

CUE

Technical Theatre Review 34

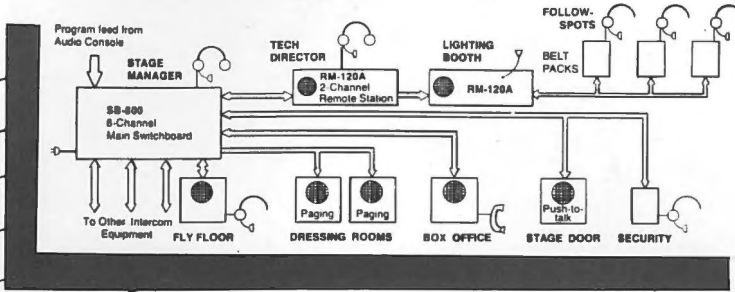
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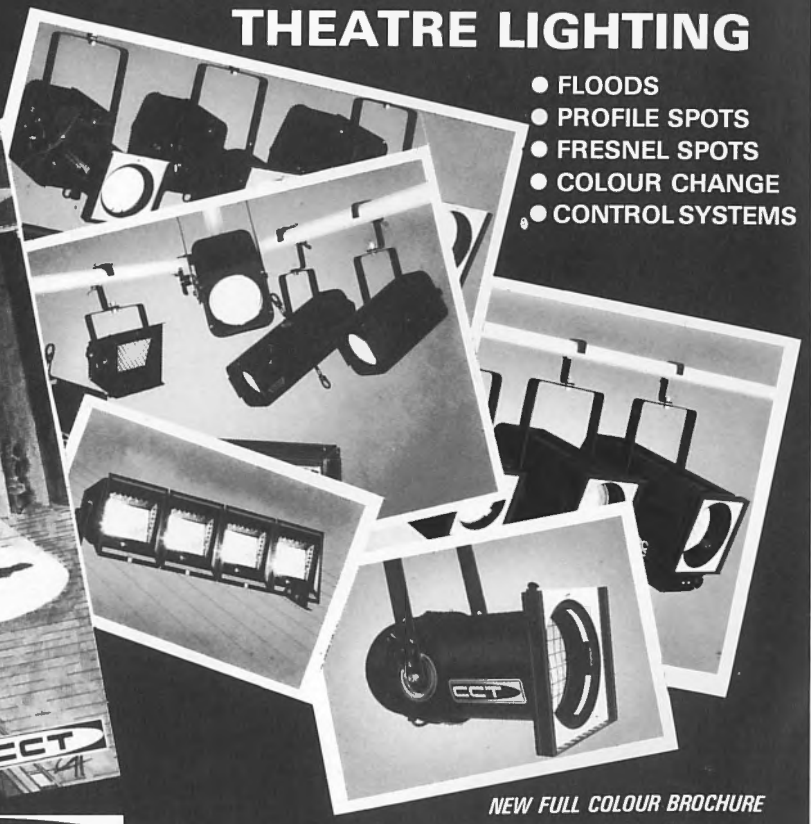
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Twentse Schouwberg, Enschede.
A regional arts centre in Holland recently transformed to provide a 900 seat opera/playhouse and a smaller magnificently restored 19th century theatre. Our cover picture by Barend Gerritsen Fotograaf Bfn shows a concert performance in the larger auditorium. Iain Mackintosh describes the completion of this five year project on page 4.

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Editorial Board

James Twynam (Managing)
Francis Reid
Jeremy Twynam

Editorial,
Advertising and Subscription Office:
Twynam Publishing Ltd.,
Kitemore, Faringdon, Oxfordshire SN7 8HR
Telephone 0367 21141

CUE

Technical Theatre Review 34

March/April 1985

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A PHOENIX INFREQUENT

Great movements in the arts, like revolutions, don't last for more than about fifteen years. After that the flame dies down, and people prefer a cosy glow.

Few of us would dissent from this view of Kenneth Clark in 'Civilisation', although a debate might centre on the accuracy of his fifteen year span and could extend to a search for a generalisation about the length of cosy glows.

Particularly as this seems to be the state in which we currently find our theatre — although with a glow whose cosiness has all the characteristics of a fade. Possibly a split fade with some rosiness lagging the cosiness but certainly an accelerating fade with all the inevitability of tragedy.

However fades to blackout are not irreversible and we await the next great movement in the cycle of theatrical progress. Where will it come from?

The last great movement in theatre — the one in the cosy glow of whose glories we now bask spanned a slot (? fifteen years) across the sixties and seventies. The climate was right, particularly Arts Council (finance), ABTT (architecture) and Royal Court (writers). While a new theatre was still establishing, reaction produced another overlapping great movement of alternative theatre. But both are now subdued flames, united in dissipating their creative energies in political squabbles about the relationship between arts and society.

From the cosy glow we await the rise of a phoenix. It is our hope against the darkening clouds of mankind's continually growing inhumanity to mankind. There is only one certainty — the next great movement in theatre will have to be dependent upon imagination rather than money. And not for the first time!

DOUBLE DUTCH

An account of two theatres in Enschede, Holland: the remodelling of an undistinguished 900 seat opera/playhouse of the nineteen fifties and the restoration of a magnificent 300 seat theatre of the nineteenth century.

IAIN MACKINTOSH of Theatre Projects Consultants.

"It does not interest me in the least what people want. What does interest me is why they want a thing." These are the words of Dutch architect Onno Greiner in an interview titled 'You must never do what a client asks', in *Bouw*, 13 November, 1982. This is a man who distrusts the ability of people to formulate what they want but is rather an architect deeply concerned with philosophy and dialogue. The philosophy is uncompromising: 'Engage my bureau, like my philosophy' could be the motto. The dialogue is extensive, exhausting and invariably successful. Again, I quote from the same interview: "What I would like is a continuous dialogue with my clients, a dialogue with brilliant partners so as to arrive ultimately at a controlled result."

