

STAGE ENGINEERING EQUIPMENT

CURTAIN TRACKS Furse curtain track type A (CT·A) specially designed to carry heavyweight curtains normally used for stage work, also where suspension points must be kept to a minimum. This track can be controlled electrically from a separately mounted controller (E·CC) or by hand with a winding winch.

The CT·A tracking has the advantage that not only can it be used with standard traverse curtains, but curving is possible so that tracks can be provided to completely encircle the drama area, or arranged with right-angle bends to give maximum clearance to an acting area.

ELECTRIC CURTAIN CONTROLLERS Electric curtain controllers (E·CC) designed for operation with type A (CT·A) curtain track are self-contained units comprising a sheet metal bed plate, motor and limit switch box. Designed for remote control by means of push buttons enabling the user to 'open' or 'close' the curtains with the additional facility that a stop button is provided so that curtains can be stopped any point along the track run and the direction of travel reversed. Relays are built into the control to avoid damage to motor windings which could occur if the user were to 'hold on' the push buttons and not release after operation. In addition to the standard forms of travel associated with straight curtain tracks, these controllers can be provided with additional facilities where short travel only is involved, often found when opening and closing cinema screen masking. Controllers can also be modified for use with brakes to raise and lower a variety of light weight equipment such as Mirror Balls or Lighting Fittings and variable speed controls may be incorporated for specific installations.

SUSPENSIONS: In any arrangement of stage equipment a large percentage of the barrels and lanterns must be suspended over the acting area involving the use of special fixings and accessories to suit wall surfaces or ceiling structures. Furse offer a variety of clamps and pulleys based on a series of standard components which give the user the maximum amount of tolerance with regard to the size of support. Where a standard fixing is not suitable, purpose-made brackets or clamps can be fabricated and supplied. Often, when no fixings exist, brace beams or tubes can be supplied to form a simple grid over the stage area. In situations where appearance is extremely important a lightweight aluminium bar can be incorporated or special finishes employed.

LIFTS AND REVOLVES

With the larger theatre or club stage where different types of presentation occur on the same programme, the use of stage revolves can assist in the smooth running of the show. Set pieces involving orchestras or groups can be set up on one side of such a revolve, whilst a small pop group discotheque type presentation can be arranged on the other or two different stage sets erected such that either arrangement can be revolved into position when required. The introduction of a revolve will also enable more elaborate stage settings to be considered with individual items or during dance sequences, which helps to give an added spectacular to the presentation.

Depending on size and weight revolves can be arranged to be operated by hand or by electric control. In either case, care should be taken in Planning as the revolve must be integrated into a complete scheme, so that general masking and special lighting equipment can be provided. Normal practice is for the mechanical side of the revolve to be constructed in steelwork at the manufacturers and the actual floor completed and provided on site by the general contractor, in this way it matches the surrounding stage floor.

Where the basic design involves a "thrust" type stage, this can often be related to a lift which will enable a section of the stage to lower to main floor level for dancing etc., so making extra use of otherwise dead space. A worthwhile consideration in the design of multi purpose areas, this type of lift normally has a short travel between 12' to 36' and is electrically operated through motor driven screw jacks and incorporates special limits and safety locks. However, some excavation is necessary within the foundations of the building to allow for the fitting of the lifting mechanism and where the club is at 2nd storey level, this could prove difficult.

Alternatively, if it proves impossible to accommodate a lift, the same facilities could be offered by using a retractable-type stage. This comprises a permanent stage section extending a short distance into the main auditorium within which are stored a series of movable sections necessary to increase the depth of stage. Ramps are included to maintain the stage height throughout the complete area and the whole unit is driven electrically through motors operated by remote push buttons which, if required can be combined on the stage lighting control panel.

There are many variations of the type of stage units described above. One is to make use of specially toughened glass flooring which, with lighting fittings underneath allows dances etc., to be