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Technical Theatre Review



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CUE

Technical Theatre Review

13 September – October 1981

The Netherlands *Theatertechnisch Congres 1981* at the RAI Congress Centre in Amsterdam included a demonstration of scenic painting techniques held on the main stage of the RAI. As a contrast to the contemporary work in progress on the floor, several beautiful historic cloths were on display in the flies. The 19th century backcloth in our cover picture is by Bartholomeus van Hove for C. L. A. Vogel's opera *Le Siège de Leyde*.

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Editorial Board

James Twynam (Managing)
Anthony Pugh
Francis Reid
Jeremy Twynam
Mark Boardman (Art)

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

Conferring at Trade Fairs

The ABTT Trade Fair is unique. It is not associated with a Conference. Why? Is it because the ABTT does not enjoy conferring? Or because it does not consider that there are any technical theatre topics worth conferring about?

Elsewhere in the world, Trade Fairs and Conferences are regarded as inseparable. Usually for economic reasons. Conferences need funding and manufacturers' stand rentals are a useful source. To justify these rents and the time of their expensive salesmen, manufacturers need a large, broadly based and preferably international, audience.

A conference helps to stimulate just such an attendance. Not only because it makes the journey seem a little bit more necessary, but because, in the eyes of the dispensers of travel grants, a conference scores a few points above a trade fair on the scale of educational justification.

That there are entertainment technical topics worth conferring about was amply demonstrated at Showlight '81. There were very few theatre people present and many of these were only able to attend because their journalistic connections enabled them to bypass the rather expensive turnstiles. But most emerged claiming to be mentally refreshed by being stimulated to think in wider terms than their normal round of daily survival.

The ABTT launched itself in 1961 with its first and last international conference. The opening of the National Theatre was recognised as an opportunity for a major international technical jamboree, but the uncertainty surrounding the opening date, coupled with the financial gloom then prevailing, combined effectively to prevent lift-off.

From the viewpoint of a recession, that financial gloom looks particularly rosy – which only goes to reinforce yet again that everything in life or in theatre, particularly poverty, is relative. But whatever ails our general national condition, one thing is sure. Our theatre – its art, its craft, and its technology – are riding high. Can we not find a way to host an event that would stimulate higher and yet higher standards at home and across the world?

The ABTT is the ideal body – indeed probably the only body – to lead the way. Let it be a gorgeous rag bag. A conference full of parallel sessions for the various specialisations as well as integrated sessions on general problems. Let there be design exhibits and hands-on workshops. Backstage tours and informal encounters. All generating, and supported by, a Trade Fair of such importance that not even the smallest manufacturer of pins for pin hinges can afford not to take space.

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Take the current when it serves

ANTHONY McCALL

The most extraordinary plans are being completed on a drawing board at Riverside Studios, whose importance to the arts world can scarcely be credited, they are so simple and ingenious in their scope. Yet the formula could work anywhere in the country.

In outline, they promise to remove for ever the Riverside nightmare of a drastic cut or even complete withdrawal of subsidy from Hammersmith Council, which for years has hung over their heads like the Sword of Damocles. The threat, which has been financially and not politically occasioned, has been removed at a stroke, and in its place is the prospect of a novel £1.5 million improvement and re-development scheme, carried out with a style and confidence unthinkable before.

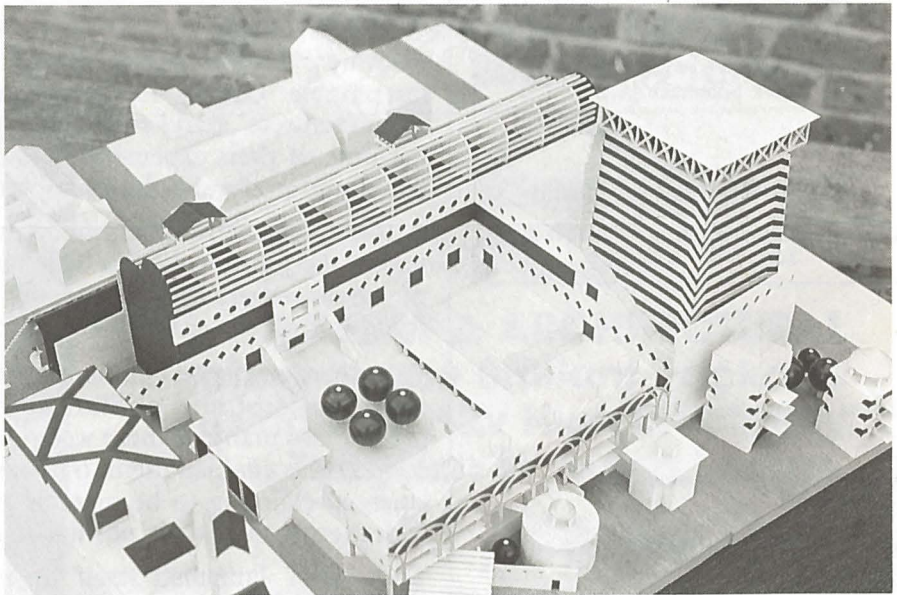
Instead of piecemeal additions whenever a few thousand pounds became available (as was the practice in the past—for instance, with the bookshop and gallery), Riverside now envisages a complete overhaul of its facilities, as part of an ambitious new office and rehearsal redevelopment programme, lasting about two and a half years. Overall cost: £18 million; scheduled start of work on site: July 1982.

The most original ideas are often accidental, and so it was with Riverside. Perhaps it was the perennial shortage of cash that fuelled their natural ingenuity, but whatever the reason, the result will be the transformation of their immediate neighbourhood.

The story starts a few years ago, with an invitation from Sir Hugh Willat and administrator David Gottard on behalf of the Hammersmith Riverside Arts Trust to two young architects called Will Alsop and John Lyall, inviting them to take part in an event called The Client Show. They accepted and soon joined a pool of 12 architects who designed tailor-made houses for the public as they came in to Riverside Studios. It was like 'kinetic architecture', you might say. Thus Alsop and Lyall became involved for the first time with Riverside. "I've never worked so hard in all my life!" he recalls. "People were peering over my shoulder as I sat drawing in the main foyer. You just had to learn to live without privacy—like a pavement artist".

Subsequently as a little extra cash became available, they were asked to design Riverside's new bookshop, which now stands at the front entrance in Crisp Road, a clean cage-like structure in glass and red-painted steel. And later still, the gallery next door followed.

By now it was becoming apparent that such piecemeal additions could not hope to achieve any unity of design or even provide an economical solution to Riverside's long-term needs. But the long-term needs were in fact the immediate needs, only the cash wasn't there. They put their heads together with Sir Hugh Willat, a tireless champion of the Riverside cause, who came up with a



colleague and chartered surveyor, Raymond Doyle, before looking more closely at the site next door. In addition to exploring Riverside's expansion, they became interested in the possibilities of financing the Riverside scheme. Around September last year, they became convinced that their self-financing idea could work. And this is how it went.

If enough income could be derived from rental of new offices and selling long leaseholds on desirable flats, then it could be worth building them. If they could be pre-sold, even before building began, there would be less capital to raise. Add to this a series of local amenities like shops, open spaces, creation of a river walkway (linking up with the Chiswick Mall) and a new, improved Riverside Studios for the benefit

of local ratepayers, and the development could even begin to look attractive to the local planning boys, who wouldn't have to pay a penny to see a prime Thames-side area developed into a new neighbourhood which in turn might encourage further private development, especially of the right sort. It only remained to finance the project. With the right connections in the pension funds and murmurs of approval from the right establishment architects like Denys Lasdun, the scheme finally had credibility—that most elusive of commodities, without which the very best ideas are as as nothing.

The surprising thing is that such an unusual idea, with such conspicuously innovative architecture could get off the ground. Particularly coming from a young

firm of architects, who themselves are extremely young to be handling a project valued at nearly £20 million. One cannot help feeling that Sir Hugh's weight in the legal world (and his much-admired term of office as secretary general of the Arts Council added much conviction; as must Hammersmith Council's enthusiastic backing once they grasped its potentialities.

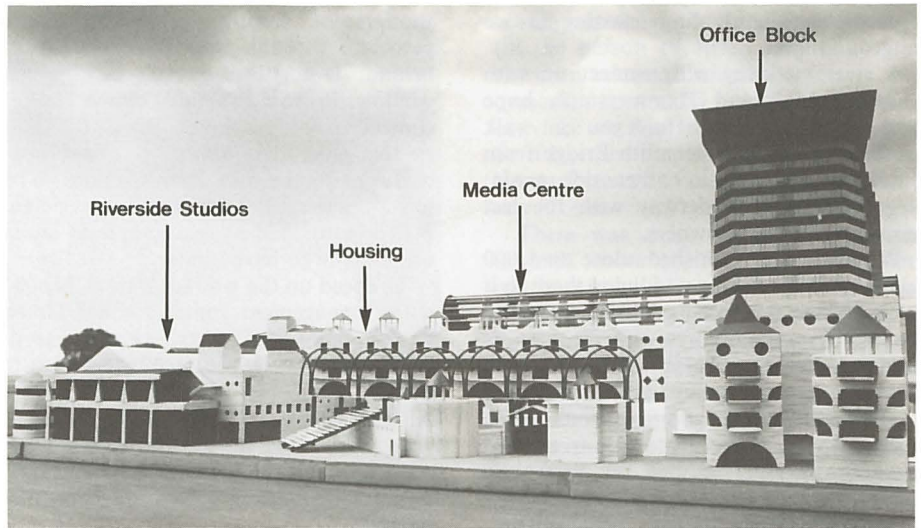
Will Alsop explained the development and the influences behind the flamboyant style of architecture to Cue before leaving for the United States for a few months.

His partnership, Alsop, Finch & Lyall, evolved a couple of years ago, when they put in for a competition to design a new Westminster Pier, with Grand Metropolitan as clients. As luck would have it, they won, and building of the £6 million floating pier, restaurant, bars, and moorings may take place in the near future, when financing has been settled. Siting, by the way, would be by Westminster Bridge, opposite County Hall. But the partnership has eschewed a distinctive style as such, like say, Denys Lasdun, Norman Foster or Richard Rogers (Pompidou Centre in Paris). Alsop's views are honest and uncluttered by theoretical notions.

"Most of this century, architects have been trying to do something they consider beautiful, but not in the name of aesthetics, but of function, which is really an extension of the Modern Movement. For an example, look at Richard Rogers' Pompidou Centre in Paris: the justification for putting all the guts of the building on the outside is to get that clean, anonymous space inside.

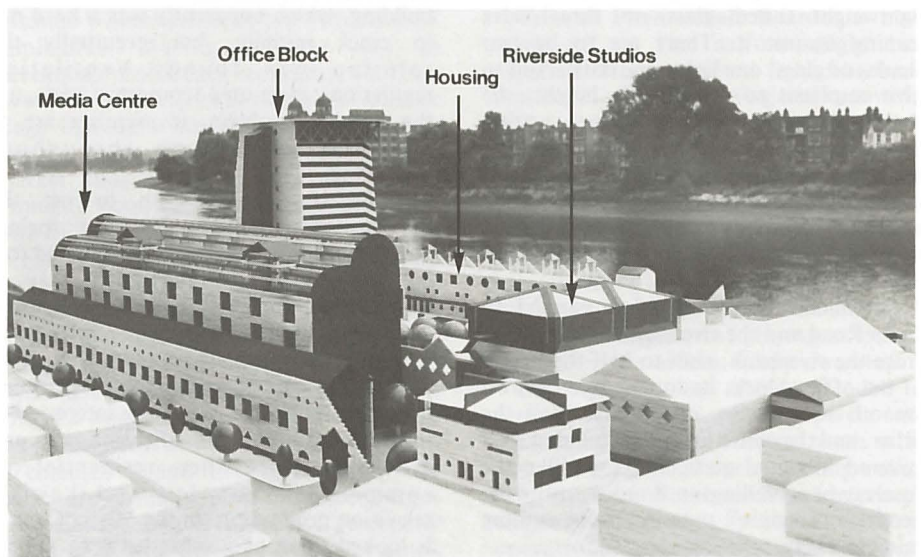
"Now I think in our generation (Alsop is 33, John Lyall, 31, and George Finch, 50, formerly in partnership with theatre architect, Roderick Ham) we've got out of that, into the position where we don't have to justify things in terms of function any more. If we want to decorate something, we'll decorate it—and to hell with its actual function, be it factory or arts centre. There's no need to be ashamed of doing something you consider to be beautiful; that's really a bit dishonest. Norman Foster's Sainsbury Centre, for instance, is very beautiful as an exhibition space, but still basically functional in its approach. For our part, we are not so concerned about expressing that function." It's not easy to encapsulate an architects' style in a few pithy sentences, still less that of a partnership, but to judge their style and their surprisingly well thought out work, two main points can be made.

There is no fear whatever of being *different*, completely different in fact, from anything you may have seen before, with an emphasis on sculpted, decorated shapes and finishing flourishes. Whilst using modern building methods and employing structural and visual techniques not available to earlier ages, such as sheet glass, modern insulation and materials like different coloured glazed bricks, they are influenced by the ideals of a former era: eclectic use of all manner of ideas in design, and a flamboyance, a sense of fun so often lacking in the harsh purposfulness of so much building this century. Indeed, they admit that two types of architecture in



Development seen from the river

(Photographs Roderick Coyne)



Development from Crisp Road side

(Photographs Roderick Coyne)

particular inform their tastes. "One is Japanese; and the other is Indian. There is some marvellous modern work going on in Japan, but their traditional structures, especially, are fantastic. They are simple, to the point, with marvellous proportions and height. Modern Indian is mostly rubbish, but many of their old buildings are extraordinary." In truth, most people will heave a sigh of relief to know that architecture might at last be escaping from its self-imposed discipline of 'cold' modernism, a style which, if nothing else, seems at variance with the human spirit. They also work closely with a sculptor, Gareth Jones, who comes in virtually every day—in itself an unusual collaboration.

So much for the Alsop, Finch & Lyall sense of aesthetic purpose, except to say that their last words were that each project is entirely different from the last. Alsop stresses that each project is large enough to draw its own references from the immediate surroundings, or from other influences. "The three main variables," he summed up, "are history, surroundings, and client. Take those three things into account and the design ought to add something worthwhile to its neighbourhood".

The development covers a site of 1.8 acres, excluding Riverside Studios. If you

add the development of that as well, it becomes 2.5 acres. In rough terms, the plans incorporate 80,000 sq.ft. of offices (a multi-storey building); about 60,000 sq.ft. of television studios (called a media centre); 18,000 sq.ft. of housing; and 14,000 sq.ft. of re-vamped, accommodation for Riverside, and another 24,000 sq.ft. of additional arts facilities. On top of that, there are to be dance facilities (possibly for a major national dance company to be based there) of 14,000 sq.ft.; and restaurants and wine bars, or other local amenities, would be on top of that.

A tour of the projected development gives a strong impression of fresh thinking, whether the ideas appeal or leave you cold.

Starting with Riverside's existing building, which readers may recall, housed the old BBC television studios at one time, there will be new rehearsal facilities, theatre workshop, a new cinema, new art gallery and general improvements throughout. Parts of the existing fabric will be demolished, but for the most part, the changes will come in the form of additions, not replacements. There will be a new get-in, from the west side, and most backstage facilities will be new. Large windows will overlook the river and the roof will be used as a private patio for actors and staff,

replacing the slightly dingy existing terrace on ground level.

A river walkway will connect up with Chiswick Mall and Hammersmith hope that it won't be long before you can walk up the river to Hammersmith Bridge from Putney and down the other side again. Negotiations are underway with the last remaining property owners.

When the site is finished, close on 1,000 people will be working and living there so it is expected to generate its own business and form a new community, with most of its needs catered for. They will be arranged around a central square, which will have low housing blocks dotted around and across it, asymmetrically, and trees and greenery interspersed, all on a slightly raised level, to permit the underground car parking to 'breathe'.

The tower block of offices is intended to give the effect of a solid wall, with the lightweight tinted glass on three sides leaning against it. There are to be two shades of glass, one light, one dark. And to give emphasis to the block's height, the darker glass will be at the bottom, getting "more powdery at the top", in Will Alsop's words. The top is to be a roof with a balcony around the top floor, so you can walk out on it. Lift and stairs are designed to attach to the rear, against the solid outer wall.

The media centre, running parallel to Crisp Road and the river, across the square from the riverbank, rises to half the height of the office block, its top rounded in two smooth semi-circles, one higher than the other, and the entire length of rounded roof covered in tinted glass, looking "like the fuselage of a Wellington Bomber, using the geodesic principle" puts in Alsop, smiling mischievously.

The residential housing, which is distinguished by its more human scale and variety of styles, faces the media centre across the square (or at least the back of them do) and marches from the riverside right across the square like so many toy soldiers, in the form of four and five storey blocks, each in a slightly different style but conforming to an overall design and scale.

On the ground level of both types of housing, there is provision for local amenities, whether wine bars or shops. Those facing the square will have rooftop gardens, with a protective wall and gabbling and a gazebo for each house, where you can "sit and view the river" says Alsop, putting on a Bloomsbury accent, "and sip your afternoon tea". Nor are all the windows square shaped: to the rear of the houses, there is an informal approach to the design, leaving the front to keep up formal appearance and impress. The small windows are bathrooms ("because you don't need much light, quite apart from privacy requirements"); the big round windows are kitchens; and the big square ones bedrooms. "Once you know that, you can sit there and decode the houses" laughs Alsop.

The residential blocks have the curious feature of balconies on each level made from latticed timber. They fulfil a dual function: when drawn up, they can act as

shutters or screens, allowing light to percolate through into the sitting room behind. Draughts are excluded by glass windows in front. The idea allows for light control, as well as the quality of light; and as this side faces south, it could prove useful at almost any time of year. When lowered, they become a strong wooden platform for one or two people to sit out on, or even to have dinner.

To speed up the whole planning process, a fee management contractor has already been appointed, Cubitts, who are on tap with advice, while the architects finish the detailed designs. "For example", says Alsop, "I can say, this is the material I want. Now if we do this in pre-cast panels or *insitu* concrete, which will be quicker? I don't really mind, it's not important to the design".

Poor old Riverside have to keep going right throughout the day during the building, which apparently was a hard nut to crack initially, but eventually the solution was found. Ventilation regulations, even on a temporary basis, are the stickiest problem, if premises are to continue functioning throughout rebuilding.

There is quite a rush to get the development underway by next spring, because otherwise everything will grind to a halt for the borough election in May. It always does. Outline planning permission is being dispensed with, since everything so far has been worked out in close partnership with Hammersmith's planning department already. For those interested in the finer points of classification, the arts are seen as neither residential or commercial, but leisure. Likewise, television production (in the Media Centre) is looked upon as a cross between offices and leisure . . . but not commercial as such. So the ratios of different developments of Riverside are perhaps fortuitous, since Riverside Studios, with its huge hangar-like studio spaces, accounts for a large amount of leisure space. This helps to allow more profitable housing and offices to be built, whose rentals return, at least in part, to Hammersmith, defraying the cost of subsidising Riverside Studios every year. Indeed, I have heard it said that without the development scheme, the end of Riverside Studios was virtually in sight.

