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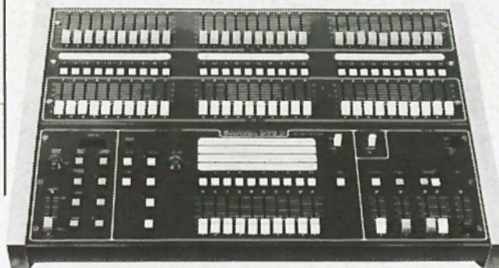
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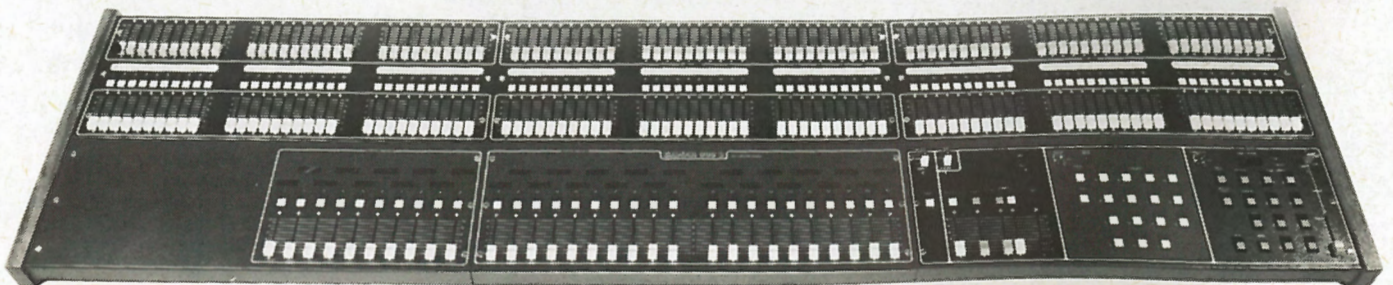
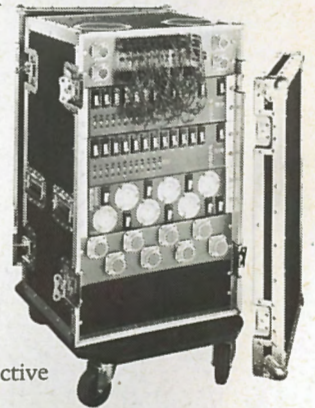
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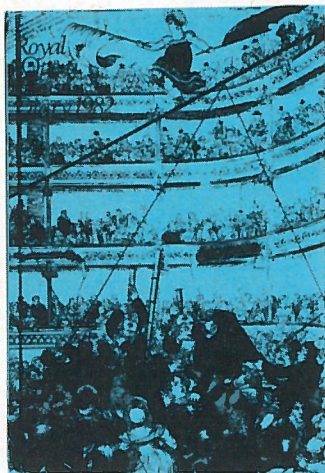
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Illustrated diaries are becoming very popular and the Royal Opera House 1982 edition has some interesting full page pictures of moments in the history of the various theatres on the Covent Garden site. These include the impression of backstage technology which forms our cover. The Rheingold's swimming machinery was painted in 1936 by a *Tatler* artist and made available to the diary by the *Theatre Museum*. The technology looks like fairly orthodox Kirby wires, although current fashion plus the growing influence of the Health and Safety at Work Act tends to favour the easier option of not restricting audience imagination by such imposition of reality! Perhaps it will all soon be done by swimming holograms.

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CUE

Technical Theatre Review

17.

May/June 1982

Flying Stalls

An eminent theatre consultant was at work with his steel rule. Not in the rarefied atmosphere of his consulting room, but while visiting a patient with a seat problem. The consultant was tall and thin, so the measurement being taken was not width between arms, but distance back to back. The phrase on his lips was from the airline industry: *seat pitch*.

And why not? There are strong affinities between flying an aircraft and a theatre.

Both frequently fly with empty seats. There is nothing more un-saleable than a seat in an aircraft after take-off or a seat in a theatre after curtain-up. No good putting the ticket back on the shelf or into the fridge for sale tomorrow.

Not surprisingly, theatres and airlines use similar marketing methods. At the play or in the air, it is unlikely that the person in the next seat has paid the same price. There is a high no-strings charge for the few whose lives are too flexible for apex fare or subscription ticket, and not flexible enough to stand-by.

First New York and now London have established half price ticket booths to unload surplus theatre seats. The airlines use bucket shops.

Theatre price differentials are based mainly on sightline: in the air they vary with seat comfort and service. How long before theatre seats divide into first, club and steerage. *Royal Irving* with free champagne and sleeperettes, *Gracious Garrick* with choice of spirits and reclining chairs, *Theatric Tourist* on benches with permission to buy beer in understaffed bar (all the usherettes would be up front with Irving and Garrick).

Well, at least a theatre audience can leave before the end without a parachute!

But, removing tongue from cheek, there is one area where theatre must surely always follow the airlines' example: the maintenance of highest possible technical and safety standards irrespective of the number of occupied seats.

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Autolycus



First Night Cover

Full marks to the British Post Office on their happy choice of *Theatre* to interpret the Historical Events theme for 'Europa' stamps this year. Adrian George's designs are a delight but CUE readers will be pleased to spot the subtle tribute to theatre technicians and to a very famous lantern which Keith Bassford has incorporated in his first day cover design shown here.

The Stamp Collecting Promotion Council of Great Britain with the co-operation of

the Royal Opera House have produced an attractive presentation souvenir pack of these theatre stamps to celebrate National Stamp Collecting Week at the Covent Garden Stamp Festival. The Festival commemorates the issuing of the First Penny Black.

The cardboard pack has a cover showing the facade of the Royal Opera House which opens to show the theatre inside with pop-up figures on stage and a set of the new

theatre stamps inserted in a pocket on the back cloth. The pack sells at £2.75 which includes a contribution of 25p towards the Royal Opera House Development Appeal.

Even if you're not a stamp collector it's a lovely souvenir of British theatre which you'll want to keep. It is available from the information desk at the Royal Opera House or from the SCPC at 27 John Adam Street, WC2N 6HZ.

The First International Jewish Theatre Festival

An international conference and festival of Jewish Theatre will be held on the campus of Tel Aviv University in July 1982. It will be the first of its kind in the world.

In the framework of the event there will be three types of activities: lectures and discussion groups, workshops and performances. Theatre people and groups from all parts of the world who share a common interest in the subject of Jewish Theatre will participate in the festival.

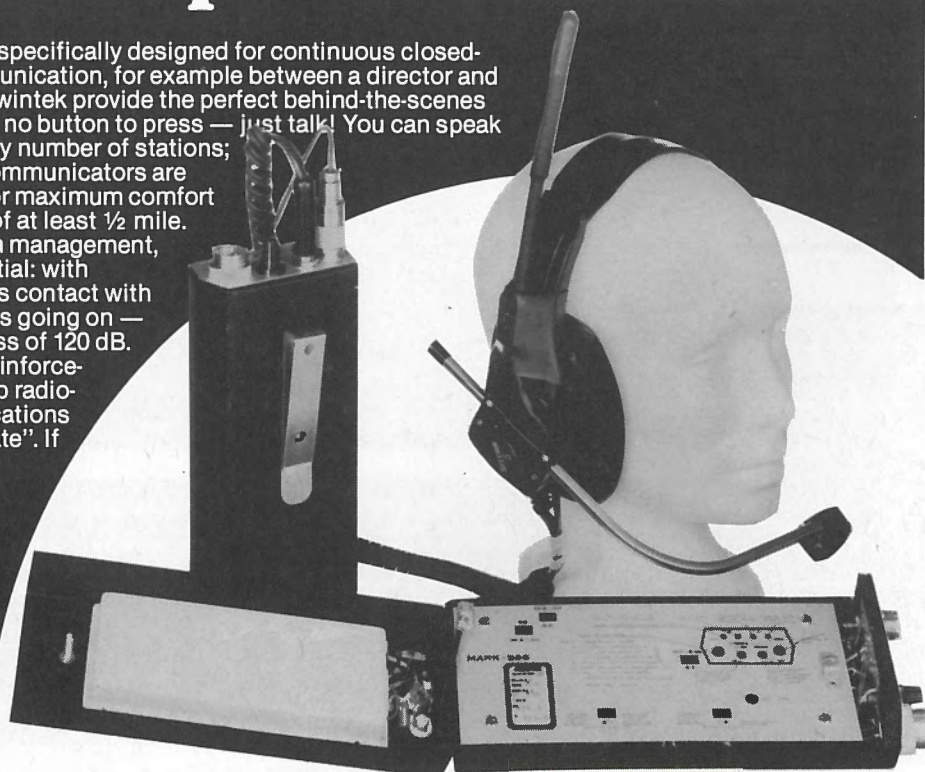
Many theatre people possess a need to express the special feeling they have towards the motifs and themes of the Jewish Theatre. The festival is an outlet for the

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realization of this feeling. The purpose of the conference is not solely to present existing activities but also to encourage new ones.

Inquiries can be addressed to the festival director, Danny Horowitz, Department of Theatre Arts, Tel Aviv University, Ramat Aviv ISRAEL 69978.

Barbican Lap of Honour

Now that the Barbican Centre has got into its stride, with many of its concerts playing to capacity houses and its peripheral attractions of foyer performances, exhibitions, restaurants, the nearby Museum of London and the Guildhall School reanimating the City at the weekends and in the evenings, it is a good moment to look back and remember the 25 years of hopes and fears and very hard slog that preceded the special opening by the Queen in March. Ninety special moments of the last year's building, decoration and finalisation – some

historic, some dramatic, others showing the complexities of the organisational preparations – have been caught on colour film by Suzanne Stanton, whose special photographic study of the Centre, "Preview", will be on view on the Barbican's Terrace Foyer from June 7th to September 12th. She went to the acoustic tests, climbed the Theatre flytower, attended the preview concerts, the laying of the acres of carpet and the growing of thousands of plants and focuses on the background events that the satisfied audience often know nothing about. The colour prints were produced by the Colour Processing Division of Kodak, and the materials, processing and developing supplied by Dixons Photographic UK Ltd. An extended exhibition about the Barbican Centre with work by Suzie Meader, Donald Cooper and these photographs by Suzanne Stanton will be on show in April 1983 at the Avery Fisher Hall, New York as part of the festival "Britain Salutes New York".

A Strictly Non-technical Guide to the Jargon of Acoustics

There is no other occasion, excepting perhaps the arrival of the Beaujolais Nouveau from France, that gives rise to so many passages of purple prose, so many conflicting opinions and so much spurious excitement as the opening of a new concert hall. Over the years I have eavesdropped shamelessly on such occasions and the opening of the Barbican Centre proved no exception. Nobody was much interested in the artistic accomplishments of the orchestra (which were considerable) and no-one cared much about the visual and architectural merits of the concert hall (which was perhaps just as well). All anyone cared to discuss, and at some length, were the acoustics.

Newcomers to the world of acoustical jargon may find the following expressions, overheard at the Barbican, helpful when wishing to dazzle with their expertise. There was, as usual, a good deal of loose talk about 'tops and bottoms'. These are key words and the expression 'all top and no bottom' (or alternatively 'all bottom and no top') thrown lightly into a conversation will immediately establish you as a connoisseur. It should be borne in mind that language, when discussing sound, should be as flowery and expressive as possible. For instance, the piano is never just loud; it is always 'aggressive', 'strident' or 'clangy' (though at the Barbican one unhappy member of the Press complained he couldn't hear the piano at all).

Opinions on the string section were widely divided, ranging from 'clear' and 'sharp' to 'unnaturally shrill' and 'lacking in body' (a useful phrase this). The cello was 'wonderfully mellow' though the violins 'were not flattered'. The woodwind 'chirped vividly', 'sounded mellow' (mellow is another much over-used word) and was found to be 'over prominent'. The brass section, apart from being 'vibrant', was both 'inaudible' and 'over-powering'.

A last word of advice. It is wise to be extremely circumspect when proffering an opinion on the overall acoustical effect. The expression 'the acoustics remain an unknown quantity' has much to recommend it. Nobody can argue with you and it is, above all, truthful.

Cara Lancaster
ABTT News, April 1982.

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LIGHTING THE ACTOR: I

CHOOSING ANGLES

In the first of a new CUE series on basic lighting design, FRANCIS REID discusses the main problem with spotlights: *where to put them*. In future Cues, he will consider *which to put* and *where to put them*.

The problems of lighting design are problems of compromise. There are compromises of practice and compromises of theory.

Practical compromises are partly associated with money and partly with time. But most frustrating are the compromises between the ideal positions for lights, and the positions where we are able to hang them. This restriction, however, has improved enormously in recent years. In the newer proscenium theatres, the provision of auditorium bridges and slots varies from the adequate to the generous; while the foh positions in older theatres have expanded to the point where proscenium booms seem as unremarkable to today's audiences as proscenium doors did to the Georgians.

