

CUE

Technical Theatre Review

January – February 1982

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CUE

Technical Theatre Review

15 January–February 1982

It was the Theatre Royal Bath (cover picture) which established C J Phipps' reputation in 1863 and except for redecoration in 1892 and 1974 the theatre remains today very much as Phipps left it. Ambitious plans for its much needed restoration are in hand aimed at re-opening for this year's panto season.

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Master or monster?

There was, at the exhibition mounted at the Lyric to celebrate his life and work, a partial listing of the 150 theatres Frank Matcham is reputed to have put up – most of which, it is also recorded, have been destroyed, demolished or, perhaps, just fell down when the wind leaned on them. All very sad, of course, for the theatre historian. But something of a blessing, dare one suggest, for the theatrical profession at large, and the enlargement of its arts and crafts.

Because Matcham, like his late Victorian clients, was essentially a front-of-house man. He seems to have approached the building of a theatre like the later Ottoman caliphs approached the building of Topkapi, creating a spacious front of playgrounds decorated as opulent fairgrounds (could his style be characterised as "rococonut"?) entirely for the management and its friends and patrons, but relegating the performers and technicians to a seraglio of cramped and cheerless cupboards smelling of sweat, dust, grease and old tennis shoes. This, of course, was well suited to the perpetuation of their status as mountebanks, rogues and women of low repute.

Between 1875 and 1914, it is said, over 800 theatres were built in Britain, mostly on the principle Matcham cheerfully embraced of a ratio of 9:1 between front-of-house and back-stage areas – which allowed accommodation for nothing much more than a series of music hall turns.

Whatever one may think of the new stripped down style of theatre-building and however much one repines that something is missing from theatre-going as a total experience (TAT included), there is no doubt that it is becoming easier for creative direction and execution to work many new kinds of magic actually *on the stage*, rather than, as in Matcham's day, around the fauteuils, boxes and crushbars. Long live Matcham, we say, but *ars longa* to the new building at the Barbican, the Riverside, the Mermaid and Covent Garden.

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Autolycus

Now the good news

The Arts Council has agreed to make grants from its Housing the Arts Fund of £20,000 to the Bristol Hippodrome Theatre; £3,000 to Radio Doom, a multi-media community arts organisation in Liverpool; and £1,500 to Chisendale Dance Space in Bow, East London.

The £20,000 grant to the Bristol Hippodrome will go towards the third phase of an improvements scheme for the theatre, which will include the upgrading of fire precautions, the waterproofing of the roof, smartening up the exterior and improvements to the dressing rooms. The Arts Council has already contributed £20,000 to the second phase of the improvements.

The two smaller grants will help to provide major alterations to the premises in Liverpool and Bow. Radio Doom is to carry out structural changes and re-wiring; Chisendale Works is to convert a neighbouring area into a dance space for new and experimental work as well as two studios, an office and a space for running *New Dance* magazine. Much of the work is being carried out on a self-help basis. The dancers have already started to carry out the conversion at a fraction of the commercial cost.

And so to Bath . . .

Anthony McCall's article on the reconstruction of the Theatre Royal in Bath appears later in this issue. To add background to new chapters in an astonishing history, we have drawn, with gratitude, on the historical information in their fund-raising brochure "Theatre Royal Bath: Past, Present, Future."

The Theatre Royal, Bath began life in 1750, when John Palmer the elder built the city's first playhouse in Orchard Street. Today it is used as a Masonic Hall. During this period Bath had its own permanent acting company and many great actors and actresses made their reputations on the boards of the Orchard Street theatre. John Henderson started his career there and Sarah Siddons, one of the finest tragic actresses of the English stage, first achieved recognition in Bath during her four years with the company.

The importance of Bath's theatre was recognised in 1768, when it was granted a royal patent by King George III, entitling it to be called the 'Theatre Royal'. Only Covent Garden and Drury Lane had been so honoured before and by the end of the 18th century the Theatre Royal, Bath, was generally recognised as the country's most important playhouse outside London.

Eventually it became obvious that the Orchard Street building, though recon-

structed more than once, had grown too small for the city's increasingly fashionable and crowded population. It took some time to find another location, but in 1802 proposals were formulated. In August 1804 shares were offered and quickly taken up. Building began in December. On its official opening nine months later (and nine days before the Battle of Trafalgar) on October 12, 1805, it was acclaimed as the finest theatre in the provinces. Described at the time as 'this elegant and immense edifice', it was comparable in size with the (then) Covent Garden, the auditorium being somewhat smaller but the stage larger. The facade on Beaufort Square was clearly intended to impress, and contemporary accounts make it evident that no expense was spared to ensure that the interior decoration rivalled the best London theatres of the day. It was claimed that 'an inconceivable lightness is communicated to the *tout ensemble*' by setting back the pillars two feet from the front of each circle, 'so as to give the first row the appearance of a balcony. (. . .) The decorations are very splendid', it goes on, 'particularly the ceiling, which is divided into five compartments, each of which is adorned by one of those exquisite paintings by Cassali, formerly belonging to Fonthill, Wiltshire. The wreaths of flowers which connect these paintings are executed with great skill and taste'.

The construction of the new building was supervised by John Palmer, the Bath architect whose best known work is Lansdown Crescent; it was George Dance the younger, who was responsible for the splendours of the interior, as well as the grand front on Beaufort Square. Dance was an eminent London architect, whose father built Mansion House and who had Sir John Soane as one of his pupils. He used to visit Bath occasionally to take the waters and had been commissioned to design the new theatre during one of his visits. He had no other link with Bath, nor did he oversee the construction, but his drawings, which survive in the Soane Museum, show how clearly his ideas were followed.

The new theatre had entrances on three sides: for sedan chairs, for carriages, and for the Pit and Gallery. Into this magnificent new theatre moved the company from the Orchard Street theatre, and while the opening night was a 'perfect failure', when the gentleman playing Richard III was overcome by stage fright, the next ten years gave Bath theatregoers the chance to see such legendary names as George Frederick Cooke, John Philip Kemble, Edmund Kean and Joey Grimaldi, the great clown. Even young Master Betty, the only actor for whom the House of Commons has ever adjourned to see perform, played in Bath.

By the 1820s, however, a period of

decline had set in. Bath was no longer the leading social centre that it had been and the moral climate of the 19th century was turning against theatre. In 1844 the Rector of St Michael's thundered from his pulpit: 'The character of the theatre . . . is marked with almost every variety of evil: and therefore, in proportion as it is adapted to the intellectual character of man, and as it is calculated to interest his passions and to make a deep impression on his heart, it is a dangerous enemy to his virtue and happiness'. Ironically, his sermon turned out to be a good piece of publicity for the theatre, since many people immediately went there to see what all the fuss was about! Nevertheless, with exceptions, the period to 1850 was a difficult one and the theatre changed hands frequently as it lurched from one financial crisis to another. But it continued to operate as a theatre until Good Friday, 1862.

Georgian playhouses were liable to be a fire hazard, and on that morning, a rapid and spectacular conflagration, watched by a large crowd who skipped church in favour of the 'grand but awful sight', consumed the theatre within an hour. Even on this occasion, competition with the metropolis proved irresistible: 'The burning of the Covent Garden Theatre, some time previously, was, in the opinion of one onlooker who had witnessed both, 'a dilatory affair in comparison'. Fortunately, there were no casualties, and the Cassali panels from the ceiling were safe, having been taken down in 1839 and sold in 1845 during a particular financial panic. (They may now be seen in Dyrham Park, near Bath.)

The exterior walls survived with some other walls and staircases, but the interior was almost completely gutted. Various proposals for a new theatre, some rather fanciful, were put forward within a matter of days, but eventually it was decided to reconstruct on the same site, making use of the surviving parts of the building. A limited company was formed, which bought out the trustees of the old theatre for £2,500 and an architectural competition was held to choose new designs. The winner was C.J. Phipps, a young Bathonian still in his twenties, who had never designed a theatre before. Nevertheless, this work established his reputation and he went on to become the leading theatre designer of the later Victorian era. His theatres include the Nottingham Theatre Royal; the Grand, Wolverhampton; the Lyceum, Edinburgh; and the Glasgow Theatre Royal.

The rebuilt theatre opened nine months later in March 1863 and though redecorated in 1892 and again in 1974, it remains today very much as Phipps left it. While his decorative scheme was mid-Victorian (including metal flowers around the cast iron

pillars supporting the balustrades) the layout retained the essentially Georgian flavour and shows a remarkable similarity to Bristol's theatre Royal of 1766. Presumably Phipps must have known the previous theatre and his designs were no doubt influenced by the re-use of its foundations and some of its old walls.

His only major change to the exterior, probably to add to the limited foyer space, was a new entrance on the Sawclose front. The design is an elaborate Italianate design and, though an interesting example of Victoriana in its way, is completely out of keeping with the Georgian buildings which it masks.

The opening performance in Phipps' new theatre included Ellen Terry in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which followed a *Dramatic Prologue* in which she played the appropriately titled part of 'The Spirit of the Future'.

Four years later, however, the permanent Bath acting company was disbanded and with the coming of rail transport there began a long sequence of visits by touring companies, which continues to this day. The great Henry Irving first played Bath with one such touring company in 1867 and continued to visit until 1905, when in a memorable *Farewell*, he played the lead in five different plays in three consecutive days!

Throughout this period the theatre was owned by the Bath Theatre Royal Company Limited, registered number 2816. Formed in 1862, it continued until 1976, making it not only one of the first, but also one of the longest-running unquoted public companies in the country. Lessees and managers came and went until after the First World War when the Maddox family took over. Their involvement continued for the next 50 years. Between the wars they did much to maintain the reputation of the theatre and it became particularly well known for its Maddox family pantomimes. But the arrival of television after the Second World War affected theatregoing throughout the country, and Bath was no exception.

The company was in a poor way when Charles and Stella Clarke bought up its shares in 1973 and redecorated the auditorium and restored the Sawclose facade. However, both they and Louis I. Michaels, who bought the theatre from them three years later, found it increasingly difficult to operate it on a commercial basis during the rapid inflation of the 1970s, in spite of attracting a share of the leading actors of the day.

Now with financial aid from Bath City Council and Arts Council, the theatre has entered yet another era: one of adjusting to the needs of the latter half of the 20th century and facing its problems more squarely, equipped to meet audience and performers' and technicians' needs.

Costumes by . . .

The recent exhibition of the clothes worn in the "Brideshead" series, with their marvellously precise redolence of a period,

a class and a quality of life, reminds us again that the function of costume-designer (or costume-chooser, which requires just as sweeping an act of imagination) is now much better understood in television than it is in the theatre. Ten years ago, no theatre-programme would have seemed complete without the attribution "Costumes by Motley" (and stockings, indeed, by Kayser-Bonder). Nowadays the costume-designer's role, possibly for reasons of cost but more probably through simple hubris and forgetfulness in producers and directors, has usually become subsumed in the more amorphous credit "Design by . . ." For opera, ballet, musicals and classic drama, of course, things are better, but there are still far too many cases in which the styling in costume terms seems to have been effected (or *not* effected) by a general requisition to Wardrobe for "something vaguely Renaissance" or "Graeco-Roman with Celtic peasant bit parts". And this is a pity because, in defining the "feeling" of a production, good costume often works better, and certainly *tours* better, than scenery and props and lighting-plots.

Bring back the credits where credit is due, we say. It may require only an extra line of print. And, later perhaps, a SWET award for all that inspired and inspiring sweat.

The Drama Teacher and Classroom Research

The fourth annual working conference of NATD (National Association for the Teaching of Drama) is to be held at the University of Nottingham from 26-28 March.

The Conference aims to explore ideas centred upon the problems of evaluation for those using drama as a medium for

learning and in doing so builds on foundations laid by the 1981 Keele Conference.

The central questions for consideration will be:

'How can we be more exact about what children learn through drama?'

'What type of learning is central to the drama process?'

The Conference will be led by Professor James Eggleston, author of numerous articles on assessment methods and a past President of the British Educational Research Association, and Dr. Chris Day, Head of in-Service Education at the University of Nottingham and author of *'Drama for Middle and Upper Schools'*.

The Conference will include:

Lectures and workshops concerned with identifying those classroom-based action research methodologies most appropriate to an analysis of learning in drama.

A Practical Teaching Session with local schoolchildren led by Dorothy Heathcote, President of NATD and Lecturer in Drama at the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

Small group sessions to analyse the small group findings and make recommendations moving towards a taxonomy of learning through drama.

Accommodation will be in Halls on the Campus in single study-bedrooms with washbasins. All Halls have their own dining rooms and social amenities including licensed bars and lounges. Full board will be provided from Dinner on Friday until Lunch on Sunday.

Conference Fees:

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| Members (Individual/Local Association) | — £45 |
| Non-members | — £50 |
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Registration forms obtainable from the conference organiser Peter Noel-Storr, 26, Canonbie Lea, Madeley, Telford, Shropshire.

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SOFTLY, SMOOTHLY

FRANCIS REID considers Diffusers and Reflected Light

Diffusion as a method of qualifying light has been in use for many years in film, and more recently in television, but never fully explored in theatre.

This statement by Michael Hall at *Showlight 81* has been feeding my thoughts.