The Hammersmith Riverside Arts Trust, to give it its full name, should be in for a change of fortunes, however. If the precision of the specification for building materials in anything to go by, the details of the scheme should go through smoothly by the end of 1985. The white bricks used for building the walls of the Media Centre, which are interspersed with darker colours like pink, to set them off, will not be achieved by using a finish, but by using glazed red bricks—"so they don't drop off after a few years", says Alsop chuckling, with that knowing look in his eye. I do believe we shall hear more about these young architects, who incidentally finished their studies at the Architectural Association . . . that hothouse of new ideas, which turns out alumni rather like Eton . . . individuals, above all else.

Podiumtechnolog

Francis Reid visits the Trade Fair at the 1981 Netherlands Technical Theatre Congress

When James Twynam was plotting CUE 1 he invited me to become a regular contributor. I happily agreed—but with one proviso. I would never ever write product reviews. The wisdom of this decision became apparent very early when my colleague Walter Plinge became subjected to the wrath of the lamp industry after a subjective comment about the relative merits of par lamp voltages. (Incidentally, visitors to "Showlight 81" were given an opportunity to observe that "hell knoweth no fury like a provoked lamp manufacturer".) Mind you, while I was chuckling over Plinge and the Pars, I was being lambasted by a firm of theatre consultants whose credit I had omitted from a favourable building review—even though the credit list had been lifted from their own user's manual for the theatre in question.

However, as CUE enters its third volume, I am tempted to make a once only entry into the stormy waters of product reporting, whether I am but dangling a toe or leaping in with both feet will doubtless become apparent from my post bag in due course!

The crunch in product reviewing is that judgements have to be made on a snap basis in an alien environment—in a showroom or on an exhibition stand. The only real way to test a product is on stage under normal production conditions. But even then, it is only under protracted use that certain shortcomings become apparent. Most (? even all) manufacturers have had embarrassing experiences when products have exhibited problems only after months in user service—faults such as programme loops in memory controls, and mechanical deficiencies in luminaires.

I hesitate to point out that motoring correspondents do extensive test driving of new cars: I have no wish to see a queue of control systems lining up at my stage door. And only the mass consumer market can support exercises on the *Which?* principle of buying production line output for a series of independent tests to destruction.

So theatre technology has to rely on the minefield of snap subjective judgements for new product assessment. And a minefield it sure is. Believe a data sheet: write a few kind words and earn the smiles of the makers and the scowls of their opposition. And vice versa. Either way, you will probably get it wrong . . . as many users will be delighted to inform you. Pity that a manufacturer's own sales team feel such a need to believe uncritically and totally in their product. Talk to a distributor who can choose which product he sells (whether on sole agency or not) and you will get a much more objective assessment.

ie in Amsterdam

Most stage equipment in Holland is imported so the salesmen are more likely to describe the bad as well as the good features of the product that they are selling. After all, they have decided to sell it—and so you are more likely to buy it—because the good points outnumber the bad. I have always found such realistic sales pitch to be much more credible than corporate sycophancy.

But those proverbial wild horses will not drag distributors' indiscretions from me: this report must remain in traditional subjective format—but I trust that the foregoing comments will justify any light hearted cynicism that may creep into serious assessment.

The equipment exhibition was part of the THEATERTECHNISCH CONGRESS 1981 organised by the *Vereniging voor Podiumtechnologie* who are the Dutch theatre technicians association. This body are OISTT affiliates and hosted a meeting of the OISTT Technical Commission which was held as part of the congress.

The event was held in the foyers of the RAI CONGRESS CENTRE which are not only roomy but have the considerable merit of natural daylight. It was probably the least claustrophobic trade fair that I have attended. It was surprisingly large. Can the Netherlands technical theatre market really support this size of operation at two year intervals? There is a lot of theatre in Holland, with a well organised touring system; and every other canal warehouse in Amsterdam seems to house an alternative theatre. But is there enough turnover for the industry to justify this selling expense—or, more importantly, can the customers stand the mark-up in final selling prices that must surely result from this costly sales effort?

The biggest impact was made by **Flashlight** who seem to have almost everyone else under their umbrella. But before going any further, I must declare interest. They, *Flashlight*, were able to supply me with the product I most needed—a plastic carrier bag for the armfuls of leaflets, catalogues and other literary masterpieces which will always be the prime motive for attending trade exhibitions. And furthermore I must confess that this is being written with their pen (on which I read that they are based in Utrecht and that you can call them on 030-444842).

The distinctive *Flashlight* carrier bags gave them something of a supermarket image and indeed that is just what they are—consider the range: Kliegl memory controls, Electrosonic manual controls, Tipspot rigger's controls, DHA gobos, Clear-Com intercoms, Lee colours, and spots from Strand, Ianiro, Lowel, Neithammer and CCT. To display all their goodies, *Flashlight* had taken the whole upper floor so that individual firms could have ample space to demonstrate their own products under the *Flashlight* banner. For example, it was good to find that Woody



trained veteran of the international scene, Michael Wooderson in action with his CCT luminaires. Having led the way in developing profile spot versatility, CCT are now having a successful rethink of smaller stage lighting. Nice to see linear floods coming in at the *Minuette* end of the market. Indeed I can see myself using the *Minuette* flood before long in conjunction with *Silhouettes* on the larger shows.

The **Electrosonic Multiway 2** manual control system is attractively styled and represents the facilities that we were all clamouring for once upon a time. Its shallow modules are ideal for fitting into own-made desks and so it would be logical to add a simple memory facility module to the range. Most of us expect memory from 30 channels up and those of us that do not expect are certainly liable to hanker, if not immediately, then eventually. I personally would be a little defeated by the system's ergonomics—not the nicely set-out master module, but the lunacy of working in dozens in a decimal world. I can certainly pick out, say, channel 23 on a preset when the breaks come at every ten; but when the breaks come in multiples of twelve, I become finger tied. The leaflet quotes “the ease of operation and cost effectiveness of a manual control system”. Is a 48-way 3-preset 3-group *really* more cost effective than a simple memory board? (Remembering that theatrical cost effectiveness is more truly measured in running than in capital costs).

The answer could probably be found within the *Flashlight* organisation, because alongside the *Electrosonic* manual was a *Kliegl Performer*. To confuse the issue, *Kliegl* were also downstairs as part of *Theatre Projects* who were appearing under their local banner of **Courage Light** who, despite their name, are Haarlem importers not London brewers. Indeed the product mixes of various importers threw up some surprising, even incestuous, combinations of familiar brands who in other parts of the world would be competitors.

The TP stand had a prototype **Colourmix** from *Plumblin* Designs of London. This offers (and I quote) “a new concept in gel changers offering rapid deployment of up to 10 colours and white”. Well mechanically it has some way to go. *But* it

is compact and I am going to watch it. TP (in the person of Brian Benn . . . now there's a salesman with an objective, even cynical, approach) also managed to convince me that I can afford fibre optics. So if I get the chance, I'll have a bash. Just the background to disguise lack of talent in any artiste.

There was a lot of sound equipment around, most of it silent. The desks continue to look like ergonomic nightmares with a potential beyond the control of the operators' fingers or musical memory. Sound quality surely cannot progress much further until the operator can capture good mixes in a storage system during rehearsal, rather than rely on his own personal memory. As lighting rigs became more complicated, they needed ever increasingly sophisticated written plots then instant electronic plots. Have not sound rigs overtaken plotting resources?

Tri-wall Firemarshal Board has never taken off as fast as one might have expected. Flame resistant light fibreboard that bends without splitting and cuts with a knife should answer many a sceneographer's dream. Perhaps it just needs aggressive marketing and it looks as if that is just what is about to happen. Its new distributors, *Benbow Creative Limited* were handing out samples and giving away lighters. Being a non-smoker I have never ever owned a lighter and so sure am having fun (and some alarms) playing at being a fire prevention officer on my own stage.

But lighting, as always, tended to predominate. *Thorn*, of course, were sadly missed and *Siemens*, once so much at the centre of things, had not sent along a single control system. There was a Dutch lever per channel memory system of some operational complexity, rather rock orientated. **ADB** had a big system on show, but *Strand* have produced in **Galaxy** what seems to be the ultimate in intensity control—no need to go beyond this in the present century. However I was surprised to find that the *DUET* on show was not only badly displayed in a corner but was a Mk I without a VDU. Now that is no way to treat what I consider to be the best small cheap board on the market. I thought so a year ago when I bought one and I still think so after a years trouble free usage. *Jack Watling* gave me a terrific sales pitch for a display fresnel called **Minim**—with all the missionary fervour of a salesman with total faith in his product. But cynical old me found it difficult to believe that it has a market slot.

It only remains to add that all the manufacturers were having a ball-visiting each others stands. Not looking for ideas so much as looking for reassurance that there was nothing new around. As the world recession continues, these trade fairs may well become like my local antiques fayres where the dealers buy from each other and the rest of us go along to watch. However, it is always nice to meet one's fellow technicians and we must be grateful to the equipment manufacturers for laying out their *conversation pieces* for us to comment on as we stroll through the boulevards of exhibition stands.

Abstracts from the Congress

The RAI stage was given over to a working display of scenic painting techniques (on floor, of course,—not frame). And there were some gorgeous old cloths hanging.

It was difficult to obtain a total impression of the proposed new Amsterdam MUZIEKTHEATER from the many plans on show. There was the obligatory model of landscaped exterior and a confused model of the proscenium zone. But, alas, *no isometric*.

Dutch theatre technicians are awarded a silver pin after 25 years service. But it is that most useful of all pins, the one that everyone of us from time to time needs urgently—the pin that goes in a pin hinge.

The Stadsschouwburg building in the Leidsplein has gained an *International Theatre Bookshop* (on the opposite corner to the *Cisca ticket shop*).

Judging from their exhibition stand, they have a very wide stock including many hard-to-get and out-of-print technical theatre books.

A student design exhibition indicated a promising level of competence—which is the most that one can expect from work undertaken as an exercise rather than stimulated by an actual production. Never were so many costumes so fresh, so clean, so laundered and so untextured. Bring on the aerosols!

Theaters en Concertzalen in Nederland is an ambitious publishing project covering over 100 Dutch theaters and halls in four volumes. For each theatre there will be a groundplan of stage and auditorium with a transparent two-colour overlay giving the lighting layout in CIE symbols with wattage and channel number within the symbol. There will also be a cross-section plus general and technical information such as exact measurements of stage, platform, auditorium, numbers of seats, dressing rooms, light and sound installations, etc. All plans have the uniform scale of 1:100. Volume 1 is imminent and volumes 2, 3 and 4 are scheduled for 1982. The subsidised price is Dfl 600 but subscribe now and get it for Dfl 520, which is a bit more than £100.

The White Heat of Revolution

DORIAN KELLY

On the 5th of October, 1881, there was very little happening to attract the attention of the London theatregoer. Covent Garden, Sadlers Wells and the Lyceum were occupied with Grand Opera, most of the Drama Houses seemed to be doing revivals, and both St. James's and the Haymarket were closed for renovation. Wilson Barrett was scoring a personal success at the Princess's in the 'Lights O' London', and in Dublin, Henry Irving was electrifying the Irish with the Lyceum classical repertoire. Down by Victoria Embankment, however, plans were afoot to electrify the theatre scene in a very different way.

For Richard D'Oyly Carte, it was the culmination of a dream. Here was a man whose wit, sagacity, gentleness, irrepressible good humour, keen insights and self-deprecatory manner caused most people to detest him immeasurably and respect him immensely. He was widely experienced in the ways of the world, and a more than shrewd businessman. In his capacity of Managing Director to the Comedy Opera Company he had contrived somehow to hold the company together for nearly five years, and make money at the same time, in spite of boardroom dissension leading to the formation of rival companies, fist fights on stage over disputed ownership of scenery, and pirated versions of his productions being presented simultaneously next door at the Olympic.

A cut throat business

Putting on a production in those days was a cut-throat business. Theatre leases were brought and sold, but merit and art had very little to do with it. Only one factor mattered to the owners of a theatre, and that was the financial reward. When the lease of the Opera Comique was nearing its end, Carte decided that enough was enough, and that rather than seek renewal, rather even than try to find another venue and therefore be beholden to the vagaries and corruptibility of the owners of the bricks and mortar, he would seek total independence. The result took only a matter of months to rise from a piece of wasteground by the riverside. It was the Savoy Theatre.

This was to be in every respect the best theatre that he could make it. Never again, he vowed, would he attempt to cram 'twenty love-sick maidens' onto a stage ideally suited to ten. The orchestra pit was to be large enough for the extra musicians for which Sullivan was always agitating, and, spurred by Gilbert, who had very firm ideas on production standards, coupled with a healthy contempt for the commonplace, he intended to make the technical facilities second to none. It was to have the best of taste in decoration, the

finest of ventilation systems, and it was to be the first theatre in the world to be lighted throughout with the incandescent filament lamp.

The phenomenon of light produced by electricity had been known since about 1800, when Sir Humphrey Davey, (he of safety lamp fame), discovered that his latest toy, a voltaic battery of great power, could be used to heat strips of platinum to incandescence. He also showed that a brilliantly blinding light could be produced between the tips of two carbon rods if they were briefly touched together, and that this light could be maintained for as long as they, and the power lasted.

This led to the development of a great many devices for floodlighting and public streetlighting, but it was not until forty-five years later that we first hear of its use in a theatrical setting. At the Princess's, Charles Kean, (no sluggard, he, at trying anything new) used it in an otherwise unremarkable pantomime entitled 'Harlequin and the Enchanted Arrow' as a wide angle floodlight. It was adjudged less than successful, according to the critic of the Times, who dismissed it as 'sickly' and accused it of 'producing giant shadows'. Later, in Paris, M. Dubosque invented the first of what turned out to be a whole circus of special effects, including sunrises, stars, rainbows, lightning flashes and most important of all, an arc, with a reflector, in a housing with a lens and some shutters (fig 1) which could be used as a follow spot. In London, Kean used it, or one copied from it, to great effect, for many years.

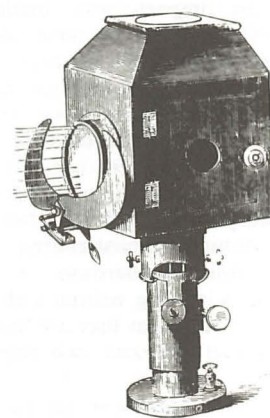


Fig. 1 Dubosque's Follow Spot

In 1879 a new theatre had opened in Lyons, which had taken the novel step of lighting its auditorium by means of electricity. This did not employ filament bulbs, but used a system of arclight known as the Jablochhoff Candle. These consisted of pairs of carbon rods separated by a quarter of an inch or so by a strip of meltable ceramic insulating material. (fig 2). The rods were connected at the top by a very fine strip of carbon, sufficient to strike

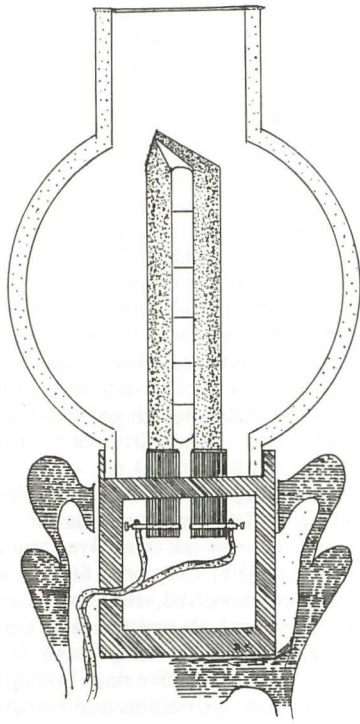


Fig. 2 Jablochhoff's candle (permission Siemens AG)

the arc. As the rods were consumed, the insulating material would vapourise and reveal a fresh supply of carbon. The whole assembly was contained inside a glass globe. There were two main drawbacks to the idea. The first was that it required an alternating current to allow the rods to be consumed equally, and the second was that if they went out, even momentarily, they could not be restruck. As the common practice at the time was for arcs to be wired in series, this meant that it was very much a case of 'One out—all out!' The management also fitted gas to cover contingencies such as these.

A problem incapable of solution

The light of the carbon arc, however white and bright it might be, was more or less useless for domestic use, and its flickering harshness and lack of controllability, did not endear itself to the people of the theatre, (although it was later to be developed into the very fine Stellmar, Sunspot, and Super Trouper follow spots), for general stage lighting purposes. Besides gas lighting was considered a perfectly adequate, albeit dangerous medium, and the still relatively new limelight was thought to be the best and most useful means of placing a spot of light in a particular place on the stage. Davey's experiments with incandescent platinum had impressed a number of people who carried on experimenting in this direction. In 1820 De La Rue had enclosed platinum strips in a piece of evacuated glass tubing, and in 1840, Sir William Grove lit a whole auditorium with feeble incandescent lamps. These consisted of platinum coils covered with inverted tumblers in glass dishes partially filled with water. The first patent for incandescent lamps was in 1841. These were glass globes filled with powdered

charcoal. Envelope blackening at an alarming rate rendered them impractical, but experiments continued, and the principle was well and truly established that filament lamps would work if only the problems could be solved. There were some who believed that they could not: As late as 1878 a group of eminent scientists appointed by the British Parliament issued a statement in which they boldly asserted that:

"The sub-division of the electric light [into a number of smaller units suitable for illuminating homes and workplaces] is a problem that is not capable of a solution by the human brain".

This view was endorsed by their American colleagues.

On each side of the Atlantic a number of men had taken this attitude as a personal challenge. Among them, Thomas Alva Edison in New Jersey and Joseph Wilson Swan in Newcastle on Tyne quite independently set about passing currents through filaments made from a variety of materials. They quickly found that the feeble and ephemeral light produced from the filaments could be brightened and prolonged by enclosing them in a glass bubble from which all the air had been removed. Even so, as the voltage applied to them was increased to more than a nominal amount, the filaments failed. This caused the experimenters to turn quickly away from expensive and precious metals like platinum and iridium, and concentrate their experiments on carbon. This substance of course comes in a tremendous variety of forms, ranging from diamond to soot. The problem was to find a form which could be fashioned into a filament that had sufficient mechanical strength, as well as exhibiting the appropriate electrical characteristics. A variety of substances were carbonised in special kilns including cotton thread, baling-twine, angling line, coconut fibre, violin strings and crocodile leather, as well as the other 7560 other substances listed in Edison's papers. 'Somewhere in Gods's workshop' Edison was (apocryphally) heard to cry, 'there is a dense woody growth with fibres almost geometrically parallel . . . from which we can make the filament the world needs' His prayers were answered when he tried a piece of Bamboo, plucked it is said, from a ladies fan.