Backstage, current design styles derive from an economy of statement which fortunately coincides with the economy of recession, leaving clearer hanging space over the stage. While, almost by definition, studio theatres now have overall modular lighting grids. And the rock and conference industries, playing in venues rather than more conventional theatres, have developed rigging techniques that bring the sky hook concept ever closer to reality.

So, in comparison with twenty, perhaps ten or even just five years ago, there is now more possibility of hanging lights in something approaching ideal positions.

But where are these ideal positions? Well, again it is a question of compromise. So the search becomes one for an ideal compromise.

Consider an actor standing still and facing the audience. Light from above – absolutely vertically downwards. The eyes will be dark sockets, the nose aglow and causing the mouth to lie in shadow. But only a very small area of the stage will be lit: an area that need be no larger than the circumference of the actor's widest part – chest, waist or hips depending on that actor's personal structure. Very selective, dramatic in its modelling, but doing nothing to let the audience see what the actor is up to with his principal means of projection: eyes and teeth.

Move that light slowly down in the front plane. Gradually more and more light reaches the actor's eyes and teeth. At the

same time the area of lit stage floor extends behind the actor. This area contains an actor shadow – a dark area whose shape corresponds to the hole that the actor has made in the light beam by stopping some of the rays.

(*aside*: OK, so I read some physics 35 years ago and so I know that light is a waveform and that I should be using scientific words like frequency and so on. But I have always found light easier to work with if I think of it as a solid. But a rather special solid: you can chop the sides and centre but not the length.)

Back to the actor and the actor shadow: put a bit of scenery behind the actor and the shadow will start to creep up that scenery as the light angle swings down in the frontal plane. When the light reaches the horizontal, eyes and teeth will be full lit and the shadow will be the same height as the actor. And the area that the light is selecting will be a corridor which is as narrow as the actor's width but extends the full depth of the stage – or rather the full depth of the acting area because the light will go on and on until it either hits the back wall or a piece of scenery. This is all, of course, for an actor standing still: moving to left or right will require the corridor width to increase to the extent of these movements.

Drop the lighting angle below the horizontal and the light on the actor's face becomes increasingly unnatural. And the shadow starts to rise above the actor. It gets rather dramatic in a dracula sort of way.

So there is an identifiable area of compromise, low enough for eyes and teeth yet high enough to restrict the length of lit floor. Perhaps somewhere around thirty to sixty degrees? Degrees from the vertical or horizontal? Doesn't matter for thirty and sixty are interchangeable – and that is a good enough reason for picking an angle in a field so subjective that the choice is more than a little arbitrary.

Anyway the degree of compromise will depend on just how tight an area we need to select. The compromise involves choices between relative visibility, modelling, selection and shadows.

Whatever we do, the light will inevitably be flattening rather than flattering. At worst like a single follow spot on an other-

wise blacked out stage in a huge auditorium.

So, having discussed light in the frontal plane, let us now consider side light – light in a plane at ninety degrees to the front light.

Let us start again with the vertical downlighter. As its angle moves down, the actor's face and body become increasingly modelled. A little light gets under the eyebrows and into the eyes while rather more gets under the nose and on to the mouth. Also, as the angle from the vertical increases, the actor's shadow will lengthen across the stage as will the corridor required to keep the actor in light.

If the actor is facing out front, lights will be required from both sides in order to illuminate both sides of the face. These two lights automatically produce two shadows.

So with sidelighting we note that modelling and visibility increase, while selectivity decreases, as the angle comes down from the vertical. When the angle becomes horizontal, there will be a complete light corridor across the stage. It will be actor high but its depth, up and downstage, will be dependent on the requirements of actor movement.

Compromise is again likely to lead us somewhere into the zone of thirty to sixty degrees. But the precise angle will depend on several factors arising from the production's requirements. How tightly selected need the areas be? Is there a lot of movement to be sculpted? (dancers, almost by definition, tend to project more with their bodies than do actors). How will the design accept shadows? (If there are on/off flats, their angles can be cheated imperceptibly so that they do not catch shadows but lose them in the bays between the wings. If there are walls running up and down stage, actor high shadows are likely to prove unacceptable, although scenic colour and texture might permit a more acceptable level of tolerance.)

But the standard actor's face angles that have been advocated for some fifty years, the standard angles that were suggested by Stanley McCandless in his 1932 *A Method of Lighting the Stage* and have been at the core of every textbook since (mine included) – these standard angles are in

neither of the planes, frontal or side, that we have just been discussing.

They are a compromise of the compromises. Light coming from the front of the actor (for visibility) but off-set to the side (to help modelling). Mounted high enough to keep the shadows low enough for the actor to dominate them, yet low enough for the light to get into the eye sockets (if the eyebrows are not too bushy or the hat brim too wide) and into the mouth with its all important teeth (if the nose be reasonably restrained in its projection).

The problem in using these angles is threefold. First, they throw diagonal shadows in two contrasting angles away from the actor, making it very difficult to control the light falling on the set. Secondly, they light an area of stage floor considerably in excess of the acting area provided with good face lighting – and that area of lit floor is in a markedly different position from the area where faces are lit. Thirdly, once the angles have been chosen, the compromise between visibility and modelling is fixed. The balance between visibility and modelling is one of the most important features of lighting design. It is such a vital part of the palette that to gain total control we really ought to have separate angles (from separate instruments on separate dimmer channels) for frontal visibility and side modelling.

In other words, should we abandon the traditional pair of spots crossing from side fronts to hit the left and right sides of the face?

Well, with the experience of lighting for the open stage plus a growth in the general number of lighting instruments available (and the dimmer wherewithal to control them) that is precisely what has been happening over the past decade – spurred on by scenic design styles which not only ask light rather than scenery to delineate space, but leave enough free space above the stage for the lighting to be rigged at the necessary angles.

But before considering this further, let us just remind ourselves of the importance of backlight. During earlier stages in the development of lighting, the priorities had to be first to get enough plain illumination and then to add modelling and area control. On considerations of cost-effectiveness, backlighting just had to come well down the list. However if light is to be the actor's environment on the stage as it is in nature, then the light must come from all around. Accordingly we now give a high priority to backlight, rejoicing in, (a) the haze above and behind the actor which helps to separate actor from scenery, (b) the modelling highlights on heads and shoulders, and (c) the possibilities of strong delineation of the acting area.

The vertical angle of backlight is not critical: it need only be twenty or so degrees beyond the vertical and indeed, in many tightly hung rigs, the backlight is virtually a downlight. Whether it is offset to the side is largely dependent on whether it is necessary and desirable to introduce a directional key as part of the motivational concept of a particular lighting picture.

Therefore when we use our compromise-angle two-spot system for the face, we

usually add a third spot as backlight. Thus each acting area is lit with *three primary angles* with a separation of approximately 120 degrees between them. We often mix in a little from other spots from the front and from the sides, but these are *secondary angles* often used as washes to include several areas within their focus settings – and added only in the bigger scenes.

On the other hand, when using a straight-in front light and a pair of side lights, plus a backlight, we are lighting with *four primary angles* with a separation of 90 degrees between them. We may also add a bit from a midway frontal angle, but these are *secondary angles* used only when we can afford to widen out the selected area.

Note that, with the exception of the backlight, the primary and secondary angles become reversed between the two methods.

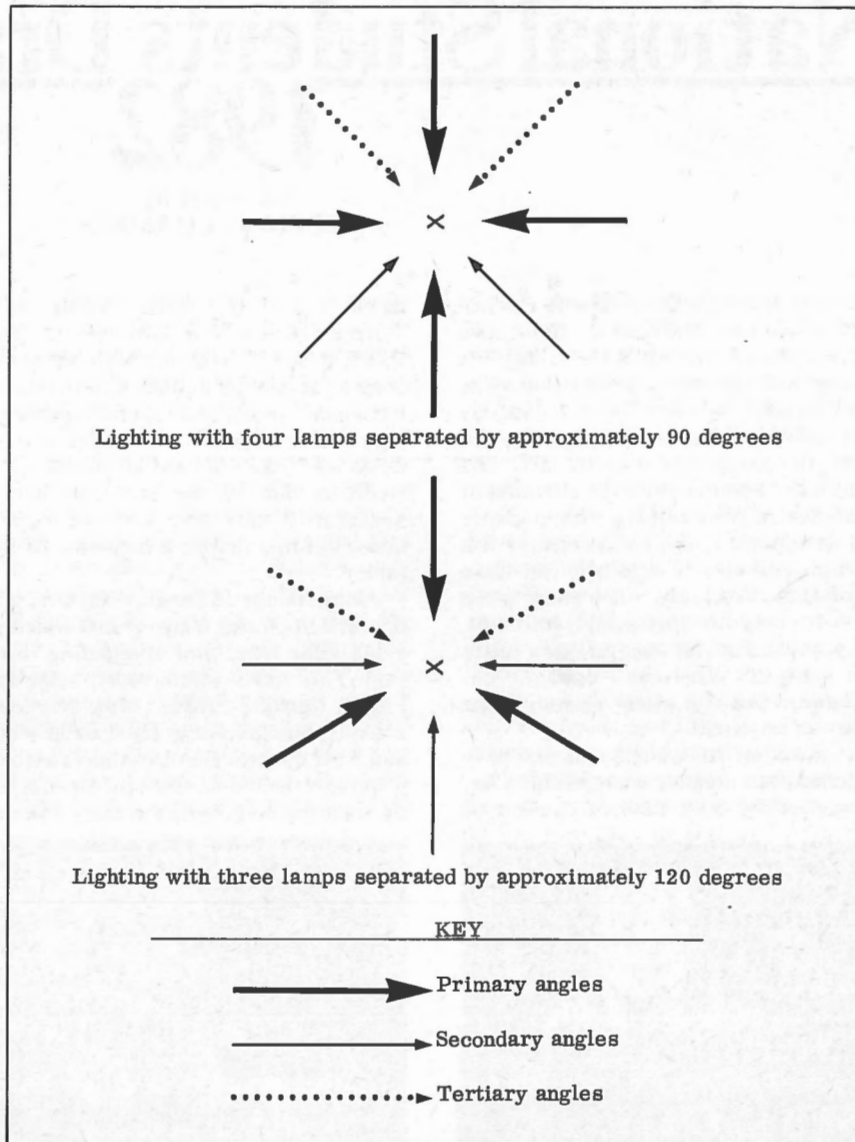
I should add that I have found it convenient, for my own working, to think of directionally motivating backlights as *tertiary angles*.

Which system to use?

Well, assuming the possibility of rigging it, the "4 lights at 90" has a lot going for it – particularly tighter area control because

the side lights can be more vertical if the front is looking after eyes and teeth; and finer quality control because illumination and modelling are on separate dimmers.

But if the stage is cluttered, the auditorium lacking in forward bridge or bar, and equipment a bit short, then there is still a lot of life yet in McCandless angles, updated with backlight.





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THE 27th National Students Drama Festival 1982

a report by
STEPHAN CHAMBERS

The 27th National Student Drama Festival settled in Hull for the second consecutive year, and proved once again the value of its extensive and generous sponsorship. The annual event, founded by the Sunday Times, provides a unique opportunity for student companies not only to meet and perform, but also to receive the attention of several theatre professionals. This guidance is an invaluable asset for students with theatrical ambitions, especially in these days of reduced subsidy, when entry to the profession becomes increasingly difficult. Each year the Festival uncovers new talent which might otherwise remain undiscovered, and for this reason alone justifies its existence.

The direction in which students have channelled their creative energies this year, was revealed by eight days of continuous

spectacle. A full scale production of Goethe's *Goetz von Berlichingen* shared space in the programme with an updated *Seagull*, a musical and an improvised 'performance' piece. An almost unremitting pace was sustained over the week as curtain down was followed hard by curtain up. All credit is due to the technical and administrative staff who kept the Festival's house in order despite a minimum of fit-up time.

Alongside the 18 productions were a host of workshops and fringe events which provided light relief and stimulating distraction. This year's adjudicators: voice coach Linda Maher, BBC director Martin Jenkins, Sunday Times critic James Fenton and RSC director Bill Alexander, each contributed valuable workshops. Besides those on voice training, verse speaking and direc-

ting, James Fenton offered the rare delight of a forum to criticise the critic, and gave several much needed tips to aspiring word-smiths. Equally informative were workshops by William Hobbs on stage-fighting, Mike Bradwell on characterisation and Joyce Nettles on casting in the theatre.

The fringe cabaret, as so often in the past, threw up acts which rivalled the Festival finalists in polish and commitment. A new all-women group called "Short Back and Sides" provided a blistering evening's entertainment with a fine series of songs and sketches. Alan Plater gave us 'poems and pints' and the fringe generally lent a welcome air of levity to the Festival's main proceedings.

