

HIS MAJESTY'S THE

white embellished with gold. The only additional colour in the auditorium was provided by a pale blue background to the classical frieze above the proscenium (known to many on the project as the Box Office Queue) and the Arms of the City of Aberdeen which surmounted the stage box towers to the left and right. A large new chandelier was designed having an entrancing lightness and sparkle when suspended but looking rather too much like a prop – which it undoubtedly was – when viewed at close quarters by the building team. Many were the complaints about this chandelier until it was raised into position when it was accepted to be absolutely right. The Art Nouveau tiles at the rear of the stalls could not be easily removed intact. After many attempts a firm was found who were capable of realising copies of these tiles which were as near as makes no matter identical with the original. It is interesting to note that they fell short, possibly, only in the intensity of some of the colours due, I understand, to the ban on the use of lead based pigments.

There is no doubt that the appearance of the auditorium in its new glory is a theatrical experience of the very highest quality. Much of the intricate detail of Matcham's original design has been newly revealed due to the accentuation of shapes through the cunning use of gold leaf. It has not been completely determined that this was as Matcham originally finished the auditorium, indeed there is a considerable body of opinion that avers that the auditorium always was plain white. Peter Rice takes the theatrical view that it is likely that Matcham ran out of money and was forced to modify his original concept. Had the money been available there is little doubt, he thinks, that Matcham would have indulged in the full theatrical glory of gold.

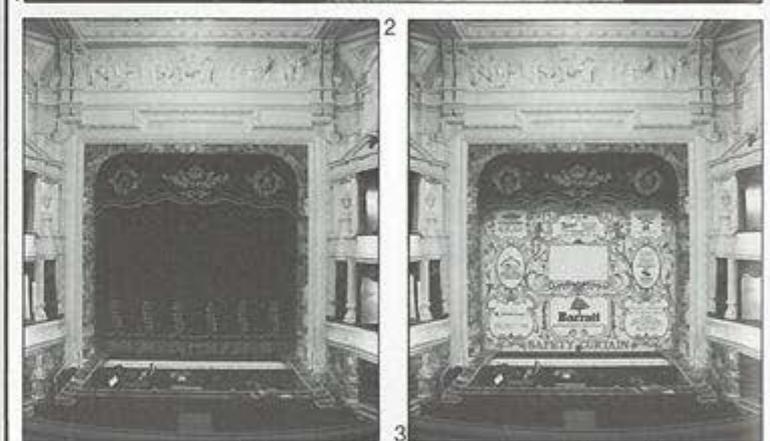
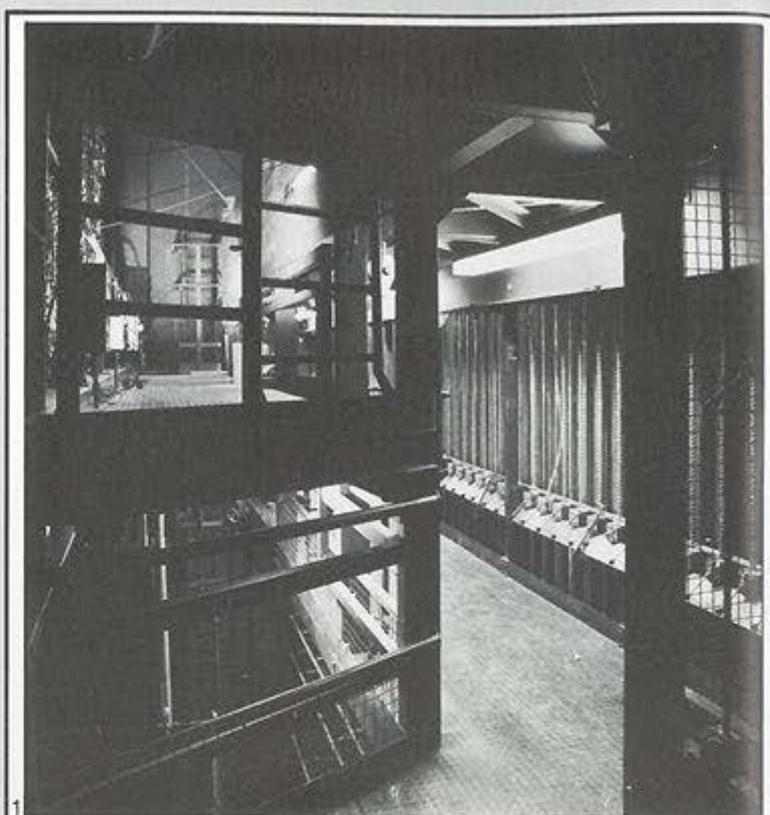
THE safety curtain is of some interest. It is conventional construction but has been painted on the auditorium side with a rococo design by Peter Rice incorporating a number of spaces in which advertisements can be painted. This nineteenth century approach has the additional advantage of providing an annual revenue to the theatre. The central lozenge is left open white so that advertisements and information may be projected on to it during the interval from a linked pair of Carousel slide projectors with a between-slide fade device. These projectors are situated in the cinema projection booth at the rear of the upper circle and can be controlled either from the switchboard or from the prompt corner.

