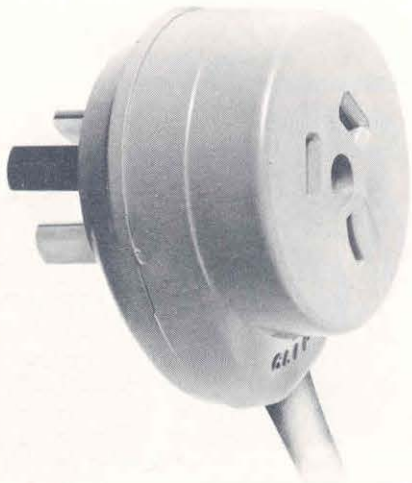


into life as we drove slowly past with eyes alight. And now and then a tear—of emotion rather than grief.

Bush engineering

Next morning I investigated the mechanics of Denis Irving's light design: the Patt. 123s concealed up in the trees and down in the kennels, the camouflaged dimmer racks and coordinating printed circuitry—all designed to function for a long long time without so much as a tickle from the service engineer's digital oil can. As in all museums it is the ephemera that breathe life and it is the small details of the daily round, some imported, others improvised, that orchestrate the picture at Swan Hill. Yet there is nothing ephemeral about the Nineteenth century machinery which, whether animal or steam driven, still chugs away. In their engineering the Australian settlers showed an ingenuity only matched by that of the stage switchboard pioneers. There was, and thankfully still is, a lot of bush engineering in theatres around the world.



Pickaback pairing

I envy the Australians their *pickaback plug* which simplifies patching and pairing. Most theatres have very neat patch panels based on this simple domestic plug with a repeat socket set into its back. Sometimes called hermaphrodite by its fellow connectors.

Theatre print

And now for a provocative statement. Australia probably has the highest overall standard of programme text and graphics in the English-speaking world. Supporting literature, even annual financial reports, is stylishly presented. Central Europe, with its traditions of dramaturgy, has long understood the importance of *print* in helping to establish and project a theatre's image. Aussies obviously understand—so what about it, Poms and Yanks?

Street Theatre

The flight path to Adelaide passes directly over the Festival Centre and a low approach in a Piper Navajo gives a spectacular introduction to Theatre and City. Theatre shapes and theatre landscaping so stunning that I failed to notice intensive colourful activity in a long pedestrian street of otherwise Sunday-quiet town centre. Twenty minutes later I attempt a lamp post climb to get a sightline to one of the many street theatre groups sharing an enthusiastically participating audience. The imaginative lighting was beautifully designed by Adelaide Sunshine.



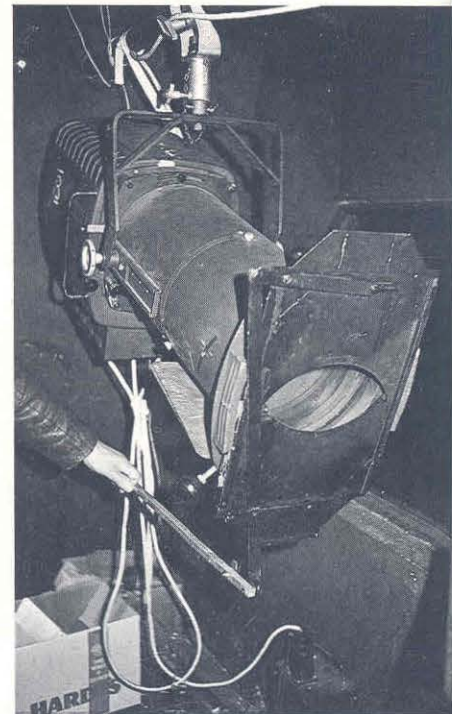
Lighting Eclipsed

For the outstanding lighting event of the year, I had rather a good seat. While the false sunset and dawn of a total eclipse brought some confusion to Australian fauna, I was flying into the eye of the sun. The best cue was the effect of night to port and day to starboard.

Space shapes

A couple of years ago this diary recorded a dogmatic but sincerely held generalisation that experimental theatre spaces seem to arise more successfully from conversions than from blank paper. Sitting in Adelaide's new austere studio (so clinical that I felt obliged to tread softly softly) I found nothing but reinforcement of this view. I even

developed a fresh prejudice—experimental space must not be square: it must be at least rectangular, and probably asymmetric. Probably wildly asymmetric.



Discharge fading

Discharge lamps, such as CSI, cannot be faded electrically. Melvin Conder of Her Majesty's in Sydney devised this interesting mechanical shutter to fade their Patt. 765 follow spots.

Some Pleasures

The wine ... The cast-iron ... The Melbourne Princess ... The steaks ... The Old Tote's *Season at Sarsaparilla* ... The cellars at Hi-Watt Lighting ... Jude Kuring in *And Miss Reardon Drinks a Little* ... The Barbecues ... The Olde Tote's *Toast to Melba* ... Melbourne's tramcars ... The Wines ...

A Rank Strand Patt. 23N enjoying the sunshine outside the Dragonara Hotel in Malta.

