

# CUE

Technical Theatre Review



January – February 1980

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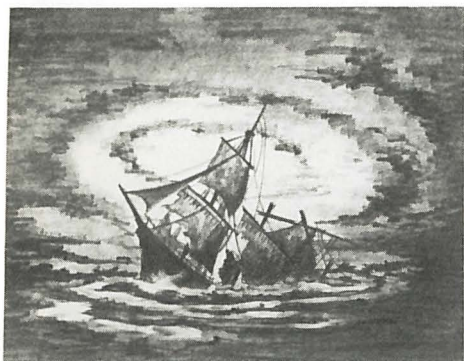
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Our cover picture is one of Robin Don's excitingly realistic sets in Basil Coleman's production of 'The Flying Dutchman' for English National Opera North. Above is a sketch for one of the slides used in the sinking sequence in the final act.

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# CUE

## Technical Theatre Review

3.

January-February 1980

## Look both ways

With the dawn of each new year the media parade the past and probe the future. Filing systems and crystal balls are consulted simultaneously in the search for significance. With the arrival of a new decade the pace of recall and forecast quickens. Phrases are coined. Labels abound. We await the turn of the century with some apprehension.

Shall Cue enter the eighties without a backward glance? Without a prophetic glimpse of things to come? No, sir! There has been a past and there shall be a future. So we exhumed an old oracle, name of *Tabulus*, to offer a one-man-view of technical theatre in seventies past and eighties yet to come.

### LIGHTING

At the beginning of the seventies there were few memory boards and still fewer that actually worked. Now instant record and instant recall are so commonplace that we can forget the mechanics of control and concentrate our energies on lighting the show. But do we? Shall we? The late seventies have seen much concentration on control cosmetics and on knobs that exist because they are possible rather than because they are desirable. Shall the early eighties bring realisation that so much lighting is grotty because, despite a marvellous control board, the wrong lanterns with the wrong colours have been hung in the wrong place and pointed at the wrong part of the stage?

### MACHINERY

Having accepted that stage machinery is a temporary production device rather than an integral part of the stage structure, we are still confused about the future of flying. Shall the eighties decide that it takes a lot to beat manually operated counterweight lines, although it would be nice if there was a simple alternative to humping

weights in a loading gallery. Plus, of course, some simple power-assistance to take the sweat out of spot lines.

### DESIGN

In their affection for the heaviest of materials, many designers have been accused of treating stage crew with contempt. However we suspect that the problem is one of ignorance — the design schools are concerned more with scale models than with reality. Shall we see a retreat from expensive floors and elaborate masking boxes? Perhaps a swing towards illusion? Perhaps even towards paint?

### SOUND

Electronic processing of sound has come of age. Sound is now taken seriously. It is beginning to get something approaching a fair share of the budget. The actors no longer sound as if they are miming to a 78 rpm gramophone. Now they sound as if they are miming to a reasonably Hi-Fi. Perhaps soon they will sound as if they are actually making the sounds.

### ARCHITECTURE

The more we thought about theatrical form in the seventies, the less we knew what we wanted. It is probably fortunate that there will be very little new building in the next decade. Perhaps, by the time we can afford new theatres, there will be building materials without the deadly finality of concrete. Meanwhile shall we restore some of our heritage that has been mothballed by the bingo age?

### WHAT ELSE?

Administration will continue to flourish and expand, but on-stage it will become increasingly the age of the one-man-show. And, unlike most other industries, we have nothing further to fear from the micro-processor age. We have had our chips.

# Competing with a Legend

ROBIN DON

**“Die Frist ist um;  
The Time is up; (the Dutchman utters his/  
first words)  
Once more seven years have passed.  
Full, weary, the ocean casts me up on land.  
Ha! Proud ocean!  
Shortly you shall bear me again.”**

— Almost the feeling as one hesitatingly steps from the Inter City arriving in Leeds at 9.15 a.m. on a bleak October morning. The first day of Fit up for E.N.O.N.'s first anniversary.

**“Your challenge varies,  
but my torment is eternal.  
The grace I seek on land  
I ne'er shall find.  
To you, tides of the ocean,  
I shall be true,  
until your last drop be dry.”**

Basil Coleman producer, David Lloyd Jones conductor, Charles Bristow lighting design and myself for the next ten days have the task of transforming a few bits of polystyrene, several lumps of steel and 10 square yards of Jap Silk into the legend of Wagner's 'Flying Dutchman'.

Peter Kemp and his engineers have been kept busy over the last month constructing the hydraulic system + hull which will enable our Dutchman's ship to rise up from Charlie's swirling mists.

**“Scornfully I challenge the pirate,  
in savage combat I hoped for death.  
“Here,” I cried “Show your mettle.  
With treasure my ship is overflowing!”  
Alas! the sea's ferocious son  
crossed himself in fear — and fled!”**

Hoping these are not the feelings of the stage crew as they leave exhausted after a get in lasting all day, we break for the night.

**“How oft into the ocean's deepest depths  
have I yearning hurled myself!  
In the fearful graveyard of ships  
I drove my vessel on the rocks.  
Nowhere a grave! Never Death!”**

Living up to a legend as great as the Dutchman is no easy task. Being the kind of opera which is open to many interpretations we had bravely decided to attempt to reproduce Wagner's original vision. Having noticed that Charlie's ELEX crew had hung more than a dozen projectors, I felt we were in with a chance.

It was planned to project four separate images of the ship for the arrival of the ghost vessel, with each slide having a slightly larger image. The battery of projectors were mounted on a mobile tower situated behind the O.P. Rocks and simply blasted their pictures on to the backcloth. A

fifth projector, with moving mist, was focused over these images, thus concealing the slide changes and enabling our ship image to look as if it was advancing down the wind, straight towards the audience.

Cued precisely to coincide with the last projected image the constructed hull (which lay hidden behind the rocks U.S.L.) started to roll down it's track, rising slowly into perspective as it advanced.

The mast tops disappeared high up into the darkness as the ghost sails unfurled from the flys. The bow sprit when fully extended came to rest approximately 6" from the front gauze. — A hell of a lot of

cues going on at once with a large team of people working in close unison in very little light. It took the E.N.O.N. crew amazingly little time to achieve this sequence perfectly!

The visual image had now achieved a life of its own. Even although I'd spent a lot of time on the model designing the arrival of the ship — the many days in the photographic studio and endless meetings with the engineers, carpenters, scenic artists and costume makers were all now a thing of the past. With David Lloyd Jones spiriting such wonderful sounds from his orchestra and confident that our crew were at the helm one was able to sit back and be totally captivated by the magic.



The Norwegian crew shelter from the storm in the Fjord.



The Ghost Vessel arrives.

I smile when that splendid baritone Peter Glossop makes his first appearance high up on the prow. The dignity and strength with which he sings his first words "Die Frist ist um" never for a moment reveal that he has spent the previous few minutes clambering over the hydraulic pump unit, through a maze of control lines before ascending an unforgiveably steep ladder. This staunch Yorkshireman is undaunted.

**"Such is damnation's dread decree  
I ask thee, blessed angel of God,  
who won for me the terms of my redemption:  
was I the plaything of thy scorn,  
when deliverance thou didst show me?  
Vain hope! Mere idle fancy!"**

The 20 minute interval before Act II gives little time to complete the change. Although most of the components for all three scenes are on stage throughout the opera, the rock cladding and ships decks have to be removed for the middle act. It is completed with approx. a minute to spare. The curtain goes up on the interior of Daland's House or as we thought more suitable, a warehouse extension to his home. Having to facilitate twenty three ladies at their spinning wheels, a thriving cottage industry seemed to make more sense!

The change to the quayside for Act III proved to be the trickiest. A stage crew running to complete a change in time must be pretty unique. It looked tight on paper but one has to admit this is really pushing it.

The destruction of the ghost ship was achieved by reversing the Act I arrival process having replaced the slides with those of a sinking vessel. The arms of the stage management ladies are now beginning to tire. Garbed in black they have been secretly manipulating the ocean of jap silk in time to the rhythm of the music throughout the piece.

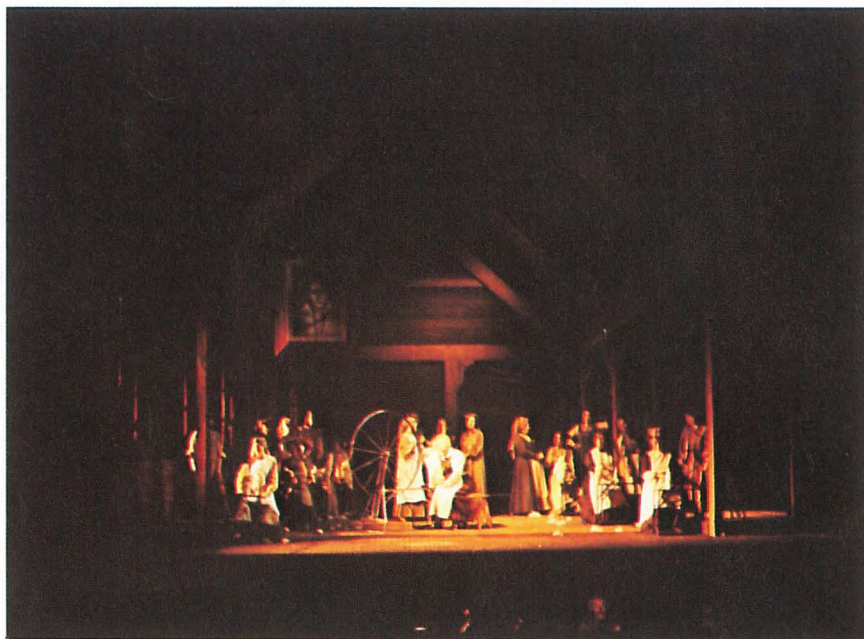
One final swell and the Dutchman's ship slowly sinks below the waves.

**"On earth there is no fidelity that is eternal.**

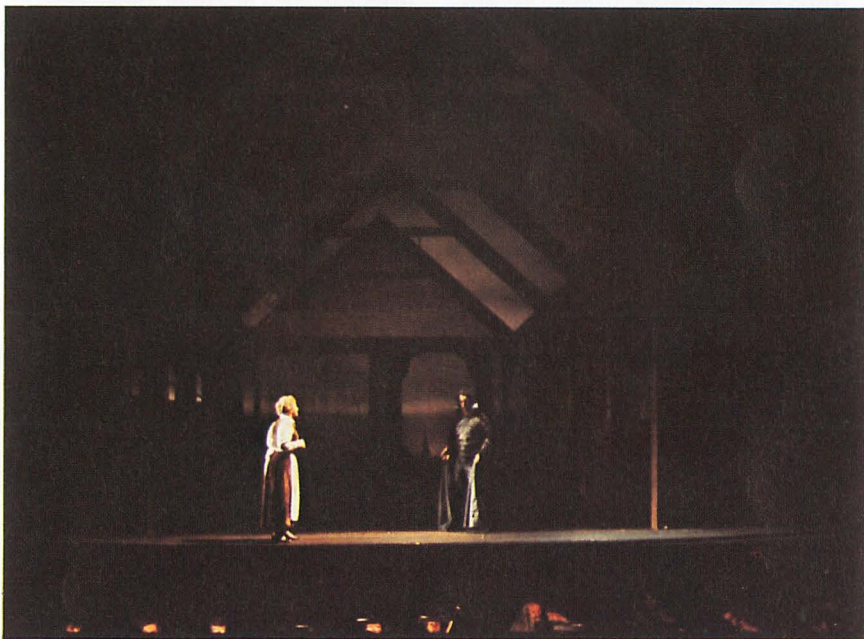
**One hope alone remains to me,  
one alone that is unshattered:  
though Earth's seeds long may flourish,  
yet one day must she perish!  
Day of Judgement! Dread Last Day!  
When will you dawn to end my night?  
When shall resound the knell of doom  
at which the Earth shall burst asunder?  
When all the dead arise,  
then shall I pass into the void.  
Ye planets, end your course!  
Perpetual extinction, engulf me!"**

The curtain falls in the final transfiguration just as we have had a moment to realize that the images formed from the swirling mists are the faces of Senta and her Dutchman.

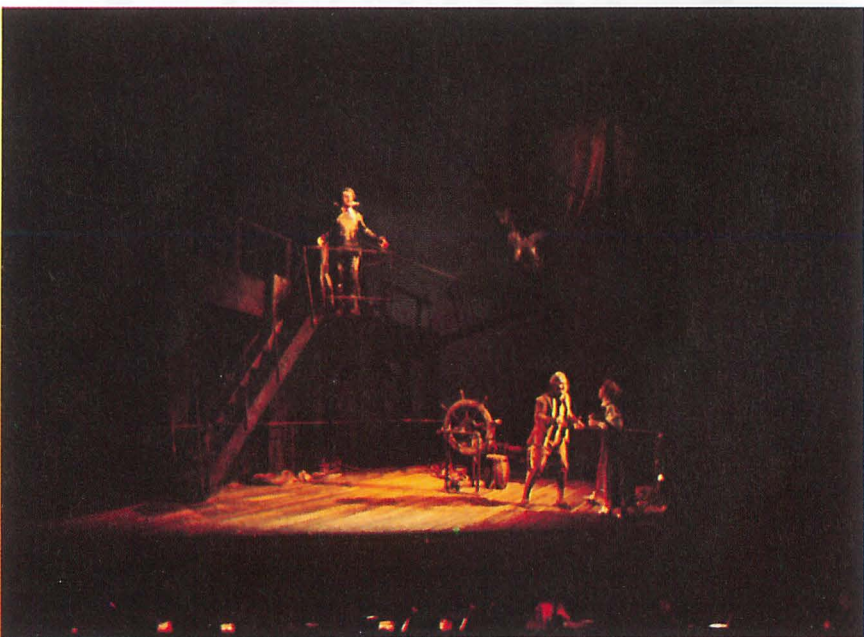
It was a tough ten days. Coming immediately after the Company and Crew had just completed an extensive and gruelling tour with four other operas, their dedication for the Dutchman was supreme. They are a legend in themselves.



The Warehouse.



Senta meets the Dutchman.



The Dutchman departs.

# Autolycus

## The Cisco Kid?

Cisco, the big trade show for cinematic and stage equipment in Paris, has now erupted three times. It obviously fills a need or supplies an excuse, and everybody who is anybody, as they say, was there – even though CUE's representative, rather ostentatiously wearing his economy hair-shirt, approached it by the least probable route available, via Lydd Airport (Junkers 52's, mind the step).

The 1979 Cisco carried noisily and significantly on its back Discom, the European Discotheque Show, and we can only expect that, next time, they'll make space for Crisco and have show-business catering in the act too. Anyway, equipment and design companies from 15 countries went to Cisco and showed their wares, France weighing in with 105, West Germany with 28, Great Britain (well done that subsidy) with 24, Italy and the USA with 16 each, and the rest more or less nowhere. Which is a fair reflexion, we believe, of where the action is, and where the competition is, in technological terms, provided, of course, that *how* you put things on is more important than what you are putting on.

What emerges at Cisco are the really extraordinary facilities that can be summoned up to help you *process* an audience, if not actually to please it. And that, obviously, is where the money is and where the work is.

'Corporate Theatre', the business of theatricalising and spectacularising conventions, conferences, seminars, symposia, colloquia (they *all* used just to be called sales conferences, or, sometimes, propaganda) is something every lighting and sound designer and technician should be up in and in on. One American garment manufacturer, it was reported by James Moody of Sundance, now puts nearly the whole of his advertising budget not into TV commercials or print ads but into a \$2,000,000 musical, which tours department-stores, and runs for over an hour, to publicise the firm's brandnames. Most of the production budget, he judges cheerfully enough, goes into multi-media effects.

What the essentially captive audiences (you want to lose your job from not attending, maybe?) make of corporate theatre nobody is saying. On the one hand you've usually got marketing men acting on

the old aphorism 'If they laugh they remember', on the other you've got creative people taking refuge in their slogan 'If you've got nothing to say, sing it'. No, it isn't quite theatre. But it *is* technical theatre. And that's us.

## The alternative Festival

The London Students Drama Festival (LSDF is not an entirely happy abbreviation, we felt) is now rounding apace and will be brought to bed at the Collegiate Theatre in Gordon Street, W.C.1 between February 18th and March 1st. At the time CUE went to bed some 20 groups had entered productions. Meanwhile workshop sessions in many aspects of theatre have been proceeding under the tutelage of some very distinguished names. Max Stafford-Clark (lately of the Royal Court) is covering Direction. Voice is being dealt with by Cecily Berry, Mime by Desmond Jones. Lighting and Sound sessions are under the control of two RSC stalwarts, Nick Firth

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and John Leonard (whose review of the facilities and felicities of the Collegiate Theatre, where the final judging of the eleven most worthy productions will take place, will be found on page 12).

