

REIDing SHELF

Would you like to **CREATE YOUR OWN STAGE PROPS**? With the help of Jacquie Gover I believe that even I could have a go. Words are used sparingly and instructively. Every page is liberally illustrated with tightly captioned line drawings and not one of these is there as mere art editor's graffiti. While there are specific instructions for making a wide range of specific props, the real worth of the book is in triggering the imagination by suggesting techniques. We are in that lovely old theatrical world of illusion and deception. In some staging fashions, only the real object is admitted; but glue, paper, string, plaster, polystyrene, paint and the ubiquitous egg box can create an artist's view that transcends mere reality. Prop making is an alliance of creative eye and skillfull hand. Jacquie Gover stimulates the latter and will be welcomed not just by embryonic stage propmakers but by anyone hoping to audition as a presenter for BBC TV's 'Blue Peter' — or indeed any parent trying to support a child motivated by that programme into being creative with the cardboard tube from a toilet roll.

I am tempted to review **ALL TOGETHER NOW** (*An Alternative View of Theatre and the Community*) by entering into debate with author Steve Gooch. But that debate might well fill this magazine (which would be an antisocial act towards its community of theatrical readers) and so I will merely recommend it most strongly as a thought stimulant for anyone with concern for drama's recent developments and future directions. Although Gooch argues from a firm stance, this is no aggressive polemic in the style of, say, John Pick's recent attempt to demolish the west end — reason rather than cynicism is the flavour. Although I personally would gain little pleasure from being either audience or worker in Steve Gooch's ideal community playhouse, I believe in the need for such a theatre. But I would wish to see this achieved by development and expansion rather than by the restructuring that he suggests. Theatre is a wide church with room for an infinite variety of gospels. As a gopeller, Gooch is logical and persuasive.

A new edition of Lisa Appignanesi's definitive **CABARET** takes the story of this most undefinable of the performing and political arts into the eighties — Alexi Sayle *et al.* With an 1881 emergence in Paris, cabaret's first half century of development is particularly associated with Munich, Vienna and Berlin where every technique of the actor, singer, musician, artist and journalist joined in every possible mix in order to entertain and comment in an atmosphere that combined informality with a finely tuned appreciation of the erotic. More recently, its reaction against the formality of the mainstream established stage is echoed in today's 'alternative' or 'fringe' which employs many of the devices first explored in cabaret.

Lisa Appignanesi's positively illustrated book includes many lyrics. On reading material that was risked in more repressive times, one can only conclude that satirists have lost some of their bite. Surely it cannot be that extreme radical comment is no longer considered necessary?

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CREATE YOUR OWN STAGE PROPS. Jacqui Gover. Conceived, edited and designed by Thames Head Limited. Published by A & C Black £9.95(UK) and Prentice-Hall (USA).

ALL TOGETHER NOW. An Alternative View of Theatre and the Community. Steve Gooch. A Methuen Theatrefile. £3.95(Paperback)(UK).

CABARET. Lisa Appignanesi. A Methuen Paperback. £5.95(UK).

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