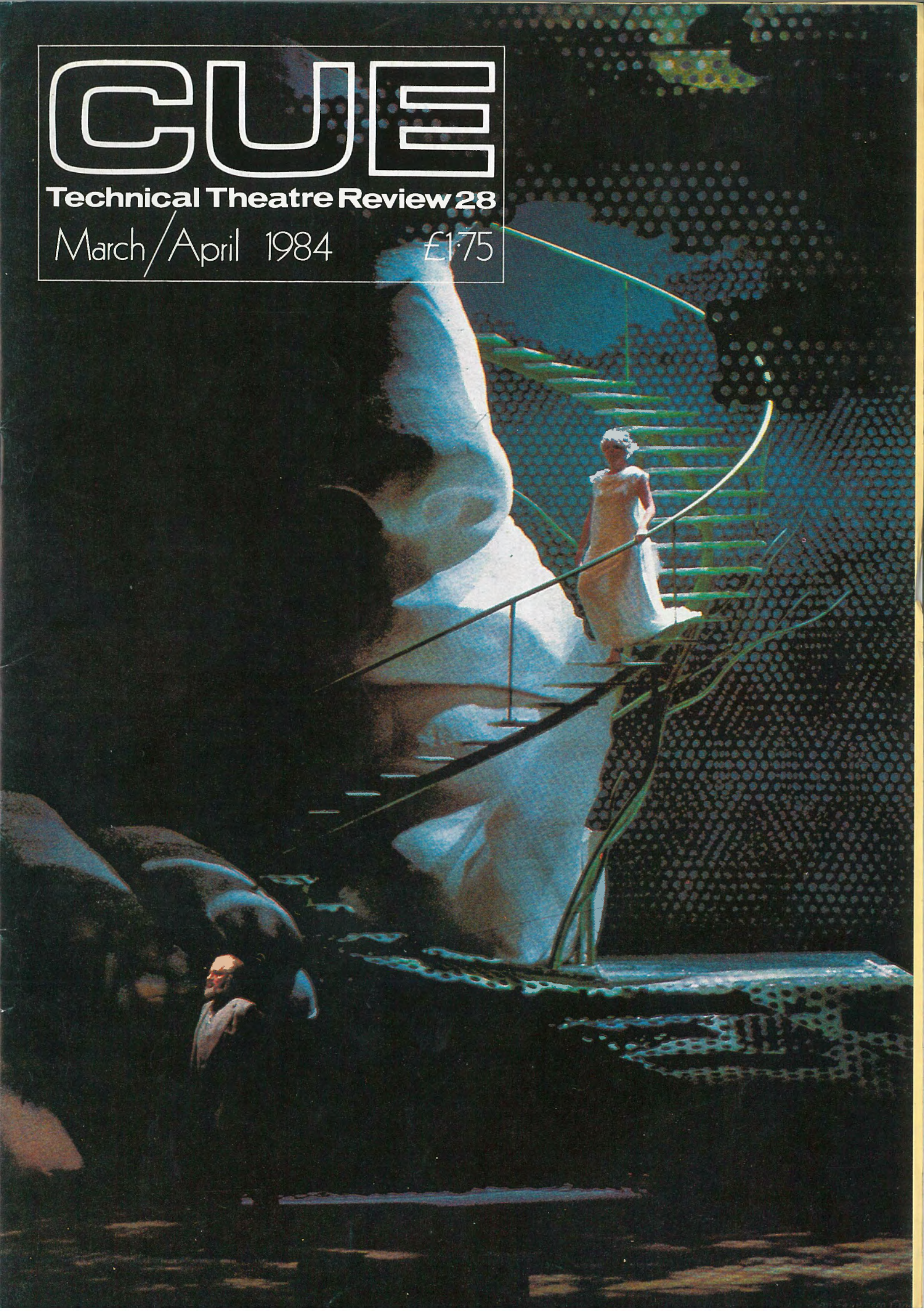


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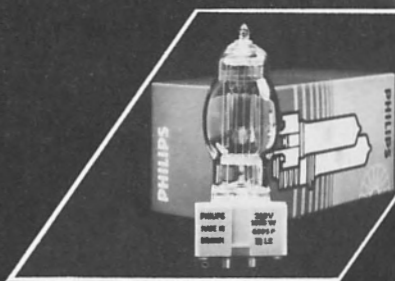
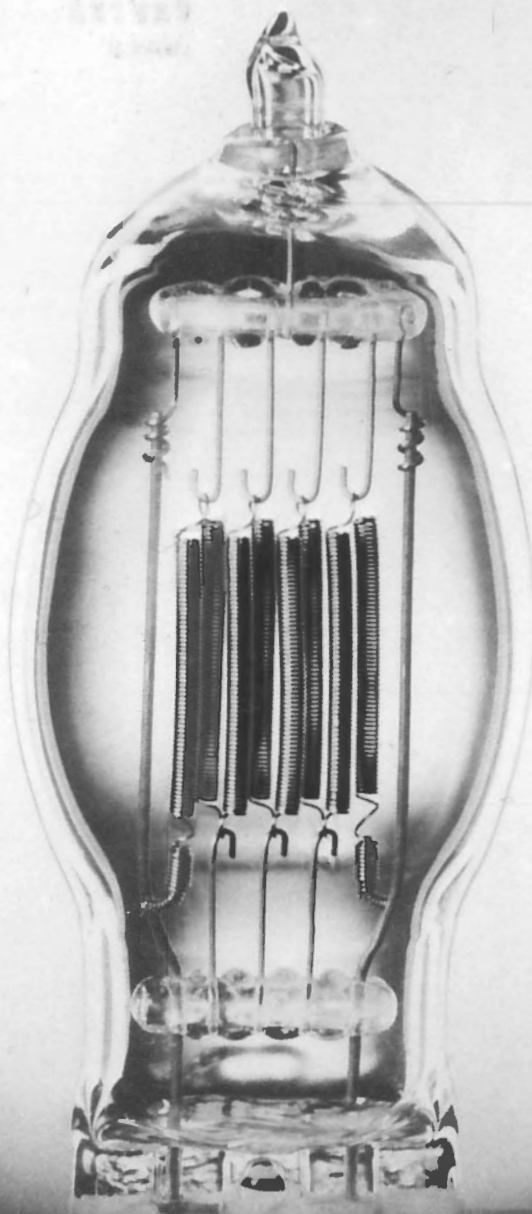
Technical Theatre Review 28

March/April 1984

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Our cover picture shows San Francisco Opera's 1983 American premier staging of Michael Tippett's "Midsummer Marriage". Ron Scherl's photograph taken during rehearsal captures one of the most striking visual scenes in the opera.

On page 4 we reproduce some highly descriptive reviews from the American press in which the Producer, the Scenographer and Lighting Designer all receive well merited recognition of their part in this magnificent production. Robin Don, the Designer, adds his tribute to the splendid technical team which made it all happen.

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CONTENTS

Images of Exuberant Beauty	4
<hr/>	
Sonus ex Machina or Don't Amplify the Gentle Lark <i>Frederick Bentham</i>	7
<hr/>	
Stage Design <i>David Fingleton</i>	9
<hr/>	
A Platform for the 1983 'Ring' at Bayreuth	12
<hr/>	
Books	15
<hr/>	
Looking After <i>Philip L. Edwards</i>	16
<hr/>	
Double Bill that Pays <i>Terence Frisby</i>	17
<hr/>	
Broadway's Theatre Museum <i>Francis Reid</i>	19
<hr/>	
Letters to the Editor	20
<hr/>	
ABTT Trade Show '84 <i>James Laws</i>	21
<hr/>	
Product News	23

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SCENIC ENCUMBRANCE

Throughout the development of music theatre, the marriage of words and music has had something of an air of an uneasy truce. To induce solidarity, there is nothing quite like a common enemy – and in the opera house that role is traditionally played by scenery.

The pages of operatic history are peppered with allegations of scenic decadence, the latest being written on page 48 of the programme of the 1984 Camden Festival. . . . *presenting them in such a way as to emphasise the musical drama without the encumbrance of elaborate scenic settings, therefore allowing the words and music prime importance.*

From the orchestra pit came the ravishing sounds of Vivaldi played on authentic instruments. On stage the singers wandered around their black box, concentrating on avoiding their light while offering inhibited gestures when the music called for heroics. The audience shared the general relief when the chorus appeared with a pile of white drapes which they tied to counterweighted bars in what must surely have been one of the better choreographed fit-ups ever seen on the London stage.

We are not telling this tale merely to propose yet again that scenery, far from being an encumbrance, supports a performance and that without it the actor can be cruelly exposed. For we suspect that the real reason for lack of scenery at this particular performance was lack of money. Alas, to admit this would have been unfashionable in a climate when every new cut in arts and education is paraded as a welcome initiative whose challenge will lead us to discovering a new excellence.

The steady evaporation of arts finance is placing an ever increasing premium on creative imagination. But, as we grasp the challenge, let us not deny that our theatres would be even better if properly funded.

Images of Exuberant Beauty

San Francisco Opera is very much a team effort says their General Director, Terence A. McEwen. Thus it followed that McEwen's early plans to bring Sir Michael Tippett's 'The Midsummer Marriage' to San Francisco envisaged an overall British-American collaboration. The following reviews taken from The New Yorker, the San Francisco Examiner and San Francisco Chronicle are gratefully acknowledged as showing that team spirit everywhere evident in an outstandingly successful production. Back home Robin Don explains the part of the technical team in achieving this special magic.

**Andrew Porter
in the New Yorker**

Michael Tippett's first opera 'The Midsummer Marriage' — a lyrical celebration of love and joy — had its American premiere this month in San Francisco. The opera tells of the changing seasons, of nature's endless dance, of the starry heaven and the fruitful earth, and of a young man and a young woman held apart for a while by differing idealisms but joined at last after a mutual sacrifice by which each is enriched. It is a contemporary work that has things in common with 'The Magic Flute' and with 'The Woman without a Shadow'. Its profuse beautiful imagery — musical, visual and verbal — gladdens the senses and stirs the mind. Tippett, in his essay 'Poets in a Barren Age', sought to define a composer's task:

To create images from the depths of the imagination and to give them form . . .
Images of the past, shapes of the future.
Images of vigour for a decadent period,
images of calm for one too violent.
Images of reconciliation for worlds torn
by division. And in an age of mediocrity
and shattered dreams, images of
abounding, generous, exuberant beauty.

'The Midsummer Marriage' composed in 1946-52 and first performed in 1955, at Covent Garden, reflects the bright years when Britain strove to create a new, juster society.

There are shadows, dangers, and a death in 'The Midsummer Marriage' but its main song is of fruitfulness and joy.

At the first production, some were bothered by Tippett's dramaturgy, for he had embodied his realistic story — the age-old comedy plot of a marriage delayed both by misunderstandings and by parental opposition — in a scenario where the imaginings and emotional adventures of the characters are given theatrical shape. The poetic metaphors by which we describe and investigate



*Mary Jane Johnson (Jenifer),
San Francisco Opera Chorus and Ballet.*

Photographs in this article and our front cover picture by Ron Scherl, San Francisco.



Act III The ancients return and the lotus blossom containing the transfigured spirits of Mark & Jenifer emerges from the temple.

experience take on visual and sonic form. Jungian dreams are enacted. Jenifer, in flight from Mark's embrace, finds herself at the foot of a staircase leading to heaven, and, as if it were the most natural thing in the world for her to do, she ascends it and passes out of our sight. Gates leading deep into the warm, pulsing earth open to receive Mark. The San Francisco production, directed by John Copley and designed by Robin Don, is the fourth I have seen, and it is the most successful, for it proceeds with utter naturalness, passing effortlessly between 'real life' and scenic metaphor. Solos, choral scenes, and dances are blended in a single, spellbinding adventure.

The imagined 'temple' in the woods is an Ozymandian shattered visage, and the gates into the earth are represented by an enormous plaster hand, two of whose fingers swivel upwards to admit entrance. The feeling of a dappled glade where enchantments may happen, one whose aspect can suddenly change, is skillfully created by shapes in perforated metal, exquisitely colored, and very skillfully lit (by Thomas Munn). Terry Gilbert's choreography is fearless, beautiful, sensuous, and sensitive to all Tippett's intended imagery. The dancers are good, and Strephon, their leader, played by Jamie Cohen, is outstanding. The chorus — a regular glory of the San Francisco company — is superb. (Dancers and chorus become principals in this opera). The orchestra, enjoying some of the loveliest nature music ever written, plays with great eloquence. The work, the company's press release says, 'was given more than the routine number of rehearsals,' and one can well believe it.

The expert individual contributions came together in a single, inspired presentation of Tippett's inspiring opera. I've never admired Mr. Copley's work more. I hope the New York, Chicago, Houston, Dallas companies are clamouring to borrow the production.

Scott Beach
in the San Francisco Examiner

Magic 'Midsummer Marriage'

The superstars of the San Francisco Opera's American premiere production of Michael Tippett's 'The Midsummer Marriage' which opened on Saturday, are the settings and the lighting. Not that there isn't some fine singing, dancing and playing in this remarkable offering — but Robin Don, in his American debut, has created a design of astonishing power, which is magically enhanced by the lighting and projections by Thomas Munn.

