



*Stratford-upon-Avon: forestage of 1962 with "thrust" effect and the side wall balconies and lighting slots of 1951. Architect: Brian O'Rourke, ARA FRIBA.*

mobile groundrow trucks at the bottom. The new switchboard, Strand Electric's latest (see page 26), had 133 dimmers and provision for an ultimate total of 144.

In 1960 Peter Hall and John Bury made further alterations in the forestage area culminating in that extraordinary achievement for a theatre of this shape, namely a feeling of thrust stage as shown above. This result was obtained largely by concentrating on the floor itself. Indeed, one could say that it led to a positive mania in respect of the actual floor surface. A strong rake was put on the stage which then thrust out over the forestage area. It was not so much a thrust among the audience but from out of the proscenium. This abolished the problem at Stratford which Norman Marshall had referred to. Scenically this floor with the actors upon it was the most important element; the very surface was changed by using bits of plastic such as Formica to suggest marble and so on, and of course the ultimate in floors was the one employed for the Peter Hall sequence *The Wars of the Roses* when an expanded metal

surface was used to ensure the correct noises as the characters in armour clanked and dragged their swords across it. The 30 ft. opening had to remain, but one was no longer so conscious of the proscenium frame, the action really could move back and forward without the effect previously complained of. Yet on close examination this thrust with only a token row of side seats, is quite literally more apparent than real. This form of stage was subsequently repeated when the Royal Shakespeare Company set up their London branch at the Aldwych Theatre\*.

Now, in 1972, Trevor Nunn has made a further attempt to minimise the proscenium effect by opening right up the assembly areas either side of the forestage. The thrust idea has now gone into reverse so to speak. The stage tends to encompass the audience—though not by very much; it is also largely a token. What is at Stratford for the new season is Christopher Morley's version of the Peter Hall/John Bury stage that we first

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