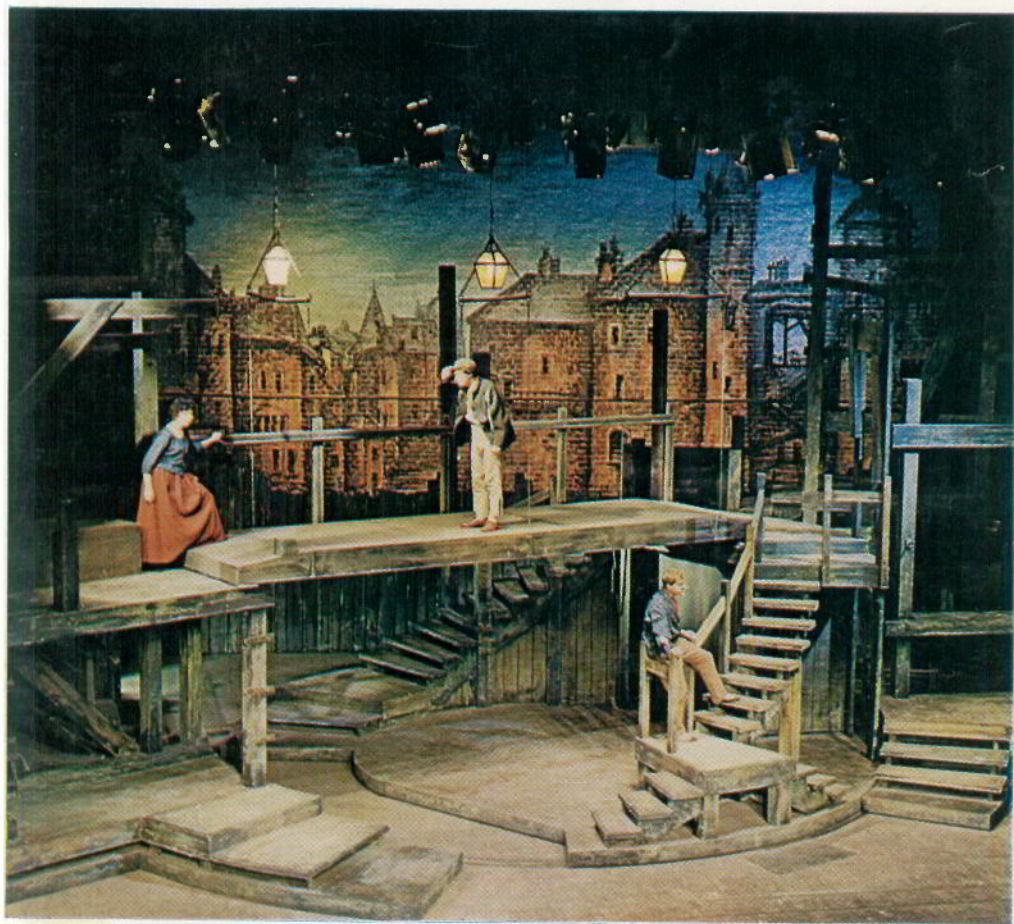


TABS

Our 100th
Number

September 1973 Vol. 31 No. 3



TABS

Published by Rank Strand Electric Limited

September 1973 Vol. 31 No. 3

Editor: Frederick Bentham
TABS
29 King Street, Covent Garden
London WC2E 8JH

Editorial

Time and Demotion	81
Entente Cordiale	81
And all our Yesterdays	82
23 Years Ago	84
More of <i>Oliver!</i>	85
Methuselah Muses by Percy Corry	95
The Day of the Sunspot by Robert Longthorne	97
Inigo Jones—Theatre Architect by Iain Mackintosh	99
Shifting the Scene by John de Lannoy	106
From Bohemia's Woods and Fields by Frederick Bentham	109
Project Seagull Chichester by B. Bear	115
Light for Curriculum Drama by David Morton	119
The Adelaide Festival Theatre by Colin Hassell	124
Something Old and Something New by Denis Irving	125
Jack and Jill Went Down the Strand by Francis Reid	130
Correspondence	132
Synopses	133

Cover picture: *Oliver!* at the New Theatre, London, in July 1960. Photograph by Paul Weston taken a few days after the First Night showing the set by the late Sean Kenny with lighting by John Wyckham. See *More of Oliver!*, page 85.

Time and Demotion or St Michael and all Angles

The approach to our favourite store is from the car park. Although a relatively new building which expected a large part of its customers to enter that way the facade is very much "the rear end". It is as if one entered a theatre or hotel by the get-in or the goods entrance. The implication is obvious. The motorist considers himself lucky to find somewhere to dump his car. The Environment stops there—at the tin casing he so lovingly polishes. The theory of relativity goes into action: so long as that environment moves outside at full speed to his rear when in motion and provides a parking lot for the vehicle when stopped, that is all that is demanded.

On arrival with ducked heads the contents of the car eject themselves and shoot off for the nearest door of their target for today. Its shape and size matters not. Indeed, it does not even have to be the usual height, for the motorists do not un-duck or un-bend until well inside the building when they stretch to look around, to locate among the fluorescent ambience the pants or panties, the haddock or hankies they require.

Consider the third world—the pedestrian. Unable to afford a car he comes in by the front door where window displays, red paint and swing doors greet him. Or rather used to, for supermarkets have woken up to the facts of "time" and particularly "motion" study and no longer go in for window displays. Instead they scribble on window panes in super jumbo lettering their latest offers of giant packs with mini contents. Alternatively they wallpaper

these with swingeing reductions in price and daylight. The *Architectural Review* has made the point recently* that these places are not the successors to the High Street shops they have put out of business but to the market stallholders, and in this way "the glittering, evocative traditional core of the city centre is being replaced everywhere by the hulks of what are in fact wholesale warehouses". The article goes on to provide possible lines as to the solution, but we ourselves come back again and again to the essential quality of a city—pleasure in walking.

All this has relevance for theatre. Arrival by motor car predicates advance planning. Motorists are unlikely to drop in. Even if the theatre has time to display its wares to them—because for example the car is caught in a traffic jam just outside—the impulse to drop in or try one's luck at the box office will have passed by the time the effort has been made to park the car.

A theatre with a completely planned audience, an audience packaged weeks or months ahead, can lose that essential leaven of those who had decided then and there that they felt like seeing that particular show in that particular place. These are more likely to constitute an audience that is fun to play to because they are in the mood. Some of the others, having planned their dream in advance, may now be actively resenting the tickets which bring them out with a rotten cold or with the wrong girl.

*March 1973.

Entente Cordiale

When entertaining the technical staff of the Comédie Française during their recent visit to London of all the delights we set before them (including Colour Music!) nothing received greater approbation than a jar of

pickled onions. This must not be taken simply as indicating a very low standard for the rest of our entertainment. *Au contraire*, as they might say on their side of *La Manche*, everything we did was received

with enthusiasm and it was a heart-warming occasion all round. Nevertheless, while fond of an occasional pickled onion from time to time ourselves we never for a moment suspected that the content of a standard jar purchased across the grocer's counter or removed from the supermarket shelf could invoke cuisinary rapture in anyone—let alone the French. Yet here it appeared was the dish or rather the jar for the gourmet.

The matter was given no further thought until a few weeks later on the radio at breakfast time (rather inappropriately) there was a tale of an EEC committee which for some years now had been endeavouring to standardise on a formula for a European pickled onion. Needless to say this was to be quite different from the traditional British recipe, but as loyal—if new—members of the EEC, our picklers would be expected to comply!

With all that butter nonsense in mind, and with our by now great knowledge of the workings of large organisations and their experts, we find no difficulty whatever in believing this silly tale. For those of us who know our onions this matter is yet another symptom of the dedicated bureaucrat buried in some claustrophobic cell happily and myopically intent on Articles 43 and 100 of the Treaty of Rome.

What should we do to preserve our pickled onions? The very question presents an anomaly because the reason that the onion was first popped in the pickling vat was to preserve it. Having been around in an ambience of preservation for months or years it can be opened up—a dish fit for the Comédie Française. It will have improved with time, provided the onion was good in

And all our yesterdays have lighted the way . . .

How does one celebrate being one hundred? Not if one is wise by a special gala number, for special gala occasions both in theatre and in print have a pronounced tendency to fall flat. The theatre, and indeed any journal or person we love, are at their best when they are their normal selves. Thus it is that all we shall indulge ourselves in is

the first place, and we went the right way about preserving it—and so too will a good theatre.

There is a great movement to preserve our theatres today but we must make sure both that the theatres are good and the methods for preservation are good. Some of the desire for this conservation springs from a conservative distrust of the new. Modern theatres have not always been happy in their architects. This is not one of the great ages of architecture but it would be sad if no-one today got a chance to take up the challenge which the task of designing a theatre building presents.

Every age will have had its crop of good and bad theatres. What we have to do is to take as much trouble in selecting a theatre for conservation as we do, or should be doing, in drawing up the brief for building a new one. "What is it going to be used for and how?" are questions which have as much validity for a venerable building that is already there as for a new one that might be there tomorrow.

Distinguished members of the acting profession have made asses of themselves from time to time in fighting to preserve a theatre to which they may have sentimental attachment—perhaps on account of a personal triumph or a happy run there—but whose claims to survival just cannot stand any kind of practical examination.

One thing can safely be said, a theatre building which has managed to survive through the years should be allowed a fair trial. It could be a very valuable bequest from our predecessors, and no gift from another age should be demolished by default.

this editorial, one letter of congratulation from a *dramatis personae* and one special article from our oldest contributor, Percy Corry, with which to span the years. For the rest there is just a typical collection of TABS articles and TABS editorials.

Aha! the editorials which we gather are read if all else fails—these are of recent

creation. Early TABSES, if that is the plural, had a heading called *Editorial*, but this confined itself to announcements of a general nature mainly directed at what Strand Electric could do for, or had done to, customers. In December 1954 for example the pulse quickened to learn on page 4 that — (why mention the lecturer) . . . was giving a demonstration and talk on Basic Stage Lighting. Also on page 4 but two years later there were glad tidings that the Hire Department would be open one hour longer on Mondays and Fridays.

We first opted for matters of greater moment in that area rather timorously in April '63 with two paragraphs without a title linked to a quotation by Isambard Brunel on not shackling engineers by the prejudices of the day. In the very next issue we got so indignant about the way our tender for the *Sydney Opera House* stage lighting had been treated, that we took two pages on the subject—but cannily confined them within a special Australian edition. The rest had to make do with mild remarks on *Adaptable England*.

In June 1964 editorials became airborne under the title *Nottingham 12 Leicester 1, or How Much is a Theatre?*

This was inspired by a BBC television programme which interviewed the poor of Nottingham in front of very hovel-like hovels on how much they liked their new theatre and would they have preferred the cheaper one in Leicester. Since that time the editorial pages have been constantly occupied to tilt and ride at this, that and the other both outside and inside the firm—and more recently the organisation.

TABS itself was begun by Hugh Cotterill (its other editor) in October 1937 with a very rough edition printed on our own offset-litho machine. Of its twelve pages two were taken up with hire charges, two were blank except for our address and phone number, and of course page one consisted of the dramatic scene which then formed our front cover. This design continued until March 1964 when there was a slight change to celebrate the Strand Electric Golden Jubilee, and the number of pages for that occasion dramatically increased to 128. Consequent on a remark

by Sean Kenny that he could never tell one TABS from another as he riffled through them we went photographic on our cover that June* and promoted our original design to form a seal of authenticity in the top left-hand corner.

Two of the authors in our present issue actually wrote for that first TABS ever—Percy Corry and the present Editor. Indeed, Corry had the indistinct distinction, seldom since accorded, of having his photograph reproduced therein. The printing process ensured his indistinction and also that of his brand new premises in Manchester's Oldham Road—which in 1937 was Strand's first branch.

Humour had to wait for three issues later when Corry gave us his first Busker advice while Bentham continued to take things seriously, even passionately, until well after the war. TABS was always a crusading journal, though some of the things we had to cover were extremely difficult to get excited about. The new installation of 1938 at the Wimbledon Theatre for example (Vol. 1, No. 4) with four battens, an eight-way spot bar and a Grand Master switch-board *did* tax both pen and loyalty.

" . . . to those of the Strand Electric who are now accustomed to deal with the highly compact and efficient wander [sic!] boards utilising remote control and the Strand Magnetic Clutch, any form of direct-operated board is looked upon as representing a stage now rapidly passing. However in this instance it was not possible, for financial reasons to utilise one of the many wonderful designs of Remote Control that the Strand Electric have available, but in lieu of this the most compact and flexible direct-operated control was devised."

In fact authors from within Strand Electric were "anon" until after the war when we were represented firstly by our initials, and then in September '57 with the change of editor by our full names. At this point fees began to be paid to outside contributors. We came of age, in fact.

For the statistics we have had to date 198 separate authors some of whom have appeared only the once, but we happy few,

*In fact, we had lapsed once before, namely in December 1959 when we could not resist a picture of *Patt. 23s* in the Norwegian snow for our Christmas cover.

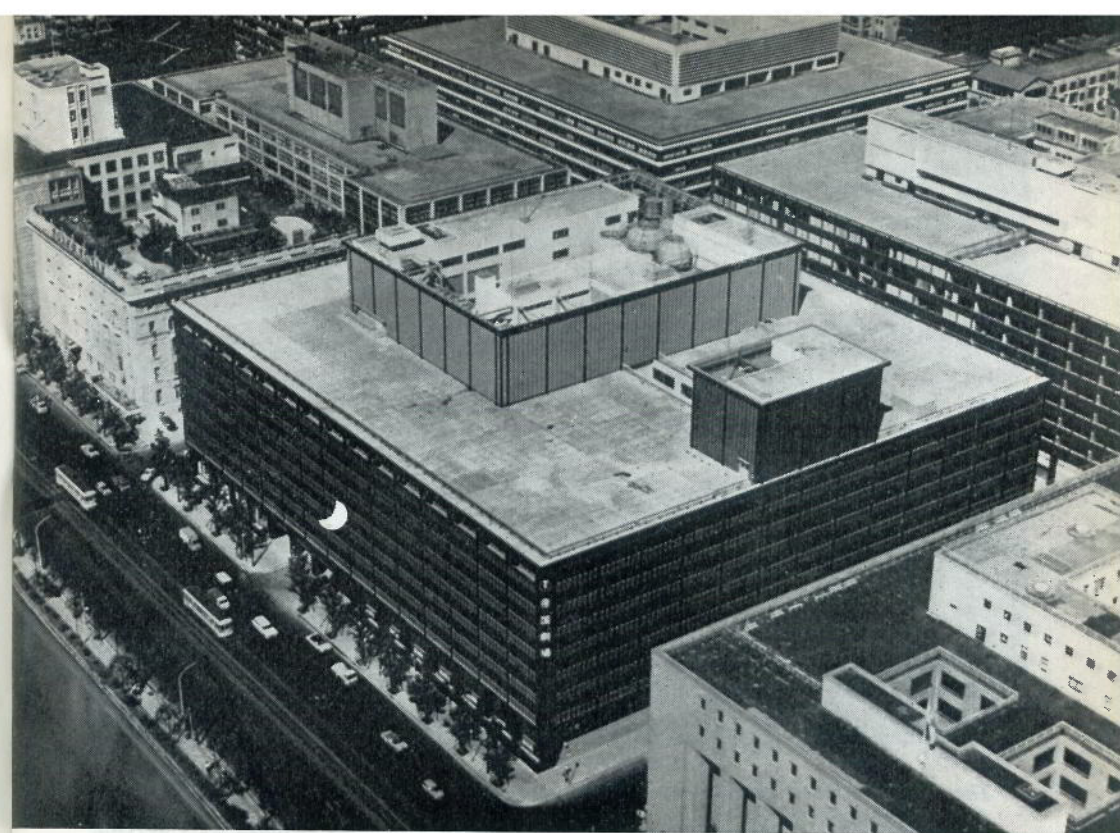
we band of writers, have appeared over and over again held together by fertility of pen and fascination with stage or possibly freedom of time!

TABS is in fact printed in Times Roman 9pt but on 10 which gives the type a little extra space. In 1970 we went double column to avoid the extra long line which the new A5 page (a sop to impending metrication) would have forced us to adopt. Double column allows greater freedom in illustration but it also poses problems. Readers probably do not realise the care we take over the appearance of the editorial pages up-front. Justification, as it is called, can bring untidy splits in words at the end of a line, or a line that is too crowded or too windy. Yet again by an unhappy chance the same words can land one above the other or they upstage each other and give the wrong dramatic stress. After all, it does affect the message if a key word enters at the beginning of a line or exits at its end or if it hides in the anonymous chorus of the text.

In the matter of that coarse actor—the misprint—we have managed (through diligence we like to think) to keep the boor

right down. But recently in *our own* pages we read that our firm began in Garrick Street when we perfectly well know it was Garrick Yard. Once upon a line the printer managed to transpose the captions under Vienna Opera and Mannheim while Norman Marshall's review of a book about Adolphe Appia was printed under the dramatic title of *A Numbing Experience for Some* when he meant the event to be merely *Chastening*. This was not, as some might imagine, due to a desire on our part to stir things up but rather to a trace of illegibility in the calligraphy of that distinguished man of theatre.

In conclusion we should like to thank all our contributors and our faithful readership, especially those who have written to us from time to time with nice things to say—and sometimes with nasty—but who in any case provided a sample consumer reaction. Finally, I would personally like to thank “Barbara” (Berrington) and the longer-toothed “B” (Bear) and “T” (Twynam) for the fun we have had together. TABS is nothing if not fun to do—and we would think this shows! FRED BENTHAM.



23 Years Ago

From TABS Sept. 1950

Mr. H. L. Mencken is reported as having once said that if a number of big business men got round a table to talk about service, it did not need a Sherlock Holmes to deduce that somebody was going to get robbed. This cynicism puts us in rather an awkward position because we can think of no better word than “service” to cover the supply of equipment with the advice, “know how”, punctuality, pleasantness, etc., which are our constant endeavour. It may be, of course, that Mr. Mencken is wrong and we are not robbers. How otherwise can one account for the

fact that we have remained undetected for upwards of 30 years. Perhaps on the other hand, we are presumptuous in considering ourselves to be “big business men”. Certainly by ordinary commercial standards we are not, but so far as our specialised business goes we have been led to believe by visitors from home and overseas that we are quite probably the largest single theatrical contractors in the world. At any rate, whether daylight robbery or painless extraction are involved, we ourselves consider that we might just as well put the shutters up and seek some other form of livelihood the day that we consider service to be superfluous.

[Hugh Cotterill]

More of *Oliver!*

A recorded interview with Ian Albery on the Donmar restaging in Tokyo's Imperial Theatre

The Imperial Theatre, Tokyo is a full city block, in American parlance, facing the Imperial Palace. The theatre is designed for Western style productions—musicals, and possibly epic-type plays. While it is not specifically designed for traditional Noh and Kabuki presentations, it is equipped with a Hanamichi ramp of about 20 metres down the centre of the stalls which lifts to a level with the stage for entrances, etc. The theatre is certainly capable of handling many dramatic forms very well, considering its large size. One has to hand it to them in that they have taken the German opera house and made a very good job of translating it into Japanese terms. For a flexible fast-moving show such as *Oliver!* it was not very appropriate but we certainly managed to make it work, better I think

than at the O'Keefe in Toronto which is far more limited as a drama theatre.

The auditorium being at street level then there's no difficulty with get-ins?

No, in fact one could drive a truck onto the stage if one wanted to.

That's a favourite of yours!

Yes! Not that it was necessary to do so because we had everything crated and it was better to drop off the castored crates; so there was no necessity for off-loading on stage, but the stage was certainly designed to be strong enough to take motorised machinery as heavy as a truck.

Did you have any problems with special Japanese regulations, safety problems—this kind of thing?

I would say we had no problems in that respect at all, we were very specific about our requirements in advance and the contract itself, which ran into many pages, had a large number of clauses dealing with our technical requirements and so on and we sent full details of all the stage effects, but I was never made aware of any technical problem in our style, or standards of presentation, or special materials being required. I would say that the English scenery and equipment we brought was probably above the standard that they were used to.

They do have a fire curtain?

Yes, it is a conventional theatre in that respect.

You refer to it as a full city block.

No. The theatre is only a small part of the block.

And so there are apartments or something in there?

Principally offices.

Then it is like Radio City in New York's Rockefeller Center block?

Well, the Rockefeller Center is getting towards it but the Japanese have considerably improved on the concept. There were about five mezzanine levels of which the lower ones were garages and then shopping arcades on two levels below street level which link in with other buildings or other blocks. Each is almost like a little city itself, these entire blocks of arcade shopping. You can literally live in these blocks day and night; you can eat, drink, sleep; do every kind of shopping, and it is one of the features of Tokyo that you need hardly go a step out of doors; you can cross from block to block underground through subways which are lined with shops—all of them are clean and tidy and neat—totally unlike anything we have ever been able to achieve in England. I think the secret is that all their subways are lined with shops and the shopkeepers I presume have responsibility for keeping their own front areas clean, and in any case the Japanese are basically very clean and tidy.