A good idea, some time back now, was a Playwrights' Forum to which original scripts were submitted. This led to a circulation of ideas for production among student bodies which were potential entrants. From this it emerged, for example, that the School of Oriental and African Studies chose a play by the American writer, David Gilbert, who is coming over from California to help SOAS with its production. Which is just how forums should work.

Currently members of the companies at the Riverside Studios, the Young Vic, and the Royal Court are out and about the fringes of London, working with the Festival committee at the sensitive business of selecting the eleven productions to be staged during the Festival fortnight. Final adjudication will be by Clare Colvin of 'The Evening News' (co-sponsors of the Festival with CUE, Thames Television, and the Borough of Camden), Peter Hepple of 'Stage and Television Today', the playwright Edward Bond, and John Ashford of the ICA (where Thames TV, as their award, will offer a week's run of any play judged 'outstandingly original'). The Evening News award is for 'the most promising playwright'. CUE is giving two awards (John Ashford will be the judge), one for lighting, one for design.

Readers of this CUE are all too late now to don false beards and bogus jeans and enter old mock-Pinero scripts they've been keeping in their bottom drawers. If you've any queries don't ring us but the nice people on the Festival Committee on 01-580 9551. And you're *not* too late to be the good audience at the Collegiate this interesting project deserves.

### Helmets and Hose

After the hurly-burly, hullabaloo and brouhaha of the Cisco scene, the cellars under the Old Fire Station in Oxford induce a comforting feeling that the theatre is not, in fact, changing at all. Down there, in a splendid subterranean warren of passages, locker-rooms and even (those firemen *did* enjoy themselves) a shooting-gallery, Betty and Sheila Robbins conduct their hire business for theatrical costume and fancy dress with a knowledge, ingenuity and panache that has made them a 'by appointment only' service (Watch out both Bermans and Nathans).

They not only hire costumes ('back to about 500 BC or up to about 1950 AD'), they house costumes (typically for The Actors' Company since they lost their permanent home in Wimbledon), and they make costumes (as for Oxford's Centre for Mediaeval and Renaissance Studies). Above all, as Betty Robbins says, they really love clothes, both for their aesthetic qualities and for the important record of

the past they provide.

It doesn't matter to them whether that past is a real one or a theatrical one, so that, hanging side by side in what used to be the fireman's washroom, one might meet both your great grandmother's wedding dress *and* the dress worn by Celia Johnson or Barbara Jefford in that play you liked so much. Which somehow is also comforting at a time when so many costumes, as for example those for historical series on television, are found on close inspection to be simply sackcloth and sashes.

Betty Robbins, who insists she came into the business by an accident in which the late Roger Livesey and the early Iain Macintosh were somehow involved, would like to spend more time on the academic implications of clothes and costumes, perhaps curating a collection. But meanwhile, with amateur theatre at least becoming more and more ambitious in its productions and seeking, perhaps, the splendid assurance provided by authenticity in costume, Betty and Sheila Robbins are perfectly happy to stitch away and press away as all good wardrobe mistresses always did.

'You can say, if you like,' Mrs Robbins said, 'that if people come here to find a costume, the one thing they won't get is the smell of old clothes'.

### Burnt Porridge?

Lighting designers make some interesting discoveries.

We are indebted to John Simpson of White Light for a report on a visit he had to make (in a professional capacity we hurriedly add) to one of H.M. Prisons. 'Come along,' the governor said, 'and give us a hand with the lighting for a play the chaps are putting on. Does them a power of good to be involved in something creative. . . .'

Cautiously cat-walking about, prior to rehearsal, above the neat and functional stage, John Simpson began to get more interested in the system of fixed lights and follow-spots he found. Looking at the wiring, he began to wonder how long it would function before something very nasty indeed started happening. . . .

'The fit-up for your stage,' he asked the prison-officer assigned to help him, 'who did it?' 'Ah,' the officer said, 'that'll be 167 Higgins. Good steady man. No trouble. Used to be connected with the theatre business himself. Pretty professional job he does, doesn't he?'

'He certainly does. But . . . if it's not a rude question . . . could I ask what he's in here for?'

'Let me see,' the officer said. 'Oh yes, I remember. He's doing five years for arson.'

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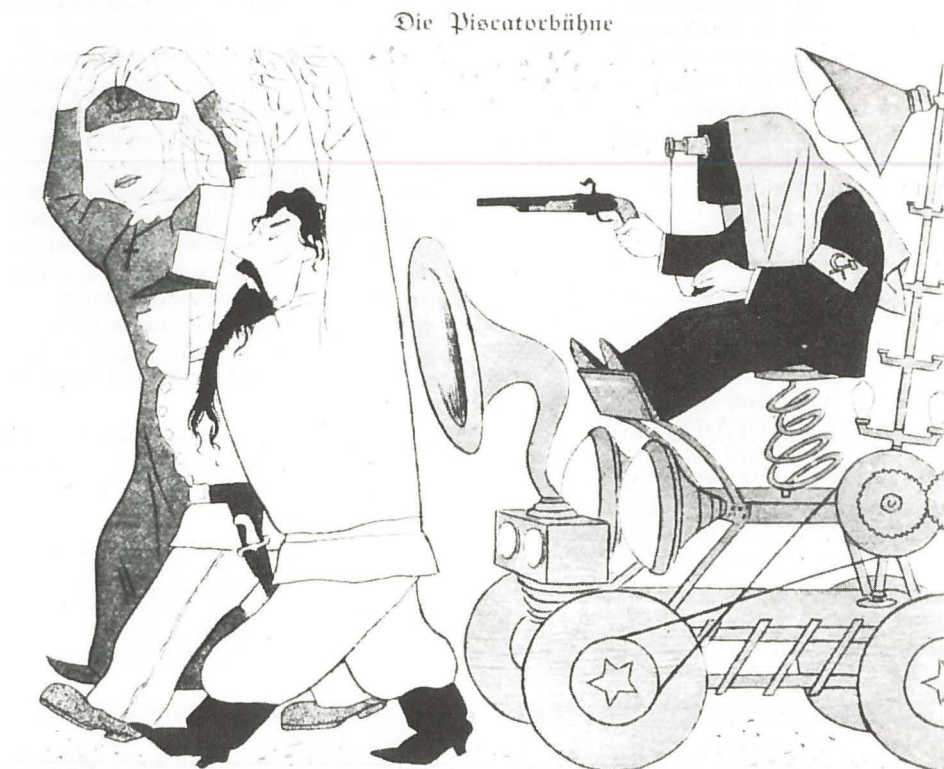
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# Erwin Piscator and his 'total theatre'

ANTHONY PUGH

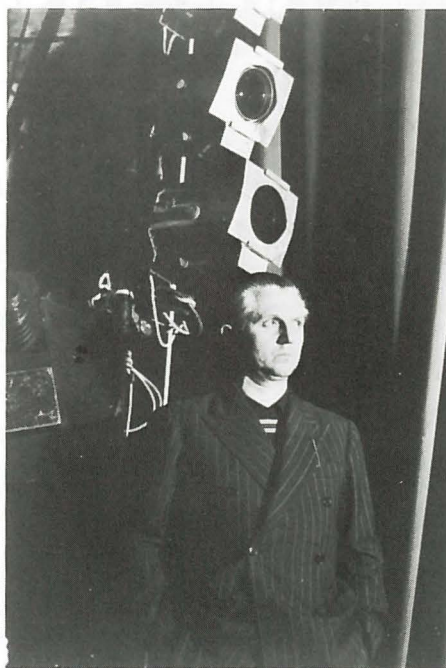
It was one of the ironies of his difficult life that Erwin Piscator's entirely laudable concept of a 'total theatre', by which a proletarian audience was to be encouraged towards self-knowledge and a greater awareness of its place and power in history, should have been exploited best by just the sort of demagogues he most abhorred.

The crowds that stayed away in droves from the various peoples' theatres in Weimar Germany he was associated with ('I carry my insolvencies', he was to say ruefully, 'like other people wear medals') were, by the 'thirties, only too happy to be self-knowing and aware at Nuremberg Rallies, at Parades in Red Square, and even



*"All the Kings Men"*  
by Robert Penn Warren  
Dramatic Workshop  
New York 1948  
Production Erwin Piscator

*"The Piscator Stage"*  
with Tilla Durieux, Max Pallenberg,  
Paul Wegener and Erwin Piscator,  
Drawing by Karl Arnold  
Simplicissimus Stuttgart, 1928.



*Erwin Piscator  
as Director of the  
Dramatic Workshop  
in New York*

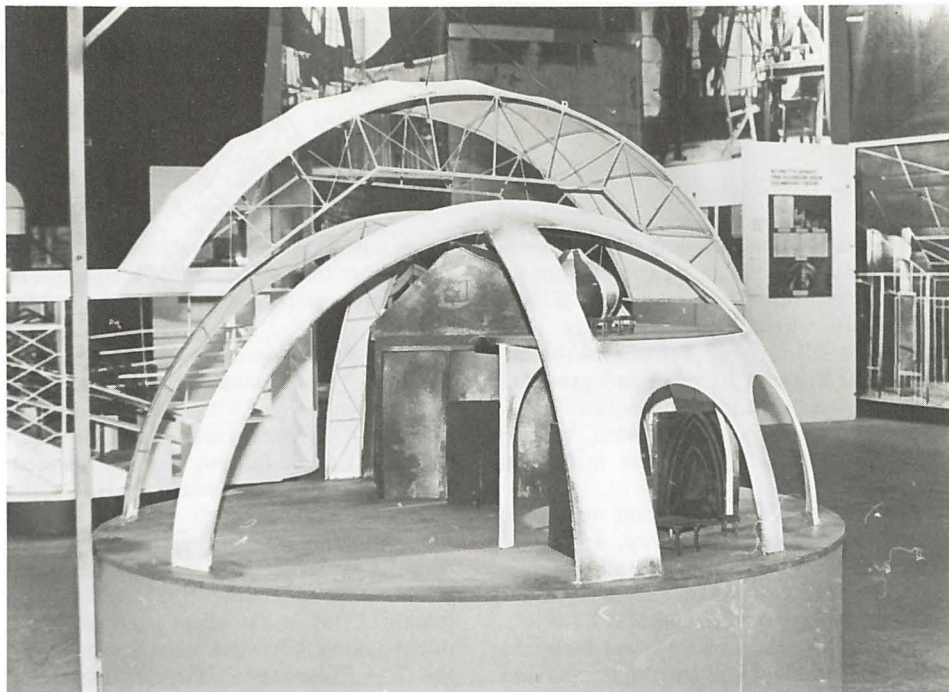
perhaps at the run-ups to Presidential elections in the USA. Anywhere, in fact, where all the multi-media effects and all the meticulous 'organisations of the stage' Piscator had pioneered were used for controlling rather than liberating purposes.

But, moral issues, agit-prop and social realism aside, what an imaginative designer and producer and director and all-round man of the theatre Piscator was. It was said of him that 'he was the best playwright who never wrote a play'. Certainly, many of the plays he produced, first at the Freie

Volksbühne in Berlin (which owed its existence to the socialist workers movement), and later at his own theatre, the Piscator-Bühne (for which Walter Gropius had designed, but never built, Piscator's ideal conception of a 'total' theatre) seem to have needed a lot more writing than they got. 'Rasputin, The Romanovs, The War, and The People that Rose Against Them', a fair specimen of the kind of thing Piscator liked to set his hand to, was intended to be a 'documentary' rather than a drama, but all that seems to have been remembered about it, even at the time, was the setting Piscator and his designer Traugött Müller devised for what action there was. This took the form of a hemispherical igloo made of balloon fabric (it weighed about five tons and was a devil to operate) which rotated on the revolve and had flaps that opened and shut synchronously with changes in the narrative. Again, the lugubriously-titled 'Hoppla we are alive' by Ernst Toller seems memorable only for the three-storey 'dolls-house' set with its built-in film screen (models of this and the Rasputin set have recently been on show at the very comprehensive exhibition of Piscator's life and work at the Riverside Studios). For Hasek's



*Model of the Erwin Piscator set for "Rasputin" from the exhibition at Riverside Studios.*



play 'The Good Soldier Schweik', one of a very different calibre, Piscator contrived another of his 'firsts', setting his characters and sometimes bits of scenery on two moving conveyor-belts flush with the stage, so that Schweik, without moving, would seem to be continually plodding on against his fate. Simultaneously, on a cinema screen behind him, animated drawings by George Grosz (who also did the sets and costumes. Brecht worked on the script) depicted Schweik's encounters and attitudes.

In fact, between about 1925 and 1931, Piscator's innovations in design and staging *all* seem to be firsts. His use of 'functional' scenery built from scaffolding, his juxtapositions of asymmetrical staircases and

steps, his introduction of geodetic domes, cantilevered gantries, split-level staging, his exploitation of film screens on stage were all innovations in the theatre. So were his ideas on lighting. The designer Hans Ulrich Schmückle (who worked with Piscator when he returned to a rather blasé and unwelcoming Berlin in the '50s after his

busy exile in New York, where he founded the Dramatic Workshop) has drawn attention to his absorption in the subject. Piscator wrote: 'Whenever light-space is constructed it begins by creating completely new laws . . . in terms of gesture, mime, movement and possibly even language. The whole technique of the theatre will have to subordinate itself to lighting . . . the light-stage can create X-ray pictures of art.' To prove it Piscator and Schmückle began to floor their stages with glass, using thousands of bulbs to eliminate shadows from faces and gestures so that each feature and each movement was in effect bathed in light. They used the system several times, notably in a production of Arthur Miller's 'The Crucible' at Tübingen in 1954, and a year later for a production of Tolstoy's 'War and Peace' at Darmstadt.

Paradoxically, Piscator's continuing preoccupation with what have to be called 'tricks' of stagecraft was based on an intention to clarify and bring 'reality' to a message rather than to create illusions or extend a fantasy. Only a deeply committed student of agit-prop would be qualified to say, perhaps, whether he succeeded in his political aims for his total theatre. What remains of his work (Erwin Piscator died in 1966) is a compendium of multi-media ideas and prototypes of presentation from which countless directors and producers have borrowed.

I can remember myself thinking 'that's a Piscator' of aspects of productions as dissimilar as 'The Skin of Our Teeth' in the late forties, 'Oh what a lovely war' in the late fifties, 'Evita' in the late seventies. But the most Piscatoresque production I ever saw was one afternoon at the Radio City Music Hall in New York when not just the stage but the whole auditorium was suddenly filled with marching marines, clock-work kicking Rockettes, a whole symphony orchestra and, suddenly rumbling across the stage, three *real* tanks. That was a pretty real message too.

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# Hooray for Cricklewood

MICHAEL WALKER

To all but those who live there, the north London suburb of Cricklewood is one of those grey, uninspiring areas of the metropolis where you stop only long enough to fill up your petrol tank before getting the hell out. Its very name provokes the same kind of disdainful guffaws as are levelled at neighbouring Neasden, immortalised in *Private Eye* as the archetypal cultural wasteland.

So it comes as a very pleasant surprise to discover an oasis of creativity, a piece of pure Hollywood in fact, with all its attendant glamour and romance, nestling in the heart of downtown Cricklewood Lane.

Walk through the main gates from the drab highroad and you enter a wonderland of old coach houses and stables which, together with a number of adjacent factory buildings, comprise Samuelson's Production Village — an entirely self-contained film studio which has just been completed at a cost of a cool £1½ million. As well as giving the neighbourhood a shot in the arm, the four Samuelson brothers who run Samuelson Film Service Ltd aim to show that the precarious British film industry is still worthy of a massive investment.

The production village has immense period charm. Built in 1900, the handsome outbuildings which surround a cobbled courtyard have been lovingly restored on the outside and converted into studios within. There are still rings in the walls where the horses were once tethered. Tony Samuelson, one of the four who head the Samuelson film empire, muses that the stables are 'a living testimony to the fact that at the turn of the century horses lived better than people'.

There is more than a touch of whimsicality about Tony Samuelson, a lawyer and former stockbroker turned financial director of the company, who races horses and planes in his spare time. He decided that if the production 'village' was to live up to its name it had better have a duckpond. They put one in the courtyard complete with duckweed and a dozen-odd ducks who waddle amiably around, occasionally quacking at passers-by. A standing joke in the village 'pub' just before Christmas was the suggestion that a daily head count be taken of the ducks in view of the mouthwatering looks they were getting from some of the technicians. It wouldn't do for the ducks to end up in the Christmas pot.