The opera, with words and music by Sir Michael Tippett, is an opulent fantasy in the tradition of Shakespeare's 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' and Mozart's 'The Magic Flute'. We see a young couple, Mark and Jenifer, involved in the ancient struggle to harmonize the spiritual with the physical; the worldly with the heavenly. In the process, we hear some great music, and we have one of the most refreshing theatrical

experiences imaginable.

The audience fairly gasped as the centerpiece of Don's design was first revealed. It's a huge stone carving of a head, like something found in temple ruins. It so dominates the action as to be almost hypnotic. A soaring spiral staircase leads up into the very brain on that idol, symbolizing the ascent to the spiritual and paradisaic. Below, a gigantic stone hand guards the gateway to the earthly and profane. Munn's use of lighting over that stunning image is masterful.

As I see it, 'The Midsummer Marriage' is what opera is all about . . . or should be. It looks into basic and powerful forces and currents in human experience, and it takes full advantage of the magic of theatrical expression. This is the kind of lyric theater that should last, and be a vital part of our heritage.

Robert Commanday
in the San Francisco 'Chronicle'

S. F. Premiere is an eyeful. Amazing 'Marriage' at the Opera

The San Francisco Opera — the only major American company to introduce a modern work this year — went all out in its American premiere of Sir Michael Tippett's 'The Midsummer Marriage' Saturday.

In wonder-filled settings by Robin Don, the drama moved smoothly among its three worlds — of the mythic supernatural, of the psyche and of the mundane. The genius of the opera and the success of this production lay exactly in the blending of the layers or facets to each other.

Uniquely in opera here, interpretive dance played a major role as the spirit — really sprite — world reached out to the earthlings in Terry Gilbert's choreography. The dance was beguiling, though overdone at the end with gushing abandon as Tippett seems to have required.

The fanciful visual production, including beautiful lighting and projections, is necessary because the music does not win on its own. The score is immediate, however, and far richer for the voice, than for the orchestra. The choral writing is brilliant, more elaborate and polyphonic than in any previous opera here.

The 1955 opera is an early modern British or post-Vaughan Williams style in which the harmonic vocabulary and effects are not dissonant enough to frighten your maiden great-aunt. Without much sustained tension developing or wide-ranging contrasts in the music, the totality of the experience as theater was all the more crucial.

That's all right. Operas may transport by any and all means, and this one did, conveying under a colorful cloud cover of ambiguity its symbolic-metaphoric-allegorical burden with a certain measure of delight.

The wedding of Mark and Jenifer, to take place in the early morning of a midsummer day, at a magic forest place, and to be witnessed by a great chorus of their friends, is deferred by journeys of self-discovery for them both.

Rejecting his physical love, Jenifer (Mary Jane Johnson) must ascend ('heavenwards') to find her spiritual self. In rage, Mark descends to the Dionysian underworld.

The symbolism of all this is at once and forever apparent in the magic of the fascinating 'place' with its strange temple. An enormous sculpted head, perhaps 50 feet high, minus one eye and cheek and next to it a great hand, its fingers reaching forward, dominate the stage. The fourth and fifth fingers, raised and lowered, control the cave entrance to the underworld.

The ground, a bank and foliage screens are made of heavy perforated metal sheets painted green. A surrounding wall of mirroring plastic sheeting reflects the greenery and woodland projections and adds a shimmering tone.

King Fisher, while trying to trick the Ancients, is confronted by the clairvoyante Sosostriis, rising like Earth Mother from the depths, the scene turned magically sinister and resplendent, with the darkness speckled with bright light. Sheila Nadler, in fantastic witch get-up sings a long dire tale, her mezzo soprano amplified deep and big.

A lotus emerges from the earth, opens and there, dressed as Shiva and Parvati in their pose of 'perpetual copulation' sit Jenifer and Mark. Too much, but more's to come. Challenging the supernatural with his pistol, King Fisher dies of a stroke. Then, with the choristers singing and coupling as ardently as they can, the woodland faeries perform a ritual fire dance and 'celebrate carnal love' until Strephon, completely spent, is fed into the lotus, sacrificed a victim at last.

There is a serene and radiant epilogue at dawn. Now in white wedding garb, Jenifer and Mark return and plight their troth, the orchestra and offstage chorus celebrating.

Well, it's an allegory and, as brilliantly produced by the British director, John Copley, and the company, an experience for the audience to marvel.

**From the Designer,
Robin Don**

'The Midsummer Marriage' is one of the most complicated operas to design as Sir Michael Tippett makes so many extraordinary demands from the visual elements. In an instant we have to be able to leap from a realistic situation to one of dreams and metaphor.

18 months before it wasn't without a little apprehension that we approached the design of this production for the American premiere knowing that previous productions of the opera had been received with certain reservations.

We knew we had to 'clarify' the piece to be acceptable at first viewing as the story portrayed is not one which can be easily interpreted by a first time audience. One has to somehow encourage them (the audience) from curtain up, that the evening is to develop into an adventure of their own innermost thoughts.

The Opera House in Francisco is certainly the largest I've designed for. The stage area puts our Royal Opera House to shame.



*Act III Sosostris appears and King Fisher demands a look into the future
Thomas Munn's lighting and Ron Scherl's projection design was pure magic.*



The sculpted head 50 ft high dominates the action.



The fingers of the giant hand control the entrance to the underworld.

With a limited budget one had to be extremely selective in order to gain maximum effect with the minimum of elements.

A 'temple' is required as a central motif. Photos of previous productions (one of which I assisted on) encouraged me to search for a new shape.

I took a life cast of the face and the right hand of Adam Shand-Kydd and put it into the model box. It instantly threw a feeling of awareness on the situation. To me it embodied a man in contemplation and indeed from the auditorium this image was able to give an incredible presence. As well as being part of the stage picture one also felt it was part of the audience. Instead of a 'temple' image of bricks and mortar it appeared to be instigator in the proceedings.

They were sensitively carved by a young west coast lass from huge blocks of polystyrene. Having a huge scene dock it was possible to seal over the joins and keep it in one piece during the six week run.

The head and hand are part of a large truck unit, the base of which is 5 ft high, 16 ft deep and 60 ft wide.

It was revealed in the course of the first act by raising the flown foliage while the whole truck unit was winched downstage by a distance of approximately 25 feet.

The backcloth is a Rear Projection Screen with a battery of projectors behind. At both sides of the stage the masking flats are made from mirror, the average height being 40 ft in an up and down position thus reflecting the image produced on the R.P.S.

One of the trickiest items to achieve was the emergence of the lotus blossom which contains two people, in Act III. The lotus was 7 ft tall and as well as hydraulically coming from understage it had to rise a further 5 ft through the main truck which was hopefully located directly above the trap.

This action is reversed when the lotus 'burns' to ashes. Amid smoke and flame projections it descends giving the technicians below approximately two minutes to strike it before the main truck travels back upstage. The splendid technical team made this happen with apparent effortless ease.

With the expert aid of lighting designer, Thomas Munn, and photographer, Ron Scherl, the appearance of Sosostris in the third act was pure magic. Again the battery of projectors from front and rear change the whole stage picture from the 'cerebral forest glade' to an image from somewhere out there in the Milky Way - to the initial 'big bang' and the source of all creation.

One was continuously aware of a curiously hypnotic air surrounding the pre-production period. It is a piece that can probe into one's innermost thoughts. One can emerge quite 'changed' as do the characters in the story. Every member of the company has to be prepared to travel on this fascinating journey of self-discovery.

Although it is a difficult opera to theorize about, in performance a special magic is released. Judging by the reviews one feels this team got extremely close to achieving a production which certainly reached out towards a memorable event.

Sonus ex Machina or Don't Amplify the Gentle Lark

FREDERICK BENTHAM

We were a small party, all strangers to one another, on this pilgrimage. An assorted bunch of all ages and both sexes but we enthusiastically covered much ground and climbed many stairs. The scale of the building is immense. Larger than the Anglican cathedral in Liverpool, the largest in this land and by the same architect Giles Gilbert Scott. As with his father's St. Pancras station it presents the same dramatic contrast between the architecture and the engineering. We were there not just to gongoozle but to have ideas as to what the Central Electricity Generating Board might do with this the Battersea power station now that they have no further need for it. I find the answer easy but where to find the money for my project is another matter. No dark satanic mill this, but a temple of fine brick to house the boilers and alternators — the key to power over this land in the thirties. It should become a museum dedicated to heavy engineering. We have no such thing — the Science Museum in South Kensington has to cover too wide a field and its buildings are too small in scale.

Whatever happens, however, it is essential to preserve intact the control room way up aloft overlooking the great alternator hall of 1930. This room, the reader may find difficult to credit, is what is pictured below. The floor of wood blocks was in those days so highly polished that the staff who manned the controls had to change their shoes before they could enter. The walls of the room are marble lined. The ceiling overhead is of rear illuminated laylights glazed with raindrop

glass, a favourite device of the art deco thirties. The fittings on the stairs are of flashed-opal glass in what we in the GEC fittings drawing office in Magnet House Kingsway used to call "demi-coups". Rails and railings are of stainless steel and the pendants behind the switchboard are Holographic prismatic 'butter-dishes'. And what a switchboard, the grandest grand master of them all stretching as far as the eye can reach and full of dials and circuit breakers. I was lucky, for in our party was a man of my age who was making a sentimental journey and he described with eyes shining what it was like to be in charge of this room, with but two other engineers, and the routines of its daily use.

Can you imagine the frustration of those men with their fingers itching to tweak and twiddle all those beautiful wheels, knobs, buttons and switches if they were told day after day, week after week; month after month not to use them. Or at most just to use this a little and not to touch all the rest. Many though the controls are, at a guess there are many more on the average modern sound control in a theatre or, wait for it, an opera house than there are in that vast room. Further, they are all more or less under the fingers and you do not have to, as at Battersea, take a walk to waggle and turn. All the more temptation to do some surreptitious fiddling, maybe. As an operator, designer, inventor and consultant — albeit not in sound — I can well imagine the frustration of never seeing my equipment in use. Of

taking people there to admire it and explaining what it can do and how much better it is than somebody else's, while all the time having to admit that only a little bit has ever been used. A sort of cruise down the road for a midnight hour or two and back to Greenham, metaphorically speaking.

At last my target is in sight; Eric Pressley's contributions on restraint in the pages of the last two issues of CUE*. I found what he had to say and to write both interesting and, rather unexpectedly for a sound man, sane. But for the fact that he works in an opera house, in the Royal Opera House Covent Garden no less, it is unlikely that I would have found myself taking up my typewriter. Then again, it was not what he said he did but what he said the conductors, the maestros, wanted him to do that stimulated my 'phredocytes'.

I quote: 'It may be a fact that the audience doesn't go to the opera to hear a record perfect performance but "you try telling that to a conductor of international standing"'. Here we come to the nub of the matter; we who go to the opera or to concerts of what may be roughly referred to as classical music, flog up there and pay our money to hear a live performance before a particular audience, a one-off. Further, to take an example, we do not expect or want a Royal Festival Hall evening to be an exact repeat of a Royal Albert Hall prom even though conductor, orchestra and music may be identical. Leaving aside the ambience, acoustic or visual, each audience is, in concert hall as in theatre, an individual one and if performers cannot respond to that then they should stick to the recording studios. And those of us that hanker after 'perfection' can seek it on disc or cassette.

As a reasonable man, who never would, never could be a Luddite, I have found myself pondering the problem of the technological take-off and the live performing arts. Because some of us really do get fun out of our dealings with machines, it is no good expecting to do a William Morris return to a manual craft world even in theatre and music. Attending a meeting at the Art Workers Guild the other evening, I was struck by the sensible attitude of Carl Dolmetsch to the use of modern materials in the instruments they make, and play, at Haslemere. Carl, exactly my age, is the son of Arnold Dolmetsch who pioneered the revival of musical instruments of the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries, many of which were at that time virtually extinct: Recorders, krumphorns, lutes, viols, clavichords and the like.

* CUE Nov/Dec p.21 and CUE Jan/Feb p.10-12



Here one might suppose would be a slaughterer of elephants and de-gutter of cats intent on getting exactly the materials used in times past. Not so, there are parts, Carl admitted, where the man-made material may not only be an adequate substitute but wear better and keep in tune longer. The result can still be an instrument as beautiful to look upon as it is to listen to when the music of the time is played thereon. Much the same can apply to that prominent feature of the concert hall – the organ. If, to use two recent buildings as examples, there is an array of pipes as in St. David's Hall Cardiff and an instrument which claims Baroque descent we should not worry as to the exact materials the tracker action is made of. However we do have a right to expect that the sounds we hear emanate directly from the pipes subject only to the *acoustic* of the hall full or empty. In Nottingham the Royal Concert Hall is quite another matter; in spite of an authentic looking 4-manual stop-knob console the traditional pipework position is occupied by a loudspeaker array which instead of standing there boldly rank upon rank, lurks – a presence vaguely sinister. Fair enough, it is one of the latest computer pipeless affairs. Another amplifier stage could up the decibels overnight and blow us out of the hall should the visiting recitalist require.