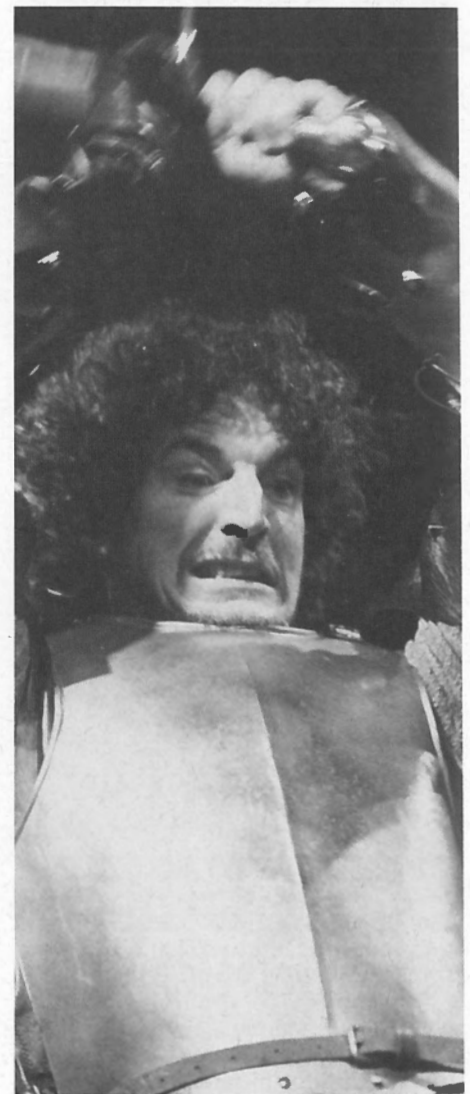
A noticeable element this year was the way in which students had made a laudable response to the plea from last year's judges



Best Actress Eileen Ryan in Faith Healer



George Ussil in The Dog in the Manger (Best supporting actor)



Neil Horsefield in Goetz von Berlichingen

for more enterprising playwrights. 24 new works were entered, of which nine reached the final. A commendable proportion, demonstrating not only higher standards but the greater readiness of new writers to venture original material. The plays selected showed a far healthier trend generally, and included the rarely seen *Dog in a Manger* by the sixteenth-century Spanish playwright Lope de Vega and an astute choice of Brian Friel's *Faith Healer*. Both suitable challenges to a student company. Perhaps most gratifying of all was the absence of such Festival warhorses as Pinter and Ionesco, who had been given a rest until Edinburgh.

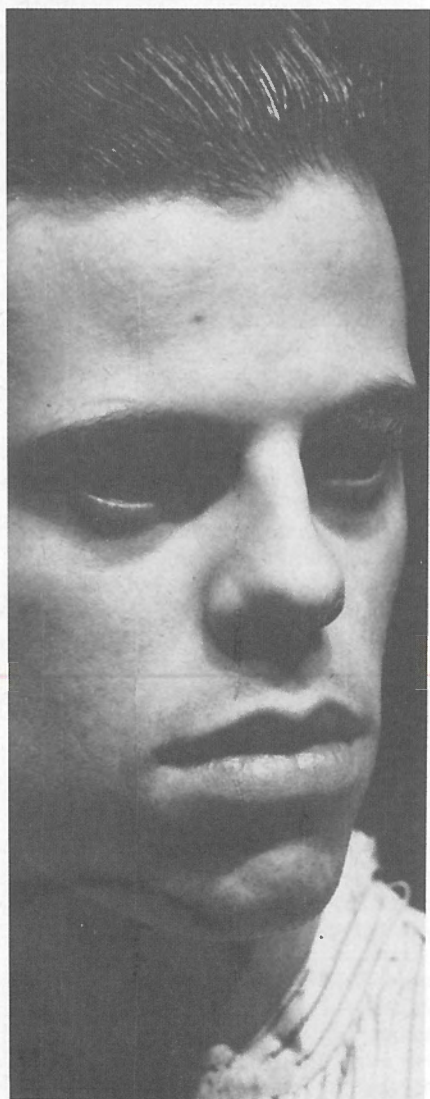
The productions which remain etched on the memory are all very different, and yet all share an aggressive direction and commitment which make them stand out above

the rest. Undoubtedly the most promising new work came from Bristol in the shape of *Small Beginnings* by Jeremy Brock, which won for its author the Sunday Times Playscript award. A typical 'Warehouse' Play, it dealt subtly and humorously with the dilemmas of a group of urban youths. Its leading actor Cyril Nri gave a remarkable performance, at once athletic and still, which made him a deserved Best Actor. It was the strength of Simon Curtis' direction, however, which finally made *Small Beginnings* such a strong play and an achievement which few companies emulated. *Happy Jack* from Minsthorpe High School was altogether quieter and less immediately impressive. Written by John Godber (author of the 1981 award winning *Cramp*) it traced a Yorkshire marriage from courtship to retirement with a sensitivity to

detail and painful silence which was assured and masterly. Firmly in the mould of 'made for TV' plays it was the best groomed and most professional piece of the week.

Faith Healer from Hull University was a fine choice of play and produced consistently fine performances. An intricate jigsaw of related monologues, it pieced itself together with chilling compulsion. Eileen Ryan as the faith healer's wife gave a consummate performance as an ageing neurotic and was deservedly awarded the prize for Best Actress. The distinction of *Faith Healer* was the way in which the whole complicated story was given life by the power of acting alone. Mick Cahill as the faith healer and John Goodfellow as his manager also made indelible impressions.

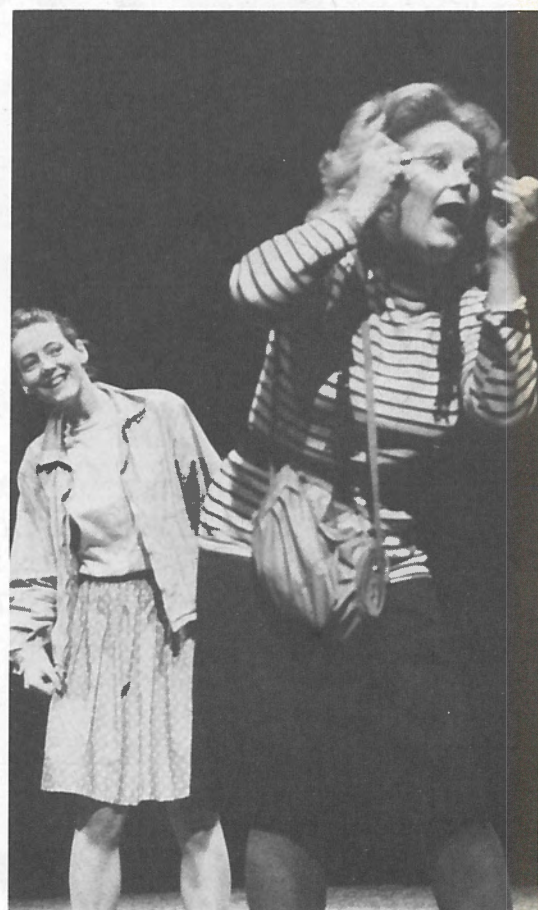
Probably the strongest company to appear in the Festival were Manchester Umbrella, who gave us *Dog in a Manger* and two new plays. They produced a constantly high standard of acting and directing and a refreshingly new approach to each play. The invited guest company from Belgium: Studio Herman Teirlinck also expressed a strong company unity and demonstrated



David Allman in *A World of Stone*



UEA's *The Seagull*

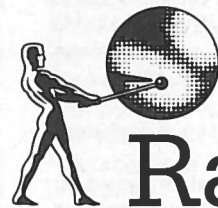


Denise Evans and Tracy Williams in *Brenda*

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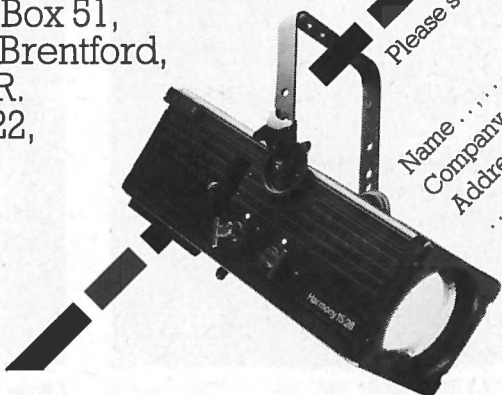
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the advantages of their mixed training in dance and mime to great effect in their version of *The Insect Play*. It was gratifying to see them enter so completely into the atmosphere of the week, as when they performed impromptu sketches before a late night cabaret audience whom they conquered entirely. A similar company effort came from Birmingham Youth Theatre with *The Goalkeeper's Revenge*, an adaptation of Bill Naughton's stories, which firmly broke the University monopoly on student drama with many of its cast being under sixteen. Indeed the atmosphere generally during the week was one of involvement, with very few companies making the mistake of leaving directly after their performance.

Hull University's musical *Through the Iris* provided an undemanding and popular late night slot. Based around the photographs of Bill Brandt it had a fine score and an excellent cast, but was sadly hampered by the banality of its lyrics. For students to undertake a full-length musical is, however, commendable at the very least, and *Through the Iris* provided one of the Festival's treasured 'moments': David Allman singing "I'm not Rene Magritte" while dancing absurd, puppet-like steps. The same talented performer turned up later in the week in a wholly different vein, as a Polish survivor of Auschwitz in *A World of Stone*. He brought a powerful presence to the part in a play which was nominated for the Sunday Times Playscript award, and provided a reminder if one was needed of the legacy of the holocaust. Another remarkable 'moment' came in a hilarious educational satire called *Sabre-Tooth Curriculum* from the University of East Anglia. A caveman gives a detailed series of instructions to a dozen fish frozen in a block of ice, about how to avoid being tickled. A fine example of inventive absurdity in a spectacular show, and of adventurous directing triumphing over limited resources: the ice and many more things beside were mimed with a table cloth.

Technically also companies were more adventurous this year. *Voyage Fantastique* from the Wimbledon School of Art made extensive and imaginative use of sound effects, while the lighting and set design of *Brenda* from Manchester Umbrella was exemplary. A trapeze, a false lawn and a rope light provided the basic tools which were used to create a variety of effects and settings. The play won the BP award for best stage design. General lighting still caused a failure of nerve with many companies however, who seemed content with poor general cover. It seems an area which has been left behind in the general range of improvements.

The other 'general' failing of many of the Festival's finalists was related to the hardest of all things to predict; audience response. Many directors pitched their plays at an audience which was expected to respond in a particular way. This resulted in unintentional humour or occasionally in a complete failure of purpose, when the audience reacted unpredictably. Directors can never rationalise audience response, but they should do their best to focus the effect of their work.

NATIONAL STUDENT DRAMA FESTIVAL – AWARDS 1982

National Theatre/BP Student Administration Award: Lesley Wake (UEA)

Michael Imison Administration Award: Hettie Macdonald (Bristol Univ)

International Student Playscript Award: Mick Clifford for *Breaks*

Sunday Times Student Drama Critic Award: Robert Randall (B'ham Univ)

Inter-action Community Theatre Prize: St Luke's, Exeter for *Sabre-Tooth Curriculum*

BP Awards:

Best Director: Simon Curtis – Bristol

Outstanding Production: *Happy Jack* – Minsthorpe High School

Best Classic Production: *The Dog in the Manger* – Manchester

Best Actress: Eileen Ryan – Hull

Best Company Acting: Birmingham Youth Theatre

Best Supporting Actress: Katharine Jones – Manchester

Best Actor: Cyril Nri – Bristol

Best Supporting Actor: George Usill – Manchester

Best Comedy Performance: Sara Thomas – Manchester

Design: Paul Lister and Hugh Charterton – Manchester

Costume: Wimbledon School of Art

Stage Management: Bristol

Lighting/Board Operation: Dave Cook – Manchester,

Pete Herbert – Minsthorpe High School

Best Lighting: Bretton Hall

Best Incidental Music: Manchester

BACKGROUND TO SELECTION:

Any student, or mainy student group may enter any kind of production. Adjudication can take place at the Edinburgh Festival or by arrangement with the selectors, who are all theatre practitioners.

1982:	Total	entry	–	68
		Entered	Selected	
New Plays		24	9	
Group Devised		8	3	
Adaptations		5	1	
Classics		14	4	
Known Moderns		17	1	
		68	18	

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The judges' summary when it came after all the frenetic activity of a week's performing, was astute and helpful. They appealed for a marshaling of the obvious energies present in all the productions into more specific channels. The major misgivings were expressed by Bill Alexander when he warned against the dangers of "performance". Productions should be *felt* as well as staged and should allow their own logic to develop without self-consciousness. Unintentionally a summary of the week's best productions.

James Fenton summing up, said that any student company on a limited budget which had the choice between the National Student Drama Festival and the Edinburgh fringe would be well advised to choose the Festival for its wealth of professional guidance. That guidance was in evidence this year as constructive and apposite. When the circus reconvenes at Bretton Hall in 1983 more people should give themselves the opportunity of receiving his advice.

Photographs by and copyright of Robert Cheesmond.

