



QUE

Technical Theatre Review

January/February 1983 £1.75



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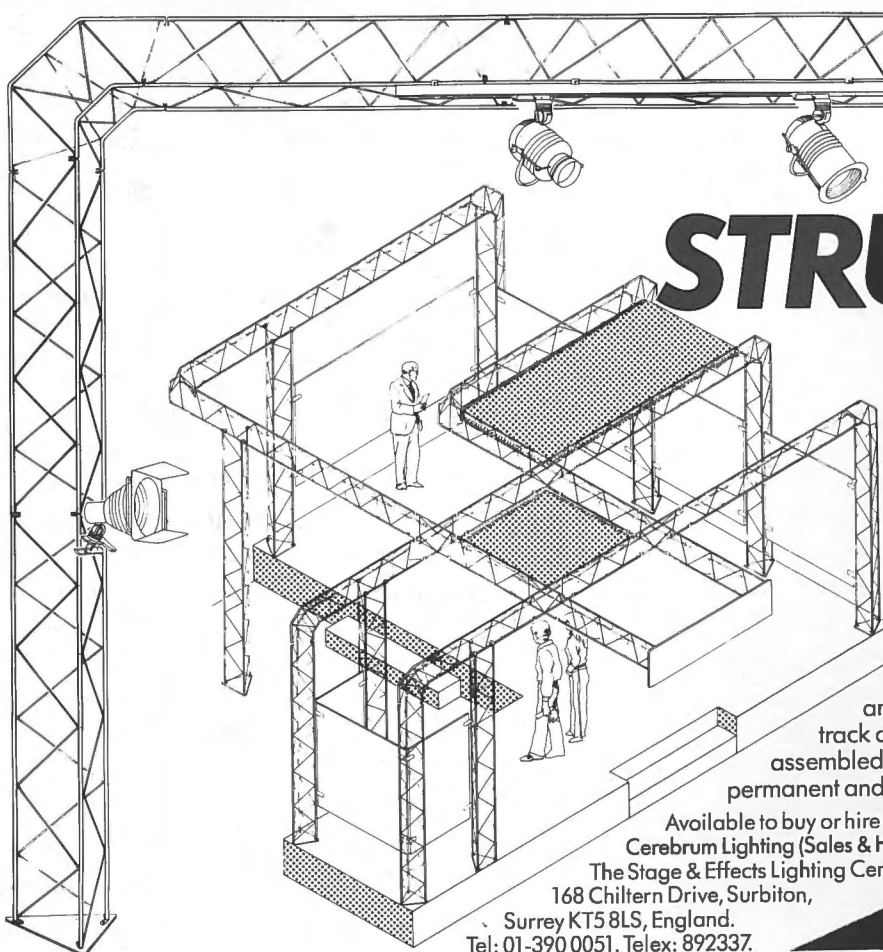
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Cover picture: Orestes mask for *The Oresteia* by Aeschylus. Design by Jocelyn Herbert for the National Theatre 1981 production and one of the items to be seen at an Exhibition of the work of over 100 British Theatre Designers being held at the Round House, London from 24th February to 19th March.
See page 4.

CUE

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Video or Television?

Commentators, having gotten their reviews of the past year out of the way, habitually cast around for a punditorial theme for those grey January dog watches when it is preferable not to have to sally forth beyond the saloon bar on missions of a researching nature. This year they were handed a plum on a plate in the shape of the christmas TV audience ratings. It seems that, while many of us millions continued to watch, there were a few millions more than usual who exercised what many market euphemists prefer to refer to as 'the negative option'. Reactions have varied from predictions of the end of an era to simple rehashes of stock phraseology. One of these phrases is 'too many repeats' although more selective viewers have often felt that perhaps there were not enough repeats. But repeats, whether more or less, have become a non-topic with the development of home video recording.

Now theatre has considerably more experience than television in the matter of audience goodbyes. So we feel that we have some excuse for producing unresearched advice based on mere instincts developed through centuries of survival. And so we venture to suggest that the television channel programmers remember that their ace card is actuality — *seeing it as it happens*.

And we ask them to consider whether their programmes are not just too too smooth, too too technically perfect. It is, after all, but a very small step from smooth to bland. Why do they not try more *rough television*? Surely they have noticed how much theatre has been rejuvenated by its *fringe* in the last decade. We suggest that one of the root problems of television was aired at the *Showlight 81* conference (in television, as in theatre, it is interesting to note how many of the fundamentals are first voiced by the lighting men) — *too much post-production*. There is an interesting parallel in the music industry: recordings may be edited for technical perfection, but it is often the wrong note or momentarily defective ensemble that creates the tension to make a live performance live.

Let's have more live television and let it live more dangerously.

Cue is an independent magazine published bi-monthly by Twynam Publishing Ltd.

Available on subscription
UK £10.50 per annum (6 issues)
Europe and Overseas £13.00

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Designers take the Stage at the Round House

What distinguishes the theatre designer from the artist who has taken up theatre as his subject is that whereas one is producing drawn and painted documentation of events and scenes already realised in performance, it is the designer who will have originated from script and score the stage pictures which will provide the effective environment for the actor and the director culminating in the final picture which the public will see in the theatre.

In this sense it is an applied art, providing the stimulus that enables the scene builders, directors and actors to achieve the right dramatic expression. Quite often these working drawings are themselves works of art and it is only to be regretted that in the past so few have seen the light of day outside the theatre.

A second major exhibit of Contemporary British Theatre Design is therefore a specially welcome event both for theatre workers and theatre goers. The exhibit is being held at the Round House, London NW1 from 24th February to 19th March.

The decision this time to produce an illustrated record of a selection of this

responsible and imaginative work is also a very happy one, especially for those unable to visit the exhibition.

In his foreword to the book, John Bury gives us this characteristically modest prologue to the work of his fellow designers. "Again we take the opportunity to lay before you the raw material of our art. It is for the theatre in performance that we design - these models, drawings, plans and photographs are but the means to that end. However, in themselves, they are also an enduring record of the labours, largely unsung, of the theatre designer. All of the work exhibited belongs to the last four years and has been selected personally by the designer involved. In this way we hope you will enjoy the wide spectrum of talent now at work in our theatre."

More than 100 art reproductions of models of set designs, photographs of set designs in performance and costumes, several in full colour, comprise the contents of this magnificent 64-page volume. Copies may be obtained at the exhibition, from the Society of British Theatre Designers or from CUE, price £4 including postage.



Joe Vanek
Terra Nova by Ted Tally,
Watford Palace Theatre, 1982



John Bury
Designs for *Tree people*,
A Midsummer Night's Dream by Benjamin Britten
Directed by Peter Hall
Glyndebourne Festival Opera, 1981

Alison Chitty
Julius Caesar by William Shakespeare
Riverside Studios, 1978



IMAGES IN RETROSPECT

Francis Reid visits IMAGES OF SHOW BUSINESS at the V & A and ROYAL OPERA HOUSE RETROSPECTIVE 1732–1982 at the R.A.

'Remind me to remind you,
we said we'd never look back.'

sang the Salad Days audio clip as I entered the current Theatre Museum exhibition at the V & A (running until April 17, free). Still as good advice for the young as it was when I was a lad. And Salad Days was indeed running when I left Edinburgh on a one-way bus ticket, fifty pounds in the post office, with screwdriver and pliers, plus sticks of Leichner five and nine and a lake liner, in order to commence reforming the theatre from my power base as a £4 a week rep a.s.m. I did not of course reform the theatre, but I set out in the right spirit – and I believe the only spirit for anyone contemplating a life in the theatre which, with some areas such as the church and, hopefully, politics and social work, is still a calling rather than a job. So, young 'uns, learn your history but cast it aside in a blaze of reforming zeal and you will earn the right to wallow in it during some of your later primes – one of the nicer discoveries of living is that life consists of an unfolding series of new primes.

The Theatre Museum exhibition is titled **IMAGES OF SHOW BUSINESS**. *Images* is a good word for the three dimensional items or two dimensional representations of them that remain after a performance. Performance is an art with many more than three dimensions: my own fourth, fifth and sixth dimensions are all concerned with time. The passing time that gives fluidity to a moving object, the real time that is the once only unrepeatable, unrecordable nature of the performer/audience relationship, and the elapsed time that requires us to consider any performance in its historical

context. Film and video techniques may allow us to record a small measure of fluidity but they cannot capture a really significant impression of audience responses and attitudes. Although one must concede just how helpful it would be to have even one scratchy fragment of video of a routine Garrick evening at Drury Lane!

The performances are dead – long live their images. Regular readers of this magazine will be aware that I favour juxtaposition of a mass of related images. They will have guessed that my favourite permanent display is in Copenhagen, and that in Amsterdam I have found the consistently finest series of temporary thematic exhibitions. Both institutions believe in that old adage of the whole being more than the sum of the parts, and so they pile up the images almost to the point of chiaroscuro. And Copenhagen has the advantage (almost the indispensable advantage) of being located in a theatre.

Our own Theatre Museum is undergoing

a somewhat extended period of gestation within the V & A whose acknowledged excellence lies in the display of **SIGNIFICANT IMAGES**. It is rumoured that this style will continue when the Theatre Museum opens a permanent display from its collections in its projected theatreland home in a Covent Garden basement. Certainly there are likely to be space restrictions but it was interesting to see just how much the Ephemera Society were able to achieve by juxtaposition of multiple images of varying significance using the small Barbican space allocated to their Christmas Exhibition.

The autumn number of **SIGHTLINE** carries a leader welcoming the reprieve of the Theatre Museum (anonymous, but with enough internal evidence to authenticate it as pure Bentham). I commend the last paragraph for particularly serious consideration (the italics are mine) . . .

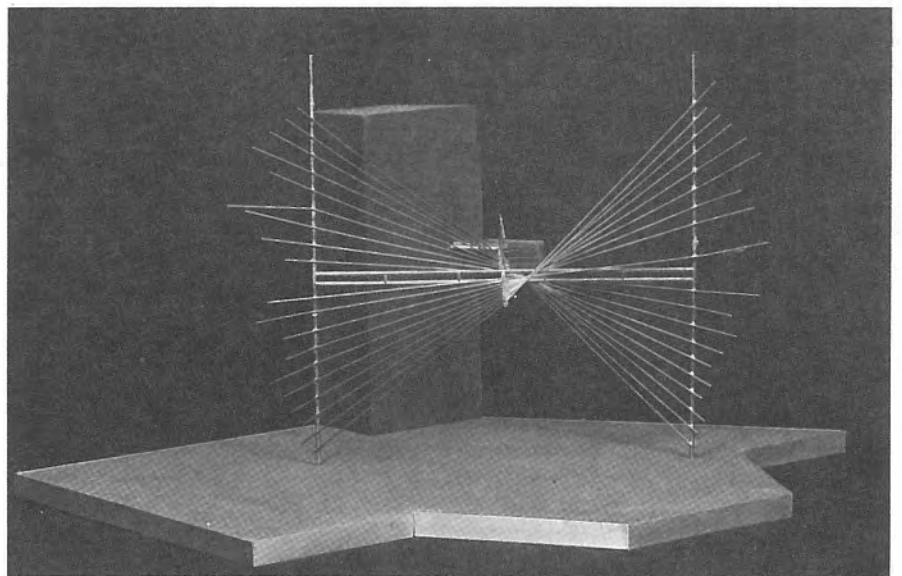
Theatre, like religion or any other en-



Philip James de Louthembourg. Model of quay and beach setting 1771–1785.



Louis Gunnis. 'The OP Side of the Empire', 1895.



Roger Butlin. Model for set for 'Medea'.

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thusiasm, is for those who take it seriously enough to get fun out of it – as performer, technician, playgoer and the like – and the museum is for them. It must not be thought of as yet another sideshow for that precious prestige piazza in Covent Garden and if there do turn out to be queues day after day outside; then in our view it will have failed.

But enough! The point is made! Not another word from me on the importance of the juxtaposition of multiple insignificant images! Well, at least not until I review the opening of the Theatre Museum in Covent Garden.

Meanwhile I will just enjoy the selective significant images on view at the V & A. Let me firstly rejoice that this exhibition is not bogged down in drama. If an art or craft involves an actor and an audience, it is to be found in this exhibition – if there are sins of omission, I did not detect them either at the exhibition or in the catalogue.

And let me commend that catalogue, **IMAGES OF SHOW BUSINESS** published as a self-sufficient book by Methuen. I shall declare an interest here. The editor is James Fowler, Assistant Keeper of the Theatre Museum, a job for which I was shortlisted. Well Fowler got the job and Reid did not – and I have to tell you that the catalogue benefits enormously from this decision by Dr Strong, Mr Schouvaloff and the Civil Service Commissioners. For Fowler is a scholar whereas Reid is rather akin to a tatty exhibit (not significant enough an object to be displayed at the V & A, but perhaps worthy of sharing a crowded perch in Copenhagen). I jest. This catalogue really is good stuff and by this token, Fowler is a good man to have assisting the Keeper.

The catalogue, like the exhibition, is arranged in logical sections:

- Performers and Performances.
- Production Processes.
- Programmes, Posters and Publicity.
- Performance Places.