In England, J. W. Swan was having some success with cotton thread prepared from coal tar and shaped like a hair pin. The brightness that he was able to obtain was comparable to that produced by a standard gas burner, but unfortunately the life of the lamp could be measured only in minutes. Rightly suspecting that the vacuum in the bulb was not all it should be, he obtained a powerful Sprengel Pump. The use of this improved lamp life to an hour or more. He then hit upon the idea of evacuating the bulb while the filament was hot. This prevented gasses trapped on the surface of the filament boiling off when operated and spoiling the vacuum. This succeeded, and Swan began logging times of forty, one hundred, and eventually six hundred hours.

Edison is said to have read of this in a research paper in August 1879 and

immediately improved his own lamps to the point where they became commercially feasible. He also designed, of necessity, all the accessories, the bulb holders, switches, plugs and sockets, consumption meters and generating plant.

Sabotage by the Gas Co.

Edison's genius (99% perspiration, 1% inspiration) extended to public relations and marketing, and his public demonstrations were noted for both originality and splendour. It is said that at one such demonstration, a short-circuit deliberately introduced by one who could only have been an employee of the Gas Company, succeeded only in blowing one of Edison's new and patented fuses, losing only one or two lamps. The whole thing rebounded to Edison's credit. The culprit was ejected, the Gas Company's shares plummeted and the Shares of the Edison Electric Light Company rose from 106 to 3000.

By 1880 Swan had lit his workshop and indeed the whole of the street with electricity, and this attracted a great deal of attention from people in all walks of life, including the theatre. Thus both men succeeded in their principal aim: to produce an electric lamp that was within the reach of all. Not a lamp for the millionaire, but for the ordinary man. Initially, the two companies were so successful that the price of a light bulb dropped from one pound to less than five shillings. Later there were to be many bitter arguments, patent suits and recriminations as to who was the true inventor. The truth of the matter was that both men simultaneously responded to the needs of the time, taking what was obviously the next logical step. As it happened they were soon to realise that co-operation was better than competition, and eventually amalgamate into the Edison and Swan United Electric Company.

It was to the Swan Company that Richard D'Oyly Carte turned when the concept of electrifying the Savoy was mooted. Having seen 'electric light in lamps' exhibited outside the Paris Opera House some years previously, (carbon arcs in floodlamps) he had been convinced that 'electric light in some form is the light of the future in theatres . . . the peculiar steely-blue colour and flicker which are inevitable in all systems of arc light make them unsuitable for use in any but very large buildings'.

He was not, it seems, a particular admirer of gas as a medium, and had strong views on the mutual incompatibility of clear singing voices and fumes from gas burners.

"The greatest drawback to the enjoyment of theatrical performances are undoubtedly the foul air and heat. As everyone knows, each gas burner consumes as much oxygen as many people. Incandescent lamps consume no oxygen and cause no perceptible heat".

He did, however appreciate the safety factors which were inherent in the use of properly rated and appropriately insulated cables and lighting fittings coupled with safe installation. In the same year that the Savoy was fitted out there was a catastrophic fire at the Viennese Ringtheater, with the loss of 450 lives. The fire broke out as the gas burners in the

borderlight battens were being lit, and spread with alarming rapidity owing to the highly inflammable nature of the scenery.

A theatre a month lost by fire

Although a safety curtain was fitted at this theatre, it was found to be impossible to lower it due to its buckling with the tremendous heat. The ambient temperature was usually so high in gas-fitted theatres—measured by Captain Shaw of the London Fire Brigade at up to 105° in the grid of the Alhambra—that any residual moisture in canvas and timber must long since have evaporated, and be very prone to instant combustion, once ignited. This when firefighting equipment largely consisted of long poles with bill-hooks attached for cutting down burning scenery, hand pumps and buckets, and a few wet blankets. “The fate of a theatre” wrote the editor of ‘The Builder’ in 1856, “is to be burned. It seems simply a question of time”. In the twenty-five years prior to 1881, theatres were destroyed by fire at the staggering average rate of one per month. Electricity had its own problems, but fire hazard on this scale was not one of them. It is, however, interesting to note that it was the standard practice of the insurance companies of the time to demand a higher premium from theatres equipped with electricity than from one fitted for gas.

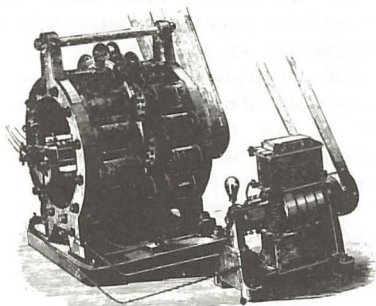


Fig 3. Siemens W1 Alternator with D6 Dynamo

At the Savoy, the electric power was produced in a shed erected on a piece of waste land outside the theatre. A motley collection of steam engines were arranged to drive six large alternators of German manufacture. The field coil excitation voltage for these was simultaneously generated by six small dynamos (fig 3). The theatre itself was wired in six main circuits, corresponding to the number of generators, various areas being protected by sub-fuses. Each area was initially provided with a switch. Main switches for each group were also provided, and it is reported that when they were operated, the flash that resulted could be seen in the auditorium if the scene was dark.

The stage lighting fittings themselves were not especially novel or noteworthy, being made as electrical versions of existing designs of footlights, wing towers and battens. Altogether there were 824 lamps on the stage, giving in total a light output equivalent to about 3000 modern watts. Of those, 718 were above the actors’ heads, 50

were floats and portable units, and the remainder were fixed to the side wings in the traditional manner.

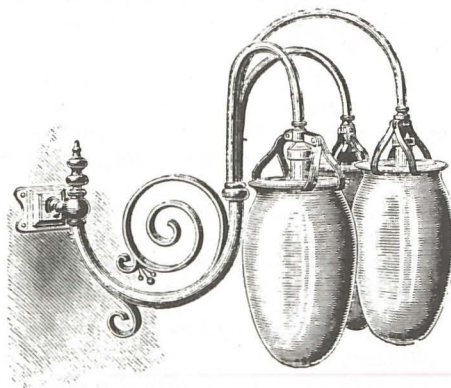


Fig. 4 Faraday's three-light electric bracket

The houselighting consisted of 114 lamps, mainly in three-branched brackets around the auditorium circle fronts. (fig 4) It seems not to have been envisaged that the houselights should be dimmed during the opera, possibly due to the fact that reading the libretto was ‘quite the thing’ during the performance, and indeed the sale of these must have been a profitable sideline.

One of the few things that Carte had greatly admired about gas lighting was the ease with which its intensity could be adjusted from a central gas plate. One of the more impressive features of the incandescent lamps was the fact that, as the applied power was decreased, the output light also decreased, more or less in proportion. Siemens Bros. and Co., who had done the installation, manufactured a series of open spirals of iron wire in a frame, and connected them between the generators and each group of stage lamps switched in and out of the circuit as required, they acted as the first ever resistance dimmers.

On October the 4th, D'Oyly Carte had confidently allowed the running advertisement in ‘The Times’ to be printed as usual.

The Grand Opening of the Savoy to the public will take place on the sixth of October . . . by which date it will be lighted entirely by electricity.

The following day the advertisement was withdrawn and the following substituted

SPECIAL NOTICE. The opening night is unavoidably POSTPONED. until Monday 10th October to complete the very complicated works and experiments connected with the application of electric light to the stage. Mr Carte trusts that the novelty of the undertaking will be an excuse for this delay.

Like many a more modern occasion when bold steps are taken with untried technology, there were complications. The fact of the matter was that the alternators would not supply sufficient power to light the whole system. It is hard to believe that Messrs. Siemens’ calculations were at fault: by 1881 they had supplied a large number of generating sets worldwide, and their experience was undoubted. Even so, this was still uncharted territory for the Victorian engineer-electricians. They had yet to learn of some of the more unexpected

effects of alternating currents. It is hard to see over a span of a hundred years exactly where the problem lay, and at the same time easy to see with the benefit of hindsight where the areas of difficulty could have been. As Carte pointed out, never before had it been attempted to light so many incandescent burners at a single time. He wrote to papers explaining that he would ‘procure an additional steam-engine immediately’ in the hope that it would solve the problem. It did not. However the houselighting, for which no dimming facilities had been provided, worked very well. It was then decided not to postpone the opening further, but to go ahead under the conditions in which they found themselves.

It was perhaps a source of particular annoyance to D'Oyly Carte that the full lighting could not be employed on the opening night. Apart from any embarrassment involved, there were other factors, among which was the fact that the Paris Opera was being temporarily fitted-out for the opening in five days time of the Grand Electrical Exhibition and Congress. Seven different and rival electrical systems were being erected side by side, including the Swan/Siemens, Edison and Maxim schemes, for the benefit and comparisons of the trade. There were obviously great commercial interests at stake here, so it comes as no surprise to learn that most of Siemens’ specialist electricians had decamped to Paris to lend a hand and their experience from the Savoy to what must have been the biggest fit-up ever up until then, leaving the Savoy Theatre more or less high and dry.

Fortunately the management were in a position to revert temporarily to an older, well-tried backup system, having had the foresight to have had the theatre fully fitted for gas. The work was carried out by the best-known name in the theatre gasfitting trade, Messrs. Strode, a magnificent example of whose artistry hung above the heads of the audience when they entered the theatre on the 10th of October—a resplendently glowing sunburner.

They also saw, not the usual painted act-drop to which they were accustomed, but a sumptuous drop-curtain in rich creamy satin set off with silk fringes. It was ornamented with two plaques of white figured silk upon which were applied comedy and tragedy masks, the cothurnus, buskin and other ancient symbols of the dramatic art. Above this ‘symphony of the draper’s art’ they saw a matching valance, surmounted by an elegantly dished top to the proscenium arch which they were later to discover was designed to be a sounding-board to direct the voices to the back of the theatre. The seats were upholstered in inky blue plush, and the walls were lined in two shades of red velvet.

Even before they had entered the building they had had a series of pleasant surprises. The elegant covered carriage entrance, large enough for five conveyances at once, led onto a well-appointed foyer. Those who had taken the opportunity to reserve their numbered ticket found printed on the portion ‘to be retained’ a simple plan

of the theatre showing the way to their particular seat, while those who were accustomed to scramble for pit and gallery places found themselves marshalled into an orderly queue. All received, free of charge, a handsomely printed four page programme.

Hated first nights

There was something of a carnival air in the auditorium that night. The Prince of Wales was there to give *éclat* to the occasion. So was John Hollingshead, manager of the breakaway section of the Comedy Opera Company who had taken the lease of the Opera Comique, and was therefore Carte's rival. Gilbert was not there. He hated attending first nights, and in any case he was busy, as it happened, directing the rehearsals of 'Princess Toto' at that very rival theatre! Sullivan was present, conducting the orchestra, as he always did in the presence of His Royal Highness. There were those, in pit and gallery, who, seeing the gas bravely shining, were prepared to believe that Carte was pulling a fast one. They were soon to be disabused of this notion, however, when, after Sullivan had led the chorus and orchestra in a lively rendering of the National Anthem, D'Oyly Carte stepped forward to address the audience. After a few introductory welcoming noises, he announced that in the nature of an experiment, that although the stage lighting system was not ready, the auditorium would be lit by electricity. He went on to warn that the system may fail due to the extremely experimental nature of the installation, in which event, the gas system, a small part of which would remain alight at all times, would instantly be brought into full use. Then, at his signal the gas was turned down and

'There was a hum of expectation and anxiety throughout the house. The effect was instantaneous. A start, a pause, a tremor, and suddenly the auditorium was literally brilliant with the novel light.'

wrote the 'Telegraph'. Not all the light was sweetness however:

'The light is far too strong, the lamps too numerous, the glare too powerful, and I found my eyeballs aching, and my head throbbing, and I soon discovered that it was as imprudent to stare at an electric lamp as at the sun. I should say that the Savoy should be as well lighted with half the quantity of lamps'.

The system behaved itself admirably throughout the performance of 'Patience' that evening, despite the odd flicker and slight change of intensity as the steam engines varied their speed from time to time. (A problem which had to await a solution until the perfecting of the storage battery). At the end of the performance, the public expressed an (almost) unanimous verdict of success not only of the lighting, but also of the production, it's new scenery, the theatre itself and all it's arrangements (a bar with whisky that *was* whisky and coffee that was something more than just acrid chicory!). Even the ticket takers and other attendants received their share of approbation, not only for the smartness of

their appearance and solicitude for the public, but also for the fact that they expected no tip, indeed they were expressly forbidden to accept gratuities on pain of instant dismissal.

It was to be another eleven weeks of hard work before it was considered ready to announce the lighting of the stage by electricity. During that time performances continued under gas.

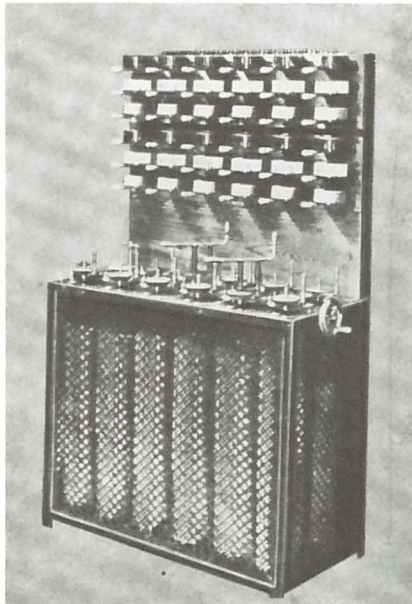


Fig. 5 Siemens' Regulator (permission Siemens AG)

The eventual solution of the problem was quite elegant in it's simplicity. The iron resistors were removed and replaced by a much smaller six-way 'regulator' (fig 5). This consisted of half a dozen six-position switches connected to tappings on coils of German silver wire. These were mounted in

a wooden frame positioned on the fly floor and were electrically connected, not to the output of the alternators, but between the dynamos and the field coils of the alternators. The operation of these resistances reduced the magnetic flux in the alternator and therefore the output voltage. It had the added bonus that it also reduced the magnetic 'drag' in the system, thereby effecting a saving in prime-mover power.

Convincing demonstration of safety

By the afternoon of the 28th December 1881, the installation was judged to be completed, and the public and press gathered to see the latest wonder of the age. There must still have been some fluttering in the public dovecotes about the safety of the new medium, for Carte found it necessary to give a graphic demonstration. He (or rather Siemens' engineer, Herr Köppler) produced a bulb which was connected to the power, wrapped it in a piece of muslin of a highly inflammable nature, and at a signal from Carte smashed it with a hammer. The vacuum was broken and the bulb immediately extinguished without so much as singeing the gauze. Whether or not D'Oyly Carte's innate sense of showmanship tempted him into cheating slightly, by having an offstage assistant to 'pull the plug' at the psychological moment to avoid the alarming bang as the fuses blew is not recorded. His triumph, however, was complete. The beauty of the new light was universally acknowledged. 'Engineering' reported that

in the artistic and scenic point of view nothing could be more successful than the present lighting of the Savoy Theatre: The illumination is brilliant without being dazzling, and while being slightly whiter than gas, the accusation of 'ghastliness' so often

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stage, exactly what they could get away with, and just how tawdry they could be, and yet how magnificent they would seem!

The 'specks and motes', the 'thick softness' of it, was in fact due to the heat haze rising from the floats, and the large amount of water vapour suspended in the air. In this environment, the beams from the limelight must indeed have stabbed through the haze with a power unequalled, for all our pageants and beamlights, until the advent of the 28 volt par 64 'aero' or lightcurtain. In this the joints in the flattage and the ancient stains on the floor must totally have disappeared: and in this even the dry makeup of the reputedly beautiful Ellen Terry, (composed we now learn of a 'maquillage' of Fullers Earth, rice flour, white lead, red lead, powdered antimony, rouge and burnt cork) must have looked good enough for her complexion to be described by contemporary writers as "radiantly natural, needing only a quick stroke from a rabbit's foot to restore a healthful glow". One can imagine her horror when she beheld 'the effect of the faces in the electric footlights'. She used dry makeup to the end.

To the Irvings, Terrys, Trees and Harkers of the era, the coming of the electric light was no boon and blessing. In total unity of purpose, one with another, they built themselves a world of theatre in which all the components balanced out. Within the conventions of this world they were free to move and experiment in any direction, and indeed they would deny that they had any restriction at all: there is no doubt but that they were the magic-makers of the day. But the coming of the electric light demanded that they change many of their basic premises. The illusion of the lighting, the illusion of the makeup, the illusions of the scenery and costume, all had to be relearned. Their first reaction was to reject it altogether. This in no way meant that they were diehards, with their heads firmly stuck in the sands of their past successes. Far from it. Much of the best of their lighting was yet to come. Besides, Irving had already been responsible for material advance in the use of light since the days of De Louthebourg, Garrick's designer. But he had looked at the electric light: and he had not liked what he had seen.

Others, though seized upon the new medium with ferocious delight. Already, by the time the Savoy had settled, the Alhambra Theatre had installed auditorium lighting to a limited extent. On the continent theatres were being equipped at a furious rate, while in Britain all the new theatres that were nearing completion or in planning were converted to the electric power as a matter of course. For a while the invention of the incandescent gas-mantle threatened to slow down the introduction of electricity, but by the mid-eighties, the improvement to the accumulator allowed the electric light to be completely steady, flicker-free and more or less secure against loss of power, and this eventually cleared the way for theatres to take the step of abolishing gas and oil as a primary source of light from their building altogether.

Autolycus

Vox inhumana

Ergastrimythos, as every classically-educated mastermind knows, is the Greek word for the art of belly-speaking, or, to throw the voice more plainly, ventriloquism. It has, surprisingly, a very ancient history, getting several mentions in the Bible (the Witch of Endor seems to have had a go), and turning up regularly in the works of Hippocrates, Aristophanes and Plutarch. Our authority for all this—and probably, indeed, the *only* authority on the subject in the world—is the appropriately named Valentine Vox, who we see on the telly with his demented dog George (sic), and who was once described by the great doyen of the art, Edgar Bergen, as a "dishonest ventriloquist"; "because," Bergen explained, "he doesn't move his lips."

What he does move, however, is about the world, continually adding to his extensive collection of early references, records, playbills, posters, photos, toys and objects generally that all bear on his art. He has, for example, over 200 of the moppets and mannikins that have sat the knees of generations of famous ventriloquists. To call them 'dummies' would be incorrect and possibly dangerous; one exasperated wife of a ventriloquist cited his 'little friend' as the correspondent in her divorce suit.

The fruits of Valentine Vox's 15 year odyssey to find out all there is to know about the rare talent he discovered he possessed when he started 'talking to himself' at the age of 10 will now, with some help from the V & A, go on exhibition at the Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood (Free! Take your father!) from October the 21st. His handsomely illustrated book* "I can see your lips moving—the history and art of ventriloquism" (which grew out of a request from a record-producer for him to say a few words on the history of the art, and his finding there really weren't any) will be published concurrently (Not free—but fascinating).

