

NEW LIGHTING CONTROL EQUIPMENT

by Rudolph Fuchs

(Translated from the original German)

ON 3rd October 1822 Ludwig van Beethoven inaugurated the Josefstadt Theatre in its present form. 160 years later a totally new latest form of lighting control was installed. The new Galaxy has been selected as meeting the present day complex artistic lighting demands of the theatre.

The Josefstadt Theatre is the oldest building in Vienna which is still used for performances. Inaugurated in 1788 and rebuilt in its present basic configuration in 1822, it looks back on nearly 200 years of history. Wagner's "Tannhauser" was first performed in the open air theatre belonging to Josefstadt, the Thaliatheater (a wooden building) in Vienna and later taken over by the main house and played there 15 times.

The Josefstadt is no great technical house or opera stage to which excellent perspectives can be attributed, but here it is a question of preserving the special Josefstadt style. Naturally tradition obliges each responsible technician to approach any modification plan with caution and a sense of responsibility. However, this involves managing the legacy of that brilliant man of the theatre, Max Reinhardt. Max Reinhardt reorganised the house in accordance with his wishes in 1924. He made the auditorium into a setting corresponding completely with his own production style, which already had the audience under its spell on entering the hall and transported them into a splendid world. The Josefstadt was justly designated as one of the most beautiful theatres in the world.

During the German national socialist era the house was managed by Reinhardt's assistant director, Heinz Hilbert, and under his leadership as much was risked politically as was permitted at that time. Perhaps even a little more. Goebbels rather angrily called the "Josefstadt Ensemble" of those years "a concentration camp on holiday". When in 1943 the news of Reinhardt's death in Vienna became known a funeral ceremony was staged with closed curtains on the Josefstadt for Max Reinhardt, whose intensions were still continued even in the Third Reich. This perhaps also characterises a little of the individuality of this ensemble, which even all difficulties considered, represented a unit on its own. The principal rule at the Josefstadt is quality, i.e. precision from the premiere to the last performance. The existing Bordoni lighting control system, installed in 1924 and renewed in 1956, could no longer follow the modern production style with its demand for ultra quick lighting changes.

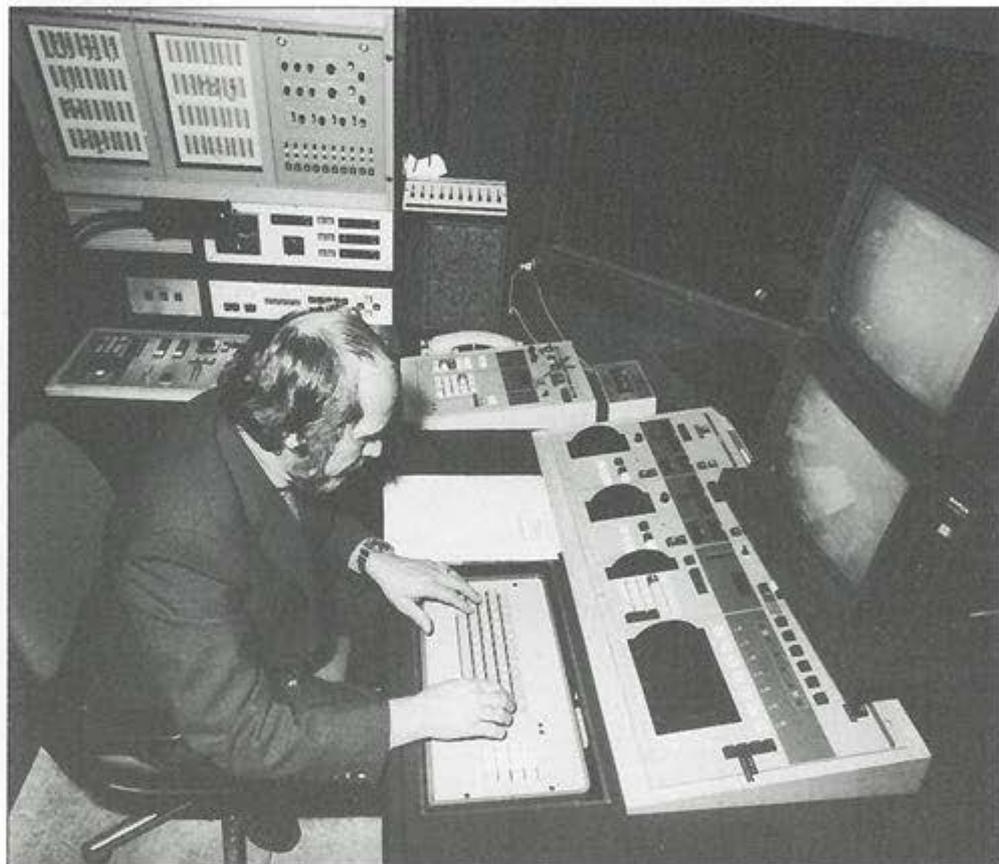
The Galaxy is not just a new machine for a more stylish realisation of old ideas, but a modern, logically working system for creative lighting control with direct, instant access to lighting as is demanded above all in current theatre productions.

Planning of the new electronic control system started in 1978. An essential planning point was the new location of the control room. In 1978 the first changes were made for the location, since an on stage position did not seem suitable on

account of dust. Also one could call it uneconomical to put an electronic lighting control system on the stage. Therefore the technician had to find a possibility of installing this lighting control system giving the operators a reasonable angle of vision. It was achieved by adapting a storage room which decades ago once belonged to a washroom. Also the toilet block located over it had to be reorganised and insulated. The in and out flow to the toilets had to be removed and diverted and incorporated into the main wall of the theatre in order to provide a 1.80m wide viewing window.

problem. The location at the side signified a compromise solution and required precise interior design. Then problems from the electricians and interior designers had to be solved. The view of the operator directly on to the stage and the working components was the guide in the truest sense of the word.

On account of the location and the space conditions a lighting control system had to be designed so that everything could be grouped around the operator within reach and so that the man has a clear view of the stage without craning his



Layout of the Control Room

The most important thing in building this outlet was supporting the theatre building without any danger of collapse.

The construction work was carried out and completed in 1979. In 1980 the electrical installation was extended. The low voltage equipment was installed in 1981 and the new lighting control system in 1982.

A few words regarding the problems of the choice of location:

A good place in the dress circle was not approved by the building authorities. Since the seating capacity of this house is less than 800 it was impossible from the beginning to sacrifice seats. The layout of the control room resulting from the conversion of the washrooms was the secondary

neck. In the case of technically artistic operation at the Josefstadt Theatre the electrician on the control box must work more than 12 hours. Therefore it is impossible to require continuous bending of the head since after a few hours overfatigue and discomfort would occur. The fact that colour monitors were chosen and not black/white screens was also a determining factor. It was therefore necessary to group all control components around the operator as in a cockpit. A procedure that was not necessary anywhere until now. The modular construction of the Galaxy accommodated these requirements very well.

The new location required also a special solution to the communication equipment located in the control room, since conventional personal contact with the stage to date had to be made via radio or wire. Furthermore in the case of entr'actes the view