Lunchtime sees all the village gossips in the pub, *The Magic Hour*, which is exclusively for the use of villagers and their friends. No expense spared here on lush interior decorations, mahogany bars, brass fittings, carpets you disappear into and even a piano player tinkling away on the ivories. The only real difference between this and any other English pub is that the

locals tend to be earnestly discussing the next take rather than the merits of cattle cake or how many mangelwurzels you get to the pound.

'This is Bilbow Baggins the general manager,' said Samuelson, introducing an inscrutable parrot who icily surveyed a number of the administrative staff from his manager's cage. Bilbow, it was explained, had earlier been interviewed by a BBC radio journalist without much success. He was not naturally a talkative parrot and the most he would agree to say into the microphone was something like 'ughkk'. He remained his usual silent self until the micky-taking interview was broadcast on the 'PM Programme'. Hearing the sound of his own vocal chords he amazed everyone round him by launching into eloquent threats of 'I shall sue, I shall sue'.

As we talked, Samuelson buttonholed one of his colleagues — 'I've thought of a name for your office,' he said in a matter of fact manner. 'How about the Wolery?' The man looked blank. 'You know, Owl's home in Winnie the Pooh.'

Ducks, parrots, owls... a positive aviary.

John Baker, who deals with the day to day running of the studios, said later: 'I told Tony he was truly the squire of the village the other day. He looked at me dubiously and said "Yes, but every village has its idiot too".'

There is no doubt that behind the eccentric exterior is a hard-headed businessman who, together with brothers Sydney, David and Michael, runs one of the largest suppliers of film equipment in the world with an annual turnover of £10 million. Samuelson is a household name in the film business and the firm prides itself on its ability to supply cameras, lighting and sound recording equipment to any location within a matter of hours.

It all began 20 years ago when Sydney, a freelance cameraman, bought his own Newman Sinclair camera with the £300 he and his wife Doris had saved as a deposit on a house. He leased the camera to friends when he was out of work and soon realised there was a market for hiring cameras both to individuals and to film companies. His brothers David and Michael were themselves cameramen with British Movietone News. Persuaded there were possibilities, they each chipped in £100 to buy a second camera and the Samuelson company was born. Tony later joined them. The firm's headquarters is in Cricklewood Broadway and employs over 400 staff.

Up the road, the village is rapidly adding a further dimension to the company's field of operations. Its ten film studio stages, which range in floorsize from 1000 to 10,000 square feet, can cater for the making of television commercials, television drama



and even small feature films where only limited studio space is needed. According to Tony Samuelson, the largest stage was once a factory where Handley Page first designed and built the bomber which bore his name and which proved so successful in the First World War.

Some film companies began taking advantage of the village even before work on it was completed. One company specialising in home movies recorded a learn to dance film. 'Breaking Glass', a new wave rock musical follow-up to television's 'Rock Follies' is also being filmed at the village. Black Lion Films have been planning a television epic called 'Very Like a Whale' at the village. And the scope for the making of tv commercials has already been acknowledged by a number of companies.

As well as the stages and make-up rooms, there are production offices, prop, wardrobe and storage accommodation, rehearsal, crowd, green and cutting rooms, art departments, film vaults, a scene dock, a viewing theatre, a post sync and effects theatre, a stills studio, music and sound effects libraries, transport, a telex machine, a paging system, private dining rooms, a restaurant called 'Le Kaif', the pub, a set construction department, office equipment, camera cars, vans, a freight service, a fully furnished cottage, not to mention Samuelson's camera and lighting equipment. Oh and there's another bar too... and toilets. Once inside the village, you need never leave.

Samuelsons see their ambitious project as unique and yet comparable to other urban



# The Collegiate Theatre will serve them well

JOHN LEONARD

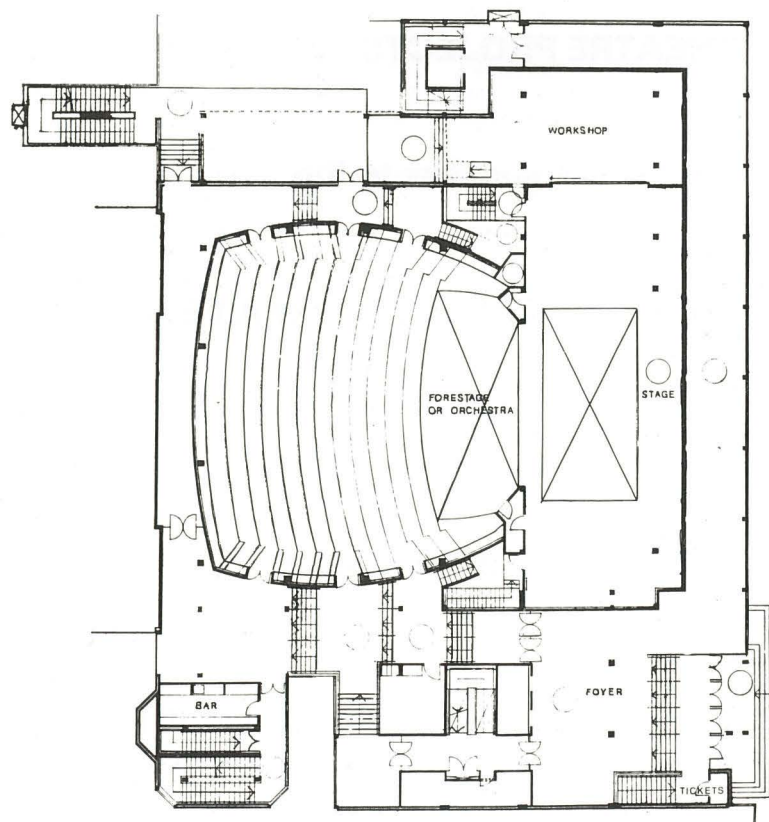
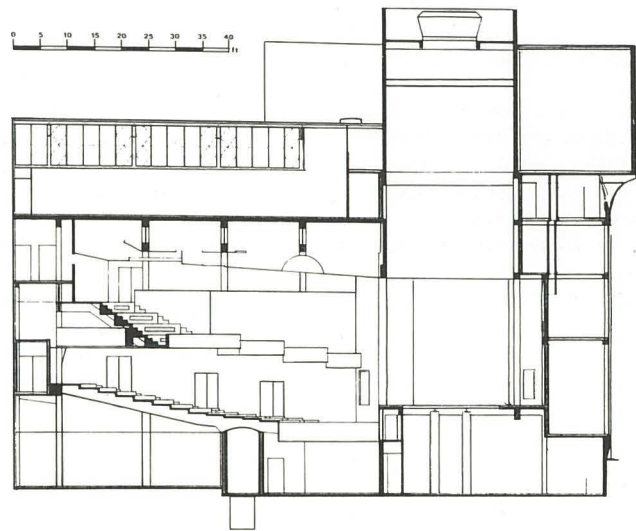
I should say at the outset, that I am not a great fan of university theatres. Not, I hasten to add, the theatres built for Drama Departments, but the multi-purpose affairs so often provided for student union buildings. My experiences in the past have left me with the distinct impression that such theatres are designed to please the largest number of people, and succeed in being next to useless to everybody. Such delights as polished hardwood floors (you want to hammer *nails* into our floor?), total lack of wing space and flying space, and the ever present cinema screen, make the theatre technician's job even more difficult than it already is. It was therefore with a slight sense of foreboding that I agreed to visit University College's Collegiate Theatre to see what sort of problems would be facing the entrants to the London Student Drama Festival. The University College's Student's Union and Collegiate Administration have agreed to loan the Theatre to the Festival, thus saving them some £3,000. A commendable gesture indeed.

First impressions of the theatre are not good. The Long Coffee Bar that runs down one side of the theatre, is scruffy and cramped, with cigarette burns on almost all pieces of furniture. The coffee and the jam doughnut that made up my breakfast were, however, excellent! A talk with the Administrator, Ann Ceri Llewellyn, revealed that the theatre is almost always fully booked, either with student functions, or with outside hires to amateur companies or the major London companies, both as a performing and as a rehearsal venue. The Theatre also boasts one of the few paint frames available for hire in central London. Harassed production managers take note. My guide around the theatre was Jeremy Anderson of the Stage Committee, a student body that supervises the technical side of the theatre running. He was far sighted enough to realise that supervising the ingress of 11 companies in as many days was not going to be an easy task, and together with the Chief Electrician – George Owczarski – and the Master Carpenter – Peter Wood – he has arranged a question and answer session, so that incoming groups can be made fully aware of what they are going to be up against. Judging by my subsequent tour, one thing they are not going to be up against is the total lack of interest and help that can so often mar festivals of this sort. The theatre, despite the unpromising exterior, is a testament to the perseverance and pro-

fessionalism of the people who run it.

At first sight, the stage seems very small in relation to the auditorium, particularly when one stands on stage and looks out into the horseshoe shaped house. This impression is altered when the viewing position is

reversed, and from the auditorium, the stage looks much larger. This is largely due to the use of a forestage extension, which projects some 6m out from the pros. Given the fact that the distance from the back wall to the pros is only 9m, it is hardly surprising

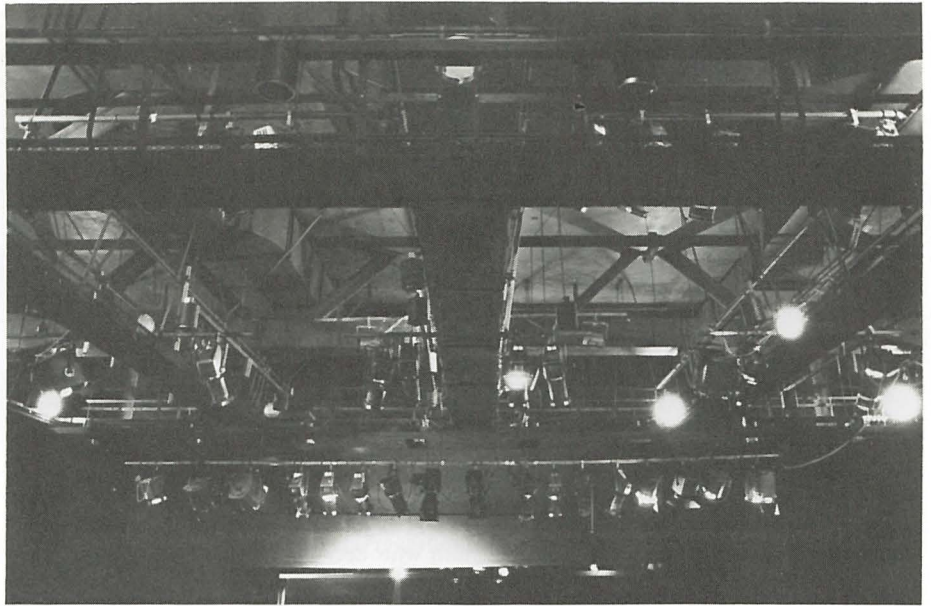


Architects: James Cubitt and Partners (Fello Atkinson ARIBA)

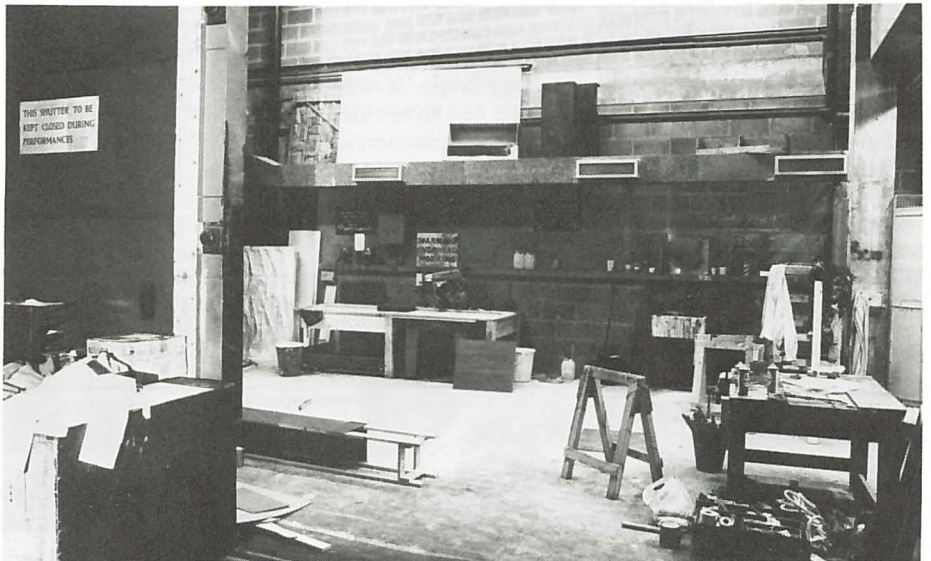
that the forestage is almost always left in place. The forestage can be removed to provide two extra rows of seats and an orchestra pit, should this facility be required. A surprising feature of this theatre, is that it has a fully operational fly tower, with a set of 24 double purchase counterweight lines, the fly gallery being stage left, with a reasonably unrestricted view of the stage. A single purchase set takes care of the house tabs, but it is unfortunate that the first three counterweight lines are permanently taken up with the inevitable massive cinema screen. Wing space is limited to around seven metres either side, but this would seem to be adequate for all but the most ambitious sets. The stage right wing houses the somewhat sparsely equipped prompt-corner, consisting of an elderly Strand Electric cue light panel, and an over-stretched Green Ginger intercom system, but I understand that this is to be changed in the near future, funds permitting. The stage right wing wall is, in fact, a large sliding door leading directly to the small workshop area and the aforementioned paint frame, which is of the moving bridge variety. This access is fine for the movement of scenery on and off stage, but totally precludes the using of the workshop during performances. I might add that a large number of theatre designers seem to share this particular blind spot, and the sooner this ludicrous practice of siting the workshop next to the stage is dropped, the happier a lot of actors, directors and technicians will be.

The workshop is small enough to prevent the building and storage of large stage pieces, but is nonetheless a useful addition to this theatre's amenities. A short walk through the pass door down under the stage gives access to the dressing room area, which consists of two small rooms that will hold 4 persons each, and two slightly larger areas that hold 9 and 14 people. I did not see a stage manager's area, although this may well exist. I hope it does, and that it is not too far from the stage. One thing that became apparent as we progressed around the building, was that the air conditioning system was very much of an afterthought. There are ducts everywhere, that restrict head height, and I spent a good deal of my time under the stage trying to avoid walking into them. The same is true of the ceiling of the house, and the profusion of ducts in the roof make negotiating the lighting catwalks over the auditorium a singularly unpleasant, not to say unsafe experience.

The F.O.H. lighting and sound position is to the right of the auditorium back wall, pride of place being given to the brand new Thorn Q Master 2000 lighting control that has been recently installed. The desk looked very imposing in its somewhat spartan surroundings, and I am sure it will prove invaluable in the forthcoming festival arrangements. Sound is somewhat less well served, there being only one Revox A77, a Garrard record deck, and a Chilton 10-2 mixing desk. Amplification is via an Amcron D60, and there are a pair of Bose 801 speakers mounted either side of the pros. It was good to see that there is a



*The Collegiate is adequately equipped with fully operational fly tower and lighting gallery.*



*The workshop area boasts one of the few paint frames available for hire in central London.*

multicore connection system, allowing the mixing desk to be taken in to the auditorium if required. I was told that additional sound equipment can be 'provided' if necessary and there is a comprehensive G.P.O. type jack patching-bay available for routing and inter-equipment connection.

As previously mentioned, there is a lighting gallery above the auditorium, this being accessible from the control room, but its usefulness is impaired by the air conditioning ducts, and extra lighting barrels are frequently hung beneath it, to obtain better lighting conditions.

At the centre back auditorium position is the fully equipped 35mm and 16mm projection room; again not as palatial as some I have seen, but perfectly adequate for the needs of the theatre. The room was well laid out, and spotlessly clean and tidy, once again a tribute to the technical running of the theatre. Equipment comprises 2 Phillips 35mm F.P. 20 projectors, recently converted to 2Kw, Xenon lamps, and a rather splendid Zeiss Favourit 16B 16mm projec-

tor. I was rather surprised to see that a Dolby A cinema sound system is fitted, as there are few commercial cinemas that have taken this commendable step.

The auditorium can seat over 500, and is arranged as a two level system, with the stall seating 445 maximum, and the gallery 154. Apart from the colour scheme, which is a little drab, the overall effect is very pleasing, and provided that proper use is made of the forestage, I imagine that the theatre could be a very pleasant venue for the multiplicity of uses to which it is put.