At Enschede, we arrived at the completion of the project on the evening of 9th March, 1985 with a gala premiere by Opera Forum, the region's own opera company that is the only professional opera company in Holland outside of Amsterdam, of *Ariadne auf Naxos* by Richard Strauss. The preceding night the Nederlands Dance Theatre, with the new 65 piece orchestra in the pit, had danced three new Kylian ballets, one a world premiere. A week earlier the theatre had offered open house to every group in town with 20,000 visitors over a single weekend enjoying something somewhere in the centre. Yes, we had arrived, we being architect, a full design team state supported civic client and a trio of remarkably consistent users, manager Maarten Zweers, technical director Hans Bakke and catering manager Jele de Grauw all three of whom were involved in every decision taken over the five years of the project. Some explanation is needed of how these came together.

In Volume 12 No 2 (1978) of SIGHTLINE I wrote of my admiration of three distinguished buildings by Onno Greiner: the restoration of Holland's oldest theatre in Leiden; an arts centre at Biberach an der Riss in Southern Germany and another arts centre, this time in Holland at Amersfoort. In this article I described the generous open-hearted feel of Greiner's architecture which does not assert itself forward but rather gently guides the patron in the right direction encouraging the arts and theatre lover to participate in the life of these indoor towns which are Greiner's unique achievement. To those who want architecture for the performing arts to be exotic and exciting like an eastern bazaar the Greiner style will always feel cool. But to those brought up in the classical discipline his philosophy comes as a breath of fresh

air: "You must give people a feeling of clarity. You must be able to orient yourself within a building, that to say consciously or subconsciously where you came from, where you are and where you are going".

Onno Greiner is a genuine internationalist who is prepared to conduct his dialogue in French, German or English as well as in Dutch. In 1947 he attracted attention at the Adelaide Conference on Building Theatres for Communities attended by our own Fred Bentham, Rod Ham and Richard Pilbrow. My introduction was the following year. In 1977 we shared a platform at the Munich Conference and in 1978 we collaborated in the National Theatre competition for Damascus and came third equal with Alvar Alto, the prize going to Renton Howard Wood Levin. Then early in 1980 came an invitation to Theatre Projects Consultants to advise in Enschede. Onno Greiner had done an initial scheme in 1976 which had been shelved. Enschede, a small town but also a regional centre a few miles from the German border, was once the centre of a once prosperous textile area but in the 1970's suffered severe financial problems. Yet in 1980 the project was revived thanks to generous central government support. Nevertheless there was only 15,000,000 guilders (approx £3.5m) to renovate an extraordinarily unattractive jumble of buildings which formed the regional arts centre, "Twentse Schouwberg".

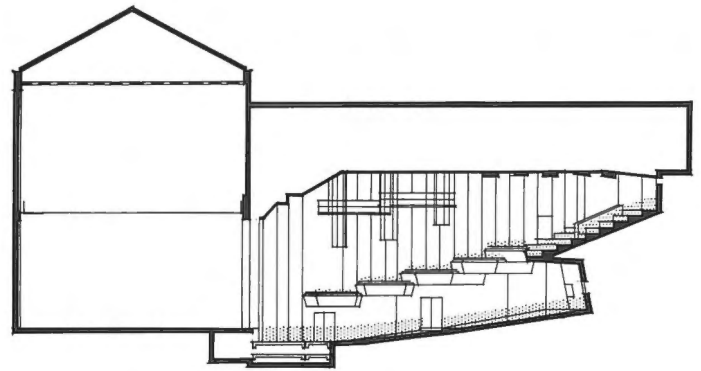
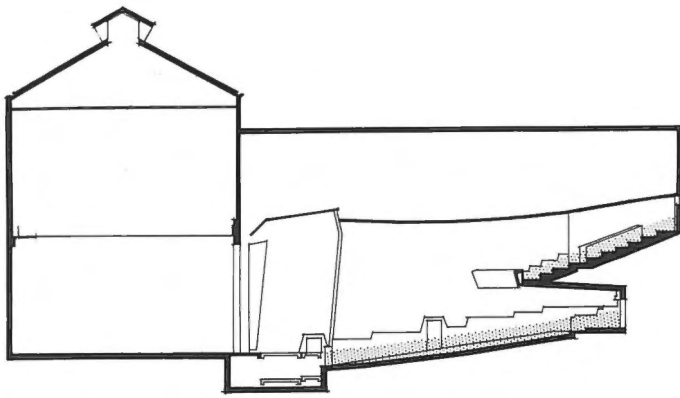
The centre piece was an indifferent 900 seat tunnel of a theatre opened in 1954 rendered considerably worse in the mid 1960s by the slapping on of some cinema-like glitz finishes. The foyers had ominously low ceilings with, on each side, bay after bay of garderobes staffed with stern faced matrons ready to tear the coat off your back. The doors of the building were firmly locked until half an hour before the show when you might get a cup of coffee before the show provided you had booked your ticket in advance at the narrow guichet in the outer storm lobby. Upstairs there was a heavily decorated club room and space for functions that you could hire, for weddings or, possibly more appropriately, for wakes.

In all this dreariness two spaces shone through the gloom: a back stage bistro with the best steak I have ever tasted (Texas, Omaha, Calgary, Aberdeen and Melbourne included), and an exquisite galleried theatre space doing temporary service as a cinema - hardly recognisable for what it was, except to the 19th century theatrical tourist, which once meant Francis Reid but now includes most readers of CUE.