There is, of course, one quick answer. In film and television the selection of vision for the audience is made by the camera and it does not matter if there is any stray light outside the area selected by the camera. In theatre, on the other hand, the selection of vision is frequently made by tight control of the light, and any scatter — such as that inherent in diffusers — tends to fall on areas adjacent to the light source. Areas such as borders or wings which may be quite remote from the selected area to be lit.

However that answer is not quite so valid as it once was. It relate to the days when the only diffusers readily available were a couple of rough frosts — our old friends 29 & 31. Now, largely as a result of developments by Michael Hall's *Rosco* organisation, there is much wider range of diffusing material available, including some rather subtle versions with correspondingly restricted scatter.

Diffusers control the *quality* of the light. They soften the edges and smooth the beam across its spread. When spotlights were more primitive than they are today, diffusers were the only method of softening and smoothing light beams. Simple focus spots with plano-convex lenses tended to suffer from an ailment known as "chromatic aberration" which produced

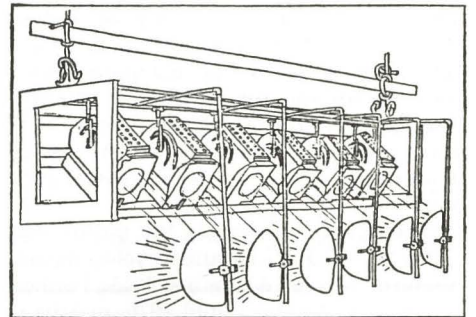
interesting rainbows, almost inevitably at the edges and, as the lens acquired its almost obligatory heat cracks, within the beam also. Before the advent of prefocus lampholders, the lamp had to be carefully centred (live) on each lamp change if an irregular beam was to be avoided. Diffusion techniques to control the degree of softness of the beam of these focus spots included cutting circles (often with serrated edges) from the centre of the frost. When filters were made of gelatine, a centre portion could be cleared (ie defrosted) by the careful application of a drop or two of oil.

In the last couple of years a new generation of PC focus spots has appeared. The PC no longer stands for *Plano-Convex*: it is now either *Pebble-Convex* or *Prism-Convex*, depending on which manufacturer's catalogue you consult. These lenses have a degree of diffusion built into them and this gives a predetermined amount of softening and eliminates rainbows. These instruments were produced initially as a marketing response to the demand from central european countries which have not abandoned the simple PC spot over the last 20 years to the same extent as has happened in Anglo-American lighting. It will be interesting to see if they become adopted as alternatives to some of the fresnels and profiles which now form the basis of standard practice.

The lens structure of fresnels produces an intrinsically diffused light. The amount of this diffusion is not controllable and many stage users find the amount of resultant

scatter to be, at best a nuisance, at worst unacceptable. According to stage lighting's saloon bar mythology, the British Standard for fresnel lenses was drawn up by a committee dominated by studio users and manufacturers.

Profile spots are designed to produce soft edges by mechanical adjustment of their optics, rather than by the addition of diffusers. Even the most recalcitrant profile spot can be made to give forth a light that is soft and smooth. But the process requires experienced hands, and a length of time that might often be more profitably spent on other matters.



Louis Hartmann's method of producing a diffuse light by reflection in the 1920's

Hard focussing of a profile spot is normally simpler and faster. It also usually produces a better light — more of it, and more evenly distributed. With the wide range of diffusers now available, this light can be given any degree of softening from very slight through to a totality that amounts to the ultimate in flooding. Should we therefore be *thinking diffusion* a little more than we are? Remembering too, that so much of our lighting is now done with open rigs where there are no borders to spill upon. (But, dear manufacturers, this does not mean that we are ready to accept half moons of light squirting out of ill designed spots: user's addition of cooking foil as a light seal is counter-productive to lamp life.)

Many of my own diffusion experiments in the last few years have been with directional frosts. Over more than a decade, directional glasses have helped to sublimate some of my worst frustrations when faced with the famine of profile spots in many countries of central europe. The availability of plastic diffusion material, which pulls the light out along a chosen axis, has brought a whole new game to the craft of manipulating light beams. Because light usually hits the stage at an oblique angle, the beam tends to be extended along an axis determined by the angle of throw. This axis can be twisted or extended by a directional filter — the exact angle determined by the way in which the framed filter is cut from the sheet.

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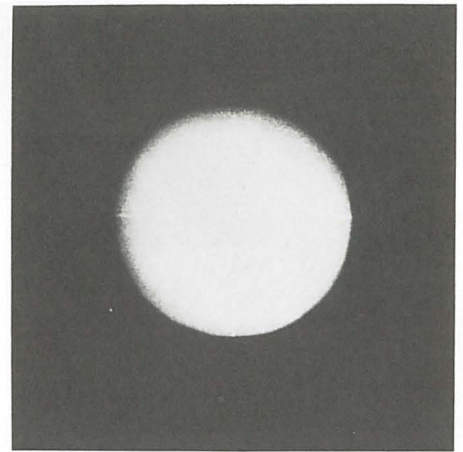
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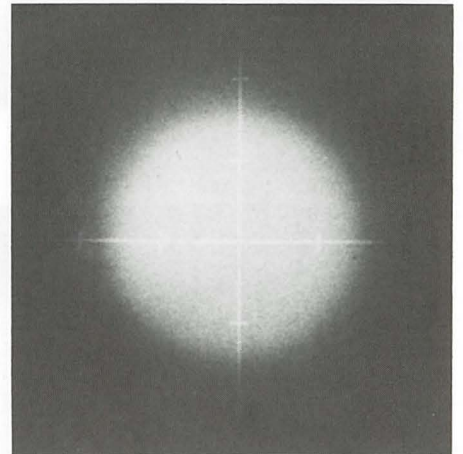
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ROSCO SUPERGEL DIFFUSION FILTERS

| Type | Beam Edge | Hot Centre | Iris and Shutter | Transmission | Flare | Spread | Warming of the Beam |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|--|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Hamburg Frost No. 114 | Slight haze | Very Good | Clean Edge | Negligible Loss | Minimum | Minimum | None |
| Frost No. 100 | Considerable (but soft) | Very Good | Clean Edge | High | Minimum | Minimum | None |
| Light Frost No. 101 | Very Little | Very Good | Just Reduces Flare | High | Minimum | Minimum | None |
| Matte Diffusion No. 110 | None | Good | No Edge | Good | Considerable | Produces Oval Shape | None |
| Tough Silk No. 104 | Very Little | Very Good | Shutter Parallel to Spread | Good | Flare In One Direction | Good In One Direction | Very Slight |
| Bubble Frost No. 112 | Very Little | Good | Fair | Good | Slight | Produces Oval Shape | None |
| Matte Silk No. 113 | None | Very Good | Reduces Flare In One Direction | Good | Very Slight In One Direction Considerable In Direction Of Flare | Good In One Direction | Very Slight |

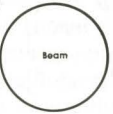


Undiffused beam




100 - Frost

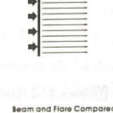
KEY TO TERMS USED IN DIFFUSER TABLE



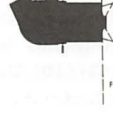
Beam Edge:
Definition at the perimeter of the projected beam. Relative sharpness of the defined line between beam and surrounding shadow area.




Hot Centre:
Preservation of the ellipsoidal's characteristic recognizable beam edge. (High ratio of light within beam to all light falling outside beam.)



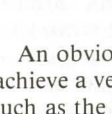
Shuttering (and Irising):
The same edge definition along shutters of an ellipsoidal spotlight. A similar effect around the whole beam is produced by an iris.



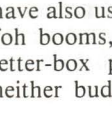
Transmission:
Relation of beam output through the diffusion filter to output of an unfiltered fixture, expressed on a high to low scale.




Beam and Flare Compared:
Labels: Flare, Spread, Beam, Spread, Flare.



Flare:
The diffused light falling well outside (beyond) the beam and spread areas to 75 degrees-85 degrees from fixture's optical axis.

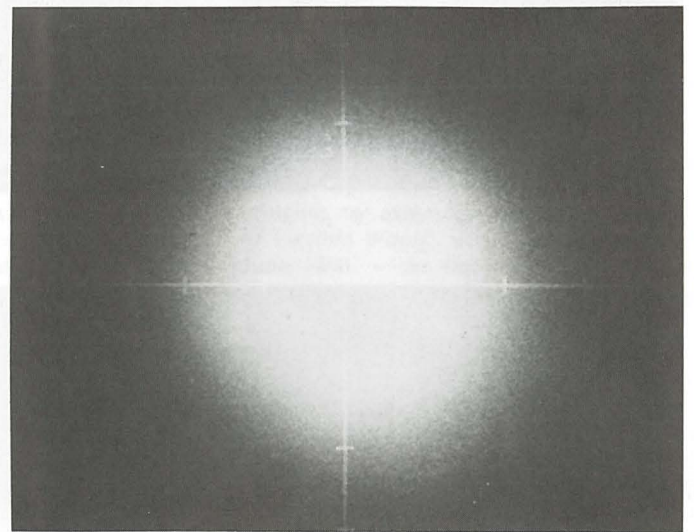


Spread:
Diffused (refracted) light falling outside and adjacent to the recognizably defined beam. Spread light is the most obvious result; of diffusion media use.

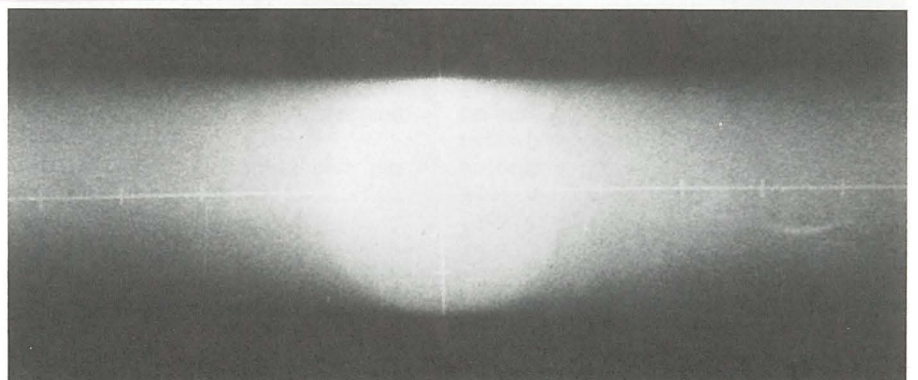


Warming of the Beam:
Apparent shift of colour temperature within the beam centre, so it appears slightly warmer.

Photographs on this and the next page show the effect of the ROSCO SUPERGEL DIFFUSER range on the beam of a profile spot. Diffusers may, of course, be combined with each other and with colour filters. The range also includes filters combining colour (deep red, blue, green and amber) with a 110 Diffuser in the same material.