Is there something peculiar in having a theatre in such a block or does it happen quite a lot in Tokyo?

I don't think there are many theatres built in blocks, it's probably unique in that respect.

So we can get to the theatre by three ways; either we are in the block already and go into it, or we arrive by car and there is the underground car port, or we can walk along and casually drop in?

Oh, yes, just as easily. It has a main front entrance with its marquee and all the usual signs for the show. It is very definitely a theatre on the outside, identifying it for what it is. It is not hidden away like the Royalty in London round the corner.

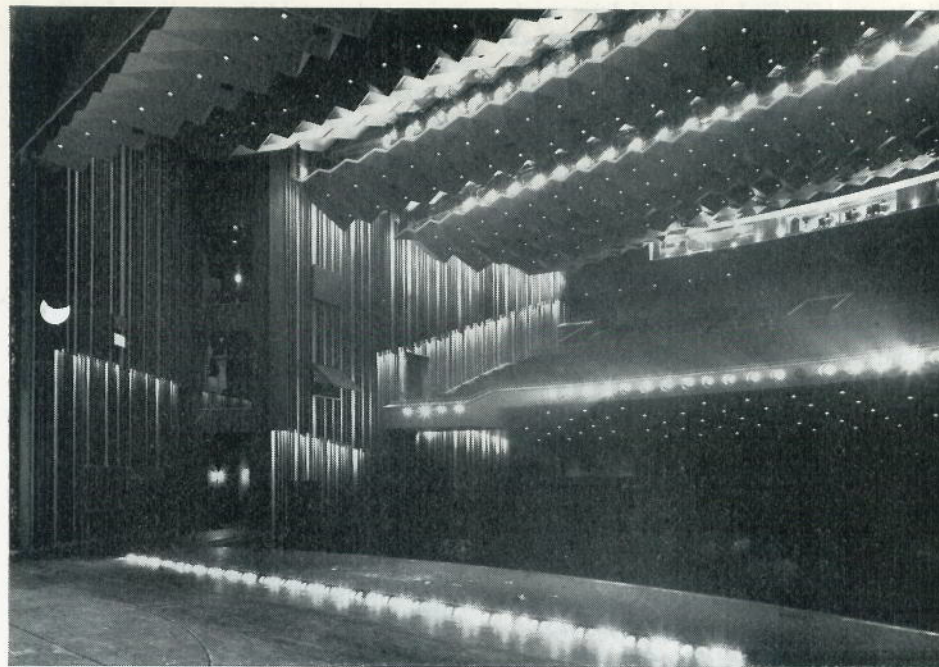
While the offices hog the main street!

An interesting thing about the Imperial is its financing. The Japanese Government in this case said to the Theatre Company, Toho (which is the local equivalent of the Rank Organisation) that they would allocate a superb building site facing the Imperial Palace on advantageous terms if they built the finest theatre in the world. Included within the package were development rights in terms of office accommodation and shops to make the entire complex commercially viable and in effect to subsidise the building and the running of the theatre.

When you say this Company is equivalent to Rank, what do you mean by that?

I think they have about a dozen major cinema theatres in Tokyo. They also have film studios and a major film production company in Japan. They have cinema interests in other Japanese cities and they distribute and produce films, produce stage shows and manage theatres. A number of their theatres are dual purpose in that they may show film shows for part of the year and stage shows for the rest.

So you are referring to the entertainments' side of Rank, a group roughly equivalent to Leisure Services, Pinewood, etc. Since Rank, I have reason to believe, do stage lighting does this company do its own stage lighting?



Imperial Theatre, Tokyo.

No, not at all. In fact the stage lighting was interesting in that it was Germanic in principle with some American influence, but they had no profile spots with framing shutters whatsoever. All they had was a limited number of masking plates and irises and we determined to bring out all our lighting instruments from England which when you think of Japanese industrial achievement is a bit extraordinary.

When you took Oliver! to Tokyo in 1968 was the Company still in existence and did it form part of a world tour or did you re-form it specifically for this?

No this was a one-off venture which we negotiated for nearly three years with the late Mr. Kasuo Kikuta who was the Managing Director of the stage production division of Toho, and who for a long time had been anxious to bring *Oliver!* to Japan. I only went out to negotiate the contract after one had spent months expressing honourable intentions without which one didn't get very far with a contract. It was a

special production, mounted specially for Japan, using a set which had been specifically built for our U.K. national tour, and we arranged with the Japanese to wait in effect till it was available subsequent to the West End revival at the Piccadilly Theatre. So it was our touring set which went out. The Company itself was specially formed but as we had had by that time at least three or four companies of *Oliver!* it wasn't very difficult to find the majority of the cast from artists who had already done it at least once before!

*So the actual set was the famous Sean Kenny one we know, was it—the one that John Wyckham originally lit?**

All the various productions of *Oliver!* from its earliest days at the Wimbledon Theatre through to the New† Theatre have stayed extremely faithful to the original design in

*Fully described and illustrated TABS, Vol. 18, No. 2, and recalled on our front cover this time.

†The New Theatre, London built in 1903 has recently changed its name to The Albery Theatre.

all its versions and one has done one's utmost to maintain that standard of presentation.

Now the intriguing thing therefore is that the set was originally designed for a 30 ft. wide stage at the New.

31 ft. 10 in.

. . . and this stage appears to be much, much wider.

The stage at the Imperial is enormous, but as *Oliver!* is an extremely well-conceived open-stage production one was able to expand it in spatial terms without enlarging any of the stage units, trucks or features so that the scenic and acting relationships stayed unchanged. By the use of masking fences we managed to keep the entrances for the artists still in the right relationship to the acting areas without any boxing in or artificial reduction of this mammoth opening which was over 60 ft.

Yes, and the point which immediately occurs to me is that you went through to the back wall at the New and one literally saw the fly galleries and so on. Backstage at the New had character—something usually lacking in a brand new theatre. Did you do anything about masking or did you just open it up to the back wall just the same?

One could criticise certain aspects of the Imperial's equipment as being slavishly Germanic in character—opera wagons, lifts and so on, such as one would expect to find in a pure opera house and which the Japanese didn't quite know what to do with. Fortunately, they had painted all the backstage areas in dark colours and there was no basic problem in opening out the *Oliver!* setting but we did partially mask in with painted hessian and gauze legs; we didn't aim for a total mask but we used them really to break up the enormous void so as not to make it seem too vast and to give some points of relationship for the set. We did use a painted backcloth, not because one couldn't have painted something on that distant back wall as at the New Theatre but the time factor made it impracticable.

How long did the show run?

The show was a record breaking run for a

touring show to Japan and ran for eleven weeks, and I think their previous maximum run was *Hello Dolly* for about six weeks.

How long did you have the theatre to get the show staged?

We had about ten production days but one has got to remember that we had a new Japanese orchestra some of whom were rather hesitant on Western orchestrations, albeit with a cast of English actors who knew the show, but the children were a



Dressing room Japanese style.

problem as English laws do not allow them to be exported, so we had to use American children.

American?

Admittedly we managed to pick up some of them from the various American productions of *Oliver!* but child artists age rather quickly in terms of vocal suitability for *Oliver!* so we had a large number of children to rehearse. The other King Charles' Head, as always with *Oliver!*, was training the *dog!*—Japanese this time because of quarantine problems.

What about language? I have visions rather like once upon a time at Covent Garden where there could be a cast using mixed languages.

No, the whole production was done in English which limits your audience in Japan because, while the Japanese visitor to London may seem to have knowledge of

English, in Tokyo itself it is very rare to find somebody on the street who speaks it and literally everything from their street names to signs on railway platforms, buses, transport is in Japanese characters. This includes the numerals, so you can't even tell what railway platform you're on unless you understand Japanese numerals. They have very faithfully kept their own culture in terms of language, numerals and everything—therefore the eleven weeks run was certainly dictated not by its popularity but rather by the potential audience who could conceivably expect to understand it.

Yes, one wonders what made this a draw for the Japanese.

I think that rather like Soviet Russia, where they have always had a keen interest in Dickens, the Japanese insofar as they learn English, hold Dickens to be one of the text book authors and Dickensian England is possibly something they are curious about. Of course any show with children and animals excites interest, but the main reason (and I think this is quite flattering to British Theatre) is that Toho wished to import this show because they attempt to attain high artistic and technical standards. In this case they considered *Oliver!* to be almost an education for their staff. They believed it to be the finest example of the fluid and flexible staging of a dramatic or musical piece available in the world—better in fact than anything in the United States at that time. They wanted the show to come to Tokyo because they felt it would have an enormous impact on design, on technical standards, and on lighting design because nothing like it had ever been done in Japan before.

For the eleven weeks run, what houses did you get and how many does it seat?

Well, certainly in terms of bottoms on seats it played to capacity. From the local newspapers and from reports that were issued by Toho they claimed that we played to 98 per cent financial capacity throughout the eleven weeks and they said that they needed to play to about 75 per cent capacity to break even. The ticket prices ranged from U.S. \$1.38 to \$9.33 which is fairly high

pricing by Japanese or English standards. However, we negotiated a very tough contract with the Japanese—justifiably in view of the costs and expenses on our side and of course the transportation costs of the scenery, costumes, artists, plus auditions in America for the children. It was a mammoth undertaking on both sides and it was entirely without support from the British Government, the British Council or the Arts Council. It was a completely independent venture by the Japanese company Toho and ourselves, which paid off for both parties.

And of course the theatre itself is, as you said earlier, a commercial theatre.

Absolutely! The only show that had gone before was an epic that recently hit London called *Gone With The Wind*. This was played by a Japanese cast who impersonated Europeans quite well. It was extremely amusing—sometimes not in quite the way that was intended—but it was a very serious attempt by Toho to present a Western style musical, and although it was a very creditable effort it showed how desperately, if I may say so, they needed *Oliver!* to teach them some of the tricks of staging; that it wasn't necessary to alternate front cloth sets and full sets to the accompaniment of enormous crashes and bangs backstage for instance. During the front cloth scenes mammoth scenery behind had been changed which, in the Japanese version of *Gone With The Wind* often added very little to the dramatic effect but were just great big lumbering set pieces overwhelming the artists and not progressing things at all. The Atlanta Fire, however, they managed very effectively with back and front projection which was really superb and far better than at Drury Lane.

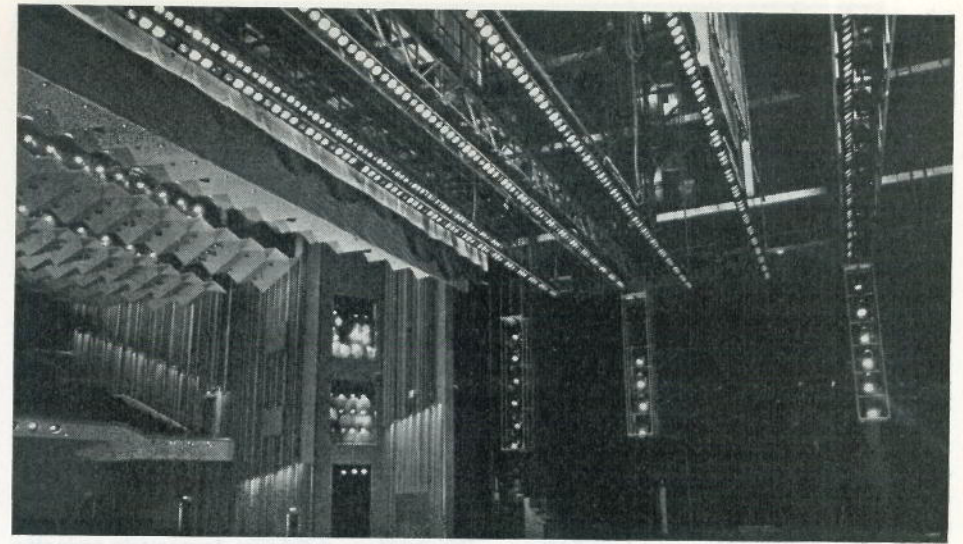
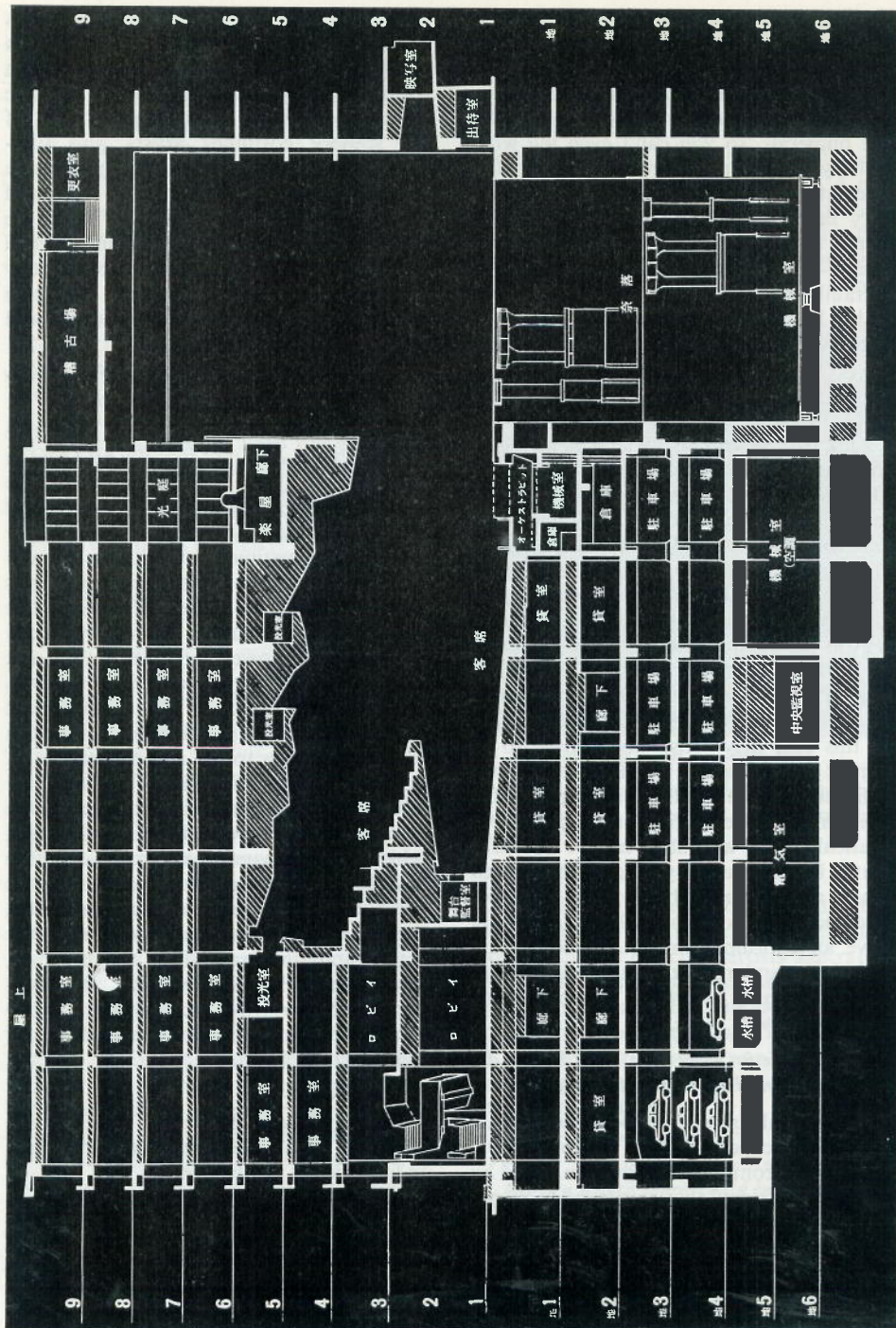
You saw this?

Yes, I saw their production twice. It was the show immediately preceding ours, and in fact opened the theatre.

How many seats are in this place?—you gave me only the prices.

It is a 1,850-seat theatre.

Is this normal for a Japanese auditorium? Japanese theatres are large, I visited a



Above. Standard lighting rig at the Imperial Theatre, Tokyo. Section opposite clearly demonstrates that there are six storeys under the stage with a large rotating floor in the basement. This revolving structure consists of four large lifts somehow capable of carrying 7.2 m high settings out of sight.

considerable number of their theatres, including some older ones, and the interior was not atypical in this respect. Most of them had about 1,500 seats and some of them even had crèches for children so that the parents could go and see a show without worrying about their offspring.

When you say the older theatres would that really be old or are we talking about between the wars?

Between the wars. There were certainly the older traditional theatres but they very definitely kept to the traditional fare. There were also some relatively modern commercial theatres which were certainly large by our standards and were presenting drama.

A one-balcony theatre like this is very typical in America for this size whereas in England between the wars there would have been two balconies.

In terms of feeling this stage and auditorium seemed more intimate than the O'Keefe, but I am not sure what that seats.

Actually that's very big indeed—3,200.

Well, it was considerably more sympathetic as a theatre than was the O'Keefe—much warmer in tone, texture and feeling but not so deep from the audience's point of view; the width of the stage is about the same and it is a very creditable attempt in terms of an auditorium, I think. The ceiling panels were white and a little too light but, as in *Oliver!* virtually 90 per cent of our lighting is done from above and from side lighting on the stage proper, and since F.O.H. lighting is used very sparingly indeed, we didn't have any spill problems. The F.O.H. lights on the balcony were at high kick level, literally just useful for the Tiller Girl type of lighting.

Mentioning Tiller Girls, what sort of show do they intend to put on there?

Besides musicals they put on Japanese ballet and variety shows. I don't know if Toho actually runs its own ballet company. I don't think there is any resident company, but rather shows are specially created for the Imperial. Incidentally, the dressing-rooms were the cause of a lot of merriment: they all had tatami mats and cushions with make-up tables about

fifteen inches above floor level and we had to request proper chairs for our artists to sit on because Japanese artists usually sit on the floor and take their shoes off before they enter the dressing room area. This is both sensible and hygienic in the sense that the rooms and corridors are absolutely spotless and beautifully kept, but we just did not feel that our English artists would be prepared to sit cross-legged in front of a make-up mirror about 15 inches off the ground!

Any daylight in these rooms?

No. If one looks at the section through the building the theatre is virtually buried within it, and while the theatre is in fact at street level, it does not have daylight in the dressing rooms. If they had put the dressing rooms at the back, behind the enormous stage and the offices, the artists would have had almost a quarter of a mile to walk to get to the Prompt Corner.

By the way, they had simultaneous translation devices of the stick type that one could rent and which are somewhat superior to some of our English versions in that they did not seem to cause any disturbance to other members of the audience. For *Oliver!* they had a team of about three or four translators who not only did a translation into Japanese but "played" the parts in Japanese, and I was told by people who had a fluent knowledge of both languages that not only was the translation very good but that dramatically it was very well put over.

So that gets us on to the technical side, where were they located, the translators?

The translation booths were at the back of the auditorium where there was a whole line of suites with observation ports—one for the Director, another for the understudies, two or three translation booths and also viewing rooms for latecomers.

Is that where the lighting control was?

No, the lighting control was at a much higher level, up by the follow spot booths above circle level, and lighting was one of our problems. Every bit of lighting they had ever done before was very much of a variety

style where only banks of coloured lights moved, not usually the individual dimmer circuits, and trying to train them into our rather tricky plot was quite a headache.

It is a show where levels are vitally important; even one spotlight off its dimmer setting by half a point will show in *Oliver!* as frequently the action is lit with literally only three or four spots, together with sensitive atmosphere lighting of the setting itself.

Has it a memory system switchboard?

