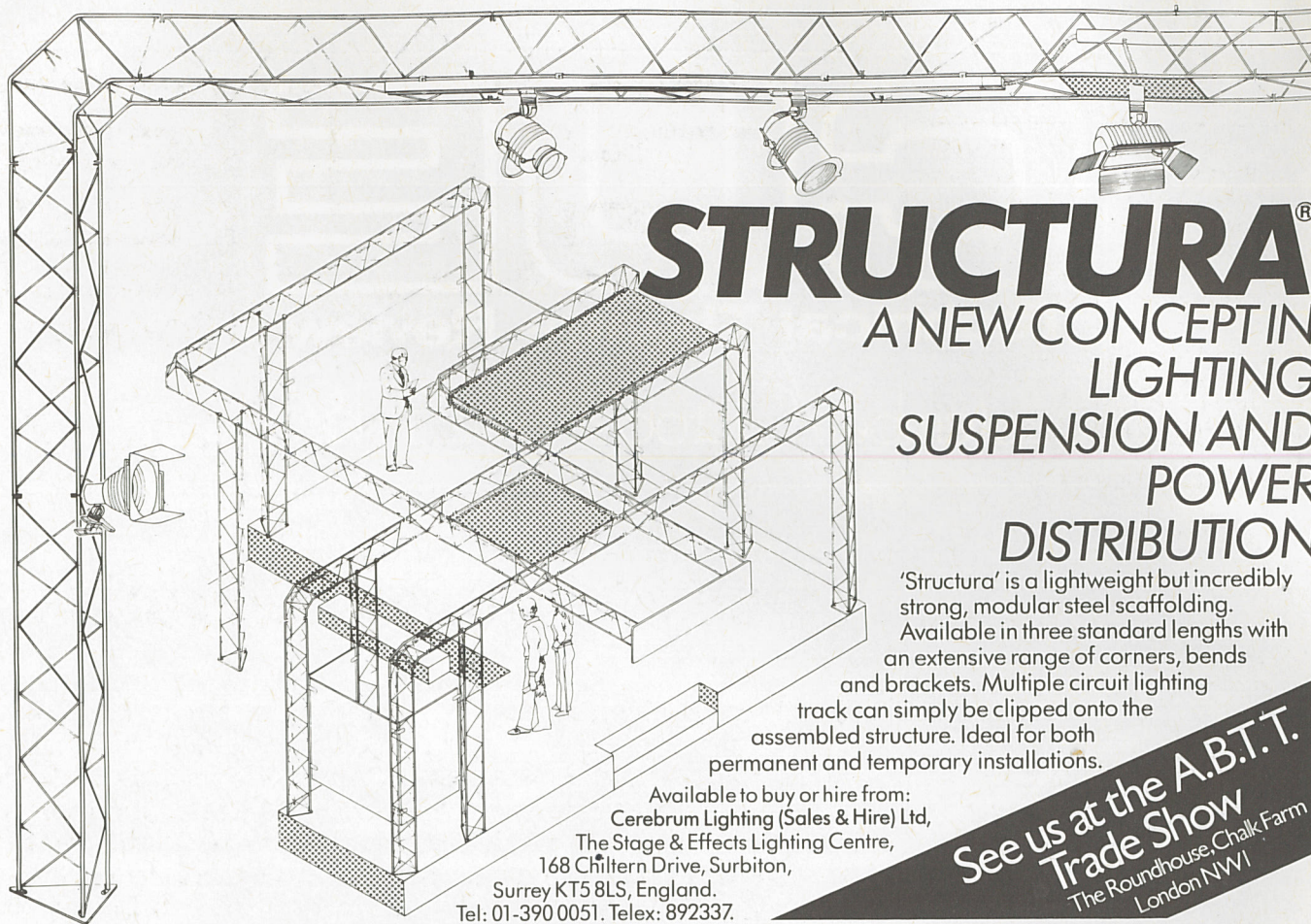


# CUE

**Technical Theatre Review**

September/October 1982 £1.25





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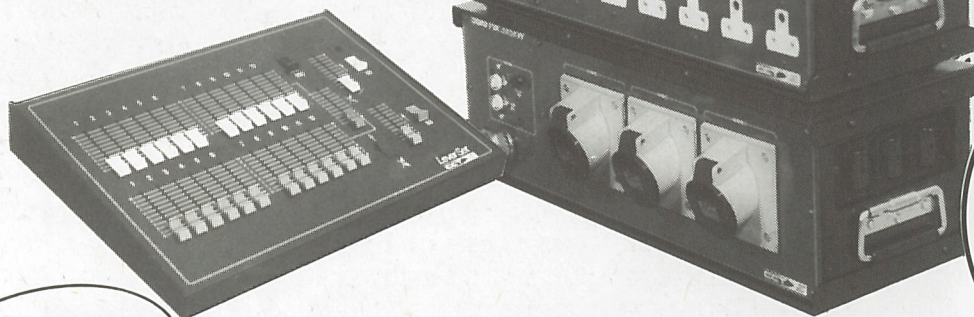
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Recent years have seen the direction and design of Bayreuth operas move from the Wagner family to guest production teams. (Peter Hall and William Dudley are at work on the next "Ring".) However, the current production of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* is directed by the Festival's Artistic Director, Wolfgang Wagner, who is also responsible for the set designs. Part of the stage picture for the final scene forms our cover illustration. Costumes are by Reinhard Heinrich and lighting by Manfred Voss. It is interesting to compare this design with that for 1888 shown on page 4.

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# CUE

## Technical Theatre Review

September/October 1982 19.

## Unity Conquers Scrutiny

The Theatre Museum has been saved from the stillborn fate prescribed by the Rayner Scrutiny. Performers, playwrights, producers and pundits joined audiences, actors, authors and administrators in an unprecedented display of unity. Individuals, ever condemned to struggle for creative survival in the twilight world of the performing arts, emerged to join voices in a demand for recognition that our theatrical heritage is worthy of the preservation and display that is routinely accorded in countries less frightened of the concept implied by that closet word *culture*.

So Room 132 in the Victoria & Albert Museum is free to carry on wheeling and dealing with the government purse to establish a Theatre Museum in Covent Garden, downstream from the Royal Opera House. When this will happen has long ceased to be a matter worthy of speculation: announced dates have come and gone with about as much credibility as the forecasts issued by experts in fields like economics and the weather.

Speculation as to the nature of the museum is also dormant, although there seems to be some consensus on two points. The archive will be so underfunded that the goodies will remain largely uncatalogued, with space at such a premium that access will continue to be limited. And that the display for the Theatrical Tourists will be a claustrophobic journey down a tunnel of spotlighted significant objects from Mrs Siddons knickers to the dagger that Mr Irving saw before him. You will buy your ticket from a computer in a nineteenth-century mahogany box office, and touch your forelock to an effigy of Fred Bentham playing a light console. The atmosphere will be alive with the enlightenment of those who have just discovered that Diaghilev was British.

There will certainly be no room to display many of the backstage goodies so dear to the souls of the readers of this magazine. No doubt the lighting chaps will hog whatever space there is: perhaps enough room for a grandmaster, that light console, a single water-pot dimmer, and the 'big six' significant spotlights: lime, arc, stelmar, patt 23, silhouette and parcan. There may be a small display of that long-lost craft: flats covered with canvas rather than ply, joined by line and cleat rather than pinhinge.

But a specialist Museum of Theatre Technology must await more enlightened times when education is once again thought to be a good thing worthy of development rather than cuts. Meanwhile CUE offers encouragement and thanks to all those lovely nutters who are storing vital history under their beds.

# BAYREUTH

Theatric tourist *FRANCIS REID* makes a Wagner pilgrimage.

When I was a younger lad, I applied my ears and eyes to the music theatre of Wagner with some diligence. I cycled a couple of Rings and grabbed at any available productions of the rest, including several robust performances in opera houses on the periphery of the international circuit and beyond. I rarely found myself anticipating an evening with Wagner in much spirit of excitement. On such nights the young me did not approach the opera house all bright-eyed and bushy-tailed. I loved the big moments. Wagner's big statements with orchestra, chorus and ensemble are superb. But there are scenes between individuals when a certain phrase surfaced in my head — and still surfaces — and that phrase is 'get on with it'. This reaction has nothing to do with length: I fret if a single da capo repeat is omitted in a Handel aria which only embroiders the plot, rarely carrying it forward.

As my twenties began to run out, I gave up squandering my limited intellect on analysing my responses. Henceforth music must trigger my senses. So Wagner (and Puccini!) were out. In the pursuit of hedonism, I would concentrate on composers who chilled my spine rather than my brain. Meaning Mozart, Handel, Verdi, Britten and the like. Wagner was restricted

to the Siegfried Idyll and three overtures.

So perhaps my journey to Bayreuth was not undertaken in a spirit of pilgrimage. Well not the same sort of dedicated pilgrimage that many made in the past and some still do. But it was something of a pilgrimage nevertheless. Because Wagner was one of the major theatre revolutionaries: both in what he did and what he wanted to do. He was a rallying point, and a catalyst, for pushing forward the art of theatre generally and music theatre particularly. Opera (and I use the word to include many of today's American musicals) has always been the supreme alliance of *all* the arts. Wagner formalised these relationships to make the integration of all the visual and performing arts a conscious pursuit of the stage. That the summit of Wagner's concept of *gesamkunst* is often achieved more readily in composers other than Wagner himself just happens to be my own response!

I worked hard on preparations for my Bayreuth pilgrimage. I did annual battle with the box-office computer for some years before I was accepted as a person persistent enough to be allowed to purchase tickets. I then studied my chosen works, Mastersingers and Lohengrin, with records and scores over a period of some six

months. I had intended to re-read Bernard Shaw and Ernest Newman but never got around to it. Anyway the soul of the work is surely to be sought in the words and music, not in the commentators. By the time I set off, the words and music were familiar.

## NUREMBERG

I resolved to make Nürnberg my springboard: perhaps I could absorb the spirit of the Mastersingers. Hans Sach's house has gone but there was a pretty picture postcard of it on sale. His statue was backed by a block of modern apartments. The apprentices were in jeans and an occasional ra-ra skirt. As dusk fell a fiddler and flautist played reasonably well to accompany a bare-foot lady dancing with much feeling, little choreography and no technique. From behind came the intermittent crack of breaking bottles in a rhythmic pattern very similar to Beckmesser's marking of a singer's faults. It was, however, but a fire eater preparing a glassy couch for the finale of his act. Later a pair of virtuoso lads whose joint skills encompassed recorder, shawm, bagpipes, lute, guitar, zither and charm, entertained the apprentices, masters and pilgrims.