Inevitably, the involvement of the theatre consultant was primarily in the two auditoriums (the stages themselves were not touched, being satisfactorily straightforward already). Yet perhaps the most interesting part of the whole project concerned the foyers. In 1980 an independent appreciation had been written which endorsed Onno Greiner's intention to open up the theatre during the day. In October 1980 the Director, Maarten Zweers, and the City officer responsible, Mr Meijer, visited London to discover, amongst other things, how the bookshop and bars worked in the National Theatre foyers. Gradually a plan for Enschede's theatre emerged which retained the capacity of management to control the flow of people at all times without at any time losing the

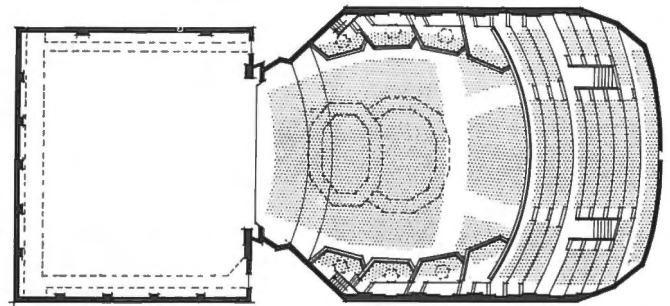
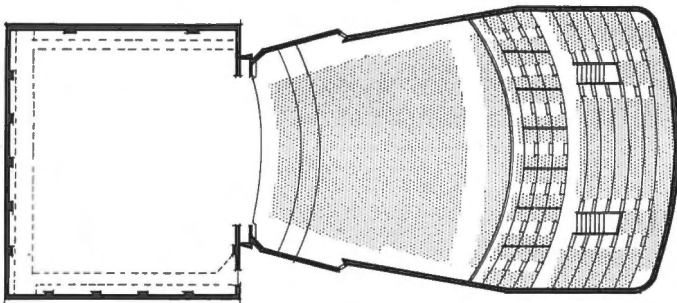


The 900-seat large Opera/Playhouse



0 1 2 3 4 5 10 Metres
0 5 10 15 20 25 30 Feet

0 1 2 3 4 5 10 Metres
0 5 10 15 20 25 30 Feet



Long section and plan of large auditorium before and after remodelling.

sense of freedom. Thus the bookshops and the cafe open on both to the new pedestrianised street and also on to the inner foyer. The theatre cafe has its own mirror image counterpart which can be kept clear for the interval through a system of sliding screens, there being nothing worse than finding at the interval that your bar is already crowded with all night drinkers, the product of a too open door policy.

The large auditorium was pronounced a success by the first users. Conductor Arpad Joo found the back of the pit a bit 'live' for Strauss brass, but this problem is both familiar and curable. In the auditorium, the lighting positions calculated by Theatre Projects and detailed by the architects will

provide future historians with easily read clues. The chandelier lighting arrangement is familiar from Bracknell where Francis Reid described it as "one of the best compromises yet devised, between visual design and technical requirements" (CUE Sept/Oct 1984) or even the St Lawrence Centre, Toronto, to which it bears a not unsurprising resemblance having been conceived at the same time (CUE May/June 1983). The stalactites are sheer Richard Pilbrow ex Olivier.

There are one or two other surprises in the auditorium. The box fronts are irregularly flecked with gold, using the simplest techniques familiar to any competent scenic artist. The boxes themselves are 'en

escalier' and succeed in totally transforming the previous tunnel into a space with a high degree of centrality which is in turn focussed onto the stage. Already the side boxes have become favourite positions for many regular theatre goers.

The small theatre has been returned to its old mid 19th Century glory. The cinema fixed rake has been replaced with the original flat floor with two important modifications: the first is that around the perimeter of the auditorium under the side balconies is an 400m raised ambulatory which at once provides easy access (this being the common level of the whole of the



Orchestra & choir out on the forestage of the large auditorium



The exterior of Twentse Schouwburg. The original mixed vintage facades were retained for cost reasons but were rejuvenated with a series of life size statues of actors, singers and dancers tumbling down the facade.

