



Student work in the paint-shop.



Poster at entrance to the Workshow.

square lantern layout. Robert Muller explained that the students are taught the mechanics of checking the stresses in the rig for strength and balance and are expected to pay full attention to their own and other people's safety. Students were overhauling lanterns before rigging and overheard discussing proper phase separation rules. During rigging everyone wore safety helmets and have a mission to carry the practice out into their secondment theatres. Evaluation of the aesthetic success of the rig had to wait until the show opened.

The Workshow opened in the second week of March giving all 24 second year students the opportunity to show off examples of their best work. The main hall, now mysterious and magic in the theatrical lighting, was filled with costumes, scenic set-pieces, model stages and design drawings and surrounded by visitors, parents and relations, every grade of VIP, staff and fellow college students. Hopefully, the VIPs included prospective employers. On stage was the permanent set and lighting for Ring Round the Moon.

It is dangerous, and probably unnecessary for a near amateur to attempt detailed criticism of the quality of the work on display. Nevertheless, lighting in the main exhibition areas was appropriately theatrical and subtle. The set pieces properly dramatic, well built and painted and with a few touches of flair. The model sets offered alternatives; the drawings showed detail, with the occasional endearing shaky printing, but proper attention to joints, fixings, dimension and tolerance. The costumes were magnificent.

Generally, convincing evidence of crafts well learned and of individual artistic ability.

Like all good exhibitions, several side shows were on offer; an attempt at colour music, animated projections and sound images deployed in space. Here, I fear, criticism is due, because, despite the apparent technical ability, none of these experiments achieved a properly shaped performance with variation of tempo and recognisable beginnings, middles and ends. Small failures though, and in the non-visual

aspects of theatre that in the co-operative world outside, will come from the author and director of the piece.

During the course students are encouraged to get work experience in the West End or elsewhere within reach of south London provided it does not interfere with their main college activities. After the second year, however, the students have to go out and spend two terms on attachment to professional theatres and craft workshops acquiring full-time practical experience. Over the years students have found attachments in all parts of the British Isles. During this time grants dry up and students have to learn to live on what they can earn. The result, after return to college for a final term

to write a thesis and for final evaluation and award of diplomas and certificates, is an enviable record of near 100% immediate employment for the course graduates, nearly always in jobs closely related to the individual preferences and skills acquired at the college.

True to the characteristics of the profession, Iain Potter claims the course to be underfunded, short of space, self sufficient and highly motivated. They could also probably claim, with justice, to be cost effective, dedicated, friendly, good natured, competent and professional. I wish them well, staff and students, past and present, and recommend their abilities to sponsors and employers everywhere.

NAPOLI and FIRENZE

Francis Reid's Theatric Tourist trail takes him to a pair of minor theatres.

The San Carlo in Naples is one of the world's most delicious opera houses, but don't miss the **Teatro di Corte** just around the corner in the Palazzo Reale. Today's auditorium is a 1950 restoration following war damage to the 1768 theatre of Fernando Fuga. The rectangular first floor hall in the Royal Palace was in use as the court theatre earlier in the century and a print shows how the space was fitted out for opera around 1750.

Today's theatre is simple in form but ornate in decoration. Unlike a conventional 'Italianate' opera house, the majority of the audience are not hung in boxes on the walls but are seated in 21 rows of 22 seats on a flat floor with centre gangway. A shallow

gallery runs around the walls with space for only a single row of spectators. In the centre of the section facing the stage, this gallery expands into a box formed from exuberant drapes executed in gilded plaster.

The whole theatre has an abundance of gold. Paintings in the panelled ceiling offer an idyllic pastoral view of the classical age and the walls are dominated by statues of the gods displaying no interest whatsoever in the performance on stage. The colourings move from subtle pinks and pale lavenders above the gallery to blue greys below, while the house tabs are of the deepest darkest damson plum. Candleabra (5-branch at statue level and 3 branch on the balustrades) give a sparkle to the gilding, although day-