The performers are all stars, most of them with a bankable reputation gained in London or the international circuit. But I must not start looking for Frank H. Fortescue, Moody-Manners or Harry Gordon: it might lead me to a discourse on the nature of significance. Rather, I will rejoice in such photographic goodies as Sarah Bernhardt as Cleopatra, Ellen Terry as Juliet, Mr & Mrs Charles Kean in *Much Ado*, the Kaufmann Cycling Beauties, and Fred Astaire dancing 'Night and Day' with Claire Luce in an age when a Divorcee could still be billed as Gay. And lovely drawings of Grisi and Lablache in *I Puritani*, Mrs Siddons, Taglioni, Isadora Duncan, and Andrew Ducrow's equestrian balletics against a candelabra'd proscenium door. I acknowledge the significance of Mick Jagger's lips and choppers, but they afford me little pleasure as an object for contemplation.

The architectural section (performance places) is a bit thin but there are some nice glimpses of the backstage process. The Illustrated London News is always a good source whether it be Joseph Harker at his

paint frame or panto propmakers at the Lane – and there is an opportunity to drool over designs by Grieve, de Louthenbourg, and Bakst. Or be surprised by an early Piper. There is an E. G. Craig Hamlet which was ahead of the technology of 1912 and probably still could not be achieved precisely as Craig intended – well not in a way that would also satisfy the director, actors, critics and audience.

A goodly selection of posters, programmes and tickets is offered. When and in what circumstances did the Theatre Royal York offer a Gallery Complimentary? With the roll number of 3001 it was presumably not an occasional occurrence. And my heart warms to the Sadler's Wells marketing officer who offered a shilling gallery ticket endorsed with 'This ticket with sixpence will entitle the bearer to a Pint of Wine or Punch'. But it adds 'for this night only': bet you it was a show no one wanted to see – not even with a concession!

The general ambience of the exhibition is helped enormously by a good tape montage mixed from significant sounds, both speech and music.

Special commendation also to the Theatre Museum for making an increasing number of their nicest items available on postcard.



The **ROYAL OPERA HOUSE RETROSPECTIVE 1732-1982** at the Royal Academy went backwards through the 250 years of the three theatres on the Covent Garden site. And it literally went backwards in time from entering the first room which was devoted to opera and ballet in recent years. I am not at all clear whether this backwards progress was dictated by the geography of the rooms or whether it was intended to build a mounting sense of climax as one approached the older and



William Dawes. 'The Downfall of Shakespeare on a modern stage'.



J. Gleadah. 'Covent Garden c. 1813-1819'.

possibly, though not necessarily, more interesting or exciting items. If I know my Iain Mackintosh (co-producer of the feast with Geoffrey Ashton) some very cogent reason will be conveyed to me in due course. Perhaps involving a proper interpretation of the word *retrospective* or perhaps stressing a need to emphasise that this was not the sort of historical survey that one might expect to find in a theatre museum.

For, as befits the Royal Academy, this was an exhibition of fine art that had been inspired by the Covent Garden theatres, their performances and their performers.

The exhibition centred around paintings of the performers of earlier centuries. Paint has, temporarily one feels and hopes, been

overtaken by photography although there is a splendid Hockney of Sir David Webster, the pragmatist who U-turned from national opera and so ensured that London now has both national opera (at the Coliseum) and international (in Covent Garden) whereas there was a moment in the post war cultural revolution when it looked as if we might have a Covent Garden that would miss both targets.

The joys of an event such as this is to meet up with some of the more inaccessible paintings that are known only from book illustrations – in my case, a first meeting after a long acquaintance with Philip Mercier's Handel. Or to meet some that one does not know at all: the gentlemen of the Garrick Club are said to

rejoice in a menu of genuine nursery fare but I do hope that they occasionally find time to look up from the rice pudding to savour their splendid collection of the work of Gainsborough Dupont. Hogarth and Zoffany, Gainsborough and Reynolds were all on view: all good publicity pics, perhaps telling us more about the actors' personalities than their performances – but each and everyone alone worth the visit.

I stood for a long time in front of William Dawes *The Downfall of Shakespeare on the Modern Stage*, showing the sort of 'improvements' that are long discredited but for which I now occasionally hanker after years of authenticity. Perhaps we should sometimes play Shakespeare in the styles of various eras. I love my 'original version' Messiah on authentic instruments, but Mozart's expanded orchestration is a worthy work in its own right, much enjoyed on occasional revival. If you hear what I mean.

A word of praise for the lighting of the paintings: one had, not surprisingly, to stand absolutely square on to avoid reflections, but it was then quite excellent.

Although this was primarily a portrait painter's occasion, there were many architectural delights on show. But (scream, scream, protest, protest) they were hung badly and atrociously lit. However the craning of the neck, the bending of the knees and the screwing of the eyes was well worthwhile. With the aid of pain killers, I was able to control the thumps in my head induced by my determination to savour every detail of the Rowlandsons, Pugins and Schnebbelies. It was delightful to meet again the 1815 engraving by J. Gleadah much swooned over at the 1975 Hayward Georgian explosion.

But it is the delicate lines of Schnebbelie that induce the most sensual responses. And here we go again: it is the juxtapositions that breathe life. It is by experiencing together the architecture of Schnebbelie and the heightened social behaviour in the Rowlandsons that I can sense Georgian ambience. Only the sound was missing. (I really must get myself one of these pocket gramophone machines with earphones for walking round in exhibitions in a proper aural ambience).

The Retrospective begat an excellent catalogue wisely using the same design, graphic and print team as the great Hayward event. Mackintosh and Ashton are really rather good at this sort of thing. I look forward to their next.

I leave to the end the one magnificent artefact: the Americans had let us borrow the original Patent granted by Charles II to Sir William Davenant. This is the charter that has given these Covent Garden theatres the right to present entertainment across the centuries. In the presence of such a historical document one can only fall silent and receive a montage of images.

Yes, this was a splendid event: a fitting adjunct to the real business of the Covent Garden celebrations, the staging of *Semele*. Both were filled with what Handel and Congreve happily term *celestial odour and ambrosial dew*.

It is, it is a glorious thing . . .

PHILIP CLIFFORD

The sound of "The Pirates of Penzance" at Drury Lane was designed by Don Ketteler and three technicians – Ric Salzedo, Steve Williams and Marytka Jablkowska – operated rehearsals and subsequent performances. My own part in all this was to organise back-up during a lengthy and demanding rehearsal period. It seemed at the time to keep me busy, but I did have the leisure to reflect on the procedures (which are largely my own) employed by the sound crew. Some of these reflections are naturally critical, (no doubt because they concern my own practice) but I will say at the outset that the sound at Drury Lane and the work that made it are of a high standard and a credit to those I've named and to Autograph whose workmanship is as good as the equipment they supply. I am free to say this because I can claim no credit for it.

At their first meeting, the Major-General and the Pirate King lock horns in a misunderstanding of 'often' (in the king's pronunciation) for 'orphan'. This misunderstanding, sadistically prolonged by Gilbert, threatens once more to overwhelm the King in Act II. The outburst of delighted laughter in the Drury Lane audience at the reappearance of this verbal puzzle shows clearly that Gilbert's play with the words and letters of his libretto is not a charming period ornament but is a true part of "Pirates".

It is certainly true that Gilbert lovingly cultivated his taste (and his audience's) for verbal play, and that this taste can be seen at work in the theatre of succeeding writers like Wilde and Shaw. But to understand this as a historical or sociological curiosity is to miss its point. Frederick's predicament as 'the slave of duty' is the thread of storytelling in "Pirates" and the predicament originates in another mishearing: 'pirate' for 'pilot', this time. Further, he cannot escape it because, being born on 29 February, he cannot come out of his apprentice pirate's indentures until he is 84. There is no need to multiply this example, I think.

But one more might drive the point home. At their first meeting with Frederick, the Major-General's daughters exclaim in horror and are echoed by a fortissimo thwack on tympani and bass drum. They remonstrate with the percussion player who effectively defends himself by pointing out the notes in his part. Although neatly done, not least by the outraged innocent musician, this could easily be a bit of village-hall pantomime, were it not that here once more literal authority is invoked and settles the issue with crushing finality. Genuinely funny, more so than the other bits of orchestral "business" in the performance.

The plot, such as it is, of "Pirates" relies on the complete and immediate trust by each character in what he is told, and a grotesquely exact and literal faithfulness in interpreting it. The conflicts in "Pirates" are verbal or literal and the winners are

those with most verbal adeptness. The Major-General is a Napoleon of verbal force and cunning, while the Pirate King is a defeated refugee from the verbal rat-race, retired to the West country and there practising the older and more gentlemanly arts of rape, seamanship and (non-verbal) bullying.

Described so, "Pirates" may seem elegant, facetious and ultimately tiresome, and there are Gilbert and Sullivan operas of which this could be said. But the verbal sharpness of "Pirates" torments its characters into revealing and appealing vulnerability; Gilbert succeeds in being both sardonic and forgiving. Farcical, brilliant and absurd, "Pirates" is affectionate and inspires affection, one of the biggest and best of all Gilbert's paradoxes.

This, of course, is an argumentative basis for saying that in "Pirates" the words are paramount – for the sound man, that is. For myself, the argument is redundant, because I think that in theatre musicals they always should be. Many readers of CUE will agree with this, although thinking it so obviously true that it doesn't need writing down. But during rehearsals of "Pirates" at Drury Lane it became clear that for some

the proposition is not self-evident or universally true. In one discussion, I found myself saying that the upper limit on the sound level of a musical is the level to which the vocal can be raised, this level in turn determining the level at which the band must be held. It seemed that this for some people was unwelcome, even disagreeable, though hard to dispute. If such is the limit on our work – I imagine this question, but I think it sums up the opposition to what I said – what sort of work is that for a grown-up sound technician? Quite what sort of work it is I hope to make clear.

There probably are some musical performances in which clearly intelligible vocals are not a high priority – some church music, some rock, some opera are possible examples. But in musical theatre the words are the actor's primary means of performance, just as they are in other kinds of theatre, because they are the only part of the actors' performance to which you cannot shut your eyes. The exchange of communication between actor and audience is the theatre's first business and probably its only essential. The wealth and variety of resources employed in a musical can render this communication with unforgettable force but simultaneously can damage it beyond hope, by obscuring, smothering or distracting it. Speaking only of the sound of a musical, I am sure that the audience listens to the words first (given the chance); once secure in this they can attend to the complexity of feeling and force of assertion that the partnership of voices and instruments is capable of.

It is quite legitimate in a musical to make the instrumental level press hard on the vocal, even submerge the vocal, if the audience can perceive what this stress is meant to convey; this perception by the audience can even be subconscious. But this device can surely not be exploited for long, because the audience becomes simply fatigued by it. If they must strain to hear for long periods they will detect, consciously or not, the technical or managerial failure which is going to give them a hard time. So

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they relapse into waiting for the interval and the good bits, if any.

It may be suspected that I have written this as a prelude to a hard-luck story, or to a cover-up. Not so; there is nothing to cover up. The sound at Drury Lane renders Sullivan's mock heroic grandeur (which is really grand) and Gilbert's rapid verbal fencing with apparent ease. Not having any direct hand in it, I feel free to say so and to say that this achievement is the greater when the difficulties of the work are recalled. Rehearsals of musicals nearly always begin by being too loud, and the days of discussion experiment and rehearsal during which the level is brought down are usually dark ones. No-one who has suffered them once would willingly suffer them again, but they seem almost impossible to avoid, although they are invariably the result of misunderstanding.

For instance, it seems to a privileged and relatively idle bystander – me, that is, – that long before rehearsals started, a misapprehension existed at "Pirates" of the band sound, and that one particular decision based on this misapprehension had to be dealt with by much hard work and plain speaking. Simply described, the music of "Pirates" is Sullivan's music but not played on Sullivan's orchestra. The new orchestra is small wind and brass sections with two bass-players, five keyboards, drum kit and two very big tuned percussion batteries. There are obvious balance problems within such an instrumentation even before the vocal line is considered, and in retrospect it seems equally obvious that the usefulness of a sound equipment in redressing the balance was over-estimated. Sullivan's music is as wittily allusive and deftly characterised as Gilbert's libretto and demands a certain manner of performance, whatever the instrumental balance. The musicians must be allowed to perform the music of (for instance) vengeance and pursuit with a certain grim vigour if it is to have any meaning. Bringing up the level of trumpets and keyboards to confront the parade-ground bass drum and cymbals resulted in levels best described as improbable. Had comparable vocal levels been possible (and they weren't) they would have been painful and ridiculous. The love music presented equal difficulty; Sullivan's sustaining and cushioning string band is replaced by electric keyboards and percussion. With disconcerting difficulty the flutes were made loud enough to live with cymbal rolls; the resulting music was then hopelessly wrong for Frederick's "Maiden breast" song.

