CUE

Technical Theatre Review

May–June 1981 £1·25

'There are only two kinds of class: First class and no class'

(DAVID O. SELZNICK)

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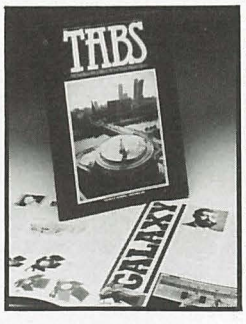

Rank Strand

PO Box 51 Great West Road
Brentford Middlesex TW8 9HR
Telephone 01 568 9222
Telex 27976
Cables: Rankaudio Brentford.

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11 May-June 1981

Cover picture is the almost completed Barbican Arts Centre viewed across the ornamental lake. It shows the lakeside terrace which is also the pedestrian access to the spacious foyers. The concert hall and the theatre share these foyers on two levels, the other being below ground for vehicle access. (Photo' Peter Bloomfield)

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Editorial,
Advertising and Subscription Office:
Twynam Publishing Ltd.,
Kitemore, Faringdon, Oxfordshire SN7 8HR.
Telephone 0367 21141

Dedication

Some people never learn. And thank heaven for that.
In this issue we print, with a good deal of quiet satisfaction, a small tribute to Sam Wanamaker, and to the dream he has nursed and cherished of reconstituting the 'Globe' theatre on Bankside, where – if you except certain earlier affairs in cathedral closes – the whole business of show business really got started.

We hope to make this the first of a regular series of profiles on men or women of the theatre who, by persistent application to an *idea,* have put up the tents the great wandering tribe of writers, composers, actors, dancers, musicians, technicians (and managements) now more or less cheerfully and sometimes unthinkingly inhabit.

Names like those of Laurence Olivier, Peter Brook, Peter Hall, Bernard Miles, Ninette de Valois, Marie Rambert, Benjamin Britten, Robert Mayer come easily to mind – we've left out all titles lest they should be thought to be 'establishment' figures. But, also lining up, in less national terms, in more specialised categories and in more eccentric spheres of operation, is a host of patiently restless people who have worked the changes in our cultural life that represent some sort of progress, onwards and upwards with the arts.

From time to time, individual enterprise may, by a fluke, coincide with government policy, the interests of commerce, the taste of audiences or the attitude of public bodies of the rentier kind. But, more often, and especially in the infancy of ideas, the individual is left to go it alone. Coping with committees, supplicating for funds, arguing with accountancy and the natural defeatism of critics, importuning audiences agog with apathy, and never, never getting home for dinner on time. The private rewards are often small – one does not envisage Sam Wanamaker laughing all the way to the Bankside. His and their satisfaction must be that, without the innovators and the 'developers' (in the nicest sense) to show us the way, a great many of us – including, of course, the staff of CUE – wouldn't know where to go in the morning.

Let's run *that* one up the fly-tower and see who salutes . . .

The Barbican Arts Centre

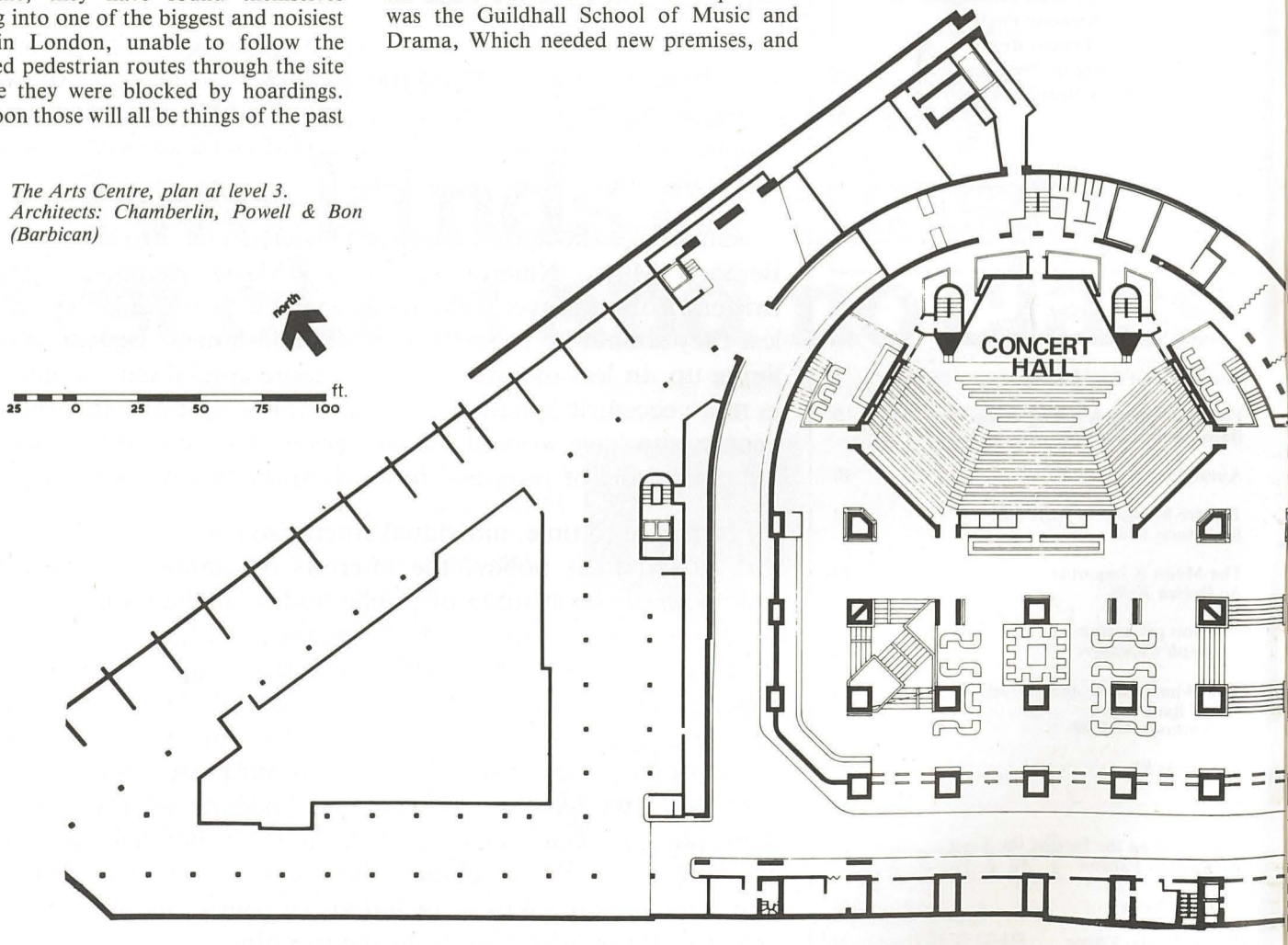
£106,000,000 worth of inner city resurgence

The fortress is just about to open. Now can it earn its keep? In this first report on what the City of London has been doing for itself and the Arts, our CUE man on the site (wearing a white helmet and a security pass) writes about the vast scale of an enterprise that will run and run.

On February 11 this year the London Symphony Orchestra played to an audience in the Barbican Hall for the first time. It was a test concert and the audience was invited. The people who came included, of course, many of those who had worked on the design and construction of the Centre, but the greatest number of seats was allocated to residents in the surrounding flats, because it was felt to be right to give them some reward for all their patience during the years when, instead of enjoying the civilised surroundings of the gardens and lake, they have found themselves looking into one of the biggest and noisiest holes in London, unable to follow the intended pedestrian routes through the site because they were blocked by hoardings. Very soon those will all be things of the past and not only the locals but the whole of London will be waking up to what has been created in their midst.

An Arts Centre on the magnificent scale of what has been built was not part of the original conception of the Barbican Development; that was, and still remains, to quote a resolution passed in 1956, 'that there should be created in the Barbican area a genuine residential neighbourhood incorporating schools, shops, open spaces and other amenities, even if this means foregoing a more remunertaive return on the land'. One of the schools in quesition was the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, Which needed new premises, and the theatre and concert hall included in the early schemes were relatively modest in size and designed to be used partly for the teaching purposes of the School and partly for public performances by professional artists. This idea of shared use was subsequently abandoned and the School was designed with its own small theatre and music rehearsal hall, so that a new policy had to be developed for the other auditoria. Instead of retracting from the project, the Corporation courageously decided to increase the size and improve the facilities

The Arts Centre, plan at level 3. Architects: Chamberlin, Powell & Bon (Barbican)



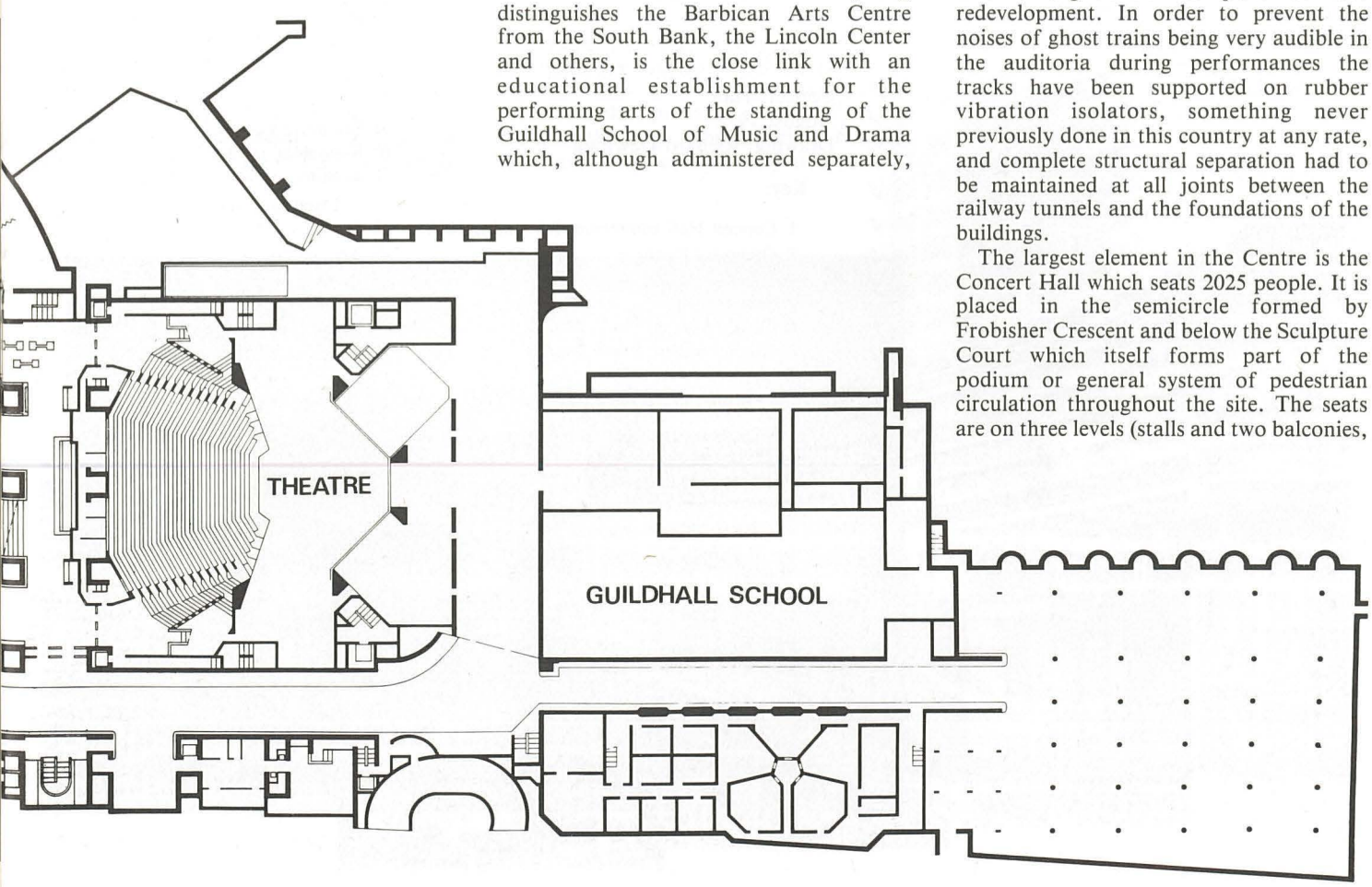
The Barbican is the largest single development of its kind in Western Europe.

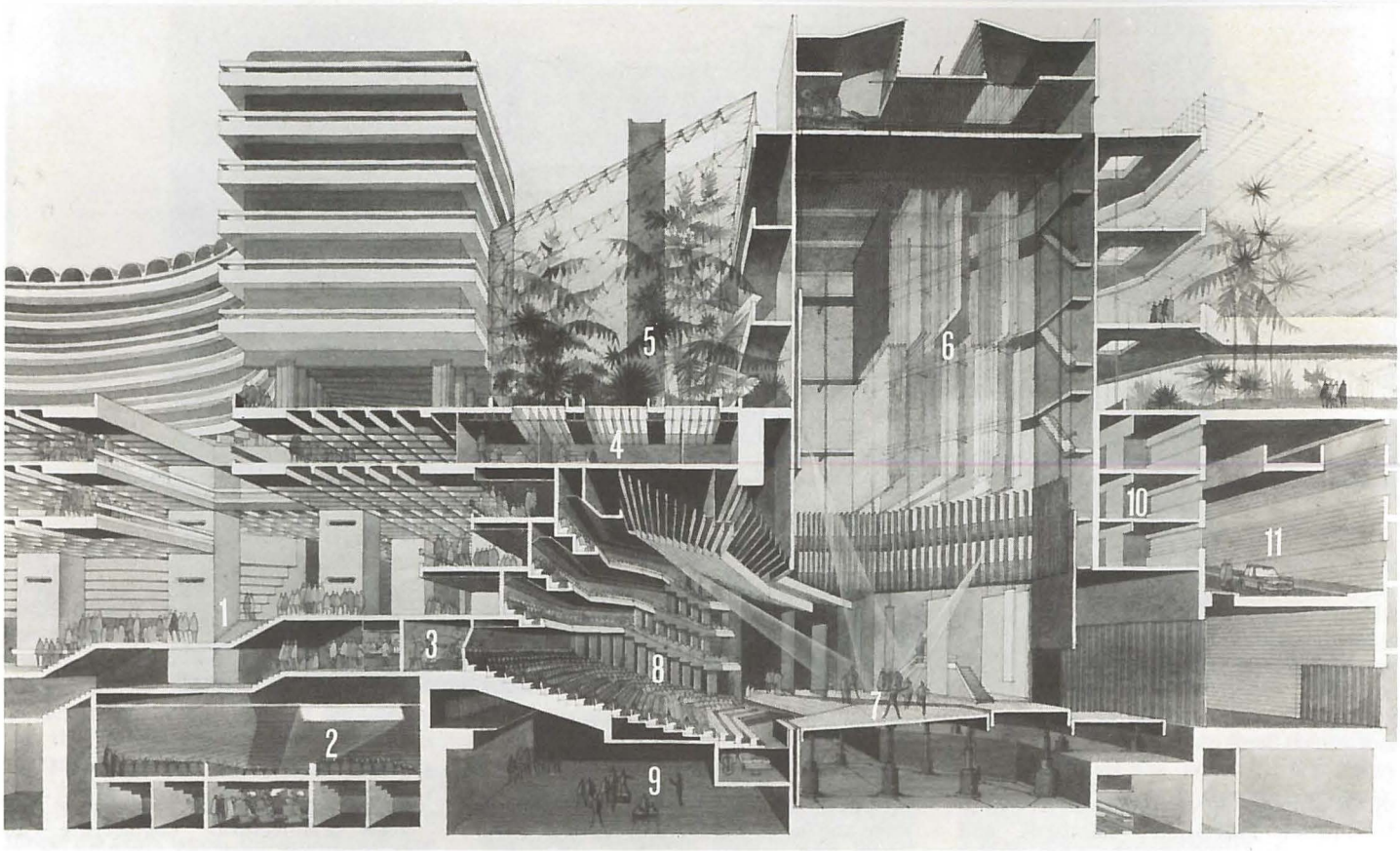
of the proposed theatre and concert hall to the highest professional standards, and from this arose the idea that they should become the London homes of the Royal Shakespeare Company and of the London Symphony Orchestra. Grouped around this nucleus and linked by the foyer spaces are library, art gallery, cinema, conference facilities, and the catering necessary to serve the large numbers of people which they would attract.

Comparisons are inevitable with the South Bank, where many of the ingredients are much the same, and doubts, which will only be settled by experience, may arise about whether so large an addition to London's cultural equipment can easily be assimilated. What more than anything distinguishes the Barbican Arts Centre from the South Bank, the Lincoln Center and others, is the close link with an educational establishment for the performing arts of the standing of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama which, although administered separately, can only be profoundly beneficial to both.

The architectural, engineering, and constructional problems involved in the project have been formidable. To give just one example,—The Metropolitan line runs right across the site between Barbican and Moorgate stations. It is actually immediately beneath the Lakeside Terrace in front of the Arts Centre and the track was straightened as part of the redevelopment. In order to prevent the noises of ghost trains being very audible in the auditoria during performances the tracks have been supported on rubber vibration isolators, something never previously done in this country at any rate, and complete structural separation had to be maintained at all joints between the railway tunnels and the foundations of the buildings.