I had once seen a postcard in a book (and was to see it again in the Bayreuth Wagner Museum) bearing the caption *Im Lederhosen Nach Bayreuth*. The illustration showed the well dressed Wagnerite in a railway carriage with a full frontal of the *Festspielhaus* filling the window. This turned out to be geographically impossible and so I was pleased that I had not invested in a full lederhosen kit. Instead I packed my crumbling dinner jacket for its first ever appearance beyond the shores of Britain. I usually travel a multi-purpose blue velour, but resolved that only in a black tuxedo could I provide an appropriately discreet background for the lady pilgrims — both the modish and the chintzy.

## BAROQUE

One of the reasons that attracted Richard Wagner to Bayreuth as a possible festival location was the 1747 *Margrave's Opera House* whose large stage he had read about in an encyclopaedia. So this theatre seemed a natural for my own first call. Wagner rejected it and he was right. This masterpiece of baroque could not have been a suitable house, either architecturally or acoustically, for the musical and dramatic revolution that Wagner desired. It is, however, a theatrical masterpiece that I shall be returning to, with enthusiasm, in a future CUE.



Model preserved in the Wagner Museum at Villa Wahnfried for the final act of *Die Meistersinger* in 1888. The same scene in the current production (Set by Wolfgang Wagner, Costumes by Reinhard Heinrich) is shown on the front cover.

## VILLA WAHNFRIED

Next stop was Villa Wahnfried, built to a design that was basically Wagner's own, and his home from 1874 through the building of the *Festspielhaus* and the first festivals until his death in 1883. Wahnfried remained in the Wagner family until 1973 when it was handed over to the Richard Wagner Foundation and completely restored for re-opening during the 1976 Bayreuth Festival Centenary Celebrations as a Richard Wagner Museum housing national archives of the composer's life and work.

The ground floor drawing room makes a magnificent concert room and recordings from the operas are played there daily. The sound pervades the whole house and, in the upper rooms particularly, is like ghostly voices. A basement vault houses the most valuable items including the original scores of *Parsifal*, *Tristan*, *Flying Dutchman*, *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung*. A pair of rooms are available for special exhibitions and there is a large model collection. During this year's festival one of the rooms housed a fascinating exhibition of the history of the house itself with the original plans, and photographs of the Wagner family at home amongst the original furnishings. There were photographs of war damage with an American soldier strumming Wagner's piano, and a pictorial record of the various problems and phases of the restoration. The remainder of the house leads one progressively through Wagner's life.

There is no shortage of ephemera: there have always been Wagnerites. He may have had financial difficulties but he always received substantial recognition. Indeed the controversy that surrounded the reception of much of his work ensured the accumulation of a considerable amount of documentation. There is even a room devoted to some of the items provoked by what might be labelled wagnerism, an industry devoted to both scoffing the master and to what the guide book calls 'inept admiration' of him. The guide book, incidentally, is available in several languages but the extensive captions to all the museum items are in German.

The journey through Wagner's life starts with a room devoted to his youth including the tightrope walkers who were one of his earliest experiences of theatrical performers and whom the eight-year-old tried to imitate. There are illustrations of the early theatres that he worked in: indeed scattered throughout the rooms there is enough fascinating material on theatre architecture to make a small shrine for those of us in-

terested in that sort of thing. Items like a sepia photograph of the interior of the rather primitive theatre in Lauchstadt (and a drawing of the exterior) where his conducting career began. And prints, inside and out, of the theatre in Königsberg plus a full interior of the Semper theatre in Dresden and a close-up of its proscenium zone. Some of these earlier theatres were barn-like and in Riga he was inspired by the darkened steeply rising auditorium and sunken orchestra pit. The twenty-five-year-old was already being influenced towards the design of his own theatre.

There is of course extensive architectural material on the Festival Theatre itself, but on my first visit I skipped most of the Bayreuth exhibits – the time for that would be after I had experienced the actual theatre itself. For the moment I concentrated on the scores, programmes, prints, photographs, letters etc. concerning the earlier pre-festival performances. And furniture and clothes of Wagner and his second wife Cosima. And the garden with its tranquil shaded grave.

## THE THEATRE ON THE HILL

By 3 p.m. one is dressed for the evening and ready to walk up the hill. This ritual lives up to expectations. The scene has but two minor changes from the nineteenth-century postcards: the carriages no longer have horses, and the policeman no longer wear jackets in the hot summer sun. It is hot but the trees are shady. The dominating feature of the theatre is still the fly tower. The exterior is warm but not fully mellow. The bricks are red and the sandstone soft and brown. The original half timbering has been replaced by pale concrete. But these lines of concrete are narrow and submissive. Behind the theatre a covered way leads to separate generous storage and workshops. There is space, there is countryside, there are trees. A German friend once referred to Glyndebourne as the *Kuhoper*; for me Bayreuth will always be the *Baumoper*. Trees rather than cows. But the spirit of John Christie's Glyndebourne is in the air. Not surprisingly because it was here that he observed some of the rituals that make a festival performance special. Particularly getting the audience to take trouble. Tonight the ritual and the ambience feels good: we are gathered together for an important purpose.

On the little balcony above the main entrance half-a-dozen gentlemen of the brass in formal, but not bow-tied, attire are being cheerful. A moment before the quarter, their positions formalise, a conducting hand is raised and on the precise second a

first act leitmotiv calls us within. The five and beginners calls will be marked by this tune repeated twice and then thrice. And with appropriate themes it will all repeat at the intervals. But my moment has come to go inside. A historical moment in the life of any theatric tourist, particularly an architectural nutty one.

## THE AUDITORIUM

Now I think that I have made abundantly clear in the pages of this magazine and elsewhere that my taste in theatre architecture rather firmly favours horseshoes with the audience wallpapered on very shallow shelves. Wagner's Bayreuth theatre could hardly be more opposite in its design. But I must now report how brilliantly it works. Although immediately qualifying this by emphasising that it works for epic music drama. To experience the Margrafen Opera House and the Wagner Festspielhaus in one day was to reconfirm once again the impossibility of the multipurpose theatre. The multicompromise theatre will always have to be built; but for ideals, and festivals are times of ideals, there has to be an exact matching of the house and the housed.

The side walls are a particularly brilliant idea. Like a series of eighteenth-century stage wings seen through nineteenth-century eyes. The clever move was to leave them as wings and not join them with borders to form a series of portals. The tunnel effect would have been disastrous. That decision to have a flat ceiling could have come from the application of logic. What is certainly not logical but works works works (I repeat the triple emphasis from notes made at the time on the back of my programme) is that the columned sections of these wings start at a fixed height rather than follow the slope of the auditorium floor. The problem of how to join the fairly massive pillared wings to the flat ceiling has been solved elegantly by using these wings as a support for the houselights. Indeed houselight support becomes their apparent visual logic. Irreverent? No! These houselights are hugely splendid white bowls on gorgeous brackets. The light from these bowls has the quality of a steady gas mantle – even a slight quality of grey green which is probably, indeed must be, picked up in reflections from the general toning of the walls and ceiling.

It is fascinating that this theatre should work so well. This great originator that has inspired some of the most disastrous thinking in the development of theatre architecture. Not always the architect's fault: the concept of a great tiered bowl has frequently been spoiled by the insertion of

fireman's gangways. (I was comforted by the fire engine parked permanently outside – it would have been ungently to measure the seat pitch but I should be surprised if it qualifies for what we in Britain call continental seating. However there are a mass of exits: there have to be as there are no side-wall aisles.) I acknowledge that the winged-wall solution works for Wagner, it works for its date, and so it is not universal: but it does demonstrate the need to break up the side walls in a manner that leads the audience focus towards the stage.

The seats are wide enough for my not inconsiderable bottom. But hard and a pain in the unsupported back. What happened to the original cane design? They are in all the old photos and the current seats at Snape Maltings are said to be inspired by the original Bayreuth, if not actually copied. And at Snape one can relax: on today's Bayreuth wood, any relaxation of the ramrod attentive posture is impossible. At my second performance I was in a box on a padded seat. Bliss!

What surprised me most about the auditorium was the warmth. I am not an enthusiast for stone, but this stone has a feeling of paint with the side 'pillar wings' going from a warmth at the bottom to a tinge of blueness at the top. The effect must come from reflections, particularly a diffusion from the painted wooden ceiling. The only strong colour is the internal red in the boxes and I was fascinated that this was the same primitive red as the earlier nineteenth-century tone researched for the theatre in Bury St Edmunds.

Houselights out. Very hush. Very dark. The emergency lighting is restricted to a

glow of exit signs and the famous hooded pit lets out the merest pale flush of light on to the curtain. Very little light but very exciting because the angle is right: it comes from below.

And then the overture. I was prepared for an excellence of sound: this is a point that all the books agree upon. But when it came, I was nevertheless stunned. Knocked out. Wow. Particularly the orchestral sonorities and the chorus. And the blend. Instruments and voices are separate yet together. The sound is all of a whole, yet the texture is clear.

Curtain up and would you believe my sightline was imperfect! I cannot logically complain since I keep advocating, in line with my horseshoe beliefs, that sightline is not paramount. Yet here I am in a temple dedicated to unimpaired sight, sitting behind my just desserts: a tall man at a point in the curve where the seat staggering has gone awry. But a slight leaning re-orientation of my posture is just possible within the constraints imposed by the chair design. This enables me to see clearly down the sweep of the bowl to the stage picture.

This is a *window* theatre: the auditorium is all dark and the audience look at a picture framed by darkness. Yet the frame is not stressed. As indicated earlier, neither from the back row nor from the boxes beyond is there a feeling of tunnel. And the audience are welded together by the absence of gangways and by the rake which is not so steep as to give a feeling of row separation. And that all embracing sound also helps towards the creation of a corporate identity amongst the audience.

The lack of proscenium stress is helped

by the lack of stage lighting positions in the auditorium. Front of house lighting can help to bridge the stage/auditorium join by combining audience and actors in one lit room. But it can also stress that join by making it apparent. In Bayreuth there are virtually no foh lighting positions. There is some projection equipment above the centre box, but the only face lighting position is a short ceiling bridge, probably not much more than about 4m long.

In most cases the playing area is sufficiently upstage of the main overstage lighting bridge for it to provide face light. But within the concept of a *gesamkunstwerk* face light is not necessarily essential in many instances. The actors have to stand and move normally but their face muscles are committed to producing sustained vocal tone rather than projecting character. There is sound – vocal and orchestral – to do things for which a drama actor has to rely on eyes and teeth.

There are possible foh boom positions everywhere: the 'wing' sides of the auditorium could almost have been designed by a theatre consultant with booms in mind. But I think that it is right, absolutely right, that they have not been installed. This auditorium works as it is and must be very carefully preserved.