Today, of course, we look on ventriloquists simply as gifted entertainers, and for each generation of audiences apparently, one or two seem to turn up whose acts become family favourites, nationally known, like Charlie McCarthy and Archie Andrews—the dolls, perhaps, rather better known than their mouthpieces. But, originally, the 'distant voice' technique seems to have been used almost as a black art, for oracular utterances, divinations and spells, and its practitioners were thought close to sorcerers and dealers with the devil. It was not until the end of the 18th century, when we find a certain Joseph Atkins ("One leg, two

voices Atkins") being billed as "the celebrated ventriloquist now performing with universal applause at Sadlers Wells" that the idea caught on that this was entertainment, and people began to laugh rather than go down on their knees. The early performers played halls like the London Rooms and the Regent Gallery, and, around 1820, the French ventriloquist, M. Alexandre, added a vital element of dramatisation to his turn by using just his own voice to create an illusion of 13 different people all on stage at once. The first use of a doll as a partner is credited to a Mr. E. D. Davis who appeared as 'Tommy and Joey' in the 1880's, but the first bill-topping, show-stopping double act was that of the famous Fred Russell around the turn of the century (another Russell first was as the father of Val Parnell, and as the grandfather, therefore, of Jack). Sometime in the Twenties, by one of those curious inversions of reality and illusion that show-business throws up, the dolls seem to take over from their operators as the real stars of the acts and ventriloquists have been modestly accepting the change ever since. Why this should have appeared is a bit of a mystery. The 'familiar' in Valentine Vox's collection certainly don't look very *human*. They were, and continue to be, the sort of grotesque who, collectively, would be a nice little cast for a Hammer film to be directed by Bergman rather than Bergen. And *this* may be because so many of them were originally made, to a 'primitive' pattern, by just two famous craftsmen, Len Insull and his son; the traditional English material is papier-mache, 'though in America the faces are of wood.

Today, the traditional dolls are giving place to more cuddly, or abstract, characterisations. Valentine Vox's George is, as we have said, a dotty red dog. Lennie is some sort of lion. Floom is possibly a feather boa. But, behind each doll and behind each 'conversation', what remains is a unique capacity in a very few human beings, and, as Valentine Vox has found out, a history and an art that goes back over 3,000 years.

Nothing succeeds like excess?

From time to time, in a pious bid to provide more international coverage, CUE examines aspects of theatre abroad, and then rather wishes it hadn't. Some issues back a correspondent was complaining that of the 25 theatres listed in Barcelona something like 20 of them had been converted to the Spanish equivalent of discotheques or stripamas or clip-joints in general. From rumbustious Rome now comes the finding that of the 46 "legitimate" theatres listed in the 'Chronaca di Roma' 40 are (this month) in a state of being "Chiuso" or "riposo" (which is to say, as of actors, "resting").

Italy, in fact, with a national theatre tradition that runs all the way back, and further, to the gloomy Seneca and jolly Plautus, sweeps in the whole commedia del arte idea, and comes up ringing lovely bells like Pirandello et alii, seems to be in the process of giving the whole art-form the

*"I can see your lips moving" published by Kay & Ward price £12.50

imperial thumbs down. Come to think of it, and pace the conventional wisdom, there's precious little *opera* in Italy either, if we except Milan and that splendid restaurant in Traste Vere where one's eating is enlivened by huge bursts of Rossini from the management, the staff, and what appears to be a whole company of mounted soldiery. Over *here*, on the other hand, there seem to be almost more performers on our stages than there are people in the audiences. Take the Fringe at Edinburgh, for example. The sheer volume of theatrical entertainment available was really formidable. If we are to believe The Festival News, the organ of John Drummond's belief in the Benthamite principle of the greatest happiness for the greatest possible number, no less than 454 different groups took to the stage (a friend of ours saw a spirited performance of Steven Berkoff's "Decadence" in the left-luggage office of the Caledonian Hotel), and gave altogether 8868 performances. 'Cor . . . but we don't necessarily mean "encore". There was, and is now trailing all round the country, an awful lot of fringe: but, also, an awful lot of dandruff. To get back to the numbers game . . . Even if *all* the 120,000 people watching and hugely enjoying the Festival Parade (a small but perhaps significant incident in which was the sight of the NSDF's "Best Actress", Rebecca Harbord, in full fig and wig as Sarah Siddons, mounted on a ramshackle car that finally went up around her in black smoke) had actually attended the huge number of performances the average audience for each would have amounted to about 14 determined souls. What management is to make of the combination between this plethora of talent and this sparsity of audience we cannot imagine. The trouble with 'marketing' in the theatre, which is now becoming fashionable, is the trouble with marketing in general: that it wants to see what has *been* successful, and then tries to sell a *series* of more or less carbon or cardboard copies, using cheaper or less talented materials, at a far greater promotional cost. How is it to avoid being hoodwinked, by the cheers of an audience (the cast's immediate family) or the approval of the critics (the reporter on the local paper where most of the cast lives), into investing in one of the numerous bald patches behind the fringe? It would be a help, we think in this welcome theatrical renaissance, if within any group of, say, 20 talented performers (this to include writers, writer-directors, actors, technicians etc) there had to be, by law if necessary, just one editorial or play-doctor figure able to distinguish in *advance* the difference between refulgence and self-indulgence. We're not suggesting (the Gods forbid) more *critics*—they have their own rows of newsprint to hoe. But what so many companies emerging from the Fringe seem to need and very seldom seem to get—even from *professional* directors who, after all, have been paid to *love* them—are the honorary services of a kind of permanent under-secretary of show-business, capable from time to time of asking the question: "why are we doing this and *how*?"

The biggest multi-purpose of them all

DENIS IRVING

The Sydney Entertainment Centre, was born of the New South Wales Government's general desire to accommodate larger audiences for productions of all kinds, at admission prices within reach of all.

The Centre now under construction, will seat 10,000 around three sides of an extended thrust stage, and with temporary seating on part of that stage area, increasing to 12,000 for pop concerts and the like. The forward portion of the thrust stage, in the centre of the whole building, has provision for suspension of masking and lighting from 12 fixed speed multi line winches, plus twenty 3-speed scenery batten hoists and 18 divertable spot lines. These facilities together with removable full height masking panels and drapes, enable the seating capacity to be adjusted to 7,000 with an open thrust stage 20m wide by 18m deep, or 3,500 using the same stage area fully masked to proscenium form.

The main arena is about 120m wide by 100m deep (totally clear span) height from stage floor to under side of roof trusses is 16.7m, with an extra 5m over the centre stage flying area. Good lighting angles are provided from a catwalk and gallery just

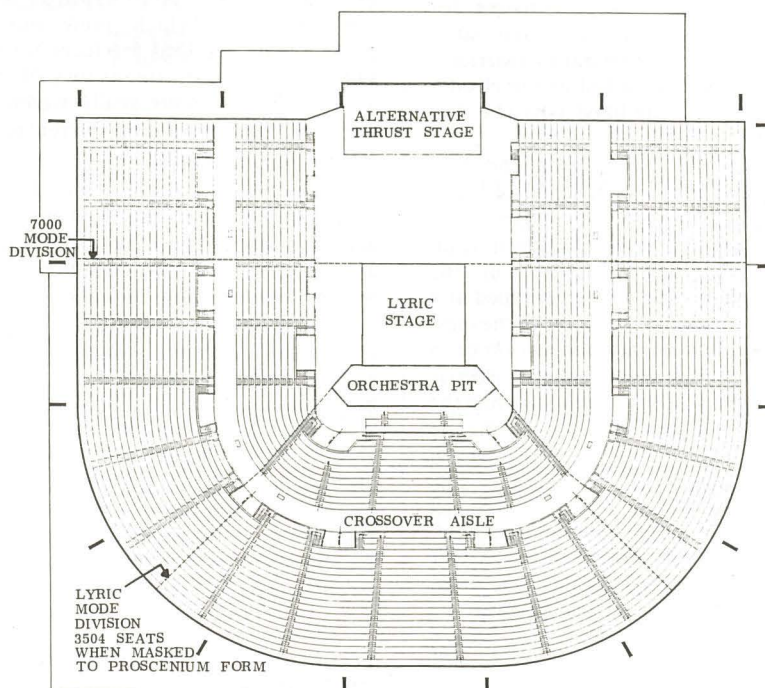
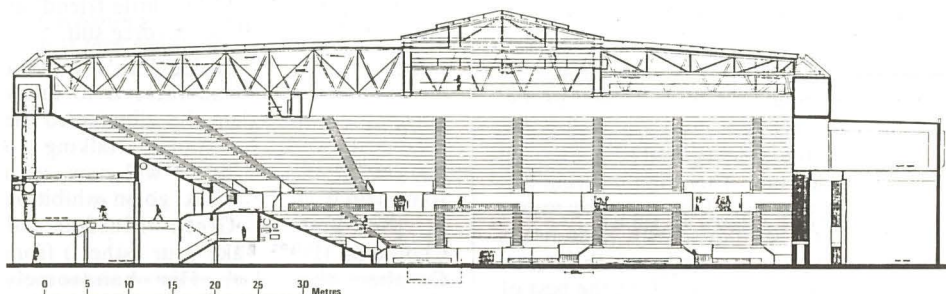
below roof truss level, running on three sides of the stage and some 12m back. The five lighting battens are in fact large size self climbing units and can be rigged anywhere across the thrust stage, or parallel to the 'long' side if need be.

The design allows for 496 lighting circuits with a dimmer permanently in each, with a 'soft' control patch down to a 150 channel memory system.

At the rear of the stage is a large dock area with access doors allowing large set pieces or whatever to be brought in from street level.

Although for a substantial amount of the year the Centre will be used for sporting events of various kinds, there is no doubt that in the largest arrangement, it will be attractive to promoters of rock concerts. Being provided with high quality sound reinforcement, the 7,000 seat mode should be good for trad. jazz or folk music concerts, as well as open stage opera or ballet productions, which command good houses in Sydney these days.

We all look forward to completion in 1982, to see which of the three modes excites most interest, and how often changes one to the other will be required.



Victoria Theatre, Ballarat

In 1856 the boom gold mining town of Ballarat could boast three theatres. The originals have long since disappeared but now, as part of a mining museum and historical park development at Sovereign Hill, Ballarat now gets one of its theatres restored to it.

Sovereign Hill has been laid out to show the lifestyle and history of the gold mining period. Part original and part replica reconstructions are the humpies, mineshafes, pithead machinery, crushing plants and so on, clustered round a main street of banks, shops and industrial establishments typical of their day. Included is the United States Hotel (with a practical bar) with Victoria Theatre adjoining.

Although modern materials are used, care has been taken by the architect in charge, Ewan Jones, to keep the interior as close to authentic Georgian style as possible, in fact, stage lighting was the hardest problem. In the end, normal profile spots were used front of house, some concealed behind a slot in the rear wall over the gallery and others (Pat 23's) unconcealed on brackets halfway along the side walls. We never did find out how the original stage was lit, but contemporary Ballarat houses were lit by gas. The Victoria has limited staging, as part of the stage house is a lean to, so small flats and roll up cloths are necessary.

Simple though it is, the place works well, and certainly is a valuable reminder that theatre building does not always have to be a multi million dollar venture to be successful.

Denis Irving, our Australian contributor, is a leading Melbourne Theatre Consultant.

Letters to the Editor

Dear Sir,

I wonder if any of your readers could assist the members of the Australian Association of Theatre Technology to solve a puzzle of nomenclature, with respect to the mode of action of a pair of traveller or house curtains as used on stage. These actions can be 'vertical' or 'flying'; 'festoon' or 'butterfly', and most commonly on small stages a horizontal bi-parting action using an overgrown equivalent of domestic window curtain tracks.

In Australia this horizontal mode is generally known as 'French action', a term which has been happily accepted by stage crews for as long as we can remember. But, someone has recently asked, why French action? What is the origin or justification?

Discussions around and appeals in our local AATT journal have drawn a blank, hence the letter seeking enlightenment from some historically minded CUE reader from England — or possibly even France.

The truth when revealed will be published in the AATT journal with suitable acknowledgements.

Yours faithfully,

D. C. IRVING,
Vice President
AATT (Victoria)

REIDing SHELF

I suppose that British Theatre has enjoyed three periods of greatness: Elizabethan, Georgian and NOW. Perhaps I could, and should, add the Victorian Theatre which is the nearest that we have ever come to a truly popular theatre—and the nearest that we are ever likely to get to a popular *live* theatre in an electronic world.

Joan Littlewood's *Theatre Workshop* was surely one of the prime influences in the development of the theatre of *today*. Ensemble acting in a style of heightened realism, in settings of selective realism, is the norm for what I find in much of my theatregoing whether to the national establishment theatres or their fringe alternatives.

These acting and scenic styles—and integrated music and clean lighting statements—were a shattering discovery for an 18-year old at the 1949 Edinburgh Festival. The performances of Moliere's "Flying Doctor" and Chekov's "Proposal", together with the previous Festival's Glyndebourne "Don Giovanni" were probably the influences that finally determined a life in the theatre for me.

These 1949 performances were, of course, on the fringe of the Edinburgh Festival: it was to be 1966 before Theatre Workshop appeared in the official programme on the Assembly Hall's open stage which cries out for just that sort of style which they had pioneered. By now, however, their great decade (1953-63) was over: the company were being destroyed. Mostly by success whereby the west end transfers broke up the ensemble that had been nurtured in the Theatre Royal at what was then often called the *other* Stratford—that is, the one down the central line tube at E.15. Theatre Workshop was also destroyed by exhaustion: the weariness of forty years of battling for funding.

Throughout Howard Goorney's **THE THEATRE WORKSHOP STORY**, the personal sacrifices of the company come through repeatedly. Most of us, in opting for a theatre career, have accepted that we must personally supply a considerable chunk of the necessary subsidy by working for less reward than would be acceptable "outside". (I am sure that I am not alone in having this actually in writing, on my files, from one of the most eminent of the establishment theatres!) But the limits must have been reached in what the Theatre Workshop actors went through for their art—whether in nutrition, or in carrying lumps of scenery as personal baggage. Harry Corbett recalls the 1955 invitation from the International Theatre Festival in

Paris to represent Great Britain at the Theatre des Nations with "Arden of Faversham" and "Volpone".

It was quite hysterical. We had no money to pay freight charges, and we had to take all the set over as personal hand luggage. Gerry held the ferry up for two hours while he argued with the crew and the Customs. We had masses of stuff including cheese-shaped rostra and two pillars, about twelve feet high and three feet wide. I carried one of these up the gang plank as personal luggage! We all carried a piece of the bloody set. Somehow we got there and took Paris by storm.

The author, Howard Goorney, acted (with the occasional break) with the company from their pre-war Manchester beginnings as *Theatre of Action* and subsequently *Theatre Union* in the mid-thirties. His book makes use of interviews with company members and here is a 1947 memoir from Jeanne Goddard who was in charge of wardrobe

In Felixstowe we played to poor houses and had so little money that we all went to a little old lady who ran a cafe at the front. In the morning she'd give us a plate of broken biscuits and a glass of milk for threepence; and in the evening, after the show, we'd go to the fish and chip shop for sixpennyworth of chips—and that was our diet for the week. Nobody complained as everybody was treated alike, including Joan and Ewan, I remember going out of the Stage Door behind John Bury, and being very amused to notice that his espadrilles, which looked all right when seen from above or from the side, were a sham. From behind, I realised, both rope soles were completely worn through, and he was really walking on his bare feet!

International recognition came early and there were successful tours to Czechoslovakia and Scandinavia, prior to the great Paris conquests. It was perhaps easier for the Theatre Workshop style to be appreciated in continental Europe where audiences had more experience, even expectation, of non-naturalistic production styles. However, with long running hits like "The Quare Fellow", "The Hostage", "A Taste of Honey", "Fings aint wot they used to be" and "Oh What a Lovely War", they finally reached a wider audience and critical acclaim—although the founders bore a guilt that they had betrayed their original ideals of a truly people's theatre.

It is interesting to note in passing that the West End transfers were instigated by Donald Albery whose son Ian is currently looking to today's Fringe to fill the same west end theatres.

A very readable book and delightfully non-sycophantic. A just tribute to Joan Littlewood and her collection of what she liked to call her *nuts*. In the words of Peter Hall

Joan's theatre was about energy, vitality, blood and sentiment. It could be very common, it could be very vulgar. But it was very alive.

In this plethora of experimentation in the German theatre one can discover, if not the absolute origins, at least a major stage in the development of all the following theatre styles: abstract theatre, the theatre of cruelty, absurdist theatre, happenings, satirical cabarets, agitprop theatre, documentary theatre and environmental stagings.

The second volume in *Theatre Production Studies* (following Michael R. Booth's *Victorian Spectacular Theatre 1850-1910*, discussed in CUE 12) is Michael Patterson's **THE REVOLUTION IN GERMAN THEATRE 1900-1933**. A subtitle might well be *The Theatre of ist and ism* for this was a period of agonising search for the fundamental nature of the theatre experience. A period when the audience were to be torn away from the subjective emotional pleasures of hole-in-the-wall magic-box theatre so that they might be enlightened by a more objective intellectual approach. Words like Abstractionism, Absurdist, Collectivism, Constructivist, Expressionism, Formalism, Futurism, Idealism, Impressionism, Naturalistic, Postivism, and Realism abound. Either singly or in combination.

Michael Patterson examines the background to this theatrical revolution—the political, social, philosophical and technological climate of the period; and the production styles and administrative format of the theatre that was being reacted against.

In an endeavour to reconstruct the performances he uses all the standard sources and the book's introduction includes a brief but valuable discussion of the relative validity of (1) Playwright's stage directions, (2) Manifestos and theoretical writings by writers and theatre practitioners, (3) Prompt books, (4) Set and costume designs, (5) Photographs, (6) Sketches made during performance, (7) Programmes, (8) Contemporary reviews, (9) Critical works, (10) Personal reminiscences and (11) Films.

The most difficult reconstruction is the acting style. Acting is a four dimensional art with time as the predominant dimension. Whereas the third dimension of depth can be projected with some success from a study of the (essentially) two dimensional sources listed above, the fluidity of the acting style is much more difficult to conjecture. Moreover it is always more difficult to develop acting styles than design styles—departures from naturalism are relatively easier for the designer than for the actor who cannot readily dispose of his structure as a human person. However, both in his general discussion and more particularly in his production case histories, Michael Patterson has some success in projecting an impression of the acting style as part of the general production concept.

This is not a particularly easy book to read (all these *ists* and *isms!*) but full of

thought provocations for all theatre stylists including scenographers and lighting designers.

There are parts of the author's analysis to provoke discussion. I personally cannot agree with

In Toller's *Masse Mensch* a number of pauses are indicated as follows: 'Silence flickers', 'Silence is about to settle heavily in the hall', 'Silence staggers', 'Silence of impending death', and 'Silence swings aloft'. Obviously such stage-directions bear little relationship to the realities of stage technique, of what the actor can actually communicate to the audience. In this respect, they are little more than a self-indulgence on the part of the writer.

Surely there is a progression of timing in the imagery which might just be the clue to trigger off a realisation of the author's intention. There have been times when I have certainly had to build on vaguer indications from my director!

However throughout much of this revolutionary period in German theatre, there was a gap between concept and realisation at a technical level. Piscator's conveyor belts may have solved the problem of mobility in an epic play, but they were so noisy that the actors had to shout above them.