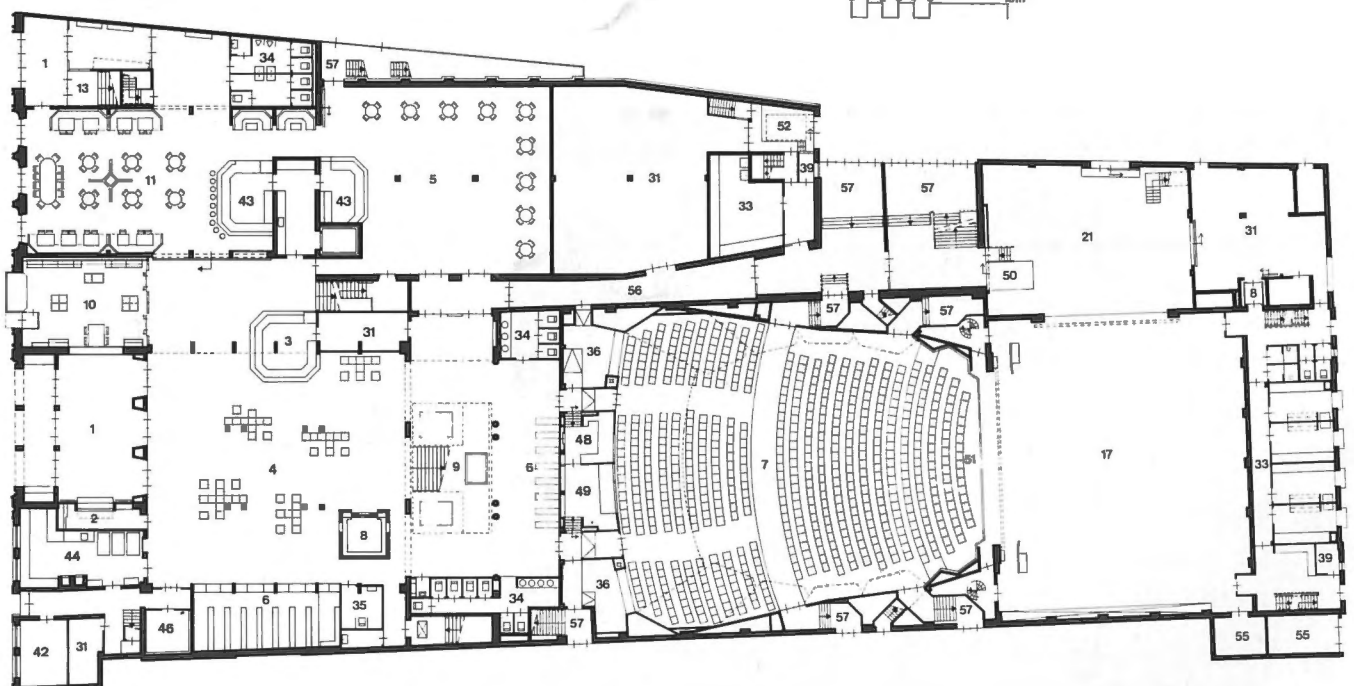
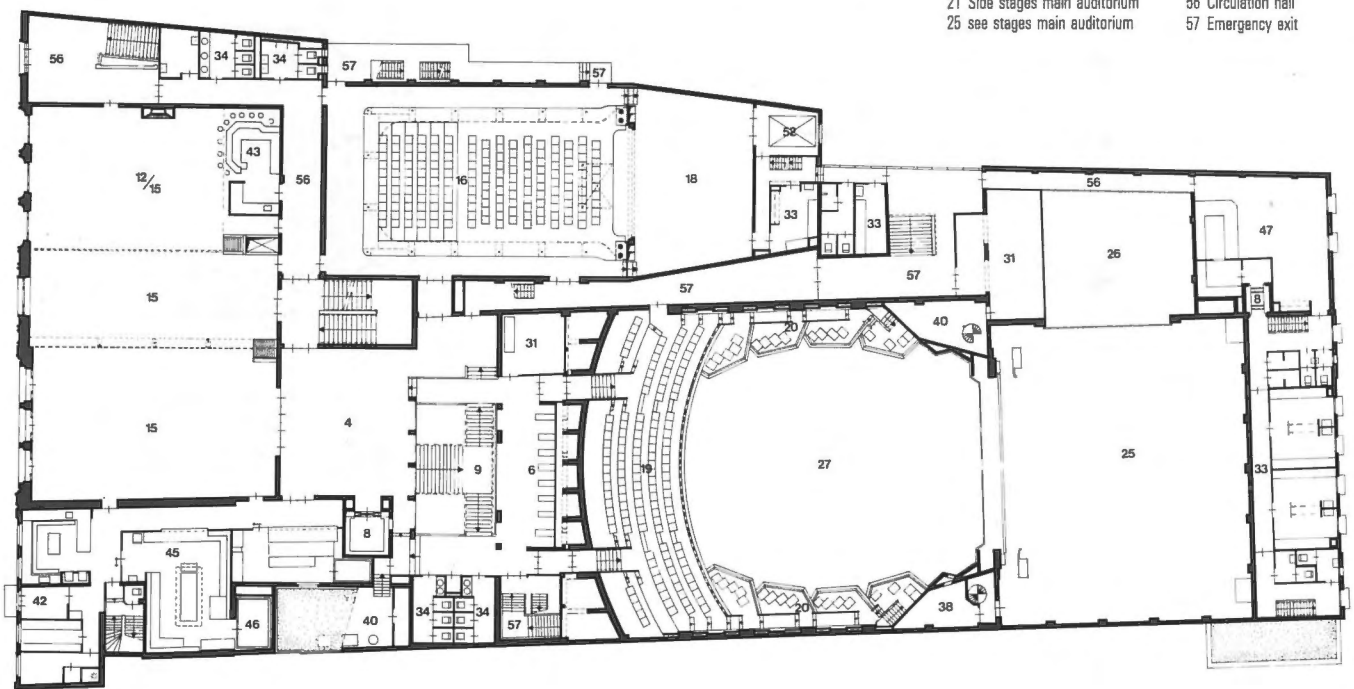
new first floor throughout the building, hitherto a maze of up and down steps) as well as providing mixed seating positions for in-the-round performances in the centre of the auditorium. The second is the introduction of three small sets of retractable mobile rostrum at the back of the auditorium which can be easily repositioned or removed. The decor of the auditorium has another Greiner hallmark: a range of specially designed light fittings with hand blown glass globes from Venice which echo the period without slavishly copying it – a welcome change from those overpolished brass brackets designed for the irregular flecked light of gas but now supporting so

very much more lux.

In the account in CUE of the transformation of the St Lawrence I wrote that “it confirmed something I had long suspected, but had not the confidence to voice: we can put right the errors of the past. Transplants are possible. Perhaps there are other theatres closer to home which can be reborn ‘again’.” Two years later one can only repeat this, adding that if a sensitive, essentially humanist architect is to be selected for one of these transplants, then a visit to Enschede and an interview with Greiner who has built seven fine arts centres, should certainly be considered. Ironically there are currently six theatre

KEY

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 Entrance | 26 see side stage main auditorium |
| 2 Box Office | 27 see main auditorium |
| 3 Box Office | 31 Stores |
| 4 Foyer/hall | 33 Dressing rooms performers |
| 5 Foyer | 34 Toilets |
| 6 Cloakroom | 36 Lodge invalid |
| 7 Main auditorium | 38 Stage manager |
| 8 Elevator | 42 Administration |
| 9 Stairs | 43 Bar and kitchen |
| 10 Bookshop | 44 Coffee kitchen |
| 11 Foyer/cafe | 45 Kitchen |
| 15 Conference room | 47 Performers foyer |
| 16 Small auditorium | 48 Lighting control |
| 17 Stage main auditorium | 49 Sound control |
| 18 Stage small auditorium | 50 Elevator |
| 19 Balcony main auditorium | 51 Stage elevator |
| 20 Boxes | 56 Circulation hall |
| 21 Side stages main auditorium | 57 Emergency exit |
| 25 see stages main auditorium | |



