

the varying effects expressing the 'idea behind the music', so that those present would receive audio and visual interpretation of the composer's ideas.

Writing about this art form, in the first decade of this century, in his book 'Colour Music: The Art of Mobile Colour', Rimington offered general guidance on the way that standard works in the repertoire might be expressed in colour. Of course, he hoped that composers would in the future write their scores in dual form, for conventional sound expression, and for visual or light effects.

HARMONIC

A Wagnerian trumpet blast, he suggested, might be accompanied by intense orange effects, 'which palpitates with the harmonic colours corresponding to a subordinate passage on some of the other orchestral instruments. The blast ceases; there is a faint echo of it upon the violins, while the screen pulsates with pale lemon and saffron hardly discernible. Again comes the blast of trumpets, and once more the screen flames with orange modulations'.

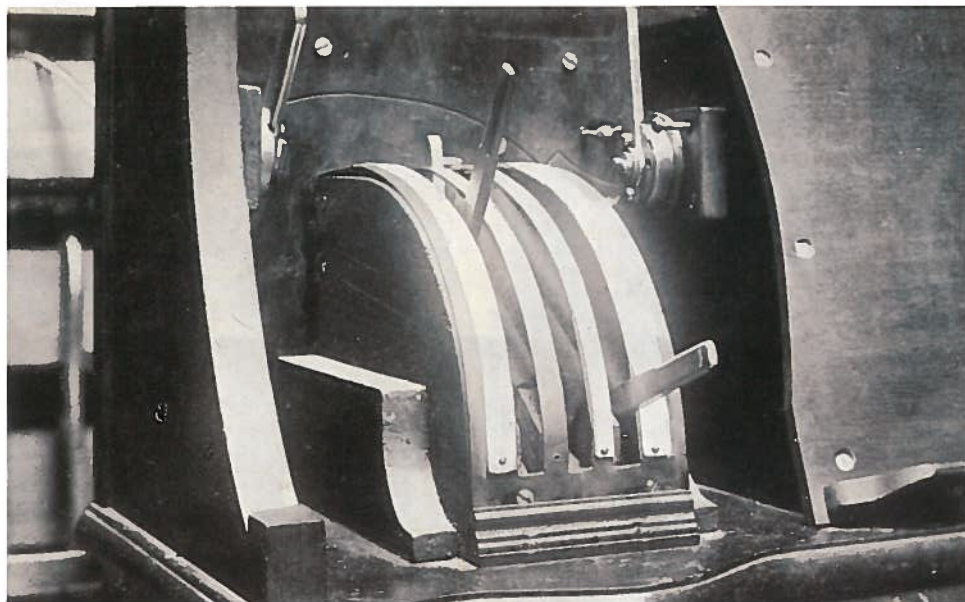
Professor Rimington's home demonstrations must have been unforgettable. The Colour Organ was some ten feet high, with a five octave keyboard which was similar to that of a church organ, being controlled by stops. A line of 'colour keys' was situated above the conventional (sound) keyboard, and connected to a lens-and-filters system, so that 'colour' was 'played'. Best effects were secured when the sound and colour were played from separate keyboards.

The person 'playing the colours' was able to monitor the effects, by looking through a strategically placed mirror, but inevitably a good performance demanded a great deal of rehearsal not to mention luck, remembering the limited potential of mains electricity.

A 'swell' pedal could heighten or diminish the colour effects, whilst keyboard stops provided the elements of control for brightness, into and out of the other colours, dissolve effects and so on.

There seems little doubt that Professor Rimington's keyboard concepts were forerunners of the Strand keyboard controls for theatrical lighting, coming years later. A power supply of 150 amps was required to power the lighting source, arc lamps mainly, and the colour dyes used on the filters were developed after considerable research.

Contemporary photography, circa 1912, of the in-house electric fittings

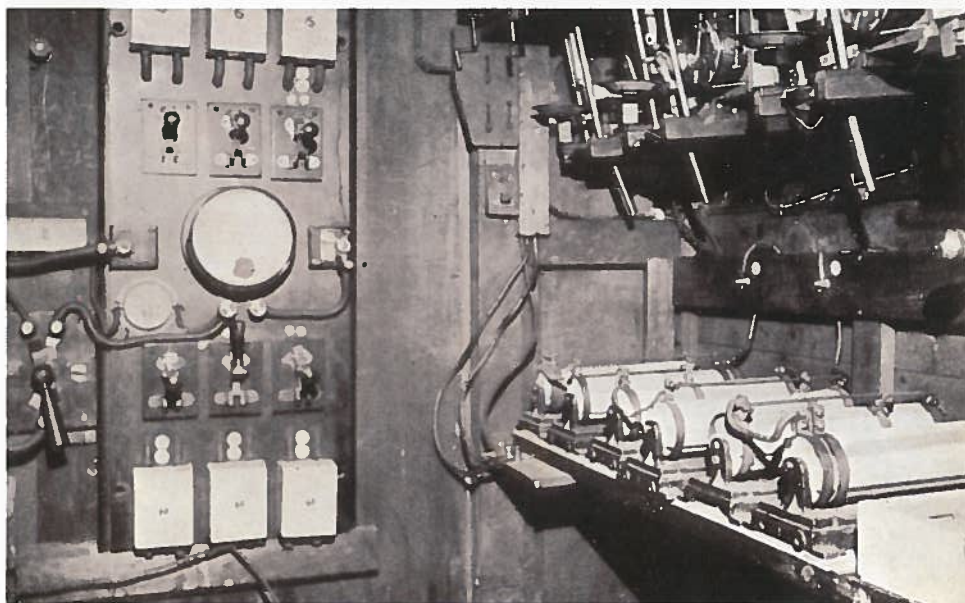


■ Lighting controls for the three-colour organ.

gives the impression that the wiring was intended to supply a local airfield or factory. Readers were assured that the Colour Organ consumed thirteen hundred candle power, though candles were not used, nor were nightlights for the quieter passages!

He was by all accounts an earnest and interesting lecturer, but must have been aware that composers might have their own idea of colour interpretation of their work, not to mention the stated preferences of orchestral conductors.

In his sixtieth year when war began



■ The 1300-candlepower light source for the organ.

Theatre specialists were interested in these ideas, but Professor Rimington tended to lecture on social realities when he appeared on platforms. He believed that Britons had lost 'that fine sense of colour they possessed in medieval times', and thought that the daily round of most people was so in-artistic in nature as to prohibit any real appreciation of colour. Colour Music could act as a bridge between the everyday and a sense of enhanced awareness of the world, whilst psychological medicine might similarly make use of the insights derived.

in August 1914, Professor Rimington had been anticipating a public demonstration of Colour Music, which, better than anything he wrote, might persuade the public of his case. Alas, the event was abandoned.

By the time Professor Rimington died in 1918, there was a new interest in presentation of musical performance, aided lighting and other somewhat neglected aids.

Had he lived into the 1920's, it seems likely that a School of Colour Music would have been established in London.