The lighting of both 'Mastersingers' and 'Lohengrin' had some very beautiful moments. Always conceived in terms of a strong production style with directional statements and precise floor area selection. (The floor is a major scenic surface in any theatre, but especially in this one.) As mentioned already there were some moments of facial gloom, but any cure would have been at the expense of the total concept. My overwhelming impression of the lighting of these productions is conveyed in another note jotted down during the applause – stunningly dramatic, stunningly beautiful, stunningly part of the *gesamkunst*.

## PAUSE

With intervals at an hour each, the evening is long. As long as a day! Leaving one's hotel at around 3 for a 4 o'clock performance, it can be 11 before returning, even by the most direct route (i.e. avoiding refreshments). But a couple of hour-long intervals are an important part of the ritual, not forgetting the opportunity given for a complete stage reset. The catering is efficient: restaurant and cafeteria buildings in the grounds with large clear floor areas that can double as rehearsal rooms. At my first interval I was resolutely beer and bratwurst on the principle that Wagner is beer, Mozart being wine. But at the second interval I succumbed to a glass of the local sparkling followed by Johannisberger *torte mit schlagsahne* (my German vocabulary may be small but I know how to get important things like whipped cream). Lots of time for a stroll in the evening cool: the day can be over hot for examining the details of opera house architecture and the elegant ladies who attend the entertainments therein.

## THE STAGE

It has always been my preferred way to visit a theatre first as audience and then visit the



Room devoted to Wagner's patron, King Ludwig II of Bavaria, in the Villa Wahnfried Museum

stage on the following day. And so it was in Bayreuth.

When I step on most stages I am invariably surprised by how much smaller the auditorium seems when seen from the actor's viewpoint rather than the audiences. Bayreuth is the exception to this rule: the auditorium seemed vast!

By German standards, the backstage area is not big. The stage is deep but it lacks the side sliding stages that enable one set to be rapidly replaced by another. There are six elevators and the basement is 10m below stage. Modern scenography, however, very rarely lines up with symmetrical bridges and so there is a daily construction session. The elaborate platforms for Lohengrin was noticeably well built from light metal framed rostra.

The proscenium opening is fixed in width but variable in height. The key dimensions are:

*Proscenium:* Height 11.80m, Width 13m.

*Stage:* Width 27m, Depth 22m, Rake 1:40

*Grid Height:* 26m *Rear Stage depth:* 13m

The lighting bridge forms the variable top to the proscenium but the side lighting towers are fixed. There are three lighting galleries running up and down stage on the side walls, providing an excellent choice of angles from accessible spotlights. Three cycloramas are installed. The lighting control, a Siemens Sitalux memory, is in a glazed cabin on the stage left tower. (The sides of the stage are labelled, in huge letters for the benefit of the singers, as *ost* and *west*; but I cannot remember which is which).

Technical Director Walter Huneke and Lighting Manager Manfred Voss have a technical crew including 42 mechanists, 21 lighting, 2 engineers, 2 sound and 2 props. Production Manager Michael Tietjens has 22 specialist craftsmen in the workshops and a wardrobe team of 45. The stage and lighting crew for the festival are drawn from theatres all over Germany, Austria and overseas, as are the orchestra and chorus: the listings in the programme make impressive reading.

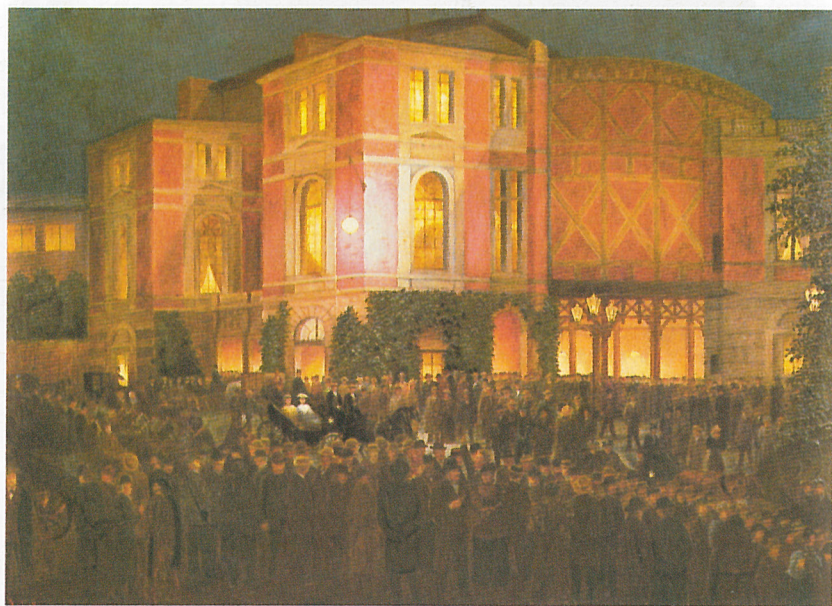
## THE DEVELOPMENT OF BAYREUTH

It was now time for a return to the Villa Wahnfried collections to study the material on the *Festspielhaus* and the development of production styles within it. Wagner's need for a Festival Theatre sprang from his basic dissatisfaction with the working conditions prevailing in the repertoire theatres of his time, and with their architecture. The ideal which he pursued for many years was of building, in a smallish town, a special theatre designed solely with regard to its artistic purpose. Key to the concept were the amphitheatre shape of the auditorium and the invisible orchestra. An original production style would be developed through intensive rehearsals.

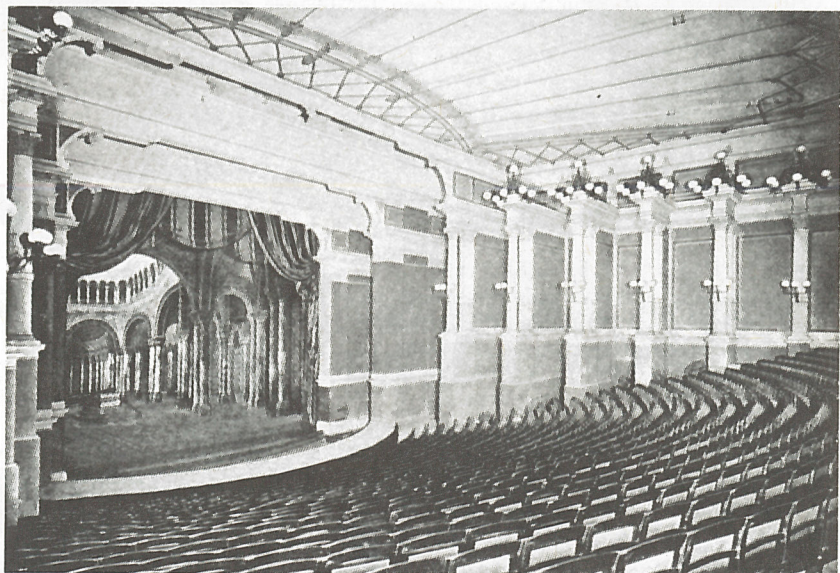
The problem was, as ever, money. Wagner was regularly pursued by debts and the mechanics of debt collection. A fate almost inseparable from being a composer, however great a master, although the evidence of his life style throughout the museum indicates that his poverty was



*The Bayreuth theatre today*



*The Richard Wagner Festspielhaus in 1896*



*The auditorium is virtually unchanged since the theatre's 1876 opening, except that the double proscenium arch has been painted black and the cane seats have been replaced with wooden ones. For auditorium views from other angles, see CUE 18, page 6.*

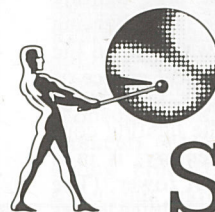
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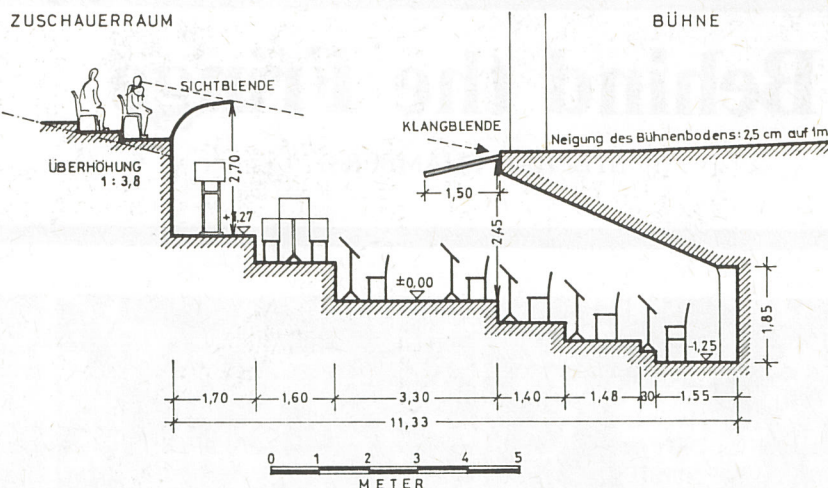
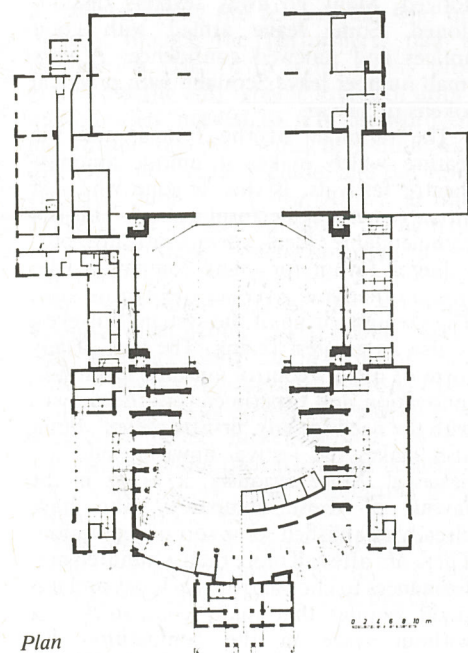
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relative. Relative to his time and certainly relative to that of, say, Mozart.

The upturn came from that pre-runner of sponsorship – patronage. From 1864 Wagner had the backing of King Ludwig II of Bavaria and, while there were still difficulties in raising all the necessary money (and in theatre there are always financial difficulties despite the apparent generosity of one's sponsor), the festival theatre became a possibility even if requiring a further dozen years to materialise.

First plans were for a festival theatre in Munich, the concept to be tested in a *provisional* theatre in the Palace of Glass followed by a permanent theatre. The architect was to be Semper of Dresden fame but his massive design was not built. However, the displayed designs with a letter from Semper to Wagner show the basic intent that was to become the Bayreuth theatre: auditorium in the form of an amphitheatre, division of the side walls through an arrangement of columns, a sunken orchestra; and two prosceniums, one behind the other, the rear one smaller, in order to effect a perspective illusion and thereby an apparent enlargement of the figures on the stage. Although he was not to be the Bayreuth architect, the fruits of this cooperation between Semper and Wagner



The famous pit. Has this design ever been equalled for sound and sight?

are to be seen in the *Festspielhaus*. On the displayed elevation of architect Otto Bruchwald's design, Wagner's handwriting says simply *Die Ornamente fort!* – the ornaments must go. And go they did.