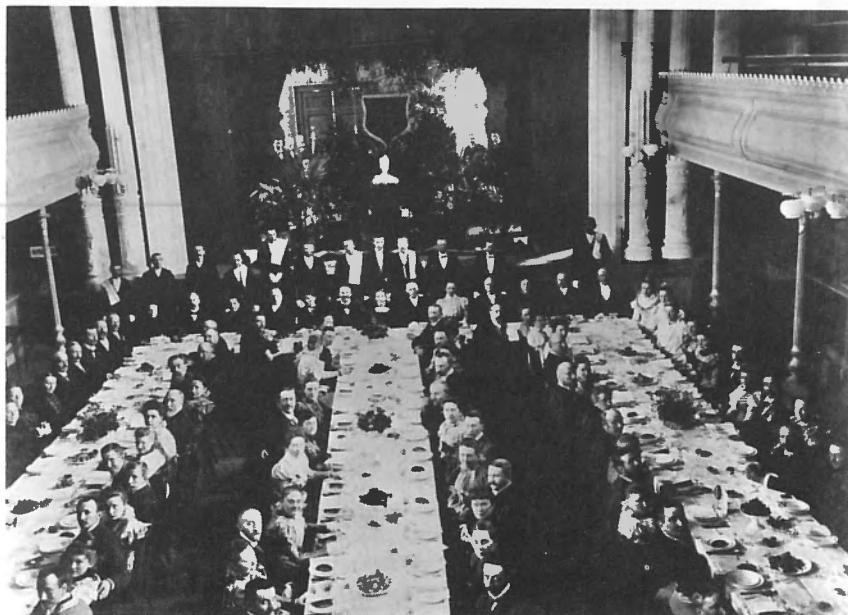
Plans of ground floor and first floor levels. Architects: Onno Greiner Martien Van Goor Architekten BV.



The small theatre restored.



A chamber orchestra in the small theatre.



The only 19th Century evidence of the original interior of the small theatre.

twentse schouwburg



ZATERDAG 2 MAART / OPEN HUIS
van 11.00 - 16.00 uur met koren, kopsen en drumsbonds
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van 12.00 - 17.00 uur met OFO / FORUM

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woensdag 6 maart - 20.00 uur kleine zaal
TWENTS CLAVECIMBEL ENSEMBLE
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prijs / 5,-; pas 05 en cje / 2,50

donderdag 7 maart - 20.00 uur kleine zaal
TONEELVERENIGING THALIA
met sketches, sketches en cabaret van Dimitri Frenkel Frink uit zijn bundel
„DE KLEINSTE HOND TER WERELD“
prijs / 5,-; pas 05 en cje / 2,50

vrijdag 8 maart - 20.00 uur schouwburgzaal
NEDERLANDS DANS THEATER MET HET NEDERLANDS BALLET ORKEST
Drie balletten van de choreograaf JHN KYLIAN op muziek van LUTJOLANWSKI, STRAWINSKI EN JANACEK.
prijs / 25,- en / 22,50; pas 05 en cje / 20,- en / 17,50

zaterdag 9 maart - 20.00 uur schouwburgzaal
OPERA FORUM / PREMIÈRE
„ARIADNE AUF NAXOS“ / R. STRAUSS
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maandag 11 maart - 20.00 uur schouwburgzaal
FORUM „EINE NACHT IN VENEDIG“
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woensdag 13 maart - 20.00 uur idem
donderdag 14 maart - 20.00 uur idem
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* zaterdag van 14.00 - 16.00 uur en vanaf één uur voor iedere voorstelling.

A busy opening fortnight for Twentse Schouwburg.

projects in Holland being designed by architects who have never previously designed for the performing arts. In Greiner and his partner Martien van Goor there is a resource of experience and of understanding which should be used to the full and not only in Holland.

Project Team

Architects:

Onno Greiner, Martien Van Goor Architecten BV
Partner in charge: Onno Greiner
Job architect: Friedel Broenen

Theatre Consultants:

Theatre Projects Consultants
Director in charge: Iain Mackintosh
Lighting : Alan Russell
Sound : David Collison
Planning : David Evans and Paul Jenkins

Acousticians:

Lichtveld & Buis
W Tak CE, Eindhoven (initial planning)

Structural Engineers:

Sassen en Fokema, Enschede

Electrical Engineers:

P W Deerns BV, Amsterdam.

