

attend rehearsals, watch craftsmen at work and hear a number of interesting talks and lectures.

The Festival is to be an annual event. The Royal Opera House has given a commitment to participate in future years and discussions are already taking place with it and other organisations for the 1987 programme. The foundation of the Festival will have been established in 1986 from which will be developed a Festival widening in the nature of operatic events, their venues and, most importantly, the audience brought to opera.

ABTT's Weekend Course on Sound in Entertainment

Every artist, agent and manager has a horror story about the sound in a theatre, hall or club where they were at the mercy of the local facilities.

Despite the inevitable exaggeration that creeps into these travellers' tales there is no doubt that with the pace of development many halls are unaware of how to get the best out of their equipment and unsure of what improvements would really show the most benefit.

The Association of British Theatre Technicians is, therefore, launching a weekend course on Sound In Entertainment to take place at the Barbican Centre, City of London on Saturday & Sunday March 1st and 2nd 1986.

The course will take the form of small groups each looking at four areas in turn – microphones; mixers; the use (and abuse) of signal processors; loudspeakers and acoustics. This will allow the maximum time for individuals to get 'hands-on' experience on the equipment and discuss particular problems they have encountered with the tutors. The Course will have the use of the facilities at the Barbican, including the main concert hall.

Participants are expected to be in-service technicians, with some experience of working concerts or musicals. Course fees are £95 for non-members of the ABTT and £75 for members.

Further details from the ABTT at 4 Great Pulteney Street, London W1R 3DF. Telephone 01 434 3901.

Josef Svoboda Master Class

JENNY PULLAR

Josef Svoboda is a truly remarkable man, and without doubt a genius. At 65 he exudes an amazing charisma and energy. He still works 7 days a week, but has a bit of a holiday every year for 3 weeks taking a Master Class in Scenography at Banff School of Fine Arts in Canada. He appears to have reached a stage where he is very interested in teaching what he has learned – in passing it on to the next generation – and he puts out a lot of energy in his class. I was fortunate enough to receive a QEII Arts Council of New Zealand grant which enabled me to attend this year. Meeting Svoboda and studying under him was a fantastic experience, though at times it also had certain similarities to being put through a mincer. It was exhilarating, frustrating and inspiring.

It was Svoboda's philosophy of design which I found most interesting. He is into Approach, rather than style (though his designs are very stylish) and he spoke a lot on the education of a designer, and how to work at being good.

Course Structure

There were 12 people in the class, 7 of whom were University Lecturers from Theatre Departments (from places like Waco, Texas)! Fellow New Zealander Peter Bartlett also attended, as did a Czechoslovakian Town Planner, who found himself playing an important role as translator in some discussions. Svoboda spoke reasonably good English – his 7th language. The days were structured with a 2-hour lecture in the mornings where Svoboda spoke of his philosophies and showed numerous examples of his work. This was followed by 'consultation' which was the ordeal of the day. Everyone without exception had their work rubbished virtually every day, and phrases like 'more dramatique' and 'completely wrong' abounded. It was fascinating, however, to watch Svoboda working. He would extract a very simple idea from a design, rework it and say 'this is how it should be'. The rest of the day and into the early hours of the morning were spent working on our designs and trying to come up with something which would please the Master (impossible).

There was also a daily 2-hour life drawing class – alternating between a female and a very cheeky male nude. This was a lot of fun, and I was amazed at what hopeless drawers most of the University Lecturers were. Our first 1-day project was to build a tower using one piece of paper. We then worked on Sophocles' 'Oedipus Rex', followed by a choice between Puccini's 'Tosca' or Wagner's 'Flying Dutchman'.

The Man and his Approach

SIMPLE and CHEAP is Josef Svoboda's

philosophy of design, though if you talk to anyone who has helped put a production together for him they would probably dispute this. It is true that he does always try to find one simple form or scenic form or scenic element to make all possibilities. It's just the reality of getting it up and working may not be simple or cheap. We were always being told to make our proposals MORE DRAMATIC. If you're going to make mistakes make BIG mistakes.

Svoboda says

- * You must think in SPACE.
- * Find which INFORMATION is important – the atmosphere.
- * Find the concept of the play in FORM – the Philosophy or Drama in space.
- * Make sense or LOGIC of a story and extract a few or just one simple idea.
- * Design for today's audience – 1985 – whatever period the play is set in.
- * Ideas, not technology, are important.
- * Suggestion is stronger than illusion.
- * Lights and set the same thing, also costume.
- * Think what is happening in the material on a molecular level – know your materials.
- * Smooth changes – as part of the choreography.
- * Good designer is half director and vice versa.
- * Designer equal partner to director (ideally)!
- * It's like an orchestra – designer must be a soloist, but silence just as important.
- * Architect, Designer or Artist is a Philosopher first.

Svoboda has designed over 600 new productions and he 'knows anything that is possible'. He believes that the design for an Opera or Musical (set, lights and costume) should take one person one week – you just have to THINK what you are doing.

Svoboda is not interested in Scenography. Nature and Life are his biggest inspiration. He certainly doesn't go to the theatre very much, and would rather go to a good Fellini on a Friday night. Banff is the only place he normally teaches Scenography. In Prague he has an Architecture school. He has designed a theatre which can change from Proscenium to Arena in 15 minutes, and this can happen during a play.

Nobody escapes from Svoboda's critical