Today's auditorium is basically unchanged from that of 1876. The seats have become harder and the gas-lighting fittings electrified. The only significant change is perhaps the black painting of the double proscenium. The splendid pit remains.

Something that I did not discover in Bayreuth but read in CUE on my return (CUE 18 page 6) was that King Ludwig insisted that the boxes be installed at the rear of the auditorium. This is said (Derek Sugden reporting Lothar Cremer) to have been a matter of acoustic luck. Who am I to quarrel with these distinguished sound wallahs! I just wish that they could experiment by temporarily closing up the boxes to see if that splendid sound is wrecked!

The original plan of the Festival Theatre carries Wagner's markings in red to indicate enlargement of the orchestra pit and there is an extant model of the theatre as it was in 1888. Designs, costumes, props and all sorts of ephemera document the early years.

Perhaps the most interesting items are the scenic designs. Designs only for the first year, but from the second (1882) festival photographs allow comparison of concept and reality – always remembering that the exposure lighting for the camera would em-

phasise construction and canvas creases. There are also contemporary illustrations of technical solutions to matters like swimming rhinemaidens and the rolling scenery for transformation sequences in *Parsifal*. In the basement a collection of some 50 models over the period 1876–1960: the most fascinating period for me was the coming of the cyclorama in 1925.

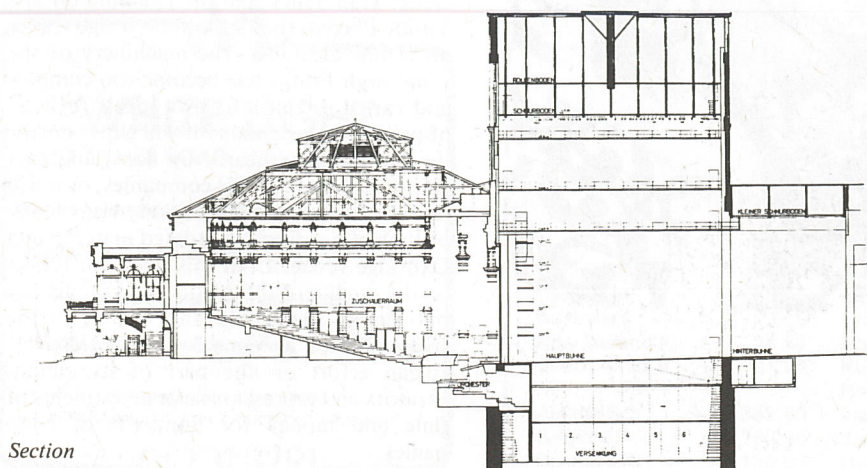
The museum brings us right up to date although the more recent festivals are detailed in photographs rather than ephemera. After a visit to Bayreuth, I have enough faith in the Richard Wagner Foundation to believe that they will be constantly collecting the apparently boring trivia of today which will become fascinating cherished ephemera in a few year's time.

For example, the item that brings the war years to life is a plan of exit routes in the event of an air attack. The festival theatre survived the war intact to become a garrison theatre for revues, musicals and variety.

From its rebirth in 1951, Bayreuth was in the forefront of the movement to remove scenic detail from the stage and to delineate space with light. There was a travelling Adolphe Appia exhibition in Bayreuth this summer. It was interesting to note his turn of the century approach to Wagner: an approach that was not applied until the 1950s.

Recent years have seen the introduction of guest director/designer teams and therefore a multiplicity of styles (including a barely heightened naturalism for Master-singers) rather than a standard uniform Bayreuth style such as obtained in various forms when the Wagner family directed all productions in addition to overall artistic responsibility.

Villa Wahnfried is a model of how a theatre museum should be laid out, and the whole trip was a thrilling experience. An experience marred by only one incident which brings us back to Beckmesser, the character in whom Wagner crystallised carping music criticism. At the Lohengrin curtain calls, one of the artists was viciously booed. How can members of an audience do this? How can they be so inhuman? How many of these boosers know anything of the creative process? Is art to be measured by a clapometer? It was very ugly and far removed from the ideals which inspired Wagner to create his operas and his theatre.



# Behind the Fringe

STEPHAN CHAMBERS



*THEY CAME FROM SOMEWHERE ELSE* — Cliffhanger Theatre Co. Left to right: Peter McCarthy and Tony Hadsie



*CHRISTIANS FROM OUTER SPACE* — Topo and Jimini (photo Greathouse)

The Edinburgh Fringe Festival is a curious phenomenon. Existing alongside the more prestigious main International Festival it has now so outgrown its more stately parent that it runs for a staggering five weeks, presenting hundreds of shows at venues all over Edinburgh. Having reached such proportions and such bewildering variety, it is all the harder to define or describe its main features, although perhaps the Royal Mile on Fringe Sunday is as good a symbol as any. Here the 'white noise' of the Fringe is at its loudest and most grating. Traffic is suspended while thousands of people spend countless hours persuading each other to see their latest revue or play. The Edinburgh Fringe is not the sum of all the productions it encompasses, it is rather the sum of all the noise and publicity which these productions engender. It is a place where hundreds of companies come to be noticed. Many go away severely disillusioned. Some leave armed with good notices and renewed confidence. A very small number leave Scotland with practical tokens of success.

The rationale of the Fringe, and the feature which makes it unique amongst theatre festivals, is that anyone who can hire a venue may perform a show. This is a commendable ideal, democratically providing a forum for many companies who would otherwise never see the light of day. The greatest virtue of the system, however, is also its greatest failing. The lack of any form of quality control not only legitimises innovation and experiment and does away with the need for any 'artistic policy', but it also makes the festival unwieldy and impractical. More seriously, it works in the favour of those companies who have already established some sort of reputation. There are after all more than a hundred performances to choose from each day and it is small wonder that many companies sink without trace in the competition for audiences. When the same programme includes Hull Truck and the Leamington Spa Youth Players the definition 'fringe' takes on a new meaning. The machinery of the Edinburgh Fringe has become too complex and varied to fulfill its own ideals. Instead of promoting originality it will either mirror the mainstream theatre by according success to its more famous companies, or it will rumble along behind an anonymous cloak of 'avant-gardism', outdated material and Oxbridge revue. Even this does not reflect on the quality of the productions on display but on the sheer bulk and volume of the fringe. This is a shame for it involves Herculean effort on the part of its administrators and represents large investments of time and money for hundreds of companies.

It is inevitable perhaps that a fringe festival on this scale will carry excess baggage. Or more cruelly a lot of dross will accompany the rarer moments of enjoyable spectacle. Inevitably also, companies will be playing to small houses for no greater reward than to have done a performance and gained the experience of it. It still remains, however, that this annual theatrical jamboree provides a unique opportunity for audiences and performers to bloat themselves on performances of every kind, and that it attracts increasingly good productions from reputable British and foreign companies.

One of the most memorable features of these five weeks in Edinburgh was the recurring plea, heard in the Assembly Rooms, in the Fringe Club and in pubs all over town: "What should we see?" Audiences, who give the town its atmosphere during the festival and who indirectly finance the performers, had a bewildering task. With a fat glossy programme as the only reliable source of information, they needed to rely on word of mouth and reviews. Word of mouth was often the most reliable guide, and the most effective publicity. *Woza Albert* at the Traverse Theatre sold out on the strength of the oral reviews which preceded it to Edinburgh. Another such was *They Came from Somewhere Else* at the Assembly Rooms, which people talked about a great deal. Most notable of all, in terms of 'folk reviews' was an all male cabaret group from London called The Joeys, who played in a night club called Buster Browns. When word spread about their particular brand of hysterically funny male feminism they played to capacity houses.

The other crucial factor in Edinburgh, for both audiences and performers is the venue. These vary from the most out of the

way church hall half an hour by bus from the city, to purpose built theatres centrally located near Princes Street. The "Circuit" organisation was quick to catch on to the prime importance of location for the success of a show. "Circuit" is a group which hires a set of good venues; all comparatively close to each other, and then invites certain companies to perform in them. This method assures both a level of performance and a steady flow of punters. The "Circuit" venues included the Herriot Watt theatres and the Little Lyceum, both of which incorporate excellent studio theatres, although the seating at the Herriot Watt must rank amongst the most uncomfortable in the whole of Edinburgh. "Circuit" booked a varied selection of productions, equally balanced between fringe stalwarts like 7:84 and some newer companies. Technically, however, the problems of getting several companies in and out every day on a tight schedule often proved too much. There were regular delays of up to thirty minutes per show. Indeed, overrunning nearly caused one of the festival's upsets when the Assembly Rooms administration threatened to close Hull Truck's *Diary of a Hunger Striker* when it overran consistently. The play was pruned and the problem shelved.

Just as it is possible to divide the festival generally into leagues, where professional and recognised companies remain distinct from students and amateurs, so it is possi-

ble to divide up the venues in a similar way. The premier venues are The Assembly Rooms, the Circuit Venues and the Traverse. In a middle league are the moderately central and well-equipped venues like the YMCA, the Walpole Hall, the Wildcat Theatre and others. At the bottom of the scale are of course the church halls, basements and other spaces hastily adapted for the festival. Some are atrocious beyond imagining, with dismal sight lines, appalling acoustics and little or no lighting capability. Others are rigged with a great deal of effort and ingenuity and become quite acceptable theatres. Occasionally the very inadequacy of the venue is turned into an advantage. Jonathon Moore's *Treatment* for example, which won a fringe first in 1981, was performed in a church with two standing spots and the audience seated in pews.

Both lights buzzed, the sound system gave out after five minutes and the wooden pews were very uncomfortable, but the highly charged and emotional play picked up atmosphere from the venue all the way through. *Treatment* was about an unemployed skin-head and his assimilation into the class of his girl friend and counsellor. Its violence and shock ending derived an awful potency through being performed in a church which curiously unsettled the audience. A rare achievement in a town where many people undergo theatre immunisation.

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Other plays did not adapt so well to their spaces, and many had grave staging problems. The sight lines and sound effects in the otherwise excellent *Pillow Talk* at Cathedral Hall were extraordinarily badly managed and were the general symptoms of poor direction which never quite managed to swamp outstanding acting. Other productions were visibly cramped and had made obvious efforts to cram existing sets and blocking into new venues. The Dog Theatre Company's *Secret Life of Cartoons* was such a case in which a sparkling and boisterous acting style looked severely hemmed in.