These difficulties are familiar in kind to most sound technicians, I imagine; since "Pirates" had already been produced in the States, they had been foreseen, and the American solution was applied at Drury Lane of appointing a sound operator specifically to run the orchestral balance, leaving the vocals to another operator. Readers of CUE will see immediately one danger in this arrangement. At points in rehearsals an operator will push his level in order to assess the effectiveness of what he is doing; inevitably the other operator will

respond with more level and for the same good reason. No mere disposition of faders or allocation of responsibilities will prevent the resulting climb in level and meaningless scramble of memories which the operators are left with after such rehearsals. This was indeed the state of affairs at an alarmingly late stage in the "Pirates" production period. The eventual solution to this difficulty was achieved by conductor and musicians by playing at a level which, once heard, was obviously right. At first sight, this perhaps seems a defeat for the sound equipment and its guardians, but the best way to secure a musical balance must surely be to leave it to the musicians, especially when they have been placed in an orchestra pit. After all, that is what musicians are for, what they are good at. Conversely, I would say that a music that cannot be got to sound right by musicians is a music that I probably

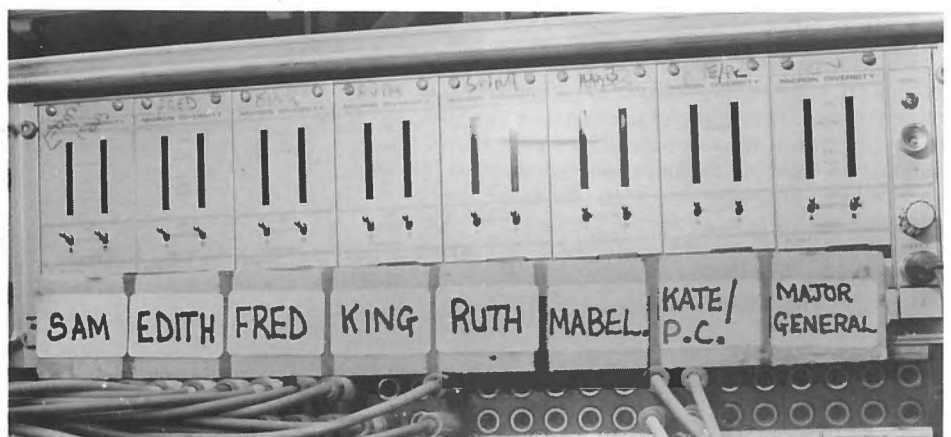
would not understand if I heard it.

Dividing the work of sound control into two jobs seems to have been irrelevant to the difficulty; and I would say it was a mistake. The climb in level described above persists (though not at Drury Lane) all too often through rehearsal into performances; the methodical training by the operator of his own memory is abandoned; and training a reserve operator becomes a lengthy and complicated affair. I must confess to an irritated suspicion that a sound which is too complex for one operator to manage may be too complex to listen to – again, in a musical.

The "Pirates" sound operators work at the rear of stalls, beneath Drury Lane's overhanging grand circle. Considered on its merits as a position for monitoring the sound of the performance, this isn't good. Current practice in sound equipment for



The master output faders of the Trident desk with the operators labelling just legible. The eight level controls alongside each fader control the level of eight subgroups into the master output. The faders for these subgroups are immediately below the master faders and, perhaps confusingly, directly in line with them.



Eight of the ten radio microphone receivers are in this rack. Each receiver channel contains two receivers and a switch which automatically routes to the rack output whichever receiver is currently offering the better signal. The equipment performs to Micron's familiar high standard and is compatible with the more usual single-receiver equipment.

musicals includes two classes of loudspeaker, one big enough to do justice to the sound of the show, the other small enough to be mounted near those people too far away from the big speakers to hear them well. The big speakers, rigged near the proscenium, embody the sound man's brightest hopes and darkest anxieties for the show, as well as a lot of the producer's money; the little ones are in location, specification design and performance a compromise, their one essential virtue that of being little. Loudspeaker performance is nowadays described in a jargon, more distilled than that of the wine-taster, which is useless even when honest, but in an attempt to convey the practical value of quantities like bandwidth and distortion we can say that, of two loudspeakers, the better conveys more information, more accurately. In the auditorium those hearing the better loudspeaker perceive more surely, with less ambiguity, more quickly; when we consider that they are listening not to an undifferentiated and random version of what happens to be going on near a casually available microphone but to a calculated selective, rehearsed combination of the work of many performers, among whom the sound operator has an essential place it is clear that the considerations which put the sound control position out of reach of the principal loudspeakers must be extraneous to the question of the sound. No doubt the arguments for tucking the operator away are good ones, but they are not conclusive.

The deficiencies of the small loudspeaker are not inherently as serious perhaps as I've implied; there are some very good, very expensive, very small loudspeakers which so far as I know are not yet used in musicals. Meanwhile a partial response to the shortcomings which I've been discussing is the nowadays frequently used output matrix in the control desk. The input signals in the desk (from microphones, for example), after fading and equalisation are routed to subgroups or buses, typically eight in number. Associated with each bus are (again typically) eight level controls to determine the level of bus signal which is distributed to each of the eight main outputs. "Pirates" is by no means the first musical to employ the device but the way in which it is used at Drury Lane is fairly representative. Bus signals, for example groups of radio microphones, percussion microphones, keyboards and so on, are sent in independently variable mixtures to each separate group of loudspeakers in the auditorium. The scheme offers obvious flexibility in compensating for imperfect (and unequally imperfect) distribution in multiple-tier auditoriums.

Increased flexibility means increased set-up time, I fear. An unusually large crew of reasonably experienced and thoughtful people proved unable to adjust, assess and readjust the levels in the matrix while the operators were coping with the insistent demands of live rehearsal. In any case, calling for an adjustment during one passage of rehearsal and assessing it during another seems strikingly unmethodical. The alternative setting-up method is to play pink

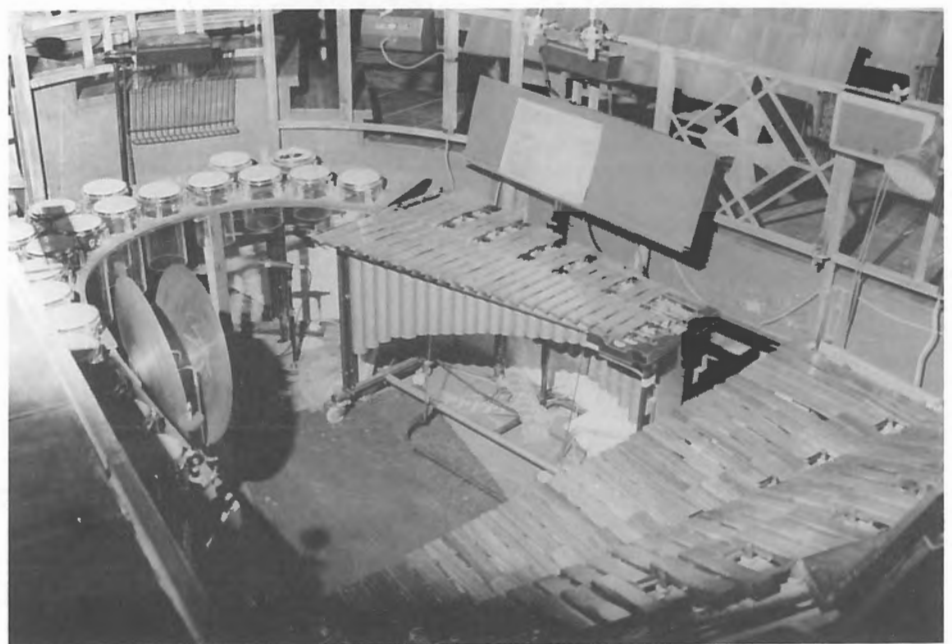
noise through the equipment and, by manipulating level controls and equalisers, secure even level and frequency response throughout the auditorium, measuring the audible pink noise with a calibrated microphone and a spectrum analyser.

My experience of this adjustment procedure is consistently baffling and disappointing. Whatever the shortcomings of a loudspeaker equipment, pink noise and analyzer adjustment can make it sound worse. I don't understand altogether why

this should be so, but it is worth pointing out that the acoustic level necessary for this measurement is necessarily high so that the irreducible noise (wind, traffic, ventilation) in the building is masked. This level is certain to be much higher than that of the theatre musical. Since our loudspeakers sound different at different levels (in most cases), adjustments carried out at measurement level will almost certainly be in error at programme level. It is also likely that the absorption characteristic of the



Good performance from the radios is ensured by a lengthy and painstaking setup routine for each performance and rehearsal. The channels are checked visually and for performance — cables, connectors and capsules, and batteries are checked for short-circuit current before they are allowed into a transmitter. In this photograph, four of the under-balcony loudspeakers can be seen, one partly obscured by the operator's head. No justice is here done to the scenery, but the operator's remoteness from the sound of the performance is suggested not too misleadingly.



Xylophone, marimba, vibraphone, boobams and cymbals on the prompt side of the orchestra pit. The corresponding position on the OP side contains the other percussion array, principally of drums, while the rock drum kit is just out of shot, this side of the xylophone.

auditorium changes substantially as the sound level changes. This leads us to remark that the continuous pink noise test signal is continuously exciting room reverberation, as no musical programme ever does, again at an untypical level. It is obvious that the spectrum analyzer does not detect or offset this reverberation, whereas securing a "flat" acoustic output of pink noise by manipulating the sound control equipment assumes such an offset to have been correctly made. Lastly, the filtered random (pink) noise which is the calibrated source for these tests is at a constant level only over a period of time. Instantaneously, this level varies appreciably across the twenty-seven bands of the analysis, so that the observer has no hope of "reading" the displayed level. To permit precise observation the analyser integrates its measurement over a determined period, typically one to three seconds, so giving a display steady enough to read and statistically true. But in sound engineering a second is a long time. The programme equaliser, adjusted to give a picture of a desirable frequency response in the auditorium, is then returned to the programme where it deals with events very much shorter in time, asymmetrical and aperiodic waveforms which are the signatures of instrumental timbre and vocal character. I have stated this last misgiving laboriously but I think it simple and final. I don't have misgivings about using equalisers, but about needing a measuring instrument's authority to use them.

This discussion entirely neglects the fact that, once rehearsals or performances begin, a very great deal of what we hear — particularly from the band — does not emerge from loudspeakers at all, but is the unassisted, uncontrollable, disconcertingly real thing. The sound technician who is attempting to secure even coverage of the auditorium is hearing one sound that has three components — live sound, sound from the principal loudspeakers and sound from the fill-in loudspeakers. I do not trust my own hearing to identify these components and my incurable egotism leads me to distrust the hearing of anyone else who attempts it. At any event, the procedure for setting-up at "Pirates", once the spectrum analyzer was put away, was to aim at the correct balance in the main loudspeakers and to then add remedial doses of what was observed to be lacking in the fill-in speakers — including those which serve the sound control position. The pattern of coverage achieved in this way was a consistently intelligible distribution of vocal in the auditorium but poor correspondence between the different areas in terms of vocal to instrumental balance and overall character, so that those parts of the auditorium served by the small fill-ins missed altogether a bright and sometimes glaring excitement that the principal loudspeakers were contributing.

A satisfactory balance was achieved following an entirely opposite method suggested by Ric Salzedo. All the loudspeakers were regarded as complementing the live sound and all were fed with an identical

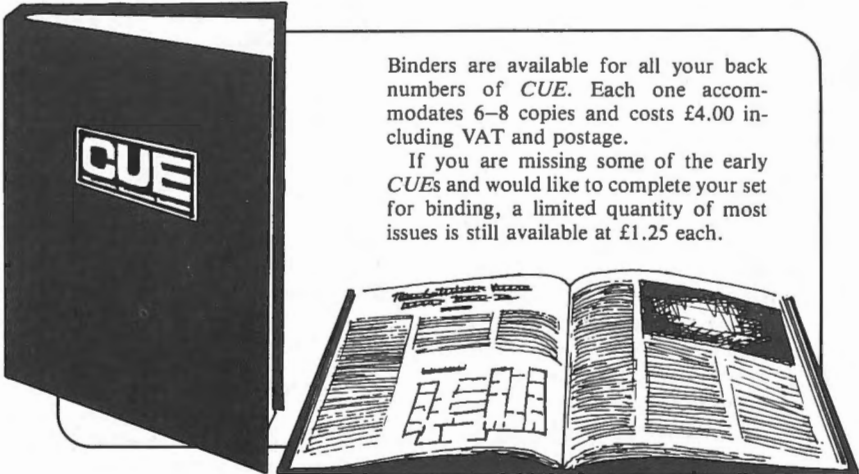
vocal-instrumental balance. The respective levels of the loudspeakers were determined using a known tape in the empty auditorium and adjustments of the balance in the speakers made during two performances. These adjustments were very small indeed so that the bus signals of the matrix are distributed almost equally to all outputs. In other words, the output matrix is almost completely redundant, in a balance which serves Drury Lane's complex seating arrangement. It seems likely that the output matrix is most useful when it controls all or almost all the sound which is heard. The very high sound levels and good isolation of rock band foldback-monitor systems are a good example, and it is not surprising that what we call a matrix-output desk looks very like what the bands know as a foldback desk. The output matrix may be useful for plays with big sound-effects equipments; and the sound of "Cats" with a band which is partially isolated from the stage can probably make more use of the matrix's flexibility. At Drury Lane, for "Pirates" the flexibility couldn't be employed, the precision of control was swamped by the live sound in the theatre.

Those who have read this far may think to detect in this account a Luddite grumpiness about ambitious equipments, or maybe a deathbed repentance by the first of the big spenders. I'll say now that I think that the best equipment obtainable is the right equipment for live performance sound, including the sound of a musical. This is so important that I would say that some of the best is preferable to more of the second best. But it is probably even more important that the sound man clearly sees what his work can achieve, and what it cannot.