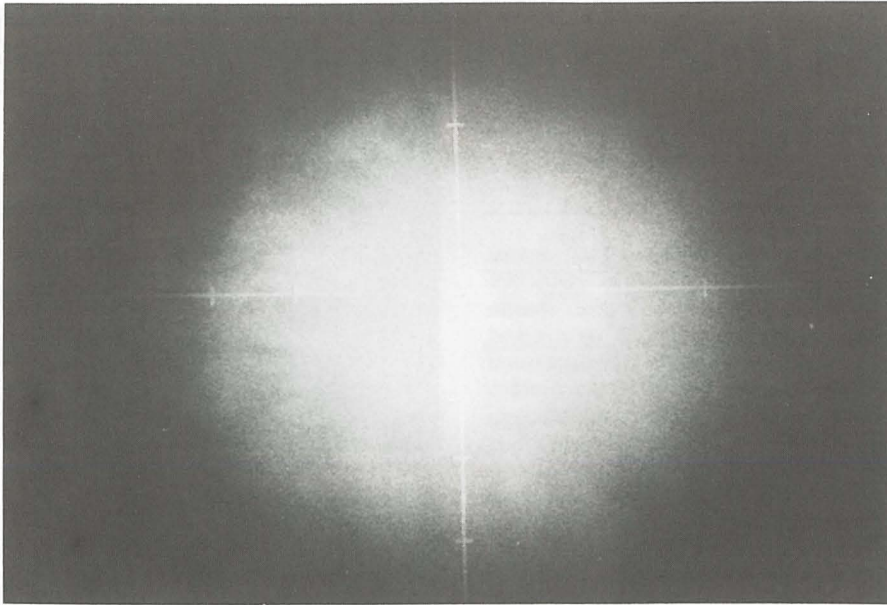


101 - Light Frost

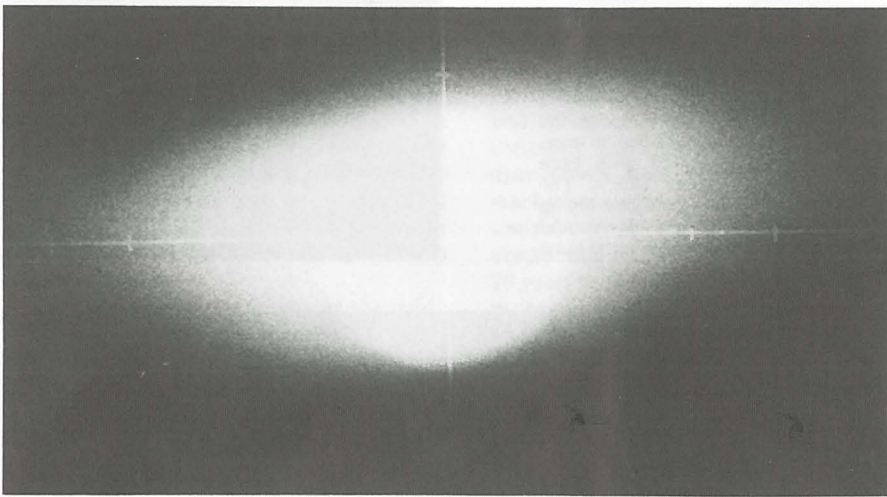


104 - Tough Silk

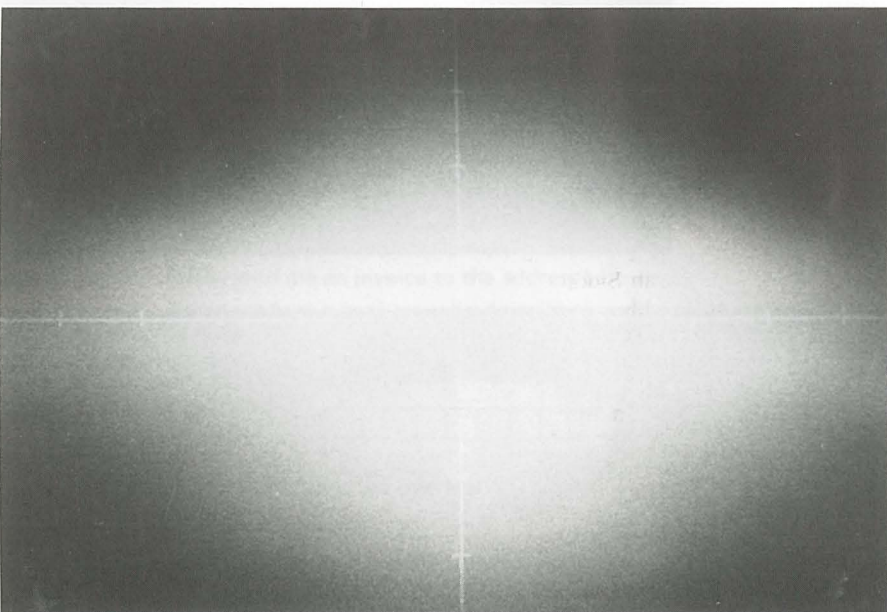
An obvious use of this type of filter is to achieve a vertical extension on short throws such as the bottom lamp of a boom covering an exit - a long soft light avoids a dark line moving up an actor walking off stage. I have also used soft verticals on short throw foh booms, and soft horizontals on wide letter-box prosceniums where there was neither budget nor electricity for a lot of



110 – Matte Diffusion



112 – Bubble Frost



113 – Matte Silk

spots with squashed shutters. Then there was the problem of a staircase with a white backing. An ideal place for actors to pause to deliver that all important entrance or exit line. A collection of pattern 23s was hard focussed then given angle-cut directional diffuser (Rosco 104) to smooth out the beam joins on the actors' faces; and to give a soft line down the white wall – a line that acquired logic because it maintained the same angle as the bannister.

The soft edges and smooth beams so far discussed are part of the general tidyness that is fundamental to standard lighting design technique – the avoidance of illogical hard edges and shadows which draw attention to the light sources.

However there have, from time to time, been proposals that softness should be taken further than mere diffusion – suggestions that the light should lose all identity of direction and be, as in nature, *reflected* light. This was a message that the late Basil Dean delivered to both the ABTT and the Society of Lighting Designers on a number of occasions.

Dean had experimented with reflected light in a number of productions between the wars in London; particularly after studying Louis Hartmann's work with David Belasco in New York. As a result he urged a further examination of the possibility of reflected light as a means of "providing a general luminosity against which the dramatic accent of the spotlight would no longer be lost through constant repetition".

I myself suspect that in saying this Basil Dean was reacting against a natural stage in the development of spotlighting – a time when the amount of equipment normally budgeted, and the rigging positions normally available, was such that general lighting inevitably had a spotty quality. The technique of using large blocks of direct spotlights is now successfully established – that is, the technique of lighting so softly and so smoothly that the "dramatic accents of the spotlight" are under the total control of the lighting designer to be used as and when the production demands. Indeed, far from the accents being "lost through constant repetition", there was recently, until the PAR 64, some difficulty from time to time in getting sufficient accent to cut through the softlight.

While a total use of indirect light seems to offer insufficient total control, there are a number of situations where reflected light can be of use. Provided that precise selection of areas is not required, a glazed floor can return light softly upward into the actor's face to compensate for the inevitably over-vertical angles of light that modelling and shadow control force us to adopt. And twenty years ago, Franco Zeffirelli taught me how to light scenery by bouncing off the backs of other flats: a technique that has subsequently got me out of trouble on a number of tricky occasions.

But, like most things in lighting, it all comes back to *style*. Every production must find its own appropriate way of providing an environment of light: smoothness and/or accents are just some of the many ingredients in the possible mix.

The new order of the Bath

A survey for CUE by ANTHONY McCALL

Until its closure last year, the Theatre Royal, Bath, was a long-established Number Two touring date, redolent of that uniquely theatrical tatty charm. I say tatty, although threadbare would be nearer the mark. Truth is, most amenities, especially backstage, were by then 'hopelessly' outdated, in their own words. The building, the equipment, the design, all had come to the end of their natural lives, which, in view of its Georgian origins and mid-Victorian renovations, represent an entirely respectable lifespan.

Just how inadequate the backstage and front of house facilities had become, we shall see later. But meanwhile the important thing to grasp, at the outset, is just what a splendid theatrical jewel we will see before us later this year, when it is officially reopened in time for the panto season.

For those who've never been to Bath, I recommend that they repair this grievous omission at once. It is one of the sights of England, an architectural experience second to none. The uniformity of street upon street of Georgian elegance, harmony of proportions, symmetry of town planning, all on a human scale, offers a startling prospect to modern eyes accustomed to haphazard scales and largely drab or practical building materials and shapes. Bath town centre is like entering a time machine, that ushers you into another age, intact in every outward detail. I have found it almost eerie on occasions; as if Dr. Who had been tinkering with the real world. And though the city bristles with shops and other signs of 20th-century prosperity, there are no neon signs anywhere to be seen near the conservation areas, nothing to intrude into the spell cast by the period grace and hauteur of the gentle 18th-century architecture. Neither Dublin, nor Edinburgh, nor London's many boroughs with long streets of Georgian buildings have remained so remarkably unadulterated as the centre of Bath. And now its lovely Georgian theatre is to be fully restored. It was, in fact, granted a Royal Patent by King George III entitling it to be called the Theatre Royal. Only Covent Garden and Drury Lane had been so honoured before, and by the end of the 18th century, Bath was generally recognised as the country's most important playhouse outside London.

Bath is best known today for three rather low-key exports: its invalid chairs; the famous bun; and its natural springs. Building enthusiasts may also be familiar with Bath Stone, quarried locally. But the Theatre Royal's one-time reputation has been forgotten — for the time being.

The city's theatre legacy goes back to the 16th century, when a shadowy figure by the name of Shakespeare (who like Charles II and Kilroy, in our day) seems to have visited every corner of the kingdom in

search of hollow oak trees to hide in, and loo walls to scrawl on. Anyhow, this fellow Shakespeare is credited with playing in a group of strolling players, that visited Bath in the 1590s. The first permanent playhouse, however, was built in 1705 by George Trim and situated in Trim Street, where the Royal Mineral Water Hospital was later built. A simple structure, in essence, it outgrew its original purpose as the city began to cater for the growing armies of visitors in search of the famous waters. The last remaining theatre building was opened in 1750 in Orchard Street, built by one John Palmer the elder. It was granted its royal patent by George III 18 years later. Though it is no longer used as a theatre, it is there to this day, and became a Catholic chapel (1800-1863) and a Masonic Hall (1866 to the present). Some, indeed, prefer its noble, neo-classical features and decorations to the plainer, less grand exterior of its successor.

But the Orchard Theatre proved too small and in 1805 the present theatre was built by public subscription, the list of subscribers being headed by the Prince of Wales, Princess Charlotte and the Duke of York. The main architects involved were George Dance the younger and John Palmer, the Bath architect, whose best-known work is Lansdown Crescent, near the Royal Crescent.

On Good Friday 1862, a fire gutted the theatre interior. No-one was hurt and the cause of the fire was never discovered. C.J. Phipps, then in his twenties, won an architectural competition to restore it, and it was re-opened nine months later. It was his first theatre. As CUE readers will know, he went on to design among others, the Theatre Royal in Nottingham, recently restored, and Glasgow.

The Phipps building, which has remained almost unchanged, save for minor details like bar facilities, seats 865 people, and has been classified as a Grade Two listed building.

Among Bath's more memorable stage personalities have been Sarah Siddons, the great tragic actress, who achieved recognition there during her four years with the company; and Henry Irving gave a colossal farewell performance in 1905, playing the lead in five different plays on three consecutive days.

In March 1979, the theatre was purchased from Triumph Theatre Productions for £155,000 by a trust headed by Jeremy Fry, a successful businessman, of the famous chocolate family, who immortalised turkish delight with screen commercials of sultry, silky sirens swooning in a distant harem for the stuff. The trust was registered as a charity and a new board of directors and a new management team were brought in. Enter the council, who took an



active interest in its future and was looking for someone to run the theatre as an interim measure, when an energetic and enthusiastic theatre buff, working for the council's chief executive, Crispin Raymond, was put in charge until a permanent appointment could be made.

The earlier losses were contained, a 20 per cent growth in attendance was notched up, and Bath City Council gave its first revenue grant.

In September 1980, agreement was reached with the National Theatre and the Arts Council for the NT to make a main regional base in Bath for its middle scale touring productions. This was to mean regular visits by the London company, bringing, for example, their *'Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf'*, which came to Bath in June 1980 — the last production before renovations began. In contrast to the annual RSC's Newcastle season, the NT's touring takes the form of several shorter seasons in different parts of the country, touring the works then in rep that seem best suited to touring.

Crispin Raymond's tightening up of the running could not salvage the fabric of the building, however. Backstage, which everyone admitted was woefully inadequate for modern uses, had a way of looking more like a scene from *'La Boheme'*. No food could be served on the premises; bar facilities were inadequate and cramped; and keeping fire and safety officers at bay became a game akin to bloodsports, particularly when the fire boys got to feeling historically-minded: they wanted to know what the theatre's historic fire fighting equipment was doing outside a museum. Why, they asked, hide it away like that? Quite apart from its inadequacy in the event of a fire, it was downright selfish to keep such brass and copper gems of industrial archaeology from the public — unless they bought tickets for a show. Such ante-diluvian gadgetry was unlikely, anyway, to be properly examined as patrons swept by



in the interval, answering the call of nature.

There were memorable moments in those last days before the renovations closed the building. Unscheduled dramas, of an off-stage variety, took place regularly. One was especially noteworthy and deserves mention. Kent Opera's renowned Jonathan Miller production of Verdi's *Falstaff* had to take place in a three-foot space between the curtain and the pit on the first evening of their season. The lighting rig had given up the ghost during rehearsals that afternoon, as they were fitting up, and there was no alternative to a workshop-style performance until the next day.

Builders have taken over the entire theatre, except for the entrance foyer and the third floor wardrobe department, now turned into a temporary administration office. Fund-raising is the main focus of attention at the moment, though building costs have been dramatically cut thanks to the intervention of Laurie Marsh, one of the more prominent theatre and cinema renovators in the country, not least through his association with Ray Cooney (with whom he was in partnership for several years in the late 'seventies) and the Classic Cinema chain, which have seen a dramatic upturn in their fortunes recently. Restoration of the Theatre Royal, Bath, was initially estimated at around £2 million, but the figure rose to £3½ million by the time closer estimates and inflation had been taken into account.

Laurie Marsh was asked to help, and help he did. He is entirely at home with building projects and estate agency management, and off came nearly one quarter of the bill. And although he is perhaps best known as a shrewd man of business, Marsh has a considerable affection for the theatre. And his motive in giving time and effort towards the Bath project, is one of real concern for a

unique Phipps theatre, of very early origin. He knows all too well the struggle involved in surviving in an age largely indifferent to the problems facing theatres and the (expensive) building maintenance programmes. The involvement of a professional property man can tip the scales, and it isn't much exaggeration to say that this is true in Bath.

Laurie Marsh put it to CUE: 'You know yourself what a difference it makes to know a business inside out. Look at the mess people make when they don't. If you know the ropes, you can save not only time, not only money, but also manpower. You can foresee problems before they occur: it's part of your job as a manager. And then there are contacts, who can lend help in so many ways.'

After reviewing the projected costs, Marsh decided to form a separate building company, Theatre Royal Bath (Construction) Ltd, which would operate on a direct subcontract system. Outside companies and workers could be engaged only as and when the theatre's building company needed the separate specialist labour. A very large proportion of building materials were arranged at cost, since Marsh has by now considerable clout after long years of buying and selling in the property business. Management costs were pared down to almost nothing, with Marsh himself taking responsibility for most major decisions.