The word 'acoustic' above also poses a problem in these days of assisted resonance.

Should a choir used to performing in St. Paul's cathedral have this turned up to full-gain whereas for all other musicians it is kept to half? Whatever is done no one should ride the gain control during a concert. Personally, I think even the change from the speech preset to the concert preset should be a ritual requiring the production of two keys or two key codes from two separate persons like a safe deposit. What we must have is a kind of freedom of information act or coming out in the open about 'it'. In a pop concert the loudspeakers are there for all to see and everyone sucks away at their mics in full view. No amplification is as inconceivable as lighting which is not constantly on the flicker and waver. Surely here lies the solution. If the Rhinemaidens are to be amplified then they should have large mics draped around their necks as they swim to and fro. There could be no confusion especially if, as Sir Peter likes them, they are topless.

Likewise in theatre; if it is really true that Mark Antony requires amplification in the Olivier when he borrows the ears of his friends and countrymen – particularly those out front – then let him have an array along the top of the tribune, like President Reagan does. During the war Tommy Trinder used to sway the packed house at the London Palladium, even though he stood at a pedestal mic stuck up from the floats centre while his voice bellowed out from

loudspeakers either side of the 47-ft proscenium arch. It was above board and appropriate, as was the Edith Evans rejection of it when she appeared at the Esmond Knight matinee one Sunday. She imperiously ordered it away at rehearsal but since it was fixed and she wasn't, she stood well away to one side. Once again there was no deception, the audience of nearly two and a half thousand knew they were expected to listen and did. It is inconceivable, or I hope it is, that any conductor would want to amplify his orchestra for *The Rite of Spring* but if I read Eric Pressley aright, there is a grave risk that the maestro might insist upon a mic alongside, for example, the bassoon for the eyrie solo wails – simply because that was the way they did it in the short takes of a recording session. This is quite fraudulent and there could be no limit to such mic-abuse. We could easily have a singer miming to a record for all or part of an opera simply because he or she does not feel in good voice that night. Mind you, the night all three principals in Tosca feel this way and loan Eric their separate records, he *must* take a curtain call for his virtuoso performance.

May I quote Bentham's first law of acousto-dynamics: No sound may travel by electric means from a source to a hearing body. And the second: The first law may be broken provided that at all times it is seen by the hearing body to be broken.

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STAGE DESIGN

DAVID FINGLETON

Some useful lessons in inventive economy from the designers in the Fringe companies

In my last article I suggested that deficiencies in design at the National Theatre stemmed largely from the unsuitable design of the two main auditoria themselves, but the latest production in the Olivier Theatre makes me wonder if I wasn't being altogether too charitable. True the Olivier is a massive space to fill and an unwieldy stage to play upon, but productions are perfectly capable of succeeding there, as both *Guys and Dolls* and *The Rivals* have demonstrated in the recent past. Both those were designed by John Gunter, and it was Gunter who was again responsible for Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan* there in February, this time with Ronald Eyre as his director. What prompted the two of them to aim for spurious grandeur and pointless pageantry in this production I cannot imagine, but the results were highly disagreeable.

Admittedly *Saint Joan* has an epic theme, but its real excitement unquestionably lies in Shaw's beautifully written confrontations between the protagonists, and his masterly, powerful depiction and analysis of Joan's psychology — all this achieved in a series of essentially intimate, small-scale scenes. In the National production however this concept is kicked aside in favour of a tatty and lacklustre attempt to create on stage the full panoply of French battlefields during the Hundred Years War. Gunter has covered the entire playing area in a vast, wrinkled black tarpaulin, presumably in order to evoke muddy fields, and on it set three vast, unwieldy siege towers — a sort of medieval version of his altogether more successful setting for *The Rivals*. These are manipulated laboriously around the stage by a group of uninterested-looking stage hands whom the director has not even troubled to costume so as to make them seem a relevant part of the proceedings. In fact nothing conveys a vestige of realism: not the manifestly cardboard columns that descend from the flies to represent Rheims Cathedral, not Sally Gardner's shoddy and ill-fitting costumes, nor the even worse-fitting wigs, not Chris Ellis's unimaginative and rather slovenly lighting. I found the entire, doubtless extremely costly, exercise unworthy of our National Theatre, but I cannot comment on what was done for the great trial scene: by then I had used the interval to flee the place.

Clumsy pomp was not confined to The National during February; it could also be found at Covent Garden in the Royal

Opera's borrowed new production of Giordano's *Andrea Chenier*. This staging had been acquired from Cologne Opera and was directed by their very able 'Intendant', Michael Hampe. The 'design concept' was by Ezio Frigerio, whose *Simone Boccanegra* for La Scala, Milan remains one of the most impressive settings for an opera that I have ever seen, but the designs were executed by William Orlandi, with costumes by Frigerio's wife, Franca Squarciapino. Whether the settings lost anything between concept and execution I do not know, but I certainly found these heavy, galleried and colonnaded sets both boring and inappropriate, as well as requiring intolerably long intervals to shift them. But their gravest defect was to remove Giordano's 'verismo' opera from Paris of the French Revolution where it is set, and to place it firmly instead in the world of totally Italianate 'grand opera', which most Covent

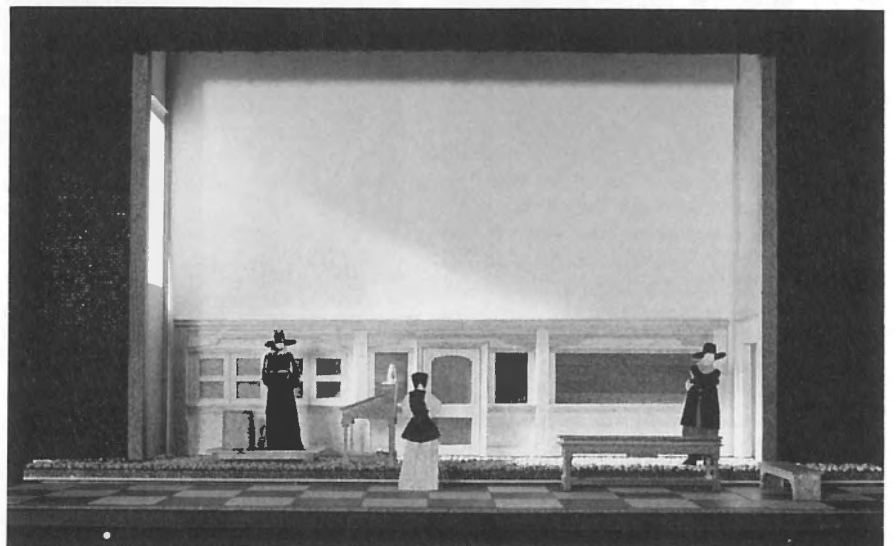
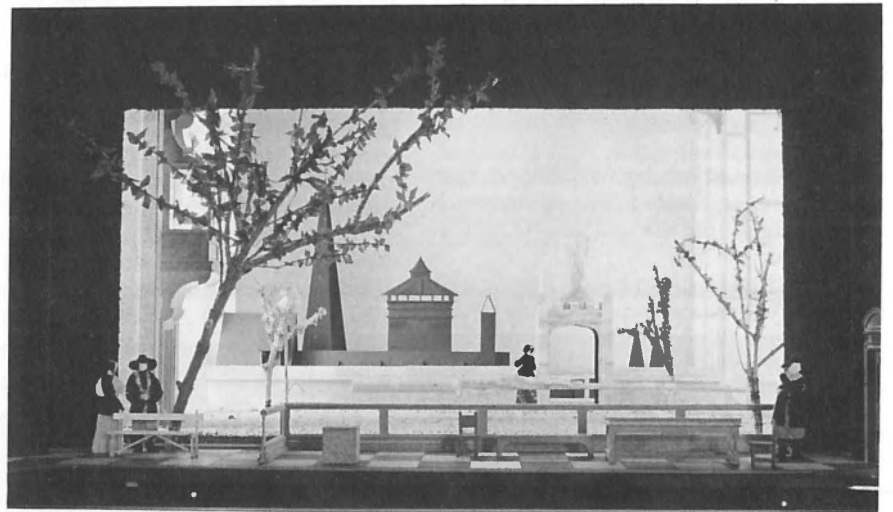
Garden productions in the past decade or two have had the good sense to seek to avoid. I feel bound to wonder whether this kind of borrowing is really more economical than a strictly limited budget, lightweight production such as the Royal Opera's superb staging of Britten's *Peter Grimes*, by Elijah Moshinsky with designs by Timothy O'Brien and Tazeena Firth, which was revived shortly after *Chenier* and which will no doubt delight Los Angeles audiences this summer when it is taken there as part of Britain's operatic contribution to the Olympic Games.

One of the *Chenier* sets, or at least the back of it, had a bonus showing on the first night of Kenneth MacMillan's latest offering to the Royal Ballet. *Different Drummer* is inspired by Buchner's play *Woyzeck*, and was to have had a setting designed by that most gifted and imaginative of designers for the dance, Yolanda Sonnabend. Apparently



Giordano's Andrea Chenier at The Royal Opera House. Producer Michael Hampe from West Germany. Design concept by Ezio Frigerio with sets executed by William Orlandi and costumes by Franca Squarciapino — all Italian. Lighting Design Robert Bryan. Conductor Richard Armstrong. (Photograph Catherine Ashmore)

however when the choreographer set eyes on his designer's work in the week of the premiere he considered that it no longer coincided with his concept of the piece, and so Ms Sonnabend's setting was abandoned. We were left with her costumes, or some of them, a bare stage with open wings, an exposed lighting grid, and the aforementioned Chénier scenery, turned back-to-front, with helpful messages to the stage crew chalked upon it. The effect was understandably unfinished, and it will be interesting to discover, if and when *Different Drummer* is revived — and I wouldn't personally encourage the Royal Ballet to do so — whether it will have the benefit of a fresh design concept from Ms Sonnabend. An altogether happier visual experience was to be had at the London Coliseum when English National Opera showed their new production of Wagner's *Mastersingers of Nuremberg*. Their previous, much-loved production had been largely responsible for taking the company from Sadler's Wells Theatre to the Coliseum back in 1968, and its straightforwardly pictorial presentation, designed by Motley was both distinctly beginning to show its age, and in need of a fresh approach. This it certainly received from director Elijah Moshinsky and designer Timothy O'Brien, who, instead of a massive pictorial treatment, offered us a series of lightweight, stylised settings that were no doubt economical to construct, left plenty of room for the large cast to move around the stage, and instead of seeming over-emphatic and 'kitsch', relied on focal symbols to concentrate the point of each scene. True the second act, outside Sachs' shop, looked rather too much like the post-war reconstruction of Nuremberg than its original, but the final St John's Day fête on the banks of the river Pegnitz, with its huge puppets and mobile trumpeters, gave a far more convincing atmosphere of civic rejoicing and general saturnalia than we usually receive. O'Brien's setting was much assisted by Nick Chelton's highly imaginative, precisely plotted, all white lighting, but less so by his own rather careless costumes which cried out for the firm hand of O'Brien's habitual collaborator in this field, Tazeena Firth. But taken as a whole this was



Timothy O'Brien's set design for Acts I, II and III Scenes 1 and 2 the new English National Opera production of Wagner's "The Mastersingers of Nuremberg", which opened at the London Coliseum on 4th February 1984. Conductor Mark Elder, Producer Elijah Moshinsky. (photographs Donald Southern)

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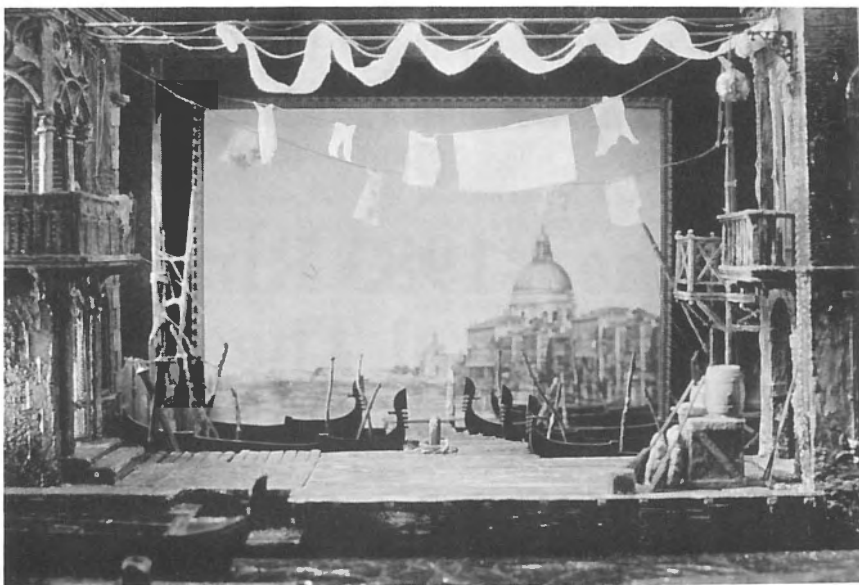
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10



Tim Goodchild's set designs for Acts I and II of *The Gondoliers* New Sadler's Wells Theatre Islington. (Photograph Fritz Curzon)



precisely the type of production that has garnered admiration for ENO over the past few seasons: highly imaginative, yet economical, a production with something specific to say in visual terms, rather than merely trying to dazzle with needless extravagance. Back at Sadler's Wells Theatre in Islington, whence ENO sprang, there is an enterprising new company in operation, New Sadler's Wells Opera, whose aim is to offer a repertory of operetta in attractive, but economical, stagings. Their two latest additions have been Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Gondoliers*, and Flotow's *Martha*, both in productions which had their points, yet did not entirely fulfil the new company's aims. *The Gondoliers* had the same designer, Tim Goodchild, as NSWO's previous, highly successful *Mikado*, but here Goodchild's manifest determination in the first act to offer us Venice right down to the last gondola was matched neither by the company's resources, nor by their technical performance. The gondolas showed a depressing tendency to become becalmed in mid-stage, and Mick Hughes's projected sunlight, which never let up, was confused and scruffy. Far better was the second act setting, the kingdom of Barataria on a Greek-island package holiday, full of witty and wicked anachronisms, beautifully lit, relying on imagination rather than scenic hardware, and as a result wholly succeeding. By contrast NSWO's other offering *Martha*, seemed underdesigned by Stafanos Lazaridis, undoubtedly as a result of director Nicholas Hytner's perverse and pointless decision to update the action from the time of Queen Anne to the mid-19th century era of Samuel Smiles. The result was that the entire opera took place in a Victorian village hall, with scene changes spelt out on blackboards: the sort of juvenilia of which very little goes an extremely long way. By contrast Johann Engels' costumes, presumably less beset by directorial influence, were exemplary.