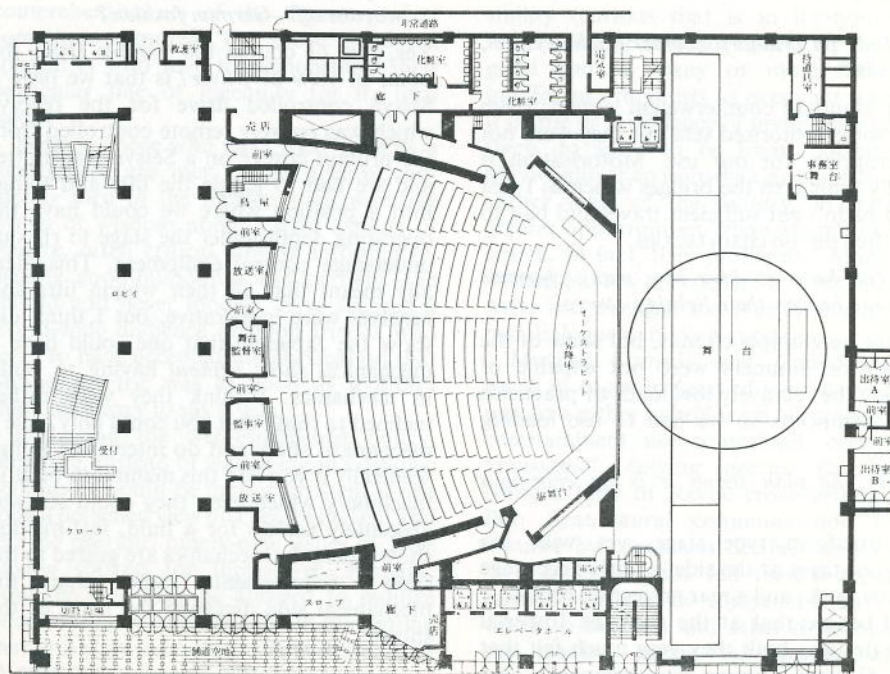
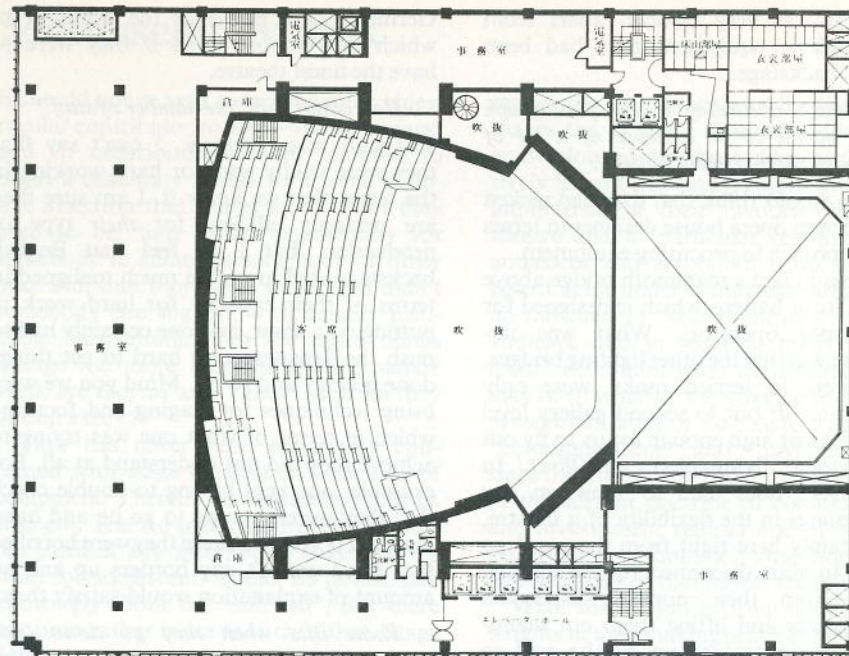
No, it has banks of presets which I think give them about a four-presetting capability but again it was not ideally suited to doing cross fades because every single circuit had to be set up to do a cross fade, and if, say, six cues all came up on one "stand-by" warning, inevitably during the third and fourth cues they were desperately trying to re-set the first two boards. Follow spots were our greatest problem because they were great big arcs and very difficult to control down to a low level of intensity and to maintain at that, and again the Japanese, from their previous experience and use of follow spots, assumed that every follow spot had to "bash" the whole time; the use of follow spots in *Oliver!* has got to be discreet to the point you're not even aware, or shouldn't be, that they are being used. Of course this makes it very difficult for a follow spot operator to follow at a range of maybe 110 ft.

The follow spots were at the back of the circle with the control. There are other lighting bridges as we move forward...?

Yes! But they were rather dangerous to use because of the white ceiling and the reflection that it used to throw back down to the auditorium.

Any side booms?

Yes, there are some very large side slots, as you can see in the drawing, and of course this theatre was equipped with a raised ramp down the centre of the auditorium floor. The side fore-stages were not so much put in for the Western practice of enveloping the audience as for the Japanese traditional theatre. For the size of the



Stalls and balcony plans. For section, see levels 1 and 4 on page 90.

theatre it was very flexible, apart from the Germanic equipment that had been installed backstage.

Backstage according to the photograph there seems to be a deuce of a lot of ordinary compartment battens.

Yes, one would think that they had picked up a German opera house designer in terms of the approach to procuring equipment.

There is in fact a mammoth bridge above the two front battens which is designed for follow spot operators. What was unfortunate was that the other lighting bridges, which were in serried ranks, were only designed to lift out to second gallery level which was not high enough for us to fly out our diagonal flying pieces in *Oliver!* In fact *Oliver!* does tend to show up any shortcomings in the flexibility of a theatre, and certainly here right from the word go we had to start disconnecting the lighting bridges from their normal suspension arrangements and lifting them out manually on chain tackles up to the grid to enable us to get our flying scenery in and out.

It is an ordinary counterweight system, is it?

Yes, standard counterweight system; there are some motorised sets but they were not appropriate for our use. Motorisation is really limited to the bridges which as I just said hadn't got sufficient travel and had to be lifted out on chain tackles.

You have no idea how many channels they had on their lighting control.

There were ample circuits, but some of the Thyristor dimmers were not capable of taking the relatively low loads of practicals and Minispots so we had to use loading cans.

As the plan shows it is an enormous stage.

A cruciform type stage, yes with big wagon stages at the side, a fairly deep stage at the back; and a rear projection room.

I believe that at the time the Imperial Theatre was built they very much felt that the German theatre was technically the most proficient and I think they used the

German opera house as the standard to which they should build if they were to have the finest theatre.

How about staff, the number of staff?

The staff was enormous. I can't say that they were wildly good or hard working in the terms that we know it. I am sure they are perfectly efficient for *their* type of production, but I do feel that English backstage staff are often much maligned in terms of their capacity for hard work in putting on a show, and one certainly had to push the Japanese very hard to get things done quickly and so on. Mind you we were using techniques for staging and focusing which in terms of what one was trying to achieve they did not understand at all. For example, one kept having to double check that they weren't going to go up and hang masking borders because they were horrified that there weren't any borders up and no amount of explanation would satisfy them.

These lifts when they go down (you say there were wagon stages) was there a space under the stage for running the wagons off—German fashion?

Yes, but of course the trouble from the point of view of *Oliver!* is that we have a Selsyn controlled drive for the revolve which was entirely remote controlled from the prompt corner on a Selsyn transmitter and we had to joggle the lifts and things into a position where we could have the operating depth under the stage to rig our understage control equipment. This literally meant that all their wagon lifts and revolves were inoperative, but I think did show the Japanese that one could have a mechanical show *without* having to build in mechanics. I think they were rather inclined to think that you could only have a mechanical show and do interesting things scenically if you had this mammoth built-in machinery which even they could see was absolutely useless for a fluid, fast-moving show where the mechanics are geared to the show's requirements rather than the mechanical side dictating the form of the show.

It's not only the Japanese that have to learn that!

Methuselah Muses

Percy Corry

It should not be very surprising if the oldest regular contributor to TABS—both in years* and in contributions—were tempted to begin a centenary article with some plaintive assertion that things aren't what they used to be, thus giving opportunity for somebody to claim, as somebody or other once did, that they never were. And didn't somebody else suggest, with equally justifiable inexactitude, that the more things change the more they remain the same? Well, are they or aren't they? And do they or don't they?

TABS has never been exclusively concerned with stage lighting and the sale of equipment. Therein lies its subtlety and its strength. The Ad-men (most of whose output justifies any assumption that "Ad" is short for adolescent) would, no doubt, talk knowingly about the "soft sell". But there has been rather more to it than that. Stage lighting must not be considered out of context. It is but a contributory part of the comprehensive art of the theatre, a fact sometimes ignored by those sectional specialists who love to demonstrate their particular line of ingenuity for its own sake.

Because those who have used TABS as a mouthpiece are men of the theatre, not merely men in the theatre, their assertive words of wisdom about varied aspects of theatre, often critical, always informative, usually good-humoured and perhaps one should add never modest, have secured a world-wide audience of good friends who seem to have accepted the implication that Strand Electric was as good as it didn't think necessary to say it was.

Following the well-established policy, therefore, instead of wallowing in nostalgic wailings it would be more consistent if one took a detached view of Theatre Present and left the previous ninety-nine issues of TABS having spoken for themselves. Perhaps, however, one may be allowed to indulge once more the personal habit of quoting Bernard Shaw who said: "It is drama that

*Methuselah is in fact in his 80th year.—ED.

makes the theatre and not the theatre that makes the drama." This self-evident truth is overlooked by those who, with excessively fervent solemnity, emphasise the vital importance of their favourite shapes of theatre and of particular relationships of audiences and actors. In truth, the competent actor under competent direction has no difficulty in "communicating" with his audience and in securing their "involvement" no matter what the theatre's shape may be or whether the stage be framed by a proscenium arch or not. Actors have been "communicating" and "involving" ever since theatre began. Those earnest devotees of the current doctrine of communication and involvement remind one of Molière's bourgeois gentilhomme's amazement when he was informed that he was speaking prose.

What sort of job is being done by playwrights in their making of our contemporary theatre? Although some of them seem to have a curious fondness for incomprehensibility (curious that is in its non-communication), there are probably as few good and as many or more bad and indifferent dramatists as ever; but whether it is true or is evidence of myopic nostalgia, there do seem to be fewer outstanding playwrights than were making theatre in the earlier years of the century, in spite of greater opportunities. Plays are not exactly scarce. In fact, they proliferate. Many are written but few are chosen. It is very easy to write bad dialogue but it is impossible for bad dialogue to make a good play.

Musical Comedy and Comic Opera, much in vogue in years of yore, have given way to a rather hybrid form of transatlantic entertainment, non-committally christened "musicals", defying precise description being a kind of Revue cross-fertilised by Pop Beat, aural communication being ensured by maximum decibels and visual involvement by the full frontal exposure formerly only to be enjoyed (if that's the word) in brothels and other dives outside the theatre. Inside the theatre sexual stimulus was usually more subtly induced. Salad at its best is slightly under-dressed:

“slightly” is important. In current theatre there seems to be excessive concern with bodily functions exercised between knees and navel, and too little concern with activity above the neck. Or is there? Perhaps not. It may be simply that nowadays the treatment is too tediously explicit.

Contemporary dramatists appear to be as dependent on pinching other people's stories as were their forerunners. It is now a fashion to augment the pilferings from the classics by devising Pop versions of the scriptural stories. In this, of course, the devisers are following the example (with rather less respectful devotion) of those medieval clerics who wrote the Mystery Plays. Even the actors are following examples of that same period by taking to the streets for their “happenings”. In the case of the actors, however, one suspects that the real reason behind the *al fresco* activity is that there are too many of them chasing too few jobs inside the theatres.

Inevitably, the theatre reflects the age in which it exists and in this technological age there has been lavish multiplication of technical aids to production. Our editor was eloquent on the subject in the March 1973 issue under the heading “A Machine for All Seasons”. The engineers have swooped into the theatre with gadgetry as complicated as it has become everywhere else. This has increased dependence on electrical and mechanical technicians without any resultant increase in the quality of the drama. In the beginning was the word and the mechanics of presenting the word can become the major consideration, without any significant bonus for the customers. It is the audience that is next in importance to the playwright in making the drama. Directors and actors and technicians are essential interpreters of the one to the other and should be the servants of both, needing humility—not servility—and enthusiasm—not arrogance.

In recent years theatre has changed its image vastly. It is no longer the scene of roguery and vagabondage. It is now stamped with the seal of Establishment respectability. No Honours List is complete without its theatrical Knights and Dames. There is a plethora of communal Councils,

Associations, Societies, Guilds, Unions and Committees, all debating at great length and frequency the problems of planning and manning and running the theatres. Streams of books, of articles, of lectures, of conferences and symposia about every aspect of theatre are in constant full spate. All universities consider it necessary to have theatres. Drama has become an essential subject for study and practice in any school or college. There are numerous academies for the training of actors and as a consequence there are more actors on the market than are in the theatres, and no very obvious increase in the number of great actors. One resists the temptation to say there are less.

In the theatre, as in most walks of life, there is now a rather sycophantic deference to Youth. Which is a pity. Youth is nearly always much too young to accept flattery gracefully. We who are nearing the sere and yellow may be rightly feeling a little guilty about the mess we have helped to make of our polluted and chaotic world but abdication in favour of callow inexperience has dubious justification. We too knew all the answers, if not at eighteen at least when we were twenty-one. We didn't discover until much later that most of the answers were not quite right.

The essence of drama is conflict. It is just possible that great achievement is most likely to result from great struggle, perhaps with an apprehensive eye on the creditors. National and local subsidies have now removed quite a lot of the financial stress from the business of play production. How much this has improved the quality of theatre as a whole could be speculative. It may seem strange that theatres with capacities of more than about 750 are now considered large, and companies playing to maximum capacities of about 500 are rather complacent if they average something over sixty per cent attendances. Audiences have a much wider choice since theatre took to the screens and, unless an urge to visit live theatre is stimulated, they needn't even leave their armchairs. Is the need to urge sufficiently urgent?

On reflection, it may seem that the answer to the questions posed at the beginning of

these musings is that although there have been a few changes of direction and method, they have not been all that fundamental. We are simply viewing a slightly different aspect of the same sort of setting. We are still doing the same sort of thing in what are different but not necessarily better ways of doing it.

The Day of the Sunspot

Robert Longthorne*

I was looking through a copy of the 1958 Strand Electric catalogue, *Theatrical Lighting*, recently. It is a veritable mine of interesting facts and figures. Most are quite useless but many are amusing.

It includes for instance details of the Patt. 76 acting area flood, the thing that looked like an upturned bucket or a rocket booster. There is a photograph showing a whole bar full of these things at the London Palladium, each having its own remotely operated colour change. The whole darned lot with no exception point vertically downwards. About the only effect they could have had would be to make the tops of the performers' heads and the stage floor change colour. I suppose they are useful for lighting the “most important piece of scenery” in theatre-in-the-round† and that is just about it.

Further on some four pages are devoted to Patt. 501 Sunspot Mirror Arc Lantern. It was extremely well engineered but what a size! At 86.6 kg. it weighed nearly three times as much as the present-day Patt. 765 Highspot, and that does not include the stand! The stand itself looks as though it was originally intended to be one of the legs of the Blackpool Tower. It weighs a mere 56.7 kg. I always thought getting the 24.5 kg. Patt. 253 to the top of a twelve-foot scaffolding tower was hard enough but . . . ! There were enough controls to keep an

*Robert Longthorne is eighteen with a particular interest in lighting and has just left school to embark on a stage management course.

†TABS, Vol. 30, No. 4.

That which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.

Theatre always was and still is an exasperatingly unpredictable business. That is probably why it is so damnably fascinating and obsessive.

octopus busy—what with carbon feed, douser, iris, barn door shutters, and so on and so on. By the way it only cost £355 plus £38 for motor feed carbons.

On the subject of prices, a commercial quality objective lens cost £7 and a telescopic stand (51–84 in.) was £4 6s. 0d. Compare those with today's prices—though in all fairness I must say Cinemoid cut to Patt. 23 size is cheaper now than it was then.

Pressing on through the catalogue we come to control. Those were the days of some of the most magnificent control boards man has ever, or for that matter is ever likely to see. Hands up those who can remember or worse still have used the HA 12 car-portable board. According to the catalogue, they “greatly facilitated transport by private car”, but you're not likely to find one in any car of mine. I hired a couple of these things once as they were all we could afford at the time. The production was in a school hall where the lighting control position is halfway up the wall over the store for gym apparatus on a slab of concrete known as “the bridge”. It took three of us to get one of those things up there, and that was after we had taken the dimmers out. The other board spent the duration of the production sitting in a store for fear that the bridge would fall down if we put it up there too.

So much for the small control, what about the big ones? Well, they are in the catalogue, including a picture of a 48-way Senior Sunset board. I once had the pleasure of doing a one night stand with

one of these things at St. Pancras Town Hall in London. What a fantastic piece of equipment! It took two people to do one cross-fade using all our strength on the master capstan wheels. If you wanted to get at the top row of switches you could lock all the controls together and climb up the dimmer handles without anything moving. They certainly had their advantages over their modern-day counterparts; you have to be careful about how heavily you breathe today in case you blow a complete preset off check.



The catalogue goes on to describe such wonders as saturable reactor controls, electro-mechanical type controls and the then new Console-Preset light control. This was a sort of cross breed between Fred Bentham's organ and the preset desk. I quote a bit from the description of the console-preset;

“. . . preset control boards tend to develop a multiplicity of presets (5 or 10 per dimmer are not uncommon) and there is even a demand for 20.”

It shows what a terrific way we have come in just 15 years. Unfortunately there are no paragraphs on how to paint the stage with light using your feet and a Strand Light Console.

However, on the next page there is a description of the Strand Chromolux. “This device enables an operator unskilled in the technique of colour mixing to obtain, by moving a simple selector switch, any of 23

attractive colours, previously set at the Strand factory”. Just set up your banks of three coloured lights with the primary colours in them, dial the colour you want and there it is. I'm surprised the Father of Colour Music let them get away with making that thing. If you're going to take the fun out of colour mixing like that, then you might as well take a robot to throw balls at the coconuts when you go to the fair.

Still on the subject of colour, further on there are fifty-two little graphs showing the proportion of the different wavelengths of the colour spectrum not transmitted by different coloured Cinemoid. Never seen anything like it anywhere else, so I see it as my duty to point out to all readers that:

$$\text{Percentage transmission} = \frac{100}{\text{Antilog. of density}}$$

For explanation see the 1958 catalogue or see your friendly neighbourhood chromatologist (if there is such a person).

Cinemoid went up to number 60 in those days. To get up to number 69 they have added no less than 6 blues, one red and skipped 64 and 65 for some mysterious reason. Come to think of it there is not a 28, 37, 44 or 59 either. Strange way these Strand boffins work, they use 27 061 0T before they use simpler numbers. Is there any connection with the Post Office?

Another strange thing—well it's not strange but the way I interpret it, it is—the catalogue refers to Cinemoid as “consumable goods”. Imagine the darkened demonstration theatre at King Street. Our Editor is seated at his console, tucking into his No 8 deep salmon sandwiches and drinking his glass of No. 5 orange. He asks his secretary, No. 14 Ruby, to go out and give the Strand delivery cart-horse his No. 3 straw. No. 14 Ruby comes back complaining of the No. 29 heavy frost. So Fred gives the No. 49 canary in the cage on top of the console a No. 55 chocolate tint (a new kind of after-ten mint-tint. Get it? No? . . . Never mind!) and then he consoles No. 14 Ruby by giving her a mixed bunch of No. 7 light roses, some No. 42 pale violets and No. 36 pale lavender.

Then he goes out and paints the town No. 6 red!

Inigo Jones - Theatre Architect

Iain Mackintosh

1973 is Inigo Jones year—the centenary posters on the London Underground reminded us in January and the exhibition in his own Whitehall Banqueting House entitled *The King's Arcadia—Inigo Jones and the Stuart Court*, which opened on July 13th under the direction of John Harris, Stephen Orgel and Roy Strong, demonstrated his genius as architect, as engineer, as civic planner and as a man of the theatre. However, the legitimate theatre enthusiast confronted by the rich magnificence of his costume and stage design for the Stuart masques (designs which would not seem out of place on the stage of Covent Garden today but built to astronomically larger budgets in absolute cost) might still think of Jones as a baroque Busby Berkeley and irrelevant to straight theatre as we know it.

Indeed, for a long time the consensus has been to take the side of Ben Jonson, who finally broke his partnership with Inigo Jones, let him take the top billing and complained that scenic effect had completely subjugated the text—“painting and carpentry are the soul of the masque”. In some theatre textbooks Jones is represented as the wicked influence who introduced *scene a l'Italienne* to Britain and with the help of his successors, architect Webb and impressario Davenant, ensured that the theatre that emerged at the Restoration in 1660 had an emphasis totally alien to the theatre of Shakespeare.

