

with — “More light in this corner, Dana. Tell the electrician I think blue or dirty green!” “More light on my face, Dana.” And Diaghileff would murmur in the stalls of the little theatre in the Casino of Monte Carlo — “Grigorieff, Grigorieff, let me have more or less, *jambou bleu*.”

I hesitate to even suggest my own methods in company with these great names, except to say that I find it necessary to be more definite, and not to leave things to any other mind, but to know the mediums by their numbers as well as to know the manual limitations of the switchboard, and exactly what is the capability of each lamp from its particular position. For this reason, if for no other (and there are many other excellent ones), I have always adhered to one colour chart. Of these colours I seldom use more than a limited number, which I have found adequate for all my needs. The Blues, speaking in order of their density, numerically — 20, 19, 32, 18 and 17; the reds — 14 and 6; the purple — 26. How I deplore the loss of 27 — that magical colour, if used with discretion. The Greens — 24, 15 and 16. The latter called “Moonlight Blue,” when everybody can



“... surprise pink”

see it should be called “Gorgonzola!” Why 18 is not called “Moonlight Blue” I don’t know, when it is obviously Astarte herself. The Ambers — 5, 4, 3 and a fascinating invaluable No. 7 — Rose — dangerous mixer with amber — saviour of many a face and a dress. Lastly come our friends the Frosts — which to me have all the fascination of drink or tobacco, softening those dangerous edges, while insidiously decreasing power.

The other colours I am sure have their uses; I have not found them; and so far I intolerantly class them as “delightful affectations.” So prejudiced am I that when in my moments of doubt the electrician has murmured to me — “why not try a surprise pink?” I am so horrified that I order a black-out immediately and start again.

I have equipped two theatres with stage lighting — the Irish-speaking theatre in Galway, which I helped my partner Micháel MacLiammóir to create, and which I believe is the only state-subsidised Irish theatre in the world, and our own little Gate Theatre. Both these were installed in the late ’twenties, the epoch of cyclorama lighting,

with 500-watt floods, a horizon lamp or so, and 500-watt and 1,000 watt spots. Both are battenless theatres, and, in the case of the Gate — without footlights, partly through choice, partly because of Corporation regulation. Of the work of the Gaelic theatre I cannot speak — my partner and I have long ceased to be connected with it. At the Gate our lighting is now almost worn out, but it still serves. The Dimmers, with the exception of a few coupled floods all control single units. They are calibrated in half-inch points, the small theatre demanding absolute precision, and the effects gaining greatly therefrom.

Often I have longed for the convenience of inter-locking systems, but I am convinced that given an intelligent electrician and a certain ingenuity and patience, there is hardly an effect worth while that cannot be achieved by the manipulation of the single unit, even with the crude device of a rod as an inter-locking device and a piece of chalk as a guide. My plots are so printed as to give immediate information as to the type of lamp, the colour, the precise position of angle and setting, and above all the precise dimmer position. For tour and our visits to the Gaiety I have the same lighting, fortunately not so worn and on a larger scale — 1,000-watt instead of 500-watt in all the spots and twenty four 1,000-watt dimmers on two touring boards.

Several times while setting up in the vast and superbly equipped theatres of Zagreb, Sofia and Athens, the local authorities have looked with askance at the simple equipment and pointed to their huge and intricate switchboards and murmured proudly in German, French or Magya or Greek, and upon occasion in Arabic, and I have falteringly replied in none of these languages that magnificent as I am sure was their equipment it would be better in the short time at our disposal to ride my bicycle with mastery than to toy ineptly with their turbines — or so they seemed to me. This is not a sneer at elaborate equipment; if I could afford it we would have much more and all of the latest — but it is an assurance based upon experi-



“... pointed to their huge and intricate switchboards

ence that elaboration is not necessarily efficiency and, although effects may be achieved with complicated equipment with less difficulty, the result is not necessarily better; any more than one hundred pounds worth of photographic equipment can necessarily turn out a better photograph than

can be achieved with one small camera, a dish-developer and a knowledge of how to use them.

The Gate Theatre is battenless because we do not use cloths, chiefly because of the lack of flies, and upon those rare occasions when transverse runners have been used, floods from the spotbridge have been hardly adequate. In the Gaiety Theatre, also well equipped, fortunately for me, it is a different matter. Here are all the appurtenances of the standard theatre, with its five battens of three circuits each in box compartments — its four circuits of box floats in three valuable sections; — its perch spots, — once despised by me and now my greatest friends, and, for use when the rare occasion demands, its front-of-the-house arcs.

But I am seldom happy with enough canvas up to sail a frigate and a blaze of light twenty feet above the actor’s head, and so here I install each season my touring plant, rig up my spot batten with its 1,000-watt spots, its four floods and four eye level spots for the front-of-the-house, and with the exception of the perches and the off-stage lighting of which I try to make much use for accent, I use the Gaiety set sparingly. I am fortunate in having a good electrician myself who is getting used to my vagaries, and in Mr. Harry Morrison of the Gaiety Theatre I have a friend and a craftsman who is a joy to work with; knowledgeable, infinitely reliable, kindly, unstinting in his labours, and from whose solid experience I have learnt much. I think in the early days he was sceptical of my methods, but we have never disagreed.

To summarise, I have learned that lighting must be divided into three main headings — what I call Open Lighting, for want of a better term — when wings and cloths are used, and the spot-light, apart from being used almost as an acting area light, is negligible and for which one must rely upon battens, perches and that two-edged sword — the footlights. Gordon Craig denied their usefulness and complained that it was an unnatural source of light; but indeed every source of light is unnatural in the theatre, and for a certain type of glamour floats are indispensable.

Next there is Spot and Flood Lighting, in which the main source of light is direct and controlled and built up to a focal climax by the spotlights; floods being used for binding the light and for basic colouring; and here I am a believer in controlling the texture of shadows.



“... a certain type of glamour”