The largest element in the Centre is the Concert Hall which seats 2025 people. It is placed in the semicircle formed by Frobisher Crescent and below the Sculpture Court which itself forms part of the podium or general system of pedestrian circulation throughout the site. The seats are on three levels (stalls and two balconies,





BARBICAN ARTS CENTRE
EAST-WEST SECTION THROUGH
ROYAL SHAKESPEARE THEATRE
Drawing by Richard Dawking

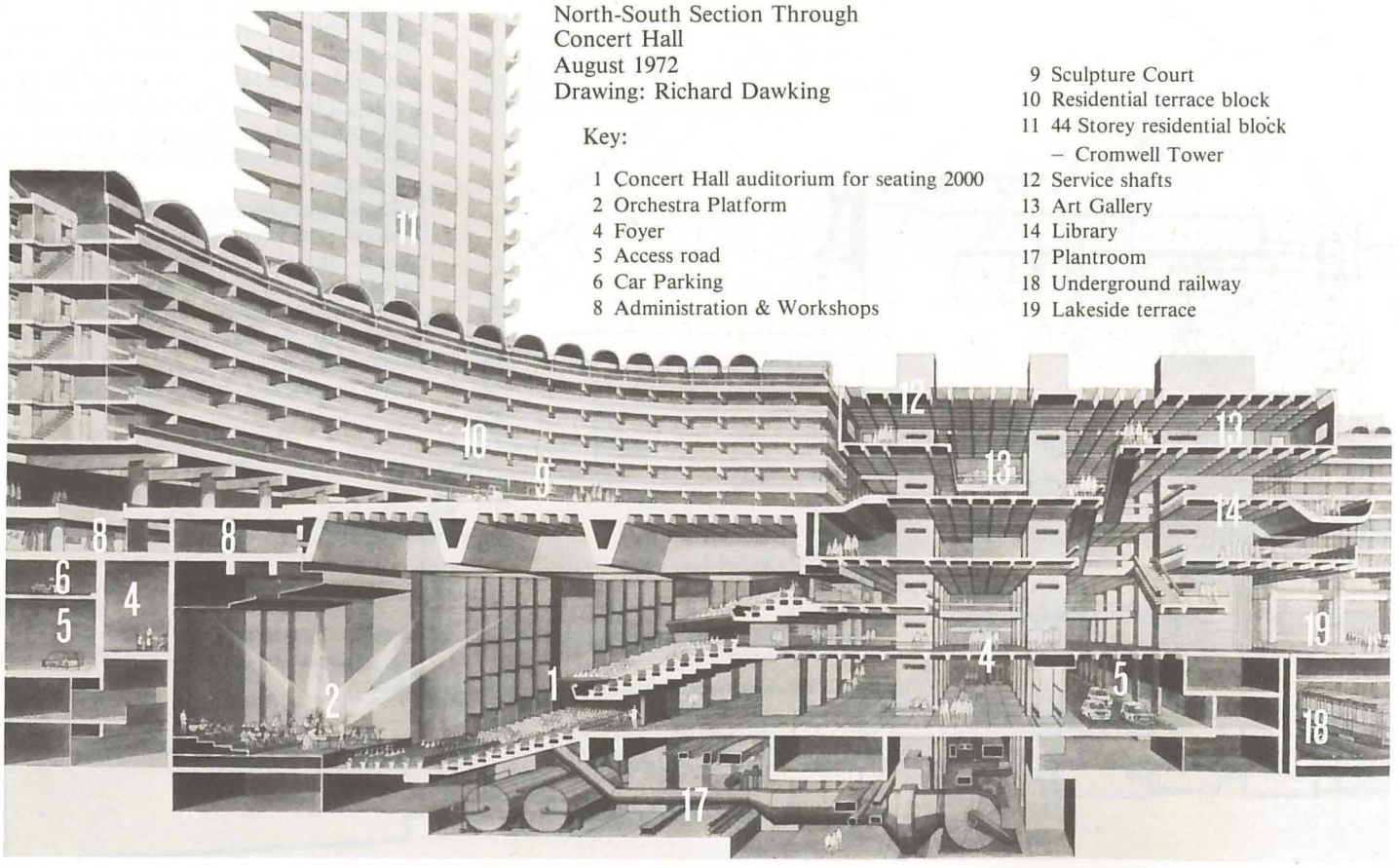
Key

1 Foyer
2 Cinema
3 Control rooms
4 Theatre Administration
5 Conservatory
6 Flytower
7 Stage
8 Auditorium
9 "The Pit"
10 Dressing rooms
11 Access road

BARBICAN ARTS CENTRE
North-South Section Through
Concert Hall
August 1972
Drawing: Richard Dawking

Key:

1 Concert Hall auditorium for seating 2000
2 Orchestra Platform
4 Foyer
5 Access road
6 Car Parking
8 Administration & Workshops
9 Sculpture Court
10 Residential terrace block
11 44 Storey residential block – Cromwell Tower
12 Service shafts
13 Art Gallery
14 Library
17 Plantroom
18 Underground railway
19 Lakeside terrace

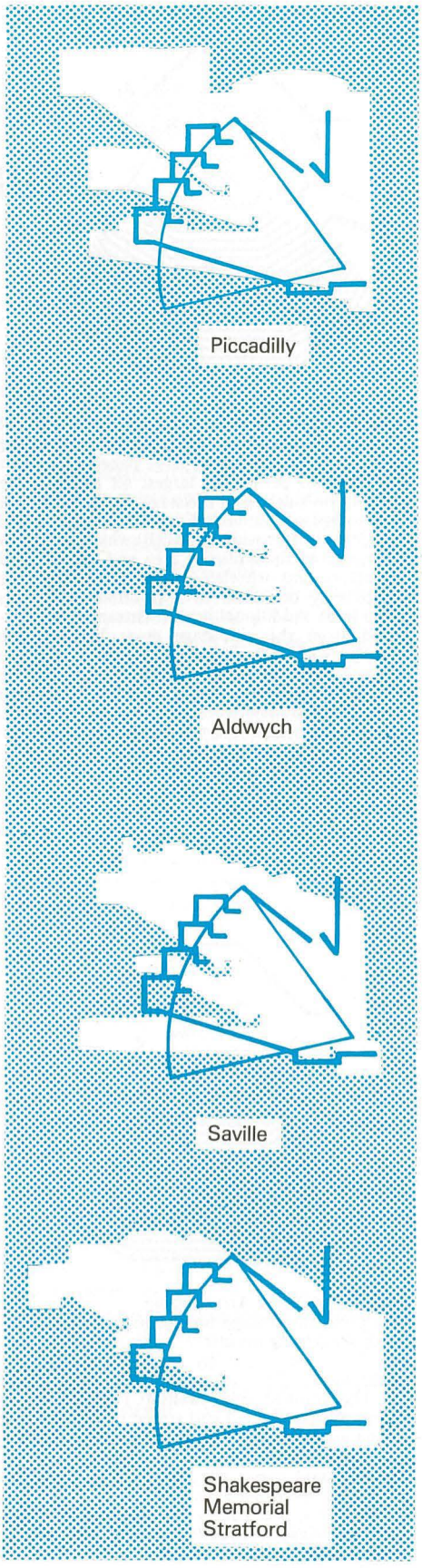


The Barbican Theatre—new home of The Royal Shakespeare Company

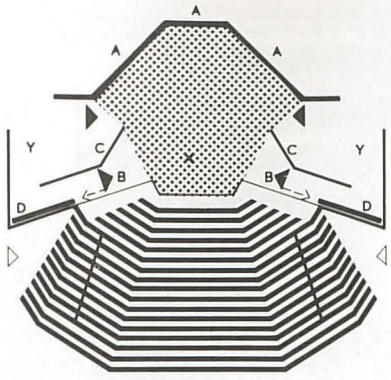
which do not overhang the levels below); the width of the hall is unusually large and its depth back to front is correspondingly small, so that the atmosphere is more intimate than would be expected. The height between the lowest level of excavation and the sculpture court was limited and this caused problems over obtaining a volume within the hall large enough for good acoustics. The problem was solved by taking into the auditorium the structural depth of the beams which would normally be concealed above a ceiling. The massive concrete beams of the Barbican Hall are exposed and visible, but their hard smooth surfaces were themselves acoustically dangerous because they could give rise to echoes. To overcome this risk and to encourage diffusion of sound clouds of plastic spheres, some of them containing lights, were hung high up in the roof spaces and they are a distinctive part of the architecture of the hall; An acoustical model, constructed of heavy varnished timber, was made to study the effects of these spheres and other acoustical properties of the hall.

The Theatre is the most architecturally original space in the Centre. The number of seats is almost exactly the same as in the Olivier Theatre and the form of the stage is very similar in both, but there any resemblance between the two theatres ends, for the Barbican theatre is designed with the single objective of placing all the seats as close to the stage as possible; in the event none of the 1166 seats is further than 65 feet from the 'point of command' at the front of the stage. The galleries, of which there are three, contain only two rows of

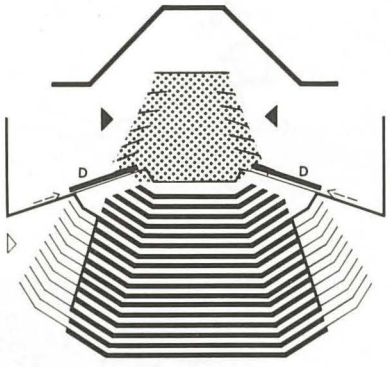
Test concert given by the L.S.O. to an invited audience.



This diagram shows the Barbican Theatre in Outline Section superimposed on 3 London Theatres and the Royal Shakespeare Theatre at Stratford-on-Avon all of which have about the same seating capacity.



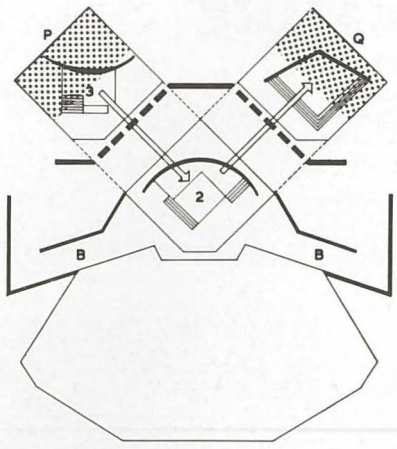
Open Stage Arrangement
The theatre will be used in this form by the Royal Shakespeare Company. The upstage limits of the acting area are defined by large panels (A) which are flown to permit the largest set pieces to be brought on stage from the stage lifts behind. The down-stage or 'command point' acting area (X) is approached by wide ramps (B) which appear to emerge from the audience area and will be used by actors and wheeled props. If desired, the ramps may be raised to a position flush with stage level. Additional actors' entrances are provided from the side-stage areas between the cranked walls (C) adjoining the ramps and the upstage screen of panels. Set pieces may also be slid horizontally on stage from the side-stage areas through these entrances. The cranked walls (c) are removable on the occasions when the theatre is adapted for proscenium productions by visiting companies. All seats in the auditorium have full view of the acting area.
Seating capacity: 1166



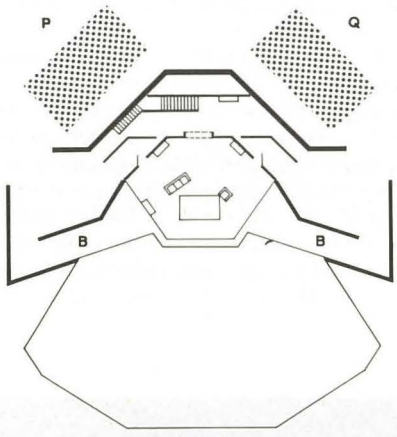
Proscenium Stage Arrangement
The proscenium stage transformation is effected by the following means:

Stage Area
(a) The cranked stage walls (C) adjoining the ramps are demounted and stored in the fly-tower giving unobstructed wing space on either side for stage wagons etc.
(b) The stage ramps (B) are raised to a position level with the acting area.
(c) Moveable wall panels (D), normally positioned in the wings (Y) are slid out along the edges of the levelled ramps to form a 35′ proscenium opening.
(d) The forestage is widened by means of infill sections at either side.

Auditorium
All of the seating in the side galleries is screened off by means of heavy fabric louvres attached to spring loaded drums fixed above the auditorium acoustic ceiling and tension-fastened to the balustrade of the first gallery.
All stalls and rear gallery seats, except about twelve (groundlings' seats have vision to a point 35′ up stage.
Proscenium stage seating capacity: 1,000



This diagram illustrates the means whereby the stage sets may be changed during the course of a performance. The major stage entrances are via the stage ramps B with additional upstage entrances. The illustration shows a three-set production sequence with Set No.2 on stage, Set No.1 having been moved off stage on to stage lift Q and about to be taken down to scene dock level in two sections, and Set No.3 parked behind the upstage screen (shown as broken heavy line), one half being on stage lift P and ready to be brought onstage when Set No.2 has been moved to Lift Q.
This represents only one possible sequence of operation. Other sequential variations are feasible.



This diagram indicates a conventional 'box-frame' drawing-room set on the open stage. In this instance the stage ramps B are not normally used. Actors' entrances are through the doors and arch of the set upstage.

Key:

▶	Actors Entrances
▷	Audience ,,
A	Upstage screen of panels
B	Stage ramps
C	Cranked walls
D	Proscenium panels
P, Q	Stage Lifts
X	Command point area
Y	Stage Wings

seats and each gallery projects forward of the one below, instead of stepping backwards as normal. There are no gangways within the auditorium, each row of seats being reached throught its own door at either end. The result is that the only surfaces not covered by the audience are the doors, the gallery fronts, and a vestigial ceiling.

Very much smaller than these two main auditoria is the Cinema, placed at the lowest level adjacent to the Concert Hall. An important function, in addition to the exhibition of films, is as a lecture room for conferences and again the special requirements have led to an original solution, in this case of the treatment of the walls and ceiling. Dark surfaces, favourable in a cinema for reducing reflected light, might tend to be gloomy in a lecture room, so a saw-toothed profile was designed, the surfaces facing the screen being 'out of sight' to minimise any visual distraction caused by light reflected from the screen.

The Concert Hall and Theatre share foyers on two levels, one, below ground, for vehicle access and the other giving onto the Lakeside Terrace for pedestrian access. The next level above these is shared by the foyer for the top balcony of the Concert Hall and the music department of the Library, the main part of the Library being one level higher, which is also the lower podium level. Above the Library are two floors of Art Gallery, the lower of which extends outside to the Sculpture Court at the higher podium level. None of these floors is continuous; all contain staircases or wells enabling one to see through from one level to another, and adjacent to the foyers on all levels are the catering facilities.

Overlooking the Sculpture Court in the lowest floors of Frobisher Crescent is the remainder of the conference accommodation consisting of two cinema/lecture rooms and five seminar rooms. Finally, to the side of the Sculpture Court is the spectacular Conservatory, like a huge glass tent surrounding the stage towers of the Royal Shakespeare and Guildhall School theatres.

Barbican Centre for Arts and Conferences

Barbican, London EC2Y 8DS
Tel: 01-638 4141

Client: The Corporation of the City of London
Consultant Architects:
Chamberlin, Powell and Bon (Barbican)
Structural Engineers
Ove Arup and Partners
Services Engineers:
G H Buckle and Partners
Acoustic Consultant:
Hugh Creighton, MA, ARIBA
Theatre Consultants:
Theatre Projects Ltd.
Auditorium and Foyer seating:
Robin Day
Quantity Surveyors:
Davis, Belfield and Everest
Main Contractor:
John Laing Construction Ltd.

Flying . . . Lighting . . . Sound . . . at the Barbican Theatre

ALAN RUSSELL

My first introduction to this new London home for the Royal Shakespeare Theatre was a picture of the model produced by Peter Hall and John Bury.

Two years later we were to be given a glimpse of the architectural model by Chamberlin Powell & Bon complete with a plan and section drawings of the building.

What hopes and ambitions were assembled in those constructions of balsa and cement. But what a pity that a whole decade had to pass before we could put all those ideas to the test.

Now, as we near completion (the RSC will start to work up the Theatre at the end of this year, leading to a full public opening in the Spring of 1982) we can look at some of the technical decisions which have been made and problems overcome.

From my first look at the 1968 drawings I could never work out how on earth there was *'a proscenium line with a straight fire curtain falling on its front edge'* as we were told.

Well, although a waiver had been obtained from the GLC in order to omit a safety curtain in the open stage on the South Bank, which was to be the Olivier Theatre, a safety curtain was considered to be an advantage for the Barbican if it could be provided without compromising the one-room relationship of the design, since its provision would avoid the extra costs and inconvenience of using the non-inflammable materials for scenery which the GLC would otherwise demand. This proved just possible for the Barbican, whereas it was not feasible for the Olivier with its much more pronounced thrust stage.

However, since the Barbican's stage floor was to be a moveable feast, the curtain had to fall to the auditorium floor level, forward of the front row's gangway, similar to the arrangement now used in the Lyttleton Theatre. So as well as the curtain being a complex shape in plan to suit the profile of the stage front, it is made in two parts, the lower section being lifted up from the auditorium floor like a rising barrier and meeting its partner descending from the fly tower above.

So successful is the focus of the auditorium and proximity of the entire house of 1150 to the stage, that the sudden appearance of this enormous room divider during the interval might have been claustrophobic. The architects have overcome this with a visual coup de theatre which I will leave you to experience for yourselves.

Another decision to be made concerned the system of flying to be adopted. Here was an open-space stage with a considerable degree of audience encompassment round the principal central acting area. Would many more three dimensional scenic pieces be required in this theatre? – the RSC were building very large and heavy pieces at that time. This would argue for the multiple point hoist suspension system being developed for the Olivier rather than the conventional arrangement of bars. Finally it was agreed that there would still be considerable emphasis on pieces which would be principally two-dimensional, although they might well be very thick and very heavy, and so a bar system was chosen.

Originally this was envisaged to be a conventional counterweight system, but power drives were not far from our thoughts since much development work was underway for the National Theatre at the time. We now had time to reflect upon decisions already taken for the National auditoria and to examine new ideas which had been mooted. Convinced that there was a substantial saving in cost and less inconvenience for a repertoire company by eliminating all handling of counterweights during fit-ups and changeovers, as well as savings for show work, we nevertheless sought as simple a system as possible, consistent with the facility to emulate the speed and subtleties possible with manual operation.

The system which was developed in conjunction with Hall Stage Equipment Ltd. and Evershed Power Optics Ltd. and which is now installed has engineering similarities to the successful point hoist system of the Olivier in that an electric hoist hauls the load directly without the assistance of counterwieghts. Here, however, we have long bars with up to six suspension wire ropes which are wound onto a large drum. This is driven by a standard squirrel cage AC motor powered from a variable frequency supply. Tests on the lines which have already been installed are demonstrating an excellent speed range and accurate dead settings.

The control desk is pretty straightforward. Hoists may be selected, given a dead to move to, and then sent on their way at a chosen speed. Individual bars or groups of bars will decelerate and come to rest to pre-set deads automatically. As an alternative a manual joystick may be used to control bars for rigging and setting or as a back up during shows or just from choice. The control desk is positioned on a gallery which is about thirty feet above the stage right side.

To assist the flyman there is closed circuit television provided which can give a full frontal picture from a fixed balcony front camera or other special shots, but the control desk can also be tracked along the gallery to obtain the best view of a particularly tricky movement.

The closed circuit television system is worth a mention as it is a twin ring system with removable links at each Sound Box position, so that either a camera or a monitor may be used on the rings from every box around the stage area.

We are particularly pleased with the way the arrangements at the grid have worked out. Although this space is now inevitably quite filled with ancillary equipment, the important principle which we wanted to achieve was the uniformity of bar spacings throughout the fly tower, in this case eight inches or two hundred millimetres, irrespective of the demands of the structural steelwork. This has in fact been done by careful consideration of the grid hanger details, but was not made easier by the main contractor's requirement to have the grid assembled in two pieces at stage level, then lifted up throughout the 120 feet of the fly tower and offered up to bolts previously fixed to roof trusses encased in reinforced concrete.

Some method had to be found to deal with the very long lengths of cable feeding luminaires suspended over the stage from the grid, since it would not be practical to handle the weight of cable involved in the usual theatre manner. We again used the six foot diameter winding drums or windlasses at grid level, since these avoid the additional suspended weight of the centre fed trays mounted on lighting bars, but here we added a refinement. With the windlass, the weight of cable has to be balanced by a counterweight, but as the cable is wound in, the counterweight should be made less and less heavy if the load is to remain in balance. This is done by using a loop of ship's anchor chain as the counterweight – for about twenty four hours we thought that this was a new idea, but of course it was not, and we were disappointed to learn that chains for high speed passenger lift counterweights were in regular use.

Cables from each windlass plug into socket outlets at grid level and feed socket boxes which are usually fitted to twelve foot long lighting pipes, which makes the system quite flexible.

