

and many others, and apart from my spot occasionally staying at the same level when a dancer jumped in the air I managed very well.

Just before I was due to leave the theatre to move to Suffolk I said to the Guv, 'I must hand it to you, you didn't turn a hair the first time I met you. I bet you wondered what you'd got?' He looked at me with the suspicion of a twinkling in his eye. 'Yes - and I'm still wondering!' was his reply. For you see although I classed myself as a drama student, for I was at that time doing a correspondence course with the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, I am a grey haired grand mother!

The Editor's Postscript

Although our contributor - and, by the way, can there possibly be another granny lime operator anywhere in the world? - seems to have enjoyed her work my own memories of the same role are of the most excruciating boredom. The show I worked was a somewhat depressing summer seaside review of many years ago at the long defunct Imperial Theatre, Brighton. I still occasionally dream of the terrible twenty minutes, which no doubt seemed only like thirty to the audience, when the principal comedian took the stage in front of a street scene backcloth, red and white circuits on floats and No. 1 batten plus two open limes, and gave us his speciality act. How I envied the orchestra as they crept out through their escape hatch to

blessed freedom from our star, a little alcoholic refreshment.

My other main memory is of the maddening scream of the blowers used to cool the gates on the 60 amp high intensity arc follow spots we used. I believe they were made by a firm called Ross, but I have never seen any others of the same type since. How we envied the six - yes, six - lime operators at the Hippodrome, the local Moss Theatre, with their magnificent pre-war Stelmars.

What a lantern the Stelmar was! I don't doubt our Strand equivalent - the Sunspot - was as good, but I never knew one. Much of the pleasure of operating the Stelmar was the lighting man's equivalent of driving a steam loco.

There was craftsmanship, weight, the extraction of performance by means of 'driver' skill, glorious extravagance of fuel - up to 80 amps and 3/8" diameter copper covered positive carbons - and not least, clouds of smoke. I remember the tremendous moment when Cinderella arrived at the ball, centre stage at top of a flight of a dozen silver steps - main stage and FOH all down to half, the doors flung open by attendant flunkies, Cinderella enters to all six limes gelled with 32 pink and then the tremendous crash - heard all over the circle, as six flood lenses dropped in as the stage circuits went to full! We used to speculate that the nearby Shoreham power station must have considered revolving round its own commutator at that point.

because the fuse box which fed the nearby kitchen was situated in the same area and it was fortunate that they did not require the electric cooker as it was that fuse (30A) which was used for the power source. I always find it 'easier' to have the shortest run of power cable possible and then use normal 15A leads to get to the dimmer pack location, easier?, because very few people have 60A power cables you can scrounge for the show, but they have plenty of domestic extension leads, even if it does mean changing the plugs.

On the five nights of the performances everything went well, however we had to add a blue filter to the Minims to give the back cloths a little more colour. As previously mentioned, the low ceiling height did cause problems especially the FOH patt 743's because of their low angle of hitting the performers face, shadows were cast on the back cloths and it would have taken more sub kilowatt luminaires than available (and more hanging space) to get rid of them and besides, when you had the dozen or so performers all on stage, you couldn't see much of the back cloth anyway.

In summing up, we amateur illuminators will never have the resources of the big professional, however, with lots of thought and creativity, a show to professional standards can be obtained with the minimum amount of equipment. If you are lighting pantomime or variety

use plenty of colour whenever possible and effects, but be careful not to let effects take over from the performers, for example, in our production of Ali-Din, which is loosely based on Aladdin, the piece when Abanazer sends Ali-Din into the cave to find the treasure we lit as follows:- Abanazer appeared centre stage with just his head visible through a hole in a back cloth, he held a powerful torch below the level of the hole up-lighting his face, the rest of the stage was in a blackout. When the rock slid slowly across the entrance the stage was in a complete blackout. True to pantomime you can imagine the laughter when Ali-Din nervously

by John S. Bentley

noticed in the February 1985 edition a request from amateurs for tips:- I usually tend to light productions for large, comparatively well funded amateur groups with often their own theatre. However, often I receive requests from small amateur groups and semi-professional one-nighters to help them out. This usually leads me in to some church/community/school hall equipped with two or four old Pat 23's or focus spots as FOH and a multitude of Pat 137 floods on stage, all going slightly mouldy; any gels present were obviously inserted by whoever installed the set-up. The first thing I always do is clean all reflectors and any lenses, then make sure that all bulbs are inserted correctly and that pre-focus bulbs are not sideways on (you'd be surprised at the positions you can get a bulb into in a Pat 23), finally making sure any bulb/reflector/lens system is correctly adjusted and positioned for maximum light output. I can improve the apparent output of a lantern by up to 50% this way. Keeping lanterns clean and correctly adjusted seems to be the most neglected part of amateur lighting.

Having contemplated the above, I then find out that the producer has 'this marvellous idea for doing everything in the round with the audience sat in amongst the action', my pointing out that the lighting rig is inadequate is met with total incomprehension and suggestions that some hiring of equipment may be necessary results in an assortment of tantrums, outrages and unctious flattery. To get round those situations I now have a collection of 150W PAR 38s, these I find fit Pat 137's beautifully and with the right choice of intensive (spot) or extensive (flood) PAR 38, depending on the throw, produce an effect somewhat akin to a fresnel - say a Patt 123. I have further found that with the addition of aluminium baking foil in the gel holder I can profile the edges of the beam, the foil must be on the lamp side of the gel otherwise the gel cracks and blisters, the older Pat 137's actually had a double gel frame runner, the front one to take a set of barn doors which were ideal for this. I have been using this technique since 1969 and so far haven't seen anybody else trying it.

The major disadvantage is that the PARs are much hotter at the front and nearer to the gel frame, the Pat 137s are not designed for this lamp and gels lose their colour, become pliable or melt (depending on the gel) fairly quickly, i.e. the Pat 137s should be kept well ventilated and used if possible for limited periods. The use of baking foil to profile the lanterns reflects heat back in to the lantern and the whole assembly becomes hotter than a Pat 137 normally does, so they should be kept away from scenery and wiring and checked regularly to see it hasn't cracked. Editor's italics.

Whilst describing this I have been reminded of the worst ladder I have ever used - this consisted of an 'A' frame ladder rising to a height of 12 feet, through the centre of the apex was an extendible 15 foot section, thus the total height was about 25 feet, 13 feet of it absolutely vertical.

There were two techniques, either adjust the height and sit on the top rung or hook one's chin over the top rung and pray. Both methods left something to be desired when rehanging a Pat 264. Being 18 stone I tried a third technique - I hooked my climbing belt to the top of the ladder, braced my legs and leant back only to discover that the top of the ladder had come with me and I was dangling in mid air. I spent an interesting five minutes trying to regain a vertical position whilst wondering when the top of the ladder would snap.

To make matters worse some kind benefactor had donated two of these things to the theatre.

said, 'ooh! isn't it dark in here'. The blackout lasted for two or three lines of script and then the fairy appeared. Well having a black stage really gave impact to the photoflash and followspot highlighting the fairy.

So you can see, don't be afraid to use your imagination and perhaps something a bit out of the ordinary, but remember, next time you go to the theatre or even a rock concert, because you can pick up effects and tricks from them, don't just go to watch the show, look up and see what luminaires are used and how they are positioned.

Happy Illuminating.

