

The Editor visits the Hawth Theatre at Crawley whose lighting rig, controls and dimming are all Strand.

My first thoughts were 'What a strange name for a theatre'. Was a Councillor Hawth Chairperson of the Entertainments Committee? Or surely if some son of Crawley had achieved thespian fame I would have at least heard of Hawth's Hamlet? Could, at last, a theatre have been named after its consultant? Certainly this was not the case, as we all know that the knowledgeable and elegant Graham Walne filled this role at Crawley. And, as we shall see, filled it very well indeed.

So when I arrived and was greeted by Chris Wilcox, the technical manager, the theatre's name was my very first query. The answer turned out to be simple. The Hawth is the area of wooded common on some of the acres of which the theatre now stands.

It is indeed an excellent site, and makes an interesting comparison with Basildon. [See article below] Both Crawley and Basildon, are new towns - ie, they are towns based on originally much smaller places, which received overspill population from London after the war. Basildon chose to build their Towngate Theatre right in the town centre, while Crawley, to my mind much more sensibly, chose a truly green field site.

Consider these points. First, my guess is that ninety five per cent of theatre goers are car owners. If you grant this ask any car owner whether he prefers to go out in the evening using the delights of public transport with its convivial company and sometimes even song accompaniment, or would he select the independence, quiet and security of his own car? No contest.

Now I am sure Basildon has car parking available in a multi storey close by, but I must vote for a floodlit landscaped parking lot placed outside the theatre entrance as at the Hawth.

Externally I like the building very much, even though 'The Stage' compares it to a local Tesco's. I provide a photo for readers to make up their own minds.

Incidentally, the debate about the siting of new provincial theatres has relevance to the Stage's comparison. Every reader of their local paper will know of the constant planning battles for the Tesco's and Sainsburys of the world to get away from town centres and out to where cars can park.

Why should theatres be different? Once more when we look at California we see the future. The magnificent Orange County Performing Arts Centre, at Cost Mesa, shares a vast car park with a local shopping mall developed as an overall concept. What happens when there is a matinee? Well how many matinees are

One Hundred Per Cent



The New Hawth Theatre, Crawley. Architects Norman and Dawbarn in Association with the Crawley Borough Architect.



The Stage in the Main Auditorium.

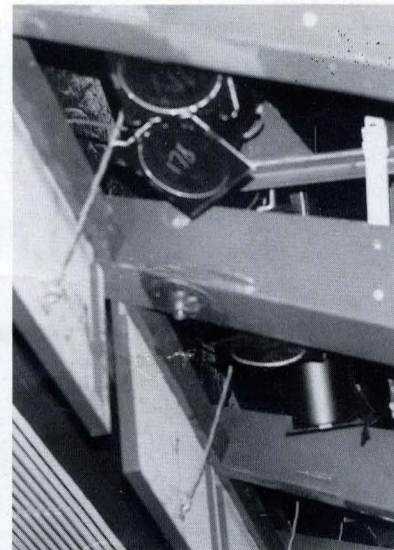
there today, anyway?

Back to the Hawth. The main theatre seats 850 in very steeply raked stalls and a horseshoe balcony. The stalls seating is reduced to 780 when the orchestra pit is enlarged to its 'Opera' size. There are facilities for re-arranging the auditorium for theatre in the round, and, by removing a few seats at the rear of the circle in front of the projection room, films can be shown. Finally stalls seating can be removed to leave a flat floor.

Just in front of the Proscenium there are manually operated ceiling traps concealing extra lighting positions, while both access

to the main lighting bridges and their positioning is first class. To go with all this quality, Cantata 1.2 kws were chosen. The control in the main auditorium is by a 180 way Gemini with Effects Panel, Disc storage, Printer and Designers Remote Control. There are 174 x 2.5kW permus and 65kW Permus dimmers.