The sound operator's work in a musical when described in detail sounds like an impossible oddity. Although there can be no such thing as the one and only sound for a musical, the operator must secure a high degree of consistency in a series, sometimes very long, of performances. The risks to the operator's own concentration, let alone to that of actors and musicians, that he runs in

experimenting with the sound are just too high. The first part of his work then is, through complete familiarity, to help present to the umpteenth audience the first (good) performance. But this must be an incomplete account, because the live performance which the operator works on tonight is inevitably different from last night's in countless small details to which the operator must respond. His familiarity with the performance enables him to correct, or rather accommodate, occasional defects due to performers who are unwell, for example, or orchestral deputies, but it also enables him to exploit new opportunities when, for example, vocal coaching produces more confident singing or when an instrumental detail makes imaginative sense for the first time. In sum, the operator simultaneously maintains an accustomed level and quality of performance within very close limits which are second nature to him, while also approaching each performance with the freshness of the first-time audience.

The operator's principal task is concentration. The musical's variety of resources and enthusiastic exploitation of them constantly threaten to bewilder. Usually a musical is an exceptionally costly and demanding effort for those concerned with it, and there must be some temptation to be continually surprising and frequently astonishing, so that the performance becomes larded with failed inspirations, cherished ornaments and fossilized skeletons. A good sound operator in a good musical has, by his own and others' efforts, got clear of these entanglements; he concentrates, with an absorption that outsiders rightly envy, on doing the barest minimum, but so intense is the concentration that this minimum demands a continuous and exacting effort. The function of this in a performance is to direct the audience towards what is essential in the performance and away from what is extraneous. It is a vital function and not only in middle-of-the-road blockbusters.



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The Development of Lighting in the Staging of Drama, 1900–1945

FRANCIS REID

“The Development of Lighting in the Staging of Drama, 1900–1945,” by Francis Reid, originally appeared in *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 10: Modern British Dramatists, 1900–1945*, edited by Stanly Weintraub (copyright © 1982 Gale Research Company; reprinted by permission of the Publisher), Gale, 1982, pp. 267–275.

In the realization of a written text as staged drama, the primary catalyst has always been, and must surely continue to be, the actor. The degree of actor importance may vary, but since dramatists are concerned primarily with human behaviour, the actor is essential even if reduced from time to time to a residual status approaching Edward Gordon Craig's *übermarionette*. But people do not exist in a vacuum: they live in an environment and they interact with that environment as well as with one another. The actor requires an environment for performance: this is rather a special environment, for not only is it to be shared with the audience, but at least the actor's part must be controlled to conform with the space and time requirements of the unfolding drama.

Light is a major element in any environment, and its dramatic importance has increased as the means of controlling light have become more sophisticated. Illumination is only the most basic contribution of light as an interpretative tool in the staging of drama. It is frequently the light that defines the space and creates the atmosphere with a degree of fluidity that brings to the actor's environment a degree of control that is virtually total.

Stage lighting has been defined as a *fluid selective atmospheric dimensional illumination appropriate to the style of a particular production*. Light has been used in this way from the very beginning of organized theatrical experience, but full realization of the aims implicit in this definition has been constrained by the pace of unfolding technology.

From the time when drama first moved indoors – or perhaps more accurately, from the time when courtyard theatres were first roofed over – there has been a battle to achieve sufficient illumination. The thrusting stages of early theatres were not the consequence of a debated consideration of the actor-audience relationship. Sight and sound are fundamental to actor-audience contact and they are related to one another to the extent that a poorly illuminated actor is more difficult to hear than one with clearly visible eyes and teeth.

During the nineteenth century a number of light-related trends gradually influenced the English playhouse. As a result of audi-

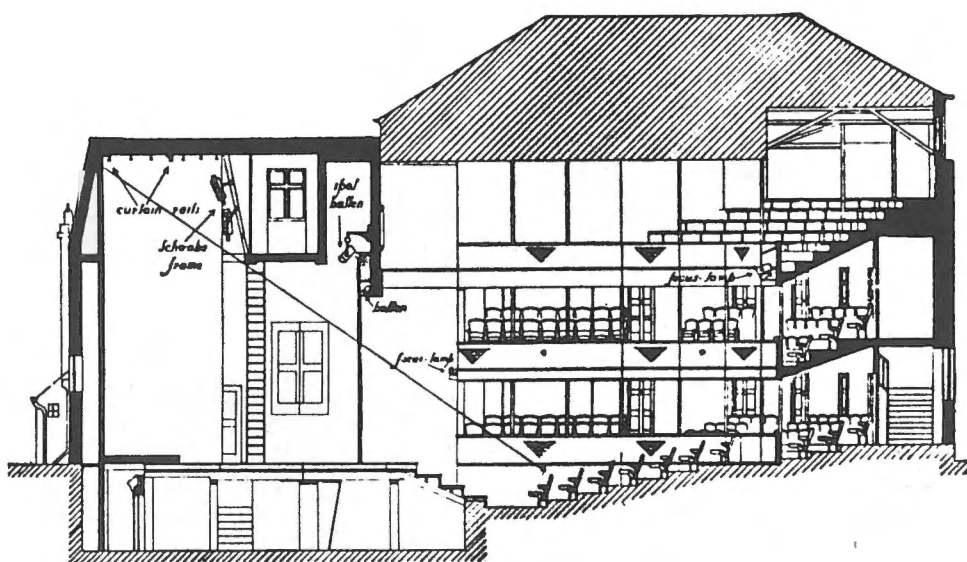
ence pressure, the emphasis shifted from text to spectacle. The actor was forced, with some reluctance, to retreat from the thrusting forestage through the proscenium to a position within the spectacle. The scenery ceased to be a mere decorative background and became an integral part of the performance. This had long been a tradition of the European opera houses where the scenes and machines had an importance often equal to, or sometimes greater than, the music and the singer. The eighteenth- and nineteenth-century English playhouse, however, was a theatre where actor and text dominated.

The actor on a thrust stage had shared the same light as the audience, and many of the lighting developments were concerned with adding lustres to candelabra, or reflectors to oil lamps, and siting them in optimum auditorium positions to illuminate

both actor and audience. With the retreat behind the proscenium, the illumination of the actor and the illumination of the audience became dependent on separate sources. This laid the way for the later practice of extinguishing the auditorium lights during the play: a logical and inevitable consequence of the sublimation of text in favour of spectacle.

The lighting of the actor's playhouse had been mainly concerned with illumination. The technical problems of obtaining adequate visibility with candle and oil were so daunting that refining the control of atmosphere or selective area lighting had to be a relatively low priority, at least in the great majority of theatres.

From the earliest theatres, there has been an avant-garde in lighting as in every other department. Dimming devices, colour'



Cross section through Cambridge Festival Theatre showing a clear audience sightline to the top of the cyclorama lit by Schwabe flood lamps for colour mixing. The actors were lit mainly by spotlights from the spot batten (pipe) and balcony front, with some fill from the batten (border light). Section drawing from “Stage Lighting” by C. Harold Ridge (Heffer 1930).

filters, scrims, scenic projectors, lenses, and so forth have been the subject of staging experiments through the centuries, but mainstream theatres' control of light until the age of gas was limited to primitive fade-outs by twisting vertical pole-mounted lamps away from the stage or lowering footlights into under-stage traps. Even so, the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century stage was intrinsically a very atmospheric place. This was assured by the low levels of light plus the low degree of visual expectation of an audience who knew nothing of later generations' sophisticated experiences of the mechanical media.

Gas brought a tremendous increase in the fluidity of lighting control. The intensity of the light sources in the various parts of the stage could now be subjected to relatively fine control from a central "gas table" with individual valves to control the flow of gas to the burners. Thus by means of footlights, overhead border lights, and wing lights a general illumination of variable intensity could be achieved all over the stage. This could be selective in a rather primitive way, mainly by splitting the stage into front or back rather than left or right. This general illumination could be tinted by adding coloured screens — fairly simple in sidelights at stage level but involving the use of rather complex mechanically operated screens in the overhead lights. These complexities gave little opportunity for fluid colour mixing. Within this general illumination, there was a possibility of selecting or highlighting by means of limelight with its intense beam produced by an oxyhydrogen flame impinging on a block of calcium.

When electricity began to replace gas as the light source, there was little change in lighting techniques. By splitting the footlights and overhead border lights into alternating circuits of three or four colours, it became easier to mix colours, but the palette still gave a series of all-over relatively unselective light. The electric arc replaced the limelight, but it was used in the same way, namely to highlight within a general soft all-over coloured illumination.

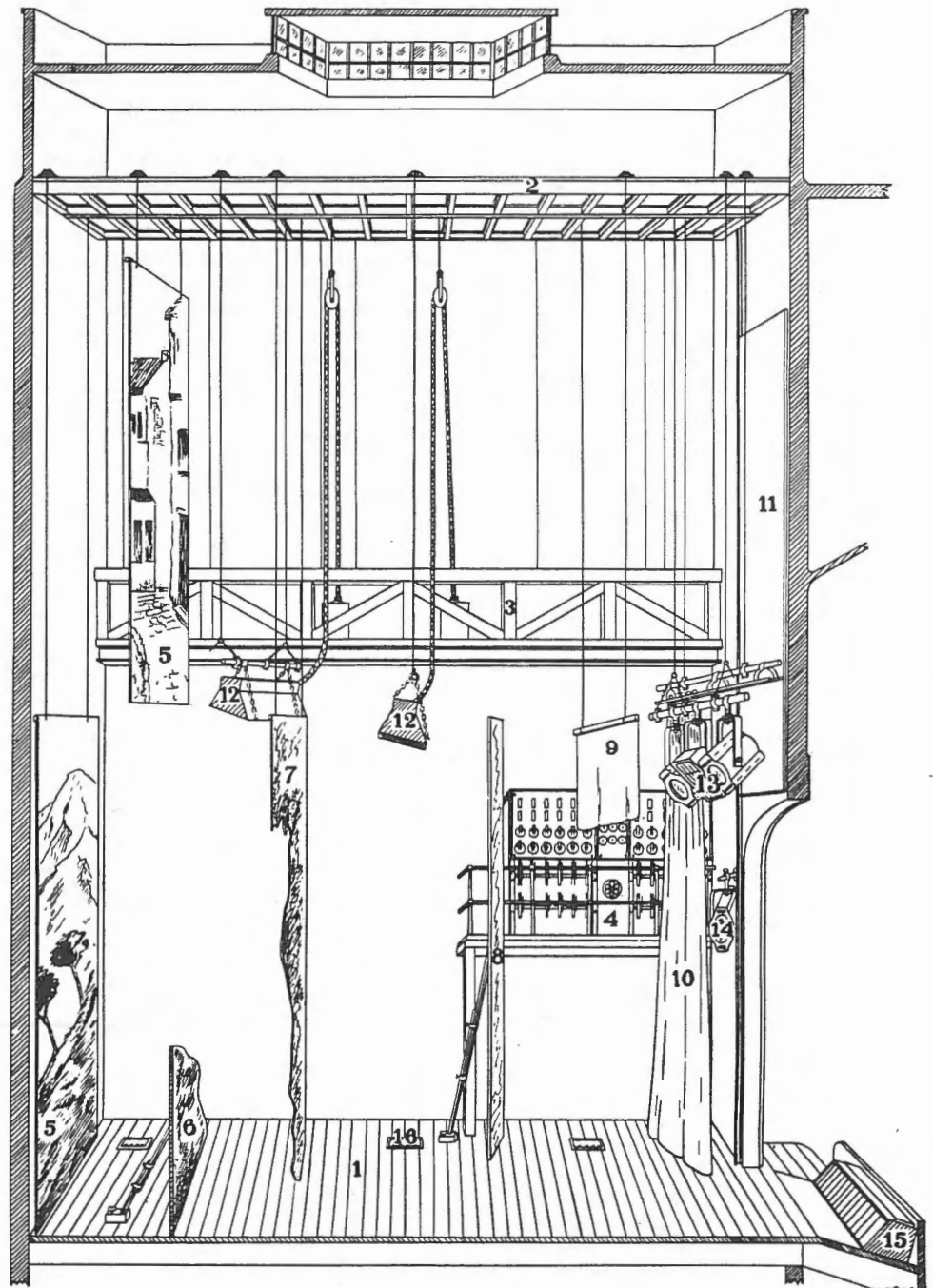
Mainstream stage lighting at the turn of the nineteenth century into the twentieth was therefore an application of electricity to the techniques of the gas-lit stage. Gas was still in use as the main illumination in many minor theatres in 1900 and was to continue as standby lighting for some years in many grander theatres. Indeed, a 1901 handbook of practical gas fitting included a chapter on "How to fit a theatre throughout with gas." This section is a very comprehensive account with details of how to make all necessary equipment from piping of standard diameter. Any self-respecting gas fitter expected to construct everything on site rather than buy from the specialized theatrical suppliers that were to arise in the early years of the century and stimulate the development of a new technology.

The following description of the lighting of a scene in Herbert Beerbohm Tree's 1910 production of *King Henry VIII* by Shakespeare (or perhaps it would be more correct to say "based on a play by Shakespeare") is taken from Michael R.