The construction company is non-profit making, so there are no company overheads. Directors, all unpaid, are Laurie Marsh, Jeremy Fry, and Christopher Sallis, of Stonechester, a local property company.

So far the Arts Council and Bath City Council have each contributed £400,000 towards the restoration and several private donations have been received, like £25,000 from the Sainsbury Family Trust, promi-

nent patrons of the arts, and £8,000 from Lady Oona Chaplin, wife of the late Sir Charles and daughter of playwright Eugene O'Neill. She is endowing the house curtain, which will bear the initials 'CC' and a walking stick motif, but the final design has not yet been decided. This is, by the way, the sole memorial to her husband personally initiated by Lady Chaplin. 'We absolutely loved the city of Bath' said Lady Chaplin, 'and often attended performances in its beautiful Theatre Royal'.

Other contributions include donations from James Mason; £150,000 from local individuals and businesses, and £5,000 from Peter Sellers' former wife and her new husband, Sir Nicholas and Lady Nuttall, whose endowment will go to a dressing room, to be known as the Peter Sellers dressing room.

The Theatre Royal Bath National Development Trust is still hunting down the remaining £1 million, but half-page advertisements in the *Guardian* and *Financial Times*, donated by the papers, and other novel ideas, are paying dividends. Far-flung lovers of the theatre with good ideas, are also warmly welcomed to contact Rosslyn Cliffe at the theatre (Bath 62821). Oh, and cash is welcome too, she assures us. 'From £1 to £1 million - I can find a good home for anything' she smiles. Jeremy Fry, chairman of the trust, explains: 'Our approach to the financing of the restoration is, wherever possible, to offer something worthwhile to our supporters in return for their help'. And in this vein, three public appeals have been launched.

Under the Top Brass scheme, supporters are invited to endow the theatre with a seat, a dressing room or even the stage itself - with £100 or £25,000. An engraved brass plaque bearing the donor's name is fixed to the item, as well as the name appearing on a roll of honour in the foyer and an 'elegant scroll' showing an early engraving of the theatre, with the name engraved, again, and the item of endowment. In many cases, Rosslyn Cliffe says, people are getting together to endow an item jointly. Clubs and pubs are doing it, post offices - and even a street!

For contributions from £100, the 1805 Club (named after the year in which the theatre was built), offers theatre seats on a night of the person's choice every week for two or more years, together with associated benefits such as discounts at Bath's leading hotels and restaurants.

And there's a 'sale of the century', whereby many of the country's leading theatrical lights, Sir John Gielgud, John Cleese, Glenda Jackson, Leonard Rossiter and Richard Briers, support the theatre by offering their services to supporters in the form of a commercial. One cannot know how well this idea will work in practice, but novel it certainly is.

Companies' products will be advertised within the evening of performance, before each show and during an interval for a year, using voice-overs by the chosen star and perhaps video recordings of the products. A deal has been struck with a local firm of video and recording facilities.

To keep up interest in the theatre's past

and its building progress, a changing exhibition is now mounted in the foyer between 10am and 5pm, attended by voluntary helpers, who also collect names for regular guided tours of the building. It keeps local interest on the boil. Sir John Gielgud's words are writ large in the foyer entrance (since his name, though not necessarily his sentiments, carries more weight than the theatre's real benefactor, Laurie Marsh): 'It is vital that this important theatre gets the money it needs and re-opens as soon as possible. Please help'.

The exact renovation plans fall into two or more phases, the number depending upon finance: urgent and non-urgent. The first can be summarised as follows.

THE GRID

The existing wooden grid, from which scenery and lighting is 'flown' is no longer sufficiently strong, well-equipped enough or high enough above the stage to fulfil a useful function for modern needs. It is to be replaced by a steel framework set within the fly tower, and a counter-weighted flying system will be added. The grid height will be raised by 20ft, which is vital for today's productions as well as allowing free sightlines for those sitting in the gods, whose view is currently cut off. To raise the grid, the fly tower will also need heightening, and following the suggestions of the Royal Fine Arts Commission this is being redesigned. Drawings will be on show shortly. In theatrical terms, this is the most important element of the renovations.

STAGE AND ORCHESTRA PIT.

The present stage is close to collapse and has a very uneven surface. It will be completely replaced with a new flat stage which will be cantilevered over a ten-foot extension of the orchestra pit. The existing pit will have a lift installed, which, when raised to stalls level, will allow seating right up to the stage, and when raised to stage level will create a useful forestage.

BACKSTAGE WORKING SPACE

Present working space on either side of the stage is 'severely' limited, say the management, and there is no room to increase it. However, by roofing over the large and under-utilised yard at the rear of the stage and putting in a floor at stage level, an additional working area will be added at relatively low cost.

DRESSING ROOMS.

The existing dressing rooms are 'shabby', in the management's words, and share two loos and two showers for sometimes as many as 70 performers. (Is this a new record? — Ed). They will be redecorated and more of each will be added.

AUDITORIUM.

The auditorium will be re-seated and redecorated. The boxes at the back of the lower circle are to be removed in order to increase the theatre's seating capacity, which is low, and holding down revenue. The gangways in the lower and upper circles will be relocated to add to the number of seats with clear sightlines. At present, a

number are sited behind the metal columns supporting the upper level, like at the Old Vic.

The centre section of the lower circle will be resteped and re-seated with luxury seats, giving better leg room. The front part of the gallery will also be resteped and re-seated to create a new grand circle. Sound-proofing between the auditorium and front of house areas will be improved.

MAIN STAIRCASE.

The existing staircase to the gallery is to be refitted and opened to the theatre at all levels to form a new main staircase, which will enable patrons to go to all parts of the theatre from inside the building.

BARS AND BISTRO.

The present bars will remain, but each will be refitted and marginally extended. The stalls bar will take in two further arched cellars and a kitchen is to be added, serving bistro-type food.

LOOS AND CLOAKROOMS.

A new lavatory block will be added at the back of the existing booking office in St Johns Place, adjacent. This will connect through at all levels to the theatre and greatly improve the existing deplorable facilities (their phrase, by the way). Two small cloakrooms will also be installed.

These renovation works will be carried out by the theatre's own construction company. The management describes the firm as 'a non-profit making construction company formed to minimise costs and obtain services and materials free wherever possible'. All the same, the bill comes to around £2 million, whichever way the figures are juggled, with a completion date of autumn 1982.

The second, third or fourth phases, the non-urgent ones, include renewing the grimy, crumbling facade of the lovely old theatre around the corner, in Beaufort Square. The George Dance exterior is a grade two listed building, but it has suffered some untidy alterations since 1805 and its stonework is now so grimy and decayed that the stucco and ornamental detail is almost gone. In particular, four delicate lyres surmounting the parapet have practically disappeared and George III's coat of arms is close to disintegration.

It is therefore intended to remove the 'box' containing the escape staircase jutting out from the later theatre to the rear of the old, and to restore the exterior so that it will once more be as conceived by Dance in 1800, and elegantly illustrated by a contemporary artist on the cover of the Theatre Royal's glossy brochure (in aid of the fund-raising effort).

It is also planned to remove the Victorian porch added to the front of house of the Phipps theatre. This Romanesque, squat cluster of three arches, surmounted with a colonnaded balustrade on top (in wholly the wrong, unsympathetic proportions) do little for the grander exterior of the theatre. It's the old story of Victorian hotch-potch: their sensibilities often appear astonishingly pig-headed, in their headlong rush to build, build . . . or indeed, to change,

change, change. It's worth remembering that statistically, our esteemed forebears destroyed or desecrated more English churches with their 'improvements' of one sort and another, than Henry VIII or Cromwell combined. So much for Victorian taste, bless 'em. No doubt the taste for clutter (exemplified by their crowded mantlepieces, for instance), grew out of a reaction against Georgian simplicity and neo-classicism.

With the Victorian porch gone, a new open portico more in style with the Georgian facade will be built, allowing, perhaps most importantly, the beautiful doorway of Beau Nash's house (now a restaurant, by the name of Popjoys) to be appreciated in full. The house is another quiet beauty.

Finally, the auditorium will be re-decorated in cobalt blue, white and gold with a string of closely-spaced dimmable candelabra on the front of the balustrades. The boxes at the rear of the lower circle will also be improved.

The Theatre Royal, Bath, is a rare little gem, badly in need of a new lease of life, and whose colourful history of splendid fame and recognition and gradual dilapidation during this century is all very English, natural and alas, typical. But one may predict with some confidence that its future is assured by now, although there is still much hard work and fund-raising ahead. It is to be hoped that the management takes full advantage of modern ideas and techniques to capitalise on its revival of fortunes. A hope which would have been wasted, I feel, on the regime in the late Louis Michaels' era. Admittedly there is a shortage of good product (dreadful, but useful term) both on the number one and number two touring circuits, but that is exactly where the lean and hungry managements come in. Still, it is also no secret that there still exists a general shortage of well-trained and experienced management candidates throughout the country. But Bath has an exceptional number of attractions to working there: an office overlooking the rolling Mendip hills; the West Country on the doorstep; a prosperous local population; not much competition, except from Bristol, ten miles away; a simply heavenly city with every creature comfort (the stoic locals despair of the 'London whiz kids' who open twee bistros every few weeks, with names out of Beatrix Potter); the perfect theatre — historic, intimate, and *different*; the list could stretch on and on. No doubt the Oxford Playhouse Company, the Cambridge Theatre Company and the NT on tour will return to Bath. So will one-nighters like George Chisholm and Jake Thackray *et al*, on Sunday evenings at 7.45pm. I hope the list of top companies and artists grows quickly, to add to their number, which a proper sorting out of technical and financial problems now makes eminently possible.

In the words of Belville Penley's book, *The Bath Stage*, of 1892, referring to Bath's splendid theatre: 'We can but express the hope that the public of Bath will be ever mindful of the brilliant history attaching to this institution, and will never let it sink into insignificance or decay'.

Goteborg's Teaterhistoriska Museet

Francis Reid savours another museum located in a historic Scandinavian theatre.

Atmosphere is probably the most recurrent word in despatches to CUE from my excursions to centres of theatric tourism. Although I was trained in the disciplines of pure science, my responses tend to be emotional rather than rational. I am more likely to be stimulated by a theatrical collection when it has been pinned up, however primitively, on the walls of an old scene dock or gallery staircase rather than displayed in a neutral space using all the considerable expertise of modern museum techniques.

So Gothenburg's *Teaterhistoriska Museet* fulfills my emotional criteria for a suitable home for a theatre museum. It is located on the stage and in the dressing rooms of the old Lorensberg Theatre which served as the city theatre until the Stadsteatern was built in 1934 as part of the Gotaplatsen arts complex which is the climax of Gothenburg's principal avenue. The auditorium is now a cinema but, since 1954, the area beyond the firecurtain has been dedicated to preserving and displaying the history of the Gothenburg stage.

This is not a national theatre museum: it is a local archive and therefore able to accumulate details in such a way that space restrictions often make impossible in national collections where sheer volume of material force a selectivity based on judgements about significance of material. Judgements that no generation can be competent to make on behalf of posterity. So quite a lot of the Gothenburg material relates to routine performances – and I use the word 'routine' in the nicest possible way: the daily working performances which pleasure audiences long after the evaporation of the excitements generated by premiere and press. This is a theatre museum in a town with a taste for theatre: in the early nineteenth century, the Gothenburg Theatre had 1256 seats for a population of 15,000 – that is, over 8% of the population could be accommodated at one performance.

The permanent displays are in the dressing rooms and corridors while the stage provides an open area for changing exhibitions such as designs by Knut Ström who was chief designer of the Lorensberg and Stadsteatern from 1919 until 1957. Thus many of the designs had been originally realised on the stage that was housing the exhibition – and I hardly need to elaborate on just how much that contributes to the creation of an atmosphere in which the visitor can evoke something of the reality of a performance long past. Just a fragment of reality perhaps, but a thread of real contact with a moment of theatre. An evocation made easier by the type of material: not just designs and production photographs of

their realisation, but also sequence sketches of multi-scene plays. Some scenes were crossed out and some had their sequence reversed: these are the details that record the reality and humanity of a designer's work.

(Many models in prestigious contemporary design exhibitions now have such a clinical flavour that one suspects that they have been made after the production opened. Designs which bear the marks of alteration and the stains of the paint room floor will surely be more valuable to posterity than post-production models which merely record the final result – often with a blurred memory of the role played by borders and other masking.)

Following the curve of the cyclorama here is an eye-level display of small model boxes of productions at the Stadsteatern (1936–59) and the Lorensbergteatern (1928–34). The Stadsteatern selection includes a set for that old war horse of English home counties french window drama "Quiet Weekend" in a scenic style that can only be described as Stockbroker's Viking.