The purpose of this article is not to defend or to discuss Inigo Jones as the designer of courtly theatre in which the King or Queen often took the central (and usually non-speaking) role, rather is it to draw attention to Inigo Jones the architect of theatres other than the masquing houses, one of which still exists today, the Banqueting House itself. This is, of course, Britain's oldest theatre, built in 1622 with a massive cellar underneath to hold the vast fit-up stage which needed up to one hundred stage hands to work it. (This original “flat floor dual-purpose hall” had a limited theatrical life of only fifteen years because

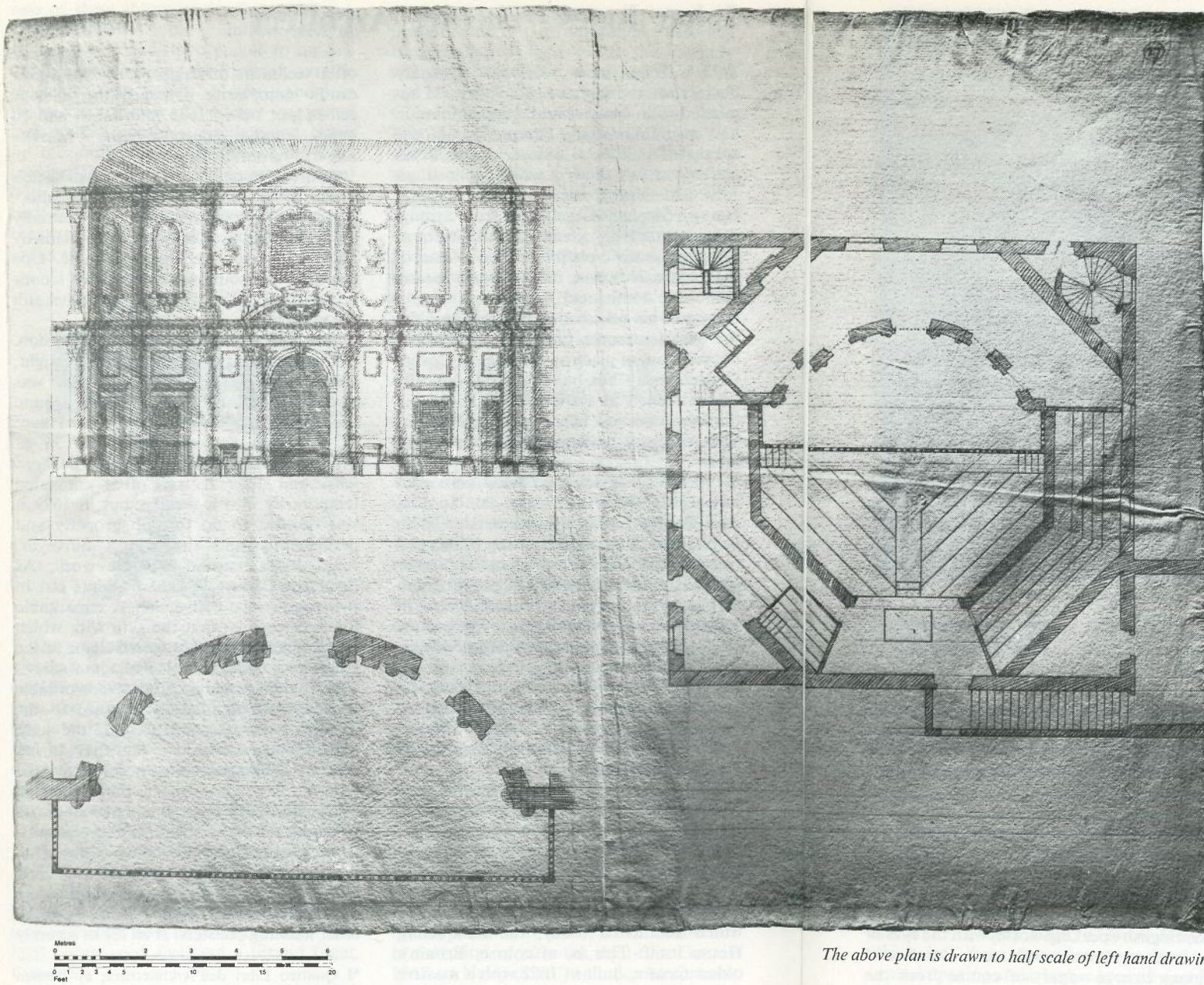
of a technical miscalculation: the multi-candle complexity damaged the Rubens ceiling put up in 1635 and Jones had to build another purpose-built “Maske-Room” around the corner.)

Apart from one heavily annotated sketch found in Jones's own copy of Palladio,* which no scholar believes was actually built, there are extant two theatre plans by Jones and both are illustrated here. One was a mystery but has recently been identified as the Royal Cockpit and the other still is a mystery.

The Royal Cockpit was a conversion. Cockpit tables, on which the cocks fought, were 12 ft. across, circular, and there was an ambulatory of at least 3 ft. width around the table. The Royal Cockpit in the Palace of Whitehall was octagonal and 36 ft. across—a king-size cockpit in fact. Between 1608 and 1629 it was often converted temporarily into a theatre, but in 1629 it was decided to do the job properly and permanently and the King's Surveyor, Inigo Jones, carried out the work. As Professor Glynne Wickham points out in two essays† the conversion is remarkable for two reasons: first the skill with which Inigo Jones hid the hexagonal shape at the stage end behind his Palladian *Frons Scaena* and created an attractive, workable theatre with minimal disturbance to the existing structure, and second, the light that this theatre throws on the playing style of Shakespeare's own company, the King's Men, who opened the theatre in November 1630. There is no inner stage, no sophisticated stage machinery (except possibly traps and the possibility of lowering properties from the heavens above), just five doorways on to a simple non-scenic stage 16 ft. deep and 30 ft. wide between the inner flanking pilasters. It all looks severely

*I Quattro Libri dell'Architettura, by Andrea Palladio.

†Shakespeare's Dramatic Heritage. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969, Chapter 9, pp. 151-62. Early English Stages, Volume Two, Part Two. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972, Chapter XI, pp. 78-89; Chapter XII, pp. 119-22.



The theatre in the Royal Cockpit, Whitehall, opened in 1630. Pen and brown ink drawing, probably by John Webb in 1660, reproduced by kind permission of the Provost and Fellows of Worcester College.

The above plan is drawn to half scale of left hand drawing

practical and yet shows that Inigo Jones could add style to the requirements of a professional acting company as successfully as he added magnificence to the celebrations of the singers, dancers and royal actors of the masque.

The theatre probably opened late, despite its Royal patron. An entry in the Works Account for the period ending September 30th, 1630, reads:

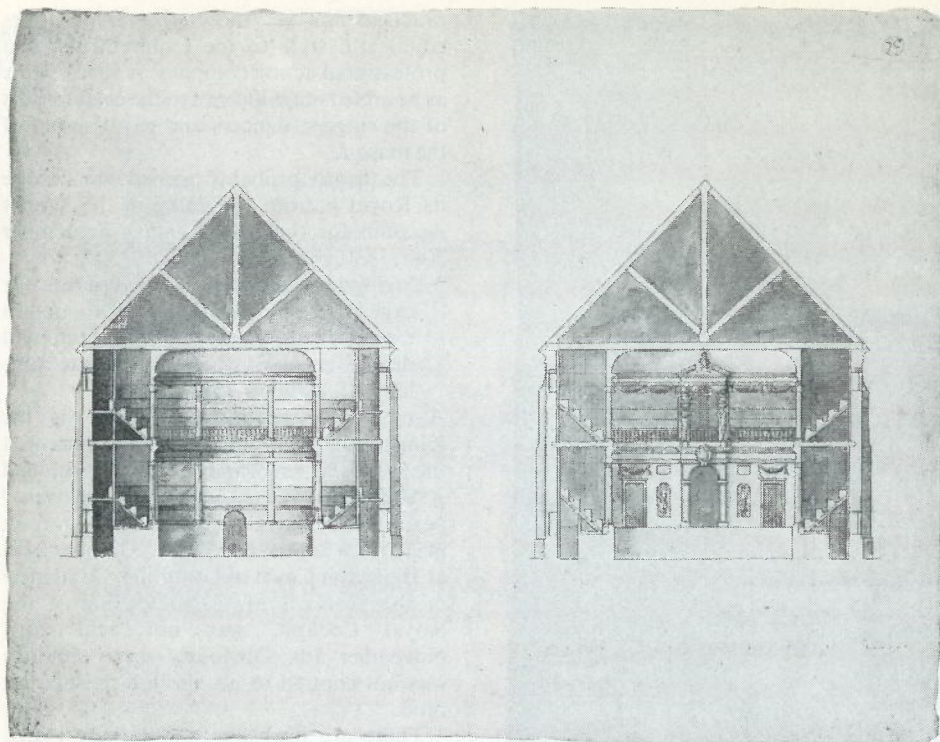
“to divers Artificers and labourers for expedicon in theire woorke upon extraordinary hast and for bread and drinke amongst them workinge very late in the night—vijs.”

A record of performances given by the King's Men in winter 1630/31 tells us that the first four performances (which included *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) of the twenty performance Royal Command season took place from September 30th to October 24th at Hampton Court and that the “Induction of the House”, or Gala Opening of the Royal Cockpit, was not held until November 5th. Obviously seven shillings was not enough to get the job finished on time.

There are problems about these plans. First they are definitely not drawn by Jones himself but by Webb, his pupil, and are generally dated as being 1660 when the Cockpit was refurbished after the Restoration. Secondly, although the plans conform very precisely to descriptions in the Works Accounts of 1529/30, the four side doors scale at but .5 ft. high, which does rather suggest there could be other errors.

These are fine points however compared with the mystery that surrounds the next set of plans which are indisputably drawn by Jones himself. Glynne Wickham is certain that they are of Salisbury Court which, Professor Bentley says, opened in November 1630. In the catalogue of the Inigo Jones exhibition John Harris is “tempted to associate this design with Alleyn's second Fortune Playhouse, which was rebuilt after a fire in 1621–1622”. Richard Leacroft* suggests that it is a

*Richard Leacroft: *The Development of the English Playhouse*. Eyre Methuen. Published in July 1973 and to be reviewed in the next issue of TABS.



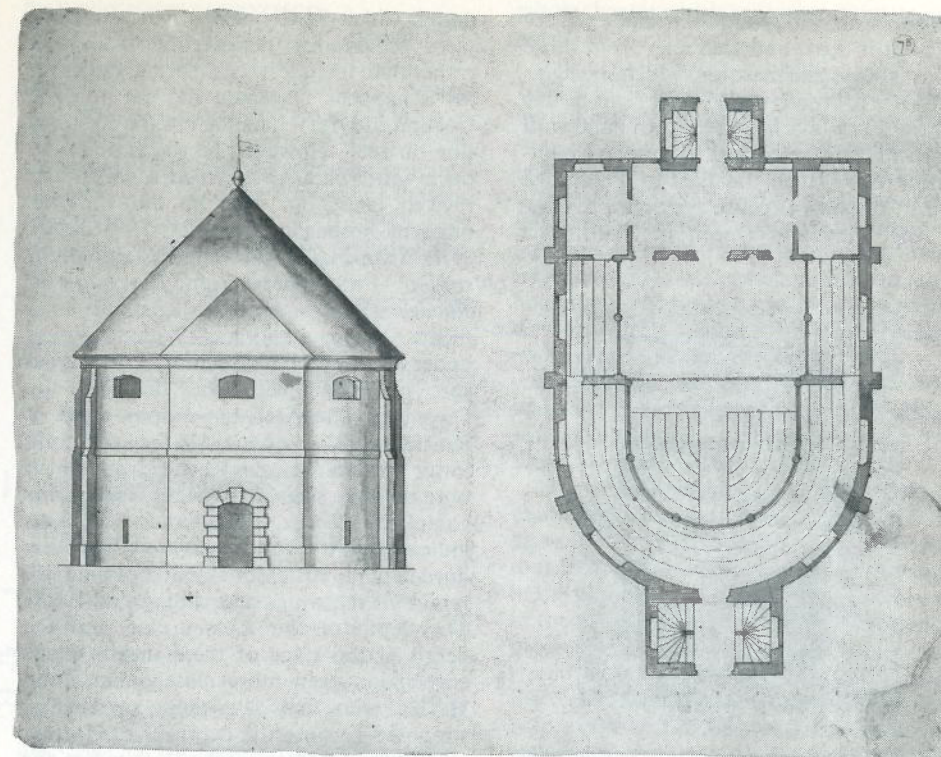
Unidentified theatre, possibly the Cockpit or Phoenix in Drury Lane, 1617. Pen and wash by Inigo Jones dated by art historians as being between 1616 and 1618 and reproduced by kind permission of the Provost and Fellows of Worcester College.

proposed design rather than an executed structure. In an unpublished note John Harris suggests that it is in fact the Cockpit, later called the Phoenix, in Drury Lane which opened in 1617.

Three things are certain: first that these plans are of a roofed playhouse which seems to exclude the second Fortune which was almost certainly open to the skies; second that it is a free-standing structure which argues against Salisbury Court where the site was quite definitely only 42 ft. wide (the width of these plans) and had existing buildings on each side; third that the art historian's affirmation that the draughtsmanship and style date the plans as early Jones, i.e. before the Banqueting House designed in 1619, is most plausible, to this layman at least, after seeing the recent

exhibition. This leads one to a simple conclusion—either it is the Phoenix/Cockpit in Drury Lane or it is a design for another “private” (i.e. public indoor winter playhouse) theatre that conforms to the brief of those companies—Burbage's, Alleyn's—who also performed the same repertoire in theatres such as the Globe, Swann, Hope and Fortune.

If one looks at these plans (the oldest extant plans for a purpose-built theatre in the English-speaking world) with the eyes of a modern theatre enthusiast, some odd things emerge—apart of course from the discovery that a single drawing in plan can indicate detailing on different levels. The tiers in the pit are shown on plan but not in section—which suggests that they are removable. In the front-of-house area there



is an ambulatory passage leading off each side of the entrance that goes to one place only, the rooms at the back of the stage. Half-way down the auditorium there appears to be a screen wall each side of the front edge of the stage which is pierced by pass doors linking two separated seating areas. These screen walls come up at a point where the Tuscan columns and balustrades are stepped back one foot and some inches on each side. Unfortunately, we do not have a section at this critical point which at its wider point is just over 22 ft. square. Twenty-two feet square is also the dimension of the *Frons Scaena* at the back of the 15 ft. deep stage, a *Frons Scaena* which has three doors at stage level, a central opening at the higher level obviously available to actors or musicians and seating spaces each side of the opening—the whole bearing a strong similarity to two of the other extant illustrations of Elizabethan and Caroline open stage layouts:

the de Witt sketch of the Swann of 1596 and the illustration of *The Wits*, a play published in 1662.

The first and second odd points related to the pit and access to it. These points when linked to the fact that a 12 ft. gaming table and 3 ft. ambulatory fit precisely into that pit suggests that this is a theatre convertible into a cockpit, complete with service passages from the backstage areas to the only entrance into the pit proper where the cockfighting took place. This helps the identification of the theatre as the rebuilt Cockpit or Phoenix in Drury Lane. The third odd point leads one to the conclusion that the theatre is an *adaptable* theatre. Snug into the one-foot set-back could be fitted a proscenium arch, and on to the stage behind a fit-up arch could be placed a complete set of perspective scenery. And there exist two drawings that could fit in this way. The first is by Inigo Jones himself: an unidentified drawing of a pro-

scenium arch, wings and back shutters, very different in scale and character from those of his larger scale masques, which, being as high as it is broad, would look right in this setting, and is marked in his own hand with the words "for ye cokpitt for my Lo Chamberlin 1639" (then the Earl of Pembroke who at his own expense presented a show for the King and Queen in 1640). The



Scenery for an unidentified play or pastoral with the inscription "for ye cokpitt for my Lo Chamberlin 1639". Pen and brown ink by Inigo Jones and reproduced by kind permission of the Trustees of the Chatsworth Settlement.

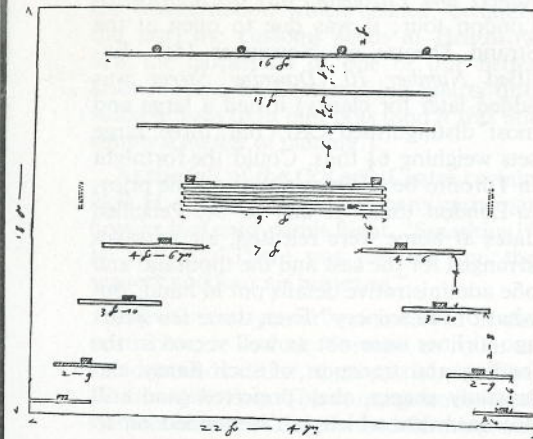
second is the oldest stage plan of a public performance in existence: that for John Webb's set design for *The Siege of Rhodes* which was presented by Davenant to a paying audience in 1656 at Rutland House during the Commonwealth when the playhouses were of course shut. *The Siege of Rhodes* plan shows a proscenium arch with an inside width of 16 ft. 10 in. and outside width of just over 22 ft. It would fit in plan behind the step back in the tier fronts—which suggests that the show could have been built for later presentation at the Phoenix. It is important to remember that the "Frontispieces" (or proscenium arches as we might now call them) of both Inigo Jones and John Webb were built individually for each masque, pastoral or opera, and were an integral part of the whole

design which is why perhaps these theatre plans provide for the insertion of an arch rather than include a semi-permanent arch. As it happens Davenant did get into the Cockpit in Drury Lane before the Restoration, in 1658. However, he was not able to open with *The Siege of Rhodes*, which was revived later, but with an anti-Catholic piece of propaganda entitled *The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru*. This had a different sort of Frontispiece from *The Siege of Rhodes* which had been staged not in a theatre but in a room of Rutland House under a 13 ft. 6 in. high ceiling. This second sort of Frontispiece was described by Davenant; "an Arch rais'd upon stone of Rustick work" as opposed to the earlier and lower "columns of gros Rustick work which bore up large freese". In other respects the complete *Rhodes* plans and elevations indicate that it would be easy to replace sky borders with cut cloth sky arches and still retain all the wings and sliding "relieves". The depth of the *Rhodes* plan and the depth of the stage of these theatre plans correspond even more closely than John Harris, who first saw these similarities, supposed because the depth of the former 18 ft. is reduced to under 16 ft. when the cross-over at the back is omitted which at the Cockpit with its 15 ft. deep stage was provided within the structure of the up-stage *Frons Scaena* house. The *Rhodes* 16 ft. wide backcloth would fit neatly and still allow use of the crossover.

Two points remain. The seating on stage may appear odd to those coming fresh to this period. But seating on stage was a continuous tradition from the Elizabethan playhouse where seats for courtiers narrowed the otherwise apparently wide stages (43 ft. in the Fortune contract) until the days of Garrick when it was often announced that "the stage will be formed into an amphitheatre where servants will be allowed to keep places". (This practice, discontinued finally by Garrick, is recorded vividly by Hogarth in his view of a presentation of *The Beggars Opera* where a lot of very rich people are shown sitting inside the scene that depicts Newgate Gaol.) Jones characteristically organised this rather undisciplined practice rather better than

his predecessors or successors.

The other point is that the area which I suggest could be used scenically is rather small—20 ft. by 15 ft.—although of course it is easy to see how the stage could have been increased in depth if later in its suggested life of over 50 years the taste for spectacle demanded the removal of the up-stage structure. However, 20 ft. by 15 ft. is not small when compared with either the



Stage plan for *The Siege of Rhodes* designed by John Webb as set up in Rutland House in 1556 by William Davenant. The drawing is scaled in Webb's own hand 22 ft. 4 in. by 18 ft. British Museum, Lansdowne MS. 1171.

supposed scenic stages fitted into the theatres opened after the Restoration by Davenant and Killigrew inside Royal Tennis Courts which were only 30 ft. wide internally wall to wall or to the still standing, and typical, Georgian playhouse at Richmond, Yorkshire. In Richmond (built as late as 1788) the designers of productions with which I have been associated have expertly deployed scenic arrangements with multiple sliders for Restoration plays where full transformations from Lodgings to Spring Gardens have received rounds of applause—all in a theatre with a 15 ft. 6 in. wide opening and little more depth. The ingenuity of directors and designers of these modern revivals has always been enhanced by the superb proportions of the

whole theatre which is at once intimate and yet on the grand scale.

The hypothesis put forward is that in 1617 or 1618 Inigo Jones designed a theatre, here illustrated in plan and section, which may or may not have been actually built (and if built may have been the Cockpit, otherwise called Phoenix, in Drury Lane) but which definitely was a theatre that, in addition to being convertible into a cockpit, was both an open-stage indoor playhouse that satisfied the brief of the major Caroline and Elizabethan professional companies and could also function as a scenic stage theatre taking scenery of the scale and character suggested by the Inigo Jones sketch of 1639 and the plans for *The Siege of Rhodes* of 1656.

That these seminal plans, or indeed the building itself, already existed before Davenant started his theatre career suggests that Inigo Jones was as great an innovator in the planning of public theatres as he was in the Stuart Masques and that he pointed precisely the way the public playhouse would develop into the form it took after the Restoration of 1660 nearly forty years before *The Siege of Rhodes*. This is all rather different from the generally accepted notion that a whole new generation of public playhouses different in essence from the pre-Commonwealth indoor theatres had to be built after 1660 in order to cope with the scenic requirements of shows such as *The Siege of Rhodes* of 1656, the show which is considered to have been the first to use movable perspective scenery outside the Stuart Court.

If the plans are therefore of an adaptable theatre then both Glynne Wickham is right when he says they "clearly assert the principle of open staging despite the Palladian ornamentation" and John Harris is right in suggesting that perhaps both Jones in 1639 and Webb in 1656 had in mind as a possible place of performance the theatre here shown in plan—or indeed a "lost" theatre derived from it.

Lastly it is interesting to note that Inigo Jones achieved this adaptability without compromising either form of staging as it then existed. Of what other architect can this be said?