The new lighting system returned the prompt side stage box to its rightful use by introducing a control suite at the rear of the upper circle. This block of control rooms was

elegantly designed by the architect to match the rest of the auditorium and contains a sound control room at the audience left end, a lighting control room at audience right and a large follow spot position in the centre. Two Panji follow spots are provided to augment the two CSI's which the theatre already owned. The windows of the follow spot position, which are openable, as are all control room windows, extend to the ceiling of the upper circle so that the cinema projector may project through the follow spot room to the screen on stage.

Lighting is a fairly conventional set-up consisting of 160 ways of which 20 are 5kW and the remaining ones 2.5kW. Control is by means of a Strand Light Palette which has accessories in the form of a designers module for use in the stalls and a riggers remote control. It is particularly pleasing to report, in view of a certain amount of early adverse criticism, that after the training received at Brentford the Palette has operated impeccably and its operator declares himself delighted.

Front of house lighting positions in theatres of this type are always difficult. No-one is anxious to offend the architecture by bolting luminaires on to plaster work and it is not always possible, even if money is available, to adopt a system similar to that in the Theatre Royal, Nottingham. In Aberdeen five principal positions were isolated. In the upper circle immediately in front of the control suite is a bar carrying a number of 2kW luminaires and 2 bars curved to fit the plaster moulding, but set behind the moulding into the ceiling of the upper circle at its left and right extremities carry 1000W luminaires. Dimensional limitations alone forced the choice of the lanterns for these positions though it must be said that had the new Cadenza range been available at the time with their smaller lamp houses those instruments might have been the inevitable choice. In the gallery two more lighting bars are to be found fixed to the ceiling at the rear and to the left and right of the gallery. These bars were originally fitted with Pattern 808's but these have not found much favour with the theatre management. The length of the fittings alone makes the proximity of the luminaires to members of the audience somewhat daunting but, almost wherever they are placed, it is possible for members of the public standing in their seats to impede the beams. That being said, there are undoubtedly times when the gallery is not sold to the public and it is believed that these positions will then be most useful. Once again there is little doubt that the Cadenza range would have been invaluable in this position. If second thoughts were possible I suppose we would have spent some of the available money having those luminaires in the upper circle slips stove enamelled to match



1 Fly floor and lighting gallery with loading gallery above. (Looking down stage).
2 The new Tabs –
3 – and Safety Curtain.

the paintwork of the auditorium. During the design period it was thought unlikely that these would be constantly in position and therefore, even if the fittings started their life matching the auditorium, in a very short time there would be a miscellaneous collection of white and black luminaires side by side. I have to say that since last September when the building opened the luminaires appear to remain unchanged.

The Light Palette itself fits almost too snugly into the small lighting control room at the rear of the circle but there is just enough space beside it to accommodate a moveable trolley which incorporates the push-button controls for a number of independent 5 amp circuits spread throughout the system together with house light controls, communications and slide projector controls. This trolley together with the associated equip-

ment and all the socket outlet boxes throughout the building were provided by Rank's agent in Scotland, Northern Light.

Northern Light also provided a prompt corner combined facilities panel. This panel (which perhaps would be a trifle smaller if there were a chance to redesign) incorporated the stage lighting socket outlets for downstage left, a number of microphone and loudspeaker outlets, a video monitor and camera outlet a number of fused terminal posts for stage effects – 12 volt dc, 6 volt dc, telephone ringing circuits and a mains circuit. Also incorporated in the box is a 100 amp 3 phase special effects supply, controls for cleaners lights, working lights and performance lights, house light controls, the local communications module consisting of cue lights and intercom socket, firing buttons for three independent effects outlets in