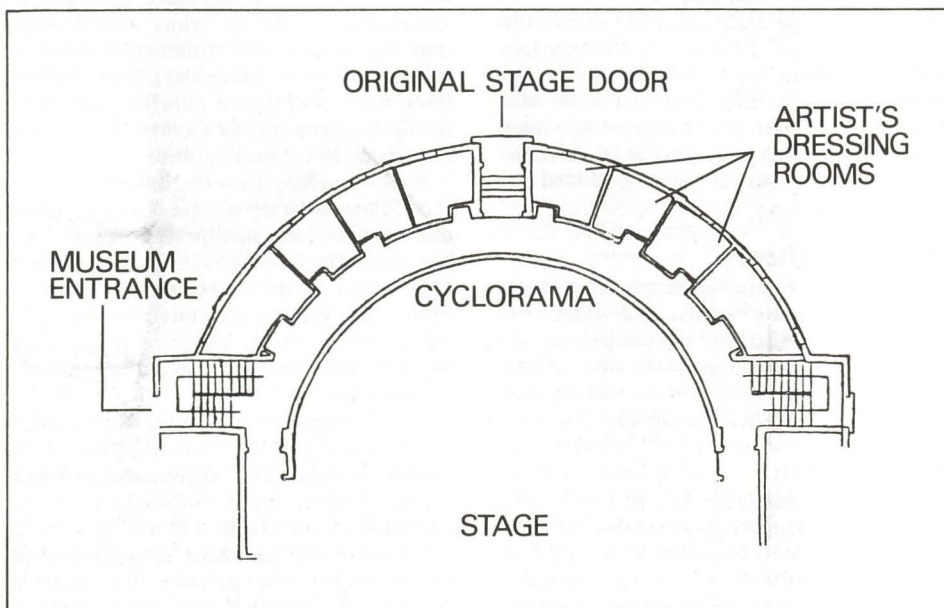
The stage has an all round plaster cyclorama to grid height. This constitutes a major act of preservation of the theatre technology and scenography of the Appia and Craig influenced period of the early twentieth century. Five years ago I admired the original Reinhardt permanent cyc in East Berlin's Deutsches Theater and was told that it would probably go in stage modernisation work (a decision that I would, of course, entirely support as a

working technician). So I predict that in years ahead, Gothenburg may close the cinema and raise the Lorensberg firecurtain to recreate 1920 spatial staging with a genuine fixed cyclorama. The frame for the horizon floods to light the cyc is still in position: 36 floods in 3 banks, with 32 of the floods still there. The remains of the lighting board sit on the OP perch. Tracker wire banks face upstage. Open knife switches are downstage, and are therefore behind the operator. Don't lean back!

The stage floor is a full stage revolve, coming to within three feet of the cyclorama. The grid is still there, with a few bars suspended, and above the proscenium there is timber bridgework and a tab track. Exhibits on the stage include an original drum hoist from the flies of the Stora Theatre and a wheel described as "Stora Teaterns Första Regnmaskin", which my invaluable *Teater Ord* (Theatre Words) confirms as rain machine. The wheel is about four feet in diameter, canvassed, and with regular cuts across the rim – the design and construction being identical with a non-theatre water-wheel observed later the same day in a park.

The stage retains its link with live performances. Last September, for example, saw a series of Monday cabarets with artistes from the city theatre in Brecht, Weill, Eisler, Dessau, Satie and Poulenc.

Both the corridor and external walls of the dressing room block follow the curve of the cyclorama. The dressing rooms, rather fetchingly called *artist boxes* in the guide leaflet, make ideal subject rooms for a



Ground plan showing stage, cyclorama and dressing rooms. The first floor plan is identical.



logical display of material. The ground floor is mainly about the theatres whilst the first floor is devoted to the artists who played in them.

The first room is dedicated to the earliest Gothenburg theatres from a private theatre pre-dating the first public theatre (1780) in Herring Street. Other rooms cover the history of the Storan (Grand Theatre) first

The auditorium of Gothenburg's Lorensberg Theatre is now a cinema. But the backstage areas house the City's Theatre Museum (below).



as the main stage for both drama and lyrical activity and (from 1920) as the Music Theatre that it still is today. The Lorensberg and the Stadsteatern each have a room and there is one devoted to the lighter stage.

The oldest playbills are 1804 including one of *Figaro's Brollup*. (is that not a lovely word?!). This playbill says nothing about Mozart – but then it says nothing about Beaumarchais either. However the cast list ties in with the opera.

A joy of visiting theatre museums is discovering the stars who dominated their decade. Not just the national or internationally famous, but the actors who spent many years in a local ensemble to become revered household names to generations of regular theatregoers. We can trace whole careers of maturing performers through the rooms and corridors of documents displayed (sorry to keep emphasising this, but it is fundamental!) in the rooms and corridors that they trod daily.

Ernst Rolf, Karl Gerhard and Gustav Wally are particularly celebrated in this museum as the masters of revue and we can capture both the flavour of the productions and the personality of their stars from such photographs as “Wallyrevyn 1941/42”, “Wally's Gardenparty 1945”, “Gustav Wally som Mexikanere”, “Typisk Wallyballet” and “Gustav Wally med danspartner”.

A room is devoted to *Magic*. Posters and tricks are nicely set off by a reproduction of a Hieronymous Bosch of audience amazement (and some faces of disbelief) of 500 years ago. There are handcuffs, a rabbit hat, chinese bird cannisters etc, plus a bent spoon captioned “fran Uri Geller epoken”.

My own personal choice of items (ie the items that I would like to have on my own walls and because that cannot happen, the items that I will have to contrive to return to Gothenburg to see again)? Well, there is a quite lovely print of the 1859 interior of the Stora Theatre. And some delicately (but theatrically) coloured scenic watercolours of designs by Sandro Halquist for productions in the Lorensberg in 1923/24 – in particular the light is beautifully evoked in Molnar's “Liliom”.

But for the student of theatre history – and for today's theatre worker searching for appropriate tomorrow styles – the value of Gothenburg's theatre museum is the mass of production photographs in the rooms, along the corridors and on the staircase walls (and presumably in the archive files where the collection is accumulating daily, recording today's theatre in what current jargon might call “real time”). These photographs trace rather well the development of scenery and costume, but alas cannot record lighting. In the older photographs the acting may be posed but we can tell something of the subtleties by comparison. There are a *lot* of production photos: picking a “typical example” picture is fine for a book but not in a museum. Indeed accumulation of visual detail in an atmospheric environment is surely the superiority of a museum over a book.

Which is why this museum is rather splendid.

A time to consolidate

A personal view about the training of
Lighting Designers with a few bitter-sweet reminiscences.

DORIAN KELLY

Thirty years ago when the lighting was 'done' by the producer, design was largely a matter of setting levels for the battens and floats, and choosing between amber, straw pink or steel for the very few focus spots. The Mirror spots in the FOH were generally left untouched, focussed in a double cover, warm and cool, which seemed to satisfy most requirements. The odd special was procured and rigged for very special occasions, but this was a matter of much discussion and budgetary consideration. 'Practicals' were invariably borrowed, as indeed was practically everything else on the set.

A little later when, through the good offices of the producer of the local rep (who happened to be my father) I was allowed, in my capacity of temporary unpaid electrician, to make some terrible mistakes, the equipment had proliferated to an enormous rig of no less than twenty lanterns, including 23's, 45's and a handful of Junior floods, with 53's out front impossibly high up on the side wall.

My lighting plans at that time consisted of a mass of interlocking circles drawn on a scrappy bit of paper, and this mess was faithfully reproduced on the floor of the stage. My father soon showed me how the edges of the beams could be softened and merged, and demonstrated that actors look and work better when their faces were lit, but that sets of the kind that were invariably produced at Colchester Rep. looked a heck of a lot better when there was no direct light on them. He showed me why he had placed the FOH high up on the wall instead of on the circle front where it was nice and easy to get at them, and how different kinds of lantern produced a different quality of light. Before long I had learned the hard way that cables got hot and fuses blew if short cuts were taken with the wiring, and that lamps and colour were expensive. With such a limited amount of equipment at my disposal one lantern had to do the work of three, and nothing, but nothing was ever thrown away. My electrical storeroom at this time consisted of a series of shoeboxes filled to the brim with broken plugs and sockets, crinkled and ancient pieces of gel, bean tins and odd lengths of cable, along with a selection of lampshades with which we rung the weekly changes on the practicals.

When the real electrician came back from his bender six weeks later I left, taking with me one broken ankle, a two-inch scar on my thumb, and a thorough practical education in the art of light. I also took with me the most important thing of all: the ability to feel utterly desolate at a mistake or a bad

fade, and the ability to cry with joy at producing a perfect one. These abilities have never left me. What I lacked at the time was technical knowledge. Photometric data were meaningless to me, and, not being a lantern designer, still are. Cable ratings, phasing and domestic wiring were a closed book, but on my next job, as chief electrician at Dundee Rep. I had to learn about these things pretty damn quick. As the question of projected scenery came up, I found out about lens calculation and predistortion. I discovered backlighting and booms (I honestly believed that I had invented booms in my lack of experience). I discovered that there were many more colours in the Cinemoid book than I dreamed was possible, and even though the budget for the shows did not actually stretch to buying any, I often managed to acquire small pieces secondhand from others, and on one occasion actually wrote away to Strand to buy a half sheet of no 43 Navy blue, which I paid for in great secrecy out of my own wage of eight pounds per week, because I wanted to try out something someone, somewhere, had told me, that using 3 straw in the spots and 43 in the floods could produce any desired colour of daylight or moonlight. (It works)

I remember with great nostalgia one particular piece of 26 which had faded in the centre to a warm pink. I used it in the dream sequence in 'Dr. Angelus', and as moonlight in 'Private Lives'. In 'Salad Days' it surrounded the robot in an eerie glow, and when the fade in the centre had become a burnt hole, it did sterling duty as a dual-purpose pin spot with purple edges when used in conjunction with a sixpenny mask. When not in use, the piece of Cinemoid was carefully placed in a labelled envelope and reverently placed on the highest shelf along with my one gobo (which I didn't know at the time was called a gobo), painstakingly cut from a piece of fairly thick steel.

I have always been very lucky in having lots of excellent people around me from whom I could learn. The director at my next theatre was such a man. It was he who pointed me in the right direction and gave me a shove in the means and methods of play analysis. 'We might as well all of us go home' he said 'if your aims and motivations are different from ours'. He would show me how to look for the key words and phrases from a script, and how to visualise in my head what the picture should look like, before attempting to translate them into technical terms. With his encouragement I learned to look at paintings to see where the strengths of line were, and realised that

from the audience's point of view, a beam of light slanting from left to right had an entirely different psychological effect to an otherwise identical beam from right to left.

The most important lesson that there was to learn was this: that Theatre is a work of totality of effort and unity of purpose. No one department is independent of the others and no piece of knowledge about it is unimportant.

I cannot begin to give thanks for the opportunities that I have been given. Unfortunately, the chance to make the mistakes that I have made is given to very few people in these days. The only electrical knowledge that I actually required when I was thrown in at the deep end was the ability to make simple electrical connections securely and safely. Now it is a little more complicated than that. The kilowattage under ones control, the electrical distribution aspect with its attendant safety requirements, not to mention the sheer weight of suspended equipment, need more than a nodding acquaintance with a screwdriver and a length of fuse wire. In many areas, the local authorities and the insurance companies are likely to insist on a fully qualified person to take responsibility in these matters, and the Health and Safety at Work Act takes a lively interest too. Although the electrical and safety angles are largely the province of the electrician rather than the lighting designer, it is absolutely essential that the latter knows a great deal about it so that his designed rig is actually practical and riggable.

From an electrical point of view, the lighting designer must know of dimmers of all types, their curves and loadings, and the means of controlling them. Phasing is vitally important as is rating of cables, flying wires and hanging chains. He must be able to spot potential trouble at source and keep an eye out for loose cord grips and cables in positions prone to mechanical damage. Problems arising from heat must be considered, and he must be able to spot lanterns hung upside down. He must know of lamp burning positions and ensure that halogen lamps are not touched with the bare hand, as well as knowing the hazards of Xenon and HMI lamps. Above all he must know how to handle men. The costs of touring and fitups are now so high that he must keep himself abreast of all the latest developments of fast fitup techniques and balance the cost of these against traditional methods.

A lighting Designer's ability to create magic is limited only by his imagination coupled with a comprehensive knowledge of how to transform his vision into reality. Any information that he can acquire about any subject whatsoever can only help, and in no way hinder, technical and imaginative skills. He must read and understand books on all kinds of subjects, including vision and hearing, the psychology of perception, the way that colour and form acts directly on the human brain, simultaneous contrast, hue, saturation and brightness. He must form opinions of the dynamic qualities of beams of light from various directions and how they can influence the feeling of strength, speed, opposition, loneliness,

security etc. He must consider the length of shadows and their contrast as an indication of mood as well as of time of day. And he must be aware of the use of colour quality in the scheme of things. In the film 'Gone With The Wind' the way that the director uses colour is nothing short of astounding, although I doubt very much that more than one person in a hundred is aware of it, for it is not intended to be noticed. In the first scenes where Scarlett is living a happy adolescence, the colours are muted pastels: As the story unfolds, and her life becomes more and more insecure, the colours become harder and clearer, and in the scenes of death and destruction the colours and images are razor-sharp. In the penultimate scenes, where she is once more living a life of luxury, the colours used are almost glossy and bright. This is an excellent demonstration of the use of colour as a means of producing and reinforcing a mood, one which works in subtle ways without hammering the point home.

There are many excellent lighting men and women who do this sort of thing totally naturally, who do not know, or need to know, of the psychological pressures which produce their results. To them it 'feels right' and this is far more important than any amount of rationalisation. In the last analysis, one's own mind can only be the final arbiter on whether or not a particular piece of lighting works or not. The problem often becomes one of communication. I remember being at a total loss for the right words when attempting to explain to a particularly verbose director what I wanted to do, and as a result, being made to do something that was totally alien to the whole concept of the play. If I had only known such words as 'alienation effect' and 'quantum leap which hints at the dark areas' or 're-echoes of happiness' I could have got away with murder.