Expressionism (whether abstractionist or primitivist or any other finely argued *ist*) was a tiny segment of a German theatre which was (and still is) predominantly a lyric theatre. But its influence upon our stage has been profound. Michael Patterson's book clarifies the origins.

This is the golden jubilee year of the Lilian Bayliss rebuild of Sadler's Wells Theatre in 1931. Although the Old Vic had been the home of Opera as well as Shakespeare, it was the opening of the Wells that gave the real stimulus to the development of our national lyric theatre companies. Consequently 1981 has been observed as the Golden Jubilee of the Royal Ballet (formerly Sadler's Wells Ballet) and the English National Opera (formerly Sadler's Wells Opera).

As part of these celebrations, the English National Opera at their Coliseum home have produced a couple of handsomely illustrated A4 volumes, both written by Richard Jarman. **A HISTORY OF SADLER'S WELLS OPERA AND ENGLISH NATIONAL OPERA, The Story of fifty years of Opera in English, 1931-1981** is precisely what it says, while **LONDON COLISEUM, The Story of London's largest Theatre** takes us through the history of that theatre from its opening in 1904, through its conversion into a home for the opera company in 1968 until today.

Both books are full of photographic goodies and are well designed. The opera pictures are arranged to offer a comparison between different productions of the same opera. This demonstrates the changes in production styles and the rises in budgets

over the years. Although not every new production necessarily represents an improvement on the earlier ones!

The Coliseum—not my favourite auditorium, too much stone—has had a varying career and there are riches indeed in this collection of information and photographs of its past architecture, technology and productions. This Coliseum book is quite simply indispensable for the bookshelves of anyone who savours theatres as buildings, and tingles when confronted with ephemeral fragments of their passing shows.

THE THEATRE WORKSHOP
STORY. Howard Goorney. Eyre Methuen.
£8.99 (UK)

THE REVOLUTION IN GERMAN THEATRE
1900-33.
Michael Patterson
Routledge & Keegan Paul (Theatre Production
Series).
12.50 (UK)

A HISTORY OF SADLER' WELLS OPERA
AND ENGLISH NATIONAL OPERA.
An illustrated booklet, published to mark 50
years of the Company's work. First published in
1974 as a History of Sadler's Wells Opera,
revised and updated in 1980. Written and edited
by Richard Jarman.

THE LONDON COLISEUM. A History of the
London Coliseum 1904-1981.
The story of the home of English National Opera
published on the occasion of the Company's
Golden Jubilee.
Written by Richard Jarman. Designed by Sue
Chennells.

Performing Books at the National Theatre

Theatre Book Lovers have a magnificent browse in prospect with the announcement of a major *Performing Arts Book Fair* at the National Theatre. Over 4,000 books will be on offer plus a considerable amount of music, periodicals, posters, prints and programmes together with a wide selection of photographs, autographs, original costume and scene designs, and film stills. June Bronhill will open this nostalgic bonanza, presented by the Provincial Bookseller's Fairs Association, in the stalls foyer of the Olivier Theatre on Friday 30th October (3 pm to 9 pm) and Saturday 31st October (10 am to 8 pm). Your CUE bookman and his colleague Walter Plinge are all aglow at the mere thought of wallowing in all this ephemera.

The West End Theatre Audience

ANTHONY McCALL

Who would have thought that theatre, or to be more exact, live entertainment, rated twice as highly as cinema among Londoners? The news is encouraging for those in the industry who are only too keenly aware of the growing problems surrounding live entertainment. Yet, as with the serious professionals within the acting fraternity who time and again return to the stage after their stint on the filmset or in a television studio – by and large for the money – so audiences seem to feel that the human dimension of live performances still have greater pulling power than the celluloid imitations up on the screen. The National Opinion Poll figures certainly bear this out, in the detailed report carried out on behalf of the Society of West End Theatre.*

Furthermore they make fascinating reading. In answer to the question: 'What types of entertainment do you go to in central London?' the following answers emerged. (Interviewees were 'all adults who come into central London nowadays – more than one answer possible). No fewer than 35% gave theatre, opera, ballet or a show as their favourite entertainment; followed, in descending order, by 20% who gave restaurants; 18% who gave cinema; then 17% pubs; 12% exhibitions; 9% art galleries; 6% classical concerts; 5% rock concerts; 4% discos; 3% wine bars; and 1% fringe theatre.

The sampling used by NOP was the standard, and they claim the best of the various systems available to avoid any one type of bias, and covers the areas of inner London, outer London and the most heavily concentrated commuter areas in the Home Counties and beyond. The only possible bias I could detect was possibly the shifting flat-bed-sitter population, who might have escaped certain questions, thus undervaluing the numbers who attend rock concerts, discos and fringe theatre, perhaps even pubs. But that's only a guess.

The interviewing was in two stages. The first questioned everybody (chosen) on their chosen entertainment; the second quizzed more closely those who gave theatre as their top choice of entertainment, and established why this was so, what they liked and what they disliked about the entire evening, from the moment they set out from home, or the office, to the return journey homewards.

NOP summarised the overall results as follows.

1. In the eyes of the majority, London's main attraction (both to Londoners and visitors) is the extent and variety of entertainment it offers, and theatre is the principal form of entertainment sought out by respondents. London is thought of as the entertainment/theatrical capital of the world.

2. Most of the respondents described the West End theatre as unique, possessing its own 'magic spell', 'excitement' and

providing a very special 'sense of occasion' for them.

3. Within the GLC there are 1.3 million people who go to the theatre, of whom 100,000 go to the theatre at least once a month.

4. The composition of the West End theatre audience is more widely-spread in socio-economic terms and consists of a much greater proportion of younger people than might have been thought.

5. The greatest obstacle to theatregoing in London is related to travel in every form: rail, tube, bus, private car and parking. The most quoted factor deterring respondents from going to the theatre in London (or which causes them to go less frequently than before) was the cost and difficulty of getting into London and, in particular, the difficulty of getting home after the performance.

6. There is some evidence of price resistance, with many respondents referring to the cost of going to the theatre, but the NOP report makes it clear that this refers to the cost of the night-out as a whole (ie theatre tickets combined with travel, eating-out, etc). When pressed, respondents specifically stated that they regard the cost of the tickets themselves as fair and reasonable.

7. The main implication of the report is that the West End theatre industry must make theatre booking and theatre visits easier for the patron. It was clear from the report that the main thrust for theatre attendances should be within the GLC area itself where there would seem to be the greatest potential for growth.

The report also provides the industry with valuable information on the 'profile' of West End theatregoers; the readership of newspapers and periodicals; their preferred methods of booking and paying for theatre tickets.

It is worth remembering that this report was commissioned and largely paid for by the Society of West End Theatre, so of necessity the questions focus on this aspect of London entertainment. All the same, there are more general pointers throughout this report which throw light on other valuable areas, such as the exact number of readers for which publications and suggestions for say, a theatre programme on television along the lines of Barry Norman's *Film 81*, which is felt to be 'entertaining and informative', unlike critics, who were seen as too 'heavy' for most tastes.

Despite the growth in recent years of local theatres, especially civic theatres, outer London suburbs and neighbouring towns offered virtually no choice of entertainment, and nothing at all late at night, which is why it was felt to be worth putting up with the prices and hassle of coming to central London for a night out:

'London always proved somewhere to go at any time' says the report. 'It need not be expensive and one need not look far for entertainment. It has an "atmosphere", it "bustles", it's "different" at any time of day and night. The variety it offers is endless, from the very best to the worst'.

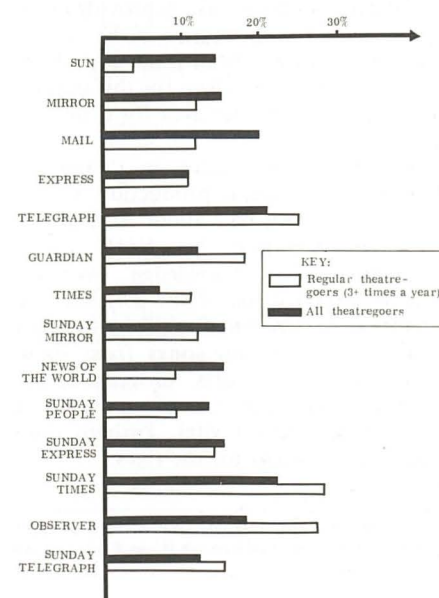
In most instances, theatregoers wanted to eat or drink or both, either before or after the show, and tended automatically to include the price of these sorts of items when assessing whether or not they could afford a theatre visit. This is clearly an opportunity for discount travel and catering deals to cash in on an audience which has admitted it is looking for ways to cut costs in the interests of another theatre outing.

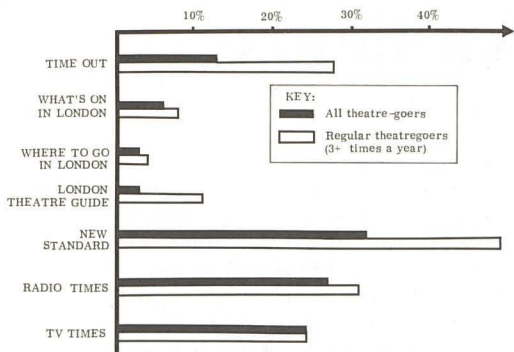
Frequent theatre attendance was much more common among GLC residents. Indeed they accounted for about six times as many theatre visits as the outside GLC areas, that is to say those within a 40 mile radius and 26 selected towns more than 40 miles from London. Overseas visitors were not covered, although they are thought to form a significant part of the West End theatre audience. The next phase of the research programme will examine the attitudes of these, with assistance from tourist authorities.

The most revealing aspect of the report was the breakdown into age and socio-economic categories. 'Theatregoing is very much more common among the AB social class, 40% of whom claim to go, compared with 19% of C1 and C2s, and 4% of D and Es. However, since ABs represent only 17% of the population, while C1s and C2s are 59%, the latter is actually more important to the theatre numerically.

This translates into correspondingly interesting breakdowns in terms of the papers people read. The results obtained are shown in the accompanying graphs.

The *Daily Telegraph* and the *Daily Mail* appear to be the most widely-read daily newspapers. *The Guardian* becomes much





more important among those going to the theatre more often. In this latter group, the *Daily Mirror* is surprisingly strong (reflecting the young profile of those going to the theatre more often) and *The Times* is surprisingly weak.

The *Sunday Times* and *Observer* are the most frequently read publications among those who go to the theatre but among those who are going to the theatre more often the *Sunday Mirror* and *News of the World* are both of some importance (this again reflecting the younger age group's interest in theatre visits).

The table for 'periodicals' shows those who go at all to the theatre are above average in readership of *Time Out*, *What's On in London*, *Where to go in London* and the *New Standard*. Among those going to the theatre 3+ times a year, or going more often than previously, the *New Standard* is the leading publication, followed by the *Radio Times* and then by *Time Out*.

Booking habits produced few deviations from what could generally be considered the norm. When easy access to the theatres was possible, people preferred to go in person, followed by telephoning their booking, then ticket agencies, writing to the theatre and bottom of the list, arranging an evening through a group organiser but as access became more difficult, telephoning and booking through a ticket agency became the obvious procedure and organising a party outing started to make more sense. It is interesting to note that not everyone was aware of the added charges levied by ticket agencies (usually around 17½%); indeed there was 'some indignation' when this was realised. As for credit card bookings, which provide instant payment and confirmation right up until curtain-up, only 21% of those with Access or Barclaycard used them for this purpose. This could be another area for a publicity drive.

The significant factor in determining how people chose a production was the information they had about it: a gradual process, defined by NOP as an 'accumulation of knowledge'. Word-of-mouth remained top of the list, but other factors were easy 'handles' like playwright, stars, well-known hit songs from shows, and reviews and arts programmes. A jauntier approach to media coverage of productions seemed vital. Perhaps critics can't see the wood for the trees.

* **The West End Theatre Audience**, a report published by The Society of West End Theatre. Price £6.50.

The Museum in Copenhagen's Court Theatre

Francis Reid's theatric tourist trail takes him to Denmark

After visiting Copenhagen's *Teatermuseet* in 1976, I was insensitive enough to suggest that the appropriate site for our long awaited British Theatre Museum would be the Old Vic. This suggestion was offered at a time when the National Theatre was on the move to its new houses and there was some debate as to the future of the Old Vic. Well the grand old lady of Waterloo Road is once again 'future indefinite' and if there are activists in that theatre lobby, they are plotting a quieter coup than before.

I no longer wish to see the Old Vic as a museum. It is not that I think that she would be anything less than absolutely superb: it is just that I am now convinced that she should be restored to her Victorian period as a very necessary fourth stage of the National Theatre who need a late nineteenth century auditorium to create that ambience inescapable from certain production styles.

(The N.T. will also require a fifth stage in due course—a Georgian one. We have the knowledge, we have the carpenters and we have the painters. But have we a fireman with imagination?).

However Copenhagen convinces me (and Gothenburg too—coming in CUE 15) that old theatres make the ideal homes for displaying the fragments of theatre history. I suppose that it all has to do with atmosphere. A theatre archive has its costumes and props. It has its models. But mostly it has paper. And these posters, prints, programmes and photographs all come together much more readily in the atmosphere of an old theatre building. It takes an audience to make a performance and it takes ghosts to make a theatre museum.

The Copenhagen Theatre Museum has its own special ambience—and it has had it since the *Hofteatret* opened in 1767. A very positive smell from the royal stables below. This smell is so locked into the theatre's history that if it ever goes away, they must surely install an air conditioner with a small portion of horse dung on the wrong side of the filter. At least to blow into the foyer if not everywhere. The theatre is located in the Christiansborg Royal Palace: on the first floor above the stables. It had a French architect who provided a theatre with a floor that could be raised to stage level for masquerades. The 1748 auditorium was in white, pearl grey, pink, blue and gold in neoclassical style with Ionic pillars. The French influence placed the King's box and the Queen's box on opposite sides. This was no doubt convenient for Queen Caroline Mathilde's involvement with the King's politically ambitious physician. Indeed the results of an overnight palace revolution in 1772 included the execution of the theatre director!

According to the guide book, parts of the original stage machinery still remain. In the stage floor there were five slots, each for three flats fixed to trolleys, the wheels of which ran on rails that still exist in the cellar. By means of capstans it would have been possible to make three complete changes of scene. These slots are presumably no longer—but, in any case, the forward acting area is now covered with a smooth floor for occasional performances. (The only other concession to our age being a lighting rig of a perch 743 each side and a pair of silhouettes for foh). There was no fly loft but, with the inclusion of the rear stage, 30 metres of depth were available for perspective scenic climaxes. At least 38 men, usually sailors or riggers, were involved.

In 1842 the auditorium was remodelled in Louis Philippe style to make it an appropriate home for the Italian opera companies who for 12 years played a repertoire rich in Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti, and the young Verdi.

TEATERMUSEET



HOFTEATRET

Nr. 53789

Entrance Ticket to the Theatre Museum, based on an original ticket displayed in the museum.

Closure came in 1881 following the catastrophic fire at the Ring Theatre in Vienna—an event which led to the reconstruction of many theatres throughout Europe and to more stringent standards of fire resistance and escape for new construction.

Forty years later the Hofteatret was reopened as a museum of Danish theatre.

Memory suggests that, five years ago, my entrance was still by the original 18th century spiralling staircase. Now there is an additional broad straight wide-treaded stairway built to full escape specifications. However the admission ticket still bears the design of the original Hofteatret ticket of which the original can be seen in a showcase of tickets, passes and entry tokens of all kinds. The tickets are numbered and a



The old Court Theatre in the Christiansborg Palace, built 1766-67. Renovated 1842. Now Copenhagen Theatre Museum.



comparison suggests that 37,500 visitors have passed through in the 5 years since my last visit. This is probably about right because this theatre museum opens only for 2 hours on Wednesdays and Sundays, plus Fridays in summer. However, unlike many other theatre museums, it is listed with precise opening times in the standard tourist brochure.

The atmosphere everywhere is of old used wood. Perhaps the timber used in construction was softish or perhaps it is just the passing of centuries. Certainly every step has the appearance and feel of being well trodden: none more so than a staircase on to the rear stage from the lower stables area of the palace. This was the stage door

entrance and one's feet are guided into the worn dips in each tread. It does not take much imagination to get a thrill from realising that this was the path trodden by a 15 year old aspirant to ballet fame called Hans Christian Andersen. A displayed programme of the ballet *Armida* in 1821 includes *Herr Andersen* among the corps of Trolls.

This atmosphere continues into the theatre with a background of recorded opera and ballet music—together with appropriately ambient lighting. The music is played at just the right level: the level that one hears in an opera house while walking the corridors or going about one's business at rehearsal or performance. Played,

curiously, on disc rather than tape—the needle stuck in *Carmen* (a ghostly intervention?) and we were more appropriately restored to anonymous eighteenth and early nineteenth century operatic ensemble.

The lighting level is surely close to the original rehearsal levels. Natural daylight from windows on one side on to the stage and into the corridors, augmented by 14 single electric candles on the box tier facias, and 4-light candleabra in the stage boxes. The stage has a painted canvas ceiling with a simple chandelier. The auditorium ceiling has a hole in which a chandelier would have been hoisted clear of the sightlines during performance. There is, of course, safety lighting and enough level to study the exhibits. But this is done with a simple discretion that does not conflict with the overall atmosphere. All parts of the theatre are used as display areas. The foyers, stairways, corridors, dressing rooms, stage, auditorium, orchestra pit, etc. Wherever possible, material is displayed in an appropriate location.

For example, the pit has a photograph of a be-wigged orchestra in that very same pit for a 1914 occasional performance of a Mariveaux play. There are timpani from 1789 and a compact conductor's piano of 1867. (Which incidentally triggered off memories of Fritz Busch's original Glyndebourne "recit" piano which used to sit in understage neglect during the sixties—just around the corner from the steam boiler that John Christie had his plumbers install in a rather optimistic anticipation of never-to-be Wagner. Will Glyndebourne open a museum in their gardens during their 1984 jubilee?).

A board on the O.P. wall of the stage carries a selection of candle and oil lighting instruments with many interesting variations of reflector and ingenious wick trimming devices. There is an early arc spotlight, smaller than I ever remember seeing before and (coming into my own time—just) a horizon flood with linear filament lamp.

There is a selection of pulley blocks and a model of the machinery used to fly Faust and Mephistopholes out of the window in Boito's *Mephistophole* at the Royal Theatre in 1885. Other items on the stage include an early marionette theatre and a Punch and Judy variation (Mester Fakels Teatret) from around 1800. And of course a great pleasure of this stage is merely to stand upon it and embrace the auditorium. It takes but little concentration to people the stalls seats and to festoon the boxes with faces.

The dressing rooms open directly on to the rear (ie vista) stage area and are properly furnished, mostly with a glazed-off section with costumes on stands and wigs on blocks. There is a 1776 dressing room with its original wallpaper and furniture from the first Christianborg Palace of 1740.