GREEK THEATRE

ANCIENT AND MODERN

FRANCIS REID reaches Athens on this theatric tourist trail

The location of theatre museums often involves a little detective work. A letter to the Greek National Tourist Office in London produced a telephone response that doubted whether there was a theatre museum in Athens but that they were checking by telex. A couple of days later a voice, in tones of mingled surprise and pleasure, called to give the address and opening times. This museum, as so often happens, is not listed in the normal tourist guides nor in the comprehensive listings in 'The Week in Athens'. However it is in the 1981, but not earlier, edition of the 'Blue Guide', with an entry given the minor status of appearing in italic rather than bold.

The location is *Akadimias* street (number 50) and there are prominent signs – well, signs that are certainly prominent by the usual international standards for indicating the presence of theatre museums!

This is not a museum of classical Greek theatre. The displays are mainly from the mid-19th century with heavy emphasis on the early years of this century. There is, of course, a large library and it is always comforting to find that the girl collecting the 20 drachma admission is clipping current newspapers.

The entrance vestibule leads to the centre of a very long corridor with display galleries at each end. The walls of this corridor carry a comprehensive poster collection. Alas my command of the Greek alphabet is, shall we say, weak. And so deciphering was tricky. As every tourist (theatric or otherwise) knows, strange alphabets are more daunting than unknown languages. I have successfully interpreted playbills in languages to which I am a total stranger. But my painfully slow transliteration of the Greek alphabet continues to produce surprises – although, in matters gastronomical, these surprises are frequently very pleasant indeed.

Posters, whose original function was to attract an audience, become a very tangible reminder of performance actuality. The best of them provide a commentary by the durable graphic and pictorial arts upon the more ephemeral performing arts. The Athens collection contains not only posters of performances in Greece, but visits by Greek companies to other countries.

One gallery has a series of dressing rooms along the walls. These are of standard size and design, constructed rather like swimming pool cubicles. Glazed doors and walls allow the contents to be displayed in an appropriate setting which combines informality with security.

Each dressing room is a memorial to an eminent Greek thespian and contains the sort of items which combine to help give more tangible form to the actor's ephemeral and unrecordable act. Costumes hang, or drape over chairs. There are

photographs, ikons, medals and awards on the walls. On the tables stand make-up boxes, props, and personal items like the framed family photographs that traditionally stand in front of dressing room mirrors.

A blood-stained costume is brought alive by a photograph alongside of the actor wearing it.

In addition to items specifically associated with the leading actors displayed in their designated dressing rooms, there are displays of other actor-related items such as costumes, jewellery and props. A prop curiosity is a wad of stage money, printed not in the expected Greek script but as 'Theatre Moussouris'. There are silk programmes from gala performances and, naturally, lots of photographs. These nearly all indicate acting on a large expansive scale with tragedy and comedy clearly differentiated. I expected to find masks and was not disappointed. Many delicately traditional ones, but also a magnificently robust Cyclops – just what I have always imagined Handel's Polythemus might well wear for "Ruddier than the Cherry".

There are models of actors (again mostly in full rhetorical flow) and many laurel wreaths with which the performers were acclaimed. Several of these crowns are in bronze or silver, although the ordinary leaf type have also been preserved by drying and framing.

There is a small opera section: I tried to sing Don Giovanni in Greek but my knowledge of the alphabet brought an early defeat.

A couple of the theatre models of 1835 and 1846 include stage and auditorium. Models are in wood and my understanding (well more of a hunch than an understanding) is that the actual theatres were of timber construction.

Set models date mainly from the decade of the 1920s and indicate quite a lot of experiment with cyclorama spatial settings. Also models of sets from modern productions in the archaeological site theatres.

And something that, please, can we have more of in all theatre museums – a couple of productions for which (A) Design, (B) Ground Plan and (C) Set Photograph are mounted together (vertically stacked) in the same frame.

But, as I said at the beginning, this is a museum of recent Greece rather than the theatre of the pre-Christian centuries. The performance of these eras can be studied on the sculptures and friezes in the archaeological museums; and, but a short walk from the Theatre Museum, one can study actor/audience relationships for real in the remains of the 4th century BC *Theatre of Dionysus*. Or, also at the foot of the Acropolis Hill, the *Odeon of Herodes Atticus* built in the form of a Roman theatre

in the 1st century AD, excavated in the 1850s, and with seating restored for performances in the 1950s.

But then it is difficult for the theatric tourist to travel anywhere in Greece without coming across a theatrical fragment, plus or minus a couple of centuries either side of the first Christmas.

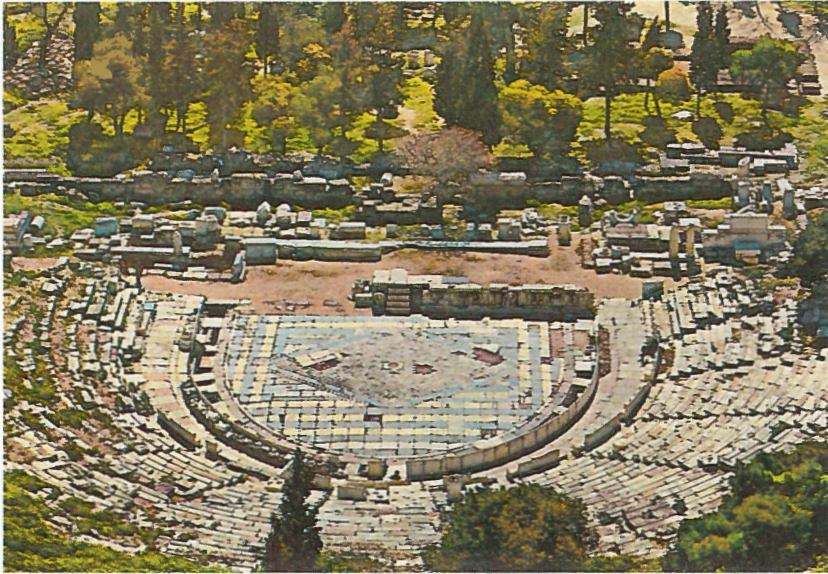


The entrance to the museum

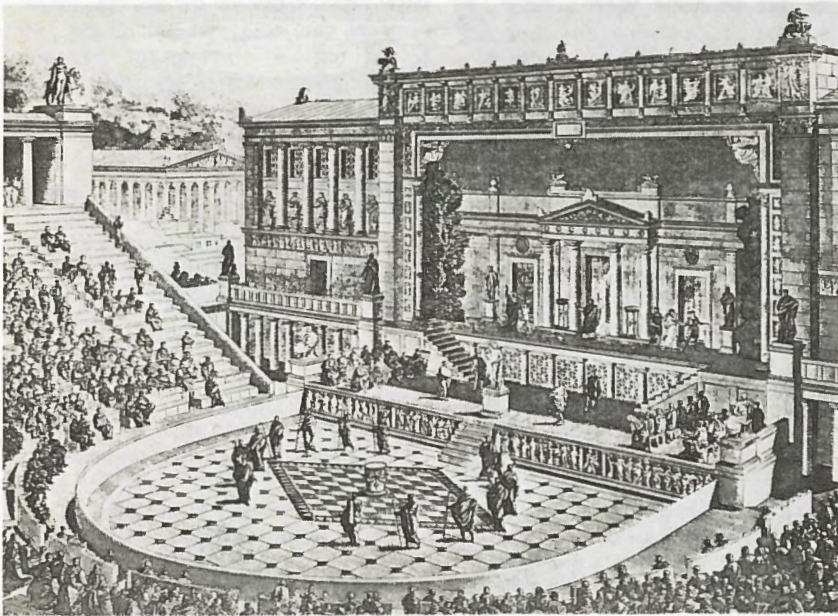


A display case in the Athens Theatre Museum

Stars in their Courses



Theatre of Dionysus



Was the Theatre of Dionysus like this?



The Odeon of Herodes Atticus

Most of us have, at some time or other, started collections of varying types – from the schoolboy, with his football cards, to the genuine collector, spending thousands of pounds acquiring first editions, or priceless antiques.

A collection that costs little to accrue has an added attraction, when most of the world is poor, and getting poorer. Many years ago, I started a collection of theatre programmes, which I shall hand on to my grandchildren to enjoy.

There is no need to attend all the performances, in person, once your mania is known. Most people are willing to hand over used programmes – after all, most of them find their way into the waste-paper basket, once the performance is over.

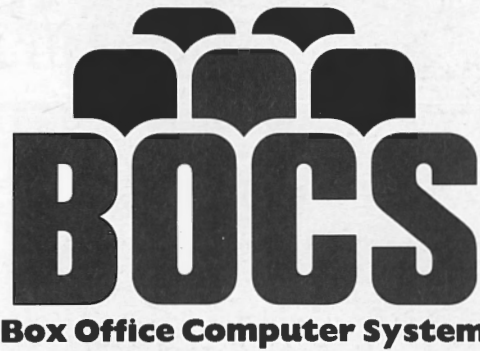
Apart from monetary value, old programmes offer a great deal of interest to the reader. Plotting the career of a star, from 1934, when I started my collection, to the present day, I find that Muriel Pavlov was a child star with the late Marie Tempest, in *Dear Octopus*, as far back as 1938. And Rex Harrison, Roland Culver and Robert Flemyng, and Kay Hammond, after training at the Liverpool Playhouse, which has given us so many stars, appeared in *French Without Tears*, at the Criterion Theatre, in 1934.

Television has brought so many of these stars into our sitting rooms nightly, so it is doubly interesting to read in the “theatre notes” of how many actors who are now household names began their careers. Peter Barkworth had a small part in *Roar Like a Dove*, in 1957, and in the same year Megs Jenkins, who also started at the Liverpool Playhouse, starred with Arthur Lowe, in *A Dead Secret*, at the Piccadilly; while a very youthful Moray Watson was in *The Grass is Greener*, one of the late Hugh Williams’ plays, at St. Martin’s Theatre.

When she was a very young actress, Juliet Mills played in *Five Finger Exercise*, at the Comedy, in 1958, and Edward Woodward was in *The Rattle of a Simple Man*, with Colin Douglas and Sheila Hancock, in 1962. Wilfred Hyde White and Wendy Craig were together in *The Wrong Side of the Park*, Derek Nimmo, Ronnie Barker, Una Stubbs and Moira Lister were all in London productions as long ago as 1959.

Eileen Gray





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Cardiff	St. David's Hall
Nottingham	Concert Hall
Croydon	Fairfield Hall
	Ashcroft Theatre

A Colour Music Hall

Archival Nostalgia by
FREDERICK BENTHAM

A couple of years ago in CUE* we were able to read about some of the surviving and restored Movie Palaces in the States and thanks to David Atwell's book⁺ reviewed at the same time the subject spilt over into their contemporaries over here. Inevitably, we were told of the wonders of the world of the 'atmospherics' or 'outside-in' cinemas as architect Julian Leathart dubbed them at the time. Sunny dawns and moony nights in Italianate, Espanic or some other exotic 'Garden of Your Dreams' could be produced by pushing the appropriate dimmers up or down. This was sometimes left in the merciless care of a motor driven automatic contraption. Whether in the hands of the colour-blind projectionist or electrician, or in charge of a ruthless robot, sensitivity to Saint Cecilia or Mother Nature was not often a feature of such changes: especially as they involved the three primary colours of light. One of which was, of course, green!

This colour-changing was not peculiar to these plaster pleasure gardens, any large cinema of the twenties and thirties was likely to feature it behind cornices, laylights or whatever. Not unnaturally my addiction to Colour Music led me not only to think of playing light to music on drapes and sets on the stage but to ponder on the design of an auditorium in which changes of lighting would not just look pretty or ape naturalistic effects but which could create varying emotional atmosphere.

Now it is all very well to write now about what that me-of-fifty-years-ago thought and did, for there are few about who could call it to question! Fortunately, it all exists in the very first article I ever wrote. This was a long affair of 4000 words or so which appeared in *The Builder* of September 2nd 1932 under the title "Light as an Art". Such lucky publication at the first attempt may not be unconnected with the fact that my father knew Christian Barman the editor! So the theories are in print but did such an auditorium get built to incorporate them? The answer is 'Yes' and it was opened by Leslie Henson (my favourite comedian!) on Wednesday February 22nd 1939 at 3.15 p.m. This was only just in time as it closed with the outbreak of war, never to reopen; and to be destroyed completely by a couple of small bombs on the night of May 10th 1941. The Light Console and its dimmer bank survived and were installed in the London Palladium for Robert Nesbitt's production of *Gangway* at the end of the same year.

The photographs give a good idea what this small theatre in Covent Garden was like but many will remember it in its post-war

* CUE 10 pages 17-21

+ CUE 10 p. 12 & 11 p. 31

form as Strand's demonstration theatre and then the ABTT's theatre which finally closed on January 28th 1977 and is now but a hole in some developer's ground. Even the bombs did not succeed in reducing it to that!

Before examining this long defunct 'colour music hall' let us take a look at some of the 1932 theory behind its construction. My *Builder* article plunges in off the deep end:

"LIGHT in the theatre and the cinema has only been considered from the decorative point of view up to the present. Light has apparently been regarded as an addition to the already too large list of materials at the disposal of the decorator. While no one can doubt the truth of this view, it should be borne in mind that light can be considered from three angles: (1) The Utilitarian; (2) the Decorative; (3) the Psychological.