Booth's *Victorian Spectacular Theatre, 1850–1910* (1981). The light sources could be electricity or gas: the word *lime* was taken over in English theatre terminology from the original oxyhydrogen limelight to include the arc and any form of operator-controlled following spotlight. The most sophisticated discharge-lamp follow spots of today are still referred to as *limes*. Booth writes: "Twenty-one limes were called into

action, all with dark amber gelatines. Two were kept on the King, one spot and one flood, and five (two spots and three floods) illuminated the Queen's chair, the central area in which she moved and, presumably, her attendants. Another lime was saved for Wolsey (none for Campeius), 'faint' on the Cardinal's chair before he occupied it, stronger as he took his place. The bishops had to be content with a single flood be-

Cross section through typical mainstream theatre using painted scenery and borders. Lighting by footlights and overhead battens with mainly flooding equipment, giving washes of light. The few spotlights were used for highlighting special moments and significant areas. Section drawing from "Stage Lighting Principles and Practice" by Ridge and Aldred (Pitman 1935).



REFERENCES—

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| 1. Stage. | 9. Border. |
| 2. Grid. | 10. Draw curtains. |
| 3. Fly Gallery. | 11. Safety curtain. |
| 4. Stage Switchboard. | 12. Compartment type batten with "tripe" and connector box. |
| 5. Back cloths. | 13. Unit type batten with spot and flood lanterns. |
| 6. Ground row. | 14. Proscenium spot lantern. |
| 7. Cut cloth. | 15. Footlights. |
| 8. Wing supported by adjustable brace. | 16. Stage dip traps. |

tween them, and the *Church Times* (4 September) doubted if 'quite sufficient is made of the Bishops. Sir Herbert Tree puts the Bishops into a dim sort of background the while that the two Cardinals sport at the footlights.' Eight limes from the flies shone through the stained-glass windows on each side of the hall, and two amber lamps from the dome flooded the downstage area throughout the scene, in addition to blue light from the battens and blue and white light from the floats."

A note provided by Eric Jones-Evans (who saw Henry Irving play) for David Mayer's 1980 edition of Irving's personal script of *The Bells* evokes for us the flavour of a carefully "lime lit" scene: "The paneling of Mathias's bedchamber is painted on gauze, behind which a black backing is hung. In the darkness the black backing is flown to enable the court to appear as if in a bluish grey haze, the haze being created by the gauze. Behind the gauze steel blue limelights from the O.P. flies pick out and follow Mathias throughout the scene. The other characters are in shadow or in reflected light.

"We know from the original lighting plot in the script that the fly limes had iris diaphragms controlled by the operator. These, when used correctly, provided the essential dream-like quality of the lighting. There were never any sharply defined circles of light; nor could figures be clearly distinguished as regards exact details of costumes. One knew there were three Judges, a Clerk of Court, barristers, members of the public, and uniformed gendarmes. But the whole effect was hazy and like a dream. Even Mathias was a figure with a dream-like, insubstantial and almost spectral appearance; though his facial expressions could be clearly seen."

Here we are examining the work of the two leading English lighting designers of the turn of the century: Tree and Irving. In their work can be traced the beginnings of the multi-spotlight complexity that is the basic technique of the second half of the twentieth century. But the average lighting standard in the great bulk of theatre was much simpler and frequently rough. Most theatre was, after all, based on weekly touring, and light control was based on the integrated operations of a local theatre crew of casual employees who had other occupations by day. They faced every Monday night as a first night without rehearsal and without the benefit of the modern communications system by which such crews can now be talked through a performance.

To assess the scope of lighting as an interpretive tool for realization of the dramatist's text in 1900, it is useful to consider the state of lighting development against the definition offered earlier — a fluid selective atmospheric dimensional illumination appropriate to the style of a particular production. By 1900, illumination sources (gas and electricity) had developed to the point where achieving the requisite quantity of light for simple visibility was no longer a problem. Indeed there were many comments about overbright stages. But these comments were probably not a

response to the actual intensity, which at its very brightest would be much less than the intensity which we expect eighty years later. They were more likely a response to the quality of the light. When oil and candle gave way to gas, there had been accusations of harshness. However, when that yellow-green of gas light had become the acceptable norm, the change to electricity brought complaints of harsh whiteness. But most of the "bright and harsh" problems stemmed from the angle of the light.

The overhead lights and wing lights were primarily scenic lights. The reliance on footlights as the main source for lighting the actor resulted in an unnatural face light with the shadows all reversed from realism. The face — particularly the eyes and teeth — are the actor's primary means of character projection. To have them lit in this unnatural way was an obvious problem for the rapid growth of realism in the drama of the early years of the twentieth century. So also were the unnatural shadows cast by the actor on the scenery — shadows which were taller than the actor and with a height that rose and fell depending on the distance between actor and footlight, shadows which marched across the landscape and sky with a fine disregard for the laws of nature. The need for an environmental realism to meet the naturalistic acting styles and scenery demanded by the more realistic approach of writers was a prime motivation for the development of directional lighting instruments and a coordinated design approach to their deployment on the stage.

The lighting also tended to be rather flattening. The framing effect of the proscenium arch tends to reduce the impression of depth and the actor becomes two-dimensional. This is particularly the case in larger theatres. Unlike the court theatres of central Europe which developed into public theatres with state and city subsidies, the English theatres of 1900 were strictly commercial enterprises. Therefore, whereas many European theatres could retain shallow balconies and consequent intimacy, the English theatres of the turn-of-the-century building boom had to exploit deep overhanging balconies to gain maximum seating as an economic necessity.

Operator attended limes were used to some extent to model the actors from the side, thus enhancing the third dimension. But it was to take the development of small incandescent spotlights to push the growth in the spotlighting of acting areas from modelling angles — a growth that has been constant since the 1920s. Similarly, light as a means of selecting and defining areas could be effected to a limited extent by limes; but full selectivity required the availability of many spotlights and a more advanced dimmer system to control them. It was to take some considerable development in centralized dimmer control before lighting could acquire that fluidity of area selection and atmosphere control that dramatists would shortly require — particularly under the influence of the cinema and those stage directors who were about to start stripping away nineteenth-century staging accretions from the classics in an ef-

fort to rediscover older and simpler styles.

Furthermore, the concept of a lighting style to complement scenic style and acting style was simply just not part of 1900 theatrical thinking. This was an actor-manager's theatre. It required the emergence of a director's theatre to establish that there were several different viable staging styles in which a text could be approached. The 1900 definition of stage lighting might therefore reasonably be *a barely fluid, relatively unselective flat illumination in the atmospheric style of the turn-of-the-century.*

The growth period for stage lighting within the 1900–1945 scope of this volume was the period between the wars, the two decades of 1919–1939. According to Basil Dean, "In 1919 the London stage was suffering from a wartime rundown . . . shabby so far as its furnishings were concerned and extremely old-fashioned in its equipment . . . still using liquid dimmers, arcs on perches either side of the proscenium, and rows of lamps lacquered in different colours, usually red, amber and blue in the battens (i.e. borderlights) and footlights." Dean was a major lighting innovator of this period. He travelled extensively and imported ideas and equipment from New York and Germany. From a base in London's St. Martin's Theatre, he produced a series of successes by such authors as John Galsworthy, Noel Coward, W. Somerset Maugham, Clemence Dane, and J. B. Priestley. Dean was a producer who directed his own productions and acted as his own lighting designer. He was concerned with West End realistic drama whereas the other major source of lighting innovation, Terence Gray's Cambridge Festival Theatre, explored styles representing various departures from naturalism. The Cambridge directors (Gray, Herbert Prentice, and Norman Marshall) worked with Harold Ridge, who can be regarded as Britain's first specialized lighting designer. Ridge's interest was an isolated case: lighting design did not really begin to emerge as a specialist profession until very near the end of the 1900–1945 period. In fact, it was not until the 1960s that the lighting designer became an automatic member of the production team.

Both Dean and the Cambridge Festival Theatre represent a response to the theories of Adolphe Appia and Gordon Craig, who proposed a stage environment based on space and light rather than painted canvas. At a practical level, the influences were Max Reinhardt in Germany and David Belasco in America. Reinhardt and Belasco were in turn supported by two key technologists who enabled them to realize their lighting concepts: Reinhardt had Schwabe and Company of Berlin, and Belasco had Louis Hartmann. The starting point for both Dean and Ridge was the cyclorama. The traditional overhead masking borders, side wings, and backcloth were replaced with a stretched cloth or plastered structure, curved at the sides and sometimes also curved at the top. Where the architecture of the theatre allowed, the side and top extremities extended beyond the limits of the

audience's line of sight. Under fluid lighting, this backing became limitless space: the cyclorama could be treated as a realistic sky or it could be a purely atmospheric environment.

Equipment was developed to project effects onto the cycloramas, and some of the very complex German cloud projectors were imported into England. Dean relates the impact of these on one dramatic author of that period: "The effects that could be got with it were so beautiful and, so far as storm, lightning, rain, etc., were concerned, so realistic that at the end of a private demonstration which we gave before an invited audience of authors and managers, Bernard Shaw turned to to me and, instead of congratulating me, said 'I'll take good care that you don't use any of these contraptions in my plays, young man. The audience would be so busy staring at the clouds, they wouldn't listen to my words.' Of course, he was right."

This suggestion that lighting might be used against the drama, rather than its servant, runs through much of the technical literature of the period. Thus, in 1930 Ridge found it necessary to warn: "It is a favourite pastime with some critics to jibe at the scenic artist and electrician, and to maintain that their efforts detract from the acting. I would only say that good acting can only be enhanced by suitable scenery and beautiful lighting, but it is a crime to spend time and money on scenery lighting to the neglect of the acting." He found it necessary to go into italics for a warning (and Ridge used italics very sparingly) "*It is also a crime to stage a bad play simply because it lends itself to spectacular effects.*"

Perhaps the key to the lighting style of the cyclorama school lies in the following Ridge statement: "There is an idea prevalent that actors cannot perform in vividly coloured light. With the exception of one or two colours such as green, the acting-area can be lit with any colours suitable to the spirit of the scene." This idea of lighting for total effect is certainly alien to the view of drama held by most generations, including our own. Even in the most non-naturalistic production style, there is a degree of heightened realism in the acting that can only be projected if the actor's face is lit in a way approaching naturalism.

But these are experimental times and the boldness of colour was so revolutionary that the audience was able to respond enthusiastically. After all, they were used to actors lit from an unnatural low angle from the footlights. To have them lit, without shadows, in heavily coloured ambient light in a scene of limitless space must have been a revelation to an audience whose previous theatrical experience had been of roughly lit painted scenes with "realistic" painted tree borders plainly made from tattered canvas.

Prentice's production of *Twelfth Night* for the Sheffield Repertory Company in the late 1920s used a white set. There was flood-lighting for the set and overhead flood-lighting for the actors. There were no footlights and no spotlighting from the

auditorium. The actors must have projected with voice and movement alone: there could have been very little subtlety visible on their faces. Some indication of the application of a strong colour approach to the psychology of the drama is apparent from the following:

<i>Scene</i>	<i>Spirit of Scene</i>	<i>Lighting</i>
Duke's Palace	Love	Front-Pink Back-Blue
Olivia's Room	Melancholy	Front-amber Back-Green
Olivia's Room	Drunken Revelry	Front-Blue Back-Magenta
Olivia's Garden	Reconciliation	Front-Pink Back-Moonlight Green

This "total atmosphere" approach was used by Dean in his 1939 West End production of J. B. Priestley's *Johnson over Jordan*. Two cycloramas were devised, the inner one of fine blue silk. According to Dean, "We literally painted the curtains with lights. In the night-club scene they took on a deep ruby red against which the masks, beautifully made by Elizabeth Haffenden, created an eerie effect. In other scenes the curtains were coloured olive green or blue or straw according to the mood of the dream which Johnson, the principal character, was experiencing. There was very little direct spot-lighting except in the foreground.

"The play ends as Johnson (Ralph Richardson) in his dream — all the struggles and hopes and fears of his past life over — turns to say farewell to the porter. Taking from him his attache case, his rolled umbrella and his bowler hat, he mounts a steep ramp between the two cycloramas, the one in front being drifted apart a few feet to make this possible. As he does so to the inspiring music specially composed by Benjamin Britten, a 5,000 watt German projector beams his ascent. The light in front fades as the sun lamp picks him up between the cycloramas, the silk one being lighted an iridescent bluish-green and the rear one a deep blue. The effect was indescribably beautiful and was so referred to by the press. Indeed the author has made flattering reference to this effect in his book of reminiscences."

The selective use of lighting to locate scenes by defining space was also developing alongside the atmosphere experiments. Ridge here describes his lighting of *The Rumour* by C. K. Munro at Gray's Cambridge Festival Theatre in 1927: "There were no less than eighteen scenes in this production, and it was essential that scene should follow scene with the greatest rapidity. The producer, Norman Marshall, used hardly any scenery, and relied chiefly on lighting to suggest the various changes. For instance, the play opened with a scene in a smoking-room, for which three chairs and a small table were grouped together at the

front of the stage, and lit solely by a red spot concealed in a trap on the forestage, which gave the impression of firelight. This, combined with the fact that black curtains were drawn across the cyclorama, left the greater part of the stage so dark that it was possible to have the next scene set ready.

This, an office, was suggested merely by a desk and chair in a concentrated pool of light, which again left much of the stage in complete darkness, so that another office could be set on the other side of the stage, and similarly lit in its turn. Yet another office scene, this time a very brief one, was suggested simply by a baby spot on the face of a man speaking at the telephone, nothing else being visible. A rather similar method was used for the street scenes, a single spot from the spot-batten suggesting the light from a street-lamp, without anything else on stage."