Shifting the Scene

John de Lannoy*

"We have an extensive cellar, 7up or Coke!" He laughed. The accent Canadian, the Captain of a 707 in mid-Atlantic. His second pilot was at the controls whilst he took a break, during part of which he had served an excellent dinner laid on the engineer's table. My hosts were the skipper, second pilot, engineer and navigator. It was dark outside and the small but remarkably comfortable flight deck could have been the sitting room of a club, the lights low, the unwatched television flickering and the occasional exchange of pleasantries, not loud enough to awaken comatose colleagues.

A slight shuddering, back to reality, lightning stabbing the darkness ahead and the realisation that there were no sleeping passengers immediately behind, only cargo including the three tons of scenery and properties which a few hours before had been on the stage of the Lyric, Shaftesbury Avenue. *How The Other Half Loves* opening Royal Alexandra, Toronto, in two days' time.

Such moves are now undertaken almost as a matter of course at the end of a successful London run. The media are not interested in such exploits as newsworthy—perhaps because, up to now, they have gone smoothly and according to schedule. One slip might make for a different attitude—there's nothing like the embarrassment of others for making news. A few near misses may serve as a warning to the uninitiated to take care!

Monday, October 16th, 1967, was to be one such memorable day—this time at the 3,200-seat O'Keefe Centre in Toronto (135 ft. from orchestra rail to back of pit). A gala performance of the musical *Robert and Elizabeth* direct from London, in the presence of H.R.H. Princess Alexandra, was to herald the opening of a British trade fortnight. Not long before the appointed date, a snag: the show could not be made

available. A replacement must be found and quickly, but no production of quality was likely to terminate a successful London run to fill the gap.

Suddenly a chink of light in the darkness. A new play, by the author who had written *Robert and Elizabeth*, was on a prior-to-London tour; it was due to open at the Strand Theatre on November 15th. Entitled *Number 10 (Downing Street* was added later for clarity) it had a large and most distinguished cast, but three large sets weighing 6½ tons. Could the fortnight in Toronto be taken as a date on the prior-to-London tour? It had to be. Pencilled dates at home were released, air passages arranged for the cast and the thousand and one administrative details put in hand. But what of the scenery? Even those few years ago airlines were not as well versed in the loading and transport of such flimsy and ungainly shapes, they preferred (and still do) hardware which can be loaded on to 8 ft. square pallets, netted over and shunted down the rails in the cargo plane. Besides, *Number 10* had not been designed to go through the doors of an aircraft. While the search for cargo space on the appropriate day continued, meetings were called to check dimensions so that necessary alterations could be made to the production which was still on tour. Unexpectedly, and on the required date, a charter company bringing a Britannia full of passengers from the West Indies to Gatwick had no return transatlantic load. They would arrive, disembark their passengers, strip out the seats and load our production. Success! And at a much lower rate per kilo than is permitted to scheduled cargo flights. A hastily-called meeting with their chief loader produced the first snag. The Britannia was a passenger aircraft, all loading via the side door; The Cabinet room in *Downing Street* boasted four large Georgian columns and there were a dozen other pieces which "would not go".

However, the show finished at Oxford on

Saturday, the four vans proceeded to Gatwick, the Britannia arrived, passengers and seats came out, scenery went in (less *exactly sixteen* pieces) and last on board—after the crew—the company carpenter. The sad sixteen proceeded to Heathrow where a scheduled cargo service had accepted the load. Unhappily they were not as accurate at planning as the Britannia loader, four pieces were still too large. Probably for the first time (and in view of the consternation which ensued, certainly the last) the customs sheds at Heathrow saw the carpenters of one of our better known scene builders making quarts into suitable sizes to fit pint pots (and it was not simply a matter of planing!).

At the fall of the O'Keefe Centre curtain H.R.H. enquired of the company carpenter how he had enjoyed his flight. "Smashing!" he replied, "There was just me and the scenery and four air hostesses."

The same carpenter was involved in the next show, to include Toronto en route to London, and entitled, appropriately for him, *Birds on the Wing*. This routing sandwiched Canada between Glasgow and Birmingham and, after the nerve strain of splitting the load with *Number 10*, it was decided to put the entire production onto a scheduled cargo flight (no hostesses!) leaving Prestwick International airport a few hours after curtain down at the King's Theatre.

The necessary space was booked, well ahead, with BOAC and we sat back and waited for the day. Then rumours started. BOAC were likely to strike. Enquiries of them produced denials; we had a firm booking with them. Prestwick International is not a large airport, the cargo lines' offices are next to each other in quite a small building. In the next few days Seaboard, an American cargo line, received an enquiry as to whether they could hold space for "some machinery of rather unorthodox shape which was urgently required in Toronto, but would only be ready by a specific date". They were able to accept but required contractual confirmation within a week. The strike was on, then off; the week passed; Seaboard became urgent in their enquiries; there was a slight

delay in the preparation of detailed inventories of the machinery. The strike was ON! With gracious dead pan charm the Seaboard cargo manager advised that he was delighted to accept "the scenery". Those office walls were thin!

The company were to travel down to Heathrow and pick up their flight. Their tickets were in my safe custody and I was joining them by a local flight from Glasgow airport, about one hour's drive from Prestwick, after seeing the scenery safely away.

The two vans were loaded at the theatre; I left on the first to make early contact with Seaboard; the carpenter was following. Soon after arrival at the cargo office a call came through from Heathrow. The aircraft, a cargo DC8, had arrived from Frankfurt and was about to fuel.

"Is the load ready? We shall be with you within the hour."

Another telephone rang, the carpenter.

"The lights on my van have failed and we can't find the cause; we're only two miles from the theatre." Cargo manager, "If the load can't be here in an hour, they must refuel for New York, if they do so they cannot land here."

A call to the Glasgow city police provided hope, they would escort the van—but only to the city limits. Time passed. The telephone again—it must be the police. No, Heathrow—"We are fuelling for New York." Was this the moment of truth?

By now it was about 4 a.m. Even allowing for the five-hour gain in time across the Atlantic, our sands were running out. When the load reached New York it had to be trucked four hundred miles, and delays at the customs post at Buffalo were to be expected.

The cargo manager was calling Heathrow again.

"Another flight has just left Frankfurt en route for Heathrow and New York; it has cargo space and they will divert it here." He put down the telephone. "After loading here the flight discharges and loads other consignments at Heathrow, Shannon and

*John de Lannoy is the managing director of Planned Theatre Ltd.

Boston before arriving in New York, and will, of course, be behind schedule.” The thought of our scenery being offloaded and reloaded three times in transit filled me with horror, and impulsively I said, “Can you offload on arrival here, put our load in the nose and reload behind it?”

His reply was totally unexpected: “Talk to the skipper yourself.” And he handed me a headset and microphone.

A strong Texan accent. “Well?”

I made my request.

“Jeeze, that’ll put us around six hours behind schedule.” Then, with the spirit which must have motivated the buccaneers who discovered the New World, “O.K.”.

I have never since known “O.K.” loaded with such significance. Just then, escorted by the county police, the second van arrived.

Dawn streaked the sky. The distant drone turned to a shriek as the thrust was reversed; she taxied to the loading area and stopped. The Texan and his crew emerged; he was vast, “Give you four hours,” and disappeared.

A taxi driver previously ordered, arrived to take me to Glasgow airport. The cargo had been offloaded on the tarmac and the carpenter was getting the first of our scenery on board.

“We’re a wee bit short of time to catch your flight,” said the taxi driver.

I was about to tell him I would go for the next one when I remembered that I had all the company tickets and only this flight would get me to Heathrow on time. Simultaneously a Customs Officer approached me. “I have to inform you that your carpenter cannot travel to New York on this aircraft.”

“But I arranged that he could.”

“On the original aircraft, yes, but this one has arrived direct from Frankfurt and is still in bond.”

I found myself a three-way Aunt Sally—taxi driver looking at watch and tugging

at my sleeve—Customs Officer adamant—carpenter truculent from tail of aircraft.

“I’m going with it, I’m not letting some other *** finish loading my scenery.”

A telephone call to a higher-up at the customs office produced no change—no O.K. from him.

But it did leave and I just caught my flight and met the company at Heathrow, and at the moment we were called to our transatlantic aircraft I got a message that the cargo plane had just landed at Heathrow—with the carpenter on board. The Toronto get-in was delayed by six hours but the curtain rose on time.

The show was being struck and got-out at the end of the fortnight’s Toronto run. Stage hand to company carpenter:

“Where next week?”

“Birmingham.”

“Alabama?”

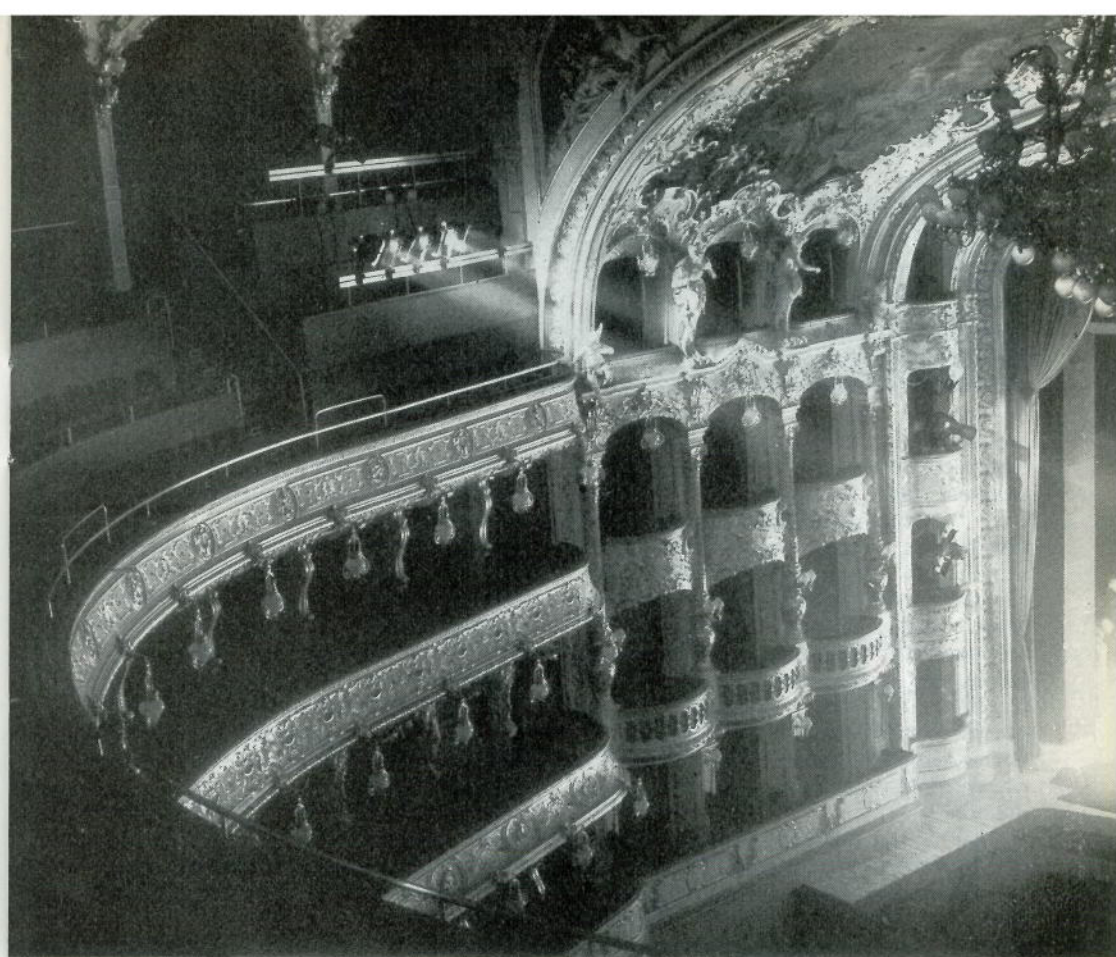
“No, England.”

The foregoing incidents demonstrate that with luck and determination it is indeed possible to substitute Toronto for Torquay in a tour—and Heathrow for Crewe station.

The conclusion must be a tribute to those involved in the latest and most split-second operation of this kind.

Brief Lives, Roy Dotrice’s brilliant one-man production, with a set and some 2,000 props, played a full week at Bournemouth Playhouse in May 1973 ending on Saturday night. He, his stage management and a very large vanload of props and scenery were flown to Toronto where they opened on Monday, played a full week ending on Saturday night, flew back to Manchester, had his props mis-routed to Heathrow and thence road-hauled to Sheffield. However, all arrived at the Crucible Theatre one and a half hours before curtain up, to open on Monday night.

“We have an extensive cellar—Champagne!”



From Bohemia's Woods and Fields

Frederick Bentham

Last December we wrote about the charming small-scale opera house/theatre at Usti; we must now return to Prague to see something on a grander scale. There are many theatres there and the range of theatrical and operatic fare in that city is diverse indeed. The theatre that appears in the views of the river front is the National, but at the head of Wenceslas Square alongside the Parliament building is the equally important Smetana Theatre. Indeed, this has now not only to be itself but will have to stand in for the National when that is closed for modernisation and re-equipment. The Smetana has just emerged from its own

facelift and it is interesting to see just what the city—now known to world theatre enthusiasts as the city of Josef Svoboda rather than of Bedřich Smetana—believes a well-equipped theatre should have!

Smetana was of course the composer of *The Bartered Bride*—only the overture of which one hears over here, but in Prague one can take all three acts and it is a tourist must. Almost better known is his tone poem *Ma Vlast*, or at least that part of it which deals with the Vltava, the river on which Prague stands. A trip up this is another tourist must, not only for the beauties of the river but of the means of



transport itself. The boats are paddle steamers whose boilers are fired with *real* coal. To the noise of shovelling and from time to time a plume of black smoke, one trundles up the Vltava in—if the right choice has been made—a boat of the same name. Connoisseurs will like to know that the engine can be seen, the crank rising and falling with each stroke of the piston just like it used to on trips to Margate, Clacton or the Isle of Wight in the Good Old Days. Each stroke is accompanied by an asthmatic wheeze and a rattle of the doors throughout the boat.

Two modern locks of superb construction are traversed en route. As the boat rises from the great depths the problem of keeping it straight in the lock (paddle boats have an outsize waistline) is solved by an intricate ballet for two men, two trees and two short pieces of rope. Each of the tree trunks is at least as large as one of those cabers that the kilted toss in the Highland games at Braemar. Up in the bow there isn't much room for tossing, and so with great heavings each is pushed out—the inboard section having a few turns of rope around it to ensure that the pole is not just attached to the man but to the boat also. The man is after all a movable, if adaptable, object and could find himself in the river.

The piers and jetties *en voyage*—there are many whistle stops—are equally primitive and getting off may involve some Brobdingnagian punting with further tree trunks—this time with a crossbar at the end. At one stop this nearly disappeared over and under the steamer, complete with its punter. A cry in Czech, presumably “Man

up the pole!”, caused the crew to rally round the hapless pol-tergeist and no splash followed.

Superb machinery at one end and a man with a pole at the other is perhaps the key of both modern theatre and of modern theatre building. The equipment suggests a laboratory for the white-coated engineer or scientist—whereas in fact any stage, on and off, is peopled by vagabonds. It is their hard work as they push and prod with rough hewn pole that keeps the show we love to watch on course.

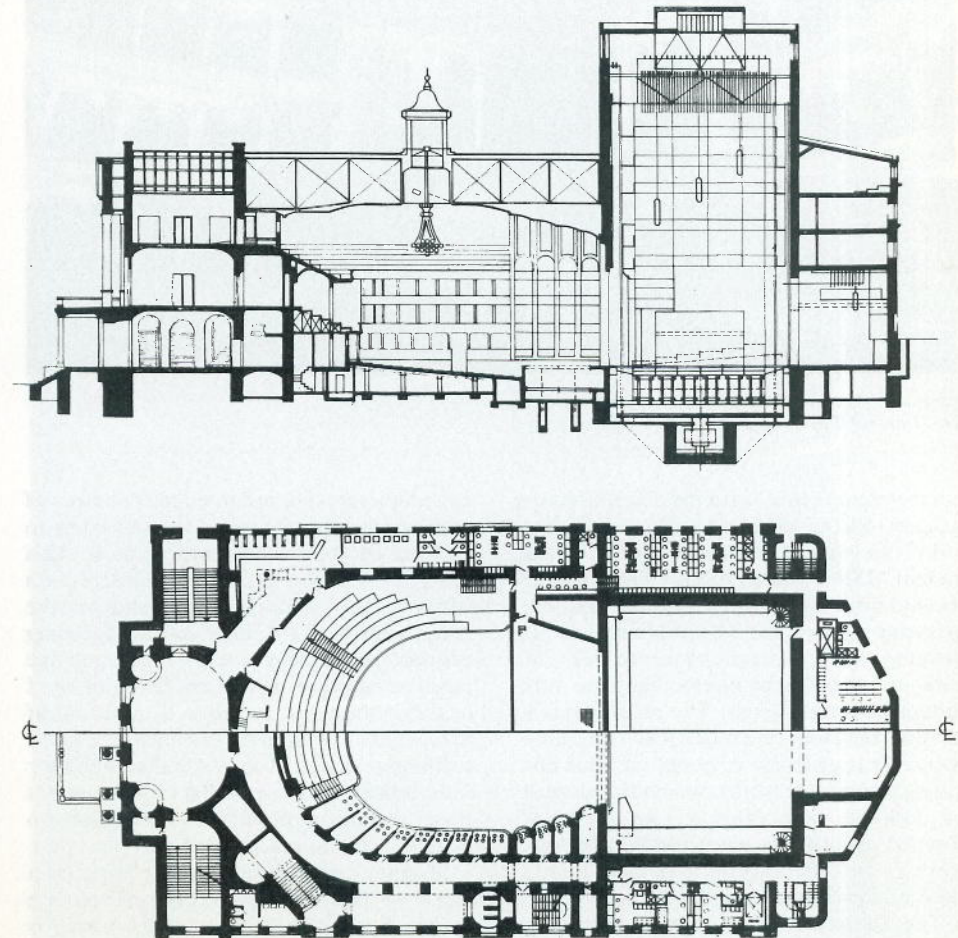
Beginning as one always should in any theatre with the audience, what they see at the Smetana is restored German magnificence. It is a real eyeful! There must be a German word for it.

The Smetana is an old building standing in isolation and both its exterior and the auditorium are regarded as a public monument. Extreme care has therefore had to be taken. For example, the old top tier had very cramped facilities but, by building another floor over two balustraded flat roofs to the left and right of the auditorium and filling in the sides of the facade with another row of windows, lavatory and cloakroom accommodation has been provided for the audience, and further dressing rooms for the actors.

This has opened up the existing areas and there is now plenty of space for bars and for the audience to move about. As in Usti, English wallpaper figures extensively in the decoration both here and in the other public areas of this very attractive restoration. The upper level is now also properly seated, and the extreme sides, where the

sight lines become dubious, have been handed over to the lighting equipment. Further lighting positions have been contrived between the arches right up at the back, and the front line of boxes (the stage boxes) is so occupied at all levels too. The rest of the auditorium, which has also been re-seated, is wholly taken up with boxes on three levels except back in the centre where a kind of grand tier exists with an extension to the stalls underneath. Right at the back of these stalls the control rooms have been built. These have perforce to be irregular in shape.

I think the present tendency to larger control rooms is retrograde. Not that the Smetana can be accused of that. Like most old theatres space for a front of house control room has been difficult to find. In Germany where most of the many theatres are new—built since the war—large rooms are the rule and this has bred a generation of very large control panels to fill them. Here in Britain tight space has led to an excellent discipline in design and operation. I shall be sad if architects become too indulgent. What is of course needed is an adequate office to retire to and this need



Smetana Theatre, Prague. Composite plan and section showing new stage on the right.



Smetana Theatre, Prague. Note lighting positions in roof arches. The Control Room is seen at back of stalls.

not be *en suite* and certainly should have a window on the world outside.

In this case there is a Rank Strand system MSR installed to provide storage of the lighting plots complete with tape programmer. There are 240 dimmers and an instant magnetic memory store for 300 cues—or lighting pictures—complete with dimmer intensity levels. The entire content of the magnetic memory can be automatically transferred in about an hour and a quarter to (and from) two complete reels of punched tape. This is, so to speak, shunted away to its place in the repertoire store or in other words it is placed on a shelf or in a filing cabinet.

The lighting control itself is a development of the type earlier known as System IDM. In this case the 240 levers—one for

each dimmer—are mounted in four rows of sixty on a separate, near-vertical wing to the left of the master control desk. This latter is directly under the observation window, the control room being at the rear of the stalls. I must confess to being vaguely dissatisfied with the relative position of wing to master desk nor do I feel that the wing, which is a duplicate of that in the London Coliseum, is a good ergonomic design. To my mind an operator should have a tight set-up with all controls close to hand without the need to get up from his seat to reach anything.

