

to stage. I suspect it will not be that long before another production of this opera takes the Coliseum stage.

At the Barbican the Royal Shakespeare Company's latest production, in one of their less happy recent seasons, was a revival of John Whiting's *A Penny for a Song*, written thirty five years ago. If pleasantly whimsical it could hardly be described as a profound or important play, but, despite that, received a totally committed, attractive production by Howard Davies, skilfully designed by Bob Crowley, with pleasingly accurate mid-19th century costumes by Alexander Reid. Crowley had very effectively enclosed the set so as to reduce the vast area of the Barbican stage, and presented an agreeably unpretentious Georgian house, stage left, looking across its front garden to a terrace with a curved brick wall, stage right. I was less happy with the tree, centre stage, in which the manservant is perched as lookout throughout the play: quite why it had to grow horizontally across the false proscenium I did not fully understand. By way of compensation there was an immaculate early 19th century fire engine, in fine working order, with whose detail nobody could quarrel.

At the National's Olivier Theatre things were on a larger scale dramatically with a production of *King Lear*. The director was David Hare who demonstrated a keen feeling for character and politics as well

as for the undertones of this great play. Costumes were by Christine Stromberg of East Berlin's Deutsche Staatsoper, with setting by Hayden Griffin, who made excellent use of the Olivier's huge, wedge-shaped stage and sensibly kept scenery to a minimum. Basically Griffin relied on three vast sails, one central, one on either side, which furled and unfurled to open and close the action. Beyond these were little more than furniture and props, including some curious flown effigies of butcher's carcasses and a weird naked mother-earth figure, whose purpose I could not entirely discern. Ms Stromberg's costumes were of the timeless, i.e. everything from pre-mediaeval to mid-20th century militaristic, variety so beloved by East European opera companies, but did no harm in that they defined character and did not obtrude. Rory Dempster's white lighting was well conceived and executed. This came across as a rather down-beat Lear that lacked the epic quality and left no powerful images, but it made excellent use of the stage and worked well.

Also at the Olivier, but transferred from the much smaller Cottesloe where I had not seen it, was Arthur Miller's *The American Clock*. Peter Wood's production with setting by Timothy O'Brien and costumes and properties by Stephen Lewis may well have worked well in the Cottesloe, but in the Olivier seemed over extended, so as to feel portentous but not important, and on its

opening night to move painfully slowly. Too much detail and too little organisation was my impression.

Immeasurably more successful was the production of Stephen Poliakoff's new play *Coming In To Land* at the National's Lyttelton Theatre. This has a starry cast, headed by Maggie Smith making her South Bank debut, and is directed by Sir Peter Hall, designed by Alison Chitty and with lighting by Stephen Wentworth. The play deals with the efforts of a Polish woman to obtain immigration into this country and Ms Chitty's unit-set has thus to serve for such varied venues as a trendy solicitor's office, a West End hi-fi store, and an office in the dreaded Lunar House, Croydon, the Home Office's immigration headquarters. She achieved this most impressively with fluent and instant scene changes and each setting, especially those at Lunar House, obtaining immense credibility. The battery of TV sets that surrounded the proscenium may have been an idea borrowed from *Chess*, but television is fundamental to the play and the scheme worked well visually, if not always aurally. Costumes too were exemplary with great attention to detail and skill of characterisation. Ms Chitty's assured work in this production made me look forward eagerly to *Antony and Cleopatra* which she is designing, again for Peter Hall, at the National soon.

Theatre Consultants

BOB ANDERSON

In the world of building, architecture and the construction industry there exists a complex network of jobbing specialists who offer professional advice and design services to ensure that the prospective owner can get the latest and most up-to-date information needed to produce the required building with safety, efficiency and economy. For each new building project a team has to be appointed, led by the architect, to prepare designs, specifications and cost forecasts and to oversee the construction. A typical building project will have a structural consultant responsible for the foundations and strength of the design; a mechanical services consultant dealing with heating, ventilation, drains and plumbing; an electrical consultant in charge of all power, lighting and, often, communications systems; and a quantity surveyor co-ordinating cost estimates and expenditure. These services are usually provided by big firms, often with offices throughout the world, who deal with many different types of building and employ large staffs to cope with the numerous jobs on the go at any time. Supporting these specialists there are usually smaller consultancies specialising

in, for example; acoustics, catering systems, security or a special building type such as the needs of hospitals, television stations or theatres.

British theatre has a world wide reputation for excellence, both artistic and technical. As a result many countries seek to employ our top directors, actors, designers and performance technicians and also the architects, engineers and consultants who build our theatres and supply our theatre equipment. There are three firms at the top of the list of British Theatre consultants whose names immediately come to mind: Theatre Projects Consultants, John Wyckham Associates, and Carr & Angier. This report is about the firm of **Carr & Angier**.

THEATRE CONSULTANT

The job of the theatre consultant is to help his employer—the client and prospective building owner—to organise a working policy, overall planning and technical details so that the completed building will be as perfect as the available money can obtain in all ways theatrical.

The Partnership of Carr and Angier was established in 1974, based at first in Haywards Heath but moved in 1982 to their present premises close to the centre of the pleasant city of Bath.

Martin Carr set up in practice as a theatre consultant in 1965 after nine years on the technical staff at the Royal Opera House as Stage Manager, Stage Director and Assistant to the Technical Director. During these years he worked on opera and ballet productions at the highest international levels and toured extensively at home and in Russia, North America and Australia. At the end of his time at Covent Garden he acted as client representative and system designer during the 1964 partial reconstruction of the auditorium and the major changes to the stage and technical installation.

Peter Angier obtained a degree in Natural Sciences at Cambridge in 1962 and then worked at the Cambridge Arts theatre and as resident stage manager at the Oxford Playhouse, then as technical director at the Mermaid and then at the National Theatre School of Canada where he planned the new school theatre. He joined Martin Carr in 1969.

The third member of the practice is Keith McLaren who joined the company from Theatre Clwyd, Mold, in 1979, where he had been chief lighting designer. Before that he had worked at Bristol Old Vic, for BBC Television in Bristol and at the Albery theatre in London.