Another room is dedicated to Pavlova with the costumes she wore in 1927 for her Copenhagen performances of "*Coquetterie de Columbine*" and "*La Gavotte*". Ballet is very important in Danish theatre history



A Dressing Room (1767) in the Court Theatre, Copenhagen.

and indeed, due to Bournonville, Danish ballet is very important in world theatre history. Consequently there is considerable space devoted to prints and photographs of the dance as well as items such as shoes worn by Taglioni and a costume worn by August Bournonville himself.

Opera has its section and drama has such items as Nora's costume from the Copenhagen premiere of *A Doll's House* in 1879. Then there is a space for Revue where the printed documentation is helped to life with items like a comic pipe and a bulbous nose with spectacles attached. And provincial theatre has a stairway with material on Odense, Aarhus, etc.

English links are not forgotten—after all English companies first visited Denmark in 1579, and in 1586 there was a visit from the Shakespearean actors William Kemp, Thomas Pope and George Bryan. Although French influence later became much stronger, our own time has brought a series of *Hamlets* to Kronberg Castle and there are photographs of Olivier, Gielgud, Burton and Redgrave playing the troubled prince on location. And there is a dagger belonging to Edmund Kean.

A success of this museum is the build-up of detail—the way in which the production pictures, the performers, and their props all somehow integrate. It is not a selective display. The visitor is allowed to build up his own picture from the wealth of juxtaposed ephemera. And that is the way I like it.

I like suddenly coming across marvellous items like an ornate varnished mahogany seat price and availability board from the Dagmarteatret. Or a model of the same theatre showing not just the proscenium area and stage but with all the traps and sliders marked on the stage. Then there is a stone sculpture group from the front of the Kongelige Teater of 1774-1874; and that Royal Theatre leaps to life when we look at an 1874 photograph of the new (ie today's) Royal Theatre when it was being constructed alongside the old theatre. Or a super drawing of an 1842 performance with



A box in the Court Theatre during an opera performance in the 1840s.

the auditorium seen from behind the actors.

There is a lovely painting of backstage at the Casino Theatre in 1885—all grooves and gas lengths. But I think that my favourite must be two prompter's box close-up photographs of the same theatre. One in gas floats, the other in very early electric.

But the major theatric pleasure of the *Teatermuseet* in the *Hofteatret* must just simply be experiencing the auditorium. Long, thin and operatic. A dull but rich red (a more convincing period red, I believe, than the Theatre Royal in Bury St. Edmunds) set off by the flat painted gilding. An opportunity to experience benches in boxes with hinged sections for both front and back rows of seats. Imagine a modern fire officer finding hinged seats across the box doors. (These boxes incidentally, have sliding doors.) All this experienced under atmospheric lighting and period music.

To locate a theatre museum in a historic theatre certainly gives it a head start!

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THEATRE PROJECTS

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From The Warehouse to The Round House

Not long after the Market left Covent Garden for Nine Elms a festival dedicated to Real Ale was held in the old Flower market building. Towards the tail of a queue extending round three sides of the building could be espied, one evening, three delegates from the ABTT. Nearly two hours later they could be seen plonking down their entrance money, their objective seemingly achieved. Exactly five minutes later the three could have been seen dashing out and rushing round the corner to a different and neglected entrance on the fourth side—but a beer bottle toss from where they had started.

The alert CUE reader will have guessed that beer, real or otherwise, was not their target for that night. Though as one of the three I must say that I could have done with a glass inside after the two hours outside.

With such infirmity of direction did the ABTT Trade Show make its first bid for existence. A notion of a combined conference and trade exhibition was around but we did not like the usual hotel venues put forward by the professional organiser the ABTT intended to employ. Someone then suggested that we take a look at this particular market building which might have the merit of being cheap to rent and which was certainly a venue located in the heart of theatreland. The vision of dropping in for some festival ale and a general look around seemed both practical and attractive. Alas! we had not taken into consideration the Londoner's thirst for the real stuff nor had we allowed for the simple requirements for collective swillage thereof. A more or less rainproof roof to prevent adulteration of the product, somewhere to stack casks and tankards for action and there you have a Festtrinkhaus, so to say. Those parts of the great building which could be seen through the mêlée of beer and the beery was lit by lots of dirty daylight filtering through an overall glass roof of the class difficult-to-blackout. Beneath, all was down-at-heel requiring resuscitation after a century long battle with the departed market porters.

However, to the north-east through a stout barricade we glimpsed a spruced up newly painted, darkened and spotlit area devoted to an architectural display. Since that show was unlikely to keep the late hours of licensed premises however temporary, there was nothing for it but instant departure for another part of the garden.

There was no queue outside the entrance to the architectural display and memory suggests that there wasn't anybody inside either—except that is, for ourselves. Enthusiasm for the idea of a trade fair took a hard knock that evening. One of the three delegates, the professional exhibition man actually died during the following week. And of the remaining two only Roger Fox the ABTT's hon. treas. has stuck with, and was stuck with, the trade fair ever since. The ABTT itself had remanded the idea in custody of the limbo filing cabinet for an indefinite period when suddenly opportunity knocked: the Donmar

Rehearsal theatre in Covent Garden had a gap of a couple of weeks between one R.S.C. booking as their experimental theatre and the next, and the rent would be modest. This space of course well known now as the Warehouse theatre and the space/time element then proved a salutary discipline. The hon. treas. was joined by hon. sec. David Adams not just to organise but to do a large part of the work themselves and the result was an amateur effort by professionals which scored a direct hit.

What was particularly gratifying was the appearance of a number of the smaller enterprises among the big ones. One which took my eye, of course, appeared to be preoccupied with the restoration of Strand Electric spots which began life my reign. Not restoration as genuine old Benthams for the museum shelf but revived for a full and active life back in the theatre. Indeed in some cases their product seemed *better* than new. As befitted the open stage era there were exhibits of scenic and effects materials with an inborn resistance to fire. Sound and lighting were represented as was transport and rigging. Outstanding of all to my mind was the firm who actually tackled from first principles the problem of a music stand for the orchestra pits. The top-heavy sharp edged cocoa tin lamphouse of long standing tradition was being challenged not just by some costly special but by something expected to sell in quantity.

Next year the ABTT Trade Show moved to larger Donmar premises, namely the stage and orchestra pit of the Piccadilly theatre. While Dame Edna coxed by night we boxed by day, punctuated at regular intervals by a descending ceiling display. This had just been installed and enabled the Piccadilly to become large or small by rising or falling to cut out the Upper Circle. All at the mere touch of a button and a chorus of vociferous shouts of "stand clear".

1980 required both stage and stalls to house it all. So the Shaftesbury theatre, then dark, was occupied and now in 1981 it has been the turn of The Round House. The qualification of this venue was undoubted. Originally the engine shed of the first main line railway in the world—the London & Birmingham (later LNWR)—it then for many many years became a store for *beerbarrels*; at a time when all ale was real! Since 1969 it has been London's largest unorthodox theatre space. And in the last couple of years, the place where the Manchester Royal Exchange company and Alan Ayckbourne's Stephen Joseph theatre company from Scarborough can perform in the round.

A problem at the Shaftesbury had been that the bar was singularly remote. Thus instead of two intermingled hives of industry, one left the show to attempt the South-West passage, so to speak, and find a hushed igloo at the far end. Thus drinking partook of the nature of a religious retreat. At the Round House one's entrance and exit was ambushed by an all-day bar and refreshments. It struck the note of a lively

get-together rather than a sadistic solitary survey of product—as the marketing executive calls it. With all—well, some—respect to the big ones it was nice to see so many smaller exhibitors at this 1981 show particularly the hand-mades like props. In addition I sensed that there have grown up a number of small regionally located firms able to bring a personal touch and service by skilful admixture of items from the 'big ones' with the locally designed and made. Not everything happens in or from London, nowadays.

The first stand to catch my eye in the balcony was that music one—apparently R.A.T. Ltd. have supplied nearly 4,000 since I first saw it. Nearby was an old spilling Patt 50a Pageant lantern. It was not White Light Ltd. (although they too were busy polishing up the past on stand K) but Ancient Lights—another young firm with a good eye for period. A sort of antique dealer in lighting. As in furniture a good antique or a spare part from the past can often provide an elegant solution to a problem. Another Norfolk firm, Eltec, was alongside and it was nice to see trouble taken over designing dimmer-lever preset-panels in spite of the digital deluge. Several firms still lever away—at any rate for the smaller jobs (they would have been considered large once!). Something which is digital from end to end, literally, is the Kliegl Performance which not only does all the punching and processing that way as usual but dispenses with analogue conversion at the dimmer. Also on the T.P. Services stand, rather sotto luce, the fibreglass way to effects like fireworks.

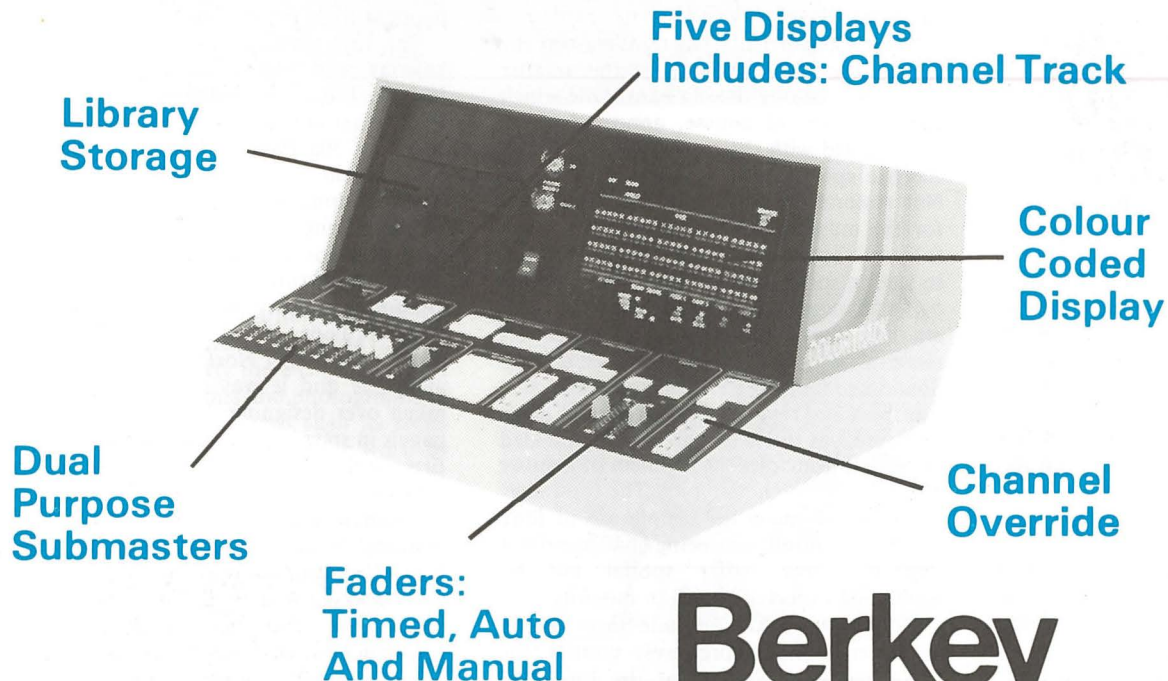
There were smoke 'machines' on two stands and loud wailing air raid sirens and bomb crashes from loud loudspeakers but thank goodness no 'Pop'; by comparison these noises seemed homely and friendly. Pop was represented by further developments in rigging and a remote joystick control of PAR cans. The firm called PANCAN in conjunction with Electrosonic move a mirror in front of the unit which remains fixed—this has logic behind it—indeed but for a pair of tiny mirrors we would not have 'enjoyed' all those lovely laser squiggles. Talking of rigging but at the quieter end of the scale there was the Peter Mumford Carousel Cradle to tidy up multi-screen projection and, dare I say it, many a run of the mill twin slide lecture.

C.C.T. brought a nice touch of the showman to their display while Strand across the way were sternly metric, nuts and all, with their 'new thirteen' curiously named Prelude and Harmony. Lighting does tend to hog a show like this even though sound control consols are much *bigger* and have *many* more knobs. According to John Wyckham 34.78% of the stands this year were in fact non-lighting and sound. The trouble is that *these* other firms have to use a lot of the lamps in order to shine. Even a manufacturer of pantomime custard pies would have to have splotches of light to do justice to his own splotch-making missiles!

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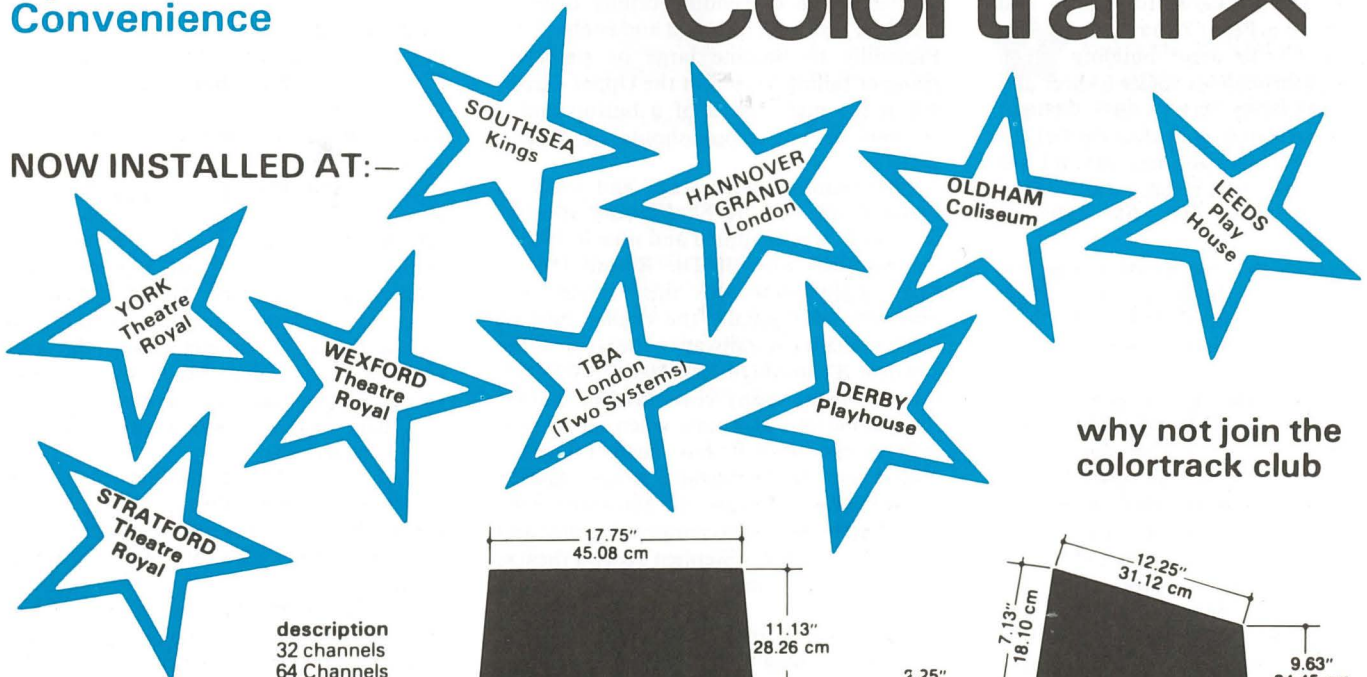
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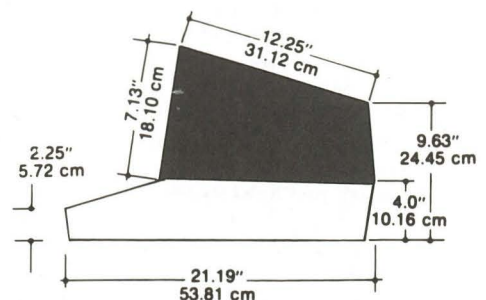
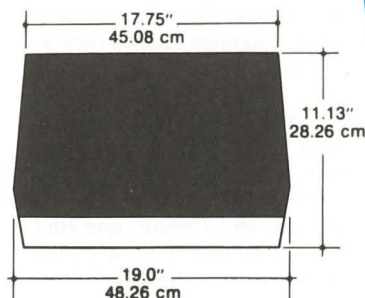
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PRODUCT NEWS



Magnum Opus

Having been let into the well kept secret of Rank Strand's massive research and development programme which preceded the launch of their new lantern range we are tempted to extend their musical metaphor.

A complete rationalisation of production has been achieved which uses common cross sections, common aluminium extrusions and pressure die casting to ensure dimensional and optical accuracy



throughout the range. The close attention given to safety and heat reduction is manifest whilst the general *look alike* compact design promises some very tidy rigging in the theatre.

The dropping of the old familiar Pattern No's in favour of names like Prelude and Harmony may take a bit of getting used to for old hands but its really quite simple if you think of Prelude as the introductory passage or wattage up to 650 watts leading in to the bigger 1kw lanterns comprising the Harmony range. Thus the Prelude range includes 3 profile spots, 1 Fresnel and 1 PC (Prism convex) lantern. The Harmony range likewise but with an extra variable spot between 22°/40°.

But do send for the literature it's thoroughly comprehensive with everything from performance data to spare parts, accessories, options and prices included.

Clearly, any well co-ordinated range of lanterns like this will have an instant appeal

abroad and much of the thoughtful design, particularly in matters of electrical and safety requirements, has this potentially larger market in mind.

We look forward to trying this new range and if, as one expects, it lives up to the standards of the old one in its heyday it will provide a well integrated lighting system. There is nothing revolutionary about the range which is not meant as a criticism—the company is probably right in the present state of the theatre equipment market to concentrate on rationalisation bringing manufacturing methods and service up to date.

Have you seen the light

CCT who have for so many years been a refreshing and innovative influence (they were the first large manufacturers to use extruded aluminium for lanterns) are never content to rest on their laurels. They also introduced a number of new products at the ABTT.

Their M650 is a new series in the very successful Minuette Spotlight range designed to use the recently introduced T26 650W TH Lamp but M & T 300/500W lamps can, of course, continue to be used.

Although retaining the compact size of the original Minuette Spots, M650 has been re-designed internally and externally. A flow through ventilation system gives high thermal efficiency particularly at the operating angles at which most spotlights are used. Yoke, cable gland and focus knob are improved and a new horizontal "grab" handle is fitted as standard.



The M650 Profile Spotlight has a completely new gate and shutter system along with new mechanics for moving the lenses. Baffles are easily removeable for internal cleaning.

Both the new M650 Spotlights and the recently introduced Minuette Floodlight are sensibly priced and provide the beam characteristics required for most entertainment needs.



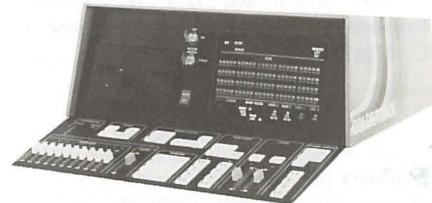
CCT's *Poppette* is a completely new low voltage (12V) luminaire designed to give theatrical lighting qualities for display and architectural lighting and uses the new low voltage Tungsten Halogen lamps with internal reflectors.

