

puppetry, dance and all the forms and mixtures that are part of our current quest to widen the frontiers of dramatic communication.

And a stage for a series of performances that match the scope of these possibilities. The diversity of contemporary production styles is mirrored by the audience seating. A wondrous collection of chairs of every possible kind — elegant, functional, rustic,

rocking even gynaecological.

Spiegel der Welt was one of the most stimulating theatre exhibitions that I have experienced. With Svoboda as catalyst, Theatre used its own visual techniques to explain itself. Often sparingly but always effectively. But why no sounds? There was not a single subliminal semiquaver and the ambience was consequently less than it deserved to be.

Light, Shade and Balance

FRED BENTHAM

A favourite work of reference of mine is the old Octavo and A5 TABS. This is not because I was the editor for its last sixteen years but because for the major part of the period 1937 'thru' 1973 there was no other technical journal devoted to theatre in these Isles. There are to my knowledge only four complete sets and one day some publisher is going to realise that therein lies a worthy subject for photo-repro. Anyway, what happens is that I go to my bound set to check a date or a detail of something or other.

Although I have enjoyed doing indexes for my own books, I am not by nature an index user; preferring rather to flip over in pursuit of some hazy vision of what the particular page looked like, or ought to look like. Soon in the present case one stopped short: George Devine on *Light, Shade and Balance*, I wonder what he had to say in April 1953? It isn't what I set out to look for; but a pause follows to find out what Devine did say!

LIGHT, SHADE AND BALANCE

By GEORGE DEVINE

The more productions I light, the more I become endeared to the "pageant family" of apparatus. I suppose I am lucky in that I never have to do much with "domestic interiors" where, except through the window on a fine summer's day, I imagine the pageant would be a bit rude and crude amongst the tea cups. But for the three-dimensional scene of a more open kind, the pageant or the narrow-angled acting area used horizontally are the only apparatus that we can satisfactorily use to give shape to our lighting in a dramatic way. (I am speaking, of course, of the acting area lighting and not of backings, backcloths or other special effects.) Another valuable asset of the pageant class is the punch for long throws: from fly rails or bridges for high cross or back lighting they keep their value. I wish there was a 2 kw. pageant. Perhaps there is, but no one I work for ever seems to have one.

Also the pageant is a bold and definite light. It doesn't pretend it isn't there, and why should it? It gives the kind of clarity which the theatre needs as it emerges from the muddy gloom of naturalism.

But this brings me to the point of what I want to say. As these strong definite lights become more and more used, another type

of apparatus becomes necessary, which we might call the "balancing light." How many times have we had to "check" a pageant, thus reducing its dramatic effect, because the light on the actor's face was too one-sided, and we had nothing to balance it on the other side? In the old Queen's Theatre, Shaftesbury Avenue, now derelict, there was in the proscenium wall on each side a series of six float spots let into the wall. They were situated within six inches of the edge of the proscenium, and were invaluable for just the function I am mentioning above. They did not "cancel out" a strong dramatic beam, but, by their proximity to the actor, one could use them to "balance" almost all over the acting area except, perhaps, centre stage. I strongly recommend all those concerned in the construction of new stages to consider this point deeply at the outset of their planning, as it is almost certain to involve architectural considerations. When we planned the new lighting at the Old Vic, we made the fatal mistake of leaving this matter too late, and discovered that no space had been left for just this type of light. In that case we were intending to use the new small mirror spots, which would have been more useful and flexible than float spots.

Another type of apparatus we need for "balancing" is a small focusing light we can conceal inside scenes, pillars, false prosceniums, etc. Apart from the old float spot, which is not very efficient or small, I know of nothing available here. I have seen some apparatus from the U.S.A. which serves this purpose well, but I have frequently been told there is some technical reason why we can't have such lanterns here. (Perhaps the Editor will fill this in by telling us the reason.) But I do not believe it will be long before these technical problems are overcome.

In the meantime we must wait and plan. The most important thing is to build our theatres and stages with these necessities in view.

Good stuff from the great man but seemingly the then editor, Hugh Cotterill, would not allow him to say it without an in-house postscript; for the story is taken up under the head "We reply —" and I continue reading and turn over and behold at the bottom are the magic initials F.P.B. So I have been reading myself and very sound stuff that was also! I must add that far from always do I find that I can agree with that chap who was

me. There have been changes of mind over the years. I cannot understand why party politicians consider these inevitable changes of mind so contemptible.

We reply —

Mr. Devine's praise of the Pageant type of lighting, as he calls it, is really welcome and focuses attention on a style of lighting peculiar to this country and one with the introduction of which I, as a member of the Strand Electric, had much to do. It vexes me when people complain of striation in the Pageant's light, or above all when they complain that, using them from the circle front, they light up the orchestra with ghost light. Let it be said with all the emphasis I can call up that they are not intended for that — the mirror spot position.

The Pageant is a side lighting lantern which makes its contribution as much by the shaft of light of its beam as by the ultimate result where it hits stage or actor. The beam stabbing through the comparative darkness tends to obscure the outer reaches of the stage picture and give the mellowing quality of, without the barrier drawback of, a single gauze across the stage opening. At the same time the actor at the receiving end of the beam is lit in no indecisive manner.

Peter Brook's production of *Dark of the Moon* at the Lyric, Hammersmith, showed complete grasp of the Pageant lantern, and he used them in extraordinarily large quantities for such a small stage. I remember at the time thinking that a "Chorus of Pageants" ought to have been listed along with the cast.

Pursuing the correct line of development we have recently redesigned the Pageant not to soften the light, not to remove the striation, ghost light, etc., but to increase the intensity still further. By substituting a small masking disc for the spill rings used hitherto, we have put up the light output at least 25 per cent. Also the new lantern (Pattern 58) can be used with a 1500 watt tubular lamp when the angle of tilt does not exceed 22½ degrees and when the extra light warrants more expensive lamp outlay. This should answer one of Mr. Devine's queries.

Correction to all this side lighting and the corresponding overhead acting area lighting is important. For the most part a really comprehensive nicely adjusted set of mirror spots on the upper circle front is the answer, but I agree that something else is needed.

Lately I have been wondering if sufficient use is made of the footlight position

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