OPERA TAKES THE ROCK ROUTE

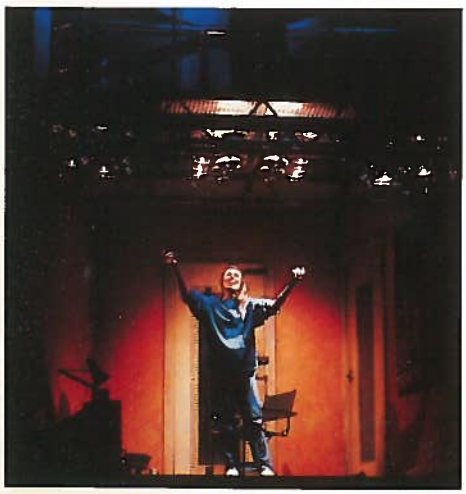
Taking a tip from the rock world, Glyndebourne Opera is now geared up for frequent touring.

The world famous Glyndebourne Opera has developed a unique way of taking its show on the road — unique, that is, for an opera company.

For at the suggestion of Strand Lighting's customer, Zenith Lighting, the opera company has taken a leaf from the book of rock supergroup *Genesis* and streamlined the lighting aspect of its touring operation.

Now, instead of each luminaire travelling individually, lights are all pre-rigged on bars and transported in specially-built flight-cases the width of a Patt 243 and the length of a Cantata hung on a Glyndebourne clamp.

Perfect setting-up each time.



Since all theatres have ramps for scenery, it is now a simple matter to wheel in the cases, line up the boxes, fly in a bar, chain the rigged bar to the flying bar, then fly the luminaires to a standard height of 20 feet.

Each section of the bar has a socapex multicore, labelled and connected. Each flight box is accompanied by a large black plastic dustbin which contains the cable. Cable is connected, and as the bar flies out, the cable unwinds like a snake from a basket.

The system means that one person can precede the lighting team, and then he and the local crew can fly six spot bars and flash out within two hours. At the end of the run, three members of the team stay behind to run the last show and the get-out takes an hour. Glyndebourne's Lighting Manager/Chief Electrician, Keith Benson feels that Glyndebourne electricians are now better organised for their five weeks of touring per year than most touring companies who are on the road for upwards of 26 weeks a year.

FOCUSING

Glyndebourne's repertoire is so extensive that they will produce a different show every evening and usually a dress rehearsal for another opera during the day. The normal method of refocusing would take too long, so Glyndebourne have adapted a unique focusing method for use during the festival and tours.

The Glyndebourne method is ludicrously simple. Two white roller towels are marked off in two-foot increments. One — the Setting Line — is rolled down the centre of the stage. At Glyndebourne it is 60 feet long, but touring depth used is 32-feet.

The second towel is marked off L1-10 for left of stage and similarly R1-10 for right of stage. The set does not change, except that it might get smaller at Oxford, Norwich and Southampton.

The lamp is focussed using the co-ordinates so that the set does not need to be in situation at the time. Two tallescopes are used at once for speed.

Colour is cut longer than the light so that it can easily be pulled out. This is slotted in behind the frame for speed because quite often it is necessary to colour-up three times a day.

Each opera has a colour envelope which has the circuit number, colour and gobo on the outside. At the end of the performance, the colour is removed and stored in the envelope in the correct order. The company always tours with a box of rolls, just in case.

CONTROL BOARDS

When touring, Glyndebourne provide every piece of lighting equipment needed from the orchestra pit backwards. Therefore, 80% of the lighting is already stored in memory and all they have to do is put in the FOH circuits.

For ten years, Glyndebourne had a Strand MMS, which they were very happy with, since it did 'sterling service' and they only had to run one performance on backups. However, they needed a memory board, so they purchased a Q file but since this did not tour well, they bought a Gemini from Strand which is now used as the main festival board. According to Keith Benson, Strand's service has been 'second to none', so now Glyndebourne have bought a Galaxy 3 system for touring and another Galaxy 3 has been permanently installed at the Opera House.

DIMMERS

Strand's dealer, Luff Light and Sound, supplied 16×Act 6 and 2×Act 3 dimmer packs.

The mux cable comes into an auxiliary panel. Every plug and socket is numbered; everything stays plugged in the flight-cases, which travel on their backs, with a trap door at the back for the mux cable. Each individual rack has its own breakers — mux links from rack to rack and two fans with indicators for cooling.