Outstanding staging was often in evidence however. *They Came from Somewhere Else* from Cliffhanger Theatre Company in the Assembly Rooms provided in a single set: two rooms, a sofa which ate one of the main protagonists and several interesting gadgets, most noticeably a plant which attacked people and a box of flashing lights which transported people. It was an extremely good show, which created a perceptive spoof of the science fiction genre with reference to virtually every film made on the subject. Several plays on the Circuit were also interestingly staged. The Actors Touring Company provided a visually splendid piece in *Berlin Berlin*, using blinds on trolleys to create a variety of spaces and atmospheres on a very wide stage. Monstrous Regiment in *Shakespeare's Sister* set their feminist parable against the backdrop of a huge refrigerator draped in parachute material. They had technical problems however. At one point paper was supposed to be jettisoned onto the stage from the flying gallery – something which never happened. The end of *Shakespeare's Sister* must remain one of the most extraordinary of the whole festival. To symbolise woman's subjugation to the sink and presumably to reinforce the play's colour symbolism, the stage was showered with red rubber gloves. This is not so unusual, ex-



**FEMALE TROUBLE** – Linda Dobell, Donna Champion and Caroline Noh (photo Jessieeca Leo)

cept that it went on for about five minutes until a mountainous pile of red rubber had accumulated on the stage. The audience's gasps and patent fascination with the effects showed just how much could be achieved by display alone, without the benefit of words or a text. A case more than amply proved by Circus Lumière's *Son of Circus Lumière*. Performed in a huge tent in the middle of a park this was pure spectacle, indulging the audience's desire for

participation (of the more terrifying sort) and for seeing water and food thrown about. It was Circus Lumière more than any other company who really solved the problem of adapting to venues in Edinburgh. They brought their own. Their show was an original mixture of standard circus clowning and new material and techniques, woven around a rather slight narrative involving a competition to entertain a queen. It would be interesting to see this level of skill and these sorts of technique applied more directly to a topic or theme.

One of the most attractive of Edinburgh's fringe venues must be the Traverse Theatre, which is in use all the year round as a professional studio theatre. It is a small space and a fire officer's nightmare (hence the membership – it functions as a private club and thereby avoids certain safety regulations) but remains one of the most comfortable and enjoyable theatres on the fringe. It also housed one of this year's major successes. *Woza Albert* is a play which deserves the notoriety it is sure to achieve. Brought from Johannesburg it tells the story of two black South Africans who await the arrival of the Messiah into an apartheid regime. It is fast and physical; incorporating mime and movement in a theatre style completely unknown in this country. Mbongeni Ngema and Percy Mtwa perform with a grace and assurance which makes *Woza Albert* a memorable piece. Staged around two empty tea chests and a clothes-horse the two performers evoke an outside barber's shop, a busy street, a brick factory and a rubbish tip. They mime a succession of activities so effectively it is only afterwards that one realises the degree to which they employed

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**WOZA ALBERT** — Market Theatre Johannesburg, Percy Mtwa and Mbongeni Ngema (photo David Liddle)

mime. And all this in general cover. Quite apart from its political content the play should stir our notions about what constitutes theatre. It shows in practice how music, mime and dance may be integrated into mainstream theatre. Something many people are agreed upon in theory.

The Edinburgh Fringe is such a vast system whose umbrella covers such a wide range of companies and forms it remains impossible to give more than a partial impression of it. In general terms audiences if not performers this year leaned more towards the lightweight than the serious; patronising revues more than ever. Of the lesser known revue companies Durham Theatre Company's *Dust on the Needle* was more entertaining and well managed than most. Of the smaller groups to have consolidated earlier promise the Yorkshire Actor's Company are a good example, as are the New London Actors; both young companies who produced excellent shows. The student companies still tend to be strongest where they have a long Edinburgh tradition. The Cambridge Mumpers gave an excellent adaptation of Conrad's *The Secret Agent* at the YMCA, where they completely rebuilt the stage into a two-tiered construction and turned all the seating around. Their budget needless to say was considerably greater than was enjoyed by many a professional company. Another student company of outstanding talent and promise is Z.T.C., who brought a varied set of productions to the Walpole Hall, all of them new works written by members of the company.

In administrative terms this year's fringe festival, under new direction, seemed an improvement on last year's. The programme was certainly easier to digest and the main box office ran smoothly and for long hours. The festival also still proved enough of a draw to attract dance companies from Japan and India and such home fringe attractions as 7:84 who won a fringe first for *Rejoice*, which was nevertheless one of the weakest productions in the festival and a decided decline from their

earlier triumphs (*The Cheviot, The Stag and The Black, Black Oil*). Given tight budgets and short fit-up times most technical crews coped well, although stories abounded once again of lanterns being rigged half an hour before curtain up. Least fortunate in this respect perhaps were the companies who had to use existing rigs — whether because they could not afford to bring their own or because their venues were managed by other companies.

Everything on the fringe varies: writing, acting, directing, design, lighting and music. Technical features and competence ranged from rank amateurism to the polished, almost laboratory precision of groups like Wildcat, whose 1982 provided the cleanest sound of the whole five weeks. There are no general terms in which to describe such a multitude of sins or miracles however. The Edinburgh Fringe is too vast to provide a qualitative assessment of the state of alternative theatre in Britain; but the sheer quantity, effort and enthusiasm of such theatre can only be a good sign. There were notable highlights and eminently forgettable moments in a frantic routine of virtually incessant productions. I spoke to no one, however, who regretted making the trip.



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# REIDing SHELF

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- ★ The investigation of new theatre spaces.

These major changes affecting the development of British theatre over the last century have been identified by Sally Beauman. And she claims that all these changes have been reflected, and some pioneered at Stratford. If she would add something about *design* to her list, I would be happy to agree with her. Because design is certainly a current strength which Stratford has helped to bring to our stages. But if the visuals of theatre do not find a place in her summary

postscript, Sally Beauman has not omitted this aspect from the main text of **THE ROYAL SHAKESPEARE COMPANY, A History of Ten Decades**. She is properly aware of design as an integral, even formative, element in production style. Why, she even talks about lighting in terms more advanced than the critic's traditional 'imaginative'!

This is a fat volume and it is a lovely read. Sally Beauman writes fluently and she has a splendid tale to tell of the precarious nature of theatrical success. Hit yesterday, flop tomorrow — both the food of gossip today. Reputations, especially director's reputations, susceptible to the merest ripples in tastes and attitudes . . . not just of audiences, but of critics, gossips, pundits, politicians, quangos and chairmen.

Chairmen feature prominently in this book and rightly so. Behind every great theatre stands a believer. Until quite recently that believer required personal money. Nowadays the believer requires an aptitude for the crafts of arts bureaucracy. The moment of change might well be signposted as the transformation of

Shakespeare Memorial Theatre into Royal Shakespeare Company. The RSC is now a national institution. That it was nursed to this point from an unpromising birth in 1879 is due to the Flower family who supplied chairmen with varying mixes of benevolence, autocracy and money. The fluctuations in their relationships with their artistic executives is possibly the most compelling thread running through the book.

We are reminded of the appalling rehearsal pressures that were a feature of theatre work not so long ago. We can trace developing fashions in production style. We who worry about theatre architecture are taken on a familiar journey. And I think that most of us would agree with Sally Beauman's final summing up in her book which appropriately ends on the eve of the Barbican era — *It had become the kind of company that many men and women in its history had envisaged, striven for, and in some cases sacrificed themselves to.*

Michael Patterson has written a book about West Berlin's *Schaubühne*. It is called **PETER STEIN Germany's leading theatre director**. This small matter of title illustrates an interesting paradox: a theatre organised on the basis of maximum worker participation in all decisions, particularly artistic ones — yet finding its success through the visionary leadership of its director. Or was the inability of the group to work successfully with any other director



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merely a manifestation of Stein's total integration into the ensemble?

Michael Patterson takes us through all Stein's major productions including his pre-Berlin period. The stagings are discussed and illustrated. The flavour of both the end and the means is well reconstructed with quotes from articles by critics, actors and, of course, Stein himself who Patterson was also able to interview in some depth. Stein appears to be freer than many of his contemporaries from the restrictions of a doctrinaire approach to production style. Certainly a book to be regarded as indispensable for anyone with an inquisitive interest in today's world theatre.

The working methods of the *Schaubühne* are ones that we can only marvel at and envy. Time does not necessarily bring rewards: much exciting theatre is born of the tensions inescapable from haste. But would it not be marvellous to be able to approach more productions in a spirit of research and experiment, with time available to try and discard? Time can only be bought and the time that the Berlin Senate buys for Stein's ensemble belongs to a world far removed from that basic survival dole which props up the British theatre. As Michael Patterson explains *The Schaubühne produces work of quality: in return the West Berlin Senate gives it generous subsidies because the theatre adds significantly to the prestige of West Berlin*. The average number of annual productions was four and the subsidy in 1980 was around the level of £2 million. The *Schaubühne's* relations with the Senate have not always been smooth but mutual pragmatism has produced a situation in which the art of theatre could be edged forwards.

As this is a technical magazine, it should be recorded that early in the development of the *Schaubühne*, the technicians ceased to take part in the collective discussions. The scale of the book does not allow more than a passing consideration of this point. However, in view of the possible contribution to our understanding of the relationship between the technicians and the rest of the creative team, it is to be hoped that someone has either researched this episode or will do so.

The original *Schaubühne am Halleschen Ufer* took its name from the rather run-down area where it was located in a hall some distance from the city's theatre and entertainment centre. This space was insufficiently flexible for many of Stein's productions which consequently were mounted in such venues as remote film studios rather than in his own theatre. Given this ensemble's probing approach to staging, it seems strange that they should have chosen to incorporate in their new home a degree of mechanical adaptability that has hitherto been found to inhibit the experimental organisation of theatre space in the way that Stein and his ensemble have excelled. Michael Patterson's book ends with the move.

And now a good detective yarn for all you theatre historians and theatre archaeologists, whether dedicated devotees or just dabblers – or like me a dedicated dabbler. In **THE GRAND THEATRE, LANCASTER: Two Centuries of Entertainment**, A. G. Betjemann marks the bicentenary of a survivor. This is a theatre which survives because it always moved with the times: it gave the audience what they wanted whether drama, music, movies or Victorian Enlightenment. And as the entertainment changed, the interior furnishings adapted to suit so that all that really remains of 1782 is the shell. Even the 1897 Matcham had burned out by 1908 to be replaced by Albert Winstanley.

I played a one-nighter in his Grand in the mid-'fifties: either 'Figaro' or 'Pasquale', I can't remember. But I do recall the joy of playing that night in a *real* theatre. A night of joy in a season of non-purpose halls. I am honest so I will also remember that my singers grumbled about draughts, dirt and decay. They would not do so now: Lancaster's amateur *Footlights* have refurbished the Grand so that it marches into its third century as safe as many, and safer than most, of the theatres listed in *Curtains!!!* Gazetteer.