COLOUR EFFECT FILTERS

Product	Effect Colour
101 Yellow	Sunlight and window effect – pleasant in acting areas
102 Light Amber	Lamplight effects – dawn sun effects – pleasant in acting areas
103 Straw	Pale sunlight through window effect – warm winter effect
104 Deep Amber	Mood effect on backings. Backlighting of floor and colour effect
105 Orange	Mainly light entertainment, functions. Fire effect if used with 106, 166, 104
106 Primary Red	Strong red effect
107 Light Rose	As for 104
109 Light Salmon	Interesting back lighting
110 Middle Rose	Pleasing effects for theatrical lighting
111 Dark Pink	Good for cycloramas
113 Magenta	Very strong – used carefully for small areas on set
115 Peacock Blue	Pleasing effect on sets, cyclorama cloths backlighting (ice rinks, galas, etc.)
116 Medium Blue Green	Pleasing effects for theatrical lighting
117 Steel Blue	Night effect used on sets – cycloramas
118 Light Blue	Strong night effect
119 Dark Blue	Mood effects – jazz clubs etc., back projection. Travelling matt blue
120 Deep Blue	Pleasing effects for theatrical lighting
121 Lee Green	Cycloramas
122 Fern Green	Cycloramas – good for mood effect
124 Dark Green	Cycloramas – good for back lighting
126 Mauve	Cycloramas – good for back lighting
127 Smokey Pink	Cycloramas – set lighting, disco's
128 Bright Pink	Cycloramas – good for back lighting – strong effect
130 Clear	Used in animation and projection work
132 Medium Blue	Set lighting – travelling matt blue
134 Golden Amber	Set lighting – amber with a touch of pink
136 Pale Lavender	Set lighting – the subtlest of the lavenders
137 Special Lavender	Set lighting – lavender with blue overtones
138 Pale Green	Set lighting – less than half strength 121
139 Primary Green	Set lighting
141 Bright Blue	Set lighting – slightly darker than 118
142 Pale Violet	Set lighting
143 Pale Navy Blue	Set lighting – reduces intensity without too much blue
144 No Colour Blue	Set lighting
147 Apricot	Pleasing effects for theatrical lighting
148 Bright Rose	Set lighting – half the strength of 113
151 Gold Tint	Pleasing effects for theatrical lighting
152 Pale Gold	Set lighting – subtle warm effect
153 Pale Salmon	Set lighting
154 Pale Rose	Pleasing effects for theatrical lighting
156 Chocolate	Cyclorama cloths – ¾ back for dark skin tones
157 Pink	Dance sequences. (Useful for softening white costumes without affecting skin tones)
158 Deep Orange	Fire effect – sun sets
159 No Colour Straw	Warm effect – pale tones
161 Slate Blue	Set lighting – a very cold blue
162 Bastard Amber	Set lighting – half the strength of 152
164 Flame Red	Disco effect – developed for hell fire scenes
165 Daylight Blue	Set lighting – keylight for moonlight effect
166 Pale Red	Good for light entertainment
170 Deep Lavender	Set lighting – disco's – theatres
174 Dark Steel Blue	Set lighting – creates good moonlight shadows
176 Loving Amber	Set lighting – pale pink enhances skin tones
179 Chrome Orange	Combination of ½ CTO & double strength 104
180 Dark Lavender	Pleasing effects for theatrical lighting
181 Congo Blue	Theatre and television effect lighting
182 Light Red	Theatre and television effect lighting
183 Moonlight Blue	Theatre and television effect lighting
184 Cosmetic Peach	Pale tints complimentary to Key lighting
185 Cosmetic Burgundy	Pale tints complimentary to Key lighting
186 Cosmetic Silver Rose	Pale tints complimentary to Key lighting
187 Cosmetic Rouge	Pale tints complimentary to Key lighting
188 Cosmetic Highlight	Pale tints complimentary to Key lighting
189 Cosmetic Silver Moss	Pale tints complimentary to Key lighting
190 Cosmetic Emerald	Pale tints complimentary to Key lighting
191 Cosmetic Aqua Blue	Pale tints complimentary to Key lighting

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Amsterdam Again

Theatric Tourist FRANCIS REID returns to a Favourite Museum

In the distant days of 1980 and Cue 8, I started a series of visits to theatre museums with the intention (as I then wrote) of considering their interest not to the academic researcher but to the casual theatric tourist. With but the very minimum of exceptions (the backstages of three historic theatres), I have never sought any special facilities that might be accorded to a journalist or a theatre specialist. My purpose has been only pleasure: to enjoy, in a relaxed anonymous way, such moments of theatre past as are openly displayed around the world.

To anyone thinking that these opening words are leading up to an announcement that I have reached the end of my theatric tourist trail, let me hasten to give assurance (or warning) that there are still enough museums and sites of theatre history to extend my trail to the end of Cue, the end of me, or to the end of Natwest tolerance for my travel bug. No, there is a trail of some considerable length still a-winding. But first a pause to return to the museum featured as the first in this series — one of my nearest and dearest, the one in Amsterdam.

Amsterdam's theatre museum is now entered through the Netherlands Theatre Institute which occupies the adjacent tall elegant 17th century merchant's house on the Herregracht canal. Indeed neither *Theater Museum* nor the earlier *Toneel*

Museum are now used. The collection and its exhibition appear on posters and in listings under **Nederlands Theater Instituut**. Current policy is to run a major exhibition for a year in conjunction with a series of shorter smaller specialist displays. The system is very flexible and, visiting in the Decembers of 83 and 84, I caught interesting periods of transition at the beginning and end of *Een Huis Vol Theater* for which the obvious translation of "a house full of theatre" is correct.

Lights rising and falling sequentially on models can be a little irritating when one is trying to concentrate on detail, but they do infuse a feeling of existence in time into an otherwise static object.

A particular strength of this museum is not just that it is assiduously collecting the material of today's theatre but exhibits the history of the recent past with as much care as it devotes to that of earlier centuries. And the collections seem to be equally strong in all areas of performance, no matter how popular or esoteric. Thus films of musicals not much more than a decade old may be found playing on video in a roomful of their costumes, supported by designs, posters, etc.

Celebrations of eminent living artistes can be given an extended treatment. While Annie M. G. Schmidt's latest revue plays at the Carre Theatre, the top floor of the museum looks at her life as theatre writer, performer, cabaret singer, and writer of children's books. A two-hour interview with her runs on video while individual listening posts relate to the various pictures, books and production ephemera on display. What treasure for the future!

In the past decade I must have made at least a dozen visits to this house of theatric pleasure. I have never ever been other than delighted and stimulated. Whether by an exhibition which brings a lost theatrical moment alive again by careful juxtaposition of memories . . . or by the prints of theatres past, an area in which the Netherlands are particularly strong — both in the quality of the prints and in the interest of the architecture . . . or the models displayed in the house's original reception room with eighteenth century murals. A model of the Schouwburg in 1894 which had stood by the box-office window to assist buyers in their seat choice. Reconstructions of the London Globe, the Ghent Rederikerstoneel, and that gorgeous



STAGE DESIGN

DAVID FINGLETON

Biblical dodgems in 'Samson' at the Opera House and a successful new 'Barber of Seville'.

