

CONGRATULATIONS HONEST·ED MIRVISH



by The Editor

THE Old Vic has had a long and chequered history – and Strand has been involved almost from that day long ago when two theatre electricians got together in Covent Garden to start “Lighting for Entertainment”.

I doubt if anyone in Britain who is even remotely interested in the theatre has not heard the latest chapter in the Old Vic saga. The dramatic story of the sealed bid of £550,000 for the theatre, followed by the two million pounds which has been spent on completely renovating the building.

But, make no mistake, so far as we know there was no cavalier throwing away of largess. Every pound was spent to be effective.

For example, the stage lighting installation was overhauled – not replaced – both on stage and the Light Palette Memory System. We added some extra dimming capacity, while we also improved the house lighting control.

When it came to Strand's involvement in the auditorium we renovated the existing seating which, our casting pattern books tell us, was manufactured in the early to mid thirties. We re-covered the seating using a modern flame proof fabric, and by laying on top of the original spring interiors a layer of foam the old seating now makes a very good contribution to the interior both in comfort and appearance.

I even feel a certain satisfaction that the seat springs that supported audiences who crossed the river to see Charles Laughton during his 1935 Old Vic season and then supported their descendants who watched those miraculous early days of National Theatre in the 60's are still giving comfort to the 1984 audience for “Blondell” and “Master Class”.

One good portent for the success of the new management must be their public relations. I sometimes write to theatres asking for information, or perhaps for the loan of a photograph. In only about 50% of cases will I receive any reply even though the fourteen thousand people who have asked for TABS must have many potential audience members among them.

My request to the New Men at the Old Vic brought forth one of the most professional press packs I have ever seen with photos, plans, a history of the theatre and the story of the whole contract.

The new idea of gathering a subscription audience to a well publicised theatre seems to your Editor to be the kind of new approach to winning audiences that London's commercial theatre can only welcome, watch and perhaps emulate.