I called this a detective story and that is what it is: the author demonstrates just how much of a theatre's past can be reconstructed by painstaking examination of deed boxes and newspaper files. Let's hope other theatres will feel encouraged to discover themselves.

**THE ROYAL SHAKESPEARE COMPANY.** A History of Ten Decades. Sally Beauman. Oxford University Press. £12.95 (UK).

**PETER STEIN** Germany's leading theatre director. Michael Patterson. Cambridge University Press. £17.50 (UK). £5.50 (Paperback) (UK).

**THE GRAND THEATRE, LANCASTER: Two Centuries of Entertainment.** A. G. Betjemann. Centre for North-West Regional Studies, University of Lancaster. £1.95. (Copies available from the author at Rivendall, Cannon Hill, Lancaster, LA1 5EF at this price which includes p & p)

## Let such teach others who themselves excel

The Theatre Department, Central School of Art and Design continues its policy of using theatre professionals on its permanent and part-time staff and in particular to invite directors, writers, designers, actors and technicians to work on projects with the students.

The programme of professional collaborations linking students, designers and outside companies continues to expand, as does involvement in the New Plays Project whose new writers, directors and designers are linked together to examine the visual potential of new playscripts. This project is under the direction of Pamela Howard and has the collaboration of several theatres interested in new writing.

Francis Reid has succeeded John Gunter as Head of the Theatre Department. John Gunter now joins his predecessor, Ralph Koltai, as a consultant to the school and so his expertise will continue to be available. Francis Reid was lighting designer for Glyndebourne Opera through the 1960s and subsequently designed the lighting for over 30 West End productions. He has taught at RADA for over 15 years, been visiting lecturer in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, America, Holland and Sweden, and is the author of books on Staging and Lighting Design. He was Administrator of the National Trust's Theatre Royal in Bury St. Edmunds from 1979 to 1981, a period that saw considerable audience development through the widening of the programme to include all types of mainstream and alternative theatre, both musical and dramatic.

The permanent staff of Tom Fairs, Peter Avery and Pamela Howard, continue to lead their respective years of the three-year B.A. Honours course and are joined this year by Sally Jacobs on her return from several years designing in America and teaching at New York University. Eileen O'Grady continues as the department's Administrative Secretary.

Following the retirement of Pegaret Anthony after 45 years of teaching, the *History of Costume* course will be directed by Janet Arnold with Ann Curtis, in conjunction with the Association of British Theatre Technicians. Charles Spencer directs a new *History of Theatre* course. A new theatre manager of the Jeannetta Cochrane Theatre will shortly be appointed to succeed Mick Orr who retires after managing the theatre since its opening.

A group of second-year students under the direction of Peter Avery are preparing a "Designers' Theatre" performance piece as part of the British entry to the student section of the Prague Quadrenniale International Theatre Design Exhibition in 1983.

Theatre design at Central continues to operate an open-house policy, welcoming members of the profession, education service and public to observe the links that are forged between the profession and its younger colleagues through the teaching of theatre design.

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# CHOOSING COLOUR

Having considered where to put the lights and which types to put, FRANCIS REID, continuing this CUE series on basic lighting design, discusses *adding colour*.

The words *adding colour* slipped automatically off my pen. I have used the phrase, and heard it used, on many stages. I use it, verbalised but unspoken, while working at my drawing board. As explained earlier in this series, when designing lighting I start with annotated crosses. These crosses become specific instruments. And then I 'add colour'. That is the phrase I say or think. And there is a logic: I am adding colour numbers to the graphics on the plan.

But the phrase can result in dangerous thinking. When we put a colour medium in front of a lamp, we are not adding. We are taking away. We are not adding the chosen colour, but taking away others. The formal label for what we colloquially call 'colours' or 'gels' is *colour filters*.

*Filtering out* is the thinking that should underlie our colour choice.

There is, of course, no need to use a colour. Some or all instruments may be left in that non-filtered state which is jargoned as *open white*. Indeed there are those who reject filters as something unclean. Something that impedes the search for that dramatic truth which can be revealed only under the penetrating clarity of pure white light. Whether they regard the unclean aspect to be due to adding colour or filtering it out, I have never really discovered. They may not have given the matter much thought, for this doctrinaire faith in white light is mainly received wisdom. Poor old Brecht usually gets the blame although, because he knew a thing or two about detergent advertising, his Berliner Ensemble got, and still get, their white light by cooling with carefully chosen gradations of blue.

They are not, please note, adding blue to make the light colder and whiter: they are using a blue filter to let all the cold through while holding back some of the warm. White light has its place. There are many occasions when unfiltered light is just the colour that we need. I merely wish to caution against an approach that ascribes supernatural powers to the penetrating qualities of white light as an aid to the seeker after dramatic truth.

Filtered light does not change the colour of flesh, costumes or scenery: it merely enhances the colour that is already there. The colour tones that respond on these surfaces are the ones whose colour has not been removed from the full spectrum of unfiltered light which includes all the colours of the rainbow. A pure *primary* filter passes only one colour, a heavy *saturated* filter passes all its own colour but also some others, while a delicate *tint* will pass all its

main colour plus a good deal of everything else. The available degree of saturation runs from the palest almost imperceptible tints through to primaries as pure and single coloured as the manufacturing process will allow.

The rule of thumb is fairly obvious: the paler the tints used, the more the possibility of the flesh, costume and scenery receiving the sort of light that will produce response. Saturated colour makes a bold statement by being selective in the response that it produces from the surfaces that it falls upon; whereas the tints stress one colour, but not at the expense of an overall response.

However, very few actors or objects on a stage receive light from only one source. Filtering single lights removes parts of their spectrum, but that spectrum gradually gets put together again, and moves towards white when the beams from several filtered lights overlap.

This technique is used extensively in drama lighting to tone atmospherically on a continuous scale from warm through neutral to cold. Two instruments are used, one warm and one cool from each direction to give a varying mix via their dimmers. For a play using the 'three lamp modified McCandless', method (see CUE 17), the colours would probably be chosen so that both were pale enough tints to remain naturalistic when used alone on flesh.

This is perhaps the place to mention that the original McCandless theory suggested that the light for one side of the face should be a different colour from that for the other. The motive was to increase the modelling of the face. However, if we choose to use colour for modelling, we then lose the use of it for atmosphere. A modification of the colour modelling principle is to use a slightly different warm tint from one side than from the other. (And slightly different cools from left and right). This is particularly useful when shortage of dimmers forces both left and right sides of the face to share a dimmer, making it impossible to enhance modelling by an intensity imbalance.

With the 'four lamps at 90 degrees' technique (again see CUE 17), the colouring tends to work on a different basis. The back light can make a strong heavily saturated statement so that it registers positively in the air haze and on the floor, but does not reach face, costume or set. The side light can be used with quite strong colour for controlling atmosphere, while the front light remains neutral for eyes and teeth visibility. This can be the neutrality of open

white or the neutrality of the pale lavenders which appear warm or cold according to the general ambience of the rest of the light.

'Double cover' is the jargon that we use for the technique of using two lights from the same angle focussed to the same stage area for a cool/warm mix. For a musical, particularly on the bodies rather than the faces, this frequently becomes a triple cover giving a wider palette, perhaps of pink, amber and blue.

Which areas need double or multiple cover? Which lamps get which colour? What is the design process? Well, I work by self-questioning. Something like this . . .

*What is the role of colour in this production's style?*

Is colour to be used? If so, is it emotional? and/or sunshine/moonshine? or just pretty?

*Is the colour static or fluid?*

Which areas need fluidity cues? Double or multiple cover? From which angles is fluidity required?

*How saturated?*

Are we into heavy colour? or tints? or both?

*Which colours?*

Having decided on degree of saturation and cover, the final decision depends on finding actual colours that are sympathetic to the design. Are the blues in the sets and costumes reddish or greenish? Are the warm tones tending to pinks or golds? In doubt? Shine a filtered light on the model or costume fabric. Only one thing is for sure: if materials are textured and shot with colours, everything becomes easier and the palette more responsive.

*Which colour range?*

Well, as in the case of spotlights, there is not going to be any attempt at a best-buy list. And anyway some chaps sell other chaps' manufactures. Which is fine. Unfortunately they tend to sell it under a different colour number. Which irritates me more than somewhat. However, it would be insincere of me to deny that over the years I have been using an increasing proportion of Rosco. It started with my need for a wider range of pale lemons and lavenders, then developed because I discovered that this range seemed to have more clarity. And every colour user needs all available help in achieving clarity. It is frighteningly easy to mix and get mud!

Time was when theatre lighting in the British Isles, be it sale or hire, was concentrated on London and a handful of provincial cities. A very few manufacturers catered between them for all demands; indeed they also created these same demands when expedient. Purely coincidentally with the emergence of kitchen-sink drama came the first of the independent hire fit-up merchants, allied with production or design facilities. Equipment was amazingly bulky by today's standards, but the railway had willing wheels and a packing case containing 849 cut and individually tissue-layered colours or a single 5 kw projector bulb could be guaranteed to arrive by the next down train.

Dr. Beeching and his axe were symbols of a change in Britain's social habits; fewer old pro's took fewer trains to Crewe on a Sunday as the touring circuits contracted. At the same time BR became more choosy about its cargos — the scenery wagon was no longer gratis with the cast's tickets. Goods took longer from London to NOT London, were more expensive to shift and less lovingly handled en route. Also, from the 60s, there was the increasing reluctance of anyone not self employed to work on a Saturday, which was the only day when some provincials could make the trip to the Metropolis. It became harder for one emporium to stock everything as the choice grew.

The advent of electronic dimming led to the setting up of a number of specialist control makers, some to supply the newly lucrative pop industry. Suddenly, light became much more mobile, easier to tour, and lighting designers began to use an awful lot of it. The new arts centres which replaced the old touring theatres were not necessarily in city centres; many converted warehouses, mills, schools and churches in market towns are now the drama H.Q. for a large district where civic halls, amateur and school drama are all finding their own audiences.

These changes, social, economic and technical, coincided with a wide appreciation of the possibilities of using light as a designer's discipline. This has resulted in a very large number of potential hirers no longer content "*to make do with what we've got*", yet unwilling to go to London for a small order. True to our reputation as a nation of shopkeepers, we have seen, over the last decade, a large number of country-based hire and sale shops, dedicated to light. Their proprietors are mostly people who have spent some years of long evenings

## Spreading sweetness and light

rigging, colouring, focussing, operating and designing lighting so that their advice is well worth the asking. Many of them know their local theatres and halls from grid to sub-stage and can save the unwary many an hour of plug changing, cable-stretching, or fuse-searching. With the knowledge of the caddie who has played the course, they can increase the enjoyment of the round immeasurably, maybe even leaving time for the 19th hole prior to curtain up.