Most of these staging and lighting experiments took place in what Marshall christened "The Other Theatre" in his book of that title (1952). It was in the little theatres and in the developing regional repertory houses that the theatre was developing between the wars. In the "other theatres" the technical difficulties of a fluid control of the lighting were not a big problem: the number of light sources was relatively small, and so the operators had enough hands (and knees and elbows) to operate simple dimmers. However, the bigger commercial theatres and the super cinemas — where the auditorium architecture was expected to perform complex colour music (an organ-type keyboard controlled the intensity, colour, and form of light in a flexible manner) between films — demanded centralized flexible control desks. During the 1930s, many fundamental developments took place in control desks, including methods of presetting intensity levels and grouping lights for operation under one person's fingers. Indeed the organ console became one of the most flexible lighting controls of the period immediately before World War II. Thus lighting control was poised for a rapid takeoff in the 1950s when the effects of war and postwar restrictions began to wear off.

Spotlights had been developing slowly throughout the 1920s and 1930s, but their impact was not immediate in the great majority of theatres, that is, the London West End and touring chains fed from London. Some spotlights were appearing in the

auditorium but were mainly used as simple "projected floodlighting." Onstage use of spotlighting was restricted to special effects and to highlighting.

The spots tended to be focused on important parts of the acting area like chairs, doors, and telephones. Between these areas there was a soft general flooding wash of light. The concept of overlapping areas, all individually lit by spotlights from angles which would enhance the dimensional aspect of actor and scene – a concept developed and described in the United States in the late 1920s by Stanley McCandless – was not to become universal in Britain until after World War II.

The predominance of a general wash of light from flooding equipment tended to favour the top and sides of the setting rather than the actors. The frame was often brighter than the picture whereas most drama requires the actor to be stressed rather than the setting. However, the dominance of the footlights was decreasing, and the actor's makeup could consequently become more natural than the heavy mask-like use of greasepaint which had been necessary at the beginning of the century. In both mainstream theatre and the older theatre, lighting was a series of "lighting moments" rather than the continuous fluid selective atmospheric dimension of our definition.

In general 1900–1945 was a period of experiment: it indicated the shape of things to

come in the lighting explosion that was to hit theatre in the second half of the twentieth century when the lighting designer emerged as an essential member of the production team; and lighting was to become an essential servant of the dramatist and the drama's interpreters – not the other way around as is suggested in a phrase from Rollo Gillespie William's 1947 *Technique of Stage Lighting*: "the producer arranges matters so that artists are placed to get the desired illumination at appropriate parts of the play."

In the "other theatre" lighting excitements were brewing, but for the flavour of mainstream drama let us turn to the lighthearted cynicism of Philip Godfrey in his 1933 *Backstage* (subtitled *A survey of contemporary British Theatre from behind the scenes*). This approach to lighting was standard in many ordinary playhouses until designed lighting became the norm in the aftermath of World War II. Godfrey writes, "The Producer comes in front and begins to light the scene. The Stage Manager, with a notebook and pencil, remains on the stage as a connecting link with the unseen electrician.

'I want more light on the back', cries the producer.

'Two more floods upstage, Bill', says the stage manager.

'What mediums, sir – amber or pink?'

'Neither', says the producer. 'I want to try white.'

'How's that, sir?'

'No good. Check them down. That's too much. Bring them up again. What are they now?'

'Half-check, sir.'

'Not enough. Bring them up . . . slowly. Slowly! More yet.'

'They're full up, sir.'

'Oh, all right; put in a pink.'

'How's that, sir?'

'No good. Try an amber. *Hm* . . . I don't like it. Try the pink again. Now try a straw. Let me see the amber again. That's not rich enough. I want a number four.'

'Put in a number four, Bill . . . Eh? Oh! That is a number four, sir.'

'Then frost it. All right, that'll do.'

'Plot that, Bill', says the stage manager, making a note.

'Now your floats', cries the producer.

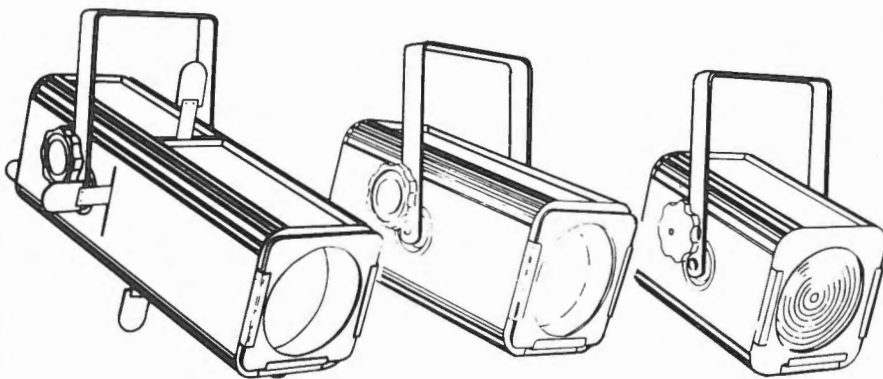
'Check up the whites . . . more yet. . . . Stop! Too much! Down again! That's better. Are the baby spots in?'

'Take them out. What's in your perches?'

'Ambers, sir.'

'Give me straws.' That kind of dialogue was quite authentic until well after 1945. Therefore, the definition by the 1940s had become something like *a fluid illumination which is becoming increasingly selective and atmospheric, especially in experimental theatres with an approach to production styles that favour a departure from realism.*

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REIDing SHELF

The Complete Guide to Theatrical Practice is a pretty tough assignment for a book of 192 pages. It is the subtitle of a new much-illustrated **STAGECRAFT** which has been written by a team of contributing editors comprising Jason Barnes, Lizzi Becker, Richard Harris, Iona McLeish, Alastair Moffat, Alan O'Toole, Philippe Perrottet, John Phillips, and Jennie Stoller. They are not credited with individual chapters but reference to their biographies on the dust jacket gives a clear indication of the specialities, while their impressive experience includes a lot of Foco Novo and National Theatre. The Consultant Editor is Trevor R. Griffiths whose foreword commends the book with a marketing fervour that is a surprising find in a lecturer in drama at the Polytechnic of North London.

The book does squeeze a lot in. There are chapters on Directing, Stage Management, Acting, Set Design, Lighting, Costume Design, Make-up, The Workshop, Administration, Choosing the Play, Festivals and Touring plus useful addresses and glossary. With so much to cover in so short a space, it is inevitable that many matters of opinion just have to be presented with the status of facts. And some of the information has a strange flavour of being received knowledge, lacking the authentic ring that should stem from having actually done it – as the authors, biographically, most certainly have done it.

It is not made absolutely clear whether the book is primarily intended for amateurs or for professional students. The individual authors keep using the word *amateur* although they are mostly describing professional practice. The writer of the jacket blurb sidesteps the issue very neatly with 'this book enables even the most inexperienced amateur group to attain professional standards'. The publishers appear also to have cast their eye hopefully on the American market to the extent that the phrase 'load(get)in' keeps recurring and 'theater' is spelled thus.

Illustrations are good, plentiful and

mostly make good points. Indeed the captions are often more telling than the text – which inevitably leads one to consider whether such a concentrated book might find a happier format as a textless picture book with running captions. Nevertheless it stands as a good introduction to how theatre happens although I would have been a mite happier if the word *introduction* had actually been used, and some indication (a reading list perhaps?) that complete stagecraft is a little more complex than can be compressed into 192 pages – even when done so skillfully as it has undoubtedly been done in this book.

Take some wood and canvas and nails and things. Build yourself a theatre, a stage, light it, learn about. When you've done that you will probably know how to write a play – that is to say if you can.

Eugene O'Neill's answer to the question 'How can one learn to be a playwright' and one that I would be happy to adapt to more universal use including 'How can one learn to be a stage designer'.

O'Neill was a more complete theatre-person than many dramatists, and Normand Berlin stresses this in his **EUGENE O'NEILL**, one of the titles in a further batch of Macmillan Modern Dramatists. O'Neill is arguably America's most significant international playwright. Certainly he advanced not just the textual content of drama but required – and got – a major contribution from his scenographers. These books tend to start with a biography and end with an appraisal, the core being

analyses of the plays. But Normand Berlin logically takes O'Neill's life after 'Long Day's Journey into Night' with its autobiographical, strains – and transcendental moments. . . .

For a second you see – and seeing the secret, are the secret. For a second there is meaning! Then the hand lets the veil fall and you are alone, lost in the fog again, and you stumble on toward nowhere, for no good reason.

Irish speech has a poetry of idiom and musicality of delivery that gives its drama a heightened realism which emphasises the universal relevance of what might otherwise seem to be a local, highly personal theme. Thus the Abbey Theatre and its playwrights quickly became a national theatre of international significance. **J. M. SYNGE** was a key figure, both as a writer and a catalyst and Eugene Benson has contributed a 'Macmillan' on him, analysing the plays and seeking the factors that could make a Synge who could *wright* classic plays. (I have always found it both fascinating and satisfying that the word is not spelled *playwrite*.) The inner soul can never be fully bared but in Synge's case it is interesting to consider the diverse influences of Paris and the Arun Islands.

We tend to think of **NIKOLAI GOGOL** and **IVAN TURGENEV** as one-off playwrights – 'Government Inspector' and 'Month in the Country'. Nick Worrall naturally includes major analyses of these plays, but he also assesses the rest of their dramatic output in a way which suggests, even convinces, that there is treasure awaiting realisation by a perceptive director. I was personally helped most by a chapter on 'Theatrical Theories and Influences', setting these playwrights in the context of their age and environment.

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Is it not curious how many experts in English literature have a less than scintillating command of English language? Because Frances Gray writes smoothly, interestingly and coherently, her **JOHN ARDEN** at first seems to be a very persuasive piece of critical analysis. Then one gradually becomes increasingly aware of an apparently unbounded admiration for his work until one almost becomes alienated by her defensive stance on his behalf. To receive what almost amounts to praise of polemic proportions can only do Arden a disservice at this point in his development. Which is a pity because once one has got the measure of Ms Gray's devotion to the style and content of Arden's work, there is a very perceptive account of what the playwright is trying to do. What we miss is some cool analytical comment on why, despite elevation to the set book lists of the educational system, Arden appears to show continuing difficulties in establishing rapport with that wider audience which would seem to be warranted by the universality of his theme and the avowed popularity of his communicative style. I certainly find him less easy to understand than I do Frances Gray.

The second page of Michael Hattaway's introduction to his **ELIZABETHAN POPULAR THEATRE** inevitably brings me back to the matter of English language comprehension. I really do rather find that the following sentence interrupts the understanding that should flow between author and reader.

Truth was measured by the internal coherence of the artefacts rather than by congruence with life: dramatists resisted the restrictiveness of the universal when reduced to the socially normative, and they revelled in the truth of strangeness, whether that be the

archaic, the unexpected, the improbable, or the impossible.

Now there may be people who revel in this sort of prose but I would guess that it alienates many (like me) who could most benefit: those wishing to develop their understanding of historical production style as a means to a performance end rather than out of purely academic interest.

So, fellow theatrelovers, consider the advisability of skipping the intro and going straight into the chapters on Playhouses and stages, on Performances, and on Players and playing. There the author gets excited and his enthusiasm does wonders for his language, with his sentences becoming short, factual and readable. The available evidence is relatively slight compared with later periods, but Michael Hattaway is a clever detective who constructs a persuasive case both in general terms and in his case history analyses of five plays.

STAGECRAFT.

The Complete Guide to Theatrical Practice. Consultant Editor: Trevor R. Griffiths Phaidon Press. £12.95 (UK).

EUGENE O'NEILL. Normand Berlin.

J. M. SYNGE. Eugene Benson.

NIKOLAI GOGOL and

IVAN TURGENEV. Nick Worrall.

JOHN ARDEN. Frances Gray.

These four titles are all published in the **MACMILLAN MODERN DRAMATISTS Series**, Edited by Bruce and Adele King. £10 (UK), £2.95 (UK) (Paperback).

ELIZABETHAN POPULAR THEATRE.

Plays in Performance. Michael Hattaway. *Theatre Production Series* (General Editor: John Russell Brown).

Routledge & Kegan Paul. £14.95 (UK).

No Aviary for Canary Fanciers

ANTHONY McCALL

Looking through a selection of London's most notable un-built buildings of the nineteenth century, I came across a splendid project for a national opera house by the riverside at Westminster Pier. There were plans for billiard tables for between arias; a surgery where doctors would treat sore throats; and even a houseboat on which the company could sail downriver for rehearsals or recreation. The plan, drawn up in 1875, failed and New Scotland Yard now stands on the opera house site.

The Victorian age was probably the greatest period for would-be improvers. Committees of Taste sat over architects' plans and projects might be rejected because they were dangerously artistic or seductively ornamental. Other 'failures' included, in passing, a Roman Colosseum at the top of Whitehall; and a true-blue British Eiffel Tower at Wembley - taller, of course, and better than the French original. However, lovers of grand ideas are invited to follow me to the foot of the Alps, to Geneva, to discover another unusually splendid, and perhaps even improbable, opera house.