No. 1, of course, embraces street lighting, office lighting, etc.; No. 2 is well portrayed in the lighting at the Strand Palace Hotel. Generally, present-day lighting is the result of combining Nos. 1 and 2. No. 3 offers far greater possibilities than 1 or 2, for here lighting can be ranked as an art itself. It is well known that light, whether artificial or natural, has the power of stirring the emotions. Until the arrival of electric light man had no power of altering light and the resulting emotions, but now things are different; light can be made to change, swaying this way and that the emotions according to the will of the right operator. Light in this way is akin to music, but it is only akin in its powers, not in its application, as some

misguided persons seem to imagine. Such attempts at setting light to a chromatic scale and playing colour compositions on instruments (colour organs) founded on musical principles, have been, are, and will be of necessity, failures."

The works and theories of the "misguided persons" above can be found in *Coloured Light an Art Medium** by Adrian B. Klein. The *Builder* article went on to affirm that:

"It is in the theatre where this new art 'Light' may be developed to its greatest extent, both on the stage and in the auditorium, the remaining parts of the building being covered by utilitarian or decorative aims both from their architectural or lighting standpoints. The stage is out of the scope of the present article, which leaves the auditorium to be considered. Realising this, let us turn with expectancy to existing theatres; but a shock is in store. In not one of our legitimate theatres can the auditorium lighting be altered; it can either be dimmed on or off, but that is all. The Saville, Adelphi, Savoy, etc., all are good pieces of decorative lighting, but can exert no psychological effect. Thus, when the auditorium lights are turned up, a complete contrast is of necessity presented to the mood of the preceding stage scene. To get over this a play generally proceeds with a series of jerks (black-outs).

When will architects realise that modern theatre design does not mean substituting polished squares and circles for gold cherubs and acanthus leaves? Take the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre - all very delightful as interiors go, but does it help bridge the innumerable gaps that Shakespeare's plays consist of even in a theatre where a sliding stage is installed? For a black-out, even if it only lasts for half a minute, is a definite break in the visual continuity. Atmospheric backgrounds are used for the stage proper. Why not provide the means to treat the fore stage in the same manner? It now becomes necessary to turn to the much despised cinema; here at least something has been done."

* 3rd. edition of *Colour Music* pub. The Technical Press Ltd. 1937

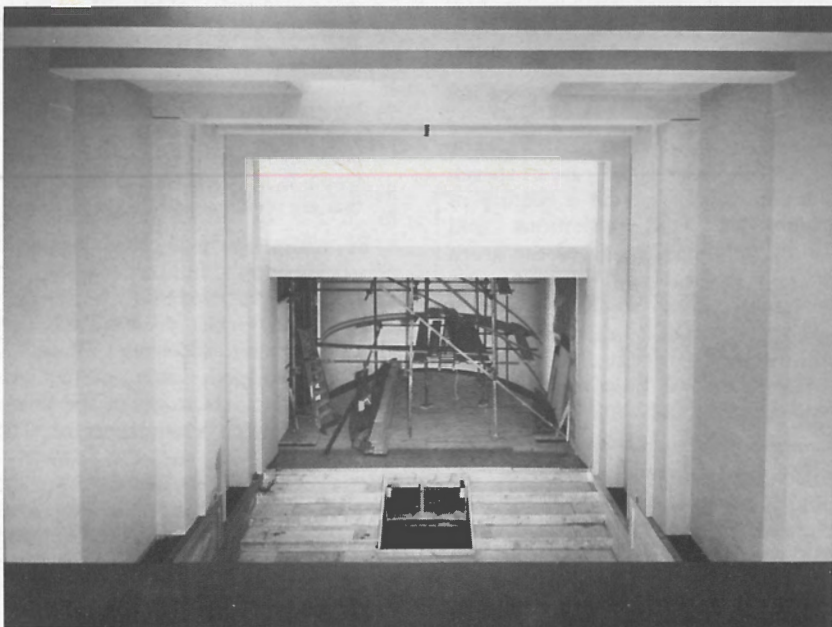
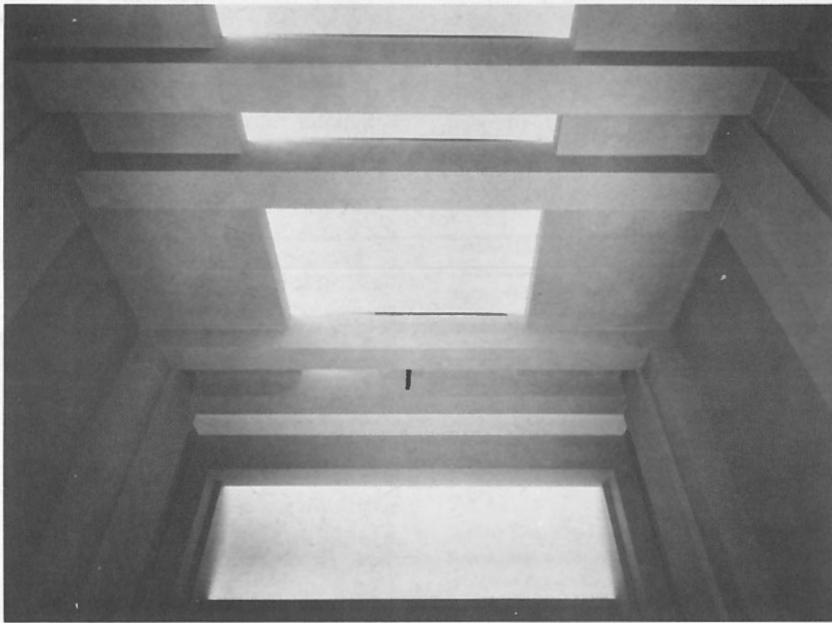
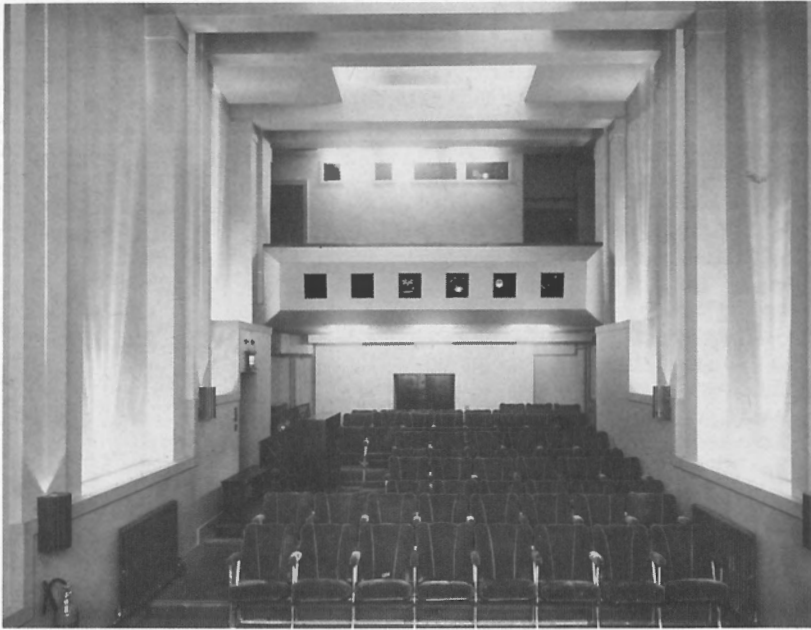
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hand edge of the ceiling cove. There could be no lighting from that side and the cove was shaped to pick up light from opposite and make it appear as if there were.

Likewise, only the wall columns on the right were real and load-bearing, those opposite were hollow of fibrous plaster. Things had to balance in those days. As can be seen there was a curved cyclorama and no wing space whatever. Any scenery had to be struck and pass through the slot to the left. Slap in the centre of the forestage steps was as fine a loudspeaker assembly as those days could provide. I had an awful fear, while Leslie Henson declared the place open downstage centre, that he would put his foot in it when returning to his seat centre front row. I need not have worried, he was too old a hand to put a foot wrong on any stage.

The view from stage to balcony is particularly significant if one notes the effects projection room and circle front housing squeezed into such a tiny auditorium. Spotlights and other such *had* to be concealed, any laxity was intolerable. As can also be seen this also applied to the tiny 36-Watt low voltage spots to put pencil beams up the columns. These special covers were of copper. In our time of lasers and pencil beams *ad nauseam* it is interesting to see that we could achieve a pencil beam with nothing better than a lamp for a car headlight and a short focus lens. These spots (Pat. 87) were originally designed to do the same job up the columns in Cavalcanti's G.P.O. pavilion at the Empire Exhibition (the last!) Bellevue Park, Glasgow in 1938. This was part of an automatic lighting and sound interlude in the central court featuring the transit of the large red areas of the globe by the Empire flying boats. A nightmare job with ultra-violet clouds overall.*

Back at King Street I have to say that all the effects worked out in exactly the way I wanted. Of the theatre the *Architect and Building News* of March 1939 had this to say: "At the demonstration the auditorium effects were as effective as those produced on the stage from the same instrument (Light Console). One advantage of this system appears to be that while actual wall decoration can be dispensed with in favour of plain surfaces, a variety of decorative schemes can be imposed on the walls and ceilings, while structural features of the theatre can be stressed to give interesting patterns and treatments. A visit to the theatre is recommended, as it is the only means of appreciating the scope of the lighting effects procurable with this instrument."

In so far as this theatre had an architect, it was me! That it ever got built during the short months between 'Munich' and the outbreak of war was quite extraordinary. One has only to think of the preoccupations at the present time with a small distant affair like the Falklands; but then we were on the brink of a European conflagration. True there were no nuclear bombs in prospect but the film of H. G. Wells *Things to Come* had shown us how dire it was to be. To complicate things I was seriously ill for

* TABS Vol. 22, No. 1 pp. 90-93

most of this time. Indeed, the reason for the under-construction photographs (used here) was to report progress to my hospital bed.

As the photographs show, the lighting in the wall recesses was, unlike the remainder, patterned. This was achieved by placing short sections of 3-colour ground-row either side of a spot set to diverge appropriately. Its amber filter only covered $\frac{2}{3}$ of the lens: an enthusiasm of mine – ‘broken-colour’. The whole recess was covered-in by a sheet of moulded glass with a very large pattern. Goodness knows what it was called! I learnt of it when supplying a special ballroom lighting scheme for Charles Laughton’s brothers in one of their hotels in Scarborough. Being a special the job was entirely in my care and I remember frantically charging as much as possible on all the extras when I realised that I had forgotten to add in the estimate for the main job any profit.

Anyway, this glass broke up the light – especially when colours were mixed together – and became a lighting mural which could be varied. This plus the crushed-silver tabs lit by a 4-colour float centre and ends and eight spots, set narrow, behind apertures in the float ramp made the place gay and bright when needed. These spots coloured alternately amber and blue-green, all on separate dimmers plus two

1-kW profile spots, with remote 4-colour change flat-on from the circle front, were very useful for beating out ‘Hot Rhythm’. The whole auditorium – all 36 circuits – used to get involved in Bugle Call Rag in a recording by Sydney Torch on the Regal Edmonton Christie organ. To match his cymbal-crash and the like, our console had a toe piston giving float white centre at first touch, adding the ends at second. What fun, and so little time to enjoy it!

On the Light Console we could either flash to out or to full across the dimmer. The emphasis could thus be altered by adjusting the dimmer levels.

Alternatively, the dimmers could be set to run down and could be played to bounce up against this action. A sort of visual equivalent to the vibraphone. There were *no facilities* for direct modulation of the light by the sound. And quite right too! All lighting was a matter of artistic interpretation of the music, whatever the kind, by *playing* upon the console:

If this auditorium could be gay, it could also be solemn (Bugle Call or Traviata Preludes!). The cove way up above the beams in the ceiling on the one hand, and light coming from float level below eye-line and extending right around the audience into the wall coves on the other. Or the joining of the two by the growth of intensity of the pencil beams and so on.

The console dimmer bank represented a great advance on the one in the original Seecol theatre in Floral Street. Here we had sixteen transformer dimmers among our resistances – the first time we had used such things. There was also remote patching by contactors so that the dimmers could do both auditorium and stage. Also they need not be tied-up with the many spots under traps in the stage. All this came in useful when the equipment was rescued after the bombs and resuscitated for the Palladium in our spare time. Only one of the two manuals could be made playable and on that, not the green keys; nevertheless it behaved well at the Palladium and when a new full installation went in there post-war, it and the dimmer rack returned to us; eventually to take part in colour music recitals in much reduced surroundings from October 17th 1958* and occasionally thereafter.

Back at the inauguration of our own theatre in February 1939; instead of my well-known stirring finale on the cyclorama shadow set to the 1st. movement of Tchaikovsky’s 4th. our revels were ended with his Pathétique symphony. Seeing that the fabric of this vision, this insubstantial pageant, was to fade so soon and leave but a dimmer rack behind, it was a prophetic choice.