For anyone with the interest, time and petrol money, a grand tour of the hire companies listed in the following pages would be a fascinating experience. From Exeter to Edinburgh via Cardiff and Attleborough is a fair step, particularly when breaking journey in the university towns and the Pennines. The traveller would be likely to discover lighting outposts in farmhouses, cul-de-sacs and garages, as well as behind the more conventional shop-fronts. A corner of a former bottling factory and a void normally dedicated to heating and ventilation are two of the more unusual but neatly organised storage areas to be found. Whatever the premises — London palatial or provincial rustic — space will usually be at a premium for accommodating the growing volume of equipment now available. One store, soon to be enlarged, currently works on the principle that, as none of the workforce is over 5 ft 9½ ins in their safari boots, overhead storage starts at 6 ft wherever possible, presumably allowing 2½ ins for skipping over the odd floor-bound but unruly cable.

The regular user of the CUE Lighting Directory will notice a number of new names again this year — the map is filling up and most counties are now represented, although we would suggest that for those of a pioneering spirit, Wales and certain Northern reaches are the places to consider setting up shop. Study of hire price lists will reveal that rates generally are very reasonable, perhaps due to the increasing competition in most areas. To show how lucky we are with the hire rates in Britain, we can mention the case where a grand outdoor ball and banquet was arranged for a French chateau in some 100 acres, all of which needed lighting. An English firm had the temerity to quote for the job (from north of London) and their price was about half that of the cheapest French company. The French Milord was so impressed that he let the English quote for the marquees and covered ways, which again were far cheaper — from Yorkshire!

We have dwelt at length on the highly desirable expansion of local hire companies but would stress that there are times when the local and the larger London-based firms can work well together. One annual instance of this appears to be the Edinburgh Festival where "*if it works, hire it*" is the cry from Kent to Killikrankie. We can also relate the happenings in a seaside theatre this summer. The House Board was approaching the age of retirement, still fine for the job but giving indications of the onset of electronic Parkinsons. The Chief Electrician warned the management who did nothing until one night . . . The local company was summoned to provide what dimming it could at 4-hours notice (including loading and travel) before the first show — two full houses were in prospect. Meanwhile a London/National company was engaged to provide the complete replacement control, delivered and installed in time for the next day's show. Both hire firms played their part — the local hatchback was just about to leave after two shows and a get-out when the London box-van appeared for the night shift.

Here then is the 1982 CUE Lighting Directory. Read it, from end to end, regardless of where you live, because you never know . . . County boundaries are in most cases purely nominal and companies will often stray further from their local haunts than is indicated. May we suggest that you keep the directory handy for use throughout the year; we hope it brings our readers and advertisers together, to the benefit of all, especially the audiences.

# CUE

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

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

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

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

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*From Mr. Derek Sugden*

# Letters to the Editor

*From Mr. George Newell*

Dear Sir

So, we have no single text book devoted to Theatre Acoustics to guide the designer? (Cue, No. 18). Do we need another one?

I have read Derek Sugden's article several times with some slight sense of irritation. The introductory paragraphs on the 19th-century scientists are well presented but how much they will interest those without some knowledge of physics, is a moot point. The rest of the article, when unravelled and read in the context of the bibliography and the activities of the Institute of Acoustics (for me, a hitherto unknown Society), surely indicates that there is now a lot of literature and advice available. Apart from Professor Parkin's work and the author's condemnation of the modern craze for sound reinforcement systems; I feel that the later paragraphs are trite and unworthy.

I am aware of Professor Parkin's and his colleague's work on the Festival Hall. In the early days of the scheme the BRS set up a mobile laboratory in the vicinity of the site to record and later analyse the noises associated with the area. I know of no other recent building which has been so thoroughly and specifically designed for its

purpose and yet, when completed, the acoustics were deficient, as is evident from the subsequent corrections Professor Parkin had to make.

But, to return to the supposed reason for this article, I am astonished that the author makes no mention of what, to architects, is still the standard work, namely - *Planning for Good Acoustics*, by Hope Bagenal ARIBA. and Dr. Alex Wood, D. Sc., M.A. (Lecturers, respectively, in Acoustics at the Architectural Association School, and Experimental Physics at the University of Cambridge). An outstanding partnership between an architect and sensitive musician; and a physicist to produce a comprehensive treatise.

All architects should have a working knowledge of this rewarding and fascinating subject. The practical application of Sabine's formulae and calculations are not particularly difficult: in my early years I used them for several buildings. But, we live in an electronic age and architects must not allow themselves to be overawed by science. The essentials of the theory of sound will not change nor the sensitivity of the human ear.

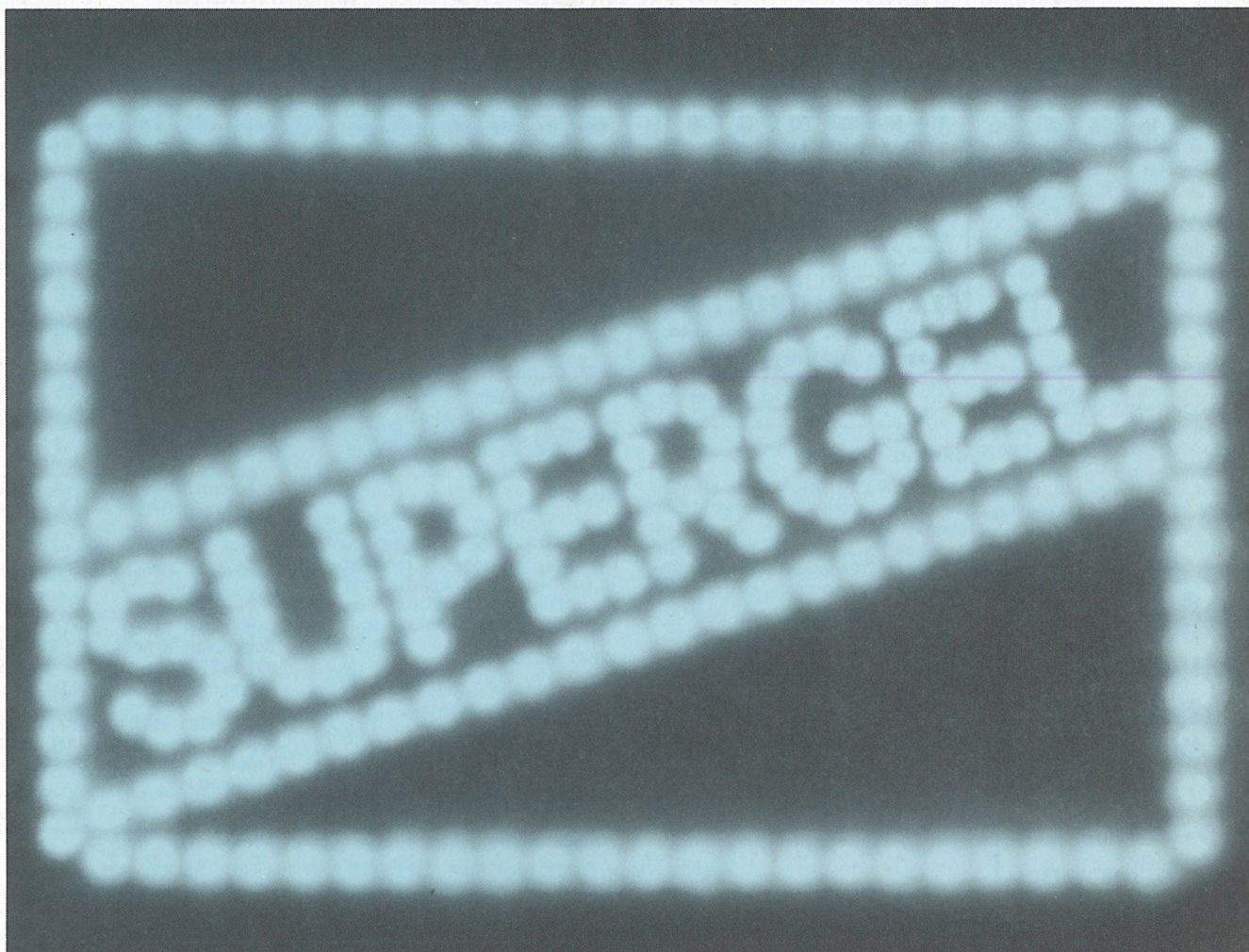
George Newell  
South Mead  
Walton Lane  
Bosham Chichester  
Sussex PO18 8QF

Sir,

I can understand that Mr. George Newell read my article "with some slight sense of irritation" and also found it difficult to unravel. It is a difficult subject to cover in a short article and could never have the precision of a subject such as structural analysis. I made an attempt to limit my references to theatre acoustics which is why I did not include more general publications such as *Planning for Good Acoustics* by Bagenal & Wood - a book of which I am very much aware but now unfortunately out of print. My colleague in Arup Acoustics, Professor Peter Parkin, probably had a closer association with Hope Bagenal than any other acoustician practising today. There are, of course, many other important books on architectural acoustics but if Mr. Newell looks closely at the references he will see that apart from Vitruvius, Helmholtz, Rayleigh and Sabine, all the other references were papers or books concerned with theatre acoustics.

Although the paper could never begin to be a handbook or guide for acoustic design and analysis of theatres my last few paragraphs, which follow from the reference to Sabines theatre acoustics paper, were - although expressed in perhaps a somewhat lighthearted style - meant to be wholly serious. I am sorry that Mr. Newell found them trite and unworthy - they were meant to be serious.

Derek Sugden  
7 Soho Square  
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# PRODUCT NEWS

## Towards standardising the presentation of performance data

When the user turns to manufacturer's published data to discover just what a particular lighting instrument will do, he finds the information on beams and intensities presented in all sorts of different ways. What would be the most useful standard way to present performance data (to the user, not the consultant)? George Gill, the doyen of Miami entertainment lighting, is conducting a survey on behalf of TTFL (Theatre, TV and Film Lighting Committee of the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America), SMPTE (Society of Motion Picture and TV Engineers), USITT (U.S. Institute for Theatre Technology). He has identified eight standard methods currently in use based on Candlepower Distribution, Beam Spread, Throw distance, Performance tables, selector tables etc. CUE readers who would like to complete a questionnaire for this survey, please send us a SAE for examples of the methods and questionnaire sheet.

## Harrogate Business

How-to-get business (if you'll excuse the pun) is what Entertainment '82 is all about. The successful recipe as last year would seem to be four major conference sessions, a liberal entertainment programme and, the meat in the middle, a polytypic exhibition where management, promoters, agents and equipment suppliers will meet in prosperous accord. Entertainment '82 is a three-day event from Tuesday, November 30 to Thursday, December 2. More information from the organiser, John Offord, PO Box 64, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN21 3LW.