Following our philosophy that patch

panels are too cumbersome and inconvenient, particularly for large scale repertoire houses, and arguably more expensive than providing more dimmers if all the costs of installation are taken into account, a large installation of 480 dimmer outlets has been provided which will fulfil the majority of the RSC's repertoire requirements.

Although there is now no technical limitation to the control of this number of dimmers, there has to be a limit to the capacity of the electrical supply and the switchgear. So, although there is around a megawatt available in the dimmer room for short durations, the example of one commercial theatre organisation has been followed, – and Rank Strand have been asked to include a load limiter with the installation. This will automatically trim down the level of dimmers when the electrical demand reaches a preset figure.

One of the most interesting of the technical innovations in the theatre is to be found in the sound mixing desk. This is currently being installed and has been manufactured by Rank Strand based on circuit design by Theatre Projects Special Project Group. This desk utilises the Floppy Disc and microprocessor units from the Rank Duet Lighting Control range in order to memorise and recall the routing selections of input channels to groups and from groups to outputs for loudspeakers. 36 channels may be selected to 10 groups which may be driven to 26 outputs in this installation.

Similar solid state switching has been used to ease the problem of switching paging microphones to appropriate areas of the building. We have sixteen paging points associated with the Theatre and these have to be routed to eight areas. Using the new system which has been devised, this has been made possible by utilising only two switching lines to each microphone position.

So there it is, many years of hard work by everybody concerned and the Barbican Centre for Arts and Conferences nearly finished. Despite the long wait I am sure the Royal Shakespeare Theatre will still fascinate all of us with its intimacy and theatricality when the doors are opened.

Alan Russell (is a Director of Theatre Projects Consultants)

Autolycus

You win some, you lose some

You lose some . . . Arts Council grants, Frank Matcham interiors, the revolves that never worked at the Lyttleton, procenium arches, the Old Vic . . . The Old Vic? Well, we certainly hope not, specially in this 50th anniversary of Lilian Baylis' Great Plan, and following Peter O'Toole's great season as a seller of seasons. But, then again, you win some . . . computerised box offices, pre-packed gins and tonics, a revival of 'The Sound of Music' (or 'Von Trapp's Last Tape' as it is known to intellectuals). In our last issue we were celebrating the re-emergence of Lord Miles' Mermaid from the waters of Puddle Dock. And now (see page4), conveniently close to Grub Street, the City Fathers are on the point of opening most of the doors to the Barbican Centre for Arts and Conferences. Architecturally it is an astonishing achievement, with facilities that will be the envy of all other administrations, and will cost, incidentally, about £5,000,000 a year to keep functioning. Aesthetically, the sweeps and swoops of its foyers and walkways, the warmth of its colourations—special rounds of applause for its acres of polished pine-block flooring, the honey-coloured wood panelling to the concert-hall, and the Kew Garden sized conservatory that hides the 109 ft fly-tower—could fail to please only the man from the RSC we met who hates being uprooted from the cosy, if ramshackle, Aldwych. But (and as our RSC man may yet be proved right for the wrong reason) the problem for the Barbican will still be one of attracting a clientele for *all* its wonders that will remain loyal and regular in its attendances. Who exactly will come from how far and how wide. Valerie Miles, the peripatetic and immensely helpful press officer who was our guide, instances first the population of 5000 of the Barbican complex itself, who at least will have pass-keys (alright, alright, we understand the security problem) that enables them to reach the centre by the shortest routes over roof-tops, along corridors, and across the waterways and fountains (we got stuck somewhere in St. Giles, Cripplegate). Yes, of course, a substantial percentage of them will become regulars, and equally of course there will be the packaged jumbo-loads from Fujiyama and Little Rock, Arkansas. But one thinks, too, of those two great maxims for management (1) 'First nighters will go *anywhere*' and (2) 'Never give a complimentary ticket to a friend', Maybe the Barbican could do better—(and indeed all the theatres now including the Mermaid, the Lyric Hammersmith, and even the National that seem to have got wrapped around by the Mammon embrace of offices)—if it had a tangible facade on an actual street. Maybe all theatres should, by law, have a pediment that asserts a more understandable and sociable scale of operations, and proclaims to passers-by, on foot, in buses, in taxis or, indeed helicopters, in notices of nasty neon: 'I am a theatre. I have a show going on. Come on in'.

A different breed of cat

We've done quite a lot of complaining in these columns about the failure of Production to grasp the opportunities for invention provided by all the new technology so hopefully and expensively installed in our theatres. Even in musical shows, where the costs of production would seem to force a full cooperation between the whats and the hows of a mise en scene, there has been a tendency , we believe, to accept as inevitable what can only be described as 'bad timing' in the plots for lighting and sound. It may just be directorial nerves or it may be arrogance, but, whatever it is, it has left a lot of audiences baulked of a viable and meaningful relationship with a show and asking the question in the Thurber cartoon: 'What *made* the magic go out of our marriage.?'

But now, at the New London Theatre in Drury Lane (where, as if to prove our point, more time has been taken up with catering to conventions and conferences than with running a live theatre) Andrew Lloyd Webber's 'Cats' is on, and, with a swirl of lighting and a sennet of sound, the old bezaz is triumphantly back. If you hate cats, we suppose, or love them too much, you could hate 'Cats'. But nod once in acceptance of T. S. Eliot's anthropomorphic fantasy and you'll be totally hooked, we think, by the sheer scope and energy of the inventiveness with which it is staged. The effects, in the full F/X sense of the word, are stunning, and, by the end of the performance, one feels that every trick or treat or transformation the 'machinery' of a modern theatre is capable of pulling off had been used—and used *relevantly*. Trevor Nunn directs; Gillian Lynne did the choreography; and an endearing cast of hot or cool cats includes Paul Nicholas (as the preening, prancing Rum Tum Tugger), Brian Blessed (particularly as the portly, white-spatted Clubland cat, Bustopher Jones) and Elaine Paige (as the sad, drab alley-cat Grizabella). But, from CUE's specialised point of view, an extra saucer of Whiskas goes to John Napier for his overall design of the splendidly sleazy setting where all the catwalking and caterwauling take place. He has created out of a clutter of old junk—part of an abandoned automobile, old tyres, even a giant boot thrown into mid-stage to stop the dancing cats in their nocturnal tracks—a world perfectly in scale with the fantasy. David Hersey's lighting sweeps us in and out of it; from the outset, with the auditorium black, when we are suddenly watched by a hundred pairs of yellow eyes; intermittently as the swoop of

headlights signals the pursuit by police of the feline felon McCavity: and, all stops out, as he weaves a petit point of fairground lights behind Wayne Sleep's dance for the magician cat Mr Mistoffolees. His plot has continuously to accommodate individual cat characters as they creep into crypts, dart up drainpipes and insinuate themselves into the audience itself. But at no time is any of the action in any way 'unfocussed'. A lot of the credit for this must go, too, to Abe Jacob's sound, which has the complicated job of keeping Eliot's idiosyncratic verse clear and clean against some pretty heavy orchestral backing, and a fair amount of jumping around and breathing by chorus and corps.

Is 'Cats' a ballet, a comic opera, a pantomime, or just a gallimaufry in general? Whatever it is, it shows you exactly how it ought to be done.

Look—no actors

A full report on what has been happening at the National Students' Drama Festival held this year at Hull University (favourite graffito, seen in the Union Building: 'Hull hath no fury like a liberated woman scorned') will be found elsewhere in this issue. Looking as usual for technical surprises, CUE got caught up in some performances which were weirdly, and perhaps symptomatically, distinguished by being staged without performers. These consisted of a group of 'Stories' by well-known writers presented by the Central School of Art and Design, and relied for their telling, somewhat cynically the more serious student critics thought, not on actors but on pre-recorded dialogue or narration, a careful selection of key props, and a variety of sound and visual aids, from slides to video replays to back-projected 8mm film. From time to time a seemingly disinterested stage-hand moved into the set to pick out a sigificant prop and 'animate' it in synch: in Ian McEwan's story 'Cupboard Man' it was a limp and lifesize rag doll: in Elizabeth Bowen's 'Last night in the old house' it was an Edwardian ballgown. Equity would have been appalled. Your reporter, entering the cavernous University Assembly Hall at the wrong time by the wrong door, himself participated, blinking foolishly at 650W Fresnel, in the Nabokov story 'Transparent things'. The audience didn't notice. In fact, it seemed fully involved and even absorbed throughout in how things were going, not in what was going on. As if promenading in a museum or in a stately home, the groundlings obediently pointed themselves at where the sound came from or at what the lights lit up, and watched carefully as various parts of the tableaux were made vivants. When the sound faded and lights dimmed, they seriously and politely clapped. The Central School, of course, couldn't take a bow because they weren't there.

All of which raises the interesting question whether, in the theatre of the future (say about Spring 1982), instead of the one-man shows which Timothy West, Prunella Scales, Alec McCowen, Peter Jukes, Richard Stilgoe and old Uncle Emlyn Williams and all have been putting on successfully—and economically—we shall now have the no man show. Particularly miserly management please note.

School for Scandal?

'We are the only profession without a centre' said Sheila Hancock a few months ago, explaining the need for an Actors' Centre. 'I believe it would give us a sense of unity and artistic purpose, providing also the opportunity to improve our craft'.

Well in April, Kate Mutton, the Actors' Centre adminstrator, was able to confirm the lease on their first permanent premises, at 10a Dryden Street, Covent Garden. The 1,465 sq ft on the first floor comprises a large studio space, two offices and a green room-cum-information centre, with specialist magazines, Spotlight directories, PCR (the casting report service), and reference books. The Centre opened its doors for members on May 5, although the official ceremony is not until June 7, when Sir Alec Guinness has agreed to open it. There are now 1,000 members, who have enrolled regularly since last autumn.

Founded in the spring of 1977 with the aim of working towards a base for actors, singers and dancers, the Actors Centre has gained momentum at a rate that often surprised even its supporters. It has not all been plain sailing though; premises are like gold dust in central London these days, at the right place at any rate. Nor are rank-and-file Equity members known for their enthusiasm in supporting ventures of this nature. Quite the reverse, if anything. But gradually, the Centre's aims were defined and in time, temporary premises were located in Wardour Street to administrate a series of workshops, lectures and classes. This allowed them to assess the level of real interest among Equity members between February 2 and 22, 1980. Further classes were added the next month.

Classes were run under the following headings: movement, dance, verse and speech, singing, music, the art of audition, radio drama, reading, acting workshop, simple acrobatics. Taking part were 22 tutors and 15 directors with a total attendance of 2,646, averaging out at 155 for each day of the week. The launch evening saw John Alderton, Anthony Bowles, Judi Dench, Sheila Hancock, Roy Hudd, Dilys Laye, Gillian Lynne, Ian McKellan, Ian Ogilvy and Robin Midgely, artistic director of the Haymarket, Leicester taking part. Later guest speakers have proved just as successful. Hal Prince, Julia McKenzie, Don Black, Cameron Mackintosh, Andrew Lloyd-Webber, Jonathan Lynn, John Boorman, the film director.

Initially a £30,000 budget for the first year set them on their feet, although fund-raising is now underway to allow work to be continued. The lion's share came from Equity, with other donations coming from television companies and memberships. The long-term objectives and activities can be summarised as providing: an archive on the history of the profession; a record library of dialects and accents; a journal of analyses into acting techniques; a creche for members taking classes; a message service; concessions with relevant firms and public bodies (for point shoes, make-up, video machines, the National Film Theatre and so on); rooms for hire at reasonable rates; joint projects with other theatre bodies like ABBT, CORT, ITI, SKYPT and others. Members' evenings allow lectures by international directors and have been a distinct success so far in exchanging ideas and information on choreography, music, acting or more specialist areas.

An evening with Hal Prince, Julia McKenzie, Don Black, Clare Venables, Jonathan Lynn, Cameron Mackintosh and Andrew Lloyd Webber

There is much work the Actors' Centre can do to help its profession, which has always been run on the basis of survival-of-the-fittest. Look at Michael Crawford, for instance, having to pick up tightrope walking for his title role in 'Barnum' in the last few months. Would that there had been an Actors' Centre he could have turned to. There are numerous similar cases of skills that need brushing up – or even learning.

Plans are afoot to set up regional centres along identical lines. Feelers have already gone out in Manchester and preliminary finance secured. London headquarters keep a tight rein on all operations, though. It has been a slow, but admirable success story and we wish it the best of luck.

Actors' Centre, 10a Dryden Street, London WC2. Tel: 01-836 3371.

Theatre Museum in Rehearsal

In Cue 10 *Anthony McCall* previewed the Theatre Museum's exhibition *Spotlight: Four Centuries of Ballet Costume* at the V & A and reported on the availability of the archives to serious researchers during the preparations for the move to the Museum's own premises in Covent Garden – now scheduled for 83/84.

FRANCIS REID, in his continuing role of Cue's museum tourist, visits the exhibition and also finds some other theatric pleasures in the V & A shop.

Theatrical costumes are intended to be seen under stage lights. But the conservation of old fabrics – particularly when they have been treated with dyes and paint – is dependent on a controlled environment with restricted exposure to high levels of light intensity.

Dance costumes are also intended to be seen in motion.

In response to these problems, John L. Paterson devised an exhibition formula for *Parade* at the 1979 Edinburgh Festival and in Cue 3 (previewed in Cue 2) he described not only the philosophy of his concept but some of the nuts and bolts by which that concept was realised. This basic Edinburgh format has been repeated for the current exhibition – which includes many of the Edinburgh costumes but has an increased proportion of Royal Ballet items in view of that company's current half century.

To prevent over exposure, the costumes are lit intermittently in a sequence which has been programmed to integrate with a 30 minute sequence of ballet music excerpts. The costume lighting rises and falls about a pivot of continuously glowing foot lamp filaments.

As a by-product of the conservation requirement, there is an expressed hope that the crossfade lighting technique might impart a sense of movement to the costumes. I find that this does happen. But it happens to a limited extent – remaining good thinking without quite developing into reality.

What the changing light does – and, I fancy, does more positively at the V & A than in Edinburgh – is to link the costumes to the music. (Not, of course, relating each costume to its own music: that sort of programme would belong to a different sort of exhibition). The effect created is very theatrical: an audio-visual experience in its own right. It is not ballet. Actually, it is not unlike walking across a stage where the warming-up dancers have been frozen in various attitudes during the overture while the electricians complete their focussing and the lighting designer calls for memory checks from his board operator.

The lighting is good – as indeed it should be. The dancers do not move and static objects are relatively straightforward to light. The lighting angles are generally, within the limits of an overhead rig, balletic. So with lighting from side and back, and faces and limbs anonymously black, the costumes stand out against the dark background.

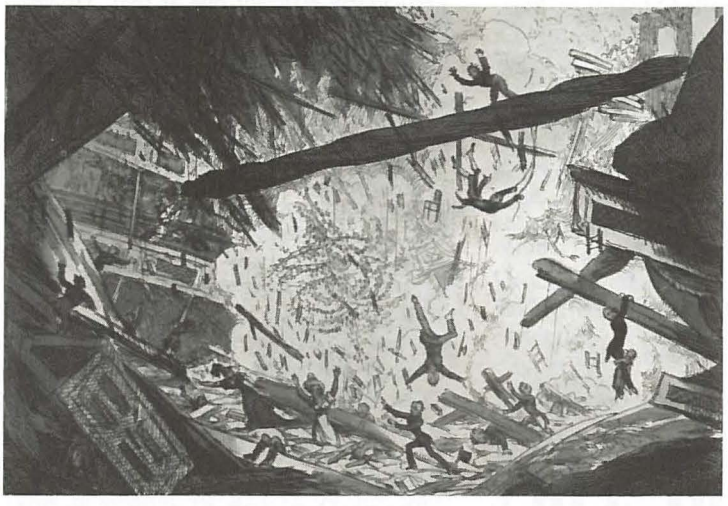
The music joins the light to create a rather relaxing ambience so that one graciously accepts a light starting to fade just as one is examining an interesting bit of costume detail. The catalogue foreword suggests, and experience confirms, that the timing is less frustrating than in Edinburgh.

Although the costumes are designed to be viewed at opera house distances, close examination gives a fascinating insight into the craft of the costumier. Some of the older costumes, in particular, demonstrate the skill with which simple fabrics can be used to project opulence with light weight and at low cost. In matters of dance costume (both design and realisation) this exhibition will surely prove to be an excellent demonstration of the ability of a collective display of the past to stimulate the creativity of the future. Time – and the next costume exhibition – will tell.

If the exhibition has a weakness, it is the shortage of related material – scene

Rowlandson's The Prospect Before Us *shows the corps de ballet's view of the principal dancers and captures something of the architectural and social conditions of Georgian theatregoing.*

Contemporary prints of two London theatre disasters, reproduced as Theatre Museum Postcards: (above) The start of the Covent Garden Fire of 1856 and (below) The collapse of the Brunswick Theatre in 1828, caused by the walls being too weak to support the iron roof.



designs,, photographs, programmes, critiques, posters, ephemera generally. These are the sort of items that would set the costume designs more clearly in the context of the ballets and their performances.

When a costume print includes some small stage details it seems to gain impact. For example, the print of Auguste Vestris (with scenic wings and backcloth) gains reality from a luminous quality that conveys the precise effect of low lighting angles from close sources. And another print comes to life because it includes enough pit to show the faces of three wind players. Rowlandson's *The Prospect Before Us* sets Georgian ballet precisely in its architectural and social perspective.

An enjoyable afternoon and I shall return before the exhibition's July 26th closure.

Although the Theatre Museum collections are not currently accessible to casual visitors, the V & A's shop is an obligatory theatric tourist trap. Lots of low price, high quality postcards of delightful prints. And *Theatre Museum Cards* – a series of A4 cards which were published in 1976-78 on such varying subjects as The Music hall, Restoration Drama, German Experimental Theatre, The Old Price Riots, Ivor Novello, Revue, Garrick's Contemporaries, and theatres such as the Lyceum, Drury Lane, Royal Court, Haymarket, etc, etc. Good basic information, illustrations and suggestions for further reading. My own collection goes as far as number 70.

Roll on the Theatre Museum opening day in Covent Garden. I shall be standing there, waiting for early doors.

P.S.
As a theatre manager, I can confirm that the Theatre Museum's archivists are persistent in their collection of today's theatre programmes on behalf of tomorrow's historians.

The moon is impartial

DORIAN KELLY

Objecting to the fact that whereas his protagonist seemed to attract a personal moonbeam wherever he went, he himself always seemed to be in the dark, William Terriss, pitted nightly in a fight to the death with Henry Irving, was constrained to protest 'Hang it all, Guv'nor the moon is impartial!' It is not recorded whether or not he got his lime.

The moon has always struck a note of awe and superstition in mankind since time unrecorded. It's influence sometimes malign, sometimes beneficent, cannot be denied. Although she cannot blind us with her dazzle, sear us with her heat, or leave us to freeze in her absence, she can—literally—move mountains. She can also bind more spells than a thousand suns.