CCT have also added a 24V AC continuous Colour Wheel to their Chromatic MX range (which won ABTT's new product Award in 1980). This continuous wheel can also be used with the "Poppette".

On the control front, Electrosonic's Multiway 2, a Modular 3 Preset electronic system, is also marketed by CCT. It has comprehensive sub and systems mastering arrangements and is available in 12 way steps from 36 to 120 ways. A single ribbon cable system is the only external wiring. Systems are expandable in the field.

Colortrack Extended

Though not new, Berkey's Colortrack was on show in a new 125 channel version in addition to the existing 32, 64 and 96



channel models. The system has earned its spurs with seventeen already installed and ten more on order. Berkey had two new lanterns on show, a 2,000W Fresnel and a Zoom Ellipsoid profile spot of 1,000W.

Smaller Lighting Controls

Eltec recently announced two new ranges of lighting controls. The Studio 90 range designed for small theatres and studios and the Studio 80 range for larger school installations, amateur groups and hire companies. Both ranges are well engineered and sensibly priced.

The Studio 80 desks have two scene presets with two groups per pre-set, i.e. four group masters arranged in two pre-set form controlled independently or by Dipless Crossfader. Crossfades can be manually or timer controlled, A Master Blackout Switch is fitted.

The Studio 90 desks have three Scene pre-sets with three Groups per pre-set form and controlled by a Dipless Crossfader operated manually or by Timer.

The timer has two ranges 0-1 min. and 1-60 min. selected by switch and rotary control. Progress and direction of fade is shown on an Illuminated Scale adjacent to the crossfader. A Grand Master fader is provided together with Inhibit and Independent facilities on all channels.

Master and Group Blackout is also fitted.

Systems are built up using a number of 12 channel modules and one master module per desk. Up to sixty channels can be accommodated on a single unit desk. For systems in excess of this, wing unit extensions are available.

A desk worth looking at

Last but I suspect by no means least among lighting controls my eye was caught by Datalite from Dynamic Technology Limited. This subsidiary of London Weekend Television is not new to controls but up to now has naturally enough concentrated on the television market. Datalite however is definitely for theatre and has a desk that looks a pleasure to work. DTL believe they have a competitor for Rank Strand's Galaxy.

Thorn dimmers still in production

The Thorn L.A.O. type dimmers and cubicles and the F.D. range of dimmers live on. D.E.W. Electrical Engineering Ltd., have taken over the production of this successful range of plug in dimmer modules. Power ratings are 2.5kW, 5kW and 10kW. They incorporate a 3 phase bus bar system and easy load/phase balancing.

Service responsibilities for existing installations will continue to be undertaken by Thorn but any new installations will be looked after by D.E.W. Electrical Engineering Ltd., at Maybank House, Unit C, Maybank Road, London E18.

Designer Products

Rosco had no less than 20 new designer products at the ABTT—gauzes, scrims, fabrics, filters, props, dyes and blood.

Iddings Deep Colours need no introduction but now that they are part of the Rosco Group the choice of paint systems from this stable is pretty comprehensive. Iddings Deep Colours are reckoned to be light fast as well as water and mildew resistant. They are non-bleeding, recoatable and are apparently uniformly light reflective. As well as the 24 colours there are 2 clear acrylics.

Rosco also have a new fog machine and fluid. Because the fluid is not petrol based the system is much safer, cleaner and altogether pleasanter than the traditional products.

There are additions to the Glame and Slitdrapage range, a new range of Hausmann stage products and various other new designer and effects products all of which were being promoted with tremendous energy and good humour by Rosco's Michael Hall, although he did hire a professional dancer, I am glad to say, to demonstrate the Roscofloor. This is a new product for Europe which has been very successful in America especially for dance tours.

Gobos and Effects

Berkey are aiming to give Rosco a little competition (and Lee and Cinemoid as well for that matter) with their Gelatran colour

filters. There is a good range in sheets and rolls and the price is more competitive than it was. Berkey claim the colours are resistant to heat fading. They also have a range of Gobos and Designers Patterns.

Talking of Gobos reminds me of David Hersey Associates which has now been split into two separate units but still at the same address. DHA Lighting is run by David Hersey and concentrates on Gobos and holders. Centre Stage is run by Malcolm Davis for effects, hardware and the hire side of the original business.

No mention of effects could omit Theatre Sound and Light and Eddie Biddle, probably the best known effects man of them all and this year's winner of the ABTT Technician of the Year award.

Sound Progress

Libra (Who are now owned by Audix) have an improved version of their sound mixing desk which won the "Best Product of the Year Award" at the ABTT in 1978. The new version has 60 input channels, improved output mixing and extra equalisation. *Libra* with Graham Walne are developing theatre sound products independently though obviously with the backing of Audix.

Optical Fibres

Theatre Projects is of course a focal point for all manufacturers and they had some intriguing new products on display. One of these was a programmable fast magazine colour changer which allows ten colour changes from one magazine. It is made by Plumblin Design.

Theatre Projects are also responsible for the entertainment applications of optical fibres manufactured by Eurotech Optical Films. In case, like me, you don't know what optical fibres are you have probably seen them at work as warning lights on car instrument panels. They consist of cables made of optically efficient glass fibre which are capable of transmitting light *without power* over quite long distances with minimal loss of illumination. The beauty of using them is that they are virtually indestructible (Brian Benn at T.P. says you can tie knots in them) and of course need no wiring. You simply provide a light source at one end and distribute the other ends wherever required on stage, say on a backcloth. This was done to great effect in the American show "Swing" even if the production was not a success otherwise.

Make-up for AJS

AJS of Bournemouth best known as distributors of lighting equipment, have branched out into make-up as U.K. distributors for BEN NYE one of the best make-up houses in the United States.

Ironmongery

Peter Mumford has designed a carousel cradle which may sound boring but is one of those simple devices which make life easier. It allows 45° movement vertically in either direction and should be a real boon for theatre and club projections just as

much as multi-screen audio visual work. It is a thoroughly robust piece of ironmongery which can be mounted on booms, hung or used free standing. A deserving winner of the ABTT Product of the Year Award Peter Mumford trades as THE LIGHT WORKS AT 58-60 Salisbury Road, Cardiff CF4 2BX and should not be confused with another talented designer in a different field, Charlie Paton whose company LIGHT WORKS LTD., is at 2A Greenwood Road, London E8. Charlie Paton's remote control developments continue and he had an extremely impressive display at the ABTT show using his new control which interfaces with a memory.

Another piece of ironmongery from Lancelyn Lighting of Oxford fill a gap left by the sad demise of Hallstage. Stage weights are not exactly an everyday purchase but when you want them Lancelyn have a sensible new design and a very sensible price of £12.50.

The Big Scene

NECO (Colour Enlargements) Ltd are promoting their new SUPERSCAN process for making backdrops for shows, exhibitions and for general interior design.

SUPERSCAN will reproduce any image—artwork, photograph transparency—to any size onto virtually any material.

Prints by SUPERSCAN have been used by television companies, theatres, ballet and opera companies, discotheques, in fact by designers in all branches of the entertainment industry.

A SUPERSCAN print is extremely durable, is UV fade resistant, fireproof, ironable and will not peel or crack.

The process was originally invented in the United States and is basically a computer-controlled ink-jet printing method. Since NECO (Colour Enlargements) Ltd acquired this technology they have been developing new and better inks and committing a considerable amount of money to Research. A new and even better SUPERSCAN machine is coming into operation within the next six months.

The cost of a SUPERSCAN print is surprisingly low—less than conventional photo blow-ups and with none of their restrictions.

Further information is available from Charmian Watford, Sales Director, NECO (Colour Enlargements) Ltd., Suite 24 Craven Lodge, 15-17 Craven Hill, London W2 3ER. Telephone 01-402-6418, Telex 298857.

The Suffolk Scene

As well as bespoke scenery for new shows Suffolk Scenery will provide a whole range of stock sets for rental by touring companies. Just a telephone call to Martin Dye on 0493 679 and before you can say 'curtain up' he will see you on the road with the right set for any show in your repertoire.

There's a Small Hotel, Aint Harf Hot Mum, Doctor in the House are just a few of the shows in the Suffolk Scenery's own repertoire.

CUE LIGHTING DIRECTORY

The Lighting Directory is divided into three sections covering Manufacturers, Distributors and Hirers.

The Manufacturers section is arranged in alphabetical order and gives the address, telephone number and broad categories of products manufactured by each company.

The Distributors section is not a list of official agents (although these are included) but a guide as to which products can be purchased from each distributor. The distributors in this section are arranged geographically by county and if a distributor appears in a county other than the one in which he is based this indicates that he serves this additional area.

The Hirers section is also arranged by county. Companies providing a nationwide service are listed under London. In addition to the address and telephone the name of the manager or contact is shown together with any services provided in addition to hire. Again companies listed in more than one area provide their services in these additional areas.

DOMINIC LIGHT & SOUND LTD.,
Christopher Place, Chalton St., London
NW1 1JF. 01-388 2936.
Intercom systems.

DURAPLUG ELECTRICALS LTD.,
Westwood Works, Margate Rd.,
Broadstairs, Kent CT10 2QL.
0843-68771.
Insulated plugs and sockets.

ELECTROSONIC LTD, 815 Woolwich
Rd., London SE7 8LT. 01-855-1101.
Lighting Controls (supplied through
CCT), standard and custom projection
systems, sound and comm. systems.

ELTEC, Station Ho., Little Dunham,
Kings Lynn, Norfolk. 0760-23073.
Lighting Controls. Free catalogue.

GREEN GINGER LTD., 52 Potters Lane,
Kiln Farm, Milton Keynes MK11 3HQ.
0908-566170.
Lighting Controls. Comm. systems. Free
catalogue.

LANCELYN LIGHTING, 102 & 112
Walton St., Oxford.
0865-512464/511522.
Lights, Rigging, Flash boxes, Detonator
sets, Intercoms. Free catalogue.

LE MAITRE LIGHTING, 316 Purley Way,
Croydon, Surrey. 01-686-9258.
Dry ice machines, smoke cartridges,
mirrorballs.

LEE FILTERS LTD., Central Way,
Walworth Ind. Estate, Andover, Hants.
SP10 5AN. 0264-66245.
Colour correction and colour effect light
filters (theatre, film & T.V.).

LIGHT WORKS LTD., 2A Greenwood
Rd., London E8 1AB. 01-249-3627.
Lights, Lighting Controls, Remote control
servo systems.

NORTHERN LIGHT, 39/41 Assembly
St., Leith, Edinburgh EH6 7RG.
031-553-2383.
Lighting Controls, Rigging, Accessories,
Socket Outlet Boxes, Facilities Panels,
sound comm. systems.

**Northern
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Technician of Which Year!

FREDERICK BENTHAM

It would be generally agreed, I think, that the stage lighting equipment used by today's lighting designers does not exude the personal touch of the hand-made. The lanterns seem to invite being called luminaires. It is difficult to think of applying this engineer's term to the dear old Pageant, Acting Area or 17-inch Sunray of times past, the days of short runs in the factory: when one man, and one man only, made nothing but large wing floods all his working life. Even switchboards today are mass-produced. No longer does the one man go to the store draw out the angle and channel iron, cut it up to make a frame, paint it, mount the shafting, clutches, relays and so on & on: then make up both high voltage and low voltage wiring and finally, after test, dismantle and re-assemble in the theatre.

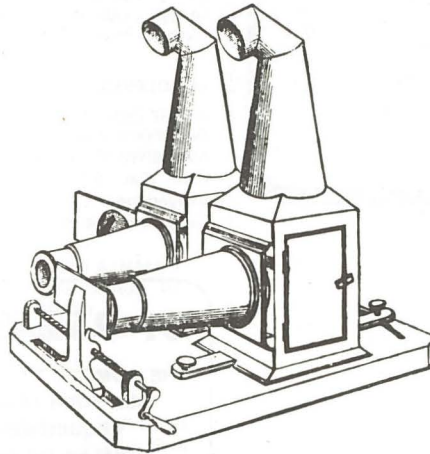
Curiously, what the new equipment is used to light upon the stage—the scenery, the props, the armour, the costumes and wigs—remain in spite of modern materials and tools, obstinately hand made; the work of craftsmen. In this Savoyard Autumn when we ought to be celebrating one hundred years of the first theatre to be lighted throughout by electricity but are unlikely to do so, let us look around and see if any ancient lighting craft of those times does survive. In the year 1881 everything for those first electric battens, including the holders for the Swan incandescent filament lamps, had to be specially made.

There is just one such craft and it was old even then. Furthermore it seems all set to continue for decades yet. It is the craft of making optical effects. And great though the output these effects has been, few are those who have been called upon to practice the craft. The optical effect is the true survivor of the great age of the magic lantern. In this context, such effects must be kept quite separate from the projection of slides as scenery. What Optical Effect (Sciopticon in the States) means to us in theatre is a moving picture and for that role the cinematograph has proved no challenge at all.

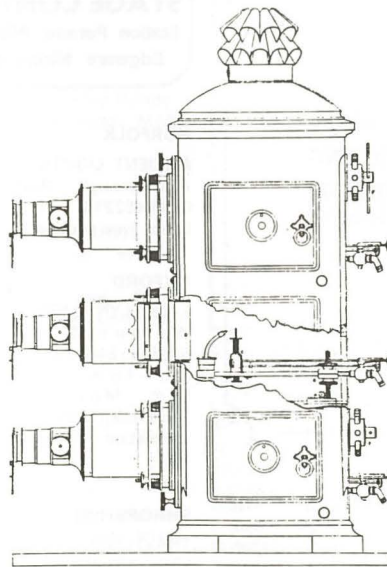
The old magic lantern should not be thought of as one still slide replacing another on the screen while a lecturer drooled on about the Holy Land or The Wars of the Roses. It was an entertainment and thanks to the fanatical enthusiasm of one man and our extensive if rapidly decaying canal system, with which it is contemporary, people up and down the country can savour what this predecessor to the cinema was like. Doug Lear has converted a 70ft narrow boat into a thirty-seater theatre. It has a rake contrived of a combination of shallow steps and the sizing up (or down) by his wife Anita of the members of their audience. Add to this a back-projection area complete with authentic period bi-unial lantern, a vast collection of slides and a Mustel organ.

What has the show itself to offer? Above

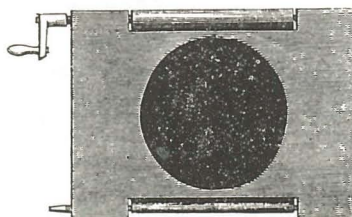
all it is a display of dexterity on the part of the operator of the bi-unial lantern and on the part of the original painters of the slides. Photography was not available for most of the reign of the magic lantern but this was no deterrent to the portrayal in detail of armies and other crowd scenes. And remember, these 3¼ inch square slides have to appear vastly blown up in size on a screen. To apply movement there are crossfades from one slide to another or



Dissolving views; two magic lanterns
(*Theatre Lighting in the Age of Gas—Terence Rees*)



Patent triple or tri-unial lantern (1886)
(*Theatre Lighting in the Age of Gas—Terence Rees*)



Mechanical slide for snow effect (1854)
(*Theatre Lighting in the Age of Gas—Terence Rees*)

superimposition of one upon another to give sunsets, moonlight, changes of weather or season and so forth. Part of Doug Lear's show is devoted to compound slides which consist of fixed and moving glasses to animate the picture. The most obvious use of these is for comic clowning.

I have a feeling that our Laser and Disco enthusiasts would receive a surprise from the fantasia for solo chromotropes which ends the show. Using one of today's pop electronic compositions as accompaniment heightens the effect. With the light patterns beating and twisting away in rhythm to the music it seemed quite impossible that just one bi-unial lantern fitted with a pair of 20-watt lamps was responsible. The changing of slides to add variety of pattern to the sequence was perfectly done and all this in the most cramped of quarters. It completely put to shame the Lightshow practitioners of 'our' time.

Chromotrope is a word which means everything to the initiated but nothing whatever to the majority. The slide consists of a wooden frame with at least two circular glasses, one or more of which are rotated through gearing from a small handle at the side. On the glasses are painted highly-coloured geometric patterns which interact to produce movement on the screen. One obvious example draws the viewer inexorably through a spiral tunnel but many other kaleidoscopic effects can be produced. As a matter of history it was a modern chromotrope slide without colour which produced the sinister halo around the Flying Dutchman's ship as it approached out of the clouded storm tossed sea in the classic production of the opera at Sadler's Wells theatre, back in 1959 and in the repertoire for very many years after.

We could not have a better example of the ancient lighting craft of optical effects in action. Charles Bristow who lit the show would have, like so many theatre people before and after, automatically consulted Eddie Biddle then at Strand Electric. In doing so he was dealing with the one man who was not only responsible for the making of the traditional effects like waves and clouds but who would design and invent *any* new one to cover whatever the particular production demanded.

The discussion would have been a friendly affair for both were well-known to each other and in any case Eddie with one half of him involved in the traditional was quick to seize the opportunity to dream up something new in terms of his craft. And he himself would be making and painting the effect—equally he would soon think up something else if it turned out not to be just what was required. In this he was the exact opposite of his predecessor and one time master, Frank Weston. It needed a lot of courage to suggest to Frank that perhaps we might try this or that.