## Egyptian contracts for Rank Strand

Rank Strand have signed a £208,000 contract with Mr. Ahmed Zaki, Egyptian Under Secretary of State for Culture (Drama Sector) for the supply of 6 Galaxy Memory Lighting Control Systems, Permus Dimmer Racks plus Environ House Lighting Dimming Systems for installation in theatres in Cairo and Alexandria.

Another recent contract worth £362,000 was signed with Mr. Farouk Ali, Chairman of Broadcast Engineering Sector, for the supply of 3 Outside Broadcast Vehicles for Egyptian T.V.

## Colortran for Saudi Arabia

Forward Technology Industries plc announces that its recently acquired U.S. subsidiary, Colortran Inc., of Burbank, California, has been awarded a £500,000

order for the supply of equipment for the theatre and television facilities of the King Saud University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

The company will act as subcontractor to Sadelmi Cogeri S.P.A. (formerly General Electric of Italy) and supply the lighting and electronic control equipment for the auditorium, television studios and still photographic studio of the University. Additionally, Colortran will supply architectural dimming and control equipment for all facilities.

## Photokina unveiling for Multiset and Auto Preset

Once a mainly photographic event Photokina has come to assume a growing importance in the Entertainment industry, embracing as it now does all the audio-visual, television, video, sound and lighting techniques. CCT were there sharing a stand with Dynamic Technology whose high technology transmitter and machine control systems were on show. CCT's exhibits included a first showing of Multiset and Auto Preset. The recently launched Staka Pak and Leverset were to be seen along with CCT's high performance luminaires.

## Battery operated Microphone preamplifier



Originally designed for London Weekend Television, these units have been produced to fill the need for a single channel low noise, battery powered mic preamp. The unit is housed in a rugged metal case and uses 4 x PP3 batteries. Both input and output are transformer balanced, and gain is 20 dB to 70 dB in 10 dB switchable steps. Battery voltage can be checked on external test points, and phantom power pass switch is fitted. Current consumption is very low, 25 hours use should be obtained before battery changes. The unit is ideal for effects mics, where gain is required before feeding a long line, or for single mic applications where mixing facilities are not required. More information from Jane Walden, Canford Audio, Stargate Works, Ryton, Tyne and Wear NE40 3EX.

## ABTT Trade Show '82 and Seminar

The Association of British Theatre Technicians is presenting its fifth annual exhibition of theatre equipment, services and supplies at The Round House, Chalk Farm Road, London NW1, from 20-23 October 1982.

This exhibition is unique in displaying the equipment, crafts and materials which provide the technical back-up to theatrical performances and in using a theatre venue for this purpose.

Lighting equipment and accessories; sound and communications equipment; scenic paints and materials; special effects; props; stage machinery and ironmongery; stage flooring; make-up; transport services; projection; fabrics. For anyone involved in the technical, management or design side of the entertainment business, this is where a cross-section of products can be found, including the very latest on the market. Several new products will be launched at Trade Show '82.

Admission is free by invitation from the ABBT and Exhibitors.

On Thursday 21 October a Seminar is being arranged on "Energy Conservation and the Theatre". This will take place in the Art Gallery at The Round House and will be chaired by Richard G. Brett, Managing Director, Theatre Projects Consultants Ltd. The ever-growing energy bill is becoming a permanent headache for most theatres but modern building design and practice, equipment design and use, and good energy management may do much to curb these costs. These aspects of the problem will be explored by the speakers: Peter Warburton, Building Services Engineer, Arup Associates; Ian Maclean, Manager, Project Co-ordination Department, Thorn Lighting Ltd; and Douglas Isham, Chief Engineer, National Theatre.

Seminar Fee: £25.00 (£15.00 to ABBT members)

Full details of Trade Show 82 and the Seminar are available from: ABBT, 4 Great Pulteney Street, London W1R 3DF  
Tel: 01-434 3901

## PROJECTING WITH PAINT

Graeme Murphy who choreographed *Hate* provided what should have been an unusual ending, but due to lack of time/planning/experiment/or what you will, and the over enthusiasm of the dancers on the dress rehearsal, reduced what should have been a great effect to that of a mediocre one. The whole idea was simple, drop in a clear screen between the dancers and the audience, arm the dancers with coloured paint bombs, on cue throw the bombs at the screen, where they burst to form coloured patterns on the screen, great!

First, for the screen, clear plastic you say, good! On enquiry the only plastic on the approved list of the Department of Services was "Trilexan", a poly carbonite which is expensive and comes in rolls some 2m wide, this would require 6 widths to make a full screen. Unfortunately, on the dress rehearsal the dancers overdid it, the paint was too thin, there was no sealer between the plastic sheets and some bombs managed to get through and land in the pit. On stage, the false proscenium, legs and borders caught it. In other words it was a multi-coloured mess and like all things that go astray, it was followed by over-reaction, too few bombs and the paint too thick. The joints were sealed but having only 5 performances with this particular effect, it was not fully realised.

Report by Keith Yates of Sydney Dance Company's *Hate* premiered at Sydney Opera House (from AATT NEWS)

# Between Cues

The thoughts of  
Walter Plinge

## A VERY MAGIC FLUTE

Francis Reid may have prepared for Bayreuth by submersion in the scores and recordings of Wagner. But Walter Plinge submitted to a much tougher regime prior to Salzburg: I denied myself the Magic Flute (and Zaubерflöte and Flûte Enchantée) for three whole months. Too familiar with the Mozart operas to be able ever again to approach them with an innocent ear, at least I could try for a clean ear. Whether this contributed to my response I have no means of knowing. But it was the most magical Flute that I have ever experienced. I became emotionally involved with a degree of innocence that I thought no longer possible. My eyes were beset by tears of alternative grief and joy. Never ever were the last orchestral bars of Pamina's 'Ach Ich Fuhls' aria so searingly tragic both musically and visually, with Pamina's and Tamino's hands moving towards contact but falling away exactly as the music changed from forte to piano. With the Vienna Philharmonic in the pit, with Schreier and Cotrubas leading the stage, this was an evening when many of the familiar musical phrases were exquisitely moulded. The production, directed and designed by Jean-Pierre Ponnelle was lovely to behold and full of solutions whose elegance and wit made one's tear ducts respond with joy.

The opera was staged in the *Felsenreitschule* whose tiers of galleries hewn from the rock allowed the serpent to zig zag from topmost level to stage as a snake of truly menacing length. This old open-air riding school, after what I understand was a rather primitive adaptation in the 1920s, has been fully transformed into a theatre. The limit of the auditorium ceiling is at just the right position for a lighting bridge. The stage ceiling retracts on motors at the interval to reveal the heavens. The stage width is considerable, even incredible: I do not have the measurements and will not try a guess. But such a wide end stage without any proscenium zone whatsoever brings a large audience into good contact: there can be intimacy with the actors without spoiling the grandeur of the setting. As a repertoire opera house it would be disaster but as a festival stage it is magnificent. But then most good festival theatres are unorthodox specials.

For this production the stage was split into irregular levels, grassed, littered with archaeological fragments of significance to an Egyptologist, and bearing two very lightable trees. There were elevators to bring people and objects from the nether regions and return them thence. Objects like the three temples which grew from amidst the stone-strewn landscape. Or a little stage complete with Salzburg painted

backdrop for Papageno's out-front arias. And the lightning on that rock face! I have never been so impressed by stage lightning. Or when it was transformed into a glittering starry sky for the Queen of the Night. Or galleries for fire or water or triumphant trumpeting sun.



Salzburg *Felsenreitschule* yesterday . . . and today



I wandered the windy winding streets of Salzburg in a daze for over an hour before I could adjust to the ordinary mundane things in life like having supper. The next morning I visited the legendary 'Magic Flute Summer House' where Mozart composed the opera. I will not try to find words.

## PIRATE SOUND

I think I can swear that the Drury Lane *Pirates* has just about the best electronically processed sound that I have ever heard in a theatre. None of the loudspeaking devices appeared to be pointing directly at me. Being a suspicious cynic, I found myself wondering if I was sitting in what a sound enthusiast would classify as a dead spot. For anyone wishing to hear a clear but not at all loud sound which actually appears to be coming from the singers I can vouch for W39 in the stalls. This seat has an acceptable sightline to the stage but not to the royal box. So I cannot record what the Queen Mother was wearing for her birthday treat. But I am sure that, while the *Pirates* may sometimes give as good a performance, they never give a better.

Mrs Plinge is relatively immune to the pressures of media marketing. We share some irritation, and some giggles, at the notion that a serene family life is dependent upon her choosing the right detergent to ensure my appropriate incredulity at the softness and whiteness of the weekly wash. The landscape of the Dalmatian coast is virtually free from messages in support of the buying decision. Definitely not a land given to intensive contemplation of marketing strategy. But, as Mrs Plinge observed, when marketing is an instinct rather than a job title it can be rather touchingly humane. We were watching a quayside pastel artist producing portraits of how his subjects liked to think of themselves. The reality might have hurt. And sales would have slumped.

## TOMORROW HUMOUR

I went to the *Footlights*, the Cambridge ones, in the hope of discovering where humour is heading. Actually, to be mad-deningly simplistic, recent strengths in humour seem to have been at Oxford, leaving Cambridge to produce the humorists. Well, for humorists, it is girl's year at Cambridge. As to current *Footlight* humour, it would seem that targets are unfashionable and that blackouts are an alternative to tags rather than a reinforcement of tags. Now a gag can be funny without a target and without a tag, so that did not worry me. What did worry me was that I did not feel old.

## ANNIE'S BAND

Why does Hollywood bring such a leaden approach to filming Broadway musicals? Why did *Annie* lose that oh-so-cinematic number *N.Y.C.*? And why oh why did they replace Philip J. Lang's brilliant orchestrations with routinely competent sludge scoring?

## KISSING ART

It is not often that I read graffiti. I am too irritated by the mess aspect and, if it catches my eye willy nilly, I seldom find the statements profound, funny or even interesting. On the rare occasions that a graffitum stirs me to ponder, then I ponder publicly upon this page. The aerosol message on a bit of spare wall near Hannover's *Staatscahspiel im Ballhof* was surprising. For one thing it was in German, not a nation addicted to untidy pastimes. And for another it was English. The message read *Support the Arts, Kiss a Musician*. None of the ladies present appeared to belong to the sorority of those who bow, blow, pluck or percuss, so I was unable to offer a gesture of support. But who wrote it? Some eager sponsor, frustrated in a country which funds the arts on a scale that makes the rest of the world look like cultural misers? Or was it just a desperate plea from a band of wind players, frustrated because they cannot take the kissing initiative lest it might spoil their *embouchures*?