Anciently believed to be both the portal into new life and the dark cavern of death, the moon is now treated with an endearing offhand flippancy. The abode of Diana/Artemis now has a new set of tenants who use her as a sort of celestial golf course, and although the rumour that the moon was made of green cheese has been thoroughly discredited, the belief that the rays of the rising moon will resurrect a vampire lives on.

Theatrically, the moonlit scene, whether conjured up with words or candlepower, has been the godsend of authors and playwrights from Aeschylus to Ayckbourn. If it's a mood that needs to be engendered, be it romance or terror, the calmness of familiar surroundings or the third dimension of fairyland, why then, set it in the moonlight and you must be at least halfway there! And what lighting man does not know that if there is a moonlight scene in the script, he is assured of at least one moment in which he can make his presence felt?

There are many ways of representing moonlight on our stages as there are scenes written where night is indicated, ranging from the highly stylised and traditional blue wash for 'Giselle' to the harsh menace of night in the 'Scottish Play': and from the softly romantic lambency of Verona to the thick, almost gluey texture of the night before the battle of Agincourt: or the steaming tropical heat of 'Treasure Island' contrasted with the wild desperation of the endless night in 'King Lear'.

Real moonlight, it is true, has an infinite variety of moods. But in not one of those many manifestations has it any counterpart with any stage moonlight effect of my own or anyone elses devising that I have ever seen. Most people who attempt it seem to have had to fall back on providing an impressionistic version of what their audiences will accept as moonlight rather than attempting to show the reality of moonlight. Actually, it is amazing how much an audience is willing to suspend its disbelief. Take for example the *colour* of moonlight. The early Victorians were convinced that it was a sort of greeny-yellow, this being the dominant colour of limelight seen against unmantled gas burners. Later on, when carbon arcs were introduced the rays of the moon were conventionally bluish-white. Harold Ridge insisted in 1930 that moonlight was not green, an assertion that Fred Bentham found it neccessary to repeat thirty-five years later. Cinemoid no 16, Blue-Green, used to be officially called Moonlight Blue. At the same time Messrs. Digby featured a 'No 13, Moonlight Green' in their catalogue. Recently we have seen moonlight as a variety of shades of blue or steel, often in double or triple layers. Lately we have tended where appropriate towards naturalism, and open white in a truly amazing range of candlepowers. Naturalism, obviously is not always what is required, (Imagine 'Aloma of the South Seas' in operatic steel!) and neither is it everybody's cup of tea.

To quote Edward Gordon Craig:

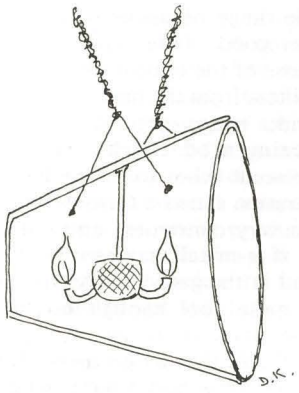
'The reproduction of natures' lights is not what my Stage Manager ever attempts, neither should he attempt such an impossibility. Not to reproduce nature, but to suggest some of her most beautiful and most living ways . . . nature will be neither imprisoned nor allow any man to copy her with any success.'

I, too, feel it most unlikely that an utterly realistic moonlight can be produced. The main reason for this is that the difficulty lies not in the apparatus used, but in the human eye, and the special way that it perceives low levels of light. During the day, or other periods of relatively high intensity, the scotopic, or night vision system is virtually blind, inhibited by the bleaching-out of the photochemical substance on the outer portions of the eye. When the amount of light entering the eye falls below a certain threshold, this substance, Rhodopsin or 'Visual Purple' regenerates and the rod receptors round the periphery of the eye become very sensitive. At the same time the overall sensitivity of the foveal cones, the ultra-sensitive part of the retina used for daytime vision is decreased. Now the rods take quite some time to adapt fully to the dark vision, and even in their most sensitive condition are totally incapable of discriminating colour or fine detail. The cones at the retina centre are supplied with optical nerves on a one-to-one basis. The rods in the rest of the eye may be connected by the hundred to a single nerve. For this reason tiny movements in one's peripheral vision at night are apt to be noticed.This originally may have been intended as a defence mechanism, as the deep shadows produced by the highly collimated scatter-free light of the full moon probably housed all manner of sudden beasties or ghosties!

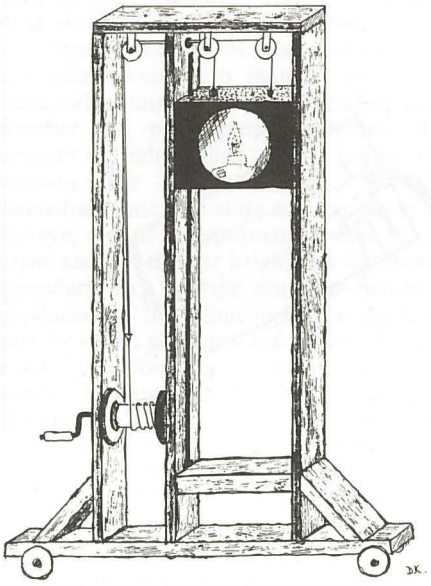
The moon itself, of course, is merely a large diffuse reflector, and not a particularly efficient one at that. However the primary source has such a tremendously high brightness and colour temperature that even by the time it has travelled ninety three million miles and undergone reflection losses, it is still very bright and the colour rendering capability of the light is unimpaired. By the time it has punched it's way through the atmosphere and gets busy working it's magic on Verona or Biggleswade the old Inverse Square Law has decreed that its brightness has decreased to a measely 0.02 footcandles or (in the case of it shining on Romantic Brussels) 0.2152 Lux. The colour rendering properties are, however, preserved. The eye, which cannot perceive colour at this level can only interpret the colour of the moon as 'silvery'.

The problem is that on stage the light levels can never be as low as that: and even if they could, the eyes of our audience do not have the requisite half hour or so to adapt. Therefore they will be as sensitive as ever to the slightest hint of colour. All we can do is attempt to simulate the effect of silvery light. Unfortunately, no filter known to man can translate the spectrum into shades of grey, and so we must make a choice as to which colour represents moonlight, or whether to go for open white, and also to make a choice of our primary light source. The two are of course, interdependent. As light levels get low, filaments are producing a great deal of red light compared to the blue, and this creates, inevitably, a warmth in the light which tends to accentuate any reds on the stage, including actors' skin tones. (It is interesting to note that an old number of 'TABS' recommends the use of cinemoid no 61 for moonlight on the grounds that it doesn't kill reds too much!*) It would

Some Historical Moonboxes

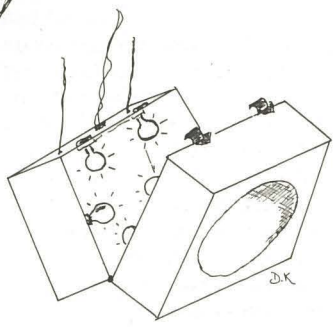


Oil moon lamp circa 1816



Adjustable moonbox used behind transparency or casement. Oil or gas. Circa 1860

1929—Electric moonbox



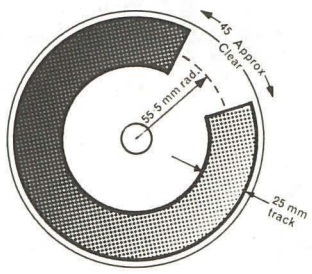
Contemporary electric moonbox

appear that we have a simple choice. Light can be either silvery and bright or it can be suitably dim, but unsilvery. There seems to be no middle way. Or is there?

If we want a high contrast scatter free effect, we should look for a single, compact source, almost a pinhole, with fine enough control of the beam to allow it to cover a large irregular area but nevertheless, be capable of being masked off areas we wish to remain unlit. If it is a diffuse effect that we are looking for, then a number of small fresnels placed close together to simulate a large single source work well. (It is worth remembering that two killowatts worth of light in the form of eight 250 watt lamps will redden considerably less than 2k in a single envelope). A variation of this which can produce a beautiful soft pearly effect, quite impossible to achieve by any other means, is to direct a number of small profiles onto a reflector. Using a diffuse, white-painted reflector produces a very dim, difficult to control effect which can be quite breathtaking. A specular reflector brings out a brash, hard, shiny effect, easier to control with french flags, etc., while if the reflector takes the form of a piece of plastic mirror stretched not too tightly inside an approximately hyperbolic former of chicken wire, and hung in such a way as to be capable of very slight random movement in the breeze, the effect is that of an unreal, out-of-this-world, magically shimmering moonlight. Indirect lighting techniques were pioneered in the twenties by David Belasco and Louis Hartmann on Broadway, and in London by Basil Dean. The technique has largely fallen into disuse, but reappears from time to time.

It would be nice to be able to use conventional filtering from a straightforward source, setting the desired colour and beam quality to taste, and then to find a way of fading down to the degree of selective visibility that we require, without introducing warmth or degrading the beam. Conventional dimming methods seem inappropriate: other means that could be considered are mechanical shutters or louvres, well out of the focal plane, (which are only of use on a profile lantern), a dense series of spill rings, or a pair of crossed polaroids. My own pet theory is shown in fig.1, and consists of a high quality colourless neutral density filter in combination with a Linnebach projector of high intensity.

This particular version of the Linnebach is a lensless, reflectorless box about 500mm square and about a metre long, black painted inside, constructed (or converted) from almost anything. It has runners at the one open end for colourless filter material which may be painted on to mask out areas required not to be lit. It need not be particularly heatproof and needs no ventilation, as, where it differs from the standard Linnebach is that its light source is external to the box, and connected to it by means of a thick bundle of fibre optics. What is inside the box is a circular



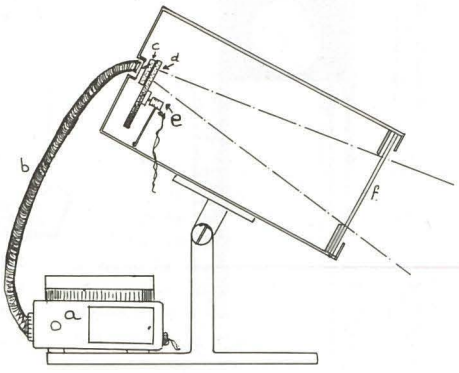


Fig 1.

(a) light source
(b) ¼" optical fibre bundle
(c) fixed value filter
(d) variable filter (inset)
(e) servo motor
(f) clear medium for masking

graduated neutral density filter (inset) which, placed in front of the cut and polished end of the fibre bundle, is rotated manually or electrically to fade the light issuing from the latter smoothly up and down. If a piece of fixed-value neutral density filter of the required degree of transmission (found by experiment) is placed between the graduated filter and the optical face, the former can make use of its whole range of densities, and thus offers quite good fade characteristics. The purpose of the optical fibres is to decouple the filters from the heat, and also to enable a wide range of light sources to be experimented with, ranging from fluorescent tubes to discharge lamps. The illustration shows a Carousel in use, as this has a very convenient and even source of light if a metal mask with ¼" aperture is placed in the gate. Thanks to the fan, it is also quite cool enough not to melt the fibres.

The light that we get using this system is indeed silvery, and if our primary source is

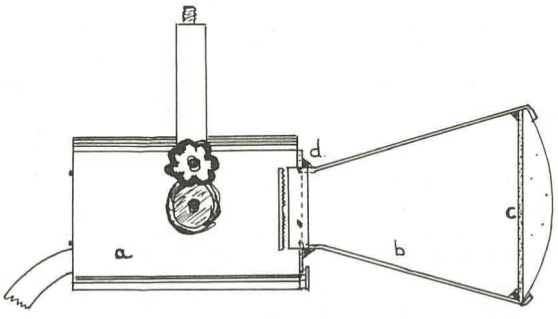


Fig 2.

(a) CCT Minuette complete
(b) old type 23N front
(c) sandblasted inside of lens
(d) rivetted plate to fit colour runners

selected with care, can be as bright or as dark as we want. A suitable place to shine it from is a box position FOH, or from the fly floor if obstructions permit. Where it does not work is from the wings at floor level or from boom top height, as shadows produced by it are likely to radiate in wildly contradictory directions. The effect is really useful only for relatively short periods, the time it takes to establish the scene, or until a character is plotted to, say, light a lamp or allow light to spill into the garden from a window. It will usually be necessary to introduce a little diffuse light to avoid eye fatigue. If you cannot use indirect lighting methods for one reason or another, then it can be more difficult to achieve the silvery look, for at present good colourless natural density filters are so restricted as to size and temperature gradient, and so cannot be used in a frame directly against a fresnel lens. A home-made screen of rub-down halftone dots on clear hi-temperature filter material, or even a piece of metal mesh with the ratio of holes to metal to suit the degree of transmission required would certainly cut down the actual amount of light coming out of the front, but the fresnel lens would certainly project these patterns into a blotchy, spotty effect on the floor, which

may or may not be unattractive. Added to which, the apertures would create diffractions which would play ducks and drakes with the colour. It is probable that we can feed our optical fibre bundle into the inside of a converted 8″ fresnel lantern, with the dimming units inserted at some intermediate point between the lamphead and the source, which would enable us to retain a degree of control over the colour.

Found in every electrician's (and indeed every master gasman's) workshop until not too many years ago was the very useful **moonbox**. Hung immediately behind a gauze it gives a good impression of a watery moon. Hung too far behind a gauze, it gives the impression of two watery moons. One of our leading provincial companies fell into this trap in their production 'Waiting for Godot' and I spent the (mercifully short) time between the fall of night and the descent of the house tabs gazing in rapt wonder at the sight of the moon exhibiting astronomical irregularities as the moonbox, (seen separately from its image projected onto the gauze), swayed gently to and fro, back and forth across the night sky as a result of being flown in a little too enthusiastically. I don't think it was *supposed* to be a Brechtian-style alienation effect that was intended. Obviously to prevent double images the moonbox must be slap up against the gauze.

Most moonboxes consist of a circular cutout in a box with a light source in it, or several, heavily frosted. Although this can give a realistic impression of the craters of the moon, frost it how you will, the effect is generally blotchy. Many people use a fresnel lamp at low check in this position. This looks very good from the production desk, but not from some of the peripheral seats, especially in those theatres where there is a deep Dress Circle. Because a fresnel lantern is designed to throw a beam with a big difference of light output along the axis of the lens compared to the very ill-defined edge of the beam, those who view it from an acute angle, apart from seeing a foreshortened view, will perceive it very dimly, while those in the centre of the beam will see it distractingly brightly. At low check, not only do the rings show, but the apparent beam angle decreases and the filament reddens.

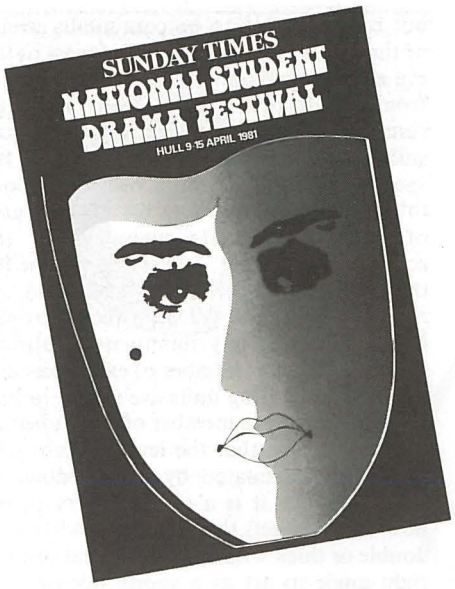
A workable, if crude, system is shown in fig. 2, in which a hacked-about old type 23N front was fitted to a CCT 'Minuette' The inside of the plano-convex lens was sandblasted, and the N-tube was internally sprayed white. This was quite successful when poked through a hole in a cloth, and would probably work okay behind a gauze. I would actually have preferred to have used a larger lens, in retrospect, but they don't grow on trees. Perhaps one could be cast in resin, if heat is not a problem, and the sandblasting can be replaced by a bit of diffusion medium. The view from the side seats was almost as good as the view from the front as the light escaped from the lens in all directions, and the curvature of the lens ensured that the oblique view was not unduly foreshortened.

Up until now, we have talked of brightness. *Intensity*, of course can be simply and pedictably adjusted merely by altering a fader lever or equivalent, and can be accurately measured with a variety of direct-reading devices. *Brightness* is an experience. It cannot be measured with any instrument known to man, is never the same twice running, and is dependent on a number of parameters, including the amount of light falling on the retina, the amount that has fallen on it in the immediate past, the state of adaptation of the eye, and of the contrast between the lit areas and the nearest brightness difference boundary. In a lighting situation such as is produced by the Linnebach, the shadows cast by scenic elements and actors are very black: therefore the lit areas look very much brighter than they would if illuminated by the same total intensity of light from two or more discrete sources, or from a single but much larger source.

In many cases the contrast boundary is the proscenium arch. If we can minimise this contrast between stage and auditorium, we can actually use higher intensities so that we can see faces, which as any good actor will tell you is doubly important in dark scenes, if he is not to have to raise his voice, which is the last thing he wants to do in a low metabolic-rate focussed scene. I suppose in theory we could put in a line of white chaser lights round the pros. arch. This would certainly decrease the apparent brightness on the stage. Unfortunately it would also decrease everything else, including audience figures, actor's tempers, my chances of ever working again, etc. In many theatres the maintained lighting and exit boxes do quite good enough a job in this respect anyway. A very much better way is to feather the edges of the lit scene so as to remove any sharp, distinct boundaries to the scene. This means very close liason with the director in the very early stages of rehearsals, to avoid any unpleasantness that might accrue from the Director having plotted a long scene with an actor lounging nonchalantly against the prosc. arch, or with his feet in the pit. It also helps if the actors actually know in advance which direction the moonlight is going to be coming from, so that they can motivate their performances accordingly. (She, elated holds her arms and her face to the moon, while He, with secret to hide keeps his face in the shadows.)

A good designer/operator will use his own eyes and dark adaptation rate as a guide to keeping the subjective brightness levels relatively constant by fiddling the overall levels. The superficially simple business of fading up a low-light moonlight scene from a blackout may actually be quite a carefully controlled sequence of moves, involving raising the master to say, level five in the plotted time, most of such time normally to be spent 'feeling it in', then pausing to let the impression that it is a dark scene sink in, and following on to full over twenty seconds or more, and immediately following on by taking the master down again over some indefinite long period to a much lower level. The idea is not so much a regular fade down, as on a ratefader over a fixed time to a fixed level, but rather aiming to be continually aware of the apparent increase in brightness as the eye adapts, and subtly compensating for it from time to time. This is really a case of running down an up escalator, just to stay still! Any cue, brightening or darkening for specific purposes is extra, over and above this. The constant to aim for is the degree of visibility originally envisaged for the scene. Do remember, however, to allow for the fact the operator's perception of relative brightness will be affected by the board light and any illuminated buttons, and that a greater number of exit boxes and maintained lighting units are visible to him than to an average member of the audience. Remember also that the level of light that he sees is attenuated by the window. In some theatres, it is a total mystery to me how any light gets through at all, what with double or thick wired glass, often at just the right angle to act as a vanity mirror, and more often than not covered in a heavy layer of nicotine laden dust.