Here, in the city of Calvin's Reformation, once called "the Protestant Rome", where gracious nineteenth-century houses bespeak comfortable living and the city walls whisper feats of military glories from the days of Julius Caesar to Napoleon Bonaparte, there live 173,000 souls within the city limits. Or, counting the immediate catchment area as well, some 300,000 in all. Yet here too, is a thriving opera house, the Grand Théâtre, modelled on the Paris Opéra in architectural style, and engaging international stars of the stature of Ruggero Raimondi (a regular performer), José Carreras, Katia Ricciarelli, Hermann Prey; legendary names like Josef Svoboda (who recently designed "Tristan" and the complete "Ring" cycle here), Covent Garden's own Götz Friedrich, and such music directors as Raymond Leppard and Nello Santi. How do they do it? No amount of subsidy can bail out a half-empty lyric theatre; and

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no singers will perform if the productions aren't right or the management is too commercial. The Grand Théâtre is open all year round – and plays to an average of 94 per cent capacity (1,488 seats).

Not surprisingly, there is an interesting tale to tell.

The city and canton of Geneva, which presides over one of the richest *per capita* income groups in the world, according to recent research (highest *disposable* income anywhere), returns a generous subsidy to its opera house. Income amounts to £7 million per annum, including box office receipts. One wonders how many Genevans are actually reached . . . well the answer is, a surprising 10 per cent. And despite an understandably heavy reliance upon subscription sales (a regular mailing list of 6,000), which accounts for the great majority of ticket sales, a deliberate policy has been pursued of keeping allocations available, at special prices, for the casual or occasional opera-goer. There are also “popular performances”, at low prices, for special social or work groups of the public.

With the reliance on subscriptions, which at least gets the money into the bank, you might expect the consequent “freedom” to encourage mounting of experimental productions. After all, financial constraints are what force companies to “play safe” half the time. But no. Careful assessment of Geneva audiences' taste shows that they prefer the classics, so although this spring will see Britten's *Mort à Venise* (Death in Venice), in co-production with Scottish Opera, normal choices are Bellini, Strauss's *Salome*, Offenbach's *La Périchole* and so on, to look down the current season's programme, and also Handel's *Julius Caesar* (a co-production with English National Opera), directed by Charles Mackerras, designed by John Copley, scenery and costumes by John Pascoe and Michael Stennett respectively; and Tchaikovsky's rarely-performed *The Queen of Spades* (not in the repertory of any of Western Europe's major houses, and the New York Met last performed it in 1965). Sometimes a “classic” is bought off-the-peg, like their *Marriage of Figaro* in February and March: Peter Hall and John Bury's collaboration and even some English singers. But more often, the management prefers to find its own novelties, which frequently happens through scenic innovation. This emphasis can threaten to dwarf the musical proceedings, as with their recent *Queen of Spades*, where the opulence and technical display became distracting. But from the visual point of view . . .

Productions run for an average of six to eight performances only. Thereafter they die, never to be re-performed. The fact is, with such a small opera audience, they estimate they have reached their natural limit – before people start coming for the second time round! And since the greater part of their audience is “abonné” (on subscription) anyway, they daren't bring productions back into the rep within “recent memory” unless it is say, a Verdi or Mozart warhorse. Storage costs would be prohibitive to keep them longer. So, with



The sweeping new balconies of the Grand Théâtre auditorium.



Exterior of “Le Grand Théâtre de Genève”. Flagpoles on either side of the main doors often carry the red and yellow flag of the Republic and Canton of Geneva. It is spotlighted at night, from across the square it faces.

approximately ten new productions a year, things work out expensive. Owing to fairly generous rehearsal periods (which take place in the former League of Nations premises by the side of Lake Geneva, looking across to Mont Blanc), the first night curtain rises on pretty smooth productions. It has also avoided the temptation to become an “aviary” for “canary fanciers”, drawing its audiences by billing (usually unrehearsed) star singers, as Covent Garden once used to do. Nor do visiting stars treat Geneva lightly, as can happen in smaller opera houses – guesting for a few performances. In the bad old days of the late 'fifties, during the Met's Rudolph Bing era, there were, for instance, eight different Amonasros for only 11 performances of *Aida*! Here, *The Times*, *International Herald Tribune* and other papers review productions for their international merit – or indeed, their rarity value; since the search for more “classics” turns up frequent novelties.

The opera does not tour, but the resident ballet company does. “It is our calling card”, says François Duchaine, *Secrétaire Générale*, who spoke to your correspondent in his office, while the orchestra rehearsed downstairs in the pit. “There are also visits from Maurice Béjart's Ballet of the Twentieth Century and other companies during the year, not to mention various concert performances by leading singers and musicians” he added. Two of the new productions are ballet works, and like the operas, they have the services of the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande – even when on tour.

The orchestra is made up of two groups of 60 musicians, one playing in the pit at the Grand Théâtre, and the other playing for the radio or television stations (Radio Suisse Romande, etc.), who also pay their salaries. It's a bruising schedule for the musicians, but it ensures that the orchestra is no mere “pit orchestra”. Ernest Ansermet, the OSR's first conductor and progenitor, put the orchestra on the map



The sumptuous foyer of the Grand Theatre, Geneva.

with his prolific recordings for Decca after the war, which also rubbed off on the opera house. The late Karl Böhm was among the guest conductors.

The Grand Théâtre itself, set squarely in the middle of one of the city's grander thoroughfares, Place Neuve, is flanked by Musée Rath, an art museum, and the music conservatory – all statuary and graceful curved windows. Across the square are the former city walls, with streets leading up to the old town, or *Vielle Ville*, and the imposing cathedral; and facing the theatre, are Geneva University and the iron gates of the Parc des Bastions, with their crowned imperial eagles looking every bit as grand as the former Russian imperial eagles at St Petersburg. In such a setting, one is reminded of the piquancy, so quaintly English, of setting down the Nation's main opera house in a market garden amid the cabbages and porters. In Geneva, thoughts turn to more historic concepts, like the city's literary forebears, Voltaire, and Rousseau, and to its traditional cultural orientation towards Paris. This was, after all, the French département of Léman, under Napoleon – hence the French for Lake Geneva, Lac Léman.

However, this opera house is no nineteenth-century ornament. Behind the decorated facade and front of house areas, is a completely modern theatre. An oxygen cylinder burst into flames during a rehearsal of *Die Walküre* in 1951, setting fire to the entire interior, and allegedly *melting* the fire curtain. By a miracle, the exterior was saved, including the sumptuous foyer with its heavenly stucco, painted tableaux and ceiling. There were 13 subsequent separate studies to update and improve the theatre's

capabilities, out of which finally emerged a larger stage, more seating, and far greater technical flexibility. Their sheet metal safety curtain, incidentally, may be covered with raised silver and gold leaves, but it is also now 12 cm thick, 2 tons in weight, and can move at a speed of 30 cm (one foot) a second.

Like most nineteenth-century theatres, the Grand Théâtre was more concerned in its original 1875 conception, to provide not so much good sightlines, as to maximize the "social" aspects of an evening at the opera. The atmosphere of the foyer is ample testimony to this. It must have been a grand occasion on opening night, 2 October 1879, with Rossini's *William Tell* chosen as the suitably patriotic inaugural production. Now the sightlines are all good, which is reflected in the pricing structure: there are some cheap seats at £3–£4, but the majority range around £10–£15, with a top of £20.

The dimensions of the post-fire stage enable the Grand Théâtre to borrow productions from such varied and large opera houses as Nancy, Turin, La Scala, Paris and the London Coliseum.

The fly tower rises 30 metres above the proscenium, and is used to fly 35 flats, drapes or whatever, with a maximum weight capacity of 500 kg. There is a movable rear stage on heavy rails, which moves electronically, alongside the main stage. Alternatively, it can move into the same position as the main stage, if the latter is dropped below stage level. Two side stages add further large areas, which if added together, total a larger space than the main stage itself. This is the key to using productions from other, larger, opera houses, because the stage areas correspond

closely.

The main stage comprises five sections, each measuring 2,40 metres by 17 metres, and a sixth measuring 2,80 metres by 17 metres. Each weighs 17 tons, thus bringing the total stage weight to over 100 tons. The six sections are mounted on hydraulic pistons, making them mobile, together or separately. They can drop by 8,67 metres or rise to 2 metres below or above stage level. On top of this stage can be added a revolve, 14,50 metres in diameter, which can turn in either direction at up to two revolutions per minute. Its distributed weight is eight tons. The orchestra pit, likewise, is composed of three lifts, or movable sections, allowing either extra stage space, as required, or variable arrangements of the players. Everything is done by hydraulics.

The lighting box, which, intriguingly is still referred to as *le jeu d'orgue*, or literally, the organ keyboard (remember the old control desks?), is situated in the middle of the Dress Circle. Using 240 circuits for the stage itself, and additional circuits for the pit and the auditorium, the lighting consists of two lots of memories: one ferrite and the other cassette, allowing 600 lighting effects in all. Total power output can run to about 1000 kw for stage and auditorium combined, they say. They use 326 spots of different kinds, and among other effects, three 16 mm projectors for special effects. I noticed too, that two closed-circuit television systems have been installed. One, Mr Duchaine explained, is for co-ordination between front and back stage and the orchestra pit. The other is to allow videotape recordings to take place, from the lighting box just above stage level, of rehearsals and live performances.

The sound box has also been completely re-equipped, with the notable addition of special sound effects, regulated through a system of speakers throughout the auditorium. Obviously this also relays the performance to other parts of the building.

The various technical departments, like paint frame, armory and costumes – are all outside the main theatre building.

On a decorative note, the auditorium ceiling is unusual in comprising separate sections of curved metal – which form the main decorative theme of the room – pierced with small, individual lights. These are embellished with Murano glass from Venice, giving an impression of a starry, asymmetrical sky. The safety curtain, when lowered, continues the metallic theme, as described earlier. The total effect is strong and simple, in this modern, sweeping auditorium, with its clean lines.

The present head of the Grand Théâtre is Monsieur Hughues R. Gall, formerly Rolf Liebermann's assistant in Paris. To judge from his reputation as a pragmatist and innovator of fresh ideas, rather than by his informal manner and strikingly arty office, the opera house is probably on the way to consolidate its place among Western European houses, somewhere between the first and second divisions. Somewhere between a British regional opera house and Covent Garden, say – in fact, not unlike English National Opera, on a smaller scale.

THREE AFTERPIECES

In last CUE, FRANCIS REID visited eighteenth-century masterpieces of theatre architecture in Bayreuth, Hvar and Munich. But there are other delights for the theatric tourist in these towns, including . . .

Pastoral ruins in Bayreuth

Many theatres become ruins but very few are conceived and built as ruins. However, the open air theatre in the park of the Hermitage at Bayreuth has been a ruin since 1743 when it was built as such. The architect was Saint-Pierre and the theatre was commissioned by the Margravine Wilhelmine who was responsible a few years later for Bibiena's Bayreuth Opera House.

The Margravine wrote plays, composed operas and took part in amateur theatricals. Assuming a shepherdess costume allowed a romantic escape from the formality of court life. The roman ruin was a favourite seventeenth-century setting for pastoral poetics and heroic operas. In the eighteenth century the ruin became a pictorial form in its own right – an appropriate setting for courtly pastoral plays. The grass and plants that grew from the cracks were not the result of neglect: they were planted there.

The stage consists of a series of five stone portals and is used as a summer theatre. Productions in 1982 were 'Orpheus in the Underworld', 'Don Juan' and 'Dracula'. Not perhaps the sort of works that the theatre was conceived for! A daytime inspection of the scenery packs confirmed that there was no attempt to recreate the production style of any particular period in the theatre's own history. I need hardly add that I immediately wanted to get going with Handel, although I would happily settle for most composers, up to about Cimarosa.

There were spotlights tucked in every bay behind the stone wings, and the inevitable scaffold foh rig. I suppose you need it for that sort of repertoire. Now, for Handel, you could cut down the candle power . . .

It is all rather idyllic and while the more perfect Wagnerites were sleeping off their leitmotiv intoxication of the night before, I had it to myself in the warm August morning to muse romantically and mentally sing fragments from my extensive pastoral repertoire.

Converted ruins in Hvar

Across the harbour from the 1612 Arsenal Theatre (see CUE 20), the Dalmatian Island of *Hvar* has an open-air theatre approached by winding hilly paths. This was established in 1953 but the site and its stones have known earlier drama. The theatre was formed within French fortifications of 1807 on the site of a former Greek orthodox monastery. In 1982 there was a general air of infrequent usage, although the lighting was in position – interesting man-basket fixed to telegraph pole boom with four spots on a T-piece. Sad to see a good orchestra pit overgrown, and is there any significance in the stone bollards which give the pit rail a distinct feeling of quayside.