Finally three praiseworthy productions were to be found in the straight theatre, and two of them achieved on a manifest shoe-string, which made pleasure in them commensurately greater. At the Old Vic the transfer of David Pownall's *Master Class* from the Haymarket, Leicester gave Londoners the chance to enjoy Martin Johns' admirable setting of Stalin's private suite in the Kremlin, complete with hidden cocktail cabinet and obligatory Russian bathroom. At the Arts Theatre Pam Gems' intriguing new play *Loving Women* had the advantage of astute designs by Jonathan Gems which move us with great precision from 1973 to 1974 and then to today, all in terms of the same Notting Hill converted flat, an admirable exercise much assisted by Kate Burnett's unerringly accurate fashion designs. Finally *Monstrous Regiment's* brief season of *Enslaved by Dreams* at the ICA demonstrated just how highly skilled and creative are designers for Fringe companies. Gemma Jackson's brilliantly visualised setting, tripartite and yet integral, was a striking lesson to large subsidised companies in inventive economy.

Readers will recall David Fingleton's report of the staging of Wagner's 'Ring Cycle' at Bayreuth last year; one of the highlights of the Hall/Dudley design being the mobile hydraulic platform engineered by Mike Barnet. Harald Apponius writing in *Buhntechnische Rundschau* defines the task and the structural and control requirements which the construction of this massive 8-ton platform involved.

A Platform for the "1983 Ring", in the Bayreuth Festival Theatre

HARALD APPONIUS

Translated by J. W. Atkins

The Task

1. A 10 metres deep \times 15 metres wide platform, curved in both axes.
2. It must be adjustable in height, between ± 0 metres and + 9 metres.
3. It must be rotatable to at least 360 degrees on its longitudinal axis, as not only the convex, but also the concave side has to be on top; in addition, an approximate vertical position is called for.
4. It must be able to travel along the stage's longitudinal axis.
5. Parts of the platform must be removable, also asymmetrically to the axis of rotation.

Structural Problems

As the stage set allows a maximum height of construction of 500 mm for the platform, the appropriate design loads were defined jointly, though a wandering group of seven people is to be statically considered. In the dry language of the engineers, this means a shifting load of 7 KN on 1.8 square metres.

To this, the requirements of stage operations had to be added:

- a) The whole construction had to be dismantlable into transportable units, each of a maximum weight of 2,000 kg, and be capable of being removed into store.
- b) With the platform raised, the stage floor below the platform had to be free for other stage vehicles and scenery.
- c) The load carrying capacity had to be taken into consideration.
- d) The existing stage should not impair the safety of the whole structure.

One gets matters in proportion (see schematic diagram), if one imagines a two-floor two family house with a "canopy" which moves over this two family house by means of two enormous traversable swivel levers.

What was to be done? 500 mm construction height with 15 metres span, a ratio of 1:30, exactly correct, for spanning a strong T beam, and for providing the prescribed, "tilt". Unfortunately a T beam weighs a few kilogrammes too much!

On grounds of safety and in order to avoid difficult to control compulsory forces, a single

jointed hip frame was selected as the basic principle. The main platform bearer was indeed rotational but, connected to a tilt support, was resistant to bending. The other support was linked articulated, to the main bearer. The supports themselves can be tilted from the horizontal into the vertical by means of hydraulic motive power. The main support is formed from metal plate as a torsion stiff box girder, on both sides of which, 4.5 metre long cantilever beams are attached. At the same time, the cantilever beam carries the rotating drive hung on gimbals, which was purposely arranged on the link support side.

Between the cantilever beams — framework of square tubing and U-sections — the covered supports, likewise framework, made from angle and flat iron, were suspended — in order to provide the surfaces necessary for the connecting weld seams. In this way it was possible to produce the curved platform 10 \times 15 metres, itself weighing 6,600 kg — equal to 44.0 kg per square metre. Likewise, the 9 metre long swivel supports were constructed as three dimensional frameworks, with a maximum weight of about 1,800 kg per support. It was not possible to feed these into the stage floor,

which was normally dimensioned for 500 kg per square metre, so special rail supports had to be let into the stage floor — these were dismantlable of course —, they conducted their loads, via tube supports, into the lower lying foundations.

Drive Technology

Control of movements in theatre operations should be as fast and noiseless as possible, commensurate with safety requirements.

The following maximum speeds were presupposed in joint discussion:

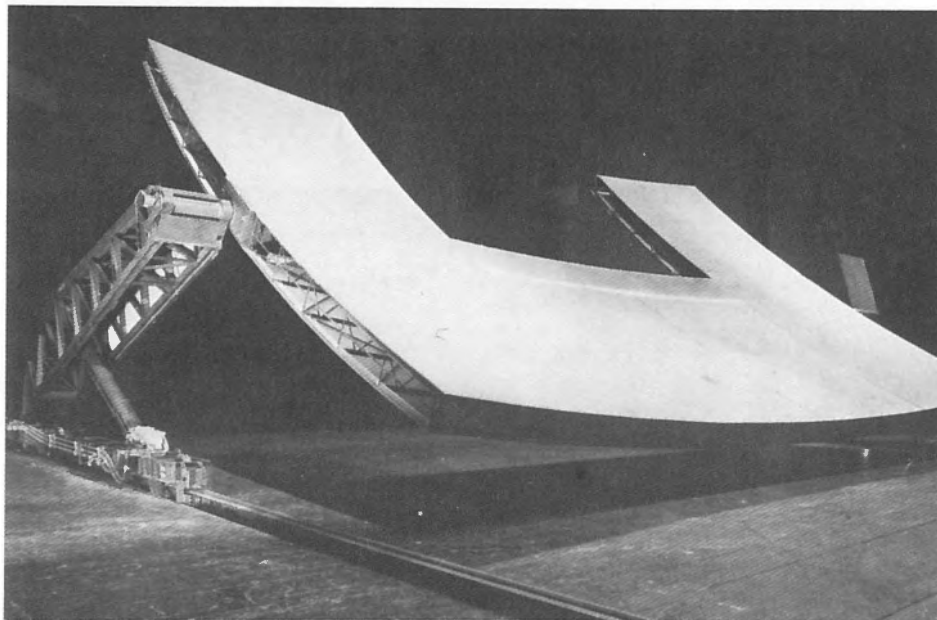
Lifting of the platform from the stage level up to +9 metres high by means of the swivel arms in 60 seconds,

Rotating the platform by 360 degrees in 60 seconds,

Traversing the platform in the longitudinal axis of the stage at 0.2 metres per second.

Hydraulics was the answer for all these operations especially as the hydraulic station could be fitted permanently in the below stage area, with an installed output of about 100 KW.

For both wagons on which the swivel sup-



The platform could be lifted upwards to +9 metres, traversed backwards and forwards on stage and rotated through a full 360° to give flat & vertical positions.

ports of the platform rest, a form-closed system was chosen as the movement drive. By means of cable lines which lead into the under stage area on a transmission shaft, both wagons are moved. The transmission shaft is driven by an hydraulic motor. The rotation of the platform is carried out by means of a pivot drive, which passes its torque to the platform's torsion stiff main support. Synchronisation problems only result with the raising of the platform to a height of 9 metres, using the swivel arm, driven by 2 cylinders (power requirement 300 KN maximum). Ingenious electronics, which controls the swivel movement in absolute values, here takes care of synchronism. Even internal leakages of the cylinders are balanced in this manner. In detail, the following construction was chosen:

The pressure station is equipped with 2 pressure controlled blade cell pumps (flow quantity $Q_{max.} = 2 \times 150 \text{ l}$ at 145 bar). These pump units work so that the feed flow of the pumps suits the required medium requirement.

The flow quantity, necessary at any time, result from the operating load present.

For one thing, with the switching on of the drive units, the pumps start up pressureless, in order to keep the starting currents of the electric motors, as low as possible. According to requirements, either one or both pumps can be run. By means of proportional pressure valves, a soft switching on of the pump units on the system takes place. By the use of these proportional pressure valves, any pressure peaks and switch shocks in the system are avoided. The pump units are made in a so-called sub-oil method of construction, to reduce noise level.

In order to dissipate the heat occurring, an oil-water heat exchanger is built in. To this heat exchanger, with filter connection in series, the medium is fed via a circulating pump (flow quantity $Q = 110 \text{ l}$ at $q_{max.} 6 \text{ bar}$) in sub-oil method of construction.

In order to obtain optimum operating conditions, it is advantageous to keep the temperature range of the operating medium within very narrow limits. For this, the prescribed cooling is intended, and as well, an additional heater is built into the container, which preheats the medium before starting up the installation.

The control of the raising and lowering movement of the cylinder is effected by proportional way valves. Analogous to a switched in signal of control electronics, the proportional way valves release, — the flow quantity, determined at any time, — to the consuming device. The cylinder speeds are infinitely variable between 0 and 7 mm/second. Via a control system, likewise from control electronics, synchronisation of the two cylinders is also controlled by means of proportional way valves.

In order to attain leak oil free blocking and control of the lowering speed, independent of the load, a blocking piston manometer is connected to the proportional way valve, which, in the idle position, blocks the cylinder, leak oil free, on the piston side. In addition, the proportional way valve has a blocking position in the position of rest. As it cannot be excluded that negative forces will occur, according to the platform equipment, the ring side of the cylinder is also, leak oil free blocked by means