At the Coliseum, a superb Vauxhall Gardens setting for 'Xerxes' but not so impressive, the Netherlands design for 'Tristan and Isolde'.

The National Theatre offers two commendable new productions in 'The Road to Mecca' and 'The Government Inspector'.

working model from 1781 which I described in that original Cue article. Oh, and there was something for the lightpersons — just casually standing there, a pair of Pattern 73s and a doublespot with a lamphouse which looked definitely derived from the age of the arc.

Actually, house full of theatre is rather a good description for a theatre institute where the administrative function of a national and international information centre is combined with one of the world's major research collections from which exhibitions are arranged with particularly strong invention in their exploration of display techniques.

The only weakness is the bookstall — however this is probably out of deference to the nearby location of one of Europe's best theatre bookshops which is just a couple of canals away. It is within the Stadtschouburg (City Theatre) building, but entered from the street and open normal shopping hours. Since the potential sales for specialist theatre books in Dutch rather inhibits their publication, this bookshop has one of the best culls of the world's theatre books — particularly in English and German. There are titles in Amsterdam that are hard or even impossible to find in London and New York. But I hope that the museum will gradually get some of their choicest items on to postcard.

The tall thin architecture of Amsterdam's house of theatre provides a sequence of interlinked domestic sized exhibition rooms on three floors. In the 'Een Huis von Theater' exhibition, the house metaphor was exploited on a staircase landing by a large pictorial exterior of the house with peepholes of the diverse theatrical activity within — and surrounded by an extensive collage of photographs, postcards and slides.

In addition to conventional displays of the items of ephemera that record the brief lives of stage productions, Amsterdam theatre exhibitions utilise presentation techniques which strive to recreate something of the atmosphere of a performance moment, or even the fourth dimension of performance time. Slide/tape and video are obvious devices with an increasing role, and Amsterdam is strong in this. But other audio-visual techniques are also used. Such as the presentation of an actor by accompanying a short biography sheet with photographs in various roles showing the width of their range, sometimes with costumes on figures with black-stockinged neutral but be-wigged faces — and with headsets of the actor's voice to accompany one's study of the material.

A major new opera house is on the way in Amsterdam — now that should stimulate quite an exhibition!

It was altogether appropriate that both our major opera companies should have celebrated the 300th birthday of that great adopted Englishman, George Frideric Handel, with major new productions of two of his most notable works during the anniversary week itself at the end of February. The Royal Opera chose Handel's dramatic oratorio *Samson*, last staged there in 1958 in a production by Herbert Graf, designed by Oliver Messel, and English National Opera offered one of his most successful Italian operas, *Xerxes*, at the Coliseum in a new English translation by its producer, Nicholas Hytner. What made their selections even more apposite was that both works had been given their original premieres in London: *Xerxes* at the King's Theatre, Haymarket in 1738, and *Samson* at the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden (the first of the three theatres on the Royal Opera House's site) in 1743. Unfortunately there is invariably a problem in staging one of Handel's dramatic oratorios, for they are altogether more static affairs than genuine operas and were never intended for the kind of staging that operatic audiences expect today. But I cannot believe that it was impossible to find a happier solution than the cumbersome, cliché-ridden realisation that we were offered at Covent Garden by producer Elijah Moshinsky and designer Timothy O'Brien. There was no harm in the decision to see the Philistines in bright white light and to plunge the Jews into stygian gloom, and it undoubtedly made sense, in the opening scene, to dress the chorus in costumes contemporary with Handel. Moreover the Philistines' glaringly lit archway contrasted powerfully with the dark wooden ecclesiastical surroundings of the Hebrews. But thereafter the production could not leave well alone and descended to a fidgety meandering of masonry so that one was never able to focus on the music or the drama. Thus *Samson*, in crude biblical dress, was trundled interminably around on a cart while his followers remained immured in a passable reproduction of Bevis Marks Synagogue, though there, of course, the constant removal of furniture is not encouraged. The height of absurdity was reached during the second act when the potentially epic confrontation between *Samson* and the Philistine hero, Harapha, was reduced to a game of biblical dodgems

in which each chased the other around the stage on four wheels. To this misconceived staging were added decidedly anachronistic choreography by Eleanor Fazan and brashly unsubtle lighting by Nick Chelton which reached its climax at the close of Act 2 with a vivid green laser beam which was presumably intended to separate the Jews from the Philistines, but only succeeded in emphasising the wrong-headedness of the production. It may be that all this scenic St. Vitus' Dance will meet with greater approval at the New York Metropolitan and Chicago Lyric Opera Houses, whither it is now bound, but it was certainly not an appropriate way in which to celebrate the genius of Handel in London.

Happily the skilful and stylish staging of *Xerxes* at the Coliseum came as most welcome relief. Producer Nicholas Hytner and designer David Fielding, both richly gifted young members of their professions, saw the opera in terms of Handel's England and then projected it to the England of today, for attitudes have not changed, emphasising the eternal British quest for culture and admiration of things old and foreign. Fielding's superb basic setting was a trompe l'oeil Vauxhall Gardens, adorned with topiary and deck-chairs and presided over by Roubiliac's famous statue of Handel, peopled by culture-vulture visitors imbibing the beauty of ancient relics in glass cases, attending the odd investiture, listening to the music from the bandstand, or taking tea at a baroque soda fountain. There were so many happy touches: the programmes and guide-books invariably clutched, the topiary Sphinx with its pre-echoes of *Aida*, the rocky landscape adorned with a miniature ruined Persepolis, *Xerxes'* famous bridge over the Hellespont, displayed in a glass case and then shattered in a thunder storm. All had abundant wit yet remained true to the spirit of the opera and enhanced our enjoyment of it. In addition came splendidly witty and intelligent costumes, and skilful, highly imaginative and subtle lighting from Paul Pyant, all combining to demonstrate why British stage design, at its best, is so deservedly renowned. The Royal Opera's next new production, of Rossini's *Barber of Seville*, had been acquired from the Cologne Opera and was an altogether more successful affair. The original Cologne scenery designs had been by Ezio Frigerio, with