Preserved Puppets in Munich

Puppet Theatre is generally regarded in Britain as children's entertainment with a



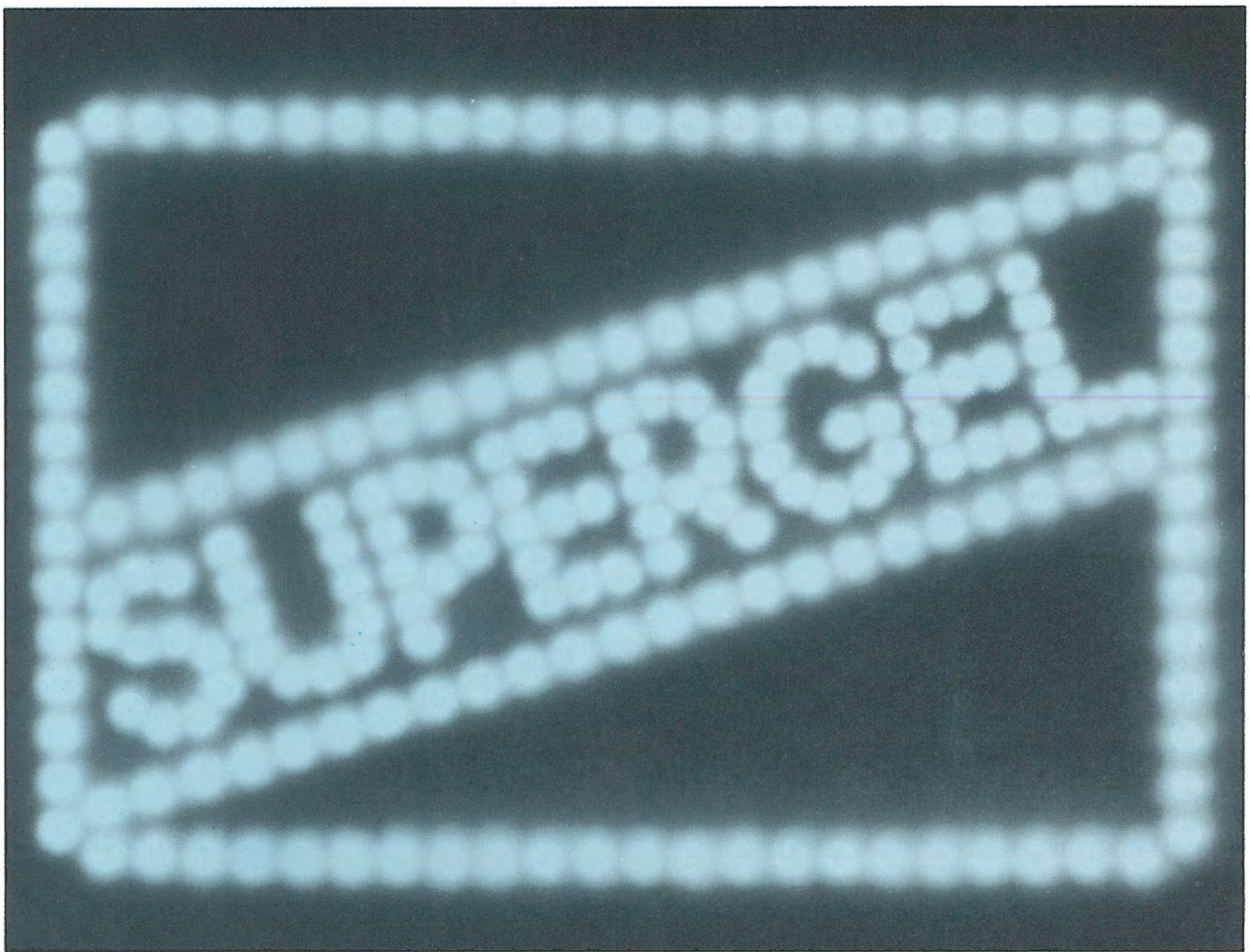
Open-air theatre built as a romantic ruin in 1743 in the park of the Hermitage at Bayreuth.



Open-air theatre built in 1953 within Napoleonic fortifications on the site of a Greek monastery on the Dalmatian Island of Hvar.



Marionettes by Ivo Puhonny for Wedekind's 'Death and the Devil' (Puppet Museum, Munich).



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dramatic content rarely seeking sources beyond the fairy tale and nursery rhyme. Elsewhere in Europe, however, puppetry, while by no means neglecting children, offers serious performances to adults. Perhaps the example that most readily springs to mind is the Salzburg Marionettes performances of opera, ballet and concerts.

The only really vital missing function of a puppet is movement of the face muscles. This is hardly a drawback in opera where the facial movements required for producing vocal tone are rarely helpful for character projection. Indeed, puppets can often produce more dramatic truth than a singing cast. I do not know of a puppet opera house with live orchestra and hidden singers, but 'real time' puppets whose operators are responding to an audience can bring a sense of live immediacy to an operatic audio recording. With the horrifying cost of an opera performance, it is rather surprising that puppetry has not received more experimental attention as a possible means of making opera more accessible.

In Germany, serious drama is performed by puppets and the Munich Puppet Museum includes plays of the order of *Amphytron*. This puppet collection is located in the City Museum of Munich, capital of Bavaria, which has long been an area particularly associated with puppet making and by toy making of all kinds. The collection, however, includes the work of puppeteers from all over Germany. There are rod puppets, gloves, and many marionettes. The exhibits also include mechanical toys with movement sequences performed by one or more puppets - including a super 'Pierrot und der Monde' of 1870/80. There are large complex mechanical stages as well as simpler including a late nineteenth/early twentieth-century complete painted canvas theatre, and an 1860 *vorhang* (house curtain).

Puppets are often given exaggerated faces to help them to project. The nursery traditions tend to produce features bordering on the grotesque. One of the most interesting features of the Munich collection, however, is the wide range of styles from total naturalism through degrees of heightened realism to extreme forms that explore many of the *ists* and *isms* of theatre's development.

Recommended even for those who do not particularly like puppets.



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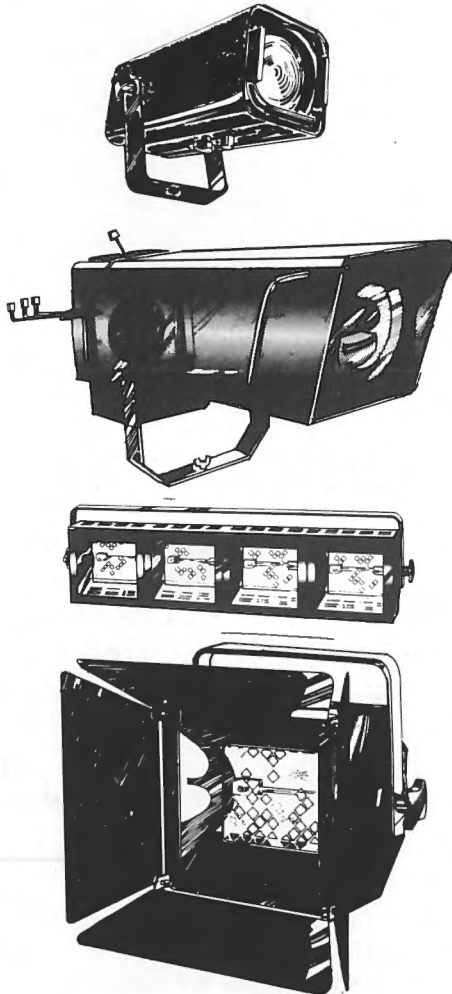
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PRODUCT NEWS

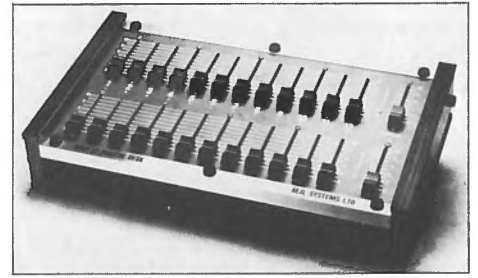
Lito

A new name in the market place is always a promising event for theatre lighting people. Tulla Lighting is the newcomer with a range which includes all the basic lighting tools. A 650 Fresnel and Profile suitable for T18, T26 and M series lamps. Compact zoom focusing follow/spots supplied with fully closing iris and built-in 4-colour magazines. 1,3 and 4-lamp Floodlight, Groundrow and Batten units for 150 to 1000 watts, all Tungsten Halogen. The single units available with barndoors. It's all very professional equipment, but why oh! why do they have to be christened Lito, sounds anything but professional. More information from Tulla Lighting Ltd, 5 Beckett Road, Andover, Hants.



You pays your penny . . .

The choice seems to be building your own equipment from circuit modules or a complete equipment or even a bit of each from two compatible systems. This is how M J L Systems and L & B Electronic introduce their wares. These are respectively a



Microdim power pack and 12 + 18 channel 2 preset lighting desk. Power dimming modules comprising "module blocks" for specific functions, slave power controller, master controller and supply/reference board. For the latter alternative several schematic diagrams are provided. For more detailed information on control systems write to M J L Systems Ltd, 45 Worley Road, West Croydon, Surrey. For modular systems and electronic kits, L & B Electronic, 34 Oakwood Avenue, Mitcham, Surrey.

As you like it

Specifiers looking for values in performance of luminaires may well have time to evaluate available equipment. The user or lighting designer on the other hand frequently has to rely on more easily understandable performance data from the manufacturers. How would you like this data presented? was the question George Gill asked on behalf of US Lighting men (see CUE 19). Unfortunately the result of this survey will now not be available until later this year when the Theatre, TV and Film Lighting Symposium of the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America is published in December 1983. We shall keep you informed although only one CUE reader showed interest enough to complete Mr Gill's questionnaire.

New Look - Old Vic

Ed Mirvish, Canadian businessman and new proprietor of the Old Vic has set October 1983 for the re-opening of a completely restored theatre, present estimate £2 million. Architects Renton Howard Wood Levin Partnership with Kyle Stewart Ltd are to restore the overall design of 1871 whilst substantially improving both public and performers' amenities. Works will include reinstatement of the original pairs of stage boxes, involving gilded fibrous plasterwork and elegant drapes. Existing seating will be refurbished and with additional seats, an audience in excess of 1,000 will be accommodated. A warren of rooms at Front of House is to be demolished to give spacious foyers, whilst backstage, new facilities should place the building amongst the best of any of London's West End theatres.

Between Cues

The thoughts of Walter Plinge

Collectives

Sheep flock and cows herd. You can have a swarm of bees, a school of porpoises or a pack of wolves. But what about scenographers? Well, Alan Ayckbourn is thought to be the first person to refer to a *gobo of lighting designers*.

Keep down the good work

And now for a word in support of Channel 4. I am delighted by its undoubted success – a success well demonstrated by its low audience ratings. At last we have a proper minority service doing what I always thought that BBC 2 had been set up to do.



Figaro extracted

The 1982 Walter Plinge Award for Imaginative Arts Sponsorship went to *Liebig*, sometime distinguished purveyors of meat extract. I may be late in recognising their contribution, but then they, in common with all other arts financing bodies, were more than rather late in recognising Mozart. Still, when Liebig did honour Mozart, they did it with élan, distributing scenes from *Figaro* with their product. I do not know when they were issued or whether they represent an existing production – but whoever painted these scenes knew the opera, its characters and the precise scenography implied in the libretto and music. These six 4" by 3" cards are sufficiently detailed to provide a precise production format. Is there a contemporary meat extractor who would sponsor a new production based on these cards?

Architact

To criticise a fellow artist needs delicacy. Singers have a tactful way of separating the voice from the person ('a lovely lady, quite super . . . but the voice!') I predict an interesting future for the young architect who referred to a senior partner's building as a *splendid concept, but should never have been left out in the rain*.

If any of its programmes do, by mistake, achieve high ratings, then they must surely be transferred 'upstairs' to make more room for programmes that very small numbers of people want to see. Yet Channel 4's viewer count has aroused newspaper screams in tones that vary from simple delight to witch hunting hysteria! Minorities are relative: a minuscule percentage of the viewing millions, but a percentage that would fill any theatre for a very long time indeed. Certainly Channel 4 gave me by far my finest television experience of the christmas holidays: Antonio Soller's baroque dramatic cantatas. Finely sung, staged and filmed. Well over an hour of pure delight. And a wonderful accompaniment to my pre-lunch carafe of sloe gin. Well done Channel 4 – keep up your good work by keeping your ratings down.

A marquee for today

It is, I think, reasonable to assume that if the architect's original elevations for the National Theatre had shown a newscasting sign on the facade – particularly that facing the river – there would have been some . . . well, shall we just say that there would have been some discussion. Both around the building-board's committee table and among that extensive external

critical body of wishers, well and ill. But an electronic sign has now appeared at a point of command whose precise siting yields nothing to compromise. Its luminous messages roll and wipe to unfold the purpose of a building whose function might otherwise only be immediately apparent to those who know a fly tower when they see one. I have not yet driven southwards over Waterloo Bridge in daylight, but after dark I find a dramatic gain in the NT's architectural impact. Lights generally, and moving lights particularly, need isolation to register. The size, shape, and flow of this sign combine to make it rather poetic. The messages are inevitably prosaic (definitely a case of style rather than content) but there is a positive projection of *Come In*. This light writing device is as appropriate to today's design for a riverside National Theatre as the Marquee was for yesterday's pavement fronting Theatre Royal.

Backpage personalities

Have you seen the back page of the current TABS? Really! What is our technical press coming to? Is not that picture of Reid just too too much!! My goodness me, for the cost of that enormous colour block they could have made a positive contribution to theatre technology. Like satisfying Reid's lust. And for what does he lust? We understand that he craves nothing more than a new cinemoid colour which would be the equivalent of double fifty. But the market mammons have set a trend and so it is up to CUE to demonstrate that we too are in the very first Rank. And so, demonstrating our customary discretion in the use of colour and space, we offer you a picture of Walter Plinge, albeit in his rather more salad days.



Bad language

New ugly words often entertain my ear on first hearing. But on their first hearing only. There is one word whose current growth rather depresses me and so I would welcome all possible help in my efforts to suppress PRIORITISATION.

Creative pressure

. . . and on the seventh day I have my seminar on resting.