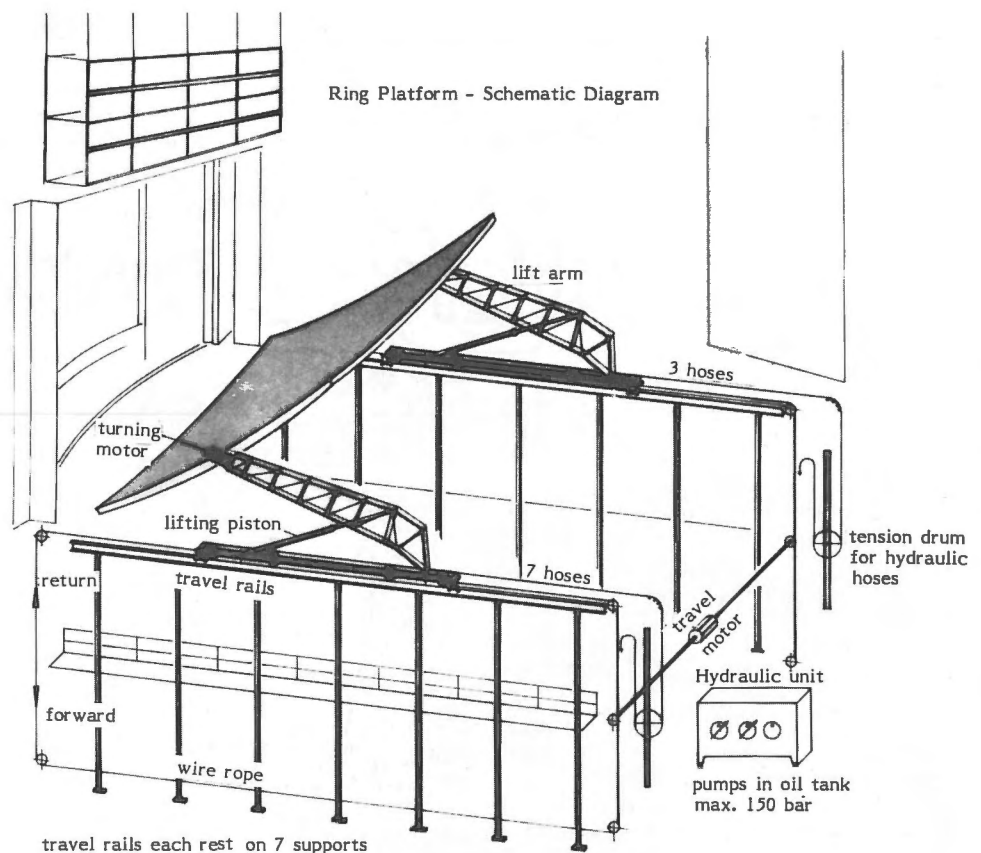
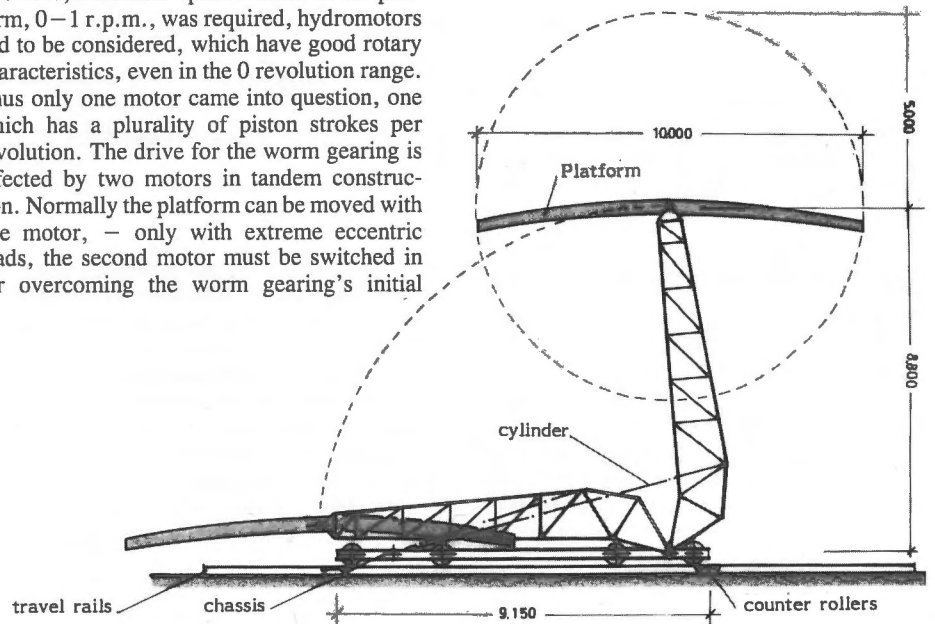
of an hydraulic unlockable non return valve with separate pre-control.

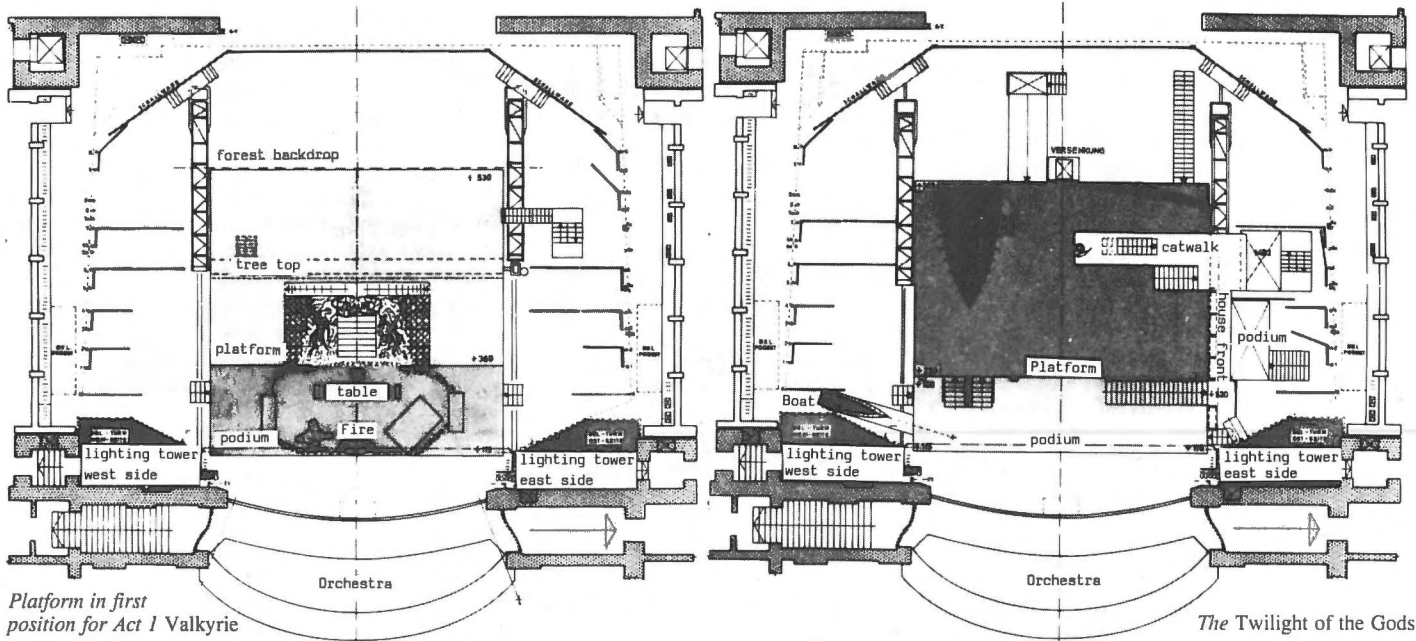
In order also to be able to attain a uniform speed of lifting the platform, independent of load, a feed piston manometer was connected to the proportional way valve. All controls are realised in so-called unit construction, i.e., a complete control of all valves belonging to a control unit are built on and into a suitable control block.

The platform is turned by a tubular shaft spur gear worm drive, which is placed on the platform's centre of rotation. The drive for this worm gearing is effected by hydromotors. As, also here, a uniform speed control of the platform, 0–1 r.p.m., was required, hydromotors had to be considered, which have good rotary characteristics, even in the 0 revolution range. Thus only one motor came into question, one which has a plurality of piston strokes per revolution. The drive for the worm gearing is effected by two motors in tandem construction. Normally the platform can be moved with one motor, — only with extreme eccentric loads, the second motor must be switched in for overcoming the worm gearing's initial

breakaway torque. The speed control of the motors is also effected here by proportional way valves. The motors are bilaterally fixed with a flow blocking piston manometer. As a second safeguard, on the motor itself, an hydraulic ventilatable multiple disc brake is flanged mounted. Control of the uniform speed of the travel drive is effected likewise by proportional way valves with connected flow piston manometers.

In order to protect the drive parts against overloading, not only with turning, but also with travel drive, possible torque is limited by appropriate built-in pressure valve. The travel





drive is fitted with two hydraulic ventilatable disc brakes.

With regard to a lowest possible noise level development, with the pipeline systems in stage technology, a flow velocity of maximum 3 metres/second may not be exceeded in the pressure line. This calls for the laying of NW50 piping for the closed circuit pipe line, and NW63 for the return piping.

The feed of the medium from the closed circuit pipe line to the platform is effected via

14.8 metre long maximum pressure hoses. For operating safety, maximum pressure hoses were selected with a bursting strength of 910 bars.

As the hose lines for feeding the medium to the platform, as well as the hose lines to the individual consuming devices, have to be disengaged with dismantling of the platform, quick release connections are provided at suitable places. These connections are so constructed that with detachment of the connecting

parts from the attached pipe lines, no medium escapes.

It goes without saying that with the construction and execution, all accident prevention regulations, and technological regulations were observed. With the many unusual features of this set-up, it was decided from the first, to draw on the responsible technical supervisory association for collaboration. We would like to express our thanks for their assistance.

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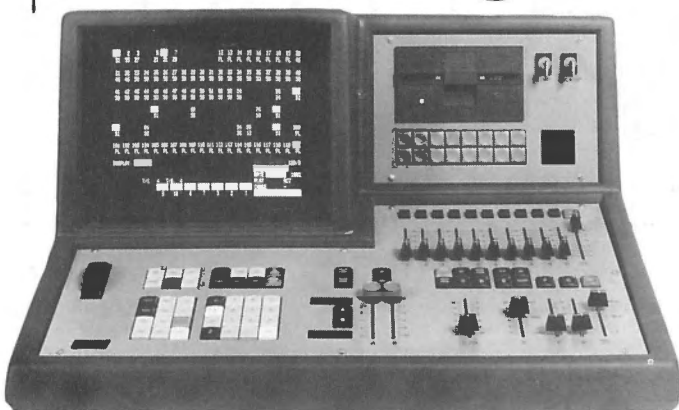
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West End theatre has a proven capacity for survival. So it is unlikely to be bruised or even scratched by John Pick's **THE WEST END MISMANAGEMENT AND SNOBBERY**. West end survival (like Broadway survival) is based on the quality of its product. But very little is heard of the quality argument in this book which is based on the doubtful premise that it is the managers rather than the audience who determine the nature of our theatre. The west end is almost totally at the mercy of market forces and even a heavily subsidised theatre is the servant of its audiences (look at the way in which some of our National Theatre's runs have been shortened or lengthened recently). As a researcher John Pick has assembled some interesting information, but the conclusions that he draws are surprisingly polemical for an academic of his stature. If I thought he was being serious, I would reach for my worry beads while contemplating the future prospects for arts administrators and their audiences. But John Pick is a tongue-in-cheek cynic (have you read his delightfully funny 'Beginner's Dictionary for Ambitious Arts Bureaucrats?'). As a theatre administration educator, he knows the danger of pupils becoming disciples of their teacher. He knows that they need something to react against and he has certainly provided it in this book.

THE OLD VIC REFURBISHED is an essential addition to the bookshelf of anyone who responds to theatre architecture with a physical ding and a mental dong. The pictures are a delight, especially those in monochrome. And the writing team of D. F. Cheshire, Sean McCarthy and Hilary Norris record much more of the history than the mere quantity of their words would suggest. I am confident that everyone who reads Cue will wish to own the fifty pages of this book.

You don't need to be an arts administrator to benefit from Charles Arnold-Baker's **PRACTICAL LAW FOR ARTS ADMINISTRATORS**. I wish that I could have had access to such a book years ago. Six hundred and fourteen numbered paragraphs offer a well-indexed journey through basic law, starting with who does what in the legal profession and explaining the process of going to law. Deeds and trusts lose their terror, and the contrast between contract and tort nearly becomes simple. Legalities on matters of property, premises and copyright are explained. And, whether you employ or are employed, there is a discussion of everything from maternity leave to the calculation of redundancy payments.

The glossary alone will stimulate a vast improvement in the performance of green-room lawyers.

ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE is the book of the television series. In deciding that the book "would have to stand or fall on its own merits, independent of the series itself, but complementing it and if possible counterpointing it", Ronald Harwood offers only a partial release from any necessity to comment on the programmes. And so I feel bound to say that I am finding it very difficult to sit back and enjoy his video for what it is — rather than keep thinking of the quite different approach that could have been made under the same title but using all the creative techniques available to historical reporting on television, particularly the rostrum camera. But that would have produced a relatively objective history, narrated by an invisible voice. What we have is a personal view by an omnipresent presenter who I find curiously unconvincing, although most of his arguments stand up reasonably well to retrospective analysis.

The television series is in thirteen episodes, so the book has thirteen chapters, and I read them on thirteen consecutive train journeys. But why did I keep looking out the window? Alas it was not because my thinking had been stimulated but because my concentration would not focus. Perhaps I'll try

again after the end of the series: perhaps by then Ronald Harwood will have captured this member of his audience. Because if there is one thing that the book does make clear it is that its author appreciates the importance of the fragile chemistry which enables the audience to make that contribution without which no performance can occur.

THE WEST END MISMANAGEMENT AND SNOBBERY John Pick.
John Offord Publications (City Arts Series) £7.95 (paperback) (UK).

THE OLD VIC REFURBISHED. D. F. Cheshire, Sean McCarthy & Hilary Norris.
Published by The Old Vic Limited. £4.00 (paperback).

PRACTICAL LAW FOR ARTS ADMINISTRATORS. Charles Arnold-Baker. John Offord Publications (City Arts Series). £8.95 (paperback) (UK).

ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE. Ronald Harwood. Secker & Warburg/British Broadcasting Corporation. £12.95 (UK).

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seriously advocated by one lighting man from the rock world on the grounds that it made it easier to move the lanterns when focusing!

The trouble with writing this sort of thing is that one can very easily get carried away (please?). Looking after equipment shouldn't only be a set of don'ts so here are a set of do's.

Do keep lanterns clean. Dust plays hell with both quantity and quality of light.

