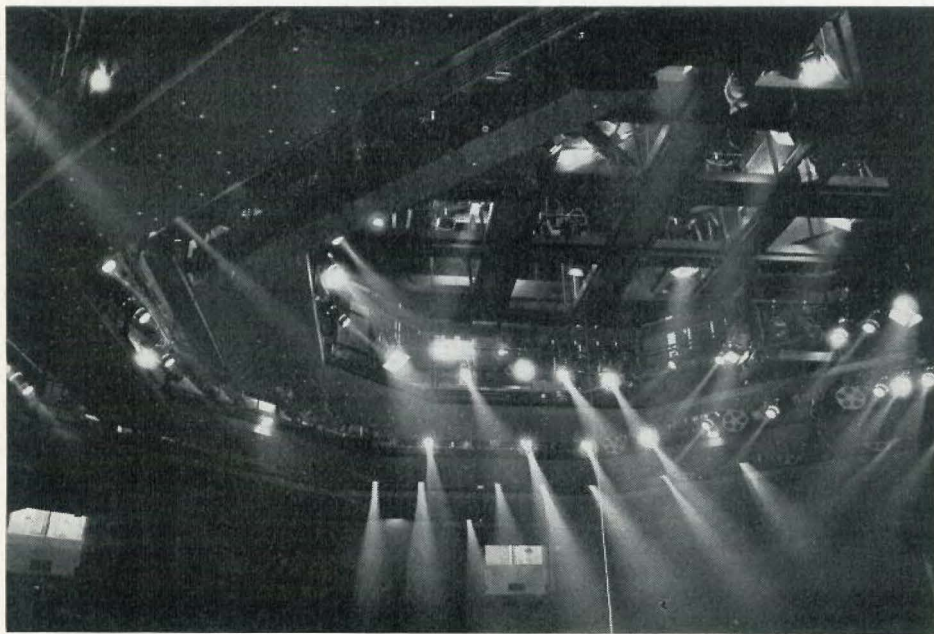


in all stage productions—first the smallness of the actor and second the largeness of his surroundings. All surroundings tend to be large in a theatre—even if it is a small theatre. The struggle lies in increasing the apparent size of the first and reducing that of the second except perhaps in the case of scenery for Grand Opera. Even there, in just one act of one opera the designer is faced with using the same stage to represent successively Amneris' boudoir and an "outside the temple" large enough to hold a Grand March in. With today's topless Desdemonas the scale of what you have to offer becomes even more critical.

Along with a large proscenium has to go a large stage and workshops to feed it and this has been well recognised. The Birmingham grid is 75 ft. high and the stage 56 ft. deep. To this can be added a forestage and this represents the only sign of niggling economy. In a theatre with a lighting control of the instant-memory type the absence of forestage/orchestra

lifts for a quick conversion in this area is somewhat odd. The main part of the stage floor, an area 46 ft. wide by 39 ft., is modular and removable so plenty of interest becomes possible in the form of levels, trucks and revolves. This is a looking-down-on-the-floor-of-the-stage theatre for most of the audience and of that I heartily approve.

One could scarcely conceive a greater contrast than that represented by the Crucible Theatre, Sheffield. The impression at Birmingham is everywhere of a large theatre both inside and out, whereas the Crucible feels small but not, one must hasten to add, cramped. The plans of both to the same scale on the previous pages show the true proportions. Of course it is the thrust form with just fourteen rows around it that is responsible for this. Here at Sheffield is the direct descendant of Stratford, Ontario or perhaps more correctly the Assembly Hall, Edinburgh. The 1010 seats in straight lines suggest the latter



*Lighting Bridges over thrust stage at the Crucible Theatre.*