The sight of a real live glowing moon rising in the sky, or glimpsed through some Gothic Arch has delighted audiences since at least the year 1662 when used in 'The Adventures of the Five Hours'. In 1853 at Saddler's Wells, Phelps made use of a transparency Diorama, that is, a painted cloth running from one roller to another, masked out at the back with black paint over the whole area, only excepting a small moon-sized circle, which, backlit with limelight, created the effect of a moon being 'seen to rise, to shine between the boles of the trees, to be partly obscured by moving clouds, and then to swim as it were, over and through the trees'. Nowadays, we would make this effect with a wide variety of standard projection devices, and very effective they are, too. De Louthebourg, Garrick's designer created just about every possible effect of night and day, sun and moon, with or without stars. Later, at the Lyceum, Henry Irving, doubtless secure in his personal moonbeam, gasped for mercy as the menacingly advancing shadows cast by the moon threw the body of the murdered Nemours into sharp relief, while at Her Majesty's, rabbits frolicked by the light of the moon, as Herbert Beerbohm-Tree's dancers waited apprehensively in the wings, dreading the coming of the dawn and with it their nightly scalding as early morning mists were being prepared to be pumped in from the steam-kettles in the kitchens of the Charlton Hotel next door. C. Harold Ridge, writing of the celebrated Cambridge Festival Theatre in the late 1920's, describes painstaking hours of work with sheet metal and crude focus lanterns to create a pair of matching but different rugby football shaped goboes to produce the striking effect of an ivory moon turning blood red. (a working model of this scene is on view at the Science Museum and is fascinating to anyone even vaguely interested in colour mixing.) In 1980, 'On The Twentieth Century' at Her Majesty's featured a gobo'd crescent moon wobbling it's way across the stage on an electric motor as a 'passage of time' device. And so it goes on. Now, as then—if its a braw, bricht moonlicht nicht, ye're a' richt.



Can you get a Degree in it?

STEPH CHAMBERS

The Sunday Times National Student Drama Festival has now been on the go for 26 years. A great many distinguished sponsors bless it. It is judged by the leaders of our profession. Its alumni are everywhere about our stages, in artistic direction, in management. To keep our feet among the groundlings this report on the happenings at Hull is by the Festival's student press officer. The photographs are by *Tracey Muscutt* and *Bob Walls.*

The National Student Drama Festival's extensive sponsorship is money well spent. Sixteen productions in one week, ranging from original work and modern one-act plays to large scale productions of the classics, illustrate the diversity of styles and forms into which students have channeled their energies this year.

Seven days in which curtain up followed curtain down without incident are an immense credit to Stage Managers, Front of House Staff and administrators. The quiet efficiency of the organisers at the front, and the uncomplaining dexterity of the technical crews in the wings kept the Festival's house full and running smoothly in a manner which belied the work involved.

The nomadic atmosphere created by several travelling troupes settling in Hull for a week transformed a campus into a circus and all but made people forget that there was a competitive edge to the Festival and that the day of imminent judgement loomed large. The promise of awards, and the presence of the four adjudicators: Estelle Kohler, James Fenton, Martin Jenkins, and Peter Willes, was best banished by the host of workshops and fringe events, which managed to snatch elbow-room from an already crowded programme. They provided the necessary light relief from high seriousness in a period of frenetic activity. Alan Plater and Victoria Wood gave hours of escapist humour in revues which ambled between satire and lampoon, comment and criticism. The fringe also produced a production of T. S. Eliot's *Sweeney Agonistes* which achieved a blistering mix of levity and weight that often eluded the Festival finalists.

The workshops, as in years past, were an overwhelming success, taking full advantage of the specialist knowledge of visiting professionals. Especially memorable were William Hobbs illuminating stage fighting, and Mike Bradwell discussing the art of characterisation. Less impressive were the discussions which followed the performances. Such potentially useful and explosive topics as the place of overt political statement in drama were avoided as though heretical. Once raised they were dropped with alarming alacrity.

It is a tribute to the plays selected that the week did not become blurred into vague memories of uncomfortable seats and indistinguishable performances. Certain moments remain in sharp relief: like the electric atmosphere which filled the theatre during the new play by Caroline Pugh, *A Portrait of Mrs Siddons*. A twenty-five minute monologue performed by Rebecca Harbord which deservedly brought her the BP award for best actress. It set out to recreate the sitting of the tragic actress Sarah Siddons for a portrait by Gainsborough, and became a beautiful exposition of the actress's art and a passionate self defence against the harrowing effects of time. Intelligently staged it also won for its director Joe Turner the BP stage design award.

The other play which remains a powerful force when recollected in tranquility is John Godber's *Cramp*, a new piece about a Yorkshire boy on the brink of a move away from his calcifying surroundings to University, who suddenly and inexplicably commits suicide. The adjudicating gang of four were rightly impressed and thrust greatness upon John Godber who wrote, directed and performed in *Cramp*, by giving him the Yorkshire Television Award for outstanding personal achievement. This will allow him two weeks work in their Drama Department, a useful and much deserved prize for unquestionably the best new piece of writing at the Festival.

Victoria Wood performing 'on the fringe'

A noticeable theme this year was the courageous way in which more student companies essayed selections from the classical repertoire. Responding perhaps to the impassioned pleas made over the last two years by Sarah Badel and James Fenton, this year saw a tremendous entry of classics. From a list of entrants which included *Macbeth, Timon of Athens, Faustus,* and *Romeo and Juliet* we finally saw *Epicoene or the Silent Woman, The Changeling* and *Three Sisters*. Brave and some would say brazen choices for companies with limited experience and resources, it was ultimately the ability to

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Best actress Rebecca Harbord in 'A portrait of Mrs Siddons'

take risks which paid off. *Epicoene or the Silent Woman* from Manchester Universtiy was a production of Jonson's play which unashamedly took liberties. The tale of court corruption and greed was updated and presented in the idiom of punk clothing and popular music, and it succeeded. Durham University's production of *Three Sisters* took an immensely challenging play and stumbled on its intricacies.

As James Fenton pointed out, Durham's budget for *Three Sisters* was £1,000, the same amount recently allocated to Trevor Nunn for his production of the same play. With such resources the play had every right to succeed. The company provided a visually splendid set, with a dazzling array of fine antiques and an enormous range of properties. However the effect was almost totally ruined by appalling sight-lines and direction so doggedly Naturalistic that it ignored its audience in an inaudible and often invisible performance. The extravagant settings had convinced the audience that the acting and direction would match them in brilliance, and so made errors of style the more unforgiveable. A good set does not a play make, and in James Fenton's words neither do plays act themselves. What Durham's noble failure showed was that the excitement derived from many of the plays in the Festival was precisely that of a group with limited resources facing the challenge of major plays with the right mixture of respect and aggression.

Avoiding the hazards encountered by the groups who attempted classical plays, but

'How does your Garden Grow' *from Hull University with Eileen Ryan left and Bea O'Sullivan. Directed Joe Turner*

Southampton University's production of Barrie Keefe's 'Abide with me'

NATIONAL STUDENT DRAMA FESTIVAL AWARD WINNERS

BP Awards for publicity and artwork: Elisabeth Robinson (Durham).
Stage Management: Bath Technical College
Costume: Victoria Penny (Durham).
Lighting: John Churchill and Andrew Sanderson (Durham).
Incidental Music: Alex Spofforth, Mathew Price and Mark Whorton (Durham).
Best Supporting Actress: *Eileen Ryan* (Hull).
Best Supporting Actor: *Tony Johnson* (Manchester).
Design: *Joe Turner* (Hull).
Best Classic Production: *'The Silent Woman'* (Manchester).
Best Overall Acting: *'Kennedy's Children* (Westfield College).
Outstanding Production: *'Cramp'* (a new play by John Godber of Minsthorpe High School).
Best Actor: *David Phelan* (Manchester).
Best Actress: *Rebecca Harbord* (Hull).

The Almost Free Theatre's Naftali Yavin Prize: *Minsthorpe High School* for 'Cramp'.

The Inter-Action Community Theatre Prize: *Manchester University* for 'Somewhere in Barnet'.

World Student Drama Trust Award: for the best unperformed script: *Janice Hally* (Glasgow).

The Sunday Times Playscript Award: *John Godber* for 'Cramp'.

The Sunday Times Student Drama Critic Award: *James Macdonald* (North London Poly.).

The National Theatre/BP Administration Award: *Patricia Tulip* (Hull).

Yorkshire TV Award for Outstanding Personal Achievement: *John Godber* (Minsthorpe High School), author, leading actor and director of 'Cramp'.

Background To Selection

There were 65 entries for the 1981 Festival (16 finalists), including 22 new scripts (5 selected), 4 adaptations (1), 8 group creations (1), 1 documentary (selected) and an unusually high number of classics: 12 (3). More schools than ever before, 3, entered (2 selected, 1 narrowly omitted). Unusually, only one finalist is a revival of a relatively unknown modern work, most of the 18 other entries being established moderns (4 selected). Adjudication (wherever and whenever performances are notified to the London office) can start straight after the previous Festival; but the first 1980/81 entry was actually presented for travelling selectors in October, the last on 5 March.

Szabo: *Bath Technical College's play about the life of French Resistance heroine Violette Szabo.*

Durham University's production of 'Equus'

making distinct impressions on the Festival nonetheless, were a brace of original plays written and directed by students. *Somewhere in Barnet* by Manchester University was a touching if rather slight musical which was popular and appealing in an undemanding way. It also gave Festival goers a variety of tunes to whistle at odd moments. Hull University's *How Does Your Garden Grow?* in much the same vein, was a group-devised view of children and the ways in which they perceive adults. Eileen Ryan's sudden transformation from a small girl in a pinafore to an equivocating Catholic Priest inveighing against the evils of masturbation, achieved purely by the force of her characterisation, brought her the award as best supporting actress.

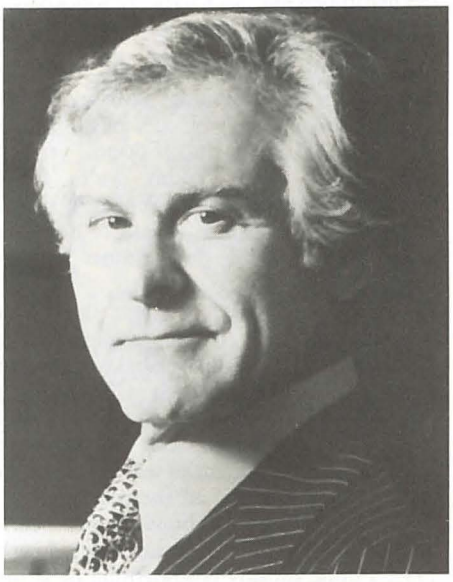
The judging when it came, fittingly on the seventh day after six days of frantic creativity, was apposite and constructive. James Fenton and Martin Jenkins gave particularly incisive reviews of the week and provided answers to some of the problems posed by the productions. Estelle Kohler gave a wonderfully sensitive invocation, appealing to young actors and actresses to value the words they spoke. Her advice that to be heard is crucial came too late for the cast of Exeter University's *The Changeling*, whose version of Middleton's Jacobean revenge tragedy was sadly muffled. Her advice was not needed by the company from the Central School of Art and Design, whose play *Stories* was relayed principally by slides and tape recordings.

Technically the Festival was a remarkable success, with each play involving high speed fit-ups, tech. runs and strikes. The general standard of lighting was unimpressive, consisting mainly of general covers, with little imaginitive effect in evidence in most of the plays. Perhaps fear of failure inhibited full use of the effects of the Gulbenkian Studio Theatre's Rank SP 80/3 lighting desk. The notable exception was *A Portrait of Mrs Siddons* in which careful design and imaginative effort made the use of single parabolic spots freeze the beginning and end of the play. Throughout, the technical crews worked under pressure, fitting up in the minumum of time, and surmounting even the disappearance of a wall—the only prop. for an excellent production of *Abide With Me* by Southampton University.

The festive season is over, and this year's National Student Drama has again allowed attention to be focused on work that would otherwise go unnoticed. It has brought to light the considerable talents of John Godber, Rebecca Harbord and John Phelan: a memorable 'best actor' from Manchester. The obvious conclusion of the week must be, however, that without the cooperation and labour of a great many students all this would not have been. . .

Sam Wanamaker and the other South Bank Show

a profile for CUE by ANTHONY McCALL



From Saxon times onwards, the area known as Bankside, on the south side of the Thames, held great importance for City dwellers, who were constrained by strict laws governing public morals and behaviour in London. Regulations outlawing gaming, drunkenness and any other public 'affront' arising from a substantial gathering of people led to Bankside assuming the role of an area of liberation, where people could enjoy themselves without fear of prosecution. For across the river from the City, such laws could hold no jurisdiction.

Access to Bankside was easily achieved from any point on the river front, not just at London Bridge – by ferry: the waterman's trade was so lucrative as a result of this vast traffic that many were prepared to risk prosecution by illegally plying an unlicensed ferry.

I quote from one of Sam Wanamaker's several pamphlets on Elizabethan and Jacobean playhouses at his Bear Gardens Museum . . . on the historic Bankside. Not unnaturally, they offer a wealth of concise, easily-digested information on the dozen-odd main theatres, the players and audiences, in roneo'd sheets. I can't resist returning to them to fill in the background history, to explain Wanamaker's devotion to his *idee fixe,* the Globe project.

By the sixteenth century, the popular attractions of bear- and bull-baiting, cockfighting and the 'stews', or brothels, were joined by players' companies, who founded their purpose-built public playhouses. They drew all sections of society and became an immediate success, lasting right up until the Commonwealth. Although theatres were once more permitted after the Restoration of the Monarchy in 1660, it was the end of the long Bankside tradition as the 'Mediaeval Soho of London'. The newly-developed and more fashionable West End of London had taken over as the natural home of Restoration drama, with its own fashions, dramatic themes and stylistic treatment. The Bankside arenas and playhouses had been destroyed by Cromwell and the break-up of the house players' companies brought an end to the Renaissance Theatre. One could have detected little relationship between this new art form and the now outmoded artistic achievement of Shakespeare and his Bankside contemporaries.

So ended a 70-year golden age of British theatre, as we now rightly regard it, beginning in 1576 with James Burbage's playhouse in Shoreditch, The Theater (sic), and ended in 1644 with the Puritan suppression of all forms of public entertainment. There were at least 11 permanent playhouses open to the public immediately outside the City of London and several halls within the boundaries used, at least in theory, for private purposes, with one-night performances of amateurs.

Rough calculations show that up to 15,000 people could have visited the playhouses in one week in 1595, and more like 25,000 in 1620. Thus, about ten per cent of the population visited the theatres regularly, far more than today.

The Swan (1595-1637), the largest of these playhouses, held some 3,000, or the same as a large Victorian music hall, or three times the modern average. So, with their non-scenic stages and heavy demands on the actors to entertain with their skills alone, the plays were partly accepted as a game. It is through a study of the playhouses themselves and their stage-craft that it is possible to evoke the contemporary appeal of Shakespeare's plays, and others of the period. And it can often invigorate and illuminate today's theatre-craft.

The ingenuity and rapid success of our earliest theatres, and above all their manifest practicality, fascinated Sam Wanamaker from an early age. 'I was inoculated with the disease' he declares jokingly, 'while still at college in Chicago'. Later, he set his heart on acting the great roles, after drama school, and in due course, on recreating that remarkable, crudely-built Globe where so many of the Bard's later works were first performed, 'the greatest theatre since the Greeks' as he calls it.

After a protracted ten-year campaign, rather than the two originally envisaged, it now looks certain that the Globe will rise once again on Bankside. Whether we would have got even this far without the zeal of Wanamaker is a leading question and one to which he replies that he was immeasurably helped by the right timing. The debate over the future of such dockland sites as Bankside arose after the bombing of the War and growing containerisation of shipping turned the former quaysides and warehouses into dereliction. Community and residential groups put pressure on the planning authorities to provide for their needs; whereas commercial interests offered the prospect of higher rateable properties and often higher density of redevelopment, leading to higher income from rateable value, and rates. Since Wanamaker's project could not be classified as residential, it became identified with the unpopular commercial lobby and no amount of persuasion could remove the taint of such establishment associations. At best the Globe was regarded as elitist. Michael Heseltine's decision last autumn however, signalled the final approval for a mixed redevelopment on the site on condition it incorporated the Globe.

The 2.5 acre site will comprise 100,000 sq ft of offices, housing, shops, a restaurant, The Globe and a riverside walkway, which is already being cobbled. (The sight of it gets Wanamaker all excited). The Globe's main function will be educational, a living museum, since for part of the year it will stage productions. They will be during daylight hours, for it lies open to the sky; there will be no 'cheating' like installing electric lights. The entire 'wooden O' will seat 1,000 with room for 600 groundlings in the typical three-tiered circular style of the period. The main fabric is expected to be timber, lathe, plaster and thatch and the price-tag around £1 million, including catering and exhibition areas.

The back-up team comprises Glynne Wickham, Bristol University's head of drama, as historical consultant; Sir Hugh Casson as overall consultant for the erection of the building; and David Yeomans, chief information officer at the Timber Research Association, will advise on 17th century craftsmanship. There may be novel possibilities for running practical courses to instruct in many of the old building techniques, as apprentices observe the long-lost skills during the erection.

'Every scholar of Shakespeare and his contemporaries will benefit from having that building built' asserts Wanamaker. 'And actors, likewise. For much more rural accent were used on-stage at the time; and audiences felt rather like they were at . . . say, the races today. You see, there were very few events other than carnivals, cockfights, bows and arrows, hangings and occasional pageants on the river, in those days. So going to the open-air theatre, you rolled up and took your chances on getting in. Everybody went, rich, poor, noisy, quiet. They sat on bare boards or brought cushions, and sometimes food. An actor

had to be good to get across the din and distractions, then'.

The topic is, of course, one of Wanamaker's consuming passions. 'The spirit of those days is what's missing now: the feeling of being out-of-doors, yet surrounded by faces. Today we're tough enough for racing and the Proms, it seems, so why not outdoor theatre? Look at Regent's Park and the summer seasons there.'

And the acoustics? 'I swear that those acoustics are going to be marvellous. Even ATV's set for their Life of Shakespeare had good acoustics. And their Globe was a gem'. He tried valiantly, at the time, to find a way of transporting the set down to Southwark when the series was over. But he couldn't raise the cost of the transport.

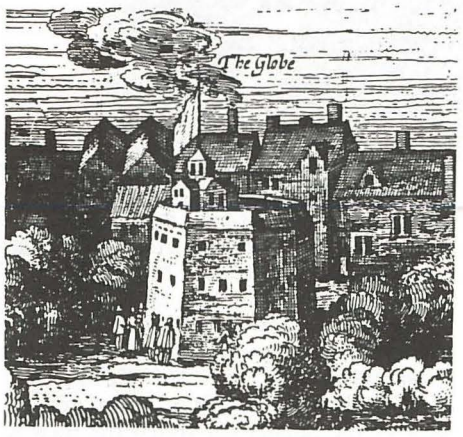
He's hoping to see building start early next year and a final opening date of early 1985. Public subsidy is something he is not keen on, hence ancillary activities like catering to support it. The Globe will be a joint Southwark-Freshwater Group project and will rise about 125 yards from the original site (which now lies under John Courage's nearby brewery). It will stand a few feet above ground level and probably overlook the Thames. 'The Globe was erected in 1599, but being the basic bones of the first theatre, from Shoreditch, it was really the first. Very few people realise this' he explains secretively.