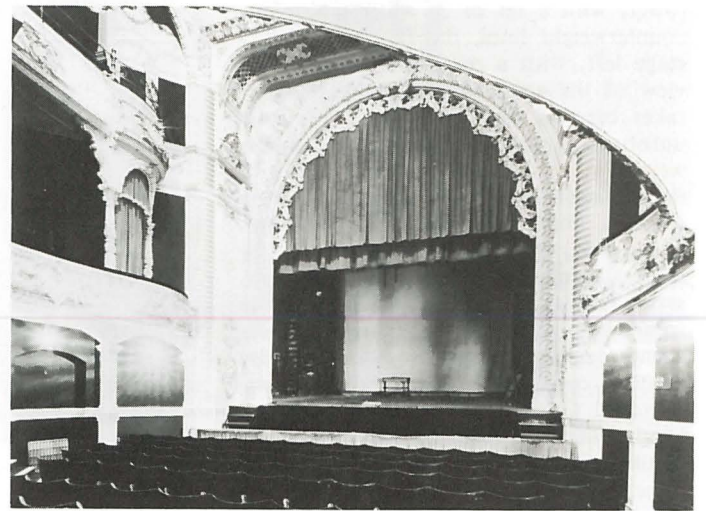
All in all then, a useful deviation from the normal type of university theatre, largely, I suspect because of the people who run it; well equipped and, apart from a certain sparseness about the decor, and the dreadfully offputting shabbiness of the coffee-bar, a pleasant space to be in. I wish the Drama Festival the very best of luck in their venture, and I don't think that they could be better served by their theatre. Oh, and by the way, they won't have any trouble banging nails into the floor!

# Old wine in a new bottle

The Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith was designed by Frank Matcham and opened in 1895. After a chequered career with high points under East at the turn of the century, Playfair in the twenties and thirties and with the Company of Three, the 59 Theatre Company and a series of premieres in the fifties, the Lyric closed in 1965. In 1969 the profession rallied (it had lost the St. James only a few years earlier) and a Public Enquiry was held into the proposed demolition of so historic a theatre. After a years' deliberation and in the best Lyric traditions of melodrama and of ballad opera the Minister handed down a reprieve. There was however a catch. The theatre could be demolished if the plasterwork of the auditorium was retained, but the plasterwork was only to be reused if someone were to build and pay for the theatre.

Enter the London Borough of Hammersmith who decided to foot the bill for the recreation of the old Lyric. Enter accompanied by the Borough Architect and Theatre Projects Consultants who in 1975 set about the job of rebuilding an old theatre on a new site: a job never before attempted in Britain though successfully accomplished in Germany (twice in Munich along with the rococo Cuvillies and the neo classical National Theater). To make it even more interesting there was an added difficulty. Since the theatre was to be in part paid for from the revenues of a two storey shopping centre on top of which it was to sit, Matcham's fluid but subtly organised plan had to be fitted to the rigid grid of Colonel Seifert's already designed commercial spaces below.

On 18 October 1979 Her Majesty the Queen graciously attended a gala performance of 'You Never Can Tell'. Britain's newest old theatre was ready on time and on budget.



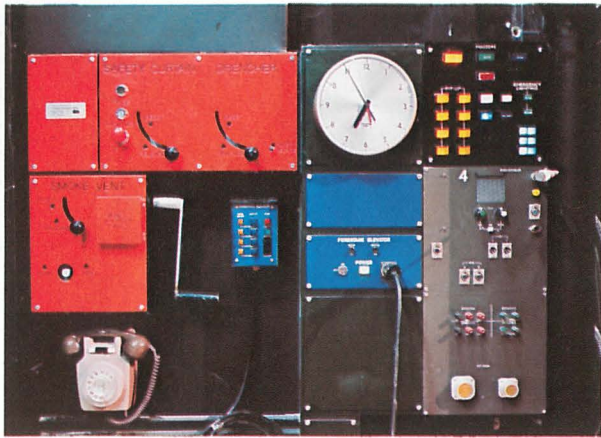
Before and After — the proscenium and increased in width from 23 ft 11 ins to 27 ft 7 ins (8.4m) to increase the range of productions that the theatre can offer (see sketch plan opposite).



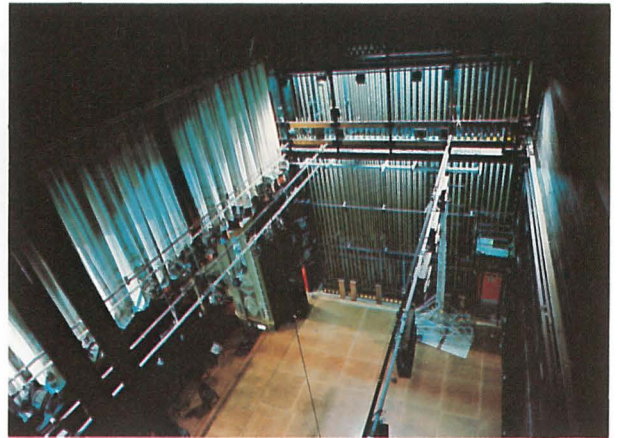
Comedy and Tragedy — these masks typify the works of Matcham at his best. Above the masks is a panel once solid which now opens to give a first class advance perch lighting position. Top right can be seen the only in view stage lanterns. These have been dipped and baked by White Light to match the decorative scheme of the auditorium.



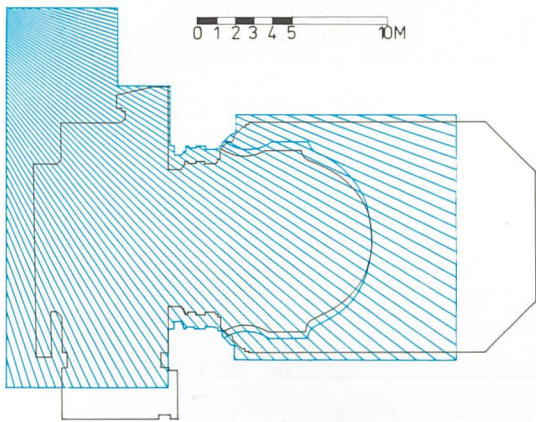
17th October 1979 — the first paying audience at a Civic Preview of the opening production. The Mayor is in the stage left box. Note the way in which the four foot increase in width has been inserted into both circle fronts and the ceiling.



Modern Technology – in the prompt corner are control panels for safety curtain etc. (red), pit/forestage elevator (blue), sound (brown) and working lights (black).

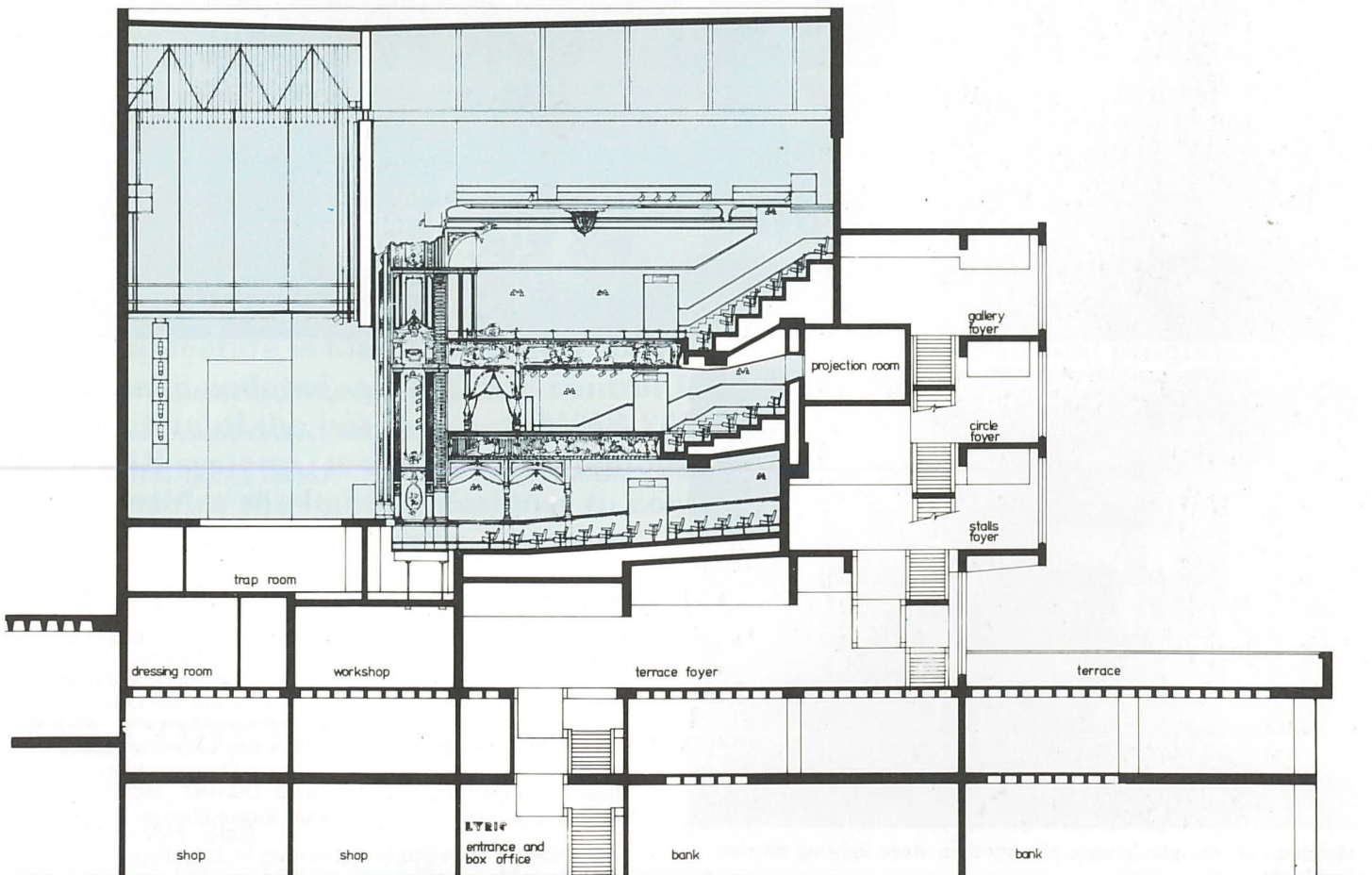


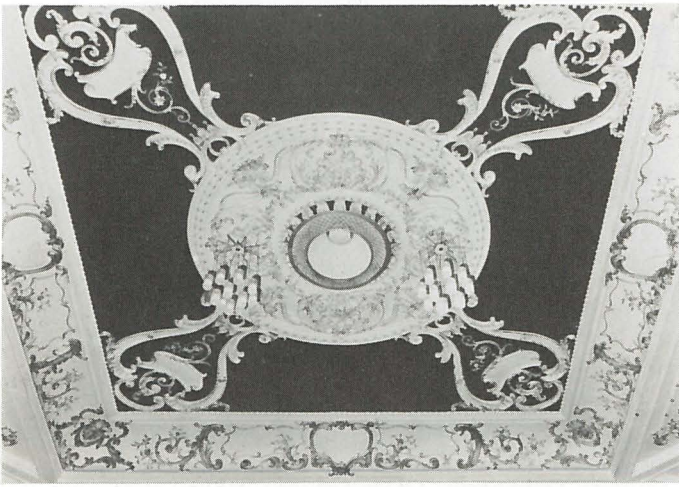
Modern Technology – a view of the stage and proscenium from the stage left (non working) fly gallery. These are 38 single purchase counterweights at 200mm centres with two sets diverted for an up and down bar each side. The working depth of the stage is now 8.25m, the full depth 9.1m.



Before and After – the circle levels of the old and new Lyrics compared. Note that while the grid of the shopping centre below allowed a larger stage it did not allow the auditorium to be built to its full depth, up to five rows being lost on each of the three levels of the auditorium. The effect of widening the proscenium can also be clearly seen.

Long section – this drawing shows how the theatre sits two floors up on the north side of King Street. Both ground and first floors are taken up with commercial development except for the single 'shop unit' which provides street level box office and stairs to the second floor theatre foyer and theatre.



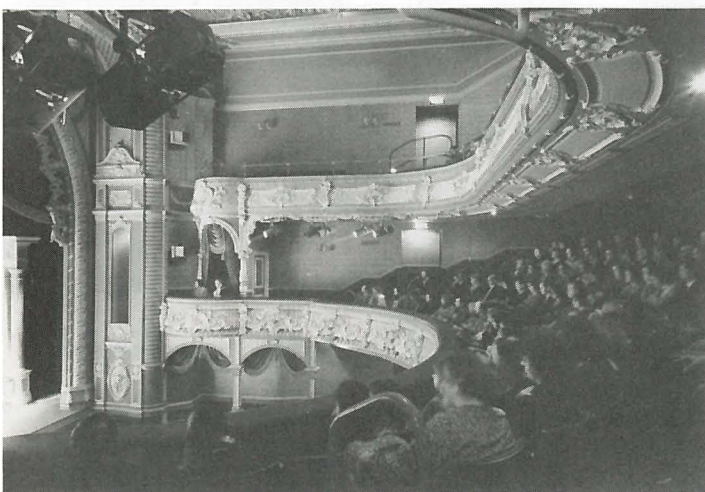


Before and After – the ceiling provided one of the greatest problems during reconstruction. The original ‘artistic painting’ in the four ceiling panels had long ago been painted out in a dark colour as seen in photo above taken in the sixties. Rather than restore such a flat effect it was decided to open up the ceiling and direct both ventilation and stage lighting through the spaces which had increased in size as a result of the widening of the proscenium.

The resulting decorative problem was solved by the installation of an open wire mesh, reminiscent of old radiators, which is near opaque when the chandelier is on and the front of house stage lights are off. Photo (right) shows both stage and auditorium lights on ‘at half’ to show the general arrangement.

The forestage area is flexible. The old theatre provided a fixed pit too small for most orchestras and too large a chasm

between actor and audience to be ignored. Today three arrangements are possible which are, reading below from left to right: with orchestra pit for 14 in 22m<sup>2</sup>; with lift raised to give a forestage for acting down to the limits of the site lines or for ‘in front of the iron’ recitals etc.; or with three further rows of stalls which brings the seating capacity from 499 to 537.



Matcham plaster plus people plus modern stage lighting on the first night.

#### LYRIC THEATRE HAMMERSMITH

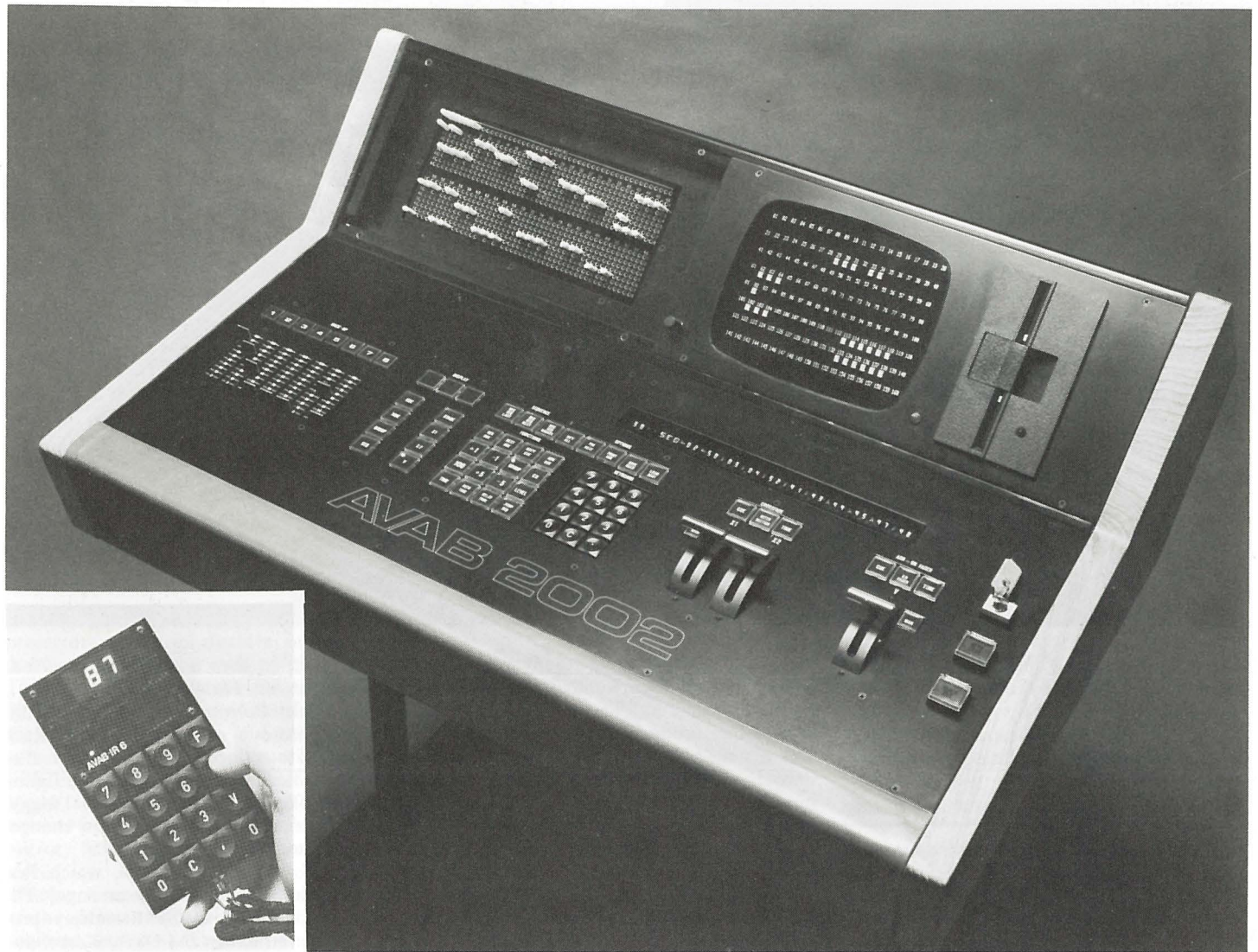
Design Team and Specialist Theatre Equipment Suppliers.