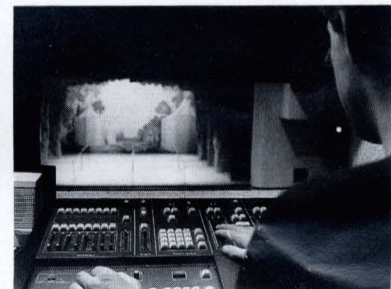
Electric winches operated from the lighting bridges have been provided for point suspension. This will be especially valuable should the theatre be used for the odd conference or product launch. Because it is convenient for Gatwick Airport, this seems highly likely.



Lighting position ceiling traps just in front of the proscenium arch.



In the Studio Theatre. Chris Wilcox in 'Action'.



A well placed Gemini.



Cantatas on the bridge.

At the time of my visit Northern Ballet Theatres' Coppelia was the attraction. Another of Hawth's benefits derives from its site. It must have about the easiest get-in of any theatre in the UK. A large yard outside the scene door gives space for any of Mr Lucking's 'Queen Mary's' to come in, turn and back right up. Oh fortunate crew at Crawley. There is also a studio theatre, seating 140. A jazz group had been there just before my visit and the Hull Truck Drama Company were moving in for a week on that day. Control is by Action, (how these are now spreading!) 24 permus 2.5kW and 4 x 5 channel 10 internally wired bars.

Obviously items will move between main theatre and studio as required, but in their usual homes the allocation is as follows:

Main Theatre:

- 2 x 1kW CID Solo Follow spots
- 8 x Cadenza 12/22 2kW profiles fitted with colour changers
- 22 x Cantata 11/26 1.2kW
- 30 x Cantata 18/32 1.2kW
- 20 x Cantata - Fresnels with Barndoors 1.2kW
- 24 x Cantata PC's with main doors 1.2 kW
- 10 x Cadenza fresnels with Barn doors 2kW
- 70 x Punchlites
- 8 x Iris Threes
- 8 x Coda Fours
- 6 x Coda Ones

Studio

- 4 x Prelude 16/30's - 650 Watt
- 4 x Coda Ones

In our last issue we showed you Cantatas - our superb new 1kW/1.2kW units in production at our Kirkcaldy factory.

Now they are actually getting into theatres and a very fine welcome they are receiving from lighting crews.

The most popular of Cantata's benefits? First, the 360° rotating shutter assembly - when the lighting Designer suddenly wants the beam shape changing from letter box to pillar box a half turn of the gate is all that is needed.

Second, the new locking clamps which, because they grip by expanding a flanged steel disc inside another flanged disc, their grip will be completely certain without needing serious pressure on the handle. The design is really just like a vehicle brake drum - and we all park on

Cantatas Go To Work

hills from time to time and expect to find our car to be there when we return.

Third, the sheer output. Not only has the 1.2kW RSE 29 turned out to be a superb lamp, but the improved optics of the lenses and of the Edinburgh university computer designed reflector mean that Cantata is effective even in situations where a 2kW unit would previously have been needed.

The First Cantata Installation

A completely modern design, by the Renton

Howard Wood Levin Partnership, whose theatrical work includes the refurbishment of the Old Vic, the Bradford Alhambra and the Theatre Royal, Nottingham, as well as the design of new entertainment buildings at Sheffield, Nottingham, Epsom and Northampton.

Tech Plan of Epsom were the highly competent Technical Consultants to the architects for the theatre equipment.

At the Towngate there are two auditoria. The main theatre with 550 seats on three levels, and a small 200 seat studio.