* TABS Vol. 16, No. 3 pp. 23–32

REIDing SHELF

CURTAIN CALLS is an anthology of reminiscences about actors. Many of the pieces are written by actors. Mostly 19th century. Their selection is by Bernard Miles and J. C. Trewin. Their origin is a collection of books made from browsing in provincial antiquarian booksellers by Bernard Miles while touring as a variety act in the 1950s. The collection was subsequently sold to fund the Mermaid Theatre, but not before Miles had got his secretary to transcribe cherished passages.

The resultant book is organised into chapters of roughly related material like Shakespeare, stage effects, opera, fans, management, etc . . . and a splendid section on touring by strolling players, entitled ‘The Popping Folk’. The quoted passages are not linked but most are prefaced or followed by comments which clarify or complement. These comments are a happy combination of Miles anecdotes and Trewin scholarship.

It would be easy to describe the book’s contents as essentially trivia. But for anyone trying to evoke the atmosphere of a departed theatre age it would be more accurate to talk of essential trivia. A book for dipping into perhaps. Yet the mere dipper can miss interesting things – witness a colleague of mine, one who cares deeply about such things, bypassing a reference to

the nature of the ‘green’.

My aunt gave me an impulse forward, and I ran straight across the stage, stunned with the tremendous shout that greeted me, my eyes covered with mist, and the green baize flooring of the stage feeling as if it rose up against my feet; but I got hold of my mother, and stood like a terrified creature at bay, confronting the huge theatre full of gazing human beings.

This was Fanny Kemble remembering her 1829 debut, fifty years on. Is the *green baize* recalled with the clear vision of a traumatic expression or is it merely a figure of speech used automatically after half a century of conforming to the conventions and superstitions of the language of the green room?

Does it matter? Not really. But if you share my pleasure in contemplating our theatre’s past while working to develop its future, then you will enjoy this sort of thing, and therefore this book, enormously.

I wonder whether Theodore Shank enjoys going to the theatre? I wonder how he rates the achievements of **AMERICAN ALTERNATIVE THEATRE**? I have read his book of this title and I do not know the answer to either of these questions. I think that he must like theatre, at least in its alter-

native forms, because he has obviously seen a lot of productions. But rarely have I read such an objective book on theatre: not a trace, not a hint of qualitative judgements by the author. He sets out to describe what happened because, as he sets out in his introduction

If a script exists, it has either been devised after the performance or served as a step along the way; it is not an end in itself. In some instances a text is not extractable from the production. The text, if there is one, can only vaguely suggest the finished work . . . A book dealing with such work must take a different form from one concerned with plays that are predominantly verbal . . .

So, with the help of 120 photographs, Mr Shank sets down, in matter of fact descriptive terms, what actually happened in these largely non-verbal productions and the reasoning that motivated them. After discussing primary explorations, he identifies as principal categories the Theatre of Social Change, Environmental Theatre, New Formalism, and the theatre which draws on Self for its Content.

Reading the book, one soon becomes relieved that the author has not introduced his own responses as a source of value judgements. With a subject as complex as this, one welcomes the clarity of simple description. I learned a lot.

In **NEW AMERICAN DRAMATISTS: 1960-1980**, Ruby Cohn is not so objective. She offers opinions on some of the plays, but, without sufficient clues to establish her critical yardstick, I found her comments of little help. Many of her thirty dramatists worked outside mainstream theatre, but most used a traditional format to the extent that they produced scripts prior to rehearsal. Most of them were, and are, reasonably prolific, so complex plays have to be described in a paragraph. However the book does give an overview of the period which helped this reader to set more familiar playwrights like Kopit, Mamet, and Patrick – and even Neil Simon – in context.

Both these books are part of a new illustrated series called **MACMILLAN MODERN DRAMATISTS** edited by Bruce and Adele King who in each and every editorial preface are at pains to explain that the series is *written for people interested in modern theatre who prefer concise, intelligent studies of drama and dramatists, without jargon and an excess of footnotes.* OK, but I do like some references and a bibliography at the back; Ruby Cohn's book is the only one of the first batch not to include these. Her book suffers thereby.

Pinter, Buchner, Labiche and Feydeau are also in this first batch and I will have read them by next CUE. Meanwhile, to complete the initial look at the American scene, Neil Carson has contributed a volume on **ARTHUR MILLER**. With only one author to deal with, there is space for discussion in reasonable depth. After setting Miller the dramatist in the context of Miller the man, each major play is given a chapter in which Neil Carson analyses the play and discusses the original and some later productions, noting the audience and critical response. He offers his own interpretative comment in a dispassionate way so that any subjective comment in the book is presented as propositions for objective debate. And there is a good bibliography and reference listings to set the curious off on journeys into the playwright's interior.

John English presents **THE CASE FOR ARTS CENTRES** very entertainingly indeed in the form of a transcript of his evidence to *The All Party Committee on the State of Civilisation in the United Kingdom*. He plays fair. The committee – chaired by Sir D.B.B. (a distinguished back bencher) and serviced by Sir C.C.S. (a civilised civil servant) – comprises Lord D.L.P. (a disenchanted life peer), Mr L.W. MP (a socialist MP with fervent convictions), Mr R.W. MP (urbane and civilised, right wing, but a good chap), Mr H.M.I. (a resilient believer in education), Mr C.E.O. (a realistic yet dedicated chief education officer), and Mrs T.L. (the token lady, but a happy choice).

They are frighteningly real and the questions they ask come straight from their attitudes. John English answers cleverly and the committee respond logically, smoothly and predictably. After reading it all, I was ready to rush out and start an arts centre. I suspect that the committee would have filed

the evidence, satisfied with a job well done.

As a script this book is performance ready: I hope that some arts centre will stage it. It would work well on television: John English could play himself and I have had a lot of fun casting the committee. Perhaps starting with Donald Sinden as the knighted civilised civil servant?

I took Donald Sinden's **A TOUCH OF THE MEMOIRS** on holiday and I laughed aloud a lot – and that is something I do not normally do while reading. Actors memoirs can be awful: they are often written in a style of platitudinous insincerity that is only appropriate for backstage visiting on opening nights. Sinden, however, knows the structure of a good tale and he knows how to use timing in the telling. But this is not just an entertaining book. It offers much more insight into the acting process than many a more profound formal text. It is not often that I am prepared to declare a book to be indispensable reading. But I heartily recommend a touch of the Sinden and eagerly await the further volumes – *another touch, yet another touch?* – in due course.

CURTAIN CALLS. Bernard Miles and J. C. Trewin. Lutterworth Press. £8.95 (UK)

AMERICAN ALTERNATIVE THEATRE. Theodore Shank. Macmillan Press £12 (hardback) (UK) £4.95 (paperback) (UK)

NEW AMERICAN DRAMATISTS, 1960-1980. Ruby Cohn. Macmillan Press £10 (hardback) (UK) £2.95 (paperback) (UK)

ARTHUR MILLER. Neil Carson. Macmillan Press £10 (hardback) (UK) £2.95 (paperback) (UK)

Note: The above three volumes are published in MACMILLAN MODERN DRAMATISTS, An International Series of Concise Studies on the Modern Dramatists of the World. Edited by Bruce King and Adele King.

THE CASE FOR ARTS CENTRES. John English. John Offord Publications (City Arts Series) £1.25 (paperback) (UK)

A TOUCH OF THE MEMOIRS. Donald Sinden. Hodder and Stoughton. £7.95 (UK)

CURTAINS!!! or a **New Life for Old Theatres** edited by Iain Mackintosh and Michael Sell. Photographic Editor: Victor Glasstone. John Offord (Publications) Ltd. £5.95. (UK)

The Curtains!!! project is an offshoot of SAVE Britain's Heritage, from which it has inherited the use of emphatic typography – heavy type, capitals, and, for Curtains!!!, those three exclamation marks. Whoever thought of them had a stroke of genius. Marching across the pages they mesmerise the reader into a state of excited expectancy, as if the show really were just going to start, and one is not disappointed, because the whole thing is done with such panache and professionalism.

Like its parent body, Curtains!!! is in the protest and propaganda business. Its chairman, Iain Mackintosh, describes its aims as 'to search out and identify Britain's finest old theatres and, whether or not they are in use at this moment (and many are not), to marshal evidence and argument that as many as possible should be retained for the pleasure of this and future generations', and explains that it is aimed at two distinct groups – the conservationist lobby and the theatrical profession. The fruits of their work are a book and a small travelling exhibition which was first displayed at the Museum of London during March. The exhibition is quite a modest affair, designed more to whet the appetite than to satisfy it. By good fortune my visit to it coincided with the last of a weekly series of lectures by members of the Curtains!!! Committee; it was by David Cheshire and he showed us lots of nice picture postcards and Sickert paintings of the vanished delights of London music halls before 1914. The exhibition will be seen in other towns and one hopes that it will arouse support for the cause wherever it goes; if there is a local 'Sleeping Beauty' awaiting resurrection, then the Curtains!!! book will have it thoroughly documented.

The authors of the book have attempted to list in a gazetteer all surviving pre-1914 theatres and music halls, including fragments of buildings partly demolished. It contains many photographs and the entries give a description of the building, its history and present condition and use, and an assessment of its merit and future prospects. Stars are awarded – three for 'A very fine theatre or hall of the highest theatrical quality', two for 'A fine theatre or hall which is an excellent example of its type', and one for 'A theatre or hall of some interest or quality'. The findings of the survey are summarized thus: 'It is thought that there were slightly over 1000 theatres in use in Britain between 1900 and 1914 . . . Of these the state or fate of about 1100 have been established. Ninety-eight or so are in use, that is 9%; 85% have been demolished or irretrievably altered. This leaves approximately 6%, 69 in fact, that are not in use as theatres to-day but are restorable. Of these 54 rate ** or ***, 11 in London, 35 in the rest of England, and 4 each in Scotland and Wales.' The gazetteer is followed by maps and chronological lists of all starred theatres. Then there are biographies of the principal theatre ar-



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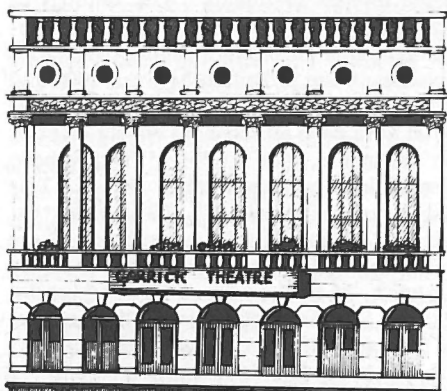
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

chitects of the period and a historical summary of theatre building from the eighteenth century onwards. The greater part of the work of compiling the gazetteer seems to have fallen to Christopher Brereton and John Earl; the thoroughness and scholarship with which it has been carried through are astonishing – so is the quantity of fascinating information it contains. I was specially grateful to be introduced to the surviving examples of the early concert-room type of music hall, with a flat or nearly flat floor and narrow balconies round three sides – I shall certainly seek them out. Then there is Adelina Patti's private theatre at Craig-y-nos in Glamorgan, and the Amusement Hall at Normansfield Hospital, dating from 1879, which still preserves 'some early borders and a Creed and Lord's Prayer drop.'

In other chapters the opportunities and problems encountered in the resurrection of an old theatre are discussed by those who have tried their hands at it – Victor Glasstone at Douglas, Derek Sugden at Glasgow and Buxton, Nicholas Thompson and Clare Ferraby at Nottingham. Also there is David Wilmore on old stage machinery, and Francis Reid on the economics of running such a theatre (Bury St. Edmunds) when it has been saved.

At the end one is left with the economic paradoxes of the whole subject in one's mind. Imagine a future archaeologist excavating two theatres, one built in 1900 and the other in 1970; would he guess that the former, with all its air of opulent extravagance was a wholly commercial enterprise where everybody paid the full value for a ticket and the owner made a profit, whereas the other, apparently poverty-stricken, was actually heavily subsidised? We seem to think it indecent nowadays to try actually to entice people into a theatre. No doubt he would notice that quite a lot of people in the earlier theatre were very uncomfortable and may not have seen very much. Bringing an old theatre up to modern standards of safety and comfort usually reduces the seating capacity a good deal, which of course reduces takings as well. If subsidies enable us to pay for this we ought to have the best of both worlds – comfort as well as the elusive 'magic' and atmosphere. Sometimes that is so, and those are the successes which Curtains!!! is trying to encourage. They have made a marvellous start with this book: it is bound to remain a bible for theatre historians for years to come.

HUGH CREIGHTON



The Editors,
Cue Technical Theatre Review

Dear Sirs:

I am wondering whether you or your readers could possibly help me: I am looking for a lime-light stage-lighting instrument, and/or the prepared 'limes' to be used with one.

