

VARIETY IS THE SPICE OF LIGHT



When you consider just how much time actors spend beneath the glare of production lighting, it is surprising that lighting as a subject does not figure large in the drama school curriculum. For actress Patricia Hodge this is a matter of great concern.

'It really is quite extraordinary but it is not something that anybody ever tells you about. You are simply never taught it', she said.

Patricia, now one of the most highly regarded actresses of our time, trained at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art, where she won the Eveline Evans Award for best actress, on graduating.

She went on, 'Of course, theatre lighting is gone into as a technical exercise — I mean, we all used to take turns on the follow-spots as first year students when we were doing third year shows — but in general, there is not nearly enough emphasis laid on the importance of it'.

The lady renowned for her perfect diction was speaking in her dressing room at London's *Comedy Theatre*, where this month she will end a six month run starring in the musical *Noel and Gertie*. Her list of credits over the past 19 years is remarkable for the fact that she has evidently bridged the gaps between theatre, television, film and video with consummate ease.

Naturally along the way she has developed an interest in other aspects of stagecraft and admits she is becoming 'more and more aware' of lighting as a means of spicing-up her performance.

She explained, 'I tend to concentrate a lot on my performance and often forget to maximise whatever light is provided. It just depends on how forward the lighting director is. Some will come forward and say, 'if you hit that light there, I'm getting a nice kick in your eyes', and explains it to you. Others will not like to interfere like that and feel that it's up to you to find the light you need.

'Of course, that means that a lot of the time you may miss the subtle things they are trying to do, so it has to be a sort of two-way process. But this is, curiously, not something that an actor learns. It is not something that anybody ever tells you about and you are left to pick it up for yourself.

'With lighting you are very much in the hands of the beholder. You are asking someone else to do the judging for you. I know that some actors and actresses, as they go on, get very wised-up on it and go and follow very care-