



Stratford-upon-Avon. 1932 auditorium showing straight-fronted balcony with Royal Box in the centre and the gallery above. Note the empty side walls.

in Arden and even the then *sine qua non* of advanced theatre—the cyclorama—was only decided on at the last moment. Norman Marshall† has said,

“The committee... decided after careful examination of other theatres both in England and on the Continent that a cyclorama was not desirable. The stage was designed accordingly. But at the last moment, in direct contravention of this decision, a cyclorama consisting of two hundred tons of steel and plaster was added to a stage which had never been designed for it. Similarly, the lighting equipment was designed for a remote control system, but at the last moment a standard switchboard was awkwardly crammed in.”

Mr. Marshall went on to say of the fore-stage arrangements:

“The fundamental weakness in the design of the Memorial Theatre is the gulf between

stage and auditorium. This would be a serious enough defect in any theatre, but it is doubly so in a theatre built for the plays of Shakespeare which were written for a platform stage with no proscenium arch and no barrier of any sort between actor and audience. . . .

“It is true that at Stratford there is a fore-stage in front of the proscenium, but it is so badly related to the stage proper that it has every appearance of being an afterthought. It is impossible to combine satisfactorily a forestage and a conventional picture-frame stage. At Stratford when an actor moves forward on to the forestage he steps, quite literally, ‘Out of the picture’ framed in the proscenium arch. A producer attempting to use both forestage and picture-frame stage is faced with the insoluble problem of combining two totally different conventions of acting and production.”

Norman Marshall continued with a masterly analysis of the theatre and brought to light its various planning faults. We have had to wait for the present decade before it became accepted practice to examine

†The quotations attributed to Norman Marshall are all from his book *The Other Theatre*, first published in 1947 by John Lehmann Ltd.