Four years ago, while working on a theatre degree, I did some research into the use of lime-light in theatre. In the end, I constructed a functional model using oxy-acetylene welding equipment, and the housing from an old electrical instrument. (I have enclosed a diagram of it.) I produced the lime cylinders by firing limestone core samples. The light produced by the instrument is a pleasant yellow-gold colour. – Old actresses would love it. – Lime-light is interesting in that it provides the nearest thing to a point-source: The lime incandesces at the point where the flame im-

pings on it. As a result, the instrument does not require a reflector, and the light produced is completely even, without a 'hot spot'.

Since I built my model, I have been trying to obtain an original lime-light instrument. They do not appear to have been used extensively on this side of the Atlantic: By the time theatres here were sophisticated enough to use them, electricity had replaced gas.

I would be most grateful for any help or suggestions you might be able to provide.

Sincerely,

M. Lindsay Lambert.
324 – B Somerset Street West,
Ottawa, Ontario,
K2P 0J9,
Canada.

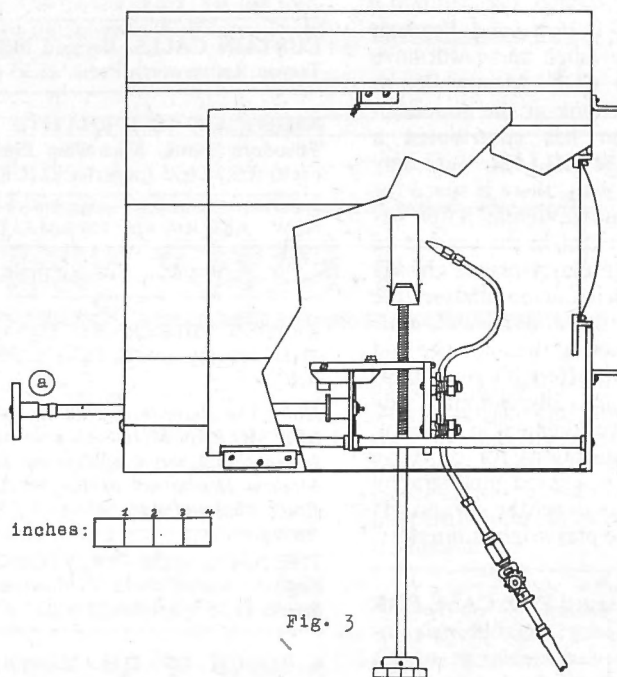


Fig. 3

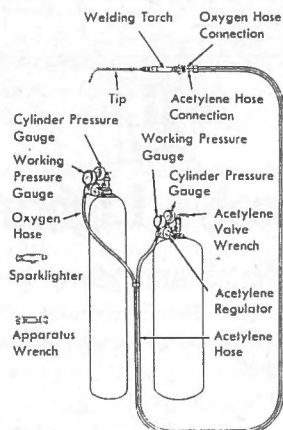


Fig. 4

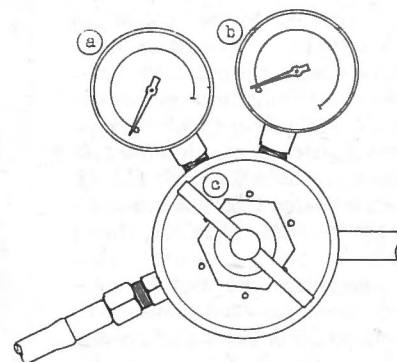
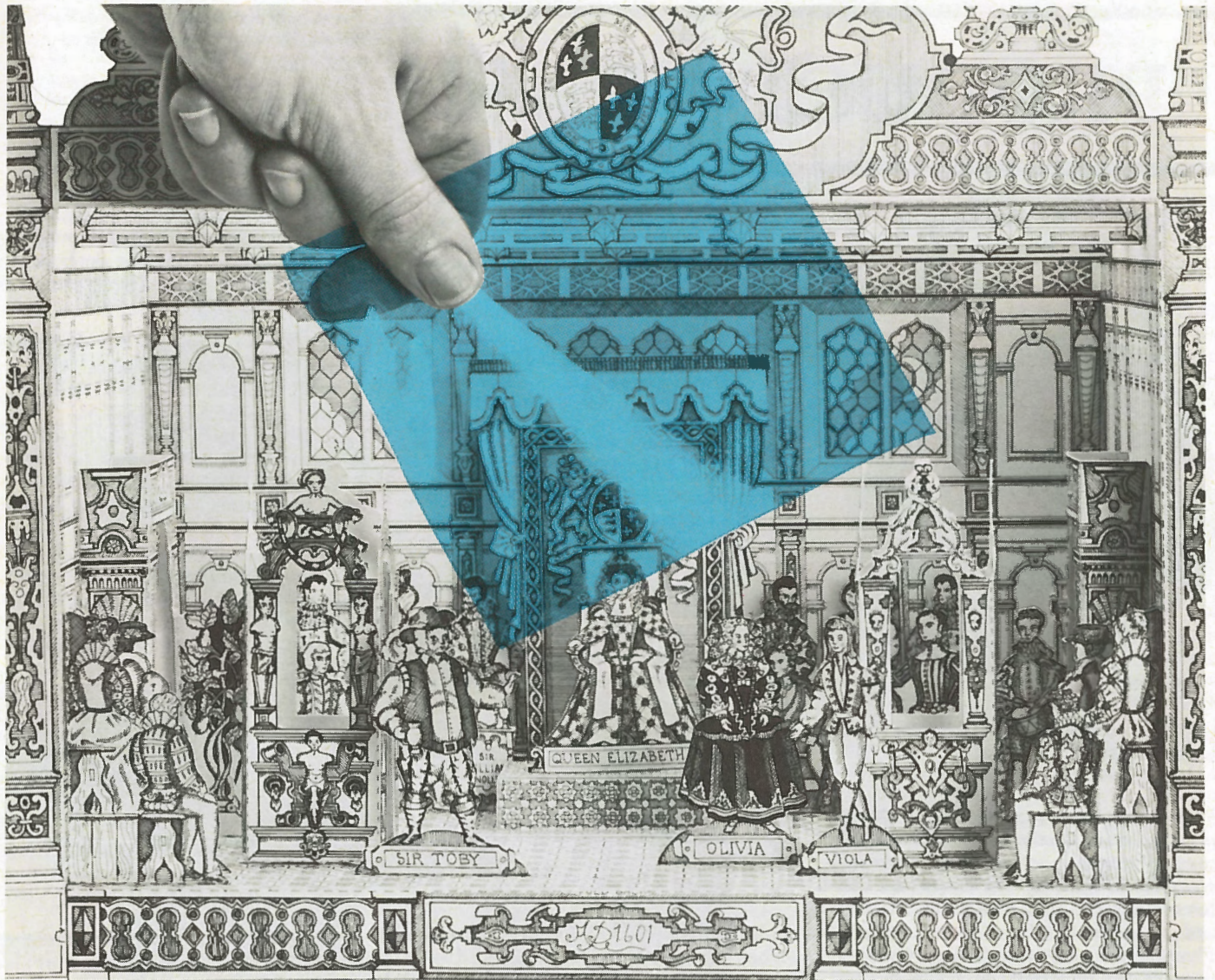


Fig. 5



Supergel gives you the exact effect you want on any light in your theatre That's creative freedom

When you design the lighting for a show, it's good to know there are no restraints on your creative freedom. You get the freedom that allows you to change colours subtly or drastically only when you standardise on the Supergel system.

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Supergel will stand up better and last longer than any other colour filter you can buy, from Rosco or anyone else.

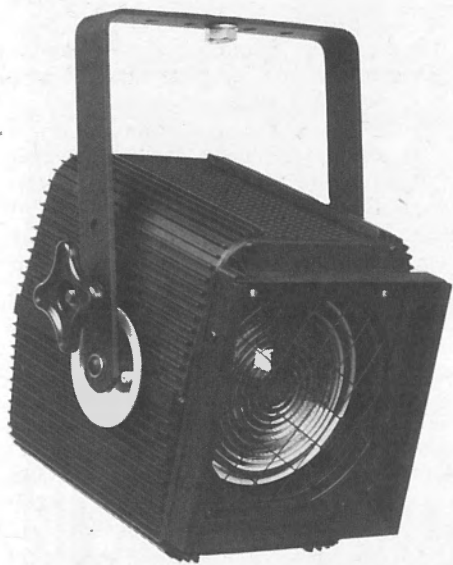
You won't need 68 colours and 9 diffusers on every show but you do need the Rosco Colour Media Guide, which sets out guidelines and applications of all the Supergel and Roscolene colours. This and the Supergel swatchbook containing samples of all the colours is yours, free for the asking.

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PRODUCT NEWS



CCT Starlette Fresnel, widely used at the Theatre Royal, Plymouth

We hear from Mitcham that CCT have supplied the major luminaire requirements for several important and recently completed contracts in the UK. The Harrogate Conference Centre, St. David's Hall, Cardiff and just recently, the Theatre Royal in Plymouth. With one or two minor exceptions all the theatrical luminaires in these important theatres have been supplied by CCT who will also be supplying luminaires for the Nottingham Concert Hall including a novel architectural application of their recently introduced small Tungsten Halogen Floodlight.

Following last month's announcement of their joint development plans a leaflet is now available from CCT which introduces the new CCT/DTL dimming and control product range. Leaflets are also available on the dimmer series TDM and CCD/CWD. The Lever Set and Staka Pak portable packaged system which ranges through 6, 12, 18, 24 and 30 channels will be commercially available sometime towards the end of May. Theaterlite, of course, is already available as are the TDM and CCD/CWD dimmers and racks. The balance of the dimming and control range will be ready for shipment some time during the summer.

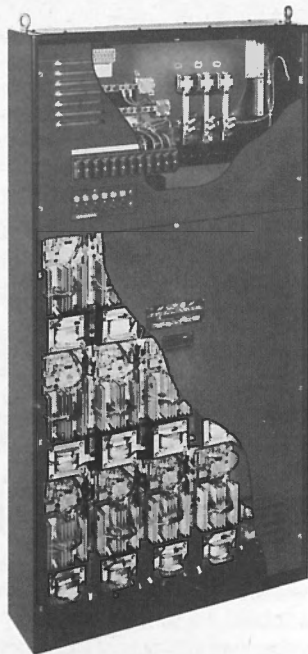
CCT and DTL have set out to ensure that whilst this new dimming and control product range is competitively priced, the emphasis on technical excellence and quality has been maintained. Small features such as the interconnecting cables and sockets and facilities for mains connection have all been developed to take care of often expressed demands from the market place. Also, as with all CCT and DTL dimming systems, optional earth/ground detection options are available.

Strand Introduce New Electronic Dimmers

Rank Strand is launching a new range of economy Thyristor electronic dimmers known as 'Permus'. Incorporating improved technical specification, easier electrical contracting and greater reliability, the new Permus range also remains fully temperature stable and is compatible with all Strand's current lighting control systems.

Particular attention has been paid to ease of electrical contracting and connection, with the top section of each rack set apart for contracting with access via a full-width removable panel.

In appearance the cabinets retain the slim-line features of STM (along with its predecessor JTM, Strand's standard dimmer system for 17 years) with only front access needed. Mounting can be back-to-wall or back-to-back.



Strand Permus High-power 12 x 20A Dimmer Rack with outer cover cut-away, showing dimmers and filters.

BOCS Sales Top the Million

BOCS, the Box Office Computer System has celebrated its first birthday by announcing total sales of £1.25m and orders for three new systems.

The three systems, to be installed in the summer, are for Croydon's FAIRFIELD HALL and ASHCROFT THEATRE, Nottingham's ROYAL CENTRE, and the new ORCHARD THEATRE in Dartford.

Together, the orders are worth over £350,000 to Space-Time-Systems, the small Covent Garden based company which developed BOCS, and which is leading the way in the increasingly lucrative market for computerised box office systems.

Announcing these new orders, Space-Time-Systems' Managing Director Ken Fraser said:

"These orders round off an astonishingly successful first year. When we delivered our first system to Manchester's Palace Theatre in March 1981 we hoped to win a further five or six orders in the next twelve months. To have doubled our projected output is a remarkable achievement, and a tremendous vote of confidence by the entertainment world both for Space-Time-Systems and BOCS".

The BOCS systems for Nottingham and Dartford will be operational in June.

In Nottingham, BOCS will handle bookings for the THEATRE ROYAL - one of the country's most consistently successful touring theatres - and also for the new 2,500-seat CONCERT HALL which will open next to the Theatre Royal later this year.

The BOCS system for Croydon consolidates Space-Time-Systems' position in the all-important London market where the biggest BOCS system to date is already operational at the new £14m Barbican Centre.

Other BOCS systems in operation include installations for the City of Glasgow (4 venues), Warrington's Spectrum Leisure Centre, the Corporation of Eastbourne (4 venues), the Theatre Royal in Plymouth, the New Theatre in Cardiff, and the Portsmouth Guildhall. The Cardiff system will in due course be extended to include the St. David's Hall, the new national concert and conference hall for Wales which opens in the autumn.