Do ensure that lanterns have all the screws holding them together properly tightened. A lantern body which flops round like a spastic umbrella is hardly conducive to accurately positioned optics.

Do rig, derig, travel and store equipment carefully. It lasts longer that way.

Do keep an eye on wiring, especially tails at the point they enter the body of the lantern. Fraying insulation can lead to embarrassingly spectacular displays of pyrotechnics as well as convincing death scenes.

Do when hiring equipment check that you return what is on the delivery note in good condition.

Do, do, do.

Do, and this sums it all up, treat any equipment as if it were not only your own equipment but also your only equipment.

Double bill that pays

TERENCE FRISBY

shows how subsidized theatre helps the country

THESE figures tell us whether the Government should subsidize the theatre. They derive from my personal experience. "We can't afford arts subsidy in the current economic climate," runs the goodhousekeeping argument. But the realists are wrong, even on their own, "thrifty" terms. Let us put aside questions of the unquantifiable, non-material riches that theatre might give us and concentrate on hard cash.

Subsidy actually pays.

Last autumn my partner, Peter Kemp, and I mounted a tour of The Young Vic production of a double-bill: "The Real Inspector Hound" by Tom Stoppard and "Seaside Postcard" by me. We applied to the Arts Council and got a £14,000 guarantee against loss. Without that money, we would not — indeed, could not — have mounted the tour, so all the benefits shown below would have been lost to the economy.

Setting aside artistic reasons, the government directly saved or received at least £45,000 in return for its £14,000

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From ticket sales	£14,720
N.H.I.	
Contributions from company	£13,500
ROYALTIES	
To the Young Vic, a government subsidised theatre	£981
INCOME TAX	
From company and author	£7,000
UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS	
Direct savings from company and theatre staff	£8,412
Total of government savings and income	
	£44,613
Total government investment	£14,000

investment. On top of this people who would have been mostly unemployed earned a combined total of more than £50,000. A spring tour of the same production is now being planned with all of the attendant benefits to the economy for another seven or eight weeks: say £17,000 of income for private persons and a further £15,000 to various government funds.

These figures show direct government benefit only. But there were other indirect effects beneficial to the economy generally: the Nuffield Theatre workshops in Southampton were kept working for three extra weeks in the summer, earning more than £10,000 for a subsidised theatre, giving employment to their technical staff and generating extra trade through the materials they used; British Rail and British Airways (nationalised industries) earned considerable income from our travels; much petrol was used, earning petrol tax for the Exchequer; £6,500 was spent on a contract to a poster publishing firm; and so on.

All this provides overwhelming evidence that government subsidy pays handsomely. Generous subsidy of our theatre improves its health, and thus the health of its offspring industries, film and television. It is, quite simply, excellent investment.

The question, "Can we afford to subsidise theatre during a recession?" is ridiculous.

We can't afford not to.

Terence Frisby is the author of "There's a Girl in My Soup".

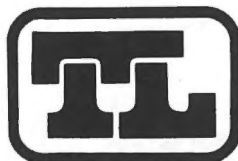
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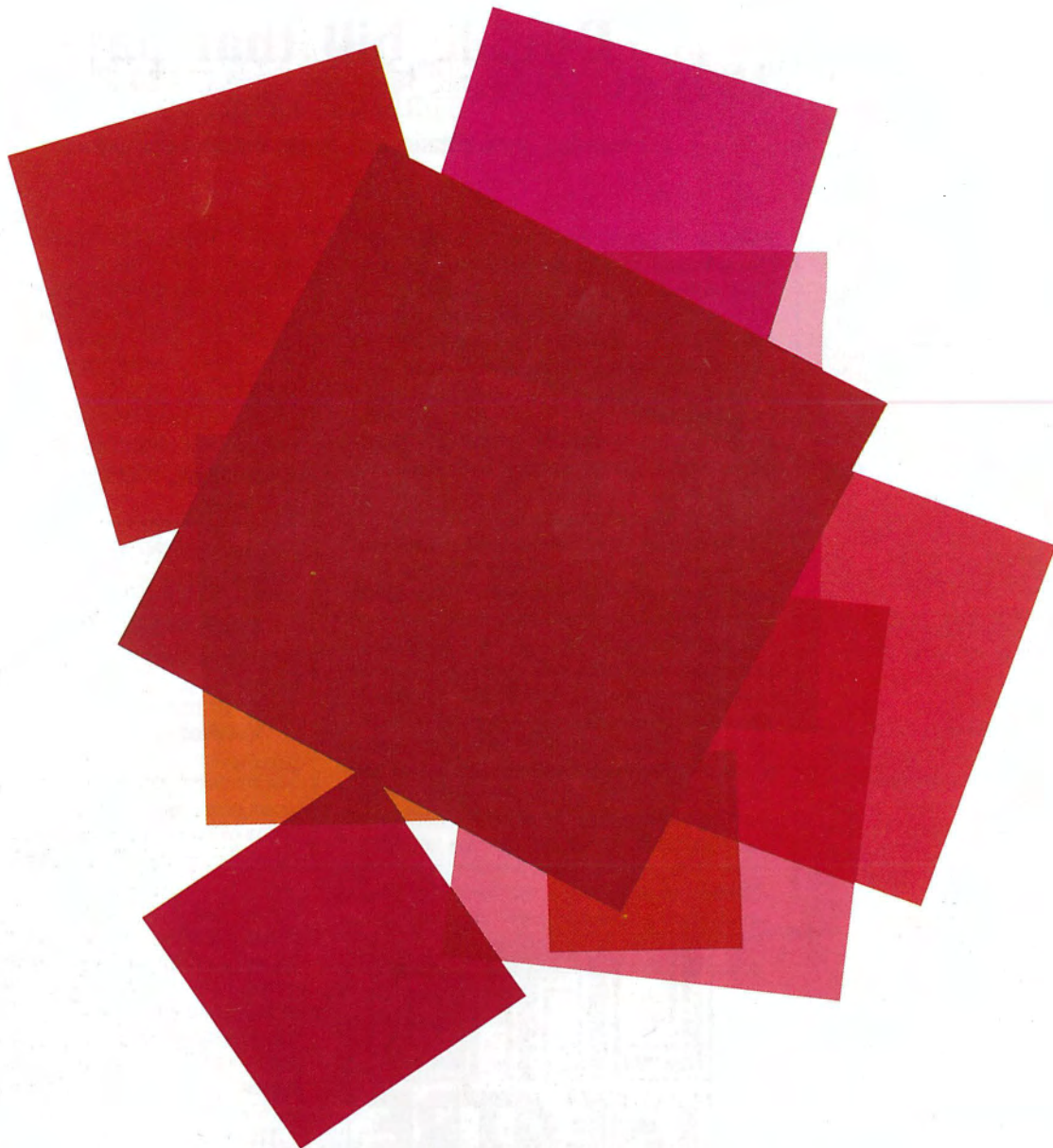
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Broadway's Theatre Museum

Theatric Tourist FRANCIS REID revisits New York.

Way back in Cue 16, reporting on the diversity of interesting experiences available to the theatric tourist in New York, I mentioned construction work in progress towards a Theatre Museum on Broadway. This is now established as a branch of the Theatre Collection of the Museum of the City of New York, offering changing exhibitions rather than a permanent display. However, in the spirit of Broadway, the exhibitions will be planned as long runners — the leaflets say six months but the box officers think approximately nine months, dependent upon funds. Apart from any other considerations, space restrictions force a policy of rotating exhibitions. There is just not enough display area to mount a permanent history of sufficient extent to fairly represent the achievements of Broadway, even although the 'Great White Way' represents a relatively narrow band within the totality of possible theatre experience.

However, if ever there was an exhibition title which captures what most of us think of as the spirit of Broadway, it is the current **SHOWSTOPPERS Great Moments of the American Musical**.

The core is a sound and light show narrated by Alfred Drake. Thirty one musical extracts span the years from 1823 ('Home Sweet Home' from *Clari the Maid of Milan*) to 1964 (the title song from 'Hello Dolly'). Is the omission of the most recent twenty years due to tact? To pinpoint the significant and representative is always difficult — but particularly so when the creative talents (and, to be realistic, the financial interests) are still alive.

The musical excerpts and their linking narrative are accompanied by a selective lighting programme which directs visitor's attention to the appropriate illustrative items in their midst. On the walls are the graphic ephemera that are fundamental to any theatre museum's evocation of performance past: posters, prints, portraits, paintings, sheet music, etc. In addition, a dozen of the songs are illustrated by character dolls created by Ron Kron. These are about two feet high and wear costumes we associate with the role. Their recognisable star faces strike just about the right balance between reality and cartoon. They revolve within their glass cases so that they have a sense of movement in addition to presenting all their facets to the circulating audience who share their performance space.

Costumes in the foyer are, however, life size original designs. How about this for a nostalgia parade: *Funny Girl* (as worn by Barbra Streisand), *Fiddler on the Roof* (*Zero Mostel*), *A Little Night Music* (Glynis Johns), *Cabaret* (Joel Grey), and *Gypsy* (Ethel Merman). Or the costume worn by Mary Martin in 1938 to launch Cole

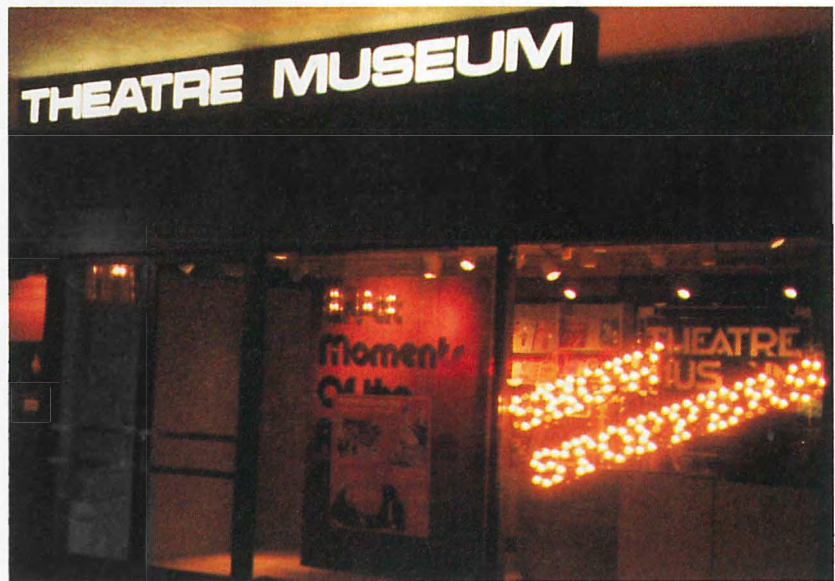
Porter's 'My Heart Belongs to Daddy'. These costumes are paired with their original show posters.

Other items include portraits, busts, photographs and a series of paintings by Leroy Neiman capturing his impression of *West Side*, *Porgy and Bess*, and *Fair Lady*. And to rest the feet there is a video interview with Ethel Merman which, like the rest of the exhibition, is compulsive viewing for anyone who likes their performing arts to have a touch of theatricality.

The Theatre Museum could not be more centrally situated in New York's theaterland. The Minskoff Theater fronts Times Square and the arcade running through it links 44th and 45th streets with their eleven theatres crammed into the block between Broadway and eight avenue. The other link

Museum of the City of New York where there has been a theatre gallery for regular exhibitions since 1978. The collection was founded sixty years ago and has accumulated massive archives in all aspects of the city's theatrical history — the impressive scope of these archives is described in the catalogue for the *Showstoppers* exhibition, as are the titles of over one hundred exhibitions mounted from the collection since 1927.

The Metropolitan Opera House's current centennial season has spawned a goodly batch of books and exhibitions. The Theatre Collection uses its gallery within the city museum to tell the story of the **Old Met** recalling operatic life in the Met's original theatre. The spirits of this departed opera house are conjured up with the aid of some



between 44th and 45th is Shubert Alley with its overtones of showbiz emotions and nostalgia. So to have the museum in the Minskoff Arcade is to place it at the absolute heart of the theatre district. Opening hours are geared to theatregoing and its curtain times. (Noon to 8pm except for 1pm to 5pm on Sunday with its matinee-only habits. Closed, however, on Monday and Tuesday). Buyers of half-price tickets at TKSTS get a half-price voucher for the museum, discounting the normal one dollar 'suggested donation'. But this is just a marketing ploy to attract the casual visitor: no one with a whiff of theatre in their bones would need a pecuniary inducement to wish to savour an exhibition of the quality of "**Showstoppers**".

Material for Theatre Museum exhibitions is drawn from the Theatre Collection in the

architectural fragments including a muse from the upper right hand corner of the proscenium plus gilded plaster rosettes. And appropriate costumes, props and models. A frieze includes the famous singers and conductors who have performed over the ages.

But in the spirit of that period of opera — and there was never a theatre so devoted to the cult of the star singer than the old Met — the montage includes neither directors nor designers! Ambience was assisted by tapes of the Met stars singing Met repertoire. My own favourite exhibit was an undated pictorial feature from *Women's Day* magazine which leads its readers through the repertoire with some gorgeous one-liners like. . . . Figaro (he made opera warm and human) *Fidelio* (his one opera — and immortal), *Don Giovanni* (lyric comedy

with note of doom), Lucia (richly endowed melodrama), Rigoletto (a work of blazing energy) and Pelleas (drama rules the melody).