There are other lighting men who are so wrapped up in the technical means that they ignore the art. How else could you account for some of the unsuitable and equipment-intensive lighting that I have witnessed all too often. A major musical with which I was slightly involved in another capacity was rigged and recoloured three times because the lighting designer had done no homework of any description and indeed I doubt whether he had given it any thought at all. And I remember another occasion when an ostensibly professional young man turned up to light a spooky thriller that just cried out for dark corners and softly moving shadows with a truckload of fluorescent fittings with no plugs, cable or visible means of suspension, expecting me to rig them as if by magic. These comprised the entire rig, together with two CSI follow spots with which he flooded the stage from the dress circle. He was vastly surprised and angry with me when I told him that I could dim neither fluorescent tubes nor CSI's as he had wanted to use them at levels. It turned out that he had recently come from the Royal Court where such lighting effects were in fashion. He assured me that irrespective of their suitability to the actual play in performance, this was the modern method of lighting all plays, anything else

was old fashioned and unexperimental. Had he learned just a little of his trade first, he would doubtless have supplied himself with the proper equipment, and I may well have been writing of this experimental young man with great enthusiasm.

The Training of Lighting Designers Conference speaks of suitably qualified people being hard to find. This country is full of people who would give a great deal to be allowed to practise their craft in an atmosphere of professional respect. These are people who have learned the basic of their trade in the Regional theatres, and extended themselves by reading and watching. They could benefit by a short course which consolidated what they already know with additional lectures on those subjects which cannot easily be learned in a practical environment. Plays must be lit, dissected, relit, argued about, and lit again. Manufacturers must be visited and ideas kicked back and forth for application of new technology to art. Lighting designers must be put into the lions den and mercilessly quizzed. It is not sufficient to be seconded to an established designer for a short period.

The Arts Council run a course for training these people. I once applied for it. I was given a brief for the interview. To produce a lighting plan for Act One of 'Ghosts'. I produced a suitable plan, to which I added a complete blind plot of dimmer levels, and a six-page screed, in which I analysed the play, and gave justification for every lantern and every lighting change. It took

me three days and a great deal of thought. At the interview it transpired that the chief adjudicator was a well known lighting designer and drunk of this parish, whose work I had occasionally admired. He had not looked at my plan. Nor had anyone else. I was insulted and humiliated by the fact that he had not even read the brief that I had been sent and kept referring to other acts and asking why I had not lit the whole play. He did in fact glance at the documents I had sent for a brief moment before he fell off the chair. I left at that point. The person who was awarded the secondment, a friend of mine, tells me that the period consisted mostly of drawing plans, making coffee and running errands.

Edward Gordon Craig's Ubermensch could doubtless perform the quadruplicate function of scene designer, lighting designer, electrician and board operator. John Bury makes a jolly good stab at the first two. As the separate functions of these four become more and more specialised, the need to train people to cross these departmental lines becomes more and more necessary, or nothing but confusion can result, and with it a loss of the unity of purpose and the common goal: To act upon our stages a work which will entertain, educate and exhilarate: which will, with empathy and compassion show the worlds which might have been: and to give people an experience that they can never achieve in any other place than THE THEATRE.

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Harrogate Supercentre

In a £25 million plus development, Harrogate have linked a new 2,000-seat auditorium to existing exhibition spaces and the Matcham Royal Hall.

Harrogate's Director of Resort Services has said *The new 2,000-seat conference auditorium has been designed and furnished to meet the most exacting international standards of presentation and production. Simultaneously it will of course provide one of the finest and most modern concert and entertainment halls in Great Britain.*

The Chairman of the English Tourist Board is quoted as saying *The most visionary scheme that I have come across.*

FRANCIS REID laments that this Centre is not as Super as it could and should be.

I am not often at a loss for words. But I find it very difficult to be articulate about *Harrogate Supercentre*. My first instinct was to put the whole thing out of my mind. Pretend that it had never been built and/or that I had never seen it. But there can be no escape: this hall will doubtless keep appearing on my television screen as a venue for the annual gatherings of the faithful from the various hues of the body politic. However, it is unlikely that I shall ever work there – my fee would be subject to surcharges. One for the time taken to overcome the technical facilities, and another for the time taken to recover from working in depressing architecture.

This is really a rather terrible indictment on a new major entertainment building. It hurts me to have to give a "bad notice". As far as I can recall, I have only reviewed three buildings with a noticeable lack of enthusiasm: Bromley Churchill, Harlow Playhouse, and Reading Hexagon. I have a track record of finding architectural worth in buildings that others have received with scepticism. And for a quarter of a century I have been getting shows on to stages whose technology has varied from the primitive, through the uncertain, to the downright misconceived. I am a veteran of St Pancras Town Hall, I lit the first show into Bromley, and I have coped with a multinational's bonanza convention at Wembley.

It really pains me to have to write words which will bring no cheer to the Harrogate creative team – for I strongly suspect that they are *not* to blame. It would seem that they have been merely midwives to a corporate monster whose fate was sealed at the moment of conception.

What is the most quoted architectural aphorism of our age? *A building can only be as good as its brief.*

Peter Angier, writing in the special November edition of "Entertainment and Arts Magazine" which formed the catalogue for the Entertainment 81 conference and Exhibition says:

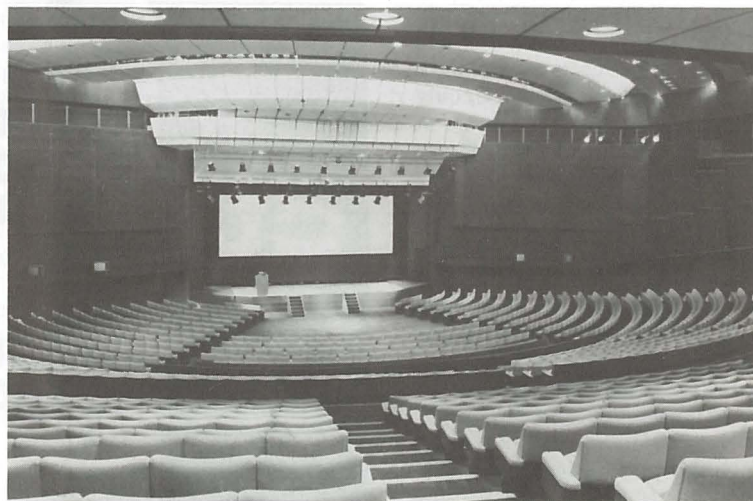
The initial concept aimed at that well known impossibility, the space where you can do anything. In due course (after building had started) a list of uses was established, in order of priority. Conferences and exhibitions came top, but a very close second was or-

chestral use with a natural acoustic. After that came a varied assortment, ranging from snooker through variety and solo artists to fashion shows. Specifically excluded were the drama, opera and ballet activities which rely on quantities of scenery and an enclosed stage, but that did not rule out concert performances of opera or open stage ballet.

I am particularly horrified by the sentence *In due course (after building had started) a list of uses was established, in order of priority.* In my innocence I had imagined that this had happened so often in the past that the lesson had been learned!

But whatever its brief, the Supercentre now exists. What is it and what will it do?

The core is a 2,000-seat single-tier auditorium facing a platform 1m above flat



floor level. Within this platform are three elevators (10m x 2.4m) which can travel 1m above platform level or 1m below. In other words, most of the stage area can be stepped in any three chosen levels between flat floor level and 2m above. An orchestra pit for 20 players can be opened in the floor in front of the elevators. The front area of seating is flat floored and after removal of seats, the platform can be extended by portable rostrum units. The platform is serviced (at flat floor level) by a car lift (10 tons), a goods lift (¾ ton) and a passenger lift (10 person).

The platform is dominated by the two massive expanses of side wall that lead

towards it. Sit in most seats and the point of command is not the stage but these side walls. This may well turn out to be a bonus for conferences since the walls are an ideal place for projecting A/V modules. Designers will surely hang flattage, incorporating screens, on these walls. This will involve a bit of heave-ho on temporary hems but there is a convenient hand rail to lean over while heaving and to tie-off on, if the health and safety officer has no objections. Despite the comprehensive projection room facilities, I suspect that the banks of carousels for these screens will end up on temporary scaffolding towers built over the rear seating.

This is just one example of the way in which the stage facilities seem to be geared to the type of conference where a platform party sit at long tables facing the audience. Commercial presentation specialists with 5 cars and 40 dancers will have to treat the building in the way that the BBC will presumably do for the Eurovision Song Contest: assume only seats, carpets and electricity. Fortunately the conference trade is used to bodging up in unlikely venues. But just think how Harrogate might have scored if they had studied the market and provided that essential of any entertainment/conference/product-launch venue: a big clear stage with modular suspension.

There is a grid over the platform area but its full use is subject to the removal of the ceiling panels provided as part of the acoustic profile for concerts with natural sound. This is said to be easier to do than it appeared to be to me. There are 10 single-point hoists over the flat floor area.

Well at least the crews will be able to keep their cool. When one's eyes have wandered from the side walls, the focus becomes two dominant features on the platform walls. What are they? Lighting booms? The ultimate in sound foldback? No. They are part of the air conditioning – booms of focusable blowers for the stage.

The permanent lighting positions concentrate on simple illumination but the equipment, based on a 160-way Light Palette is commendably lavish. Indeed all the technical furnishings are fine – lighting, sound, communications, assisted resonance, projection, CCTV – all specified to a high standard. It is ironic that

the things that could be changed are good, but the features that are enshrined for posterity in concrete are so limiting.

Harrogate Supercentre will be fine for concerts of all kinds from the Halle to the superstars whose fees will be supported by the 2000 comfortable seats. It will be great for party conferences. And it will work for all sorts of events because its technicians (both resident and visiting) will make it work. Their unnecessarily heavy and complicated labours will no doubt be met with a *Yes, well we knew it would be a success!*

Perhaps I am just an old sourpuss cynic. Why don't I just shut up and believe the advert issued by Harrogate Resort Services:

One of the most sophisticated International Conference, Entertainment and Exhibition Centres in Europe.

Harrogate Supercentre, purpose-built and custom-designed to be ahead of its time, providing a magnificent 2,000-seat air conditioned auditorium fully equipped with space age high technology lighting and sound systems of broadcasting quality.

That is what it certainly should have been. And, with more thought, could have been.

Architects: Morgan, Bentley, Ferguson and Cale, Harris

Theatre Consultants: Carr and Angier

Contractors: John Laing

Stage Lighting: Rank Strand
CCT Theatre Lighting Ltd

Sound & Communications: CTL Ltd

Hoists: Telestage Associates Ltd

ENTERTAINMENT 81

I hope and believe that *Entertainment 81* was a major step forward for the performance industry. We are all in the business of communicating with an audience, yet our own lines of communication with one another can be a little haphazard. From time to time there are specialist conferences and specialist exhibitions, but this was the first attempt at a UK convention embracing the buildings, the performers, and the people who bring these buildings and performers together in the hope of attracting and entertaining an audience.

Entertainment 81 was essentially a management convention but the framework was such that it could – and I believe should – expand sideways to include all aspects of entertainment provision. Perhaps the most obvious move would be a marriage with the ABTT trade fair. This may well turn out to be a shot gun marriage – with the finger on the trigger being that of the equipment suppliers. Under present and foreseeable conditions it is difficult to see how the equipment industry can stand more than one annual major launch pad.

As far as technical theatre is concerned, the visitors at the Round House seemed to be the people who influence the buying

decision whereas the Harrogate delegates were those who make the buying decision. Would it not benefit all parties if equipment sellers and both categories of buyer were to meet informally in the forward-thinking atmosphere that is hopefully – and usually – created in a conference environment. And I suggest that getting everyone together in a smallish heart of England town like Harrogate leads to a concentrating of the mind that is not possible in London.

On the exhibition side there was already a formidable array of the technical big boys amongst the 165 exhibitors. There were also quite a lot of small firms – hardly surprising when it was possible to rent a 4' x 2' stand for £58 including free advertising space in the November number of *Entertainment* and *Arts Management* magazine which acted as catalogue.

Many of the big agents and not so big theatres had stands and there was an opportunity to consult with a broad spread of supportive trades including *Tip Top Drinks* (in four explosive flavours), *Nationwide Fireworks* (specialised amateur-fired kits), *Hairraisers* (footman wig @ £19.50 or the King Charles @ £22.50), *Body Media*

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| Southampton | 2•3 Mar | Polygon Hotel Cumberland Place |
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REIDing SHELF

(There's more to T-shirts than meets the body) and *Jack 'n' Jill Animations* (The Master Monster Makers). Dick Condon's Norwich Royal was noticeably absent and so Manchester Palace was free to advertise itself as *The Flagship of British Theatre*.

Needless to say, the entire box office computer industry was on parade – now here there really is a major identifiable growth area. However the general feeling at what is popularly known as grassroots level was to wait and see how Ian Albery fares.