Strange though it may seem, the biggest obstacles are now out of the way. The project's credibility, especially with an American in charge, was a huge problem. And outline planning permission equally so. Fund-raising is 'relatively simple' he quips. But despite the intended humour of the remark, he is right. 'There are complications, true, in launching the various activities you need to get going. But it's far easier than launching a mere idea' he stresses.

Just how Wanamaker became tied up with all this is a chapter in itself. Furthermore, although his name is familiar to most people in theatre, few know much about him when pressed. How many would remember, for instance, that he played Iago to Paul Robeson's Othello in the 1959-60 season at Stratford-on-Avon, with Tony Richardson directing? The season included Flora Robson, Charles Laughton, Edith Evans, Peggy Ashcroft, Olivier and Finney. How many remember his 1962 productions of King Priam or La Forza del Destino at Covent Garden?

Going back almost exactly 40 years, a young actor, fresh from drama school in Chicago arrived in New York and plunged into radio soap opera for a living. ('It was quite an art form then' he adds). The young Wanamaker was determined to make his mark and although radio brought him into contact with such contemporary giants as Orson Welles, he had an eye on Broadway. An entree with the influential Group Theater movement, which had disbanded a year before, opened the door to men like Elia Kazan, then a young director 'virtually working on his first production'. Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, Clifford Odets, all came within his circle, with critics like Harold Clurman and such seminal directors as Lee Strasberg.

A promising career was interrupted by the war, which was spent mostly in the Far East. On his return, he was thrown back into the thick of it: his second day after demob he had to go to rehearsals in uniform – he'd had no time to go down to the shops for new civvies!



Detail from the Visscher View of London, 1616 showing the first Globe

He was soon in a playwright's company, this time even better than before. The leading writers of the day were involved: Robert C. Sherwood, Elmer Rice and Maxwell Anderson. The first play was a moralistic treatise on Joan of Arc set in modern society with morals to match. It was called Joan of Lorraine and starred Ingrid Bergman, then at the height of her film stardom, in her Broadway debut. A couple of weeks into rehearsals, the director was dropped. Would Wanamaker like to take over, while keeping his co-starring role? With only a few weeks until it opened, there was no alternative. But on opening night it all gelled. The show had rave reviews and in particular, the new discovery, Sam Wanamaker, plucked from relative obscurity into the limelight. The effect on his career was 'a kind of ballistic missile, which shot into the air'. He had offers to go to Hollywood (who were always pinching new talent) on an acting-directing contract with Warners. The fruits of success were starting to taste sweet, when an unfortunate intrusion cut across his life. The investigations of the Un-American Activities Committee singled him out as a black sheep from his associations with various prominent American intellectuals, some on the Hollywood Ten list.

He explains in his own words. 'While there was this hostility to Russia and Communism, at the same time the communists and capitalists had a common enemy in Europe, the Fascists and Hitler. So we found ourselves on the same side.

'Up to that time American propaganda had been violently hostile to the Soviet Union, and then suddenly we became their "allies". And we had to support them. So a lot of ordinary Americans became friendly with them, through cultural exchanges and so on.

'Then Churchill's "Iron Curtain Speech" changed it all back again and American right-wingers decided enough was enough'. Wanamaker, a Jew, remembers that the volte-face was easier for some than others, depending on their integrity and wartime involvements. 'You couldn't just turn it off, you know, especially after the Hitler thing. I think most thinking people were involved with the McCarthy era, either privately or publicly'.

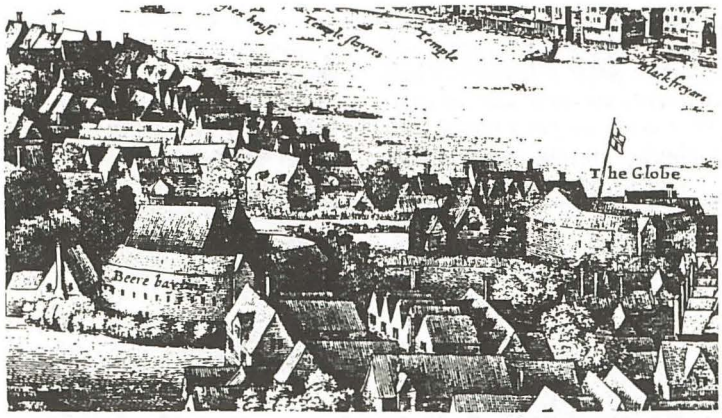
But it all affected him badly. 'My career, having been at a very high level at that point, started to encounter tough attitudes, professionally. Either you could take a determined stance on the issue of the constitutional right of a committee to question your beliefs in a free country, or else accept passively what was happening. The issue was not your politics, but the right to hold those views under the Bill of Rights,' he explains. 'Semi-Fascist things happened in America, too. And bit by bit, we so-called activists were isolated and became subjects of attack as 'pinkos'.

The unhappy era, which Wanamaker admits changed the course of his career for 20 years, coincided with his first visit to England to do a film, which, as luck would have it, was sensitive politically, although already highly acclaimed. He was eventually subpoenaed in 1951 while abroad, to appear before the Un-American Activities Committee. He declined to leave this country and was granted residency status here. He didn't return to work in America until 1960. To have returned while under the subpoena would have meant public blacklisting. Even British films slowly ceased to use him though, since his involvement would have impaired its export potential to the big film market, America. 'The period changed my whole life' he remembers, ruefully.

Wanamaker is a dynamic personality, and like so many foreigners living in this country, he found our way of life and the inscrutable British character 'marvellous, but alien'. No feeling of a second home, developed, as it should have. 'You don't actually become part of English society, you're still . . .' he trails off. It is difficult to verbalise. 'You are not made to feel that you belong'. It took him a long time to learn that over here, people do not always say what they mean or mean what they say. It was hard going on the young wunderkind who, on top of feeling resentful at being effectively exiled from his country, felt alienated in the new.

But he survived, and a successful film, television and stage career got back underway by the mid-sixties, although inevitably not with the impetus he achieved earlier. It couldn't have. By the late sixties, during a period of temporary quiet, he hit upon the Globe project as an emotional lightning rod for his pent-up frustrations, never dreaming it would take longer than a couple of years all told. The work provided a positive outlet for something that had fascinated him since his childhood, ever since the British Trade Fair came to Chicago with The Globe as its exhibit.

What on earth made him believe he could, or would, succeed, though? An American, with few connections and no money to speak of? It seems hare-brained.



Wenceslas Hollars 'Long Birds Eye View of London 1647. Note the labels to the Globe and the Beere Bayting have been transposed.

The answer, he generously concedes, is more to do with being there at the right time than anything else. Many had tried it before and failed, as with the National Theatre. But not till the sixties did the docks and warehouses fall into disuse, with the growth of post-war containerisation at Tilbury. Together with bomb damage, great areas along the riverfront lay empty and silent. Wanamaker arrived on the scene in time to join in the heated debates about the future of the sites.

The biggest obstacle, he feels in retrospect, was not planning permission, but credibility. Would it be a noble memorial to a former British theatre tradition, or a cheap piece of Disneyland? The question lingered for a long time.

Sam Wanamaker's finest hour though was no doubt the now little-discussed Liverpool project in the mid-fifties. A dream of a theatre, which Harold Hobson called 'the most beautiful little theatre other than the Haymarket in London' was the Old Shakey, (The Shakespeare), a 150-year-old former music hall, which Wanamaker had fallen in love with on a visit to Liverpool. He was offered the chance to bring it back to life by a group of businessmen, to which he agreed on condition that he run it without interference. He pioneered foreign films there, an art gallery, a coffee bar and children's theatre, all under one roof. He staged plays that got round the Lord Chamberlain, like Arthur Miller's View From The Bridge.

It was a huge hit. 'Even Paul McCartney, then still a schoolboy, introduced himself to Sam' recalls Charlotte, his wife, 'saying his schoolmaster had told him about the theatre'. For McCartney and hundreds of other Scouse schoolchildren it was their first time inside a theatre – and they loved it. It was different, and fun. Wanamaker had run a summer festival on Broadway a few years earlier on a tight budget, working with people like Anthony Quinn, so he knew a fair bit about administering a season and theatre finances.

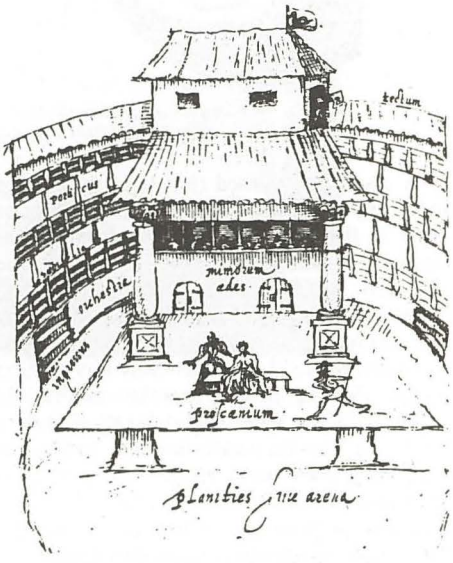
Enter Anna Deere Wyman, of the wealthy American tractor family. She and Wanamaker got on famously and she bought the 35-year lease of the theatre and rented it back to him at a highly favourable figure. Their common interest was to make the venture a success. She wanted it named after her, but instead he ran a newspaper competition to find a new name and the pedestrian New Shakespeare, was finally chosen. After a time she and he fell out, just as the theatre had taken off, and a peculiar game ensued, with Deere Wyman raising her rental to ever higher and finally ludicrous heights. Several public appeals to meet these ridiculous figures were successful: there was widespread following by now for the theatre's activities, which ran throughout the day. But in the end Wanamaker realised he was being 'done' and closed the doors. They never re-opened. The theatre was sold to a furniture company as a warehouse and eventually it burned to the ground, a crowning irony for such an architectural gem.

'Sam dealt purely with the theatre side, although the whole project was known as his' says Charlotte Wanamaker. 'There was a restaurant upstairs, run by a dreadful, snobbish, anti-provincialite, who catered for absurdly expensive and pretentious tastes, entirely out of keeping with the rest of the activities!

In the early seventies, however, Wanamaker was at it again, this time on Bankside. A succession of summer seasons ran with a theatre rep season running under a canvas marquee, using an apron stage. Keith Michell, Caroline Seymour, Tony Richardson and Vanessa Redgrave all made their appearances. And elsewhere the Classic cinema people screened Shakespeare films in a warehouse; commissioned music was performed in Southwark Cathedral and a summer school was run by drama teacher, Diana Devlin. John Player even sponsored the second season; they were halycon days.

Then the rain poured through the marquee roof, and a second structure went up. 'Sam wanted desperately to keep a presence on the site, because of the Globe project, always at the back of his mind' recalls Devlin. 'He had a huge desire to keep people coming to Bankside'.

Even in those days, though, she explains, 'his aim was to initiate a project and get someone else to carry it on. He had other professional commitments to fulfil, as well, of course.' But that was assuming that 'other people' could get round his passionate involvement with each project. Folklore has attributed a charming saying to various people by now, although I can testify to its veracity, after humping a solid filing cabinet from his car into the Bear Garden premises after finishing our interview recently. 'If you work with Sam Wanamaker', it goes, 'you will be required to mix concrete to support castles in the air'. Far from being fanciful, it is so accurate as to fit a caricature of the man. But equally, he inspires all those who work with him. He is



Arend van Buchell's drawing of The Swan Playhouse

a do-er, like Bernard Miles. Diana Devlin explains: 'Some dismiss him as Oh, *him*! But when he returns to London to be told something is impossible for such and such reasons, he will make six phone calls and solve the problem'.

Wanamaker's legacy will prove greater than the man, some argue. As it happens, he wants no part in overseeing the artistic policy or running of The Globe when it opens. That will be someone else's problem, although he will doubtless retain a spirited interest in the goings-on. Ian McKellan started the fund-raising campaign with a charity performance on Broadway in April, and Barclays Bank have installed a man in the Bear Gardens office to co-ordinate the international fund-raising campaign. Philip Lewis, Wanamaker's new administrator oversees the day-to-day running and the full committee behind the project is chaired by Neville Labovitch. It comprises Sir Hugh Casson, Theo Crosby, a partner of Pentagram, the international design consultancy, David Kingsley, George Nicholson and Glyn Wickham.

The replica Cockpit Theatre (from the 17th century) inside the Bear Gardens is to be finished off this year with a small additional capital grant from the GLC 'for which we are just so bloody grateful' says Wanamaker. With heating round the year,

it will be useable now for up to 26 weeks a year, instead of the previous four.

It has been over a decade since the Globe project began; many of those years dark with depression, a sense of isolation and the weight of opinion against Sam Wanamaker. The most complicated and difficult chapters are over. And though there is still work to be done, what remains is team work – with a fairly powerful team at that. There will be aspects of fund-raising and technical building problems, but it would be hard to imagine a more fascinating way to spend the day than in finding solutions to those headaches.

Bankside, and its historical jewel, The Globe, has been given the kiss of life. And so, in a way, has Sam Wanamaker.

SHOWLIGHT 81

International Television, Theatre and Film Lighting Colloquium

July 6 and 7 1981

It could be claimed that there has never been anything like Showlight 81 before, at least in Britain. Certainly, there have been lighting conferences before, but never one devoted solely to lighting for entertainment. There were, of course, the many and famous Strand Electric lectures and 'gatherings' held on practically any pretext to get lighting people together in the late lamented King Street demonstration theatre and, for the international set, there was 'Lighting 2000' held in New York in 1970 and also devoted exclusively to the type of lighting familiar to readers of 'Cue'. But how many delegates actually attended from London? Lighting 2000 was nevertheless the progenitor of 'Showlight 81' because one of its New York organisers, Phil Rose, and two of the contributors, Ken Ackerman and Fred Bentham, decided that the wealth of lighting expertise in London could also justify organising a special conference or colloquium.

So what is 'Showlight 81' really trying to be? First, it is about the art of lighting the actor, dancer or musician and secondly about the equipment specially evolved to assist this art. The four keynote speakers are leading lighting artists with international reputations and the distinction of being acknowledged by their peers as great lighting designers. Richard Pilbrow, speaking on theatre lighting, has lit over 200 productions in theatres in London, New York, Paris and Moscow. Recent London productions lit by Richard include 'Annie', 'Oklahoma' and 'Joking Apart' in which he pioneered the use of fibre optics for lighting effects on stage. Denys Coop will speak about film lighting. Denys is an outstanding Director of Photography and was responsible for the spectacular flying photography for 'Superman I' for which he received an Oscar. John Treays is the television lighting specialist and is one of the best of the internationally admired BBC Television Lighting Directors. John is best known for his lighting for many BBC Shakespeare productions and drama series. He is a BAFTA award winner and was the first Chairman of the Society of Television Lighting Directors. Richard Dale speaking about Pop and Roadshow lighting completes the team. Richard and the company he runs have been responsible for the total production organisation of countless Pop Roadshows including The New Seekers; Marti Caine; Neil Sedaka; Gladys Knight and Hot Chocolate. All four are using colour slides, film or Video to explain what they think lighting in their medium is about and to illustrate the artistic achievements of the recent past and their hopes for the future.

The technical papers, on the other hand, are about solid fact. The technical session begins, logically, with a session on modern light sources with contributions from Thorn, G.E.C., and a Californian firm, I.L.C. describing recent lamp developments for stage and studio use. I.L.C. promise details of a new dicharge lamp suitable for indoor use at 3200K. After lamps comes the luminaire design session opened by a contribution from Mario de Sisti, the Italian designer responsible for the Rank Ianiro lighting equipment whose attention to quality and innovation have secured them a worldwide market in TV, Film and, increasingly, in Theatre. America then contributes a paper from Kliegl on the contentious question of the place of efficiency in luminaire design and then the London manufacturer CCT offer a paper on their new digitally controlled remote colour change system. Colour is also the subject of a paper from Rosco and a description of a new cyclorama system by a leading US consultant, Dick Glickman. To round off this section Telestage describe their latest moves in development of grids and suspension systems.

The second day begins with a session on temporary power distribution systems reporting the far reaching effect that Health and Safety legislation is having on the Film and Television industry location wiring systems and which might yet spread to disturb the 'custom and practice' of the theatre and pop scene. Inevitably, lighting control systems are a major topic in this sort of discussion and Rank Strand, Electrosonic and Zero 88 describe their latest approach to harness computers to the service of art and effect. Finally, the prepared papers end with contributions from Australia, Canada and elsewhere describing how lighting practices differ in other parts of the world.

The last half day is devoted to 'structured discussion' which the organisers hope will allow topics triggered off by the earlier sessions to be fully explored by the delegates.

During the conference there will be a small exhibition by leading equipment manufacturers.

'Showlight 81' despite the implication of its name, will not, repeat not, become a regular event. Monday and Tuesday 6th and 7th July 1981 will be positively the only performance. Showlight is being held at the Barbican and will be among the first to use the long awaited extensive conference and entertainment complex designed for the City of London. The Lord Mayor of the City of London will open the proceedings with proper ceremony. Registration at £60 including VAT will include lunch on both days and a reception in the Overlord Embroidery room followed by dinner in the Porter Tun room at the converted Whitbread Brewery close by the Barbican site. A tour of the nearly completed Royal Shakespeare Company theatre and other areas of technical interest is promised. Reduced rates are offered for young people and pensioners. The event is organised by a joint committee of the National Illumination Committee, The Chartered Institution of Buiding Services Lighting Division, The Royal Television Society, The British Kinematograph, Sound and Television Society, the Association of British Theatre Technicians, The British Society of Cameramen and the Society of Television Lighting Directors.

Details and application forms from Anne Gibbins
CIBS, Delta House
222 Balham High Rd., London SW12 9BS
Telephone 01-675-5211

REIDing SHELF

I have never worked at the Royal Court—and with my romantic leanings on the matter of colour filters (reflecting my attitude to theatre in general) it is rather unlikely that I ever shall. However I was interviewed by George Devine in 1958 for the job of DSM on *Live Like Pigs*. This interview seemed to be going rather well until Devine commiserated with me for having worked on several pantomimes. I hastened to reassure him that *all* forms of theatre, including pantomime, are valid—indeed essential—audience experiences. At that point the atmosphere cooled noticeably and we embarked upon a swift fade to 'of course, I'm seeing another two or three people and we'll be in touch'.