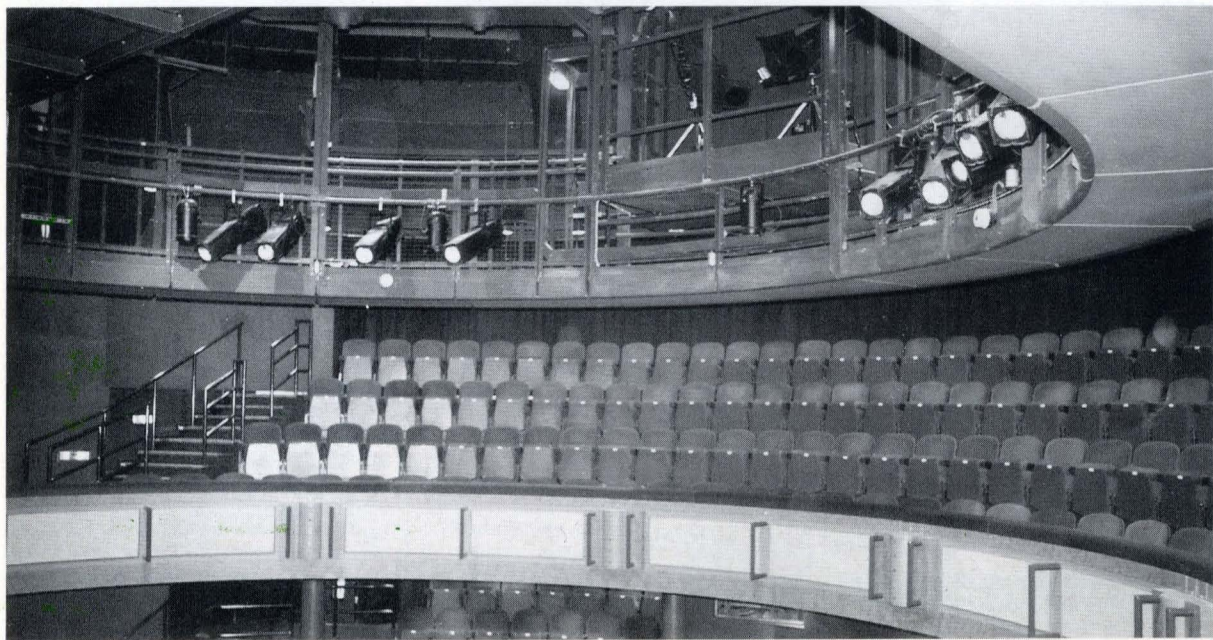
The main auditorium can have its seating moved on air castors to the basement on a large control elevator so that the stalls area can become a clear, flat floor.

The proscenium width can be varied by "moving towers", again on air cushions. I first saw this idea at the excellent Max Bell Theatre in Calgary, and I think it was first used in the U.K. at the Dergate Centre in Northampton by the same architects.

The lighting rig included the first Cantatas actually supplied to a theatre.

- The equipment consisted of
- 60 Cantata F
- 50 Cantata 18/32
- 10 Cantata
- 30 Punchlites
- 4 Iris 4's
- 4 Coda's
- 2 Solo CSI follow spots and
- 10 Internally wired bars.

There is a very comprehensive working light set up by those experts in this specialised field - specialised as, anyone who has blackouts persistently spoil by the odd 100 watt GLS left on in the wings can testify - Messrs Northern Light, of Leith & Glasgow. Purely incidentally, of course, Northern Light represent Strand north of the border.



Strandlight is Published by Strand Lighting Limited

Editor:

Richard Harris
Strand Lighting
Grant Way (off Syon Lane)
Isleworth
Middlesex TW7 5QD
United Kingdom
Telephone 01 560 3171

North America

Greg Zebrowski
Strand Lighting
P.O. Box 9004
18111 South Santa Fe Avenue
Rancho Dominguez
CA 90224, U.S.A.
Tel: (213) 637 7500

Asia

Phil O'Donnell
Strand Lighting
802 Houston Centre
63 Mody Road
Tsimshatsui East
Kowloon, Hong Kong
Tel: 3-685161


Strand Lighting

LOS ANGELES
NEW YORK · TORONTO
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MELBOURNE

Strand Lighting Limited
Grant Way (off Syon Lane)
Isleworth, Middlesex TW7 5QD
Telephone: 01-560 3171 Telex: 27976

Designed by Barrie James West Associates Limited