



Creating a bright outlook at RADA

Any lighting designer coming in to RADA to give a lecture notices one thing the students have in plentiful supply. Enthusiasm. So says Christine White, lecturer in lighting at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, from where the cream of new theatrical talent spills out onto the stages of the world.

The point she makes is all the more valid in view of the criticism by some established actors — most recently, John Hurt — that RADA's training in lighting for students in former years was less than adequate.

Since Mr Hurt was a student at RADA in London, in the 1960's, attitudes have modified considerably. Yes, there is a great deal of training now being given in lighting and sound techniques. But the view is very wisely taken that a subject as complex as lighting is best left to the specialists, while actors concentrate on giving an outstanding performance.

Christine explained, 'I think John Hurt's views may be valid for television because they are doing close-ups. The thing about theatre lighting is that you are not trying to make one person look good. You are trying to make an overall picture.

'Actors need to know about lighting in terms of how it affects their environment, which is what lighting does. It changes an environment within a setting.

'John Hurt was here quite

In the last issue of Lights!, internationally renowned actor John Hurt stated that more effort should be given to teaching lighting as a subject at drama schools. Christine White, lecturer in lighting at RADA, and her colleagues are taking steps to improve matters.



Strand controls in all theatres.

some time ago and lighting and set technology hadn't reached the kind of level we are at now.'

In addition to its annual intake of about 28 actor students, RADA takes in up to 20 stage management and

'specialist electrician' students, aged anything from 18 to their mid 30's. The Academy's full-time complement of 15 technical staff is supplemented by visiting lecturers, such as Francis Reid, Rick Fisher and Kevin Sleep, to give the much needed additional dimension.

Christine said, 'It must be quite refreshing for them to discover there are so many enthusiasts who want to have the craft explained to them. There is still a design mystique and they enjoy the demystification with people who are not afraid to ask "why do you do that?" That cross-fertilisation is very useful.'

Under Neil Fraser as head of lighting, RADA in recent years has expanded its technical course far beyond the basic 'how to rig' approach.

The Academy's main building in Gower Street



contains three theatres, all of which are open to the public for the many performances staged by tomorrow's stars-in-the-making.

The largest of the theatres, The Vanbrugh, seating 150, has lighting controlled by a Strand Gemini 2+ board. The smaller George Bernard Shaw theatre, has an M24, and the smallest, 'Studio 14' uses a Tempus, with Tempus dimmers. A variety of luminaires is used throughout, to give students a taste of the variety they will encounter in theatres around the world.

'I suppose the biggest difference is that an ordinary theatre will select its luminaires for the job they are expected to do. We buy-in equipment in order to teach, not in order to light,' said Christine.

'We have a strange mix of luminaires — about 270 of