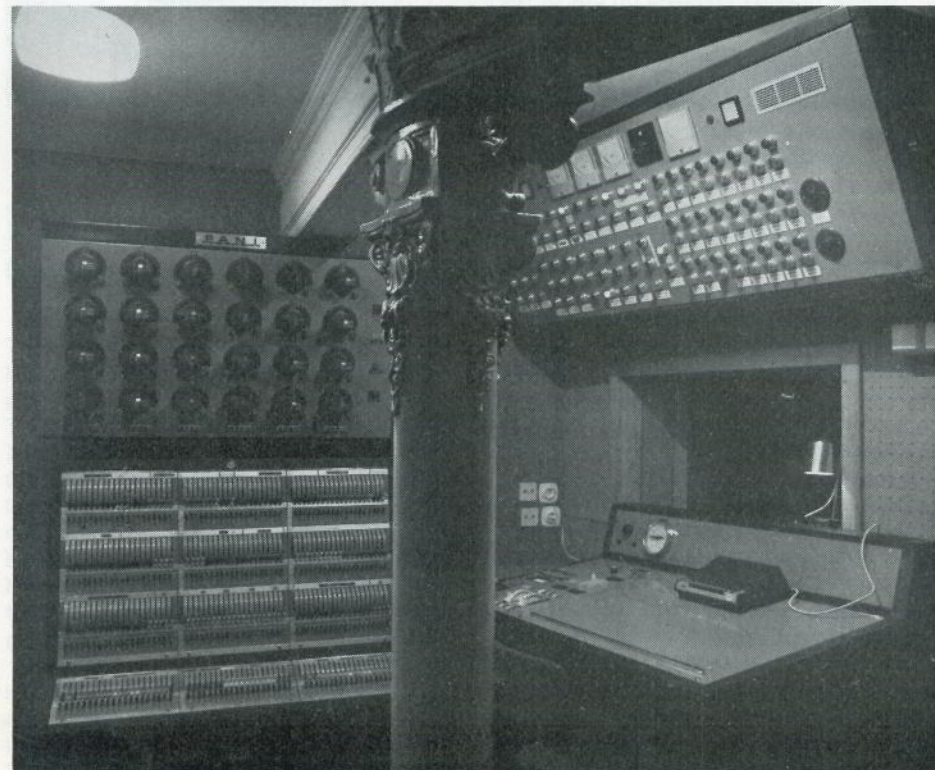
Mounted above the dimmer wing is a series of special rotary controls. There are twenty four of these and this panel is installed to control certain spotlights by remote servo on the Pani system. Pani is

an Austrian firm manufacturing follow spots, scene projectors and other projection equipment with peculiarly theatre application*. For spotlights a motor driven attachment is provided to pan, tilt and focus remotely. This of course involves movement in three dimensions at the control and the knobs on the panel provide pan and tilt control by means of a kind of graduated joystick. This enables the spotlights to be moved and focused on their locale, then plotted. While inerted by master switch they are subsequently preset to be driven on target when required. The system has been applied to some of the spotlights of a number of other installations on the continent of Europe.

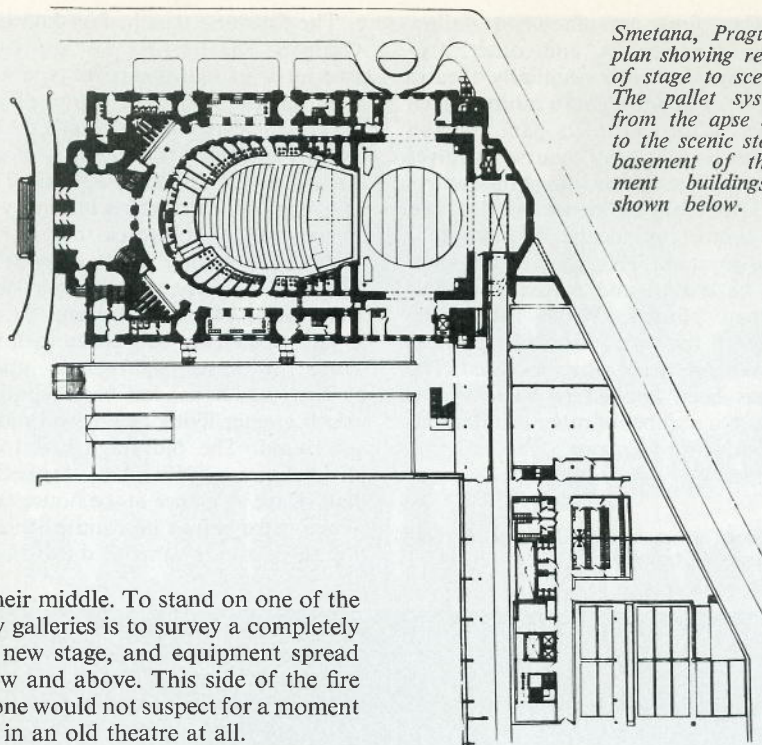
**Rank Strand are agents for Pani in the UK, Germany and N. America.*

The Smetana was in fact known as the German Theatre—so we are told. The interior is of that theatrical type which we now hanker after. The rigors of the concrete and workshop era seem to induce a nostalgic respect for things Victorian—or should we say Franz Josephian. The place is a mass of swirling decoration which on a previous visit struck me as decidedly heavy. Re-gilding and renovation has given it a lighter and gayer feel, and dominating the auditorium is a great crystal chandelier backed up by a veritable choir of lesser lights—tier upon tier.

The stage house has been rebuilt to give much greater flying height and more space all round. The old stage had to have a divided fire curtain—half descending and half rising. A glance at the house tabs when I was there before proclaimed this at once for there was a strange dusty band right



Rank Strand System MSR Memory Control with Pani servo controls and other auxiliaries over.



Smetana, Prague. Block plan showing relationship of stage to scenic store. The pallet system runs from the apse backstage to the scenic store in the basement of the parliament buildings partly shown below.

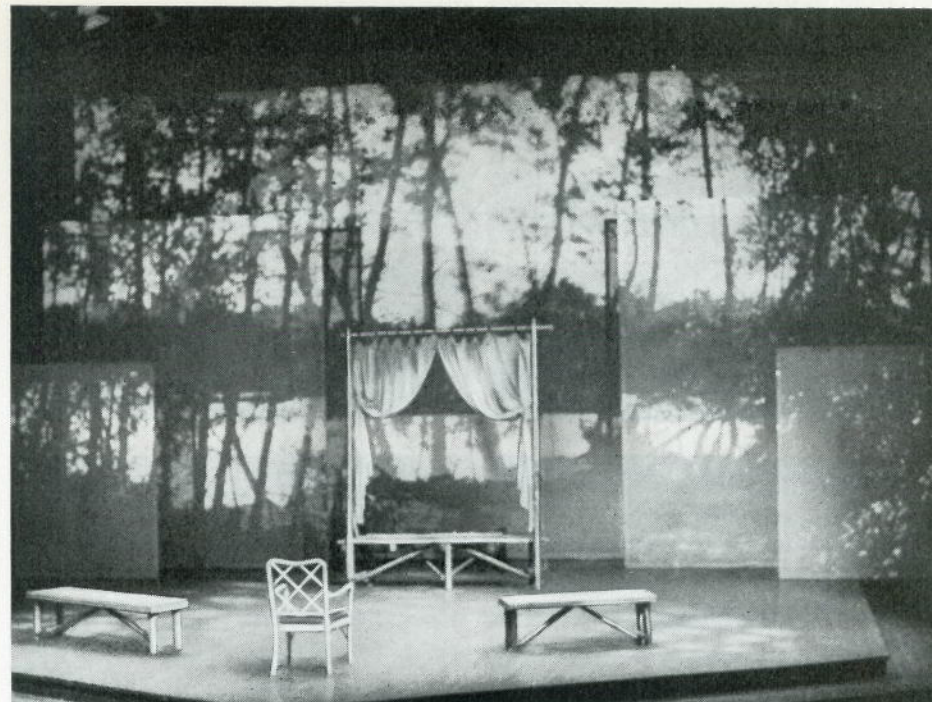
across their middle. To stand on one of the upper fly galleries is to survey a completely modern new stage, and equipment spread out below and above. This side of the fire curtain one would not suspect for a moment one was in an old theatre at all.

The stage floor itself is dominated by a revolve with elevators running across it. Thus large or small sections of the stage floor can rise and fall within the compass of the revolve or a continuous rake can be applied. The stage floor can also be extended forward by a number of separate orchestra lifts.

What is very sensible in a theatre playing repertoire is the provision of storage for productions nearby, and the basement of the Parliament building is used for the purpose. In fact, that building itself has just been enlarged by creating a whole new world of office floors carried on steel stilts over the old. This is quite literally the case, and the fact is clearly expressed in the exterior design. All the same, to find the Smetana Theatre next door has annexed the basement is unexpected to say the least. The productions are housed there in large wire cages which are trundled to and fro and shunted onto sidings. I believe this is known as the pallet system. The on-stage end of this system is situated in the apse

which forms the rear stage. Owing to the fall in the land across the site the scenery has to be raised somewhat, but a very large elevator is provided here for this.

Here in the Smetana Theatre we have the perfect example of modernisation being applied to an old and respected building—a monument no less. However I do recall that for his famous Prague production of *Romeo and Juliet* way back in 1965 Josef Svoboda used very simple tracks lightly constructed to shift what appeared to be big scenic structures before one's very eyes—there being minimal mechanisation. It now becomes obvious that built-in, large-scale machinery is as irresistible in Prague as elsewhere when the chance affords. A vision floats by of the vast lock installations of the Vltava and of the rude mechanicals with their tree-trunk fend-offs!



Project Seagull Chichester

B. Bear

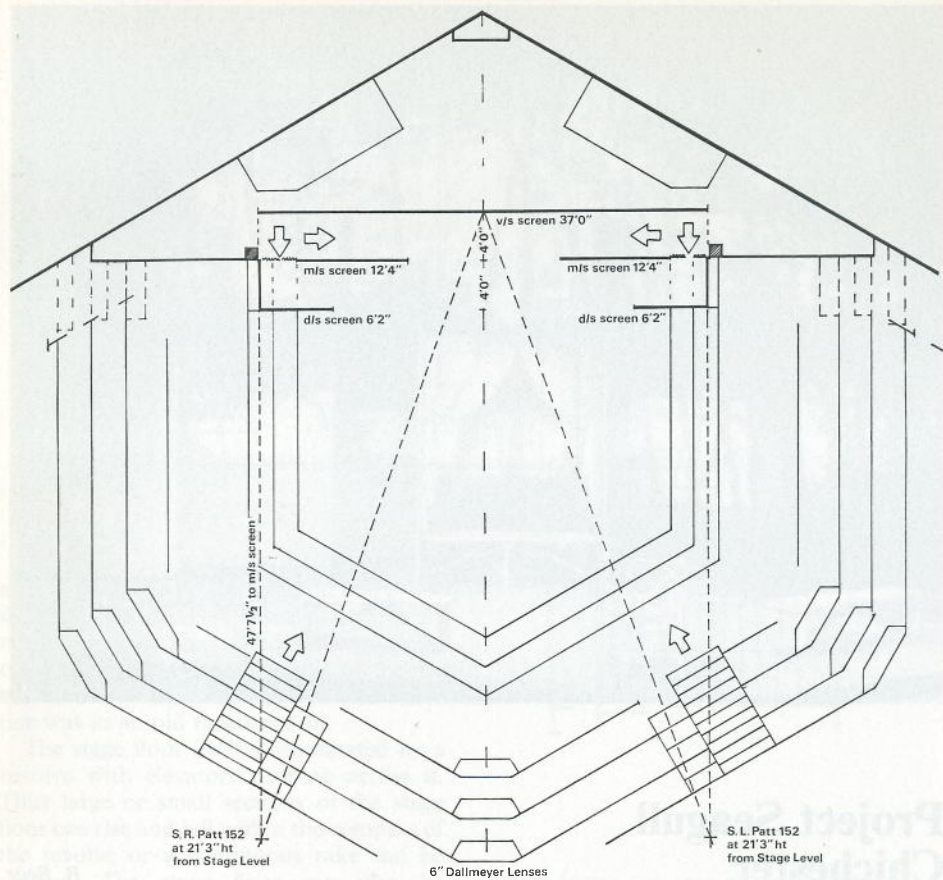
The lake, the girl who has spent all her life beside it and the seagull are essentials to the plot of Chekhov's *The Seagull*. Before Trigorin draws his parallels in Act II, Nina early in Act I feels "drawn towards this lake, like a seagull" and all the characters refer to its hold over them and to the memories it evokes. Chekhov seems even to have reserved for the lake a dramatic entry, having it hidden by the fit-up garden theatre to be disclosed as the curtains part as suggested by Harvey Pitcher.*

How have Jonathan Miller, the director, and his designer Patrick Robertson gone about putting this evocative ambience on to the Chichester open stage? What Mr. Robertson has done is to use scene projection very simply and most tellingly. There is

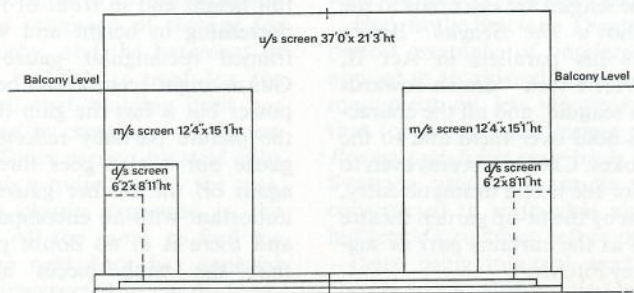
a gauze stretched across the back wall to the full height and in front of it on each side, decreasing in height and width, are two framed rectangular gauze wing pieces. Gauze might seem a bad bet for reflective power but it has the gain that not only is the picture partially reflected off the first gauze but it also goes through to reflect again off the further gauzes. This is all-important with an encompassing audience and there is a, no doubt planned, bonus that the wing pieces allow up-stage entrances and exits.

Two Patt. 152 lanterns with six-inch Dallmeyer lenses and 4 kW lamps are used almost flat on from above the audience to

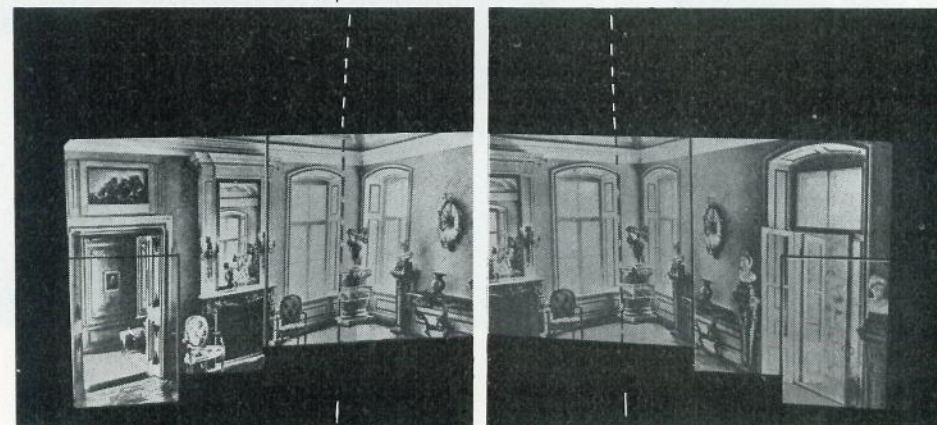
*The Chekhov Play, *Chatto & Windus, 1973.*



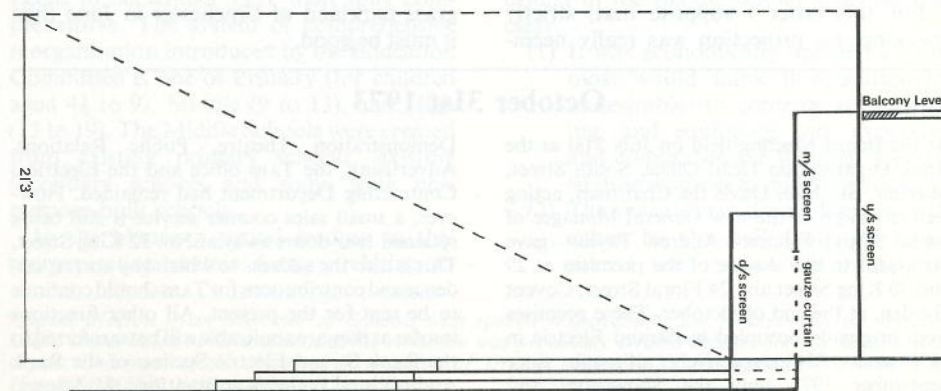
'The Seagull' Chichester Festival Theatre May 1973



Pat Robertson's plan showing the projection angles and screen positions in relation to the front seating rows. The front elevation of the screen is shown below. Vertical section (opposite page) showing projection angle.



The actual slides used for Acts I, III and IV. Overlap indicated between arrows and the interior scenes blocked out to reduce the apparent height.



project 3½ by 4 inch slides by means of standard motor-driven slide-change wheels hired for the occasion from Rank Strand.

On this form of stage it would not have been possible for the curtains of the fit-up stage in the garden to leave the lake picture masked, especially as with projection this originates in front, so the dramatic entry of the lake as the essential locale comes right at the beginning of the act and is strikingly established for all to see—marginally before the actors' entry and their lights. It cannot and does not try to be *verismo*—that must be left for proscenium stages—but it acts on the senses like saying “here we are beside a very lovely wooded lake—fix that in your head and watch what happens”. There is therefore no sense of incongruity in Nina pointing out her mother's house on the far shore which there certainly would have been without the picture; nor in the many references, all though the first two acts, to the lake and its beauty. It is still there and it supports the text. Of course, there is a slight degradation of the picture by bounce or spill light when the actors are lit and let me say very well lit. But there is no feeling at all that Spike Gaden had to play down his lighting to save the projection. The establishing shot at the beginning of the act dominates the imagination, and only technical truth demands that bounce light be mentioned.

A second set of two slides of the lake is used for Act II equally effectively and for Acts III and IV a further pair to set the interior.

For this latter I suppose that, strictly speaking, no projection was really neces-

sary. Actors, their lines and furniture can always do enough, but the faithfulness of respect for Chekhov's intention in Acts I and II is no production gimmick; it is not of itself a show but rather an elegant solution to an artistic problem. Painted backcloths and plastic grass would have produced problems rather than solutions.

I went to this performance only two days after seeing *The Cherry Orchard* at the National Theatre at the Old Vic, a true and fine proscenium arch production, and subconsciously I must have been ready to make allowances for Chekhov on an open stage. In the event it never entered my mind. If here I write most about the scenery then that is because TABS goes for lighting, not dramatic criticism. For the latter aspect *The Times* said:

“No attempt is made to take any short cut to ‘atmosphere’: there is hardly any music, and Patrick Robertson's settings consist of projections on the back wall offering merely a pictorial accompaniment to whatever the cast manage to create for themselves”

Nobody in the audience cared or should care how it was done. The result was there as part of an immensely moving performance. The actors inhabited the stage.

Some years ago the drama critic of, I think, *The Spectator*, referring to the regular successful transfers of open-stage Chichester productions to London West End prosceniums said: “Perhaps Chichester is the best proscenium stage that we have.” And if I can accept projected scenery immediately after the tree and grass parkland of Chichester in June then it must be good.

October 31st 1973

At the Board Meeting held on July 31st at the Rank Organisation Head Office, South Street, Mayfair, Sir John Davis the Chairman, acting on the advice of the new General Manager of Rank Strand Electric—Andrew Taylor—gave his assent to the closure of the premises at 29 and 30 King Street and 24 Floral Street, Covent Garden, at the end of October. These premises were originally occupied by Strand Electric in 1938 and 1924 respectively although since September 1972 only the Showroom and

Demonstration Theatre, Public Relations, Advertising, the TABS office and the Electrical Contracting Department had remained. However, a small sales counter service is still being retained two doors away at No. 32 King Street. This is also the address to which any correspondence and contributions for TABS should continue to be sent for the present. All other functions insofar as they are applicable will be transferred to the Rank Strand Electric Section of the Rank Audio Visual Building at Brentford, Middlesex.



Light as a Resource for Curriculum Drama in Middle Schools

David Morton*

Leeds in September 1972 went fully comprehensive. The system of comprehensive reorganisation introduced by the Education Committee is one of Primary (for children aged 4½ to 9), Middle (9 to 13), and High (13 to 19). The Middle Schools were created from existing primary schools, existing secondary schools and some were new purpose-built schools.

In the planning period leading to this reorganisation certain factors relating to

drama in the middle school soon became clear:

- (1) It was economically unrealistic (and most would think it educationally undesirable) to contemplate providing, and equipping with expensive and comprehensive lighting, specialist drama spaces in middle schools.
- (2) The space where drama happens will either be the hall (with its usual shared use) or an activities area

*David Morton is an Inspector of Schools with special responsibility for Drama with the City of Leeds Department of Education and the Arts. He was previously Drama Adviser for Rochdale and is a past Chairman of the National Association of Drama Advisers. All photographs were taken at Harehills Middle School, Leeds.

involving several other aspects of the curriculum.

- (3) The curriculum organisation of a middle school suggested that drama should not be taught as an isolated subject, but would more likely appear as part of thematic or conceptual approaches to humanities and creative arts programmes, taught in a block of time and often by a team of teachers within a full year group's scheme of work.