Unusual in that it is an "in-house" system, BOCS allows box office staff multiple access to auditorium seat plans, which are called up by venue on to the VDU screen. Different symbols are used to denote the status of any seat: whether sold, pencil-booked (by telephone), or free, and shading used to show price ranges. The method of payment is also recorded by the system, and tickets only printed when the seats have been sold.

A list of future enhancements, includes multifeeding ticket printer, for different colours and designs, a financial analysis package and financial accounting and payroll systems. Ken Fraser sees the most dramatic developments, however, as happening in networking of sales.

"At the moment we are looking at Miracle from D. M. England, which could be available either as a freestanding viewdata package with BOCS alongside it, or as a gateway facility into Prestel. This would provide a dialogue to enable agents to book their own seats," he explained.

Linking between BOCS venues, to enable one to sell tickets on behalf of the other is another projected feature of the system, and remote ticket sales to offer a higher level of service than the viewdata option.

First Theatre Ticket Sales by Satellite

In a demonstration to delegates at the recent Box Office Management International Conference held in St. Louis, USA, the Box Office Computer System was used

to book the first transatlantic theatre seats.

Using a DEC VT100 display terminal, Ben Wells, Chairman of the St. Louis Symphony, made a request direct to the BOCS system recently installed in the Barbican Centre in London for a subscription series of six concerts by the London Symphony Orchestra. Transmitted via a CASE 814 multiplexor and a Paradyne 9600 modem through the satellite link to the BOCS database on a DEC PDP-11/44 mini-computer, the booking was made at the Barbican Centre, and admission tickets printed on the BOCS 7000 printer in St. Louis, Missouri.

The demonstration was a prelude to the US launch of the system, scheduled for July this year.

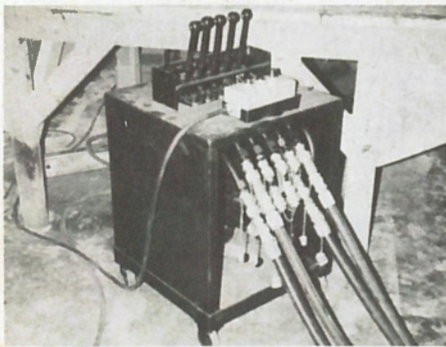
For further information please contact Ken Fraser of BOCS, telephone 01 836 8123.

Canadian Modular Revolve

Montreal Opera's new production of Massenet's *Werther* was mounted on a new portable modular revolving stage. The unit was developed in Montreal by Michel Noel of Marcel Desrochers Inc, in conjunction with Pierre Laforest of Paco Corporation.



The first assembly



The hydraulic control unit

The turntable has a diameter of 50ft with each of the individual rings having a width of 5ft. The discs are driven hydraulically.

For *Werther* the full 50ft was used, although, being modular, one or more of the rings could be omitted for future productions of other shows.

At the first fit-up, on the stage of the Salle Wilfrid-Pelletier at Montreal's *Place des Arts*, the crew completed assembly within a four-hour call. Each section weighs 190 lbs which is no problem for level get-ins, but with a view to difficult access situations, consideration is being given to the possibility of using aluminium rather than steel in the basic structure in order to reduce unit weight down to 100lb.

Between Cues

The thoughts of
Walter Plinge

Walters's Plunge

I arrived in Rotorua with every intention of attending the evening performance at the Maori Cultural Centre and reporting upon it in these columns. Alas, with but twenty minutes to curtain time, there was a conflict between feeding the senses through the mind or through the palate. Dinner won. But I took the plunge in the sulphur softness of the thermal waters, and next morning toured the boiling mud and fizzing geysers. Here was performance art indeed. Magical and menacing.

An Error of Style

I caught the final preview of *The Little Prince and the Aviator*. It did not open. (Although Broadway does try to have at least the opening performance). Whatever the merit of words, music, acting and singing, it could never have survived its scenographic style. The popularity of Saint-Exupéry's book can be measured by its six million copies sold over forty years in twenty languages including Latin. This is a fable about an aviator who makes a forced landing in the Sahara and meets a little boy who has been transported there by birds from another planet. It might just conceivably work in a small, no scenery, theatre in the round; but on the proscenium stage it needs distance. It needs haze and illusion. The piece is just too fragile to withstand the atmospheric alienation of today's popular scenic style of reduction to a token realistic element (the aeroplane) set within a masking box (painted as crates) illuminated from an exposed lighting rig featuring in-view operators of backlighting follow spots. *The Little Prince and the Aviator* surely requires the audience to suspend disbelief rather than be kept earthbound by alienation devices in the scenography. (And the technology did not help by requiring the aeroplane to pivot arbitrarily to permit the entry of trucked furniture.) The little prince (on piano wires so obvious that Brecht would have been delighted) was like a refugee from 'Annie' and how could he have acted otherwise, without atmospheric assistance. My admiration and sympathy were for Michael York whose aviator managed to sustain a blinding truth throughout the evening — even when singing *I like my misfortunes to be taken seriously*.

Cue Dropping

CUE seemed such a good name for this magazine that we decided to go ahead without worrying about the possible confusion with the New York listings weekly with the same title. But it is interesting to note that since CUE Technical Theatre Review started, *CUE New York* has become *NEW YORK including Cue*.

Figaro Evaluated

The scene is a reception in the interval of a performance of 'The Marriage of Figaro' sponsored by Martini.

W. Plinge: After early flirtations with the first act trio and the third act sextet I have now come to believe that, despite their magnificence, it is the second act finale that is the supreme achievement of eighteenth-century music theatre ensemble.

D. Bass: It's very long.

Orthodox Easter Drama

I had two easter eggs this year. The first was a product and the second a tradition. Both had a flavour of theatricality. My Great British Easter Egg was packaged in the image of a current television commercial for a sex drive chocolate bar. One week later, living by a different calendar, my Greek Orthodox Easter Egg was dyed in the wool to a traditional red and packaged in the centre of my Easter bread loaf. In English, the drama of the passion tends to be remembered by the faithful exhibiting the British actor's customary fear of going over the top: even the resurrection is greeted with well-mannered restraint. Neither the sorrow nor the joy feels free enough to spill out on to the streets. Perhaps it is all the fault of the weather. But perhaps not. Certainly a little shower of Grecian rain did nothing to stop the entire population of Aegina Town assembling with brown beeswax candles to light the harbour when the faithful from all three churches processed with their flower decked biers at dusk on Good Friday. And what more effective moment of street theatre than a Resurrection joyously proclaimed with the aid of lights, bells and fireworks. At 23.45 all is darkened. The priest brings from the altar the new Easter flame from which the people light their candles (white candles this time, for there is a long tradition of divine lighting design). As the flame is passed from hand to hand the light gradually grows in the church, then spills out on to the steps and along the waterfront. Then around the harbour and right through the town, eventually linking the flames from all the churches. The priest comes out to a stand and with the aid of that inevitable concession to the life herepresent, a microphone, proclaims on the stroke of midnight that *Christ is Risen!* Instant Bells, Bangers, Flares and Well-Wishing. Without restraint. Perfectly staged managed? Well no, not quite. Some firecracker operators jumped the cue by rather more than just the length of a standby. But immaculate timing is not an essential of popular theatre. Indeed precision can well remove something of that spontaneity which helps to break down the formalities which can inhibit the participation of a popular audience.

Box-office Bulletins

The media claim to respond to public need. If so, we must be a nation of economic hypochondriacs with exchange rate as the pulse and F.T. index as temperature. Our theatre managers, however, are very secretive about their economic health. Oh! they are quite open about incurable diseases like VAT, inflation and inadequate subsidy. But any detailed mention of box-office symptoms is strictly taboo. General bulletins of optimism are issued but it takes a personal examination to diagnose the empty seats which the patient denies having last night or tomorrow night. Broadway box-office returns have long been exposed in weekly *Variety*. And the New York Times has taken to helping its readers with a Friday listing of *Weekend Ticket Availability* from 'all sections for all performances' through various permutations of section and date to 'sold out'. Is the west end really so depressed that the relatives cannot be told? Or potential visitors informed as to the probability of finding a chair at the bedside?

The Indefinable Defined

The finance committee of a local authority were contemplating one of the more obscure byways of their budget. Emotive words like highbrow, lowbrow, culture and Andy Stewart were in use. The crunch, however, hinged around the difference between *popular entertainment* and *aesthetic education*. Their definition of popular entertainment is not reported but presumably includes everything that does not come within the category of aesthetic education. Their Regional Assessor's Department helpfully defined 'aesthetic' as the *appreciation or criticism of the beautiful*. Well I suppose it all depends what you mean by appreciation, criticism and beauty. If this fine body of elected financiers has a gap in a future agenda, perhaps they would like to debate one of the more disposable aphorisms of a minor member of the Confucius secretariat *Art should be entertaining but all entertainment is not necessarily art*.

Frontcloth of the Year

I am addicted to the words and music of Fred Ebb and John Kander. My gramophone has long known by heart their *Cabaret*, *Chicago* and *The Act*. Now I am being much pleased by their *Woman of the Year* recording. Tony Walton has done some clever things with the scenery. Like a show pros of tv screens. Like trucks being shaped to interlock rather than merely butt join. Like just about the best use of film that I have ever seen in a live stage show: an actor singing a duet with a projected cartoon character. The animation image includes a follow spot which forms a stylistic bridge to the actor and his real follow spot, bringing the cartoon towards reality and the actor towards cartoon. Fusing with the words and music, this technique brings a new dimension to the art and craft of the frontcloth number.

Beethoven Serenaded

Beethoven has slipped a bit, over my years. Goodness me, when I was a lad they used to rate him top man! Well, Mozart has the throne now and occupies it democratically on a popular vote – although I personally almost make him share with Handel. Nevertheless old Ludwig is pretty good at romantic passion – all tension and *mysterioso*. But passion, tension and mystery were precisely what was missing from two concerts within a recent month. In Montreal the hall was vast and bleak within and it was snowing without.

The conductor was a professor. Was it a combination of intellect, temperature and bleak house that made the symphonies sound like *divertimenti*? But a good *divertimento* does something for the senses: this was music to please only an analytical mind. South of the equator, there was a heat wave and the conductor was a Viennese choirboy who had escaped to the Antipodes in 1940. With a background like that



he would surely have lived through enough *sturm und drang* to give me all the tension and mystery that I craved! His appearance was encouraging: uncontrolled excess silver hair, deeply set eyes in an unsmiling face raked with a fine mixture of terror, horror and apprehension: every cartoonist's dream of a romantic musician. And he nearly, yes nearly, got the band aroused. But who could possibly play darkly on such a day in



such a country. So I enjoyed the serenade version of the fifth symphony and admired Christchurch Town Hall which is so human that Wellington has done the only honourable thing: ordered a copy.

Séxy Handel

One of the happiest things to happen in my lifetime has been the rediscovery of the Handel operas. And one of the greatest contributions to our civilisation (almost as important as fast, painless dentistry) has been made by the musicians who have re-mastered the lost arts of playing simple baroque instruments – keyless wood, valveless brass, and gutted strings. The schoolmaster who most influenced my early grapplings with language went to considerable lengths to explain the difference between *sensual* and *sensuous*: but I have never been happy at any division of the senses into physical and mental. As far as I am concerned the sounds of a baroque orchestra are both sensual and sensuous. In a word the genuine Handel sound is very *sexy*. It is certainly so in Kent Opera's *Agrippina* and so I would like to sing a big da capo thank you to the Arts Council of Great Britain and Sainsbury's for paying for my superb Georgian multiple orgasm on Easter Saturday. Consequently I have resolved to shop more often at Sainsbury's. (I have long been a faithful, if occasionally complaining, customer of the Arts Council of Great Britain.) *Agrippina* was Handel's first pop hit, but it is unperformed and unrecorded. But not unknown: it is full of material that Handel reworked from earlier works or was to rework for later ones. Butlin and Chelton were splendidly sympathetic with their sets, frocks and lights. With aural authenticity and visual sympathy, it only required just a touch more courage to remove the shadow of Offenbach hovering over some of the acting: when the libretto is as strong as this one, the comedy and satire can not only sustain sincerity, they are heightened by it.

Forward Bars

My seat for *Amadeus* at Her Majesty's Theatre was the one that I once used to light a musical whose horrors took some considerable time to heal. Looking around I was delighted to note that lighting instruments had penetrated the auditorium positions where I had most yearned for them: booms between the boxes and stage, and a bar from the auditorium ceiling. It is interesting to note the growth over the last decade of these forward bars in London and New York: is my hunch correct that on Broadway it was the sound designers who lead the way in getting this position available for technical suspensions?

Menu Marketing

Blackboard menus are a response to the morning gathered camp of portion controlled copy writing in market researched eating houses. However one Auckland waitperson wheeled the blackboard to the table to give a full scale sales presentation on every dish. Never ever were details of saucing and garnishing so forcefully yet poetically described by such a presentable lady of such inscrutable countenance. Nevertheless the meal was excellent.