- |                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| <i>Architect:</i>                     | London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, Architects Dept.  |
| <i>Theatre Consultants:</i>           | Job Architect: Derek Woolland<br>Theatre Projects Consultants<br>Project Leader: Jerry Godden<br>Director in Charge: Iain Mackintosh<br>Anthony Hunt Associates |
| <i>Structural Engineers:</i>          | Engineering Design Consultants  |
| <i>Services Engineers:</i>            | Gardiner and Theobald   |
| <i>Quantity Surveyors:</i>            | Sir Robert McAlpine and Sons  |
| <i>Main Contractor:</i>               | G. Jackson and Son Ltd.   |
| <i>Specialist Plasterwork:</i>        | Rank Strand Electric  |
| <i>Production Lighting Equipment:</i> | P. E. Kemp Engineers Limited  |
| <i>Stage Engineering Equipment:</i>   | Analogue Electronic Workshop  |
| <i>Sound and Communications:</i>      |   |
| <i>House Curtain</i>                  |   |
| <i>Masking &amp; Seating:</i>         | Rank Strand Electric  |

Photographs by Steve Stephens. Drawings by Janet Prestney  
Text by Iain Mackintosh.



# AVAB 2002



The new AVAB 2002 is a very advanced, powerful microcomputer lightboard with all the features of AVAB 2001 – plus VDU and a mini floppy disk drive. Its most important feature is that it is entirely software based. The operational program can be periodically updated, adding new control facilities while leaving the physical construction of the board intact. AVAB 2002 is for up to 192 circuits. Like the other two AVAB systems, it uses AVAB's famous infra red, wireless remote controller, which enables the lighting designer to control channels and cues and record them from anywhere in the theatre.

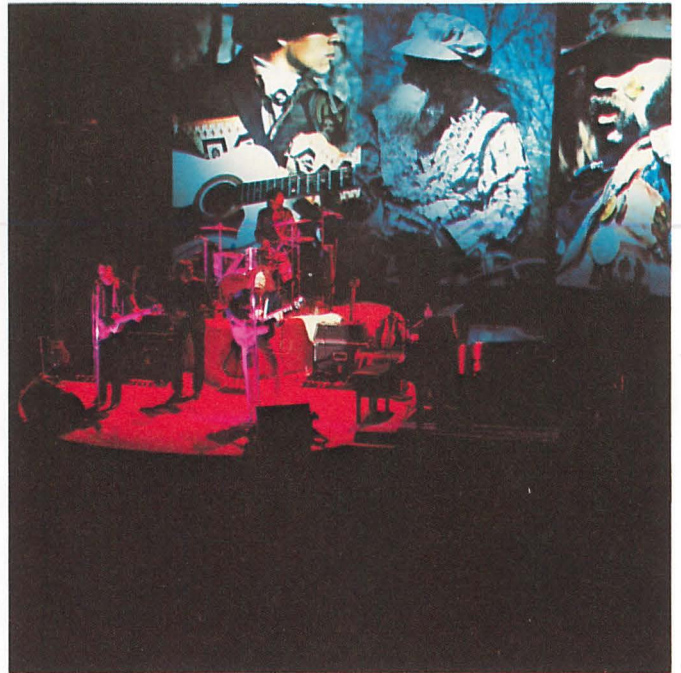
In comparison with any other computerised show business lighting system, the AVAB 2002 is a tough act to follow.

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# Beatlemania

RICHARD ANDREWS



'Beatlemania — the multi-media musical experience'. 'It's *not* the Beatles . . . but you won't believe it!' So say the hoardings outside the Astoria Theatre in London. Well, believe it or not, there is certainly more media to the square inch in Beatlemania, than any show I've ever seen in the West End.

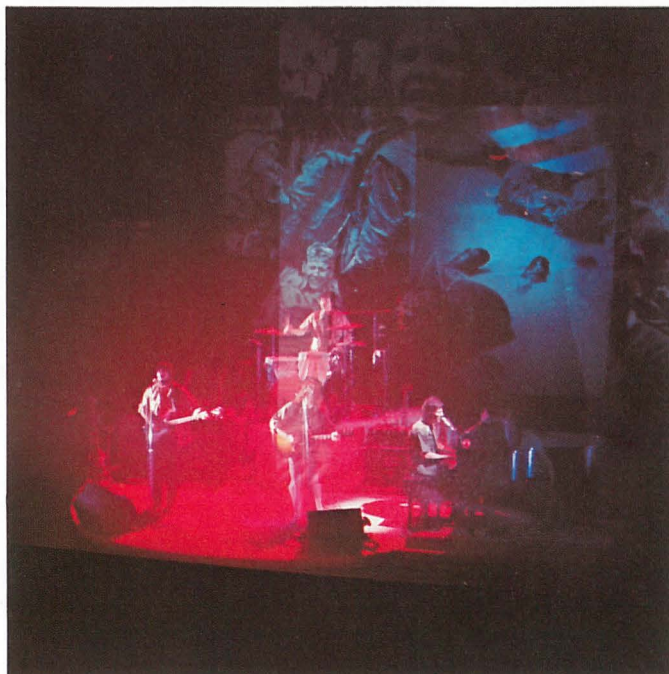
What is it then? Firstly, it is not *about* the Beatles. It takes the 'Fab Four' as one phenomenon of the 1960's, and adds to them many others, to present a recreation of the period. Four musicians, who look

and sound remarkably like the Beatles, sing twenty nine of their numbers, in roughly chronological order. There is no dialogue. Meanwhile, around them on slides, films and a newspanel, the events of the 60's unfold, both reflecting, and reflected in the music.

The show is in nine sections: *Pre Beatles* — setting the scene with the music and personalities at the opening of the decade; *Mersey Sound* — the early songs, new faces, new attitudes; *Making It* — the style of the sixties is established; *Listening*;

*Tripping* — the Sgt Pepper period; *Dropping Out*; *Flower Power* — hippies, Woodstock; *Bottoming Out* — Vietnam, student protest; and *Moving On*. Each section is introduced with a keynote film clip — a Martin Luther King speech, Jimmy Hendrix playing, an interview with Twiggy. These set the scene, and also allow changes of costumes and wigs to be made!

This is an American show, which first opened there some three years ago. The original concept was by Broadway producers Steven Leber and David Krebs, and



lighting designer Jules Fisher, who is overall Production Supervisor. The aim was to go beyond the 'staged concert', to create an environment – an experience of the period. A positive battery of personnel, credited with 'multi-media images', 'visual direction', and 'editorial content', produced fifteen thousand researched and created images. They range from news pictures, to specially commissioned paintings, collages and photographs, which illustrate or comment on the songs. From these, ten thousand slides were made, which were then reduced, over a five month production period, to between two and three thousand, finally used in the show. Jules Fisher is quoted as saying: 'Success with slides has nothing to do with art, or knowledge, or mechanics, or engineering. It's time.'

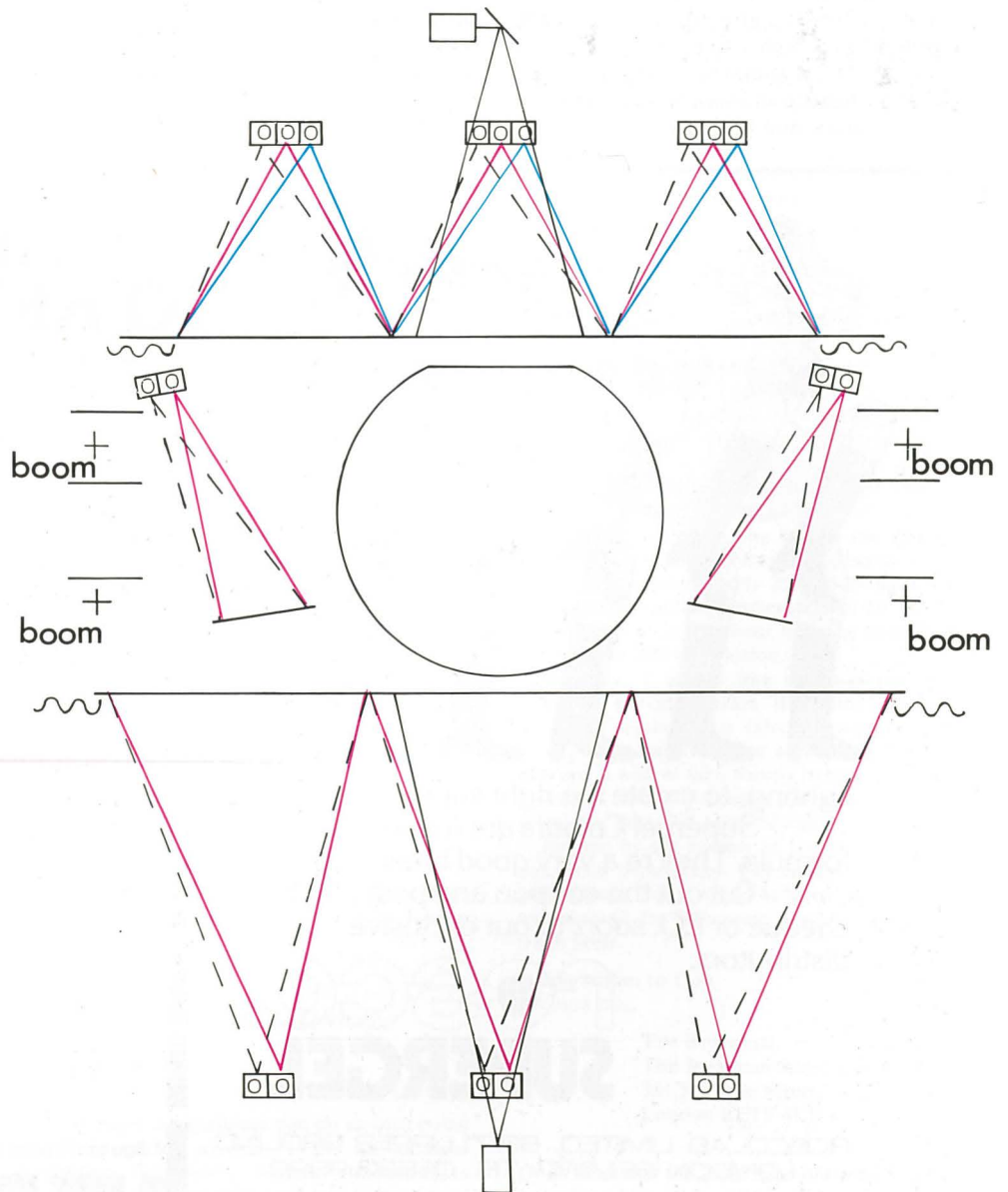
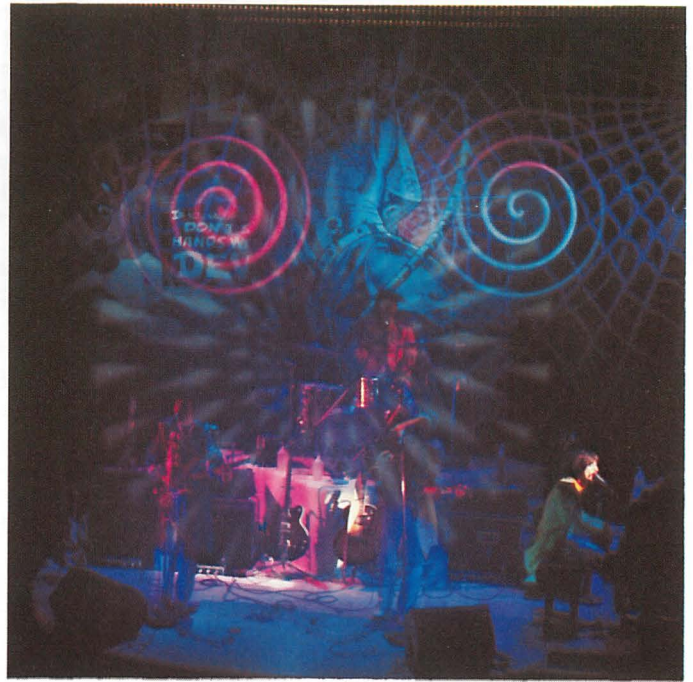
The London production uses projection and effects equipment from the American world tour company. This naturally presented some problems, not the least of which was power. The answer to this was provided by Excel Electric, who installed and commissioned an alternator, to supply a 110 volt 60 cycle feed, in just five days – and nights. Records were being broken before the show opened!

Now to the hardware itself. The group performs on a white raked disc, in a black void (see plan). Upstage is a rear projection screen, spanning the whole stage. Focused on this, from a scaffolding bridge on the back wall, are nine 500watt Xenon carousel projectors – two for dissolve, and one for overlay or effects, on each of three areas. They can combine to make one image about 39 ft by 18 ft. Because of restricted space they have 1.4in lenses, and since Xenon cannot be dimmed, dissolves are achieved with mechanical dousers. There is also a 16mm sound film projector. This, again because of space problems, projects into a mirror, which reflects the image onto the screen. In addition to a straightforward dissolve, a set of black travellers downstage of the screen enable a 'wipe' effect to be achieved, and mask the screen when it is not in use.

Downstage of the group is a gauze which flies in and out, and serves as a front projection screen. This also has three pairs of Xenon carousels and a 16mm film projector, sited on the circle front.

On either side of the group a small rear projection screen flies in to about 8 ft from the deck. Each has a pair of 1200watt Buhl incandescent carousels, with electronic dissolves, mounted on a tower on stage. These are all controlled by an Arion 832 micro programmer, with an identical unit run in tandem as backup. It operates nearly four thousand cues per show!

The front gauze is in for about two thirds of the show, enabling a 3D effect to be generated, when related images are used on front and back screens simultaneously. This is particularly effective in the Tripping section, when slides of stars, and the earth as seen from the moon, combine with a moving star projector, and films of rockets, and astronauts tumbling from back to front screens. Similarly in 'Hey Jude', using repeated news pictures, and a change every four musical beats, as the Vietnam war,



race riots, and student protest rise to a crescendo. Some of the slides on the up-stage screen are polarised, and using filters moving patterns are created.

But what about the people? Given all the slides and films, lighting the performers, with sufficient intensity and variation is obviously difficult. Follow spots could not be used, because of the large amount of time the front gauze was in. 'Spill' and 'bouce', in what is virtually a corridor between the two screens, also had to be avoided. Jules Fisher's answer was to use largely side and back lighting. This also helped with the 'lookalike' illusion, if their faces weren't too brilliantly lit! It is really dance lighting. Using Silhouette 15's, 25's and 30's, one lamp lights the face, while another provides overall colour for the body. The light hits the musicians and then disappears into the wings. There is a boom upstage each side lighting the drums, and downstage each side lighting the mike positions. The lamps run about 3 ft to 8 ft from the floor. Each boom has a mixture of two warm colours, two cool colours, and a colour wheel with really deep tones. Additionally, there are tightly focused downlighters on each position, together with colour wash back lighting, and gobos on the white disc, which is carpeted to avoid bounce. There is a groundrow on the back screen, and footlights on the gauze. Fisher's use of colour is stunning. Taken from the Gelatran, Roscoe and Cinemoid ranges, it is always vibrant and always changing There

are 181 lighting states in 100 minutes!