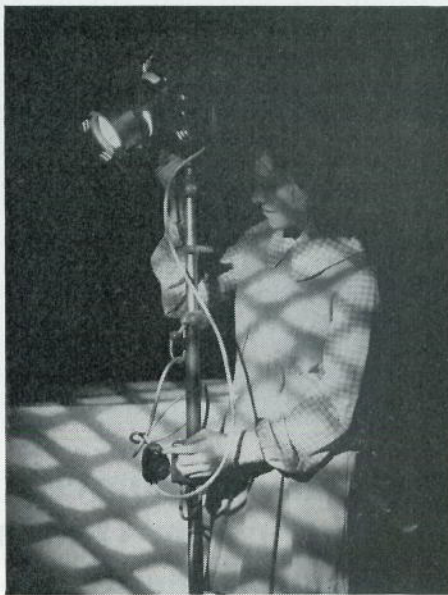
Boy using the Mini-2 control desk for "shooting".

It was necessary, therefore, to devise a system of lighting appropriate to the ethos of a middle school and one that recognised these three factors. The most important considerations that I needed to satisfy before deciding (with the help and advice of Jack Watling, my local Rank Strand representative) on the system described in this paper were:

- (1) The principle of pupil-initiated learning was likely to be the hallmark of the developing middle school. As far as lighting is concerned this implies

a system which can be operated by the pupils with ease and safety. The equipment must also therefore be durable.

- (2) The equipment will sometimes be used by teachers who are not specialists in drama, therefore technically it needed to be simple to operate, maintain and service.
- (3) It might need to be used in more than one space so must be portable, easily stored and easily erected.



Light on stand with rotary dimmer.

I therefore opted for recommending to existing schools, and for including in the schedules of new schools a system comprising:

- (1) 6-channel, 6-lever Mini-2 control desk and dimmer pack.
- (2) Six of Ref. 626 Telescopic stand, each equipped with an individual rotary dimmer which could be used independently of the central control desk.
- (3) Each stand to be equipped with a lantern (Patt. 23) and a sectioned tray of a variety of gels and masks.

The notable possibilities of this arrangement are:

- (1) For ordinary group work in drama where light is not essential, each stand becomes a station and its pool of light defines the space which each group has to work in. This may seem pedantic, but I like to feel that children can experience the environment and atmosphere of drama before the lesson even starts, in the way that a science or art room has an immediate "feel" that is appropriate to the work which will take place in it.
- (2) The children or the teacher can bring light from blackout to full brightness, and the reverse, as a control factor (control related to the work not to imposed discipline) in dramatic activity.
- (3) Lights can be used to build environments, suggest locations or simply to create mood, for work in groups or with the whole class. Children soon become adept at using light in a "theatrical" way to point improvisations, underpin themes, provide focus, etc., by varying the intensities of light. (I recall one occasion when a group of 10-year-olds, working on the idea of the conflict between speech and inner thoughts intuitively pointed and emphasised their improvisation by using light in exactly the way it is used in Beckett's *Play*).

Readers will probably see many other possibilities for use of this equipment, including its suitability for simple performance work. However, my main concern is its use within a curriculum context, and I quote below one example in detail to illustrate the use of the equipment. It should be remembered that *the children using light were working as spontaneously as those improvising the action*. The children were a class of 12-year-olds working in a blacked-out room. The activity described took thirty minutes.

ACTION

The class had been doing some work in humanities on people and creatures who

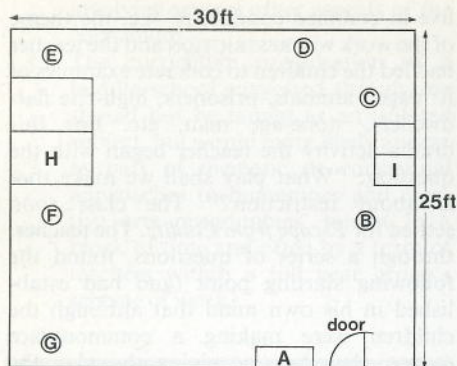
live in confined conditions—i.e. the theme of the work was RESTRICTION and the teacher had led the children to concrete examples of it: caged animals, prisoners, high-rise flat-dwellers, stone-age man, etc. For this drama activity the teacher began with the question: "What play shall we make that is about restriction?" The class soon settled for *Escape from Colditz*. The teacher, through a series of questions, found the following starting point (and had established in his own mind that although the children were making a commonplace escape play, he was giving the play the emotional focus of "how do people, previously unknown to each other manage the business of living in close proximity with each other?") He took the play from the particular to the general so that the "sub-text" was also about, say, people living in flats, old-people's homes, a school classroom, as well as the prison).



The dormitory—planning the escape.

Starting-Point: Prisoners in dormitory planning a tunnel escape. (One half of room was set up as dormitory, using blocks, screens, and chairs.) During the planning the teacher took the role of look-out.

Lights E, D, F, G, were placed by four girls, to be the natural light into the dormitory from two sides. A "barred-window" mask was placed in each light.



- (A) Mini-2 Control Desk.
 (B-G) Lights on stands, with individual rotary dimmers.
 (H) Rostra: one 3' × 3' × 18"
 one 3' × 6" × 9"
 two 2' × 2' × 1'
 two 3' × 1' × 6".
 (I) Two 3-sided bleached calico screens, 6' high, 4' sides and front.

Stage 1. Planning session had thrown up the following areas of conflict: 1. Tunnel must not be discovered by Germans. 2. One person suffered from claustrophobia. 3. Another was suspected of being an enemy agent. 4. A couple became violent if their own ideas were not accepted by the other prisoners.

After discussion when the teacher was out of role, time moved to evening and the digging of the final two feet of the tunnel.

Lights E, D, F, G, as before, but girls had put gels in to suggest night time and taken down the levels. Light B, with a steel blue, became the end of the tunnel and was placed near the door, and the boy on light C was using it in the opposite corner as a searchlight.

Stage 2 ran on from stage 1 without interruption. The boy suffering from claustrophobia collapsed and blocked the tunnel. He was looked after by the enemy agent (it turned out they were both enemy agents). The two violent prisoners, in anger at the tunnel being blocked became involved in a fierce verbal argument with the others, and did not hear the teacher, as the look-out, warn of a German patrol. While others



Claustrophobia in the tunnel.



The enemy agents are shot.

were trying to quieten them the tunnel caved-in so that nobody could retreat or escape.

Lights E, D, F, G, and C faded to Black-out. Light B at full intensity.

Stage 3. The teacher, still in role and angry that his warning had not been heeded, led discussion on what to do. They eventually decided to try to clear a way back to the hut and put off the escape until they had better planning and could work together more efficiently.

As they re-emerged in hut, lights E, D, F, and G, were brought up to "daylight". Light B to blackout.

Stage 4. The two agents were "tried" and eventually their sentence was to "escape" back down the tunnel and they were "shot" by guards as they emerged at the other end.

Shooting was improvised by one boy flashing all the lights from the control desk A. Pupils at individual lights directed them to the same point of focus. When the bodies were still, lights faded to blackout by control desk.

Stage 5. Out of role, teacher led class in a period of analysis ("Why did you fail to

plant the escape efficiently?") and related the improvisation to the broad theme of RESTRICTION.

The description of the action of this escape play does not adequately reflect the "educational" content of the play in terms of the teacher's concern about the way strangers establish relationships. Lack of space prevents this so the account is limited to an illustration of how simple, flexible lighting can heighten the dramatic experience of a group of children working at a fairly stock improvisation. Teachers must look to established books for consideration of how this type of improvisation may be used for firm educational purposes.

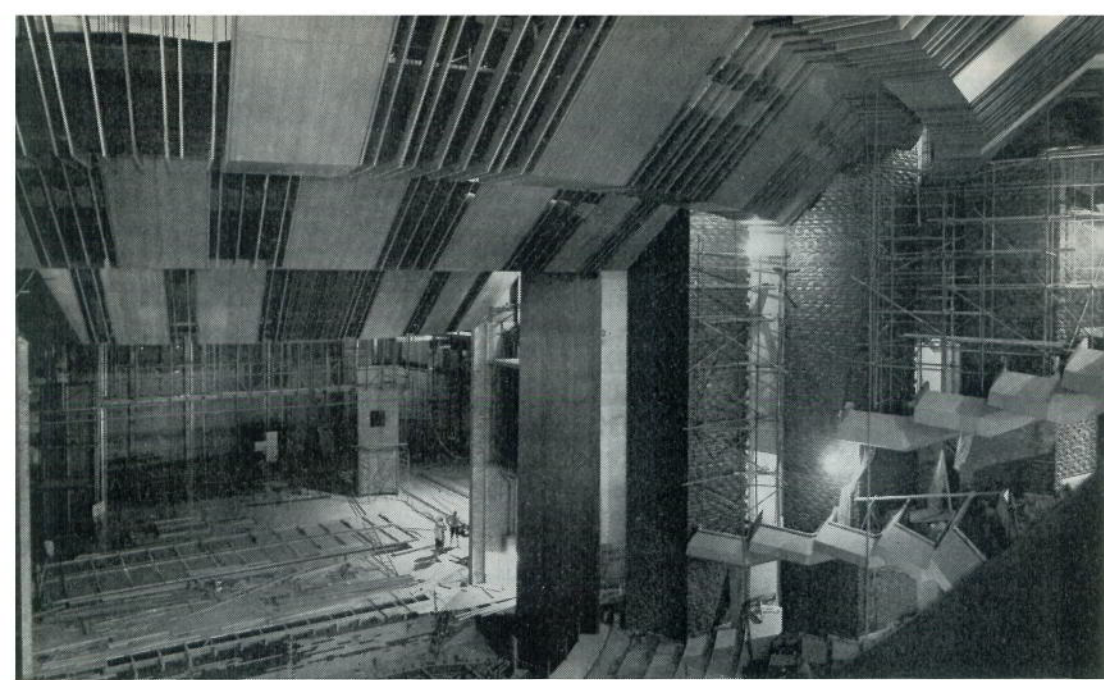
Technical Note. It will be noticed that in order to give both local and centralised control the six spots B to G have domestic type Triac dimmers mounted on their stands, and these are in turn fed from the six thyristor channels of a standard Mini-2 pack. This can lead to instability in working even when the Mini-2 dimmers are full on, and ostensibly the local Triacs are fed with full wave AC. This can be overcome by dummy loading the second socket of each channel with a 100-watt lamp. (Editor.)

The Genius and the Mortal Instruments in Council

We note that the Theatres Advisory Council celebrated its tenth birthday with a modest reception at the Royal Festival Hall a little while ago. Equally modest was the space accorded to such an important event in the national press—so modest indeed that few except the celebrants themselves know of it. Yet here—with Lord Goodman as President and Hugh Jenkins M.P. as Chairman—is a unique body working quietly away on behalf of the theatre. Under the aegis of the TAC assemble the commercial and the subsidised,

the actor and the musician, the technician and the manager, he who would preserve an ancient theatre and he whose interest lies in building a new. Around its bi-monthly table—be it the one in the Arts Council or more occasionally one loaned by the Palace of Westminster—we find the genius and the mortal instruments in council.

The TAC office is at the British Theatre Centre, 9 Fitzroy Square, London W1P 6AE.



The Adelaide Festival Theatre

Colin Hassell†

Designing the Adelaide Festival Theatre was a real challenge because it was the first time my firm had been commissioned to design a theatre of any size. It was a further challenge because a dual purpose theatre was required and it had been said so many times that the compromises necessary to achieve the dual uses would be too great.

The final sketches were commenced in mid-1969, and armed with these notional diagrams, I travelled round the world studying theatres throughout the United States, Europe, Scandinavia, Moscow and Tokyo. Looking back now, I am sure the prime lessons learned were the necessity to achieve the maximum flexibility, to provide as large a stage area as possible, and to steer clear of the gadgets and gimmicks which seemed to absorb an undue proportion of the costs of so many theatres. Discussions with the U.S.I.T.T. in New

York and the A.B.T.T. in London as well as the technical directors of many theatres helped to establish the vital factors which make a theatre work.

Then, on my return to Australia, we began the gradual process of refining the plans. There is no short cut to the hard work necessary in going over and over every section and every detail to make it work in the best and most economical way. A theatre is so complex that it requires a great variety of skills and my outstanding memory is of the teamwork which came from the various specialists—From John Morphett my partner and all in our office, from Tom Brown the theatrical consultant, from Mike Pryce the acoustic engineer, and from the structural engineers, mechanical and electrical engineers and so on. All worked together as a team at the never ending planning meetings. Then, there was the helpful criticism and advice from the users—directors of opera and ballet and

orchestra and the entrepreneurs. Each contributed in his own way and it was our function to co-ordinate these skills, to design, to refine and to keep our feet firmly planted on the ground.

We have been blessed with understanding clients in the Adelaide City Council and later the Festival Centre Trust as well as a most sympathetic nod from the Premier's department. We ourselves are

Something old and something new . . .

Denis Irving

There is a hackneyed word in these jargonistic days, whereby any major step forward is now called a "breakthrough". The origin is presumably in tunnelling through mountains when one succeeded in joining the two halves or, more appropriately in our case, came into the light once more.

The wave of theatre construction apparent over recent years in the Northern hemisphere is now reaching Australia, and producing some evidence of a breakthrough for the country—which hitherto has been struggling to accommodate both commercial and subsidised theatre in a mixture of ancient (by our standards anyway) buildings and multi-purpose horrors only slightly relieved by the odd one which could be regarded as a practical theatre for the late twentieth century.

We must here make some comment on our best known new project, to wit the (misnamed) Sydney Opera House. For years the butt of wits, political argument or whatever, it will open shortly after this appears in print. The opening has been planned as a lavish affair, with a week of heavily subsidised festivities, including fireworks, gala functions in municipalities all around and other delights evidently meant to highlight the public relations value of it all. No one could argue against this—proponents of the Opera House rightly comment that it has attracted worldwide interest and put Sydney on the map of those who only vaguely knew of it

much too close to the work to give a valid criticism, but the things which please me most would include the intimacy achieved in the 2,000-seat auditorium, the size of the stage which borders on extravagance, the sweep of the continental type seating and the spacious area of the foyers. If I were starting the job again I would certainly urge for larger kitchen facilities and more office accommodation.

before. Many good points can be made for the Utzon dream building but it must forever be an object lesson to "they" who have the power to control policies and purse strings for major theatres, or arts centres as they are now often called.

No doubt the N.S.W. Government concerned with the original idea, and its successors responsible for the construction have all been working with the best possible motives, but alas, the brief was not sufficiently well established at the beginning hence there has been no one in authority with sufficient knowledge or information to reconcile the artistry of the architect with the complex and ever-changing needs of opera or ballet, or who appreciated the conflicting interests of concert hall versus full stage presentations. Even now, the matter of a suitable car park is still unresolved, despite the architect's notion that theatre goers would prefer to arrive by ferry, leaving their cars on the far side of the harbour; this would be fine in the summer, but winter is another tale.

The breakthrough which prompted this article is more evident in projects planned or built in other capitals. Iain Mackintosh stole some of our thunder recently, but it can now be said that the new Festival Theatre in Adelaide* has had a successful beginning, taking its place as a major opera, ballet and concert venue in the Southern

*TABS, Vol. 30, No. 3

†Senior partner of the Architects Hassell and Partners Pty. Ltd.



hemisphere, able to get in full scale productions in short time. To this end, the technical planning has been very careful, involving the architect Colin Hassell and theatre consultant Tom Brown in numerous conferences with the management and staff of potential hirers of the theatre. There is a large area of working space surrounding the acting area at stage level, plus ample storage at fly gallery level (served by a goods lift). The acting area is a generous 50 ft. square, enclosed on the audience side by a continental style lighting bridge and movable tower assembly giving adjustment of effective opening from 24 ft. high to 32 ft 6 in. high; width from 40 ft. minimum to 51 ft. maximum—except when the concert sound shell is in, when the towers move out to the structural maximum opening of 55 ft. When the shell is properly set, the design of the interior results in the timber panelling of the auditorium blending with the towers and suspended panels so that there is no evidence of the stage tower or false proscenium.

The sides and rear shell sections are made as tower trucks; the overhead sections can hang straight and fly out on con-

ventional scenery lines. Plagiarists beware though, putting 2,300 lb. on double purchase counterweighting means large cradles and lots of weight, plus a need for mechanists with sympathy and stamina. Modern power flying devices would help here, if local regulations could permit.

When music is a part rather than the whole of the show, the orchestra is still well catered for by a pit with a maximum capacity of ninety players after removal of some front row seats. The regular size is for fifty-five players, and has a lift to form an extension to the stage level under concert conditions. Incidentally, all musicians, performers and stage staff are truly "catered for" by a green room area at dressing room level which offers meals and drinks in pleasant surroundings. Other theatres please copy.

The lighting installation is fairly conventional, with outlets on both bridge levels and the proscenium towers, plus the usual gallery and floor locations. There are three bridges across the auditorium, giving good angles for opera or ballet, plus slots in the stairways either side for cross lighting. A total of 342 outlets are fed via a wire and screwdriver patch field to 180 plug-in

5K PTM dimmers. Racks are provided and wired to accommodate a further 60 similar dimmers in future. Control is by a rocker DDM with 180 channels, 256 memories, and provision for extension to 240 channels also. This is based on a PDP 11 (lovable?) computer programme and it and the users have been learning to operate lighting with a new freedom. One recent Sunday night variety show with no technical run through showed the advantages of ADD, MOVE and DIM functions enabling quickly recorded cyclorama colours and area lighting sub-groups to be played as required during the performance, the operator thinking in terms of areas and effect rather than individual dimmers.

Adjacent to but separable from the lighting control room is the audio control, which has a multi-channel mixer with comprehensive disc, tape and sound delay

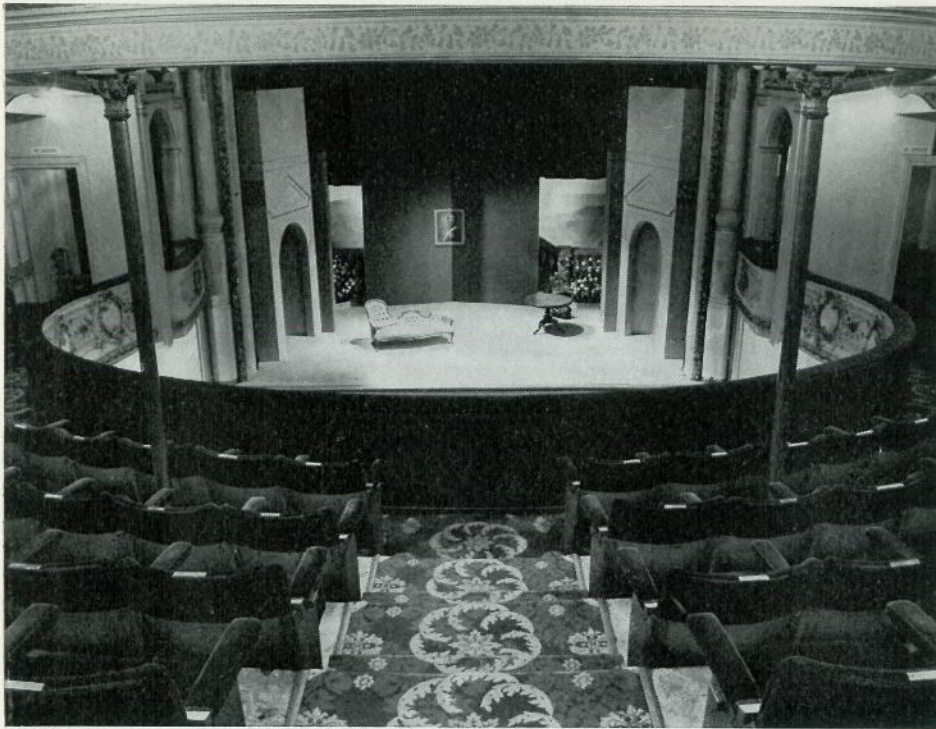
units. SM cueing and talk back, CCTV and so on are provided, also cabling and control rooms for visiting broadcast or television crews.

As can be seen from the illustrations, the seating is continental on three levels, total being 1,992. The foyer also has three levels, the upper two being in effect balconies within the main foyer space. This surrounds the auditorium on three sides and gives a tremendous feeling of space as well as giving good sound isolation from traffic and trains without.

The main theatre which opened on June 2nd last, is the first part of a scheme which will include also a 700-seat drama theatre, a studio/experimental area, workshops, restaurants and car park. When complete, a concrete plaza covers that part of the site not already occupied by theatres, and the sloping natural ground enables



The Adelaide Festival Theatre.



Theatre Royal, Hobart.

part of that plaza to be built as an outdoor amphitheatre facing the Torrens River beyond. For the mathematical reader, the cost of the main theatre was A\$6.6 million, and the estimated total when finished is around A\$20 million, provided that building workers have not in the meantime been given a thirty-five hour week!

