

branches of industry, there is no tradition of publishing this knowledge to ensure progress and to claim due credit. So, again and again, subtle or even elementary mistakes are repeated as newcomers leap into a field they mistakenly think to be still in the stone age. The sufferers are the users, the still unorganised band of theatre console operators who have to learn yet another new set of control names, ground rules and pitfalls. F.P.B. is the only man who, so far, has made any attempt to alter this state of affairs and yet, in my view, he himself very often gets things wrong. TABS, as I have already emphasised, is the main, almost the only worldwide vehicle for a continuing discussion on this subject. But, naturally, it has never been available to rivals of Strand. So the F.P.B. view has, to many, become uncontested doctrine. Now, in this edition of the book, he is able to make some amends. No longer employed by Rank Strand, the achievements of rivals can be noticed more frequently than before and an informed reader can see that there is sincere recognition that others have made valid contributions to the art. However, I do not think that F.P.B. has yet gone far enough in acknowledging the real step forward made by Tony Isaacs at Thorn when he designed the first Q-File to couple the electronic dimmer to the fixed separate stage and preset store concept with one-way matching cross-fades. This idea is now fundamental to the majority of first-class systems from many manufacturers. F.P.B. himself may recognise that this was a simple extension of his own electromechanical System CD, but it would be fitting if he now set himself to really study\* and report on the whole range of advanced control systems that have achieved established and widespread use. Thus the next revision of this chapter, perhaps about eight years on, could give a really impartial survey of how the important and lasting ideas in stage lighting control should be attributed.

Chapter 1 is for connoisseurs of F.P.B. style. In it, he looks at the problems facing British theatre today. The new playhouse designs, much discussed, but barely begun at the time of the first edition, are now practical fact even if not yet well enough understood to prevent unwitting repetition of mistakes. The State now finances most professional theatre and London has a growing number of big repertoire houses. Should the search for perfection still continue, or should the discipline of circumstance be our new ideal? This is my interpretation of what chapter 1 is about. F.P.B., of course, puts it much better and, for once, does not draw a conclusion.

In the last few paragraphs I have treated this book as being an advanced work for specialists. It is not, nor does it pretend to be. It is a thorough, authoritative, well illustrated explanation of all the technical aspects of stage lighting taken to a level that any practising technician should expect to achieve. Of great value is that the style is eminently readable and every point is embellished by anecdote or provocative, humorous, sincere, prejudiced or concerned

\*In several parts of this chapter it seems that F.P.B. does not really understand rival products.

opinion, in every combination. The new printing is on better paper and the photos and new layout giving opportunity for margin notes are also improvements. Owners of the first edition should get a good look at this revision and should seriously consider whether they can afford not to buy. Anyone seriously interested in stage lighting and who has not yet got a copy of either edition should buy now while stocks last.

BOB ANDERSON

#### BAUTEN DER KULTUR

Published by the Institut für Kulturbauten, 105 Clara-Zetkin-Strasse, Berlin 108, DDR.

Welcome to a new magazine launched with a single issue in 1976 but intended to be developed into a Quarterly. Berlin's Institute for Cultural Building is the National Theatre Consultancy of the German Democratic Republic and has responsibility for housing the performing arts from conceptual brief to detailed technological specification. The magazine contains articles on schemes which indicate the wide range of the Institute's work: the refurbishing of older theatres such as the Dresden Semperoper and the Berlin Deutsche Theater; the building of new complexes such as the Stadthalle in Karl-Marx-Stadt and Berlin's adaptable Palast Der Republik (with an adaptable ceiling which makes all previous ceilings seem like stone-age engineering); and the new Jugendklubs with integrated spaces for recreation and creative leisure. *Bauten Der Kultur* is a journal to go on the shelf alongside *Buhntechnische Rundschau*, *USITT Journal*, *Sightline*, and *TABS*. Welcome.

#### SIMON'S DIRECTORY OF THEATRICAL MATERIALS, SERVICES AND INFORMATION

5th Edition. Published by Package Publicity Services Inc. 1501 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10036.

Readers of *Sightline* will have noted that the Association of British Theatre Technicians have been beating their collective brow over the problem of information retrieval. Perhaps the problem is that there is no British equivalent of North America's *Simon*. *Simon's Directory* describes itself as a classified guide of where to buy, to rent, to lease, and to find out. The number of entries is quite staggering. Architects, Boas, Conferences, Dollies, Engrossers, Fountains, Gobos, Hemp, Instruction, Jugglers, Kaleidoscopes, Lumber, Movies, Newsletters, Organisations, Pulleys, Risers, Strobes, Teasers, Unions, Velours, Wagons: its all there. Mr. Simon is only defeated by X, Y, Z and Q. All this information would be useless if it were not easily retrievable: *Simon* does this by detailed indexing. So you want a balloon? Well, is it a balloon, ascending (see aerial advertising) or a Balloon, imprinted (see advertising specialities) or perhaps just a balloon, large for parades (see props). Anything missing? ... well there are 204 theatrical periodicals listed, but no mention of *TABS*.

# Tabman's Australian Diary

#### The going ...

Enjoying, by courtesy of an airline with hydraulic malfunction, a rather pleasant dinner on the Graecian coast. Suddenly a violent storm arises and just as suddenly is gone. Suddenly, very suddenly: quicker than any of the maestro-operators could have wheeled a grandmaster. Resolve to be more sympathetic to all those composers of classical mythology operas who wash their tenors ashore with instant storms.

#### ... and the coming back

The stunning feature of night light in Hong Kong is not just the extent and the brightness. It is that the light is absolutely still. Not a flasher, not a flicker, not a tracer. Very dramatic. Like the Arts Centre that architect Tao Hao is building on an incredibly tight waterfront site. Getting a main theatre, experimental theatre, recital hall, rehearsal room, exhibition gallery, restaurant and seven floors of studios on to such a restricted site raises problems of audience flow. Clambering about the concrete in my hard hat, I gained a distinct impression that the problems have been solved—very neatly. Clearly a building to feature in *TABS*, in due course.

#### Tabman Talking

Just failed to score a century. But 98 hours of lecturing in the 15 working days of a three-week three-city tour must surely rate as something of an honourable near-miss. (And the 98 is computed with impeccable