The Met's centennial was also a subject for celebration at New York's other home for theatre archives — the Lincoln Center's Library and Museum of the Performing Arts where the reference material is wider ranging and more readily accessible to the casual enquirer. This Met exhibition, called **The First Hundred Years**, spread through all three of the Center's galleries. It was alive with all the forms of two and three dimensional documentation that make possible some attempt at the fragile reconstruction of something as intangible as yesterday's performance.

The mental and emotional triggers were all there — photos, contracts, props, audition cards, correspondence, costumes, paintings, models, designs, posters, etc — with juxtapositions ensuring that the whole is more than just the sum of the parts. It is often the small, relatively insignificant details that help to breathe life. At this exhibition I found that my personal stimulus came from the lost art of the telegraph. A cable code book enabled the Met manager of the 1880's to communicate with his board of directors about the progress of his activities while engaging singers in Europe. Whereas *windfall* translated as 'I think these are the best terms he(he) will agree to', *windmills* was the stronger 'These are positively the best terms he(he) will agree to', while *windows* had the finality of 'he(he) will make no further concessions'.

And anyone who has ever been remotely connected with an opera house, or been a stage manager, or worked in a wardrobe will feel a raw nerve caressed by the following 1941 Western Union telegram to 'Met. Opera Assn.' **CHIPAS TIGHTS ARE NOT IN BOSTON PERHAPS HE HAS THEM WITH MANON COSTUMES THEY ARE IN HIS GREY GRIP IN ARTISTS WARDROBE ROOM FIFTH FLOOR WILL MAIL KEY BY AIR MAIL. ANGELO.**

Two further points for any theatric tourist visiting New York City. Describing Radio City Music Hall in Cue 5, I noted that regular tours were then about to be established. I recently took one of these tours which leave regularly from the foyer — no need to book, just roll up and pay your \$3.94 (nearly £3). It lasts an hour and is not just foyers and auditorium: you also get on to the stage, go understage for a look at the elevators and their hydraulics, rehearsal room, wardrobe, projection room and lime box. Much less value is the \$5 official tour of the Lincoln Center which I took out of curiosity — I have seen more as a member of the audience at the Met, the New York State Theatre and the Avery Fisher Hall (the nearest the tour gets to the Vivian Beaumont is to have it pointed out from the Avery Fisher foyer). However it is a way to see the architectural quality in a hurry, and the stages were in use for fit-up, ballet class and solo tuba respectively. And the guide was a real hoot: her attitude to opera singers was pure 1890 and her concept of theatre represented monetarism at its purest.

Letters to the Editor

The Editor

Sir, it is damn bad form of my part to act the pedant in respect of the content of Francis Reid's CUE tribute to the ABTT's tribute to myself in the last issue. But for the sake of generations of thesis-writers to come I must risk 'outcastation' and point out that he is not correct in his aside 'J. T. Wood's electronic is the seminal system from which today's desks can be traced.' Substitute "dimmer systems" for "desks" and Francis would be bang on target. Today's dimming is based on chopping the AC waveform by static means and that is how the thyatron valves of the Wood electronic functioned.

Today's Memory system control panels, however, must be seen as depending on two things, Auto-Stay-Put and Select & 'Play' by Master. My Light Console of 1934 et seq had both and the Wood electronic of 1949 et seq had neither! It was the inertia inherent in electro-mechanical motor-driven dimmer banks with the Mansell magnetic clutches which provided me with the A-S-P part and the cinema organ consoles popping up & down all over these Isles which suggested the Select & Play. The result was a mobile desk with everything within arm's reach of a seated operator. By this means Strand Electric were able to avoid the slippery slope to multi-preset and a room-full of levers as in the New Met in Lincoln Center in 1966 or a pit-full as in Radio City Music Hall in 1933. Nor did we have to consider that other solution, which became an addiction in the States, patching in order to keep the number of dimmers to a minimum.

Once the centuries old Select & Play of the organ builders had been adopted as basic the rest followed. There was even, on that first Light Console, an equivalent of the 'At' idea in the shape of nine black notes giving 10% steps without the need to hold a master key and watch a master dial. Very crude but it was there. It is piquant that my own swansong up this stream — the software DDM memory system, Stratford 1972-82 — departed from rigorous application of Select & Play. The rocker tablet to each of the 240 channels encouraged individual raise & lower thereby: there being no need to use any master or to oft off one to do so. Could it be that just when everyone, numeric keypad in hand, had to adopt Select & Play I had come to realise the limitations of that principle at last!

FREDERICK BENTHAM

Dear Sir,

CUE: November/December 1983 pp 21+22
SOUND (?) DESIGN

When reading "Sound (?) Design" the transcript of a recent ABTT Members' meeting and debate on theatre sound I felt more than sorry that I was not able to be at that meeting and to make one or two observations.

May I correct one serious error. I am sure that Martin Carr must have been wrongly reported in your pen-ultimate paragraph. There was always an orchestra pit in the Snape Maltings Concert Hall. The only changes made in the auditorium after the fire were the omission of the score reading lights and the introduction of a mechanical system for raising the floor of the orchestra pit to auditorium level, and to stage level to act as a forestage. There were no alterations to either the geometry or the surface construction of these elements. In 'Snape I' these elements had been fabricated in sections and it took a somewhat long time to change the hall from concert to opera use.

My views on the real subject matter of the meeting have been polarised following a recent visit to the Adelphi Theatre to see the Royal Shakespeare production of 'Poppy'. My family and I sat in the stalls, R11-R16. I became somewhat fearful about what might happen because as we approached our seats we were forced to circumnavigate a gigantic sound control desk. All my fears were fully confirmed when our ears were assaulted not by any musical sounds but by an horrendous noise, 'sprayed' at us by an array of overhead speakers at a volume which I found devastating and which rendered all the words incomprehensible.

Where has the artistic control gone? In a Show like this, if we are to receive the impact of 'Poppy's' message, it is essential to hear all the words and to get all the jokes.

What part are our directors, producers and writers doing to control the 'neanderthal men' who appear to be doing their worst to ruin our lyric theatre?

Yours sincerely,
DEREK SUGDEN

PS I have just read Eric Pressley's "Appropriate Technology" in the January/February 1984 CUE and for me his last paragraph is an excellent summary of a very sad situation:

"The real tragedy of theatre sound is not that it has consistently failed to make full use of existing technology, but that it has failed to initiate the development of new technology to meet its own unique needs."

D.S.

TRADING UP

JAMES LAWS

1983 was memorable in many peoples minds as "the year without the tradeshow", so it was with special interest that we all, exhibitors or punters, heard the news that the Show of Shows was to move to Studio 2 at the Riverside Studios, Hammersmith. Fears that the boat race would create a lack of visitors on Saturday Afternoon, or that no-one from South London could cope with the Hammersmith Bridge closure, were totally unfounded, although it must be recorded that the area of the Thames in question was (co-incidentally) full of

incident this year.

Was the move to Hammersmith a good one? Against the good points that the bar and catering were fine, tube access and parking were reasonable and many people found their way into deepest Minder's country, must be ranged the undoubted fact that there was not enough space for all who wished to exhibit and some stalls looked very cramped. Others were apologetic that they couldn't show all they wanted. Many visitors noticed that they got round the stalls very quickly and perhaps this will be

reflected in next years attendances. The technical theatre profession meets so seldom that it is essential that it has the best chance possible to communicate what's new and to renew old acquaintances. Travellers from Inverness, let alone from Palmer's Green, deserve to see all that's currently available. Suggestion and talking point; next year either use both studios at the Riverside or go for another venue. St. George's Tufnell Park would be a challenge . . .

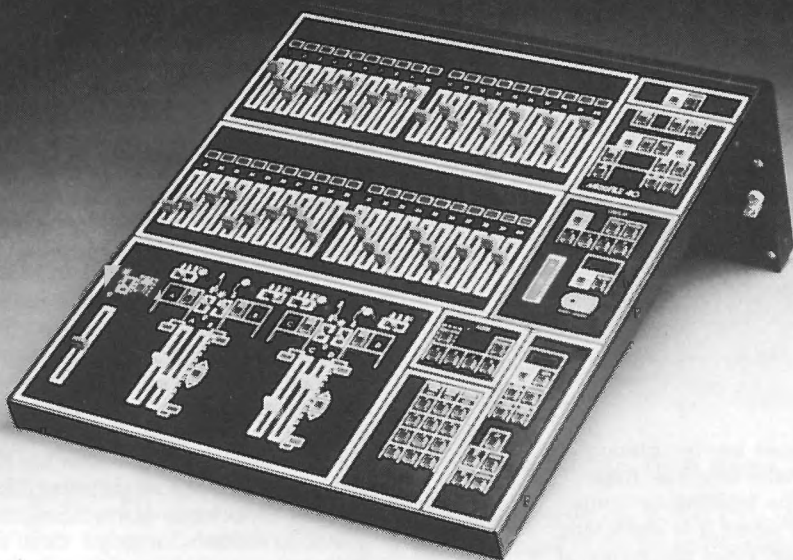
As a stallholder, I am in an invidious position when writing up the Trade Show. The flow of visitors was pretty relentless, so I apologise to any stalls which I missed or failed to cover fully in a whirlwind tour. As usual, my chosen trade of lighting was very well represented, and again it was apparent that advances have been made in control, including lantern control (by Pancan) but the good old luminaires themselves, despite sporting names hitherto restricted to the concert hall, or at any rate grade 3 piano, have not come a long way. Curiously, CCT has adopted the CP77 as a 1Kw light source for profile spots, with a marked increase in light output, at the same time as Colortran, who always used this American-inspired lamp, were showing a markedly English range of lights for the first time.

Of particular interest on standard luminaires was the Tulla stand. Since the '82 show this Andover company has launched itself with a virtually complete range of spots and floods on the Theatre market and their comment on the show was "good response". Imported followspots of high power and high price were being shown by several stalls, including the Coemar U.K. Pilota, which uses the "blue" tin halide lamp also used by Tulla in their top of the range model. A.J.S. had the Ultra Arc from America - a snip at £2500 compared with the Colortran marketed U.Tech (Tokyo) Supersol 2Kw Xenon at £5300. However, the latter beast had gorgeous mechanics and would be a joy to work a show on. Did I blink or was there not one single British designed CSI or HMI followspot on show this year. For a race of pantomime-lovers who gave the world the Stelmar, we have not been taking our followspot manufacture very seriously lately.

Besides followspots, there were other luminaire imports from Whitelight who market the ADB range including the Light Curtain and a new series of 500/650 watt spots. Whitelight are also agents for Ianero film lighting equipment. Action Lighting, who import R.D.S. lamps, also market the "Raylight" optical reflector and GY 9.5 holder which fits any Par 64 can and offers use of the A1/244 as a cheaper alternative to the Par 64 range of lamps. This company also offers Barndoors for common makes of Par Can, Pulsar launched their new 300w Par 56 can at £25.00 list price.

Pancan, last time's prize winner, were "overwhelmed with the reaction" to their latest innovations. Their stand was extremely eyecatching with the constituent letters of "Pancan" projected on a gauze

MicroFILE 40 Memory lighting control desk



MicroFILE 40 is now available complete with 500 in-built memories, 4 play-backs with dipless cross fade, 40 way manual pre-set with channel mimics, capable of recording 9 shows, and many other features normally available only in more expensive desks. All combined in a stylish compact control with standard interface voltage 0 → + 10V nominal (other interfaces available). Overall dimensions 415 wide x 665 x 260 x 233mm vertical height. Weight 12 kg.



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and moving in sequence, controlled by the Pancan Memory System. Their colour Pancan system reminded me of the Major "Rotolux", which gave revolving colour change to battens in the '30s. Few were motorised and none were memory controlled in those days! Donmar and A.J.S. amongst others, hire Pancans and Cerebrum, Donmar, Electrosonic and Kleigl (U.S.A.) are stockists.

Memory lighting controls featured prominently on many stands and Rank Strand, on their 70th birthday, won an award for taking memory into a wider marketplace. There were other small (24 to 60 channel) memory desks available but the AVAB 201, imported by CCT from

Gothenburg, was the only one not to be geared towards rock, cabaret or light entertainment. T.B.A. had the Avolites 30 way with Rolacue, Green Ginger launched the Microfile 40, using "conversational mode of operation" - probably hi-tech specifics for the "user friendly" certainly the colour coding of different parts of the desk helps cockpit drill. Zero 88 had the Eclipse 1200 Modular 2 desks with a miniature stage in front of their controls, to demonstrate lighting changes. Cerebrum used a 2D equivalent of this display to show their Celco series 2 which, to a confessed non memory man like myself (you never guessed), offered a lot of versatility for use in concerts and A.V. shows alike.