The conference had a session on this subject and Ian Albery was in the chair. But I was not in the audience (nor yet in Harrogate). I did pop (half way through) into something called 'Eurospeak – But who speaks for Britain'. But if anything emerged, it did not do so in the downbeat ten minutes before I moved on to a parallel session called, in jargonspeak, 'Venue Meets Product'. This turned out to be about marrying shows with stages. The discussion seemed to be skirting around the basic problem: sorting out the quality from the width.

I also missed the discussion on Arts Centres because it took place while I was participating in a session entitled *A New Life for Old Theatres*, when a group of restoration nuts got together to drool over each others slides of the remaining 16% of the Royals, Grands, Alhambras, Empires and Hippodromes that flourished in Britain between 1900 and 1914. Of the 2,100 theatres and major music halls in use in 1914, only 130 are in use today. A further 70 are thought to be suitable for rescue. But this was not just an occasion for just another wallow in nostalgia. The seminar looked at the particular problems of restoration and the audience were offered some pointers towards what to look for in buying a second hand 19th century theatre (in particular the sort of difficulties likely to be inherent in the fabric), the legalities of preventing demolition, planning a renovation, and finally what to do with it once restored.

This session was associated with a sneak preview of the *Curtains!!!* exhibition which will have its formal opening on March 4 at the Museum of London in the Barbican. March 4th is also the publication date for the *Curtains!!! Gazeteer* of pre-1914 theatres and music halls with details of delights destroyed as well as the state of beauties asleep. From the Harrogate preview, both exhibition and book look all set for international success. And perhaps even stimulate some further restoration!

The convention lived up to its name: there was a lot of entertainment. There were formal concerts in the Royal Hall and informal lunch-time performances in the exhibition areas, plus late-night entertainments of all kinds in the major hotels. It is not difficult to foresee the event becoming a major showcase for entertainers in the years ahead.

And with the conference expanded to include some sessions on theatre technology, *Entertainment 82* could well become the event that no theatre worker on either side of the curtain can afford to miss.

Francis Reid

I read Derek Salberg's **ONCE UPON A PANTOMIME** over the christmas holiday and I enjoyed it muchly. Which is hardly surprising for someone as addicted to pantomime as I am. But you do not have to be a panto nutter to enjoy this book. I would happily recommend it to anyone from an alien land who may be groping for an understanding of the nature of Britain's only completely indigenous form of performing art.

It is really two books: a general history of pantomime and a memoir of the author's own pantos. The listing of his own productions at Birmingham's Alexandra Theatre is unique: he not only records the triumphs but identifies the years that were less successful and attempts to analyse why. He is happy to take the blame for any shortcomings, less willing to blame the performers. Salberg can usually find something nice to say about every performer. I find it difficult to believe that every artist in every Salberg pantomime was so nice and so talented! Possibly profitable, but *always* both nice and talented?

The general chapters take us from the Commedia dell'Arte beginnings through Grimaldi and Dan Leno to the influences, firstly of the music hall and subsequently of television, that have resulted in today's pantomime with its peculiar traditions, superstitions and anachronisms. There are lots of good quotes and the eighty illustrations all make positive panto points. I'll certainly read this book again next christmas.

Festival has become a rather debased word – part of the stock marketing jargon of the tourist industry. Whenever two or three performances are gathered together in an unlikely place or at an unlikely time, the festival label seems inevitable. But a description surely to be earned rather than merely applied.

What makes a festival? Bernard Levin offers a few pointers in the introduction to his **CONDUCTED TOUR:**

a town of a size big enough to accommodate all those who want to come, but small enough to be dominated, at festival time, by its festival function . . . the festival visitor is normally on holiday; how much sweeter music sounds at the end of a day of walking, bathing, sunning, sipping, than a day of working! . . . with the cares of daily life left behind, the claims of eternal life can be heard; no wonder music seems more intense at a festival . . . the grace of such festival centres as Salzburg or Florence reinforces these feelings . . . the performers are likely to be striving to get closer to perfection . . . a two-way traffic: audiences tend to take more trouble at festivals, not only dressing better, but behaving better, even listening better . . . festival towns tend to be furnished with better food than the average; festival weather tends to be sunny; the countryside around festival

centres tends to be beautiful and easy of access.

Levin's Conducted Tour took him to some of the great festivals (all European except Adelaide) including "the dedication and sausages of Bayreuth, the gaiety and champagne of Wexford, the charm and innocence of Aldeburgh, the sophistication and over-charging of Salzburg, and the lashing gales and pitiless rain of Edinburgh." I have always suspected that Aldeburgh has only a surface innocence and who would ever touch champagne in Wexford where the only true nectar can surely be a bottle of stout. But I was student in Edinburgh.

Of Levin's dozen festivals, I have worked at five and I plan to visit a further couple this coming summer. He has captured the flavour of the ones that I know and so I am prepared to believe what he says about the others – including the one at *Hohenems* that I have never heard of. The one where they certainly seem to have a way with Schubert. Or so he persuades us.

Bernard Levin visited all these festivals in the space of one summer: 1980. He succeeds in conveying the pleasures of the performances and their settings. From time to time he makes statements that are outrageous or profound. Frequently both. Simultaneously. *Conducted Tour* is entertaining reading and made me want to return to the festival towns that I know, and to seek out these that I know not.

John Allen's **THEATRE IN EUROPE** might be more correctly titled *Theatre in Western Europe*. It covers (and I list alphabetically) Belgium, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland. Actually the book titled *Dramatic Theatre in Western Europe* because John Allen shows scant respect or understanding of lyric theatre.

However within this restricted version of the title (which, however, is, in all conscience, a large enough subject for any encyclopaedia let alone a single volume!) there is not only lots of hard facts but a goodly measure of stimulating thought.

Much of this thinking is about money. The disbursement of subsidy: how it is done in the real world of the countries listed above, and how it might be done in the ideal world that we all hope that we are progressing towards. After discussing who goes to the theatre and passing briefly over the private commercial theatre, the case is put for a subsidised theatre and we learn how the subsidy is organised in the different nations . . . including the amounts and the strings attached. There is a lot of comparative information on both mainstream and alternative theatre structures.

The artists are discussed: the actor, the director and the playwright. Their interactions and their unions. But there is very little mention of the designers or technicians. However, there is, as there should be, a solid discussion of the educational background – Drama in School, Theatre in Education, Children's Theatre and Amateur Theatre.

I wish that this book had appeared years ago: it would have presented me, over a weekend, with a lot of basic information on the workings of European theatre that has taken me some twenty years to acquire. (Although I do wish that John Allen had penetrated Spain where my own dramatic experience has been thin). But at least I can verify the accuracy of John Allen's picture – certainly for the *dramatic* segment of western European theatre.

Radio is now mainly a medium for music and news. Drama has become a minority interest: at least in terms of the way that the word 'minority' is used by the media who count their audiences in millions. But it was not always thus. Ian Rodger in **RADIO DRAMA** is not being fanciful when he describes the BBC drama output of the 1940s as the *National Theatre*. As a wartime schoolboy, I certainly have my memories of

listening to plays, classic and new, on my home-made wireless sets (graduating from crystal through one-valve-detectors with first AF then RF stages added, until I finally arrived at a superheterodyne for the opening night of the third programme).

The BBC drama department gave opportunity to many new young dramatists including writers of the calibre of Alan Ayckbourn, Robert Bolt, Giles Cooper, John Mortimer and Harold Pinter. Although radio drama developed its own production style for a 'theatre of sound', it also influenced the development of play staging. And not just in promoting new standards of diction and bringing a new understanding of the strength of the silent pause. The heightened reality of much of the work produced by the features department, who were closely associated with the development of drama, prepared the way for theatre styles of today. Radio's use of the tape recorder established an awareness of the nuances of regional speech and thus finally killed off actor's mummeret.

In looking at the influences on today's staged drama, we tend to forget the work of radio producers like D.G. Brisdon, Francis Dillon, Val Gielgud, Laurence Gilliam and Donald McWhinnie. Ian Rodger's book puts the record straight and gives us some

food for thought on the nature of drama . . . and on the nature of technology . . .

Technical improvements now allowed the producer to record actors in isolation, to assemble the necessary sound effects and to weld these various components together in the privacy of an editing room. Such a method could be more efficient than the previous system but it could also create the kind of production which no longer had the same tension and sense of presence that had characterised radio plays when they were put together by the group of actors and technicians working together.

ONCE UPON A PANTOMIME.

Derek Salberg. Cortney Publications £3.95 (paperback) (UK).

CONDUCTED TOUR.

Bernard Levin. Jonathan Cape. £7.50 (cased) (UK).

THEATRE IN EUROPE.

John Allen. John Offord Publications Ltd (City Arts Series). £11.95 (cased) (UK).

RADIO DRAMA.

Ian Rodger. Macmillan. £14 (cased). £4.95 (paperback) (UK).

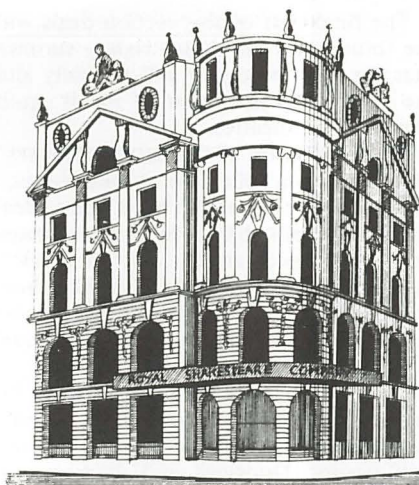
SOUND FOR THEATRES. A BASIC MANUAL. By Graham Walne, published by City Arts, John Offord (Publications) Ltd. 253pp. £7.95.

Mr Walne has undertaken an ambitious project in the writing of this book. His stated aim is to cover ". . . the terminology and technology of theatre sound in a single volume.", and the book is written for those with ". . . little or no knowledge of electronics and physics." It is to Mr Walne's credit that, in many respects, he has succeeded in supplying a large amount of relevant information in a largely non-technical way. My reservations about the book are concerned with style in which this information is presented, and I will deal with this during the course of the review.

The book is divided into seven sections, which are; 1) An Introduction to sound theory and its terminology, 2) The acoustics of performance areas, 3) The equipment itself, 4) Putting it all together, designing a system, 5) A look at some awkward problems, 6) Effects, communications and future prospects, 7) Bibliography, useful data, and index.

In his introduction, Mr Walne uses the analogy of a chain, with its links comprising people, e.g. performer, operator, installer, etc., and equipment, e.g. microphones, mixers, amplifiers, cables and plugs. This analogy persists throughout the book, and each link is dealt with in greater or lesser detail, depending on the importance the author assigns to it, without resorting to the use of obscure technical theory.

The first section deals with the theory and terminology of sound in a concise and clear way, introducing the reader to wavelength and frequency, the speed of



sound, fundamentals and harmonics, as well as the less well known but equally important areas of transient response, and the directional characteristics of sound waves. The decibel, in all its manifestations, is well explained, as is the frequency range of the human voice and ear. Sound pressure levels and the dangers involved in exposure to high sound levels are also well explained, and this section more than adequately covers the basic knowledge needed to assimilate the finer details of sound theory and practice. This section ends, as do all the others, with a brief summary of the main points covered.

The section on acoustics is very comprehensive, covering reverberation, including the calculation of reverberation time, assisted resonance and ambiphony, reflectors and resonators and a great deal more besides. Perhaps there is too much

detailed information in this section to appeal to the average reader, as Mr Walne goes into areas that are unlikely to be of concern to a performer or technician, but are of more use to an architect or builder.

Section three, dealing with hardware, is not as comprehensive as it might have been, for, whilst the reader is given a useful guide to all the major items of equipment, and is instructed in the interpretation of specifications, few examples of accepted equipment practice are given. For instance, ribbon microphones are introduced, but no mention is made of their inherently fragile nature; capacitor microphones are dealt with, but the section of phantom powering is so vague as to be useless. No mention is made of electret microphones, stereo microphones, or piezo-electric transducers for musical instruments. Some of the problems of radio microphones are covered, but no mention is made of diversity systems receiver aerial positioning, or aerial distribution systems, and the few lines devoted to frequency allocation and licensing are hardly sufficient. We are shown photographs of a number of mixing desks, but are not told why they are especially suited to theatre work. The working method of a Libra desk, or of a Trident Fleximix is at least as important as the working of the Bose speaker system, to which Mr Walne devotes several paragraphs. Having said that, I should go on to point out that the sections on Loudspeakers is excellent, and contains much that will be useful to the compiler of an efficient system. (Although I wish that the difference between a studio monitor and a stage foldback monitor had been made clearer. They are often designed to do very different things.) Amplifiers and treat-

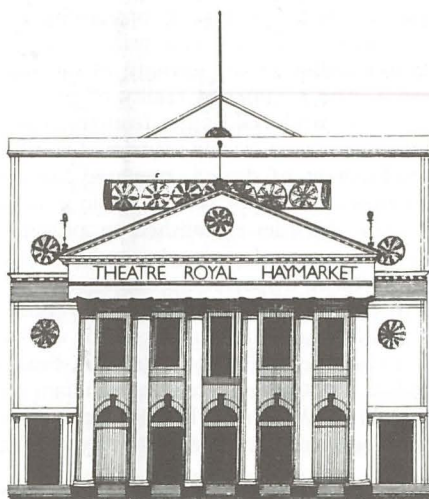
ment devices are also well covered, and mention is given to both 100-volt line and low impedance systems. Mention is also made of time delay systems, and their use is fully explored in this and other sections of the book.