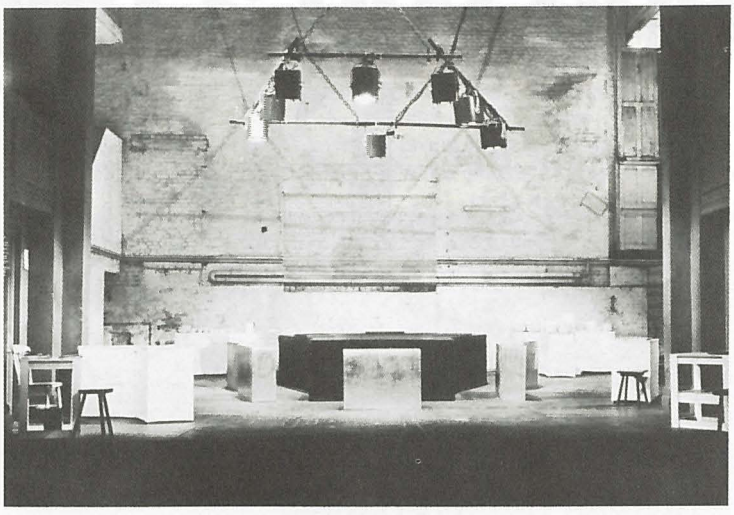
However, as a member of the audience, I was almost in at the beginning. I saw the fifth performance of the opening production (*The Mulberry Bush*) and the second production (*The Cruicible*) is an event engraved on my heart: this was the first evening out with the lady for whom my silver bells ring out just 358 days after the jubilee which has prompted the publication of **AT THE ROYAL COURT 25 years of the English Stage Company.**

I mention all this personal background because it illustrates that one of the functions of this sort of book is to stimulate the recall (pleasurable or otherwise) of those who shared the period. For those who reached their age of theatre awareness during the period, such a book should supply a knowledge of the roots of the performance styles that they are now experiencing. And finally, for future generations—including researchers at work in a future when certainly the building and possibly even its ideals will have crumbled—there should be an accurate picture of *what it was like.*

This book seems to score high marks in all of these requirements. I cannot testify to the accuracy of its picture of what it was like to work at the Court, and I suspect that there may well be considerable disagreement among past Courtiers. Certainly the working atmosphere seems to have been tense rather than cosy. And probably deliberately so, for it usually is in a doctrinaire environment. As I read the book I lost any residual ambition to work at the Royal Court: I have never flourished in an atmosphere where creativity stems from crisis and collision. But I do acknowledge that fine work can be achieved by this method although I prefer to appreciate the results from the safety of a seat in the stalls.

The Court was founded as a writer's theatre and its concentration on text has been a major influence on the development of British scenography towards a style of representational realism where the actors' environment is established by a statement of essentials rather than an accumlation of detail.

This scenic clarity called for a corresponding lighting style and the text became exposed to a lot of light and very little shade, with white taking on a status hitherto only accorded to virgins and detergents. The exposed lighting rig became part of the scene design with its shape following the contours of the design and thus helping to delineate the acting area.



Wesker's The Kitchen, *1961. An early example of the developing Royal Court design style with the shape of the lighting rig following the shape of the scene design. (a) under working light (b) In performance*

Paradoxically, therefore, a Royal Court production is often more recognisable by its scenography than by its text!

Much of the English Stage Company's work is over: the revolution that was sought has been achieved. The aims of George Devine and his founding team are now incorporated in the policies of many theatre companies from the NT to the Fringe. The 25 years of this jubilee may well neatly enclose an era.

At the Royal Court is cleverly laid out: the factual chapters covering each period of two or three years are interlaced with memoirs from Courtpersons like Osborne, Olivier, Gielgud, Gaskill, Beckett, Fugard, Lindsay Anderson and Jocelyn Herbert. Richard Findlater links it all together and appendices list all the plays and their casts plus fascinating box-office returns. All definitely good reading—both now and for the future.

An encyclopaedia has two uses: reference and browsing. I find that looking up a reference usually leads to a browse. If the encyclopaedia is illustrated it is usually the pictures that trigger off the browse. **ILLUSTRATED ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF WORLD THEATRE** has a lot of pictures and they are set across the right hand two columns of each right hand page. This makes them leap out while one is seeking an alphabetical reference—whether searching from the front of the book or, like me, flicking from the back. The pictures, and there are about 420 of them, contain many familiar 'standards' but nothing amiss in that, provided they are printed to illustrate a point and not as mere graffitti. In fact the illustrations often make more point than the text—if only because the text is necessarilly restricted with 2000 entries to be accommodated in 290 pages (ie about 600 CUE columns). However, many entries end with bibliographical references to point possible directions of further enquiry. Emphasis tends to be on names rather than subjects and there is a separate index of play titles (5000 of them) leading to author entries. The book is based on the German language *Friedrichs Theaterlexikon*, first published in 1969. Martin Esslin's English language edition of 1977 is now made more accesible by publication in paperback.

AT THE ROYAL COURT. 25 years of the English Stage Company. Edited by Richard Findlater. Amber Lane Press. £12.95(UK).

ILLUSTRATED ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF WORLD THEATRE. Based on *Friedrichs Theaterlexikon*. English language edition adapted and amplified under the general editorship of Martin Esslin. Thames and Hudson. 1977 edition now available in paperback. £5.95(UK).

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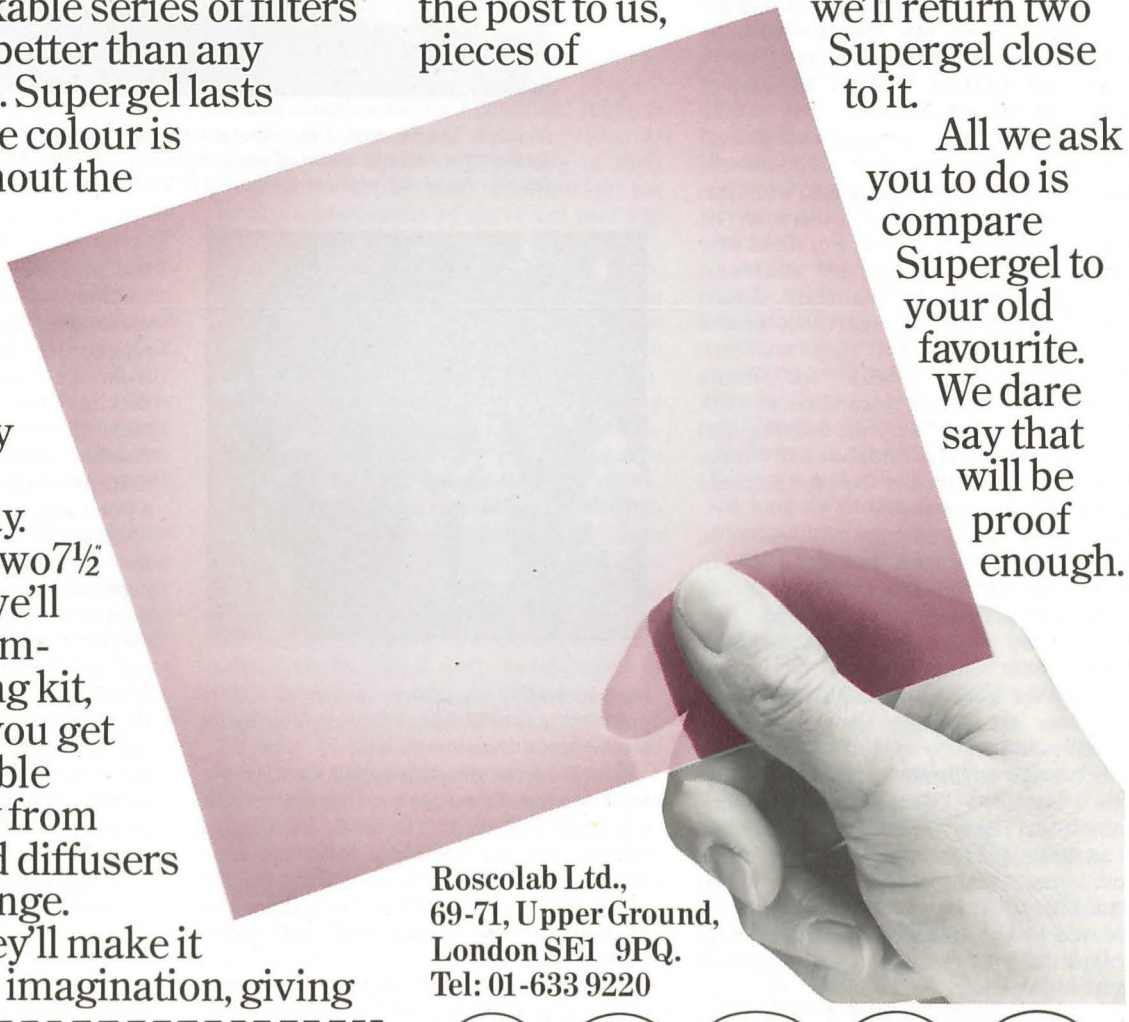

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IN A WORLD OF HOT LIGHTS SUPERGEL COLOURS LIVE LONGER

The Smile on the Face of the Tiger

RICHARD PILBROW

The rock of Gibraltar looked down upon some strange goings on in early March. This symbol of a one-time far flung empire is used to presiding over the presently somewhat subdued activities of R.A.F. Gibraltar. But now, to break the monotony of life in an isolated out-post – half Spain and half Portsmouth – a strange invasion occurred. Not a chemical attack from eastern barbarians (although this eventuality is apparently rehearsed) but a more unexpected charabanc of surprises: Leyland Bus, Commercial Presentations, the industrial show's producers, under Steve Batiste, Bob Scott and line producer Robin Pritchard, with Theatre Projects to encompass the whole with light, sound, film and audio visual.

Venue: an empty hangar on the airfield.
Event: the launch of Leyland's new chassis for coaches, 'B43' now to be christened 'Tiger'.
Time: March 17 and 19 1981. Audience: 240 coach operators flown out from U.K. for the spectacle.

The hangar, a huge barn, had to be converted into three spaces – a reception 'foyer' and two theatres placed back to back. The audience having received a necessary cup of coffee – it was the beginning of a long day – filed into the first auditorium, where in a dark black and blue space, two blocks of steeply raked seating faced an elongated rear projection screen and lectern. Broad strips of Rosco spectral break up material framed the small presentation stage in rainbow colours.

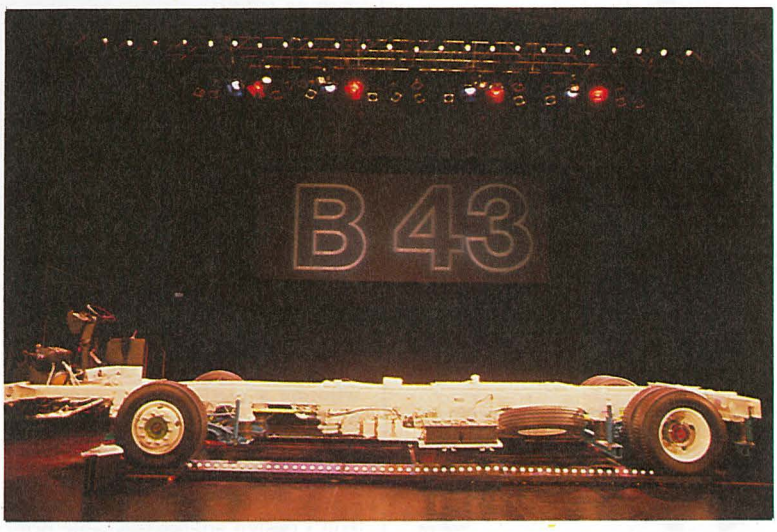
Several speakers introduced Leyland bus and coach history, recent achievements, organization, research and development and service and parts back-up. Each was accompanied by a fast-flowing sequence of multiscreen slide and sound displays.

A key feature of this new chassis – the writer should explain that Leyland build the chassis and others custom-build the superstructure, coach seats etc. – is that the suspension is pneumatic. The coach is suspended on air. To demonstrate the efficacy of this quite revolutionary development, the sales director (rather bravely) stepped forward to the front of the two seating units and said 'Gentlemen' (there were 120 at each performance) 'you are now suspended on air'. They were, as the air compressor hummed and the units rose on air bearings and then slowly began to revolve, guided by two men each. To add to the audiences surprise and disorientation, music thundered, coloured lights flashed and pulsed until Valhalla must be around the corner.

As the light and sound reached its climax, the seats had revolved 180° and now faced a new stage and mystery. Nothing was to be seen but mist and darkness. Slowly a huge Union Jack loomed projected through the clouds and then below, in the distance a ghostly-like white shape appeared and glided down toward the audience. Was it? It was . . . B43.

The new chassis, 40 feet long, weighing six tons, floating sideways on air pallettes toward us. Arriving downstage it blazed with light, a massive gleaming feat of engineering. Suitable applause . . .

Next, Leyland's technical director demonstrated the many unique features of the new chassis. In a subdued, blue modelling light, each item was picked out in white pin spots, while also being illustrated in close up on the huge screen above. Then for its new name. At the motor show, a series of 'candid camera' recordings had been made with dealers discussing the alternatives. 'Of course, you must call it *Tiger*', prompted a rapid light change to cover the white chassis in orange yellow tiger stripes!



As the audience seating turned on airpowered hover units the 40ft chassis, also on 'Aero castors', came hissing towards them.

Into a film that showed the finished coach in action, up hill and down dale of the Lake District, hurtling round test curves, a road sickening test that demonstrated eloquently the vehicle's remarkable stability. Faster and faster, around we went on film, as the chassis below became alive with light, changing colour and form, yellow, orange, blue, green, red, purple, gearbox, engine, suspension, wheels, radiator, fuel tank, a kaleidoscope of engineering and effect.

Afterwards, cocktails and the excited buzz of conversation. 'Gentlemen, luncheon is served.' It was – 10 minutes away by plane in Tangier!

As our now friendly delegates gamely climbed their aircraft steps – accompanied by the Leyland Brass Band striking up – in search of lunch, we, the creative team and crew retired to our refreshment. A pint at the NAFFI.

Ruminating upon it all, the concept of the launch by Commercial Presentations was a brilliant mixture of showmanship, sober information exchange and some notable 'coups-de-theatre-industrielle'.

Technically an empty hangar is all too like a black box theatre – it takes a lot of scenery and skill to fill it. The roof could bear no significant weight, so virtually all equipment had to stand on the floor. Two eighty foot long trusses supported much of

Audio Visual and Sound controls

the overstage lighting. The sound, AV and lighting installations in an empty space were substantial. Ironically two of the most irksome problems were the hangar windows and getting rid of bright Gibraltar sun with miles of black polythene and . . . have you ever tried to get large quantities of dry ice in Gibraltar?

Finally, did it work? Well, I'm sure I saw that Tiger smiling.

I'll close on one review:
'makes most pop groups seem insignificant. The atmosphere was electric and I vaguely remembered a Cape Kennedy rocket launch which was a non-event compared to this magnificent Leyland show.'

Thank you *The Coachmart*. How would you like to review the old fashioned sort of theatre?

Client:	**Leyland Bus**
Producers:	**Commercial Presentations** (Steve Batiste, Bob Scott, Robin Pritchard)
Lighting, Sound and AV:	**Theatre Projects.** (Richard Pilbrow (Lighting) Mark Huffington (Audio Visual) Richard Rogers (Sound) Phil Hughes (Electrician)

Making ourselves heard in a hangar

Total 6.4 Kw. system used for taped sound in 2 stereo pairs at each end of the auditorium to fill 800,000 cubic feet of aircraft hangar.

8 BOSE 802 loudspeakers in two arrays fed from lectern mics and radio mics to cover the audience from both directions during 180° revolve. Each array was individually equalised using a Court stereo 30-band graphic equaliser to minimise feedback and boominess in the far from perfect acoustics.

The mixer was Soundcraft 400 18-4-2 with 9 individually adjustable outputs to the two stereo stacks (4 inputs of the desk were inserted in subgroup outputs to utilise the comprehensive equalisation of the Soundcraft in eliminating a tricky 300 Hz. 'boom' in the hangar and 'liven up' one pair of speakers partially obscured by the set) – the other five subgroups and auxiliary sends being used (a) to feed each BOSE array individually, (b) to feed programme to the 16 substation TP intercom system, (c) to feed a Revox B77 recording each dress rehearsal and show and (d) to feed 8 Auratone loudspeakers surrounding the Reception area via D60 amplifiers to provide 'wallpaper' (background) music from cassette and pre-show announcements.

The main problems encountered were high ambient noise levels – RAF fighters arrived and departed regularly 400 yards from hangar doors – and indigenous inhabitants of the hangar – several hundred birds – whose excitement at bus commercials was evident.

Contrary to expectations, the enormous amount of radar and communications systems blanketing the Rock caused no interference to radio mics or sound system. However, the conviction of local service personnel that World War III was imminent provided much amusement for the crew held up by commandos with high velocity rifles, and WRAFS waving pick-axe handles'.

Richard Rogers

PRODUCT NEWS

50th Anniversary Conference

BKSTS '81 marks the 50th anniversary of the Society. It would be a mistake however to assume that the exhibition and particularly the conference is exclusively about film and T.V. technology. The scheduled list of papers include much on sound, front projection and audio visual techniques which are likely to be relevant to anyone involved in technically sophisticated productions in any medium, especially trade shows. We hope to carry a report on the event in our next issue but for anyone wishing to attend, BKSTS '81 is from 29th June to 3rd July (just before Showlight '81) at the Royal Lancaster Hotel near Paddington Station. Details from BKSTS 110-112 Victoria House, Vernon Place, London WC1B 4DV. Telephone: 01 242 8400.

Treading the boards

The Alex '81 (Aluminium Extruders Association) competition produced a design for a lightweight modular staging system winning a certificate of commendation for its designer, Anthony Hill Designs Ltd.

The stage uses structural aluminium alloy extrusions originally developed for the tough job of freight carrying. Anthony Hill's design adapts the same principles and existing shapes to satisfy all the parameters and standards of theatre stage construction. The system is easy to handle, transport and erect in schools and local halls for temporary or semi-permanent use. Floor sections neatly interlock to form a continuous, flush surface and is claimed to be up to one third the weight of any competitive product. Further information from Anthony Hill, PO Box 9, Shepshed, Leicestershire.

The Prospect of Faster Rigging

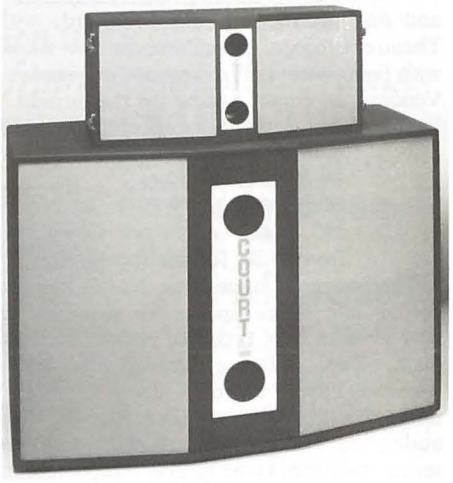
Theatre Projects have taken over the stock, staff and premises of the 'rock and roll' sound and lighting company, T.F.A. Electrosound.

The new company, trading as T.F.A., will continue to operate under its Managing Director, Brian Croft, as an independent unit within the Theatre Projects Group.