Being yet a young country, we have few buildings of any historic value—also, being rather naïve or materialistic, we tend to neglect (or worse still destroy) those that do exist. One fine exception is the Theatre Royal in Hobart, which has been a legitimate theatre since 1851 having had several renovations in that time. The latest improvement was to replace the old resis-



Foyer of the Theatre Royal unchanged for 100 years except for electrification.



tance dimmers with an SP60 three-preset board, though it had to be on stage as no suitable location could be found for a room F.O.H. without spoiling the original interior.

That comment will probably evoke a reaction after looking at the photographs, as the lanterns hung on the circle front though not new, are certainly not nineteenth-century either. However, the foyer is totally unspoilt, and if anyone can assist with a better way of treating the F.O.H. syndrome, please let us know.

The name "Theatre Royal" is of course not peculiar to Tasmania, or we believe to Australia. TABS has previously recorded the occasion of a final performance in Sydney's example, immediately prior to its

demolition. We are pleased to say that there *is* to be a new theatre constructed as part of the new development, after expressions of concern from numerous Sydney residents. It will be a two-tier, 1,000-seat conventional proscenium type, with the complication of having to fit between street level at stage rear, and railway tunnels beneath the orchestra pit.

It is ironic that in a country with such vast amounts of space, we are forever facing awkward theatre sites. The replacement Her Majesty's Theatre in Sydney, also conventional proscenium style, has all foyer and box office space tucked under the circle, with a large part of the wardrobe and dressing room facilities below that again. A new Guthrie style peninsula stage

theatre (financed by a bequest) to be built on Sydney University ground has been delayed because the site straddles the main Sydney-Melbourne co-axial telecommunications link, and special access tunnels are necessary. The new Victorian Arts Centre will be substantially below ground . . . we can only hope that possible projects in Alice Springs or Mount Isa may be easier, or someone could start a Nullabor Plains Arts Festival.

Enough of our worries. We would like this Hundredth issue to note that the estimated expenditure on theatre building envisaged over the next four years is well over 60 million Australian dollars or about \$5 per head of population. So we hope to fill some at least of the pages of the next hundred issues with progress reports and comment. And we are still trying to persuade the Editor to come and see for himself!

Jack and Jill went Down the Strand, to Patch a Plug and Socket

Francis Reid

I once sat on a committee to define the word *patch*. I cannot remember what we decided or even if we decided, but there were lots of chocolate biscuits with the tea. But then it is rather difficult to get excited about *plugging* and *patching* and I must confess that the first genuine patching passion of my lighting life did not strike until I read in TABS that a lovable DDM had been installed with 90 dimmers patching to 460 circuits.

The glamorous bit of a stage lighting installation is the control desk (and we have all known control desks that were glamorous although not at all lovable). We often get into a passion about lanterns, but the means by which the controlled electricity is to be distributed to the lanterns is the province of the professionally clinical, cool consultant. The only emotion in this area is the *despair* of the fit-up electrician who has to link lamps A, B & C with dimmers X, Y & Z.

In fact the distribution system could be regarded as the key area, for it is probably the one single factor most likely to influence the flexibility of a stage lighting installation. Moreover, it is the area most under attack from those electrical bodies who draw up codes of practice and are appalled by the non-permanence of so much of a standard stage-lighting layout. The growth of stage lighting has rightly been accompanied by

a swing towards an interest in the light that comes out of a lamp rather than the electricity that flows into it, but we cannot completely shut our eyes to the existence of the electricity.

A feature of stage lighting is that not only are the type and position of lanterns likely to vary from one production to another but there will frequently be more than one lantern fed from each dimmer-controlled channel. Historically (and by that we mean anything prior to the thyristor dimmer) there was a basic choice to be made: a large number of cheap dimmers or a small number of expensive dimmers. Today's marketing men file this decision under *cost/effectiveness* but this does not provide a solution, for although *cost* is easy to define, *effectiveness* is more elusive. Effectiveness in pre-thyristor times depended on whether one preferred the convenience of each lamp having its own dimmer and staying with that dimmer, or the compact control that resulted from sharing dimmers.

In general British practice opted for the larger number of cheap dimmers and developed alternative methods of making the control compact, while North American practice favoured a few expensive dimmers. Of the other possible permutations, the sharing of loads amongst a small number of cheap dimmers was not practical due to the

poor load adaptability of such dimmers; and large numbers of expensive dimmers flourished only (and inevitably) in German theatres where technical budgets have always been more generous.

With the thyristor dimmer now in universal use for new installations, the actual dimmer bears a much smaller proportion of the total system cost and we are therefore able to think in terms of a large number of relatively cheap, high quality



dimmers. Nevertheless it is surprising how much of the old distribution techniques linger on.

Patch panels were initially evolved as a centralised plugging system on the telephone exchange principle so that lamps sharing a dimmer could be grouped to that dimmer and the groups easily re-arranged between performances, between scenes or even (!) between cues. In its simplest form the patch panel has lighting circuits terminating in corded Jack-plugs which can be mated to appropriate dimmer-fed Jill-sockets. Sophistication brings cordless cross-connect systems then relays and no doubt someone somewhere is going to use a solid-state, all-singing, all-dancing computerised memory patch where the Jacks and Jills all have their bits.

Patching is essentially a grouping system, but because the grouping is done on the

load side of the dimmer it is not only technically and operationally cumbersome but an anachronism. Even before thyristors, the application of organ-piston memories allowed groups to be quickly formed, modified and (just as important in my own operational experience) easily cancelled. Solid state dimmers allow various degrees of group sophistication on the control side culminating in the case of DDM in such inherent flexibility that its full potential will never be realised until one operator/designer has had the opportunity of performing two hundred different consecutive one-night stands without rehearsal.

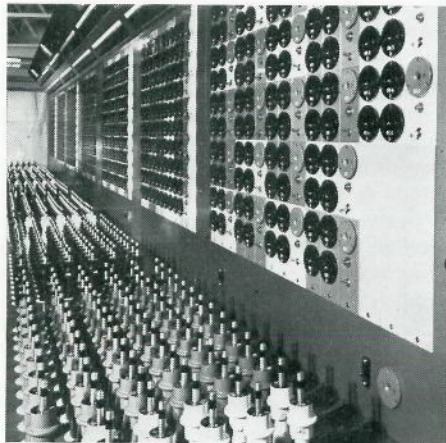
And therefore if my mind cannot be allowed to boggle on artistic grounds at a 90-way DDM with 460-way patch, then perhaps I can be excused just a mini-boggle on the grounds of cost-effectiveness. Actually DDM is such a logical machine that it has probably programmed its own internal boggling loop. (Are the number of boggle bits a function of dimmer ways or patch ways?)

In my Bordoni days at Glyndebourne, I patched 120 ways to 60 dimmers for five years and despite the usefulness of being able to re-arrange circuits to simplify cue operation on a manual board, I never knew where anything was fed without consulting bits of paper which I continually mislaid. Despite these experiences (which, dear Editor, explain the state of my hair if not of my trousers) I incorporated a patch panel in the distribution system when Glyndebourne went thyristor in 1964. But that patch panel was used in a way in which patch panels are still valid in a solid-state world.

The contemporary patch panel is essentially a *repertoire* device to enable circuits to be replugged from a central point—particularly to transfer blocks of circuits to that part of the theatre where they will be most useful for a particular production. For example, an opera played behind a gauze will require few F.O.H. but may need extra downstage booms. Or an apron “romp” will not need upstage flies but will scream for extra F.O.H. And some shows require dips upstage left rather than downstage right. Remembering that repertoire

with rehearsals involves a twice daily lighting-rig change not merely a daily change, a patch panel can save a lot of time and cable.

The pace of technical theatre has quickened so much in Britain during the past ten to fifteen years that one tends to forget that in the late 'Fifties and early 'Sixties, it was quite common to find at least the battens permanently wired-in with no possibility of substituting other equipment by means of a plug and socket. And if the circuits did terminate in a socket then a fly-socket was a different size from a dip-socket and neither socket accepted the plug which was used as standard on the lanterns.



Now that Britain is standardised on the 15-amp BESA with twin adjacent outlets and Grelcos galore, I would like (with apologies to overseas TABS readers who probably keep their plugging houses in better order) to offer up a few debating points for thinking light pluggers.

(1) Shall we stop installing 5-amp effects motor sockets? Let's call them *non-dims*, make them standard 15-amp sockets and have lots of them.

(2) Shall we stop installing these monster 25-amp sockets on our 5 kW dimmers? These sockets are rarely used, the equipment rarely has the right plugs on and they are quite evil to put on. Let's have a simple little terminal box instead.

(3) Shall we stop wasting money on

changeover switches giving a choice of the aforesaid nasty socket or four 15-amp sockets? Let's just have four 15-amp sockets with our terminal box in parallel. (I have been told, but cannot bring myself to believe, that there are installations where the four sockets are subfused!)

(4) Shall we stop worrying so much about six feet between phases? This seems to be a peculiarly British obsession, but I find comfort in the fact that my local Electricity Board have not only installed two phases in my children's bedroom, but they have provided me with a certificate which "guarantees that it has been carried out to the best standards of modern practice". Let's duplicate at least a proportion of our circuits in paralleled socket boxes at several strategic points around the theatre. Stage electricians are responsible people, and *if* we overload, the fuse will blow—for thyristor fuses, being as sensitive as the walls of Jericho, are liable to crumble at the very first toot.

(5) And shall we stop putting all these sockets three inches above floor level; its the bending dear Editor that gives my trousers their memorable preset.

A DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Dear Sir,

On behalf of USITT may I extend warm congratulations to you and TABS on the coming publication of your 100th issue.

May your next 100 issues be as entertaining and informative as the first, and may all your pages be in well-registered color.

NED A. BOWMAN
President US Institute for
Theatre Technology

DAS IST ALLES MÖGLICH

Dear Sir,

In TABS, September 1972, I read with amusement your article entitled "Das Ist Alles Möglich".

I am one of the organisers of this meeting in Düsseldorf, and also one of the Technical Directors of those mentioned big German theatre monuments, in my case it is Cologne, and I think, a little criticism is very beneficial for us. Above all, if it is written in such a humorous way and without any malevolence.

As the editor of the *Bühnentechnische Rundschau* I ask you politely for your licence to print this feature on some occasion in our paper (of course in the German language).

HELMUT GROSSER
Köln

Synopses

Time and Demotion

L'Editeur, perché face à l'arrière terne de son magasin favori, muse sur l'influence de la voiture lors des achats quotidiens et se demande si cette restriction du va-et-vient des piétons ne freine pas aussi l'achat spontané des tickets de théâtre et engendre ce phénomène peu encourageant: un auditoire pré-emballé.

Der Redakteur betrachtet die uninteressante Rückseite seines Stammkaufhauses und sinnt über den Effekt, den das Auto auf das tägliche Einkäufen übt. Er fragt sich, ob die Verminderung des Fussgängerverkehrs ebenfalls den spontanen Kauf von Theaterkarten vermindert. Das Resultat wäre nicht wünschenswert: ein vorverpacktes Publikum.

Entente Cordiale

Pour faciliter les échanges commerciaux, les bureaucrates du CEE concentrent leur énergie à aplanir les divergences. Que leur attention se porte sur les oignons marinés ou les somptueux théâtres, il nous incombe de surveiller ces bureaucrates et nous assurer que ce qui est bon est préservé, et conservé de façon à garder l'individualité.

Im Interesse des freien Handels sind die Bürokraten der EWG darauf bedacht, Verschiedenheiten auszugleichen. Ob es sich um eingelegte Zwiebeln oder ehrwürdige Theatergebäude handelt ist gleich, wir müssen auf unsere Bürokraten aufpassen und dafür Sorge tragen, dass das Gute bewahrt wird und zwar so, dass es seine Individualität behält.

And All Our Yesterdays

Ce numéro de TABS est le centième. Cet événement n'est pas célébré avec grand apparat, mais commémoré par un article de son plus ancien collaborateur Percy Corry, une lettre-anniversaire des Etats-Unis et ce voyage sentimental dans le passé.

Die vorliegende Nummer ist die Hundertste von 'Tabs'. Dieses Ereignis wird nicht mit schmetternden Fanfaren begrüßt, sondern von dem ältesten Beiträger unserer Zeitschrift, Percy Corry, mit einem besonnenen Artikel gefeiert, sowie mit einem Gratulationsbrief aus Amerika und diesem Blick in die Vergangenheit.

More of "Oliver!"

Ian Albery, Donmar Productions, dans une interview enregistrée avec l'Editeur, décrit le Théâtre Imperial, à Tokyo, de 1850 places. Il vient d'y monter "Oliver!" avec la troupe anglaise et des jeunes Américains, mais un chien et un orchestre japonais!

Ian Albery von Donmar Productions beschreibt in einem Interview mit dem Redakteur das Kaiserliche Theater Tokyo, 1850 Plätze, wo er vor kurzem eine Tourneeeinszenierung von 'Oliver!' aufgeführt hat, mit englischen Schauspielern, amerikanischen Jungen, jedoch japanischem Orchester und Hund.

Methuselah Muses

Dans sa 80e année, Percy Corry donne un aperçu de divers aspects et rôles du théâtre au cours de l'existence de TABS, maintenant fêtant son 100e numéro.

Percy Corry, der in seinem 80. Jahr steht, gibt einen Überblick über den Aspekt und die Rolle des Theaters und wie diese sich binnen der 100 Nummern der Zeitschrift 'Tabs' verändert haben.

The Day of the Sunspot

Le plus jeune collaborateur Robert Longthorne, 18 ans, feuillette un catalogue de Strand de 1958. Il s'étonne et se demande quel a pu être l'usage de ces appareils mégalithiques.

Der jüngste Beiträger, Robert Longthorne, achtzehn Jahre alt, kramt durch einen Strand Katalog aus dem Jahre 1958 und möchte wissen, wie man die dort beschriebenen vorsintflutlichen Riesenapparate gebraucht hat.

Inigo Jones—Theatre Architect

La célébration cette année du 4e centenaire de la naissance d'Inigo Jones a suscité un nouvel intérêt pour cet architecte et dessinateur de la cour des Stuart. Iain Mackintosh suggère que non seulement il était un grand novateur dans le domaine architectural, mais encore le promoteur du théâtre de la Restauration; en effet sous son impulsion, la construction du théâtre shakespearien se transforma. De plus, il nous aurait laissé les plans de ce qui est sûrement un des plus anciens et meilleurs théâtres adaptables.

Der 400. Geburtstag von Inigo Jones hat ein erneutes Interesse an diesem Menschen hervorgerufen, der als Architekt und Bühnenbildner am königlichen Hofe der Stewarts diente. Iain Mackintosh ist der Meinung, dass Inigo Jones nicht nur bahnbrechender Architekt war, sondern dass er ausserdem die Denkrichtung bei Theaterbau grundlegend beeinflusst hat, sodass aus dem Theater von Shakespeare, das der Restauration entstand. Ausserdem hat er uns Entwürfe für ein Mehrzwecktheater hinterlassen, das eins der Ältesten und Praktischsten sein muss.

Shifting the Scene

Que le monde devienne de plus en plus petit est aujourd'hui, avec le développement des transports aériens, un cliché de notre société moderne. Dans cet article, John de Lannoy raconte ses expériences lors d'une tournée transatlantique et explique comment intercaler une semaine à Toronto entre un arrêt à Bournemouth et Sheffield.

Das Schrumpfen unserer Erde durch das Flugzeug ist sprichwörtlich. John deLannoy erzählt hier wie er mit Tourneeaufführungen Reisen von transatlantischen Ausdehnungen unternimmt und insbesondere das Einschachteln einer ganzen Woche in Toronto, zwischen Aufführungen in Bournemouth und Sheffield.

From Bohemia's Woods and Fields

Dans le numéro de décembre, Frederick Bentham a décrit le théâtre d'Usti. Continuant son tour d'Europe, il remonte la Vltava sur un navire à aubes pour arriver à Prague, au Théâtre Smetana, magnifiquement restauré dans sa splendeur germanique. Ce théâtre est fier de son magasin de décors sous le Parlement situé à proximité, de son jeu d'orgue MSR de 240 circuits et une fois encore de ses magnifiques papiers peints anglais.

Nach der Beschreibung des Stadttheaters Usti in der Dezembernummer, fährt Frederick Bentham mit seiner Europareise fort. Ein Raddampfer trägt ihn auf der Vltava nach Prag, wo er das Smetanatheater besucht, das im alten, prunkhaften Stil erneuert worden ist. Es hat einen Kullissenspeicher, der sich unter dem benachbarten Parlamentsgebäude befindet, ein MSR Stellwerk mit 240 Stromkreisen und, wie Usti, schöne, englische Tapeten.

Project Seagull Chichester

Monter une pièce comme *La Mouette*, du naturaliste Tchekhov, sur une scène en éperon, peut présenter plus d'une difficulté. Pat Robertson toutefois, à Chichester, vient de résoudre admirablement le problème en usant deux projecteurs Patts 152, pour la projection frontale sur un ensemble de rideaux de tulle.

In einem Theater mit vorstossender Vorbühne wie Chichester sollten Aufführungen naturalistischer Spiele wie Chekhov's "Die Möve" besondere Schwierigkeiten bereiten, aber Pat Robertson hat das Problem geschickt gelöst, indem er zwei Pattern 152 Scheinwerfer benutzt zur Frontprojektion auf mehrere Schleierverhänge.

Light as a Resource for Curriculum Drama in Middle Schools

Jusqu'à tout récemment encore l'emploi de l'éclairage scénique dans l'éducation scolaire avait tendance à être un pâle reflet de la version professionnelle. Aujourd'hui de nouvelles occasions se présentent. David Morton, inspecteur scolaire et spécialiste du drame, décrit les réalisations faites par des groupes de jeunes de 9-12 ans, dans des écoles situées aux environs de Leeds, Yorkshire.

Bis vor kurzem war Bühnenbeleuchtung in Schulen eine verdünnte Version von Berufsbühnenbeleuchtung, aber neuerdings bieten sich ganz andre Möglichkeiten. David Morton, Schulinspektor und Schuldramaspezialist beschreibt wie man diese Möglichkeiten in Schulen in der Gegend um Leeds in Nordengland bei 9 bis 12 jährigen Kindern anwendet.

The Genius and the Mortal Instruments in Council

Le Theatres Advisory Council lui fête ses 10 ans d'existence. Tous les deux mois, il veille à réunir autour de la table de l'Arts Council les représentants des divers aspects du théâtre en Angleterre.

Das Theatres Advisory Council feiert auch Geburtstag. Zehn Jahre lang hat es sich alle zwei Monate um den Arts Counciltisch versammelt—Vertreter von Theaterinteressierten aller Art, die heute in England wirken.

The Adelaide Festival Theatre

La récente explosion de théâtres en Angleterre touche à sa fin. En Australie, par contre, avec Adélaïde et Sydney, la construction est encore en plein essor. Denis Irving compare ces nouvelles créations avec le théâtre beaucoup plus ancien d'Hobart, en Tasmanie.

Australien steht noch am Höhepunkt des Bauens neuer Theater, indem dieses Jahr die Eröffnung der Theater in Sydney und Adelaide stattfinden, während dieser Höhepunkt in England schon überschritten ist. Denis Irving vergleicht diese beiden Theater mit dem viel älteren Theatre Royal in Hobart in Tasmanien.

Jack and Jill Went Down the Strand

Stimulé par l'emploi américain d'un memory control DDM de 90 gradateurs de lumière branchés (patch) sur 450 circuits, Francis Reid expose ses vues sur les emplois et abus du patching dans les installations modernes du théâtre. Se référant en particulier aux défaillances anglaises, il démontre la valeur du système de débranchement électrique dans un théâtre et l'importance qu'on devrait y attacher.

In Amerika hat man ein DDM Speicherstellwerk angewendet, wo 90 Verdunkler zu 450 Stromkreisen umschaltbar gekuppelt sind ("patched"). Das regt Francis Reid dazu an, seine Ansichten über den Gebrauch und Missbrauch des "Patching" in modernen Theaterinstallationen, zum Besten zu geben. Man sollte das elektrische Verteilersystem genauer beachten, das eine überaus wichtige Rolle spielt, besonders notwendig in England.

© 1973 Rank Strand Electric Limited, P.O. Box 70, Great West Rd., Brentford, Middlesex, TW8 9HR; Strand Electric (Australia) Pty. Ltd., 19 Trent Street, Burwood, Victoria 3125; Strand Century Limited, 6334 Viscount Road, Malton, Ontario; Century Strand Inc., 3411 W. El Segundo Blvd., Hawthorne CA90250; Rank Strand Electric, 3301 Salzdahulum Salzbergstrasse; Strand Electric (Asia) Ltd., 1618 Star House, 3 Salisbury Road, Tsimsatsui, Kowloon, Hong Kong. Printed in England by The Whitefriars Press Ltd., for Twynam Publishing Ltd., 11 Grape Street, London, W.C.2.

25M 1409