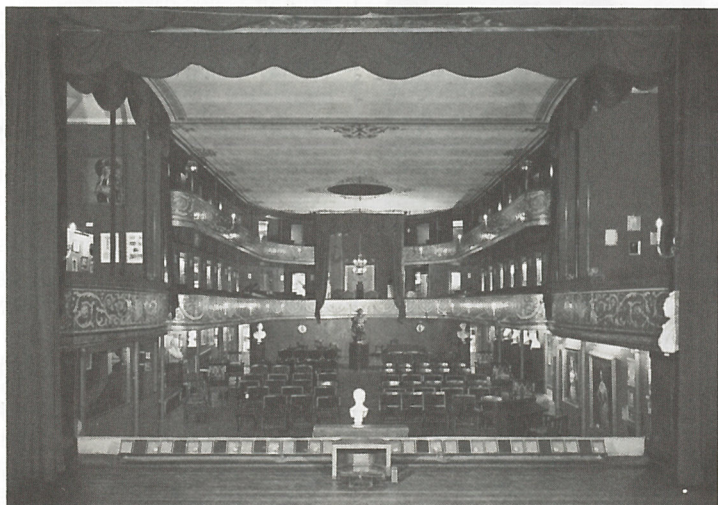




*The old Court Theatre in the Christiansborg Palace, built 1766-67. Renovated 1842. Now Copenhagen Theatre Museum.*



comparison suggests that 37,500 visitors have passed through in the 5 years since my last visit. This is probably about right because this theatre museum opens only for 2 hours on Wednesdays and Sundays, plus Fridays in summer. However, unlike many other theatre museums, it is listed with precise opening times in the standard tourist brochure.

The atmosphere everywhere is of old used wood. Perhaps the timber used in construction was softish or perhaps it is just the passing of centuries. Certainly every step has the appearance and feel of being well trodden: none more so than a staircase on to the rear stage from the lower stables area of the palace. This was the stage door

entrance and one's feet are guided into the worn dips in each tread. It does not take much imagination to get a thrill from realising that this was the path trodden by a 15 year old aspirant to ballet fame called Hans Christian Andersen. A displayed programme of the ballet *Armida* in 1821 includes *Herr Andersen* among the corps of Trolls.

This atmosphere continues into the theatre with a background of recorded opera and ballet music—together with appropriately ambient lighting. The music is played at just the right level: the level that one hears in an opera house while walking the corridors or going about one's business at rehearsal or performance. Played,

curiously, on disc rather than tape—the needle stuck in *Carmen* (a ghostly intervention?) and we were more appropriately restored to anonymous eighteenth and early nineteenth century operatic ensemble.

The lighting level is surely close to the original rehearsal levels. Natural daylight from windows on one side on to the stage and into the corridors, augmented by 14 single electric candles on the box tier facias, and 4-light candleabra in the stage boxes. The stage has a painted canvas ceiling with a simple chandelier. The auditorium ceiling has a hole in which a chandelier would have been hoisted clear of the sightlines during performance. There is, of course, safety lighting and enough level to study the exhibits. But this is done with a simple discretion that does not conflict with the overall atmosphere. All parts of the theatre are used as display areas. The foyers, stairways, corridors, dressing rooms, stage, auditorium, orchestra pit, etc. Wherever possible, material is displayed in an appropriate location.

For example, the pit has a photograph of a be-wigged orchestra in that very same pit for a 1914 occasional performance of a Mariveaux play. There are timpani from 1789 and a compact conductor's piano of 1867. (Which incidentally triggered off memories of Fritz Busch's original Glyndebourne "recit" piano which used to sit in understage neglect during the sixties—just around the corner from the steam boiler that John Christie had his plumbers install in a rather optimistic anticipation of never-to-be Wagner. Will Glyndebourne open a museum in their gardens during their 1984 jubilee?).

A board on the O.P. wall of the stage carries a selection of candle and oil lighting instruments with many interesting variations of reflector and ingenious wick trimming devices. There is an early arc spotlight, smaller than I ever remember seeing before and (coming into my own time—just) a horizon flood with linear filament lamp.

There is a selection of pulley blocks and a model of the machinery used to fly Faust and Mephistopholes out of the window in Boito's *Mephistophole* at the Royal Theatre in 1885. Other items on the stage include an early marionette theatre and a Punch and Judy variation (Mester Fakels Teatret) from around 1800. And of course a great pleasure of this stage is merely to stand upon it and embrace the auditorium. It takes but little concentration to people the stalls seats and to festoon the boxes with faces.

The dressing rooms open directly on to the rear (ie vista) stage area and are properly furnished, mostly with a glazed-off section with costumes on stands and wigs on blocks. There is a 1776 dressing room with its original wallpaper and furniture from the first Christianborg Palace of 1740.

Another room is dedicated to Pavlova with the costumes she wore in 1927 for her Copenhagen performances of "*Coquetterie de Columbine*" and "*La Gavotte*". Ballet is very important in Danish theatre history