The battery of lighting effects, almost matches the media in its comprehensiveness. From the scaffolding bridge on to the rear screen:

- 2 - Patt 252 Cloud Effects
- 2 - Spiral Projectors (A continuously revolving spiral with dissolving colour)
- 2 - Moving Pattern Projectors (Rather like two counter revolving black doilies)

On the stage:

- 2 - 30 rpm Colour Wheels (These almost give the effect of a chase) U.V.
- 1 - Strobe

From the Circle front on to the gauze:

- 1 - R.D.S. Projector (Generating moving faces)
- 1 - Moving Stars Projector
- 1 - Patt 252 Chromosphere (With the colours removed)

In the auditorium on to the audience:

- 6 - Rotating Beacons
- 8 - Strobes
- Blinder Battens

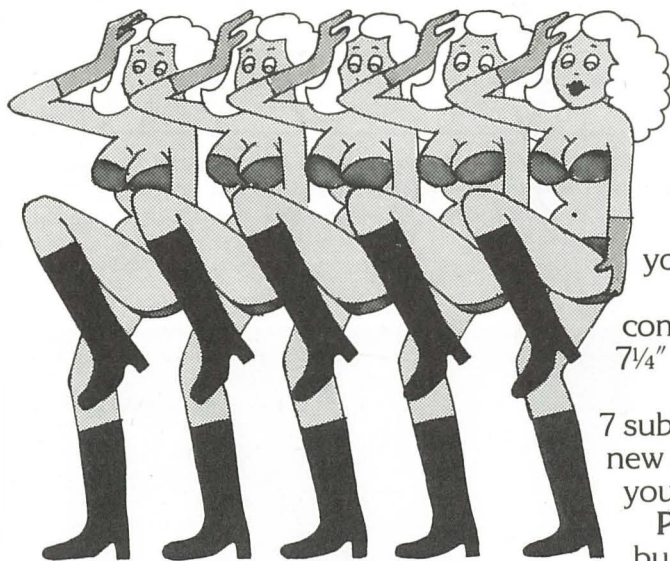
But what does it all look like? Immediately the spectre of Elvis looms. Comparisons may be 'odorous', but are inevitable, given that the two shows have almost followed each other, in the same theatre. Elvis was, to put it tactfully,

'inspired' by Beatlemania. However, since Elvis reached London first, it has obviously stolen some of the thunder, since the concept is no longer totally new. It is interesting that each show is more ambitious in a different direction. Beatlemania is necessarily more static, since the performers play instruments as well as sing. In Elvis it was possible to stage 'scenes' interpreting the numbers as incidents in Presley's life, making it more of a theatre piece. In Beatlemania, the musicians are more passive, and the emphasis is on the hardware, the technology. The visual 'attack' is certainly greater - there are twice the number of projectors that Elvis had. The aim is the overall impression, there is no conventional storyline.

As to the projectors themselves, I have to say that in my opinion, the Kodak SAV 2000's with 400watt 36volt lamps used in Elvis, gave a brighter and more even image. They could also be controlled by an electronic dissolve unit, rather than a douser. I don't think that I will ever persuade the creators of Beatlemania to agree with me though. See it and judge for yourself. Certainly, it is more complex than anything attempted in this country before.

Technical credits for the London production:

*Production Co-ordinator:* Robert V. Straus  
*Lighting Designer:* Robbie Monk  
*Media Engineer:* Mary McGregor



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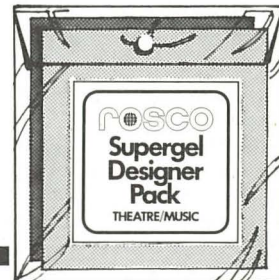
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# CORRESPONDENCE

*From Mr. Richard Pilbrow*

Dear Sir,

The Loretto School Theatre is the latest in what must now be seen as a worldwide trend towards a rediscovery of the courtyard form of theatre epitomised by the Shakespearian theatre of Elizabethan times but which continued in various manifestations through the Georgian period into the 19th century.

During this century and up to the theatre building boom of the 50s and 60s, proponents of theatre architecture battled over such questions as should the proscenium theatre survive, the role of the open thrust, arena or end stage, and so on. The general tendency, partly influenced by cinema design of the 20s and 30s, and partly because of the post-war theory of social equality, was for theatres to be single, or at the most two tier, and it was considered undemocratic to have the many level theatres of previous generations. The result, coupled with an enthusiasm for perfect sightlines and so-called perfect acoustics, led to a series of fan-shaped auditoria, both in this country and, on a far larger scale, in the United States.

Two buildings of significance then emerged. The Eden Court Theatre in Inverness by architects Law and Dunbar Naismith and auditorium design consultant Iain Mackintosh, which returned to a multi-level horseshoe shape for its auditorium, and Christ's Hospital, Horsham, where architect Bill Howell, with ourselves as consultants, successfully expanded the capability of Bill Howell's previously triumphant Young Vic Theatre into a flexible courtyard form. Out of these two successes there came 'a professional marriage' with Iain Mackintosh joining this practice and being responsible for the basic design study and concept of the Cottesloe Theatre in the National. This theatre, so much more than the common 'black box' experimental space, is a pure courtyard form theatre which allows, in the Georgian playhouse manner, both a highly satisfactory end stage or proscenium form as well as a completely variable space in a potentially flat floor stalls surrounded by a considerable proportion of the audience on galleries. We regret the coat of black paint that covers it overall, but perhaps, like so many things, black paint is merely a theatrical fashion and one that is perhaps in its last days of this current theatrical cycle.

Your writer, Francis Reid, has the good fortune to work in a gem of this type of theatre at Bury St. Edmunds. The travels of members of this practice around the world have over the last few years led them to what was initially a surprising discovery. The courtyard theatre that we believed belonged in England to Shakespeare through to the Georgians was not in any sense unique to this country. It was seen across Europe, the Middle East and the Far East, and in nearly all countries it was the prevalent form of theatre at a time when each country's Drama was at a peak of creative quality.

The courtyard form which is, of course, capable of many variations of style and scale, offers great intimacy, flexibility, economy, and, most valuable of all, a three dimensional relationship between performer and all the

spectators that heightens, in a unique and immediate manner, the essence of the theatre, which is the aliveness of the event.

We now have the good fortune to be designing various types and sizes of courtyard form theatre in several places around the world. Their ancestry crosses nearly all civilisations. Many others are pursuing the same path. We are delighted that your reviewer makes such flattering references to the newest and perhaps most modest of its manifestations at the Loretto School and we congratulate 'Law and Dunbar-Naismith (not to forget their man Ross)' on so excellently realising this concept.

Yours sincerely,  
RICHARD PILBROW,  
Chairman,  
Theatre Projects Group of  
Companies,  
10, Long Acre,  
London, W.C.2

*From Mr. Colin Ross*

Dear Sir,

May I first of all say how much we in Edinburgh appreciated Francis Reid's article on the new theatre at Loretto School. May I also confirm that the following organisations played their part in its design and execution:

<i>Architects:</i>	Law and Dunbar-Naismith
<i>Theatre Consultants:</i>	Theatre Projects Consultants Ltd.
<i>Services Consultants:</i>	Blyth & Blyth (M&E)
<i>Structural Engineer:</i>	Blyth & Blyth Associates
<i>Acoustic Consultant:</i>	Paul Newman
<i>Quantity Surveyor:</i>	Jas. D. Gibson & Simpson
<i>Main Contractor:</i>	Campbell & Smith Construction Co. Ltd.
<i>Stage Lighting Control:</i>	Rank Strand Electric
<i>Sound, Communications, Stage Equipment:</i>	Northern Light
<i>Seating:</i>	Auditoria Services Ltd.

With best wishes for the prosperity of Cue magazine in the New Year.

Yours etc.,

COLIN ROSS,  
Law & Dunbar-Naismith,  
16, Dublin St., Edinburgh

*From Mr. M. R. Dormer*

Dear Sir,

First may I congratulate you on an interesting and informative journal. I am an amateur 'lighting designer', which encompasses everything from designing and building scenery,

through to playing in the occasional production, with a constant eye on the switchboard! The level of information is very useful in planning future lighting rigs and creating effects.

In several of the articles in Sept./Oct. issue colour codes are quoted from the Strand range, which I have used more or less exclusively. However several references are made to colour media commencing with a digit 8 in a three figure code number. I would be grateful if you could inform me which supplier provides such a range of colour media. Reading the item without knowing the actual colour referred to is somewhat frustrating as I expect you can imagine!

Hoping that you can help, and looking forward to the next and future issues.

Yours etc.,

M. R. DORMER,  
61 Courtenay Road,  
London E17 6LY

*A fair point. We will try to use less shorthand and jargon in future. The prefix 8 refers to Roscolene. (Editor)*

*From Mr. Tim Burnham*

Dear Sir,

I have been reading with great interest your product news column in the November/December edition of Cue and there are one or two inaccuracies which I should like to put straight concerning the Berkey Colortran Mini-Ellipse.

Firstly, there seems to be some confusion in your reviewer's mind concerning the lamps available for this unit. I quote: 'When the long-life version of the lamp arrives in 240 volt rating, this should indeed be a good shuttered profile . . .' Well, for heavens sake, I should have thought that two thousand hours was long enough for anybody! There are, in fact, two lamps currently available for the Mini-Ellipse, designated as JD500. The 240/250 volt version, which is readily available from Berkey, Valiant or ourselves has a rated life of 2000 hrs and is priced at £9.87. Reports from users indicate that, in normal conditions, these lamps last and last. The second lamp, for use where light output is more important than long life, is the 220/230 volt JD500, which, when over-voltaged at 240 volts, gives approximately 25% more light with an increase in colour temperature of 80° Kelvin and an estimated 1100 hour life. The price is the same as the 240 volt version.

Secondly, I should like to point out that, although Berkey market the Mini-Ellipse as 30/40/50 degrees, it is extremely simple to re-arrange the lenses to give a beam angle of 20 degrees. It will, in fact, shortly be possible to buy a straight 20° Mini-Ellipse, for about the same price as a Patt. 23! Must be value.

Judging by the success of the Mini-Ellipse in our rental department, I'm certain that it has a great future, but it would be a real shame if this was marred by inaccurate presentation in the trade press.

Best wishes to Cue,  
Yours etc.,

TIM BURNHAM,  
Tim Burnham Associates Ltd.,  
381 St. John Street,  
London EC1V 4LD.

*Good news that the 2,000 hour life lamp to which we referred is now available. (Editor)*

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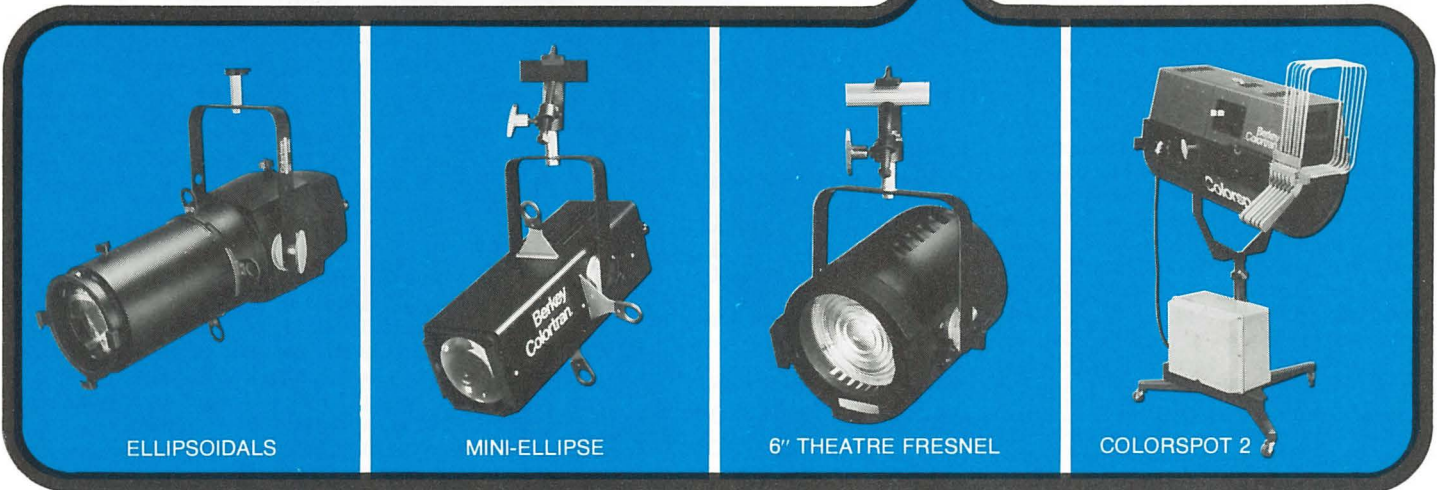
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# PRODUCT NEWS

CISCO, the biennial trade fair in Paris, was a very different and generally improved event this year. Gone was the dominance of cinema we saw in 1977, products for theatre had a good showing and there was a new addition in the form of DISCOM. Discom was the name given by the organisers to the substantial and certainly vocal part of the exhibition devoted to disco equipment. Purists disapproved of this noisy intrusion but at least some of the exhibitors saw a benefit in the crowds Discom attracted which apparently included some buyers too.

Most of us recognise that the Pop/Disco world has brought benefits for conventional theatre in terms of techniques and equipment and this exhibition certainly demonstrated the point though sadly sometimes with a lack of creative skill which tended to devalue the techniques themselves. Pop may be for the relatively young but surely not for the totally juvenile.

Clémançon that distinguished French company of the theatre seem to be taking the development seriously. They eschewed the theatre section and devoted themselves exclusively to an admittedly impressive exhibition in the Discom section. Questions only evoked a gallic shrug and an enigmatic 'ah yes the theatre'.

In addition to the French exhibitors there was good representation for both British and German companies but CISCO is not yet the truly international fair it deserves to be, probably through youth and past mistakes rather than any fault of the present organizers. The list of the exhibitors was impressive enough but too many important companies relied on a local agent who also represented a dozen other companies (one actually had twice that number) from a stand eight feet square. Doubtless this will improve as the stature of the show grows but this time the absence of American manufacturers particularly com-

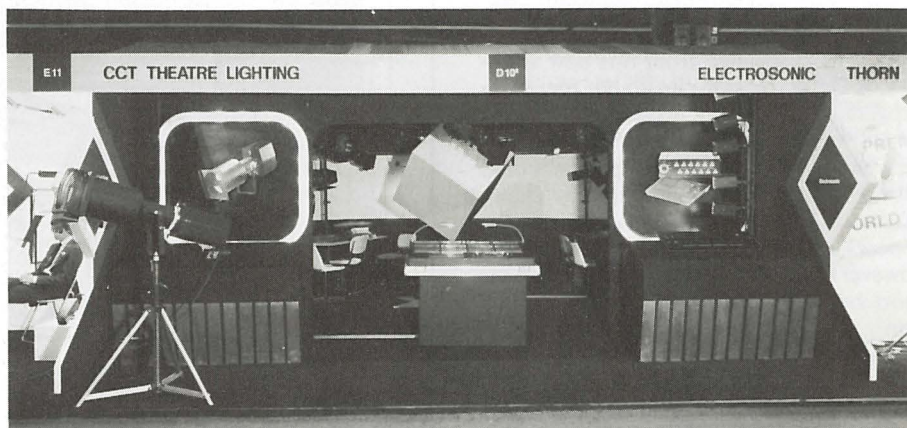
panies like Kliegl was very disappointing.

Most important British companies were there or satisfactorily represented. Rank Strand rather oddly played down their lighting and concentrated on their new subsidiary Telestage which after Light Palette's success abroad seemed almost perverse.

Rank Strand may do some strange things at times but two welcome pieces of news from them recently have been the return of their lectures last month and the introduction of a spare parts service called Strandpart through all recognised Rank Strand stockists.

## Ziller Profile

For those who know their Flanders & Swann this Profile (or cross sectional shape) is made out to be a kind of 'Universal Wom-Pom' of a bar/suspension system/tab track/grid constructor. Ziller Technik of Wesel, Germany, have created a curiously shaped extrusion which enables fittings to



Flying the flag, the British section at CISCO.

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Rank Strand over the counter spare parts service.