Richard Pilbrow, Chairman, of the group says 'The acquisition of T.F.A. Electrosound equipment and know how by Theatre Projects is of significance to the theatre, conference and music industries. It has long been apparent that the fast rigging techniques common to lighting and sound of one night touring rock and roll shows could greatly benefit the theatre and conferences in their striving for greater efficiency and cost effectiveness. Conversely rock and roll lighting has developed to a point where many feel the need for greater subtlety and theatricality in its design and execution. This Theatre Projects can provide.

These factors, together with the benefits of scale throughout the joint operation, should ensure both a superior and more competitive service to both company's clients.'

Full range PA/Music loudspeaker systems



Compactness and high quality are the keynotes of the new Proflex loudspeaker systems marketed by Court Acoustics Ltd. Proflex 200 has a highly efficient low frequency response from two high power 12″ drivers. The mid range and high frequencies are handled by horn loaded compression drivers with the response of most professional studio monitors. A very wide and even distribution is achieved with a pleasing spacial effect in place of the usual beam of energy experienced with many reinforcement systems.

The proflex 200 can be run by a single amplifier or augmented with the Proflex 400 system when explosive bass is required for club, discotheque and live performances.

The little American Gooseneck

CAE inc. manufacturers of the 'Littlite' gooseneck lamps announce three handy new mounting accessories. They include an adjustable clip to go on music stands and console sideplates for providing local lighting; a free standing arrangement with weighted base where the lamp is not required to be fixed to the equipment, and a plastic snap mount for semi-permanent attachment to equipment but which can be easily removed for storage or when travelling the equipment.

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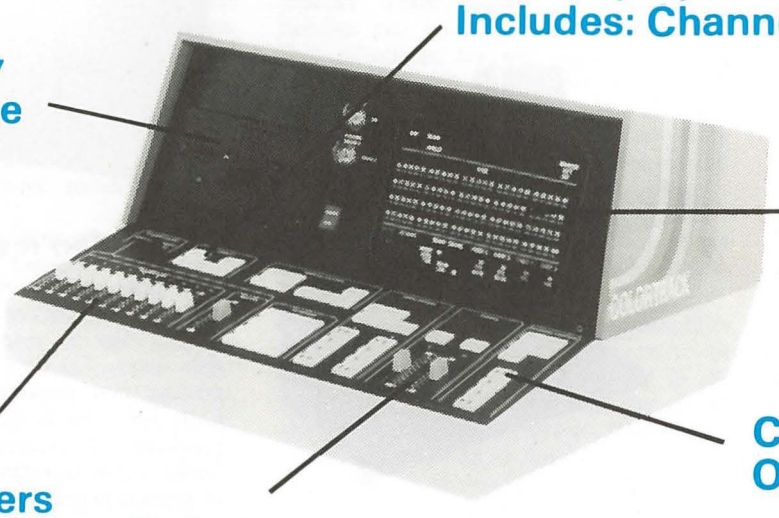

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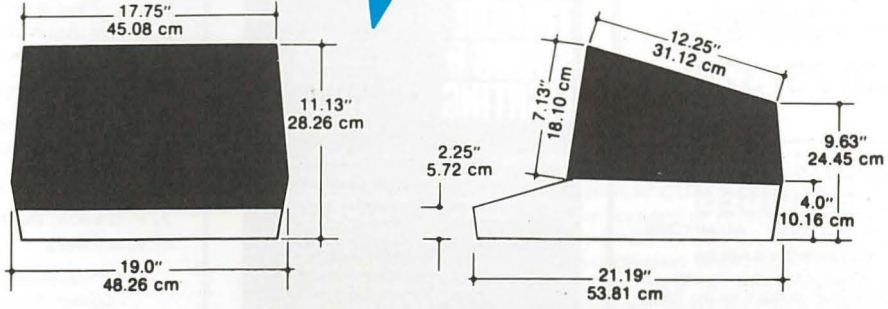

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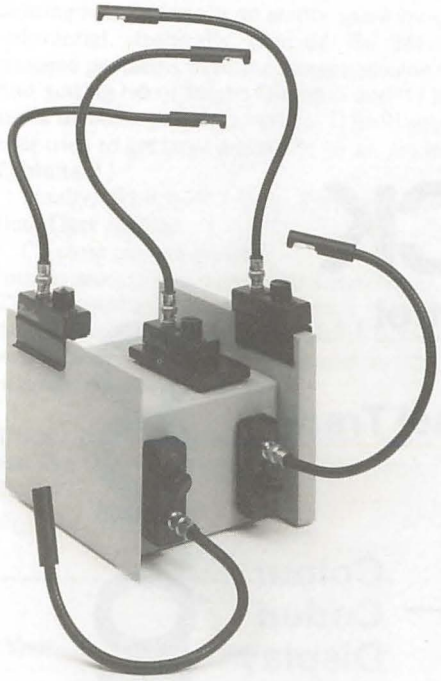

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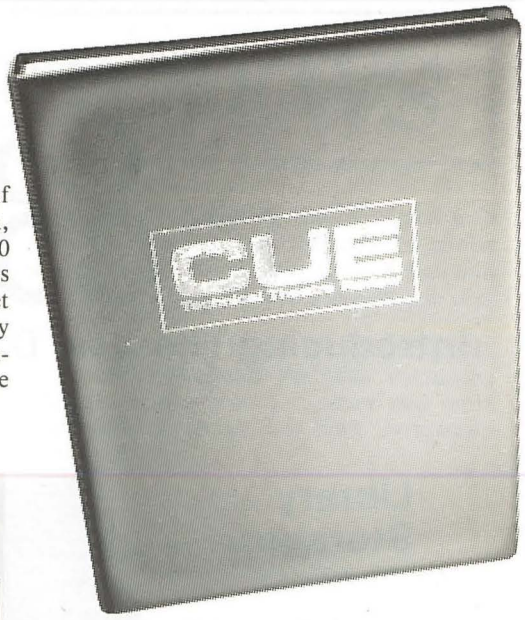

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The first supply of CUE binders has arrived, but they're going fast. If you haven't already reserved yours send off right away. The cost is £4 including VAT, postage and packing. One binder takes CUE 1-8. This is CUE 11 so it might be provident to reserve your 2nd volume binder at the same time and take advantage of present prices.

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Letters to the Editor

Sitting Pretty

Dear Sir, It was fun to see F for Freddie – or rather F for Fox – the organ console ready for take off in your last issue and there was much of interest in Iain Mackintosh's pair of rather breathless 'in Splendour' articles. I did, however, bridle and snort more than once over his review of David Atwell's *Cathedrals of the Movies.* In such a short review why quote Maxwell Fry? He is as relevant as P. Morton Shand or Fred Bentham to mention but two others then out of sympathy with that kind of architecture (and I didn't approve of the Frank Matcham school either!). I now know better.

What puzzles me still is all the drooling over 'a Garden of Dreams': the atmospheric or 'outside-in' cinema as the architect Julian Leathart neatly dubbed them at the time. Mercifully they constituted but a tiny proportion of the cinemas over here. The Americans had a greater kidability, perhaps. What I suppose got up my snout was the use of all that colour lighting to produce a few unconvincing sky effects. What I wanted, and said so in 4000 words in *The Builder* of Sept 2nd 1932, can be summed up as multi-atmosphere not atmospherics. And I wanted this for theatre auditoria as well – hence the anti-Matcham.

One must be careful over the talented Komisarjevsky also. He *decorated* the Bernstein theatres and only the Granada Tooting presents a real coup de théâtre. Another splendid one-off in this context was the New Victoria by Wamsley Lewis. Conserved it certainly is; but only as a shadow. Alas for the long vanished long seaweed fittings, for example. The real equivalent of Frank Matcham in that world of the super cinema was George Coles. I got quite sentimental the other day when I saw the practice's plate in Craven Street just off the Strand where it always was, fifty years ago. Then there was Harry Weedon and all those Odeons – the genuine Oscar Deutsch ones, not the taken-over Gaumonts and the like of the greater Rank circuit.

It is the Odeons which answer in part Iain's question as to why cinema stages with fly towers persisted in the thirties. The Odeons seldom had anything much of a stage 'in their brief'; nor did they often have the still de rigeur cinema organ. After 1933, when the Odeon circuit took off, it had just become possible to rely wholly on reproduced sound for a show – even to covering the intervals with gramophone records played on the non-sync. In the early years of the talkies not only was a system liable to a breakdown – impossible to remedy quickly in those pre-modular days – but the sound it produced was a monotonous throaty boom.

There was another reason, which I suspect might explain why something completely logical in the silent twenties persisted right up to the Gaumont State Kilburn of 1937, and that was 'sons', in this case Mick Hyams of Hyams and Gale (H. & G. Cinemas). He enjoyed designing stages and putting shows thereon. Another example was Dave Abrahams and the Regal Edmonton. There was an element of indulgent Father and his son's toy train set in the practice. These, mainly Jewish, exhibitor families may have had an eye to business first, of course, but they were *involved* in their cinemas. Or at any rate those who I had any kind of contact with, certainly were. Each cinema you built was something you enjoyed, showed off to your rivals and were proud of. Because you liked it, the public would like it and you personally made money. Often today, the man at the top has no connection with an enterprise except budget and balance sheet.

The Davis Croydon (1928) exemplifies this approach. The last and largest to be built by Israel Davis, they kept it in the family long after they had sold the rest of the circuit to Gaumont British. Disciplining myself not to go on to describe its technical equipment, it is time to get around to the real point of this letter! 'These old cinemas' were not just 'yesterday's technological junk' now to be viewed smugly by we 'live theatre enthusiasts'. They kept the idea of going out for a collective entertainment experience alive and expanded it. They were *theatres* and were referred to as such by the exhibitors who ran them.

You went in and bought your tickets, there and then at the pay box, because you felt in the mood and not because some weeks earlier you had been privileged to buy a pair at the box office. Everyone went in at the same door, shared the same foyers, cafes or restaurants. And there were plenty of staff around, with the house manager well in evidence. Anything less like today's impersonal internment for screening in a robotic cell cannot be imagined. Nor was that technology divisive: unlike disco or gig, it was something for all the family – whatever their age. Let us be thankful to David Atwell, and others, who record as many in as much detail, those pleasure domes – stately or otherwise – before this substantial pageant fades to leave not a rack behind.

As to the Atwell omission of Mackintosh's 'own local pre-talkie cinema' I would humbly beg to point out that David obviously puts first things first; because the local of my own boyhood – the Coliseum Harlesden of 1911 – is not only recorded in his book but there is an excellent photograph, apparently taken from the same balcony seat in which I used to sit!

Fred Bentham

From Mr. L. E. Read.

Dear Sirs,

Iain Mackintosh's review of David Atwells 'Cathedrals of the Movies' (CUE No. 10) smacks of the toffee nosed, '*WE* of the theatre . . .' attitude which is not uncommon in certain quarters of the profession. As a 4th generation member of a theatrical family, who is only too willing to testify to the pleasures and delights of the experience of first class theatre, I feel exactly the same about first class cinema.

To dismiss as 'pretty second rate stuff', the many hundreds of (then) A.B.C., Odeon, Granada, and Gaumont cinemas plus the smaller circuit shows, is totally unjustified. During the 1930's whilst on tour with my parents, I visited many such buildings throughout the country, and many were the delights and pleasures of seeing each new interior and its luxurious furnishings. I frequently compared the very comfortable seating available at even the smallest cinemas, with the very hard seating at so many theatres in those days. I still haven't forgotten, when I took my girl friend to the Coliseum in 1949 to see a performance of 'Annie get your Gun', how uncomfortable the dress circle seating was.

Maxwell Fry's view of cinemas as *'those really dreadful by-blows of un-awakened commerce that failed to achieve a total form of any consequence but merely added to the corruption of the High Street'* is a load of codswallop!!! I don't doubt that there were people like him saying the same sort of things about the Globe and the Swan in Shakespeare's day.

I have, in fact, thoroughly enjoyed reading Mr. Mackintosh's report on the theatres he has visited during his recent trip to the States. I have, I am sorry to say, only attended one performance in an American theatre, and that was at the Barrymore on Broadway. I notice when discussing the cinemas in America he comments on the 3000 and 4000 seaters being a problem when putting on a show. I see his point, but for the medium for which they were first constructed they were perfectly suitable. Not only were the audiences there to fill them in the '30s and '40s but the size of the screen ensured that even from the back row of the circle you could quite clearly follow the action. He says 'we live theatre enthusiasts may ponder smugly that while a good Victorian theatre may serve a modern actor as superbly as a Stradivarius serves a violinist, etc etc' yes, of course, since the theatre is virtually unchanged since Victorian times for the presentation of most plays, whereas the cinema was a completely new form of audio and visual presentation for entertainment. Even if the cast are all over 6ft, they loose impact and presence from the rear of a 3000 or 4000 seater. The reasons for the contraction of the cinema industry after World War II are many and varied, but the important part it has played in both entertaining and educating the public in the past 60 or more years is reason enough that some of the buildings mentioned in David Atwell's book should be, and indeed are, preserved as monuments to the finest form of mass entertainment the world has so far known.

Yours sincerely,
L. E. READ
Flat 1.
9, The Boulevard,
Crawley, Sussex

P.S. May I just add how much I look forward to each issue of CUE, worth every penny!!! I enjoy the enthusiasm of Francis Reid when he visits a theatre on his travels, just how I feel on the all too rare occasional visits I make to a theatre. By the way, I have a photo I took of the HOLOPHANE board I used to operate back in the 1940's and was wondering if Fred Bentham might like a copy, no charge, of course.

Between Cues

The thoughts of Walter Plinge

Audience Assistance

A photograph in the Paris Opera's Benjamin Britten exhibition is captioned *Britten and Pears assistent a la 50me representation D'Albert Herring A L'Opera National.* In the photograph Britten and Pears are not assisting by making music but are assisting by sitting on a box. This traditional French concept of the function of an audience was understood by Glyndebourne's founder John Christie who demanded that his audience arrive on time, remain for all the calls, and dress for the occasion—*Evening dress is not snobbery. Its purpose is to give the audience trouble. We take a great deal of trouble. The public must do the same . . . . We tell our public openly and bluntly 'we want to give you trouble: if you are not prepared to take trouble stay at home'* Christie excelled at his chosen role of a great British eccentric. It helped him to add humanity and humour to an acutely perceptive mind (he daily asked me, intuitively, the very questions that I was anxious to avoid) and it was typical that he should turn a fundamental law of theatre into a materly marketing strategy.

Fishy Reflections

In these days of high technology theatre I am glad to be reminded by Donald Walker of the electrician whose tool kit included a goldfish trained to create just the right degree of turbulence in the water tray used as a reflective surface in the production of ripple effects.

Opera du Chatelet

From time to time there is much pleasure to be had from indulging, after a suitably lubricated meal, in the pleasures of flapping canvas, full up lighting, out front singing, and no ensemble nonsense. There was a choice of *Opera Comique* or *Théâtre du Châtelet*. But a few years ago the Opera Comique was disbanded and its Salle Favart designated, as second house of the Opera, to sterner pleasures—frequently atonal. Now the Chatelet has been brought face to face with 20th century staging ideas and techniques, and Paris has acquired a new alternative opera. It is a city rather than a national theatre and, this being the age of arts integration, it is called not Opera de la Ville but *Théâtre Musical de Paris*. With this new organisation occupying the Chatelet, the Paris Civic Music and Drama theatres now face each other across the Place du Chatelet with identical 19th century facades. The drama house, *Théâtre de la Ville* was formed by gutting the traditional furnishings of the *Sarah Bernhardt* theatre to instal a raked black box with end stage. The Chatelet has retained its original 1862 tiering and spectacularly vaulted gallery. Refurbishing has been restricted to a flexible orchestral pit, modernisation of the stage elevators, renovation of the ventilation, reorganisation of some of the seating, and what the programme rather charmingly calls *amélioration de l'acoustique*. Certainly Bizet's *Pearl Fishers* sounded super. The production had been imported from Bologna and was directed by a distinguished designer who was also credited with the lighting. This was good news for the scenery but hard luck on the singers. (Lighting actors is never easy when solid up and downstage walls combine with a front gauze). A tear or two inevitably must be shed for the passing of the old style Chatelet with its huge traditional painted operettas. But the future looks good with a programme (part imported, part in-house) that within four months includes music theatre by Charpentier, Bizet, Massenet, Cavalli, Vivaldi and Offenbach interspersed with concerts and followed by a season of Ballets Folkloriques. A welcome innovation is that the usherettes are paid by the management and not, as traditional Parisian custom, by the audience. No purses and no predatory palms: there are even printed announcements that cloakrooms are free and that gratuities are strictly forbidden.

Housing the Arts in Paris . . . .

Le Centre National d'Art et de Culture Georges Pompidou is wearing well. Its primary coloured structural tubes no longer have a temporary air: this one-off engineer's fantasy is as important to Parisian ambience as that hymn to metallurgy, the Eiffel Tower. Popularly known as *Beauborg*, the Pompidou Centre has revitalised the surrounding neighbourhood and stimulated its individual character. Curious, however, that its excellent bookshop should stock every art except theatre. Good to find a lot of performing art filling up the hole left by the destruction of nearby Les Halles.

. . . .and in Edinburgh

On returning from Paris I made my annual inspection of another important hole and can report that the prime site cleared for the proposed, but abandoned, Edinburgh Festival Opera House is continuing to provide a comfortable wild life sanctuary in the lee of the castle. At the 1952 Edinburgh Festival I appeared with the Hamburg State Opera—as a non-singing extra, let me hasten to add. *Why are we not in your Stadt Opernhaus singing?* asked a chorister, observing the difficulties of inserting Mastersingers into the King's Theatre. His response to my reply would be equally apt today—*Ach, So!*

Organic Light

An organ demonstrator rented my theatre. The seats were free and the house was full. Consoles stretched from pros to pros, keyboards and pedals beaming seductively at the audience. The demonstrator said anyone could play and he demonstrated how. He used one finger for the tune and selected microprocessor programmes to clothe that tune in logical rhythms and harmonies. We applauded and he changed his tune: the accompaniment re-aligned itself automatically and logically. Then he launched into a complex voluntary using all his fingers and all his feet. Aha!, an instrument that anyone can play, yet also an instrument that will respond to a maestro's touch. Just like a good lighting board! could the next step be an organ console that plays light? Just think of the sensitive speed control that would be obtained from an accelerator pedal!

Inspired Spire

Theatre externals are a problem in an age of structural architecture. *Come hither!* rather than *Enter ye who dare!* should be the proclamation, Decorative treatments are out of fashion, yet escapism continues to be a prime motivation for theatre going. A fly tower may be a poetic statement to those who understand its function: but to the average punter it can promise all the excitement of a bunker. The sails of Sydney Opera House dominate the cityscape and seascape with a promise of excitement within. Unfortunately their form superimposes limitations on the deployment of the space that they enclose. Since a 1976 site visit to Melbourne—when I went public with my admiration—I have followed from afar, with considerable fascination, the building progress of the Victorian Arts Centre. The latest postcard of the model suggests a return of the art of non-functional theatre decoration in a way that is so dramatic that it must also be welcome.

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