Section four, on putting it all together, is, as may be expected, an amalgam of various other parts of the book, with particular emphasis on choosing a system that can cater for current needs as well as being capable of expansion to cover future eventualities. A series of block diagrams are given, showing some sample rigs, and much is made of the need for correct matching of different items. I should like to have seen at least some reference to impedance matching, as this very often poses problems for the non-technical. Part of this section deals with balancing microphones, particularly radio microphones, for live performance, and I feel that the author's aims, though well intentioned, are rather idealised. The thought of attempting to pan any more than one radio mic whilst maintaining a band balance, let alone trying to control six of them, whilst the performers are engaged in a complex dance routine, is enough to make any operator retire. Connectors, cables and mains supplies are also covered in this section, and the theory is sound, if lacking illustration; incidentally, what has the G.P.O. jack plug done to be totally ignored in this section? Safety, the use of earth leakage circuit breakers and correct fusing all figure in this section and are well covered. Mr Walne also covers budgeting, a useful adjunct to the more technical matters otherwise involved.

Section five deals with problem environments, such as churches, banqueting halls, and outdoor events and Mr Walne makes some valid points about setting up systems in difficult areas, theatre in the round and thrust stages being particularly well served. A useful section, and one that covers an area that has hitherto been largely ignored.

Section six deals with effects, communications and the future, and is, in my view, lamentably thin. The barest essentials are covered, with some explanation of stereo and "quadrophonic" systems. Tape, as a way of storing effects, is also mentioned, but what sort of tape? What track configurations? What about four track, and even eight track machines? Why is there no mention of noise reduction? And why, when Mr Walne complains about the lack of random access on conventional reel to reel machines, does he only give two lines to broadcast standard cartridge machines? Tape editing is mentioned in passing, but no detail about editing and splicing is given. The use of recorded music is also covered, but no mention is made of the legal obligations of such bodies as The Musicians Union, The Performing Rights Society, The Mechanical Copyright Protection Society, and Phonographic Performances Ltd. Every time a theatre uses a piece of music, without consulting some or all of these organisations, and obtaining the necessary permission or licence, it is a breach of the law, just as surely as if it had contravened any other regulation concerning the presentation of a public performance.

Communications are a little better served, with a brief explanation of a ring intercomm., paging facilities and cue lights, but where are the block diagrams of these systems? Multi-channel systems, station to station intercomm. systems, induction loop paging, and priority lock-outs for paging systems are also ignored, and why, if space is given to the fairly complex equation for computing reverberation time, is there not a circuit diagram for wiring a simple cue-light system?



The final part of this section deals with the future, and Mr Walne rightly surmises that the microprocessor will radically alter the design and operation of much equipment used in theatres.

The last section of the book comprises a bibliography, a collection of data sheets, a summary of some of the basic points dealt with in the main body of the book, a sample installation specification, and an index to both text and photographs. The data sheets are a very nice idea, and serve as a readily accessible glossary to many of the terms encountered in the book.

My main complaint is that this book has been very unevenly edited. Sections overlap in their content, and repetition of information occurs. Drawings and diagrams are rarely referred to in the text, and in many cases are very badly drawn. Some of them, such as those relating to microphone placement for musical instrument pick-up, are virtually useless. Similarly, many of the photographs, either by virtue of their content, or their reproduction quality, serve no useful purpose, and should have been left out of the book altogether. I became increasingly annoyed at the absence of correct proof-reading, and also at Mr Walne's style of writing which veers from the familiar to the didactic with alarming irregularity.

I hope that my comments do not unduly upset Mr Walne, because even in its present form his book is still a very useful manual but I feel that if it were to be revised in a second edition, then it could indeed become all that Mr Walne and his publishers hope for.

JOHN LEONARD

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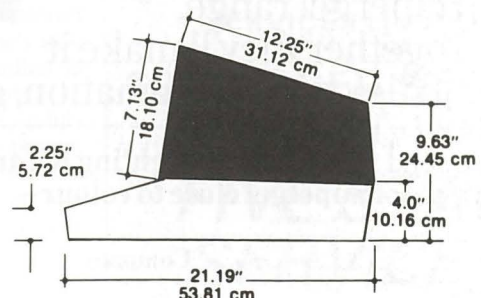
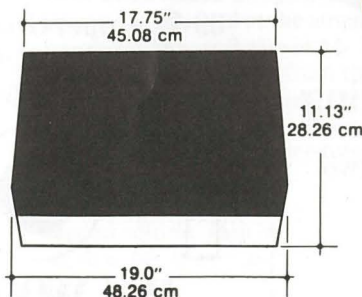
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PRODUCT NEWS

CCT on tour

CCT will be 'on tour' in February and March with an exhibition of their product including the latest additions to the range.

So many people who were unable to get to the ABTT and 'Entertainment '81' exhibitions last Autumn have asked to see the product that CCT have decided to take a small but comprehensive show to them. The new M650 range including Zoom Profile and Tungsten Halogen Flood is sure to attract much attention as it has since the launch in September 1981.

Similarly the Poppette low voltage Tungsten Halogen Spotlight which will be on show in its full range of available colours is bound to command interest.

The ever popular Silhouette ranges will, of course, also be there together with CCT's Semaphore and MX Colour Change Systems.

The whole show is arranged to allow visitors to handle all the equipment. At each venue the local CCT stockist will offer a special tour deal on the M650 product and CCT have promised a tour competition with attractive prizes with the winners being drawn on the last night at the final venue at ABTT headquarters in London.

CCT 'on tour' will be playing in nine cities, Edinburgh 15th and 16th February, Newcastle-upon-Tyne 17th and 18th February, Manchester 19th, 20th and 22nd February, Birmingham 23rd, 24th and 25th February, Bristol 27th, 28th February and 1st March, Southampton 2nd and 3rd March, Canterbury 4th, 5th and 6th March, Cambridge 8th and 9th March, London 10th, 11th, 12th and 13th March.

Tickets are freely available and will be distributed through 'the usual channels'. However, if you want to know more a call or note to Eddie Hunter at CCT Theatre Lighting Limited, Windsor House, 26 Willow Lane, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 4NA, Telephone 01-640 3366, will bring you all the details.

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New from Spectrum

Spectrum Audio have introduced a new low cost ring communication system known as BANTAM.

The system is simple to install - existing wiring can often be used - and even simpler to operate. Apart from a volume control there are no knobs or buttons to play with.

BANTAM provides hands-free, two-way communication. An unlimited number of socket outlets can be installed. They are interconnected by a two-core screened (microphone) cable, looped from one outlet to the next in any convenient order. One core carries the audio signal and enables each station to talk and listen to every other station. The other core carries the power at low voltage to the stations. No batteries are carried by the operators. The required number of headset stations are plugged into the appropriate socket outlets.

The BANTAM headset station, £39.50 incorporates its own microphone pre-amplifier and headphone power amplifier housed in a rugged metal case. The amplifier pack is fitted with a spring clip to hook it on to a belt. Being smaller than a packet of cigarettes the amplifier pack can be carried in the pocket. The microphone pre-amplifier has a tailored frequency response band-limited and peaking at 2kHz to improve intelligibility. The headphone power amplifier is short circuit and thermally protected. An exclusive roller volume control allows the listen level to be adjusted to suit the operating conditions.

Side tone suppression is provided to reduce the level of the signal from operator's microphone in his own headphones and thus minimise acoustic feedback and noise pick-up. Reverse polarity protection ensures that the amplifier pack will not be damaged by an incorrect connection in the system. The amplifier pack is fitted with a 1½ metre curled cable, extending up to 6 metres and terminated in a standard 3-pole jackplug.

The headset is fully adjustable and incorporates noise excluding double muff headphones, together with a dynamic close-talk microphone which can be raised or lowered and slid in and out of the pivoting enclosure. It is connected to the amplifier pack with 1m of high quality rubberised cable.

The BANTAM power supply £39.50 can supply power for up to 10 headset stations. Further information from Spectrum Audio Ltd, Leaside Industrial Estate, Garman Road, London N17 0QP. Tel: 01-801 7461.



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Instant Slide Making

Lighting Designer Jan P Sendor is offering a novel on-site service for producing colour projection transparencies wanted for same-day performance.

The service includes the supply of all photographic and processing equipment, lighting equipment and film stock. Because the processing is done on site the film can be viewed in its wet state to check results and retake if necessary. The package, says Mr Sendor, effectively removes the mystique surrounding the use of projection on stage and brings it under the immediate control of the designer concerned.

Further information from Sendor, 46, Crowford Drive, Mickleover, Derby DE3 5JT.

Assisted Resonance at Harrogate

Acoustical Investigations and Research Organisation Ltd has designed a ninety-channel system for the Harrogate Super-centre conference auditorium, employing tuned microphones and loudspeakers in the ceiling design. A self-contained micro-computer based calibration unit will ensure that the system will be ready for operation at very short notice. Two levels of Assisted Resonance will be provided and it is expected that the lower setting will be used for operetta and chamber music whilst the higher setting, which as much as doubles the reverberation time at the lower frequencies, will make the hall ideal for symphonic and choral works.

Lock, stock and barndoor

On December 28, 1981 Lowel-Light, maker of professional location lighting equipment since 1959, moved, lock, stock and barn-door, to 475 Tenth Avenue, New York, New York 10018. Tel. 212-947-0950.

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Between Cues

The thoughts of
Walter Plinge

Theatre in movies

I always get excited by glimpses of old theatres and old stages in old films. Indeed when I succumb to the video boom, it will probably be so that I can freeze single frames to examine details of the backstage technology. But a Christmas Cliff Richard re-run brought caution to my enthusiasm. I was around in 1961 and so I remember that it was not customary practice to use a standard Strand cue light board to switch on S-batten – one tablet switch to each colour! There is also a lovely sequence in the film (“The Young Ones”) where a derelict theatre is restored within the space of one musical number. Will future generations assume that this is how things were done before the era of theatre consultants?

Omnipotent tomatoes

The world of theatre is relatively free from industrial action. I have been inconvenienced (as potential audience) by withdrawal of labour by opera technicians in both Paris and London. Then there was that little spot of plumbing pother at the National. And on more than one occasion I have been grateful to the musicians for declining an offer of rehearsal overtime so that I could go to bed. But a recent Amsterdam exhibition of Netherlands theatre history drew my attention to a couple of unusual and interesting strikes. The first was in 1919. The demand was not only for better pay: the old guard opposed the new ways of acting and rebelled against the growing omnipotence of the director. Exactly half a century later, in 1969, it was the audience who took action in the *Aktie Tوماات*, using tomato power to protest against the lack of social commitment in the play selection of the establishment drama companies. To make my own position clear I should perhaps add that I believe in omnipotent directors provided that they are talented and wear their omnipotence with discretion. And I prefer to eat my tomatoes.

Box windows

As the all important point of sale, the box office window has become an area of some concern for theatre planners. Like the proscenium zone and its much debated actor/audience relationships, the ticket window also requires some degree of flexibility. Opening up for nice punters, but narrowing down when one of the nasties approach. Oh yes, the customer is always right: but some are righter than others – and they make a point of saying so. I con-

fess that I used to think that box office staff came only in four flavours: abrupt, cheerfully abrupt, rude, cheerfully rude. That was before I tried my hand at selling tickets. Now I realise that *elegant protection* is the



key to window design. After all, if the show is any good, there will be a seller's market. Spain is rather good at the elegantly protective sales window as these *Alicante* examples (*Plaza de Toros* and *Teatro Principal*).



Theatre ahoy

I have an insatiable appetite for theatres. Let the horizon suggest the slenderest promise of a fly tower and all my senses instantly switch into a mode of heightened twitch. But a theatre in a harbour has an element of surprise. A *Bad Theatre* or a

Bath Theatre? No! the German for spa is the Danish for boat. And so in Copenhagen harbour one must assume *Boat Theatre*. But neither the Box Office or Stage Door hatches responded to my hopeful ahoy! Perhaps they were all having a bath.

Subscribe here

The British theatre is feverishly embracing subscription selling as if it were a new idea thought up by an American marketing man. In most of Europe, the discounted series ticket has long been the basis of repertoire planning and audience continuity. As autumn approached Copenhagen, several shop windows had tempting displays of the stage offerings planned for the winter ahead – and there was a temporary stall to make it easy for shoppers to *take subscription here*.



Così revisited

I must return to the subject of *Così fan Tutte* although I will try (probably with little success) to adopt a less polemic tone than in Cue 14. I have been to a quite splendid performance by the *Singers Company* given in the elegant little opera house of an east anglian market town. This performance confirmed two matters of great importance to me. Firstly, it is possible to change an opera's period and location provided that the producer does it with his ears. Thus the proposition that Don Alfonso is an Oxford don of 1900 can generate a totally acceptable, musically valid, interpretation full of fascinating and stylish ideas. Secondly, it is possible to reduce the orchestral forces provided that the parts are re-distributed in the way that Mozart would have done if he had been writing for a chamber group. The *Singers Company's* publicity includes some fashionable cobblers about presenting opera as theatre. I was delighted to find that they present opera as opera. This *Così* was sung and played with full respect for the conventions of its operatic style. Bravo!