The first assistant allocated to Frank in the twenties was Jack Madre. Since both

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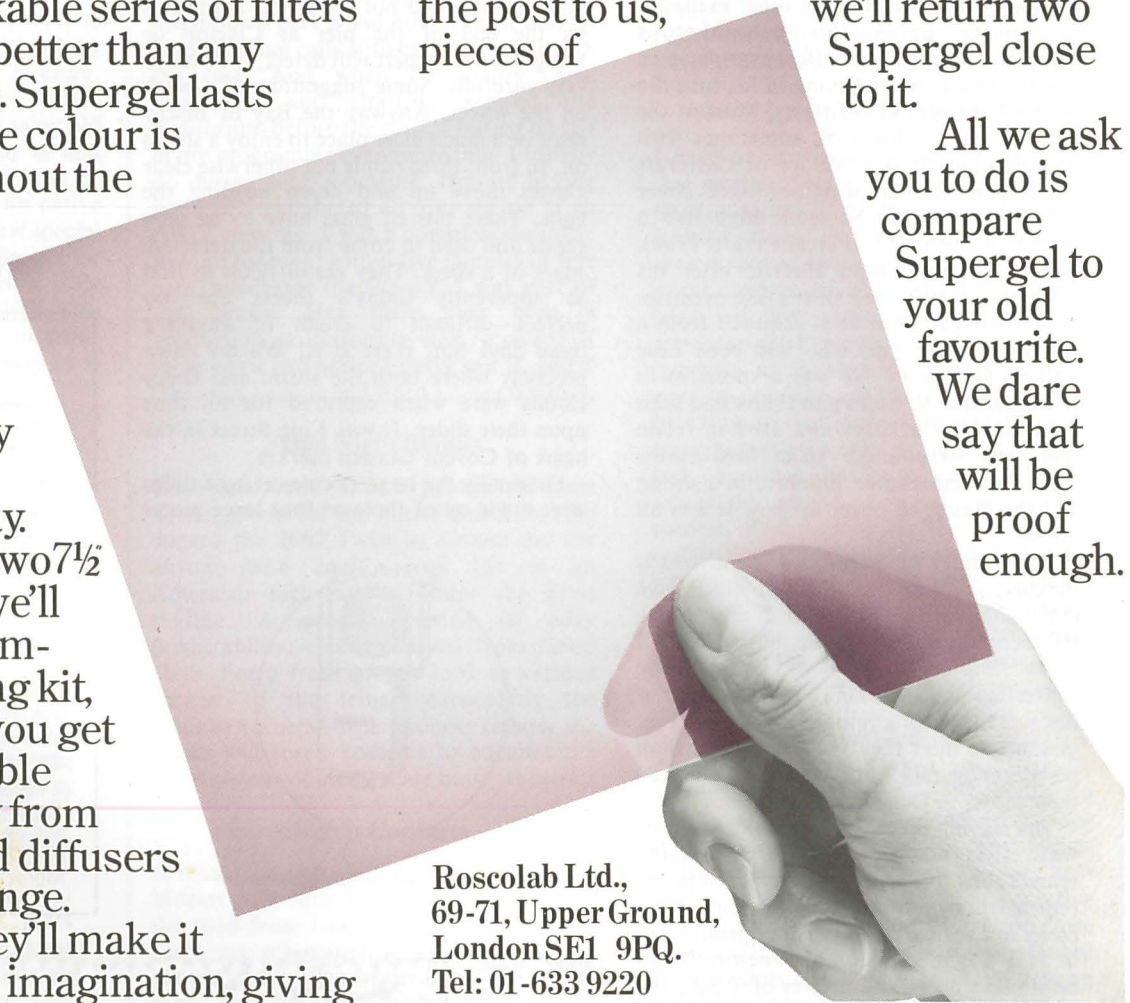
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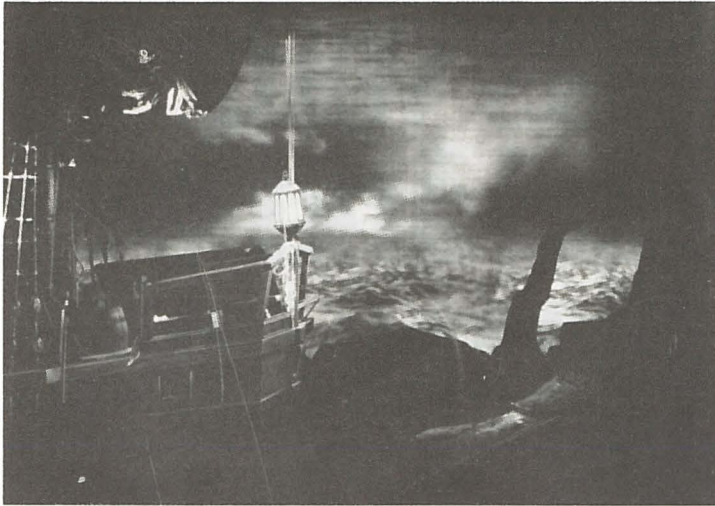
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The Flying Dutchman Sadlers Wells (1959) (left) clouds and waves, (right) dissolving slides and chromotrope

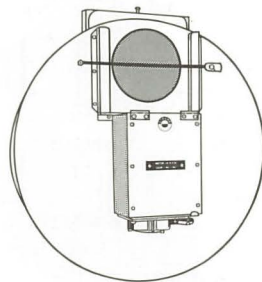
had violent tempers easily triggered, a replacement had soon to be conscripted and the short straw was drawn by a very young Eddie Biddle who chanced to have joined the firm. He had no obvious qualification for the job but somehow or other managed to survive under this cantankerous aggressive boss: to such effect that patience was rewarded by becoming in his turn the Ruler of the Strand's Effects. Most of the time he was on his own, sometimes with one assistant. It is a feature of this craft that a mere handful of names would cover the work worldwide. Someone might like to attempt a thesis on this arcane craft. Frank Weston joined Strand Electric after his "demob" in 1919. The firm's first premises in Garrick Yard had been acquired from a certain Percy Boggis who had been Loie Fuller's electrician. He was a specialist in Effects and U.V. tricks and Frank had been with him on the tours and used to relate that they were under strict instructions from this remarkable pioneer, in lighting and the dance, to cover up how it was all done.

The country of origin of some effects is obscure; certainly John Kleigl must have taken some of the ideas with him when he left Germany and started up in New York. I know that at least two effects, the Butterflies and the Falling Flowers were of distant Kleigl origin and it was a great pleasure to meet their current Effects Man perpetuating this work when I last visited their plant, in October 1975.

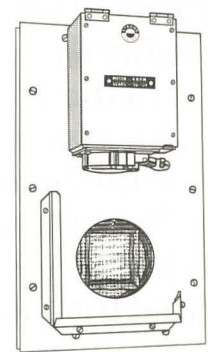
The staying power of the cloud, snow or wave effects and the rest of the cast is quite remarkable. If Arthur Bouchier were to return from the grave to play Long John Silver in a revival of his twenties production of J. B. Fagan's version of *Treasure Island* he would find on the shelves of T.S.L. the very same wave effect: electric clock motor instead of a spring clockwork but otherwise unchanged. It was T.S.L. (Theatre Sound and Lighting (Services) Ltd.) who took over from Rank Strand the sacred trust (i.e. Eddie Biddle) of making sure that theatre (and television) can always have their optical effects. The wave effect is still housed in a tall vertical wooden box wherein is fixed the umpteenth

reproduction of a rough sea as seen from the stern of a boat. This photograph was reputedly taken in the Bay of Biscay but with what, off what, by whom and when? How do we know that the unknown photographer did not set up his apparatus on the end of the pier at Clacton or Margate? The expert will detect, if he looks very carefully, some suggestion of a wash on the waves. Anyway the Bay of Biscay must be a much nicer place to enjoy a storm on. In front three ripple but otherwise clear glasses move up and down bending the light. These bits of glass have to be very gentle and used to come from the defective edges of a sheet. They are difficult to find as apparently today's sheets are *too* perfect—difficult to credit of anything these days but, there it is! We do know precisely where both the storm and fleecy clouds were when captured for all time upon their slides. It was King Street in the heart of Covent Garden market.

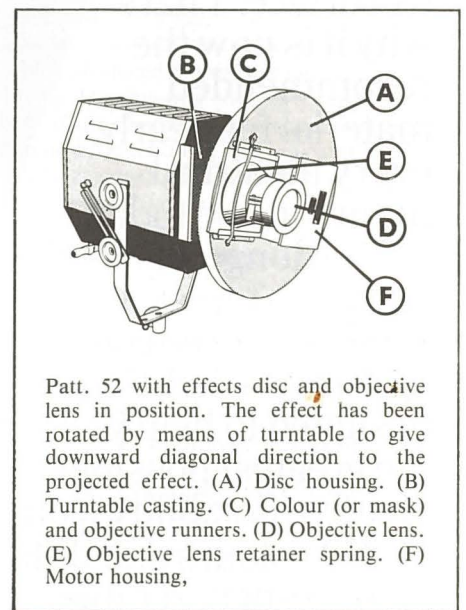
Originally the large circular effects slides were made up of three or four large pieces



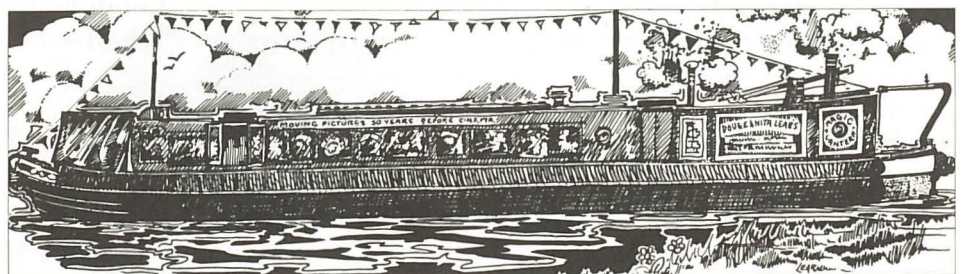
Disc type moving effects attachment



Box type moving effects attachment



Patt. 52 with effects disc and objective lens in position. The effect has been rotated by means of turntable to give downward diagonal direction to the projected effect. (A) Disc housing. (B) Turntable casting. (C) Colour (or mask) and objective runners. (D) Objective lens. (E) Objective lens retainer spring. (F) Motor housing,



The good ship 'Magic Lantern'

Between Cues

The thoughts of
Walter Plinge

of mica stuck together and hand painted. A process in which the fingers played a large part. Much early Eddie work will be readily identifiable by the archaeologist one day, in consequence. The mica discs persisted until after the Hitler war. I recall that on the first night of *Rainbow Square* in 1951; during the storm scene something like a sheet off a bed went rushing by overhead. One of the micas had become unstuck and was showing white. I sat in the stalls of the old Stoll Kingsway petrified. But it did not reappear: it had been spotted by the Light Console operator and that effects projector faded out before the repeat came round. It was nicely done.

When at last it became possible to think of using discs of heat-resisting glass and photographic reproduction it was natural to consider pointing a camera at bits of the sky and making a master montage. This was quite hopeless. To collect enough cloud pictures which could be pieced together to make a story, so to speak, and arrive at a point of repeat was a task for a computer or Eddie Biddle. Since we did not have computers in those days the 'photographic' clouds are from Eddie artwork made in King Street.

In a changing world the craft of optical effects—like the toilet roll—is something which defies fundamental change. Nevertheless, the reader must not be left with an image of a man doing the same old things, however craftworthy, year in and year out for over fifty years. The truth is, thanks to his skill as an artist and his native ingenuity, there must have been few special optical effects demands from a director or his lighting man which he, after a little thought, has not been able to satisfy. You put a bit of this with that, draw or paint something, add a breaking-up glass or two, suggest the right lens and degree of focus and there it is—the desired effect. And much better, and certainly much less expensive, than some extravaganza employing film or lasers. Above all it will be right for the stage because it is a 'live' piece of apparatus conceived and made by a man to be part of a live show.

CUE readers will like to know that Eddie Biddle who figures so largely in the article above, became the ABTT's Technician of the Year. The coveted trophy (a chromium plated G clamp on a suitably inscribed base) was presented at the Round House Trade Show by Antony Easterbrook chairman of the ABTT who said that Eddie had practiced for 51 years what surely must have been the rarest of theatre crafts. In acknowledging the honour Eddie replied that for twenty years he was known as that "Effects chap" for the next twenty as "The effects expert" but when, ten years ago he became, like Joe Davis or Fred Bentham, just "Eddie Biddle" he knew he had arrived!

(Editor)

Ensemble Defined

Ensemble is perhaps an ideal more appealing to the committed minority playgoer than to the majority audience who, on the evidence of the box-office, seem to prefer stars. Music, on the whole, is dependent on ensemble. Drama, on the other hand, can exist without it and the word has developed something of an image (often based on experience) of acting that is closely integrated but uniformly bad. However, ensemble as a total integration of uniformly excellent acting has been freshly defined by the RSC in *Nicholas Nickleby*. It was difficult to get in, but during the last weeks of the final revival my patience was rewarded with a "return" in the back row of the pit. It was part 2 and I felt like an interloper. The four hours that the audience had spent together during the afternoon's part 1 had bound them into an ensemble: not only with each other but with the cast. And when the actors came wandering and chatting around the auditorium before the start, I buried myself in my programme even more than I usually do during such moments. Despite having previously clambered all over the set at an ABTT meeting, I was a complete outsider. But not for long: within five minutes or five cues, whichever the shorter, I was part of the family. Has there ever been a production so uniformly well received? If there was a bad notice I never saw it, and if there was a single bad word I never heard it.

Salad Night Stands

One Night Stand failed to provide the same nostalgia trip for the mums and dads who danced the 1962 Twist as *Grease* did for anyone who could recall life in an American high school under the Elvis regime. A gentle evening of cosy predictability, clearly derived from *Salad Days*. For a fresh brew I look to various corners of the fringe—particularly the feminist corners—where sooner or later the trends will surely coalesce to advance the development of small scale music theatre.

Church Concerts

A recent evening of orchestral Haydn and Mozart in a little Georgian theatre down the road from Chez Plinge reinforced yet again my oft stated belief in theatres as concert halls. But what about churches? Well, up the road there is a minor perpendicular cathedral where another summer's evening found me rejoicing in the sonority of Beethoven's horns but requiring a score to hear the strands of his pastoral symphony. From time to time it is certainly right and proper to stand in awe of Gothic Grandeurs and some music takes on a new, sometimes even interesting dimension when the acoustic stresses the overall shape at

the expense of the inner texture. However on the whole my ears and sensors are more receptive to the Georgian churches with their domestic scale and elegant restraint. St. George's Hanover Square was built in Handel's parish during his lifetime. Like the theatre of that time, it is built in courtyard form with people hanging on the walls to increase that intimacy and sense of corporate identity which is fundamental to the concept of both theatre and church. With the baroque timbers of original instruments, including such stylistic felicities as oboes doubling recorders, Handel's "The Triumph of Time and Truth" was a total marriage of music and architecture. It is one of those pieces that jogs along pleasantly but from time to time suddenly overwhelms the senses with unbelievably exquisite sounds. A perfect evening with every ambient detail just right—including tolling the bell to recall interval drinkers from the Mason's Arms.

Repetition Parisien

I have never shared the widely held view that worthy theatre can only germinate in an atmosphere of tension and exhaustion. Regular sleep and relaxed meals have always seemed to me to be an essential part of the creative process. Perhaps that is why some of my more pleasant rehearsal memories are Parisian. Even (or especially) the Man of la Mancha rehearsals which were scheduled to last from 2 a.m. until late breakfast so that they might integrate with day rehearsals for evening concerts. Days in bed, evenings in Paris and nights in rehearsals passed a week in pleasant routine. Preparations for the French flop of Sleuth were enlivened by an oblique back wall requiring the set to be an exact left for right mirror image of the original design. This turned out to be rather more unnerving than anyone had predicted, but the focussing schedule fortunately allowed for frequent refreshment breaks to reverse the lighting designer's visual perception. Bubbling Brown Sugar was rigidly scheduled as 8-12, 2-6, 8-12, (with an additional 30 minute intermission in each call) to allow a proper creative contribution to be made by the cuisine of the cafe next door. A carefully regulated creative environment where the only intrusion from the outside world was a message relayed from the box office in the form of a scrap of paper bearing a London telephone number and an elegantly pencilled *Monsieur ?? (au fait avec lumiere)*.

Phrasing for Profit

Was it Dick Condon (it must have been Dick Condon) who shook his head over the notice in a theatre bar *No Hot Meals Served after 7 p.m.* "Now surely everyone knows"

he said "that it should read *Delicious Hot Meals always available until 7 p.m.*" I was reminded of this on two recent consecutive ferry trips. As I approached the bar on St. Pondlink, the shutter crashed down, most of the lights went out and the steward, looking at his watch, declared triumphantly "well we've run out of draught anyway." A couple of weeks later aboard the King Hamburger, on the stroke of 21.00 the *Geschlossen* signs appeared but the tannoys purred with a sexy frau reminding us that breakfast would be served from 7 a.m. I don't know whether this is what is called *marketing* but it is certainly positive, polite, and probably profitable.



Alternative Bullring

With my usual genius for miss-timing, I arranged for the annual family fortnight of sun, swim and wine to end the day before Denia's Fiesta week. Denia is too small to have a Teatro Principal or a Plaza de Toros but with a bit of carpentry the church square becomes a theatre and the quayside acquires a temporary arena for the appreciation of bull heroism. Actually Denia has a rather unique version of the bullfight where the bull appears (from the postcards) to have the upper hand. Definitely not a case of *last one in is a cissy*.



Willkommen

I am all for a bit of theatrical camp, and so I am not averse to my ship being welcomed to the River Elbe by the raising of her national flag to an accompaniment of a few decibels of her national anthem. Particularly as this welcome point is an

enterprising house of public refreshment—even if it was deserted in a misty dawn and the ceremony lacked anything so human as a waving hand. When, a few miles later, the ship moved into her home port with a blast of Rule Britannia from her own loudspeakers, I felt that there might be more subtle ways of telling the Hamburgers where we had come from. And when this segued into an orchestration of Greensleeves so soupy that James Last himself would have been embarrassed, I really did feel that we had gone over the top.



Acoustic Courtyard

The life of an acoustician is hard—forever condemned to work with unsympathetic building materials in 'an age when the architect's aesthetic search for functional purity so often seems to end up in brutalism. Most theatre people have acquired a cynical approach to the science of acoustics and most can remember the day when they crossed the threshold of that cynicism. In my case it was during the remodelling of a theatre of cinematic vintage. A lighting bridge was to be incorporated in a new ceiling. For months I corresponded, through the architect, with the acoustic consultant. Then the crunch. If I insisted on any change, however minimal, in the ceiling configuration, then future audiences would forever clap their hands over their ears in horror. Now I am a reasonable chappie as well as a coward: so I withdrew my objections with all that grace and dignity for which we lighting designers are renowned. A year or so later I stood on stage and admired my lighting bridge now swung into place. "And when" I asked the architect "shall we see the ceiling?" "Oh that's been cut" came the reply, "No money!" A dozen years later, the bridge still hangs in limbo. No cases of acoustic suicide have been reported. Against myself, it is only honest to record that despite the less than theoretically ideal position, the lighting angle is rather good. All this acoustic reminiscence has been prompted by news that the Lincoln Centre is to spend

eight million dollars on alterations aimed at correcting the acoustics of the New York State Theatre (opera/ballet house) and the Vivien Beaumont (drama house). It is reported (with relief) that no adjustments are required at the Met, but the Avery Fisher Hall (home of the Philharmonic) has already been given a totally new auditorium since its original opening in 1962. Which brings me back to acoustic cynicism: it has ended up with that shallow tiered courtyard form which was standard in an age when acoustics were part of a master builder's instinct.

Performing Words

Street Theatre takes many forms. In a Hamburg square I came across an event which I can only describe as performance literature. On one improvised stage they were singing that kind of song where the words are obviously more important than the music. Elsewhere, prose was being offered into a microphone with sincerity rather than feeling. Children were being guided through a programme of structured creativity with basic materials. The site was criss-crossed with alleys of bookstalls. Pamphleteers had been prolific. The beer looked clear, the bread wholesome and the sausages marched elegantly and obscene. So I stopped to lunch and let the words roll over me. Like music.

A Speciality Dream

Had I but been born with a smoother countenance (and no whiskers), I often think that it would have been fun to be a conjuror's assistant. Making heroic arm gestures while posturing elegantly in black fishnets, my face displaying anticipatory horror—then beaming relief (tinged with just a little disbelief) that *he* had actually made it. The band, of course, playing away like crazy at their speciality music. But not the Star Wars selection that I recently found a conjuror working to. Something cheerfully rhythmic: preferably arranged by Marcus Trundleberry, Mus.Bac., in his heyday at the Hockley Hippodrome.