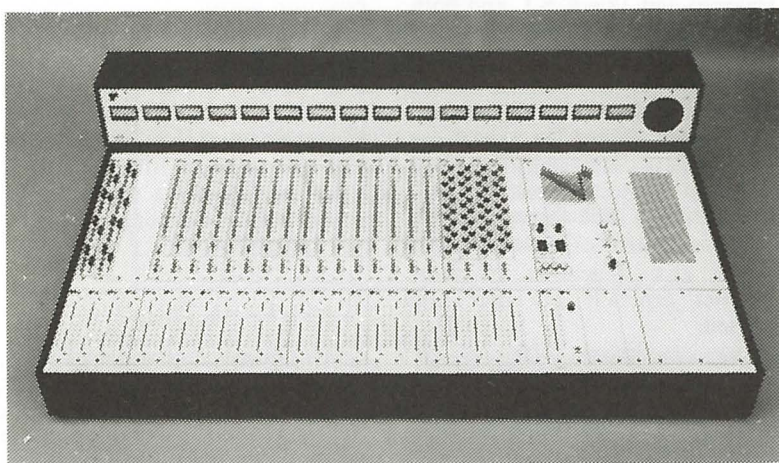
**Technicobel**

This French company, an independent offshoot of Televic, was exhibiting a range of sound equipment from Noise Gates to Multi channel Mixing Desks, and of particular interest to the Theatre world was

their CX40 Special Effects Console. Basically, this desk is a 16 input to 16 output (with 24 outputs to special order), but its operation is very interesting indeed and will be the subject of a special article in another issue.

**Multiplexed Simplicity**

Prophon Sound Limited of Luton, Bedfordshire has produced the MX8A Multiplexed Multicore, which simply consists of two boxes each with eight jack sockets and a length of T.V. co-axial cable. One box receives eight inputs (microphone or line); these signals are then multiplexed in much the same way as a stereo radio signal is formed and transmitted down a single co-axial cable to emerge decoded as eight discrete signals, thus eliminating the need for heavy and expensive multicore cables, with all their attendant connections. There is a power pack at the receiver end and the standard package includes an 80ft co-axial cable on a drum. The unit is effective with up to 650ft (200m) of cable and signal loss/distortion is 'too small to be measured'. For any application where an off stage mixer is used, this must be a far simpler system to use and install than conventional multicores, particularly with touring shows and bands. Prophon claim that their multiplexer will accept any input up to 500mV and will drive loads down to



Technicobel Cx40 special effects console.

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500 ohms at the receiver end. The complete MX8A retails at below £150, direct from the manufacturers.

### R.D.S. Effects Projection System

In Britain, Effects Projection has had a tradition of being, for most potential users, either too expensive, too restricted or too heavy. There have been several excursions into bright Scenic projection with Reich & Vogel, Pani and the very British Pattern 152 (4kw at 100 volts), but, with few exceptions, most of us have had to make do with the Patterns 51, 52 and, since 1965, the Pattern 252, the latest addition to a family founded in Strand Electric's 1936 catalogue. The current range of Effects Discs has been established since the 1920's if not earlier, possibly stemming from those produced by Kliegl in America early in this century. All this adds up to a tradition of Effects Projection going back over fifty years with very little change in the optical facilities provided. The glass discs have always been expensive as items to buy, particularly in view of their intermittent use

in most theatres.

Also at CISCO were David Hersey Associates of Cobham, Surrey, the U.K. Distributors for the R.D.S. Effects Projection system. Made in Japan, this range appears to offer the lighting and scenic designer a lot more scope than the traditional system. The Projectors are 1kw Quartz Halogen and 1kw C.S.I. and both will take Rank Strand Discs with additional heat-absorbing glass filters; these are not needed on the R.D.S. discs which are made of etched stainless steel. All the standard clouds, rain, snow, falling leaves etc. are reproduced on these discs, which have full electronic speed control, clock or anti-clockwise. There is a slide carrier and a 5 position remote control slide turret and a multi-lens to give dimension to snow effects. Lenses generally are rack and pinion focused.

The above description refers to the 'horizontal mode'. The 'vertical mode' opens up a vast number of possibilities and is in fact a system where the projector sits in a vertical optical bench, the light from it passing through a primary effects machine (endless film loops, contra-rotating spirals

or standard discs are three of the possibilities), through the lens and, if needed, a secondary effects machine. The options here include flicker, prism, kaleidoscope and mirror movement creators. All these accessories have electronic variation of direction and speed. The light is then directed to the position needed with a diverting mirror. The possibilities opened up by the extensive range of moving light patterns should appeal to the cabaret, club and disco markets and in theatre the possibility of building up an effects disc library at last becomes feasible with each disc costing under fifty pounds. When the somewhat expensive C.S.I. Projector has remote control dimming, then new horizons will really be with us.

### Green Ginger go continental

Since CISCO Green Ginger have added to their Micropack range to include continental socket options. The range now includes CEE 17, Schuko and French 3-pin sockets together with CEE 17 mains connector.

# Hobson's Choice

Dr. ARTHUR TARRANT

Recently I attended a big meeting on lighting – all sorts of lighting, not just stage lighting. As we went in to the great auditorium one well-known lighting engineer was heard to remark that he'd never seen a place so full of dark grey light. The auditorium was lit entirely by concealed fluorescent lighting, to a distinctly modest level and this description was a very good one.

We often use words to describe lighting effects in a picturesque way – for example, what about 'warm' and 'cold' colours? From quite an early age we are given to understand that red, orange, brown and so on are 'warm' and that green and blue are 'cold' – presumably because fire is red and fire is hot. If you try lighting a cyclorama entirely with a deep rich blue many people will say that there is nothing cold about it – indeed it has a warm look to it. I well remember Mr Applebee of Strand Electric

saying at a meeting many years ago that the stage lighting designer 'paints with light' – which is exactly what he does.

I was interested and amused to see Walter Plinge adopting a like simile in his column 'Between Cues' when he refers to the PAR 64 as adding 'an exciting new texture of light to the palette'. He was at pains to exclude the 240 volt version however. So why the distinction?

The main difference between the 120 volt version and the 240 volt one is in the shape of the filament. Higher voltage lamps have to have longer and finer filaments than low voltage ones which means that inevitably they have to have a larger configuration of the filament. Now in any lamp with a built-in focusing system the narrowness of the beam that you can obtain is limited by the size of the filament coil – the bigger the coil the wider the beam – hence the success of low-voltage lamps that have very com-

pact filaments. In developing the 240 volt PAR 64 the manufacturers have adopted a different filament shape from the 120 volt version for this reason. However in the 'narrow spot' and 'spot' versions the beam divergence of the 240 volt lamp is slightly larger than the 120 volt one – in the 'flood' version the 240 volt beam is slightly narrower than the 120 volt one.

The table below lists the manufacturers published figures for the beam widths of the 'spot' and 'narrow spot' types – it will be seen that the 240 volt lamps have 'squarer' beams than the 120 volt lamps.

The Thorn people check their production continuously by picking lamps at random from production batches and testing them photometrically in a representative range of fittings. The results obtained as the average of one such recent batch meet the catalogue specifications satisfactorily. So in short the 240 volt PAR 64's do what the makers say they will do, which is not the same as what the 120 volt version does.

Now of course there are other things to lamps besides beam angles. Thorn's also tested these lamps for both life and shock resistance. The actual life on average was found to be well over the rated life, and the lamps all stood up to as severe a shock as any tungsten lamp can be expected to carry.

There is also the little problem that in this country (and most of the continent) we live with 240 volt supplies – so if you want to use the 120 volt PAR 64's you have to use them in pairs in series, or permanently connected to a dimmer on half check. In the experience of yours truly lamps in series are a pain in the neck in permanent installations, let alone on the stage, and the latter alternative is not practicable. So like it or not we have no choice.

Type	Brand	Voltage	Angle to ½ peak intensity (degrees V × H)	Angle to 10th peak intensity (degrees V × H)
Narrow Spot	GE	120	6 × 12	10 × 24
	Sylvania	120	6 × 12	10 × 24
	Thorn	240	9 × 12	17 × 24
Spot	GE	120	7 × 14	14 × 26
	Sylvania	120	7 × 14	14 × 26
	Thorn	240	10 × 14	20 × 22

Source: Thorn Lighting Laboratories.

The author is a senior lecturer in engineering at the University of Surrey and specialises in lighting.

# Parade

## Three hundred years of dance costume

John L. Paterson

This article is dedicated to the Theatre Museum, its curator Alexander Schouvaloff who insisted on a refined and simple design, and to the 'team' – Phillip Dyer, Judith Doré, Wendy Fisher, Moira Walters, David

Webster, André Tammes, Karel Kris, Jim Craig, Brian Wishart, Andrew Chisholm, Stuart Barrie and many others without whom this exhibition would not have been realised.

It had always been the intention, from the earliest discussions held between the Theatre Museum and the Edinburgh Festival Society, that an exhibition of dance costume for the 1979 Festival would be restricted to only costumes and their accessories. Exhibitions of costumes that I have seen in the past have tended to either diminish the quality of the costumes, because they were either presented in an over-elaborate setting, or else, because of conservation problems, so dimly lit that it was impossible to see them without eye-strain.

Apart from these discouraging experiences, there was also the inescapable fact that ballet costumes are meant to be danced in when seen, not draped over a dummy, frozen in a single static pose. I decided therefore to create the illusion of a 'magic box' in which the costumes would glow like jewels set against black velvet. To achieve this in the Edinburgh College of Art – the location of the exhibition – meant transforming it so that the existing interior did not distract from the original design intention. The result was an octagonal entrance hall containing the sales and ticket counters in the centre, together with a small curtained proscenium opening set within the existing main staircase displaying two of Picasso's gigantic figures from the Diaghilev ballet 'Parade'. From the entrance hall a long corridor led to the main hall. The corridor had specially designed show-cases along one side that contained memorabilia of the history of ballet in the form of ballet shoes worn by famous dancers, and many of the accessories which they had used in connection with some of the costumes which were on display. Before the entrance to the main exhibition area beyond the show-cases, and acting as a vista-stop, the whole of the end wall was a translucent screen, onto which were back-projected triple overlapping images of a silhouetted dancer performing the basic steps of the dance.

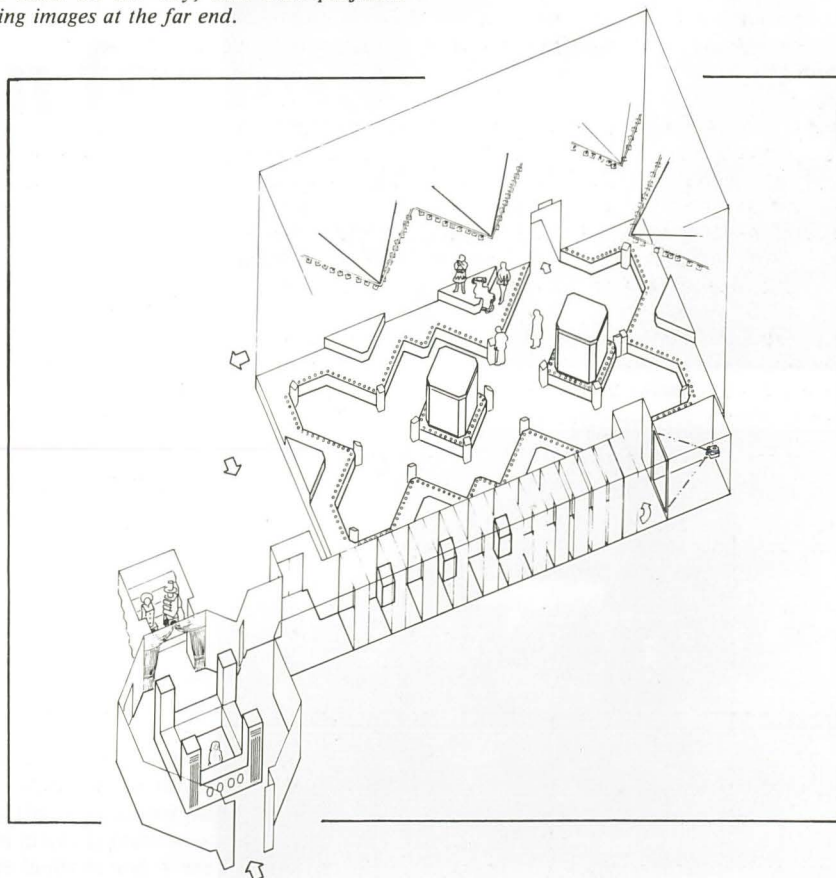
The colour scheme of the entrance lobby was dove-grey throughout, while that of the main hall was black. To provide a gradual colour transition between the two, I introduced bands of black stripes that encircled the corridor, separated by bands of grey that gradually diminished in width until, at



*Long corridor leading to main exhibition with show cases on the way, and back projected moving images at the far end.*

the far end of the corridor, they disappeared entirely, leaving only the black surface at the entrance to the hall.

The main hall, which should perhaps be more properly called an auditorium in the context in which we are describing it, was entirely black. The walls, the floor, the platforms on which the costumes were placed, the draped figures, even the internally lit caption boxes which were distributed around the hall, all were black. The only exceptions were two large polygonal show-cases in the centre that were faced in plate glass to which had been attached gold plastic film that provided a mirror surface. When the cases were lit by dwarf lamps set in the ceiling, the mirrors became transparent revealing their contents.

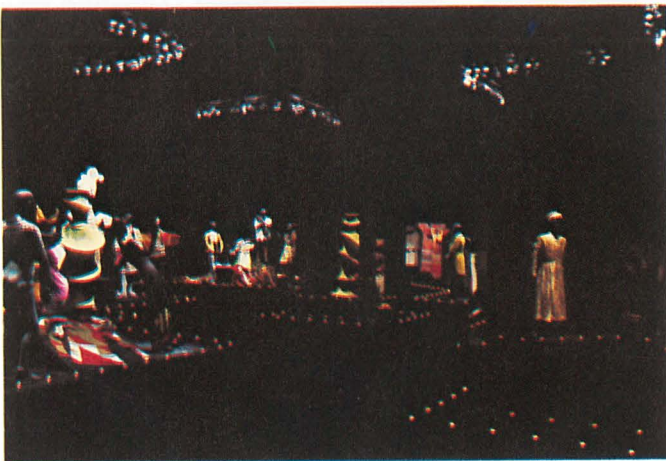




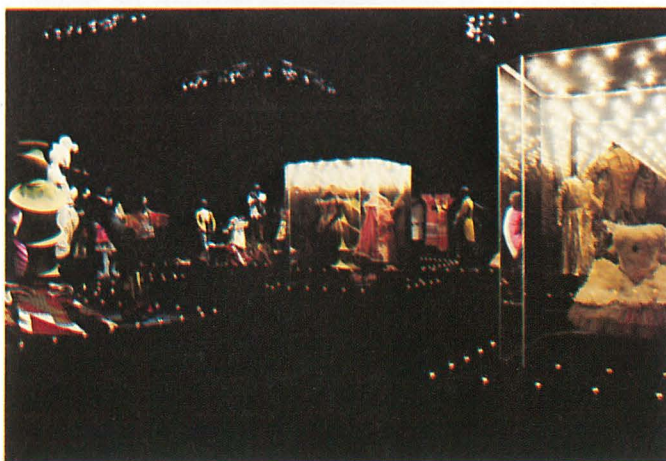
*Entrance hall showing proscenium arch with 'Parade' costumes*



*Aerial view of exhibition.*



*Lighting changes were effected by a cartridge replay unit pulsed to synchronise with master tape recordings of ballet music.*



The general lighting of the hall consisted of 15 watt tungsten bulbs at 12" centres which were positioned along the front edge of the platforms, which not only helped to prevent spectators from unintentionally walking into the rostra, but also created a theatrical atmosphere. The wattage was reduced by a dimmer to a point where only the filaments glowed to give an impression of lowered foot-lights. The draped figures were cross-lit from above by one hundred and fifty E903/7 luminaires fitted with either fresnel heads, irises, or masking frames. These were attached to lytespan 7 track which was bolted to cantilevered aluminium T sections sixteen feet above the platforms. The choice of lighting was dictated by economics. The lights were borrowed from the Theatre Museum and are intended to be used in the new museum in Covent Garden when it is completed. As designer for the museum I had worked with the manufacturers to modify their standard unit to fit into the limited height of the converted building for the museum. However, they proved to be perfectly satisfactory in the changed circumstances of the exhibition. I was able to achieve approximately 75 lux levels with this lighting, and I was only allowed to use such an intensity because the lights were only on for short periods of time.

