

to book the first transatlantic theatre seats.

Using a DEC VT100 display terminal, Ben Wells, Chairman of the St. Louis Symphony, made a request direct to the BOCS system recently installed in the Barbican Centre in London for a subscription series of six concerts by the London Symphony Orchestra. Transmitted via a CASE 814 multiplexor and a Paradyne 9600 modem through the satellite link to the BOCS database on a DEC PDP-11/44 mini-computer, the booking was made at the Barbican Centre, and admission tickets printed on the BOCS 7000 printer in St. Louis, Missouri.

The demonstration was a prelude to the US launch of the system, scheduled for July this year.

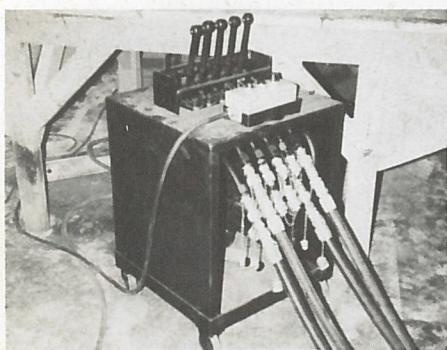
For further information please contact Ken Fraser of BOCS, telephone 01 836 8123.

Canadian Modular Revolve

Montreal Opera's new production of Massenet's *Werther* was mounted on a new portable modular revolving stage. The unit was developed in Montreal by Michel Noel of Marcel Desrochers Inc, in conjunction with Pierre Laforest of Paco Corporation.



The first assembly



The hydraulic control unit

The turntable has a diameter of 50ft with each of the individual rings having a width of 5ft. The discs are driven hydraulically.

For *Werther* the full 50ft was used, although, being modular, one or more of the rings could be omitted for future productions of other shows.

At the first fit-up, on the stage of the Salle Wilfrid-Pelletier at Montreal's *Place des Arts*, the crew completed assembly within a four-hour call. Each section weighs 190 lbs which is no problem for level get-ins, but with a view to difficult access situations, consideration is being given to the possibility of using aluminium rather than steel in the basic structure in order to reduce unit weight down to 100lb.

Between Cues

The thoughts of
Walter Plinge

Walters's Plunge

I arrived in Rotorua with every intention of attending the evening performance at the Maori Cultural Centre and reporting upon it in these columns. Alas, with but twenty minutes to curtain time, there was a conflict between feeding the senses through the mind or through the palate. Dinner won. But I took the plunge in the sulphur softness of the thermal waters, and next morning toured the boiling mud and fizzing geysers. Here was performance art indeed. Magical and menacing.

An Error of Style

I caught the final preview of *The Little Prince and the Aviator*. It did not open. (Although Broadway does try to have at least the opening performance). Whatever the merit of words, music, acting and singing, it could never have survived its scenographic style. The popularity of Saint-Exupéry's book can be measured by its six million copies sold over forty years in twenty languages including Latin. This is a fable about an aviator who makes a forced landing in the Sahara and meets a little boy who has been transported there by birds from another planet. It might just conceivably work in a small, no scenery, theatre in the round; but on the proscenium stage it needs distance. It needs haze and illusion. The piece is just too fragile to withstand the atmospheric alienation of today's popular scenic style of reduction to a token realistic element (the aeroplane) set within a masking box (painted as crates) illuminated from an exposed lighting rig featuring in-view operators of backlighting follow spots. *The Little Prince and the Aviator* surely requires the audience to suspend disbelief rather than be kept earthbound by alienation devices in the scenography. (And the technology did not help by requiring the aeroplane to pivot arbitrarily to permit the entry of trucked furniture.) The little prince (on piano wires so obvious that Brecht would have been delighted) was like a refugee from 'Annie' and how could he have acted otherwise, without atmospheric assistance. My admiration and sympathy were for Michael York whose aviator managed to sustain a blinding truth throughout the evening — even when singing *I like my misfortunes to be taken seriously*.

Cue Dropping

CUE seemed such a good name for this magazine that we decided to go ahead without worrying about the possible confusion with the New York listings weekly with the same title. But it is interesting to note that since CUE Technical Theatre Review started, *CUE New York* has become *NEW YORK* including *Cue*.

Figaro Evaluated

The scene is a reception in the interval of a performance of 'The Marriage of Figaro' sponsored by Martini.

W. Plinge: After early flirtations with the first act trio and the third act sextet I have now come to believe that, despite their magnificence, it is the second act finale that is the supreme achievement of eighteenth-century music theatre ensemble.

D. Bass: It's very long.

Orthodox Easter Drama

I had two easter eggs this year. The first was a product and the second a tradition. Both had a flavour of theatricality. My Great British Easter Egg was packaged in the image of a current television commercial for a sex drive chocolate bar. One week later, living by a different calendar, my Greek Orthodox Easter Egg was dyed in the wool to a traditional red and packaged in the centre of my Easter bread loaf. In English, the drama of the passion tends to be remembered by the faithful exhibiting the British actor's customary fear of going over the top: even the resurrection is greeted with well-mannered restraint. Neither the sorrow nor the joy feels free enough to spill out on to the streets. Perhaps it is all the fault of the weather. But perhaps not. Certainly a little shower of Grecian rain did nothing to stop the entire population of Aegina Town assembling with brown beeswax candles to light the harbour when the faithful from all three churches processed with their flower decked biers at dusk on Good Friday. And what more effective moment of street theatre than a Resurrection joyously proclaimed with the aid of lights, bells and fireworks. At 23.45 all is darkened. The priest brings from the altar the new Easter flame from which the people light their candles (white candles this time, for there is a long tradition of divine lighting design). As the flame is passed from hand to hand the light gradually grows in the church, then spills out on to the steps and along the waterfront. Then around the harbour and right through the town, eventually linking the flames from all the churches. The priest comes out to a stand and with the aid of that inevitable concession to the life herepresent, a microphone, proclaims on the stroke of midnight that *Christ is Risen!* Instant Bells, Bangers, Flares and Well-Wishing. Without restraint. Perfectly staged managed? Well no, not quite. Some firecracker operators jumped the cue by rather more than just the length of a standby. But immaculate timing is not an essential of popular theatre. Indeed precision can well remove something of that spontaneity which helps to break down the formalities which can inhibit the participation of a popular audience.