The 60+ end of the Memory Market was catered for by Rank Strand's Galaxy, Colortran's new Dimension 2, DEW Electrical's Concept 120 and LAW dimmers, CCT's Datalite and Eurolight's new Microlite Datarack, all of which had "hands on" demonstrations. For the smaller users of dimmers Pulsar offered a new rack-mount dimmer rack with twin 15 amp sockets. Eltec of Oswestry showed their range of educational dimming equipment on the Ancient Lights Stand.

Northern Light were showing their Internally Wired Bars, Patch Panels and Working Light Controls - as installed in the Marlowe Canterbury. Other Electric-biased hardware included Astralite Trussing and a metalwork range from A.J.S., RAT Engineering's lightweight music stand, in a choice of 5 colours and several illumination options, and the very pleasant "Firefly" miniature fibre optics display by Illuminati of Colchester on the Action Lighting Stand.

There were fine displays of traditional and innovative hardware from Flint and Hire Supply Ltd, and Edelstein Engineering, whose new pin-hinge won the Product of the Year award. Such attention to detail, on an item which in the past has driven us all mad with its makeshift inefficiency, deserves the award and huge sales. By the way, Flint will hire compressors and sell tools. If you were looking for a scenery builder to fit these fine items for you, then you would have found Martin Dye of Suffolk Scenery at the show. Curiously there were very few people selling their skills as opposed to their products; perhaps a joint freelance technicians stall next year would be helpful.

On the property side, Peter Evans studio sold for 50p a very good handbook of their range of mouldings, including Helmets and Breastplates, which are held in stock. Packman Research offer a service of making vacuum formed copies from your own mould, Jane Rumble had a good display of her work in the foyer.

Now to materials. Nevilles Textiles showed their range of glittering fabrics for making dancewear. Varia Textiles carried glitter to velours, amongst their range of inherently non-flam scenic materials. White filled cloth and calico up to 9.70 metres is

THE BRITISH COUNCIL

International Specialist Course

Theatre Planning

20 January - 1 February 1985 in London

This course will provide an introduction to the problem of planning buildings for performances. The intention is to give an outline of the many technical and artistic factors which have to be brought together in the process of designing theatres and concert halls.

The various forms of audience to performer relationship and the effects of these on sight lines and acoustics in the auditorium will be considered. Planning the stage for handling scenery, stage lighting systems, the stage sound and inter-communication networks are subjects which will be dealt with by experienced practitioners and will be illustrated by visits to recent buildings in and near London. Other matters to be discussed will include performers' accommodation, rehearsal spaces, production workshops for scenery, stage properties and costumes, public areas, the box office and the training of theatre technicians.

The Director of Studies will be **Mr Roderick Ham**, Architect and Theatre Designer.

Qualifications of members

The course will be of great interest to all those contemplating building theatres, opera houses or concert halls whether their responsibility is to draw up a brief, design the building or some technical aspect of it, or to run the building when it is complete. Participants may therefore include senior staff from Ministries of Culture and other governmental or non-governmental bodies concerned with theatre planning and the briefing of architects for theatre projects, and Directors of Arts or Cultural Centres, as well as architects interested in the problems of theatre design, and other senior people involved in aspects of theatre planning.

There are vacancies for 25 members.

Fee £645 (Residential).

Venue and accommodation

The course sessions will take place at the Art Workers' Guild in Central London. Residential participants will be accommodated at a nearby hotel.

Applicants are advised to apply before 1 October 1984.

Further information and application forms are available from local overseas Representatives of the British Council or from Director, Courses Department, The British Council, 65 Davies Street, London W1A 2AA.

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held in stock. Harlequins flooring ranges include Studio, for permanent flooring and Showfloor, for displays and launches. The Cascade range offers the designer any colour of floor.

Sound was well represented this year. Merseyside Audio Consultants – MAC for short were offering to install or to work conferences. They were one of several companies to launch intercom systems, others being TBA with the rack mounting Clearcom, Spectrum with the Bantam and a custom built complete system service and Technical Projects Ltd., whose systems are compatible with Strandsound and enable sub-rings to be established. Canford Audio will sell you the pieces to make your own intercom and they won an award for their Littlite gooseneck lamp, ideal for prompt desk and stalls lighting sessions.

Hill Audio were showing their sound reinforcement/studio mixing consoles, capable of arrangement to any ordered format. The Libra Mixer was relaunched and its unique 12x12 matrix for assigning inputs to more than one channel is updated, enabling sophisticated microphone mixing as well as effects.

The lamp market was represented by Action Lighting who also showed accessories mentioned above, S.L.D. of Manchester who showed their range of colour medium and lampholders and Valiant Electrical who concentrated on a very comprehensive stock of lamps.

Lastly, five stalls which defy categorisation. Roscolab Ltd. are extending their range of performance products into Hersey gobos and computer software programmes for Theatres and Designers. Radcliffe Transport Services Ltd., dedicated removers of scenery and John Offord, comprehensive providers of information reference literature and Exhibitions to the arts world were both unique representatives of their trades, although Cara Lancaster's Book Bazaar certainly gave Offord's a run for my money. Amid all the kilowatts to see a book called Theatre Lighting before electricity was very pleasant. Ancient Lights of Attleborough showed their range of lantern GX/GY update kits for P28 and P40 users and their comprehensive stocks of Lee Filters for prompt dispatch.

The award for the best literature was awarded to Donmar, whose reference manual will be hailed as an industry standard. Other good catalogues were provided by White Light and T.B.A. who have a new sales division.

As you see despite the small space of Studio 2 there was a lot to see in Hammersmith at the ABTT Show. Next time, turn up or even better exhibit. Organisations like the ABTT itself and the Stage Management Association were there recruiting; why not the Society of British Theatre Designers and the Association of Lighting Designers? It's not often our world comes together.

James Laws is a partner of Ancient Lights, Attleborough, Norfolk.

PRODUCT NEWS

No expensive 'add ons' with new Colortran

With the launch of Colortran's 150 channel 250 memory Systems 2 this month a worthy successor to Colortrack takes the stage. Some fairly extensive customer research lies behind the principal design concept of a complete system in one unit dispensing with those expensive 'add ons'. Thus remote control, floppy disc drive and built-in computer back up with separate multiplex link to 512 dimmers are all standard. Main features include two timed or manual cross fade playbacks with wheel type analogue override; wheel type channel controller with special routing functions and ten manual playbacks. A special effects system provides auto loops and loop counts on both main system faders. Conventional 0-10V dimmers or the latest Colortran multiplex HDD racks can be controlled. More information from Robin Rayner, Colortran UK, PO Box 5, Burrell Way, Thetford, Norfolk.



New filters from Rosco

An extension of the Rosco Cinegel range takes account of the greater variety of discharge lamps and fluorescent tubes now being used in film and video photography.

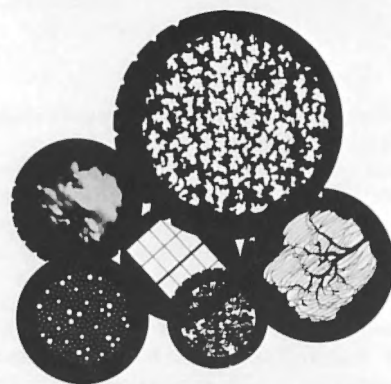
These new filters, called 1/2 and 1/4 Minus Green, supplement the existing Tough Minus Green, to give a family of filters approximating to 30, 15 and 7 1/2 cc in the Magenta colour area. They enable consistency to be maintained where variations in light characteristics occur with these lamps and can be supplied in sheet form for placing over the lights or as sleeves for fluorescent tubes. Data sheets and samples from Roscolab Ltd., 69-71 Upper Ground, London SE1.

Gobos Galore

Roscolab Ltd who recently acquired the Colortran line of designer patterns, have announced a partnership with DHA Lighting Ltd to market gobos in the UK.

The complete range, which includes more than 250 designs will cover all the Colortran designer patterns, plus many new designs created specially by David Hersey, principal of DHA, which includes mesh tones and composite gobos.

Rosco and DHA will market the range in the UK, while Rosco will market the full range exclusively in the rest of the world. A free detailed catalogue of all the designs is available from Roscolab Ltd.



The Rosco Nivoflex platform and staging systems described in CUE November/December number are now available for rental from Arena Promotional Facilities, well known for grandstand seating and sports equipment rental. Arena Promotional will carry hire stocks of both Nivoflex professional and Nivoflex Vario systems and the staging in York Minster this summer will be one of the first of such hirings.

Hire charges are £25 per week for each professional unit or £15 for the Vario. A small extra charge is made for delivery from the Newbury warehouse. All hire enquiries to Arena Promotional Facilities, Floway House, 42 Bone Lane, Newbury, RG14 5SH.

Electrosonic make a Scene

Although the close connection with stage lighting scenes is obvious the main application of Scene Set would seem to be in large hotels, conference complexes, large commercial buildings, multi-media entertainment complexes, and for dynamic control of flood lighting.

Scene Set is described as the ultimate in architectural lighting control systems. Imagine a hotel Conference Manager being able to reset the lighting of a Ballroom from a Banquet to a Fashion Show at the touch of a button! Well, don't just imagine any more, because Scene Set is capable of controlling



512 dimmers on 128 lighting scenes from up to 24 control panels.

Four or eight remote push button Scene Selector panels call up the pre-programmed lighting scenes; and Scenemaker is the hand held memory programmer for creating or modifying the scenes. Scenemaker is fitted with a miniature jack plug for connection to any one of the Scene Selector panels and its LCD display 'prompts', the person programming to act on the various functions available. In addition to dimmer levels and fade times for scenes, Scenemaker will also programme special effects, events at a specified time of day, emergency routines and even more.

Scene Set captures the imagination, but the heart of this new range of lighting controls is the digital dimmer, or Digidim, which employs a microprocessor device and a thyristor pair to control the load. An additional control system to Scene Set is Multiscene — an 8 scene memory programmer/replay unit, suitable for controlling up to 6 channels of Digidims.

A typical application for Multiscene would be in restaurants where different lighting moods for the time of day — Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner can be simply called up by untrained staff by push button. The dimmers can be used on cold cathode and fluorescent loads, and on transformer fed loads such as low voltage tungsten lamps.

Write to Yvonne Hegarty for the Scenaset technical information at Electronsonic Ltd., 815 Woolwich Rd., London SE7 8LT.

Operator Orientated at Eurolight

Since Microlite was launched only 8 months ago ten of these systems have already been installed. Pretty convincing testimony we would think to some bang-up-to-date tech-

nological design and operational flexibility. But Eurolight are clearly not resting back on these established design procedures and their determination to stay a step ahead all the time was to be seen in their demonstration of Datarak at the ABTT Exhibition. This is an entirely new idea in dimmer technology by which the Microlite can deal directly with the dimmer channels without the need for de-multiplexing units. Datarak dimmers are also used with Micron the small theatre version of the Microlite system where a remote dimmer controller is unnecessary, the dimmer accepting the digital signal directly.



A useful option in the Eurolight systems is this designer box remote control which has all the main functions of the computer, data recall for preset — and dimmer — numbers, intensities and computer information. More information from Neville Lockwood at Cosby Eurolight Ltd., 58/60 Kingston Rd, New Malden, Surrey.

ABTT Awards 1984

This year there were two deviations from previous practice: the number of Awards was increased and the presentations were made on the first day of the ABTT Trade Show, thereby enabling visitors to the Show to take particular note of products which had received an Award.

The presentations were made at the Riverside Studios, Hammersmith, on Thursday 15 March 1984 by Anthony Field, Finance Director of the Arts Council of Great Britain.

A "gold" hook clamp was awarded to Edelstein Engineering Ltd for their pin hinges.

"Silver" hook clamps were awarded to:

Rank Strand Ltd for their Tempus M24 memory lighting control system;
Donmar Hire and Sales for their Reference Manual;

Paul Fowler, prop maker, for his puppets made for the production of "Where the

Wild Things Are" performed at the National Theatre;
The Royal Exchange Theatre Company, Manchester, for their production of "Moby Dick".

Pin up from Strand

A well planned brochure just received from Rank Strand opens up to form a 2ft square wall chart having the whole range of luminaires at view on one side with their dimensions and appropriate accessories all included. Copies are available free on request from Rank Strand or their dealers but if you do intend to mount it on the wall it might be as well to ask for 2 copies as the obverse contains the information on controls, colour filters and fixings.

Three score and ten

Quite a long reign by any reckoning. Their 70 years at the top was marked by Rank Strand with a well attended reception in London recently. As you would expect there were old hands among the stage hands and at least three generations of lighting designers present. Altogether a lovely occasion for raised glasses to their next milestone in stage lighting.



Guests at the Rank Strand reception left to right Bill McGee and David Enraght of the Royal Opera House, Francis Reid and Michael Thompson

Homer sometimes nods

It has been pointed out to us that our last Product News contained an error of fact when attributing all the new FOH lighting at the Old Vic to CCT Silhouettes. That word 'all' was the trouble as some among them were in fact Strand lanterns. And the evidence, our own picture of the theatre appearing on another page, says Bill Crisp, Strand's eagle eyed publicity manager.