

THE BRITISH SCHOOL OF BRUSSELS

by the Ellis Williams Partnership, Chartered Architects

The King of Belgium officially opened the new Theatre building for the British School of Brussels on the 8th December 1981, an event which represented the culmination of 11 years of intensive development since the founding of the School in 1970. During this time the School which spans from nursery to secondary level has grown to over a thousand places housed in 7 buildings on a compact but beautiful site within the Royal park at Tervuren on the west side of Brussels.

OUR involvement began in 1978 when the British School of Brussels asked us to undertake a study of their existing facilities. The development plan which grew out of the study recommended the construction of a 7th building, followed by the substantial re-organisation of the existing teaching facilities into more flexible and informal units. The new building was seen as the keystone to the campus, filling up the last building site and providing certain special facilities which the School previously lacked. These included a library, a social area and a large space to house drama teaching, assemblies and productions. These facilities would also provide a focus for the School's considerable effort to open its doors to the community.

The Theatre is located at the centre of the building, surrounded on 2 levels by a library, social areas, classrooms and offices with additional teaching accommodation also provided at the lower ground floor level. It must of course fulfil many functions ranging from the presentation of professional productions to being used as an educational tool. Consequently the stage area has not been raised and can be enclosed together with the first two rows of seating by means of a special curtain to create an intimate teaching area. Similarly a grid of bridges has been provided over the stage area and auditorium to give the students the opportunity to work safely on the technical lighting and scenery at high level. The auditorium however has been raked to achieve good sight lines and comfortable continental seating has been provided in

the hope of attracting some non-students to productions to fill the 240 places. The auditorium rises to the main foyer at 1st floor level. This space also will be used in many ways including as an examination hall. The workshop and props are located at the rear of the stage area where the adjacent classrooms can double as changing rooms.

From the point of view of acoustics, the Theatre was designed primarily for the spoken word. It was always clear however that it would be used for every imaginable type of function and we are pleased to learn from the School that the acoustics have been found very satisfactory throughout the considerable range of performances and events which have already taken place.

Rank Strand fitted out the Theatre providing the seating and curtains, and also the audio and technical

lighting installations. Whilst these are fairly basic in keeping with the limited budget for the building as a whole, there is ample scope for the School to adapt and extend the installations in the future.

The Design Team:
British School of Brussels:
A. Humphries, Headmaster
A. Barlow, Bursar
Architects:
Ellis Williams Partnership
Theatre Consultant:
Norman Branson
Liaison Architects:
Les Architectes Polak
Quantity Surveyors:
Mahon Scears & MDA
Structural & Services Consultants:
PROGECO S.A.
Main Contractor:
Bâtiments et Ponts



A NEW GALAXY

-IN BREMEN THEATER AM GOETHEPLATZ



by Gunther Reichelt
Gunther Reichelt is Product Manager for Memory Systems in Germany. He joined Rank Strand Germany in 1974 after having worked for eighteen years for a company which is now one of his competitors, although his particular sphere was railway signalling. He can now send every stage lighting cue to its proper destination and make sure it arrives on time.

THE theatre was reopened on 27th August 1950 after having been completely burned out during World War II. It is used for all interpretative art forms such as plays, opera and musicals, with an audience capacity of 990.

Since 1969 a Scandinavian light control system with a punch card memory was in operation, but only the

actual 200 thyristor dimmers were still perfectly reliable up to the last day of use. The control electronics were showing considerable malfunction due to mechanical wear caused by age.

The constantly increasing demands of modern artistic lighting soon overtaxed both men and machine. For this reason it was decided to install an up to date computer-controlled lighting system and at the same time to increase the number of controllable dimmers to 288.

The extension of the power control system required a complete exchange of the existing dimmers because 88 additional dimmers and an extensive power distribution had to be put into the identical space. The use of special compact size dimmers developed by Rank Strand's German company solved the space problem, taking up only two thirds of the area previously required! In the remaining third, to the joy of the theatre, storage space for luminaires and lamps could be provided.

After some heavy efforts by competition, we installed a Galaxy system with two playbacks, group master, dual floppy discs, colour monitor, a keyboard and a printer.

An effects module will take control of the dimmers via the 360-way pin patch. At the customer's special request, an independent second back-

up system with 288 single channel faders was installed in matching style. This piece of equipment is also used when rigging the luminaires. Allocated to each lever is an LED showing the dimmer function. Computer system, pin patch back-up and channel-fader unit can be used separately or at the same time, following in the latter instance the Strand rule of "highest takes precedence".

Specially designed panels for control of working and auditorium lights, as well as the communication system, extend the facilities of the Galaxy to complete the control system.

The lighting control room is housed in a spacious area behind the auditorium, providing excellent visibility of stage and proscenium.

The exchange of the complete system with its many extensions had to be carried out within the space of four weeks, making it necessary for a great number of different performances to be recorded blind. This was carried out with such perfection that only a few alterations had to be made later.

The operators were quick to recognise the sophisticated possibilities of Galaxy, and can now hardly remember how complicated things used to be!

With Galaxy's help, we have won more new friends.

Those interested in future installa-

tions of Galaxy would be well advised to have this theatre's enthusiastic team demonstrate this new Rank Strand system to them — there is nothing so convincing as a working theatre's experience.

The following additional Galaxy systems have been installed in Germany:

Berlin — Schaubuehne

Three systems each 576 channels. All three systems can drive the same 576 dimmers. The auditorium has removable dividing walls, thus providing one, two, or three auditoriums at will, with the possibility of holding up to three performances simultaneously.

Stuttgart — Grosses Haus (Opera) — Kleines Haus (Drama)

Two basic systems — 600 channels — plus special floppy disc. Both systems are used as electronic back-up for two Lightboards. A special programme allows the use of Lightboard diskettes within the Galaxys.

Schweinfurt — Theater der Stadt

120 channel system with group master, a keyboard and colour monitor.

The immediate future

The next two Galaxys will be installed in the Baden-Baden studios of Sudwestfunk Television. Each system will have 120 channels, preset masters and colour VDU.