

stage and then deprive him of his hour of glory—the hour of challenge. What damn fools we mortals be! No one tries to work out the qualities of a good operator—what it is that attracted him to this work.

More and more as we get involved in advanced—and this means really advanced—switchboards one becomes convinced that working such a control needs to be fun. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole control, and lose the operator's soul? A superb switchboard

demands a superb operator. In the kind of theatre that is spending money like this it will still be the fingers of the lighting operator even if used only one at a time which will breathe life into the visual side of the show. There are some who see the modern switchboard as something that needs to be jerked into action by signals from the stage manager in the prompt corner—now perfectly possible.

Of course, if you see the lighting role like that. . . .

The scarecrow or a scaley problem

Between ourselves and Covent Garden Tube Station, or Opera House according to need, there are some grimy steps leading to what can best be described as “the regions below”. It is, rumour has it, some sort of club. It can't be a discotheque because guitars and other stringed machines and their electronic attachments can be seen moving up and down the steps. Not of their own volition—for although they are assigned legendary powers to stun humans into voluntary and involuntary movement they are themselves deprived of self locomotion. It may be that one day the electronic guitar and the motor car will interbreed—a case of “The Day of the Guitos” when Kraken will assuredly awake.

We return to a lone figure standing by the cellar steps. This came straight out of Dickens, design by Cruickshank, costume by any Old Curiosity Shop. Passing “it” by (there were no pointers to sex) at close range there were no indications that the object was other than perfectly clean—much cleaner be it said than many a spruce young City gent in his sweated black coat! The truth is that the rags and tatters were just so much decor, a kind of put-up job.

And thus it is with so many places where it is good to eat and to fun. Likely enough nowadays if someone describes a splendid meal or show they begin by detailing how they crept down some ill-lit back alley, picked their way past ageing and crammed refuse bins to pass through a

door half-off its hinges into a smoke-filled candlelit den. Candlelit did we say—well, the last time we dined in such a place in Chelsea we had to call for a second candle before we could discern where among the obfuscations to poke the knife and fork. This second “luminaire” was obtained promptly from off an adjacent table by the waiter, or rather by the youth in shirt-sleeves and skin-tight trousers. Strangely when another party entered later and took possession of their table it evidently did not occur to them that they needed any light at all.

And the food? Well, it was marvellous—at any rate it tasted marvellous—and all the distant guitar plonkings quite failed to curdle the taste buds.

It is curious indeed that at the very time when smart or anyway smart-appearing décor is eschewed elsewhere, civic authority is frantically building Palaces for Theatre, and even elderly theatres are being given a facelift with new coats of paint. It is yet more curious that those in the know at the receiving end are not all that keen on palaces and it is those-in-the-know that constitute many of the people that go to theatre.

Of course, every palace has to have its “studio theatre”. No theatre worthy of the name can afford to be without one! Hastily contrived and shoved in any left-over space these are, so it is said, the true nests of vital theatre. Decide however that you want one well in advance, carefully plan a