Above the costume lighting some thirty-five feet from the floor we suspended from the roof twelve pat. 23 lanterns with either motorised or static gobos focused on the circulation area of the hall avoiding any overspill onto the platforms.

All the lighting was wired back to a 100 amp single-phase power supply, and was controlled by a combination of a Kodak Carousel S-AV 2000 programme control linked to a purpose built electronic unit that provided an interface between the Kodak programmer and Rank-Strand S.T.M. 5Kw racks incorporating fifteen thyristor dimmers. Lighting changes were effected by an Electrosonic ES 1311 NAB cartridge replay unit utilising a four track continuous tape cartridge, which was pulsed to synchronise with the stereo tracks from Decca master-tape recordings of ballet music.

The sound was initially amplified through an Electrosonic ES 1253/1266 stereo power amplifier and relayed to twelve MFB RH541 30W speakers distributed in pairs along the length of the hall.

This then was the technical specification of the equipment which was used for the exhibition. But the important question is *how* was it used?

I had prepared with John Drummond, the festival director who is an expert on ballet music, short excerpts from appropriate ballet scenes, and Decca's sound engineers produced the final master-tape. I then transferred this recording onto a four track tape working from a cue sheet that detailed all the lighting positions in the hall. These were coded in relation to the costume locations combined with the pulse timing that was to be synchronised to the music. A cross-reference was included in the cue sheet based on the Kodak programme control diode matrix so that the pulse signals would be relayed to the appropriate light



*Detail of showcase containing Nijinsky's boots for Petrouchka, etc.*

units.

The combination of the equipment and the final pulsed tape resulted in a thirty minute 'son et lumière' programme that was divided into two sequences of fifteen minutes each.

Commencing in total darkness except for the faintly glowing footlights, the audience were first made aware of the exhibits during the initial bars of music as spotlights were gradually brought up onto costumes that were identified with the relayed ballet sequences. Each of the music sections lasted between two to four minutes and the lighting was timed to change not only between each sequence but also during it, so that cross-fades of profile lighting created a

simulated sense of movement in counterpoint to the music. During certain moments of the programme the spotlights dimmed to be replaced by the lights within the large showcases revealing costumed figures. The small 5W lamps not only lit the interior but were also reflected in the mirrored glass which projected their image beyond the showcases, creating an illusion of extended space. At the climax of each of the two sequences all the lighting faded in the auditorium, but with the grand finale of the music (Stravinsky's Firebird suite in the first sequence and the Adagio from Act 1 of Tchaikovsky's Sleeping Beauty in the other) the lamps in the roof were brought up casting shafts of light onto the spectators.

Then with the last notes of the orchestra they faded gradually to leave a momentary pause of darkness and silence before the next sequence was heralded by a fanfare of trumpets.

The majority of the fifteen thousand people who saw the exhibition during its four-week run at Edinburgh seemed to enjoy the experience of a theatrical 'performance' rather than a static display. I was told that it was an innovatory technique that had been used, but in fact I have been using similar techniques in exhibitions for about twelve years! The difference with 'Parade' was that the whole rather than a part of the exhibition was dependent on electronics, and this was only possible because of the reliability of the equipment, which was certainly not the case when I first started in 1967! Parade was open for seven hours a day for thirty days without a single breakdown. The equipment will receive a more critical test in 1981 when 'Parade' will be shown in London over a period of five months; however, from my experience recently with permanent installations using electronic equipment, I do not anticipate any problems.

I personally believe that future developments in exhibition design will utilise the potential of electronics in ways that can only be dimly perceived at present, and will revolutionise our traditional attitudes to an extent that an awareness of the intrinsic quality of displayed objects or pictures will be the prerogative not of the few but of the many.

## Design for Lighting

PERCY CORRY

A Revised **STAGE LIGHTING** by **Richard Pilbrow**, Studio Vista (£14.95).

In 1954 I thought it necessary to protest in print about the unjustifiable anonymity of those who devised the lighting of stage settings. It soon became clear that many of the designers had the same idea and had done something about it. Their names began to appear in the programme credits and even, occasionally, on playbills. In 1970 Richard Pilbrow, who had by then acquired an international reputation, produced a comprehensive survey of the art and techniques of lighting design. The fact that reprints were necessary in 1974 and 1976 was evidence of the need for and the quality of the book. It has now been revised and expanded. Included are authoritative comments by Bill Bundy on the lighting of opera and by John B. Read on ballet and dance. The Foreword originally contributed

by Sir Laurence Olivier is revised only by the recognition of his elevation to the peerage.

There are a score of additional photographic plates, many in colour. Unfortunately, photographs of stage settings, however good, and many of these are very good, never completely capture the actual lighting effects produced on stage. This was emphasised for me by the illustration of a scene from Michael Elliott's production of Ibsen's **BRAND** at Hammersmith's old Lyric many years ago. Frederick Bentham and I saw this production together and were greatly impressed by the lighting devised by one Richard Pilbrow, a name that was then unfamiliar. The lighting had a dramatic unity with both setting and performance, a unity that proclaimed the creative sensitivity of an artist. It must be assumed that he had fewer lanterns and a less sophisticated control than would now be available to him.

The aspirant lighting designer would probably be slightly daunted by the multiplicity of lantern symbols scattered over the Pilbrow layout diagrams prepared for particular productions, especially if he is unfortunately compelled to work within the limitations of half a dozen F.O.H. spots, a sparse selection of lanterns of dubious versatility over the acting area and an obsolescent manually operated board to control his maximum of something like forty dimmer channels. He would be wrong to think that this book is not for him. In the early chapters Pilbrow quite clearly and emphatically establishes the basic principles which are the same whether he has forty circuits or four hundred. The need for artistry is constant: it is the technicalities that differ. If vaulting ambition is not allowed to o'erleap the practical facilities the visual effects produced can still be theatrically satisfying if there is sensitive use of the facilities available, however limited.

The multiplicity and variety of lanterns now demanded for many theatres are not primarily related to the size of stage and a need for more light intensity per square yard (all right, square metre if it must be). Greater selectivity of light sources and group control of intensity, direction, distribution and colour provide facilities for subtle variations of visual expression to be used by the designer who has something to express and has mastered the techniques of achievement: if he has not the skill to use fluently a complex multiplicity of lanterns the possibilities of disaster are multiplied.

Pilbrow offers examples of his methods of dealing with the practical problems in devising the lighting of particular productions. He does not imply that his way is the only Right Way. Anybody who justifiably claims to be a lighting designer will have developed his own methods to suit the style of his own productions. None the less he will find the book very interesting and helpful no matter what differences of scale there may be. Fortunately even stages of modest size, though not equipped with lavish complexity, frequently have installations that would have been envied by those of us who had to endure restrictions and frustrations in the not too distant past. Quite often, however, there can be much virtue in simplicity.

The text of the book has been extended by 24 pages. There are detailed schedules of equipment, mostly British and American, of course, but also including examples from Germany, Austria, Italy and Japan. (There is an increasing international market for theatre books.) There is appropriate comment on a comprehensive range of dimmer controls from the humble Junior 8 to the most sophisticated memory systems. All types of lanterns are scheduled and the universally accepted symbols are listed. A method of calculating lighting angles is examined in some detail and much ancillary equipment is described. Altogether a most useful reference book for any lighting designer.

Here is an artist who exhibits his mastery of the essential craftsmanship. He develops his theme with a well ordered clarity and, mercifully, without any of the pretentious clap-trap so popular with those pundits who love to display, with pompous solemnity, their exclusive appreciation of the nuances of Art.

To an incipient geriatric whose modest expertise has now a faded air and who recalls the pleasure with which he was wont to receive royalties based on sales at fifteen shillings a time in real money before it was debased by metric coinage, the price of £14.95 seems a trifle excessive. It seems less so when it is also recalled that when I started to smoke a pipe nearly seventy years ago I could purchase an ounce of tobacco for five of the old heavy pennies: for a comparable quality the cost of a reduced metric substitute for a 2 oz. tin is now £3.30. Pilbrow is better value.

# Between Cues

The thoughts of  
Walter Plinge

## Theatre Balls

Some of us have been saying for some years that the proscenium theatre is the most adaptable building for entertainments and assemblies of all kinds. Just to emphasise that the eighties are going to be no different from earlier decades, Walter Plinge has chosen to decorate his page with pictures which span two centuries of theatres as ballrooms. Theatres can be used for assemblies, but can Assembly Rooms be used for theatre? Most towns have at least one building which proves that they cannot.

## Jargon

In the world of theatre architecture *point of command* was the trendy phrase of the late seventies. We predict *courtyard* as the

obvious 1979 starters. The exhibition's Shakespearean title was *We shall not Look Upon his Like Again* derived from the verdict of a contemporary Drury Lane prompter, and the catalogue had similar outbursts of sycophancy from names like Alexander Pope and Dr. Johnson. All tosh, of course (we have seen, and especially the Old Vic has seen, Oliviers, Richardsons and Gielguds, to name but many) but good healthy showbiz tosh for all that . . . and any era of entertainment would surely be the worse for a lack of ephemeral epithets like *The Undisputed Monarch of the English Stage* the title of an entertainment in praise of David Garrick which graced the Vic's stage for one Sunday night but which will hopefully reach a wider audience in due course. Ian Richardson, in a single performance, established himself as the only

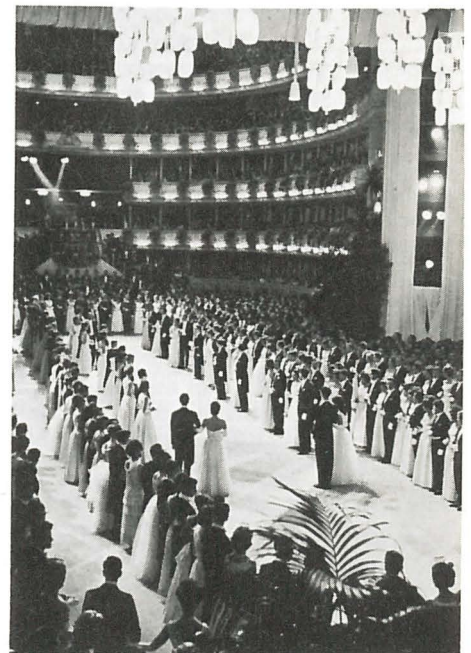


Tom, Jerry and Logic in characters at the GRAND CARNIVAL.

fashionable word of the early eighties. As far as we have been able to discover, a *Courtyard Theatre* appears to be an Italianate Opera House without curves.

## Garrick celebrated

An uncouth departed diarist called Tabman once declared that the only possible location for a theatre museum was a historical theatre (as in Copenhagen) and suggested that this might be an honourable future role for the Old Vic. This idea was, to put it with some delicacy, received with doubt in certain quarters. *This* diarist will only note that London's theatre museum seems doomed to remain in embryo perpetuo, and repeat certain seditious rumours that, come the eventual anticlimactic opening of its doors, the emphasis is likely to be on the art of exhibiting rather than on the exhibits themselves. Meanwhile the foyers of the Old Vic have been refurbished and form a goodly exhibition space with Garrick as



thinkable actor for Garrick, and Timothy West once again made us wonder how we could ever contemplate any performance of anything without his contribution. In fact we have survived many theatrical evenings without Timothy West – indeed, enjoyed many productions which were certainly not the poorer for his absence. But there are actors who are so *right* in everything they do that they carry the conviction of indispensability throughout the magic hour of their strutting and fretting. Such an actor is Mr. West and his contribution thus catalysed Mr. Richardson's characterisation of the leading role. I certainly hope to look upon their like again.

### Stage scores a century

*Stage* newspaper is one hundred and I have read every issue for over a quarter of that century. I have no intention of missing a single future issue until my final curtain. I like *Stage* and I congratulate her on a splendid long run. I hope that she will always remember that she is a local newspaper and will contain even more trivia and even more names. Hers is a world where the Cast List is infinitely more important than the Review.

### B's Memorial

Although not an ABTT founder – I was in rehearsal when the promulgating ad hoc cell met in that King Street cellar – I did join in time to speak from the floor at the ABTT's 1961 Conference: their first and only, but certainly successful attempt at international

hosting. After a decade of active committee work, I now offer only moral support from the back benches. And so I did not join the band of enthusiastic members who did-it-themselves to transform a bleak slice of fringe Soho into office, committee, and assembly rooms. Instead I waited until the official opening when the plonk flowed liberally (by courtesy of Theatre Projects). After all the volunteer effort and donations in kind, it would be churlish to suggest that the assembly room looks as if it had been devised by a local authority acting on the advice from equipment manufacturers without seeking an opinion from the ABTT's architectural and planning committee. So I will only think it, not say aloud. No, I will just commend T.P. for putting their finger on the real pulse of the ABTT – informal communication – and supplying the necessary lubrication. This essential purpose of the ABTT was recognised by the late B. Bear and I can well remember the moment when he rose to his feet in the King Street basement to bring a wandering policy discussion to its senses by proposing a wine and cheese epilogue to the monthly technical meetings. The bar in the new premises is most properly dedicated to B's memory and he would have wished no finer memorial. But, glass in hand, he might well have used the occasion to warn that acquisition of grand premises can often be the first sign of an institution on the slide.

### Lyric devalued

On entering the new Lyric at Hammersmith I expected to be overcome by a great wave

of *déjà vu*. I had, after all, seen many great performances from the old Lyric's gods and had bridged a two month unemployment gap in the late fifties by acting as the Lyric's chief electrician. So I stepped out of the ghastly foyer (style: developer's bland) into the comic auditorium (style: disneyland Matcham) anticipating a great wave of damp-eyed nostalgia. But I collapsed in a wave of nervous giggles arising from a state of disbelief which resolutely defied all attempts at suspension. The auditorium had been re-scaled to a minor but disastrous extent; but even if the new Lyric had been an exact copy of the old, this is no way to go about building a theatre. It stands as a monument to the stupidity of our planning regulations and possibly even to our whole attitude to the performing arts. Frank Matcham would surely regard us as a right load of loonies.

### New decade's resolution

As a regular breaker of New Year resolutions I now propose to attempt a New Decade resolution. *Hear Ye, Hear Ye!* The only things that I really care passionately about (well, things of the soul, that is) are Handel and old-shallow-tiered-horseshoe theatres.

So Walter Plinge hereby resolves that he will make no more mention of either in this column throughout the Eighties. (It is not that your Walter is a Puritan, he just does not want to be a bore.) So no mention. Well, not unless he succeeds in getting a Handel Opera performed in some old-shallow-tiered-horseshoe of which he happens to be, for the time being, custodian.

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# Caring is the little things

DOROTHY TENHAM

Only American Actors Equity would dare to attempt to define the duties of a Stage Manager on paper. The idea of actually setting down on paper the duties of any particular member of a stage management team is something that has always defeated me totally. I was brought up to believe that anything that was required for the comfort of the rest of the company and for the requirements of the production was my job to provide.

As DSM on the book of any fairly conventional production, it became a habit to think of myself as hostess to all the people who turned up in the rehearsal room each day. That seemed (very simply and without too many fussy complications) to take care of the 'comfort of the company' part of the deal. However, the quality of the host varies from time to time and varies considerably from generation to generation. The common-sense courtesies tend to slip

away first. Let them not be forgotten in the stampede to computerise the provision of production requirements. They are the things that make actors and directors comfortable in the rehearsal room and, therefore, able to produce better and more relaxed work more quickly.

For good box office, the essential conclusion to all the preparation work must be good performances from the actors – no matter how efficient theatres become technically. A company needs relaxed and safe rehearsals to enable it to go all out for the best results and yet still feel secure.

Actors are a walking paradox. They can remember 2½ hours of script and still forget to come to their rehearsals with a pencil. As a good host, you should be prepared to provide a pencil (preferably one with a rubber on the end) and something with which to sharpen it when required. A spare note pad or two should always be at

hand for use by actors and directors – also forgetful folk! As hosts of the rehearsal room, DSM's should be the first to arrive and the last to leave. They should know the most convenient route to the rehearsal room, where the loo is, where to eat, where to drink, where to make the company's tea and coffee, where the nearest pay phone is and how to get from the rehearsal room to costumiers and wig makers.

These may seem unnecessary or obvious duties for a DSM. If they become so unnecessary that nobody performs these duties anymore, then I believe that the standard of stage management will go quickly downhill and take some potentially exciting performances with it. If you find it all too obvious, I once more apologise for boring all you good DSM's.

It is my firm conviction that unless these 'little niceties' become so obvious to DSM's that they are automatic actions, schools who teach stage management are wasting their time teaching students to understand the workings of more technical aspects of the craft.

As I said to start with – 'caring is the little things'.

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