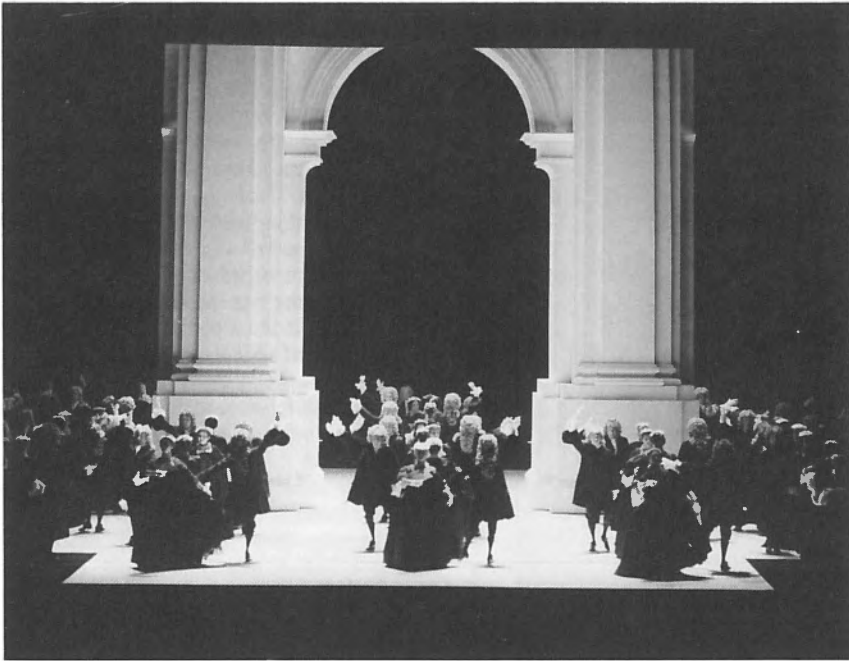
costumes by his wife Franca Squarciarapino, and Frigerio's designs were now realised rebuilt for the different dimensions of Covent Garden's stage by staff Production Assistant Peter Davison. The results, if wholly conventional, were attractive, functional, and had an authentically Spanish feeling. First came a dignified grey stone 18th century domestic exterior with, unusually but quite sensibly, Rosina's window for the serenade placed centrally: an imposing sweep of heavily gridded glass above a classical portico. Then for the

remainder of the opera we saw the other side of the window, a spacious, uncluttered stone-floored room, rather meagrely furnished but dignified and allowing plenty of space for producer Michael Hampe's meticulously choreographed action. I did not warm so much to Miss Squarciarapino's costumes, finding them rather fussy and over-decorated, and the powder-blue frock for this distinctly middle-aged and dumpy Rosina positively ungainly. Nor were we greatly assisted by the lighting of Hans Toelstede, who had been responsible for the

Cologne original. Its imprecision demonstrated once again how hard it is to work in a 'strange' house. This Covent Garden *Barber* however was a decidedly more successful transfer than English National Opera's staging of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*, acquired from the Netherlands Opera and first seen there over a decade ago. Designed by the late Heinrich Wendel and Jan Skalicky, this offered a spiral slip-way used in different formation in each of the three acts and was reminiscent of the late Wieland Wagner's Bayreuth settings of the 1950's, without having their powerful imagination. Moreover as these sets had not been rebuilt for London they sat uneasily upon the Coliseum stage, being too narrow and thus needing clumsy reduction of the width of the proscenium. There was one effective coup de théâtre upon the discovery of the lovers in Act 2, and Stephen Watson's precise and imaginative lighting was an asset, but, for the rest, I could not escape the feeling that one of our own promising young director/designer teams, such as that responsible for *Xerxes*, might have achieved something altogether more impressive on no larger a budget.

Over the past few seasons the Royal Ballet seem to have acquired something of an idée fixe about using easel painters to design new ballets. Whilst I am all in favour of giving artists their chance and am happy to acknowledge that recent designs for the ballet by Patrick Caulfield and Victor Pasmore have been laudable, the scheme requires that the artist has an inbuilt understanding of the particular professional needs of stage design. In the Royal Ballet's new staging of Balanchine's *Ballet Imperial* the painter Christopher Le Brun demonstrated all too clearly that he does not. The whole point of this ballet is that it demands glamour and style, and these Le Brun's tawdry, murky, shabby setting with its dimly painted, 'flat' backcloth and limp flags dangling from the wings wholly failed to achieve. Nor were his costumes any better. The girls' had fussily over elaborate fronts and bare backs, and the mens' too were ungainly and distracting, with the general scheme preventing the principals from standing out from the corps de ballet. I fear this version of *Ballet Imperial*, like too many recent offerings from the Royal Ballet, is going to prove difficult to revive, thus demonstrating how careful one should be at the outset.

There have been two commendable new productions recently at the somewhat beleaguered National Theatre. Douglas Heap's setting for Athol Fugard's *The Road to Mecca* at the Lyttleton successfully tackles the difficult problem of evoking an artist and her surroundings on stage. Wisely Heap does not seek to reproduce any of the South African sculptor Helen Martins' work in her New Bethesda sitting room, leaving us to see photographs of the sculptures in an exhibition in the foyer, but the feeling of this remarkable Afrikaans naive artist was tangibly there, as was her joy in colour and candle-light, this last most skilfully evoked by Rory Dempster's highly skilled lighting. More ambitious was the staging of Gogol's *The Government Inspector* in the Olivier by



Timothy O'Brien's setting for Handel's 'Samson' at the Royal Opera House. Produced by Elijah Moshinsky. Choreography Eleanor Fazan. Lighting Nick Chelton. Photo. Zoe Dominic.



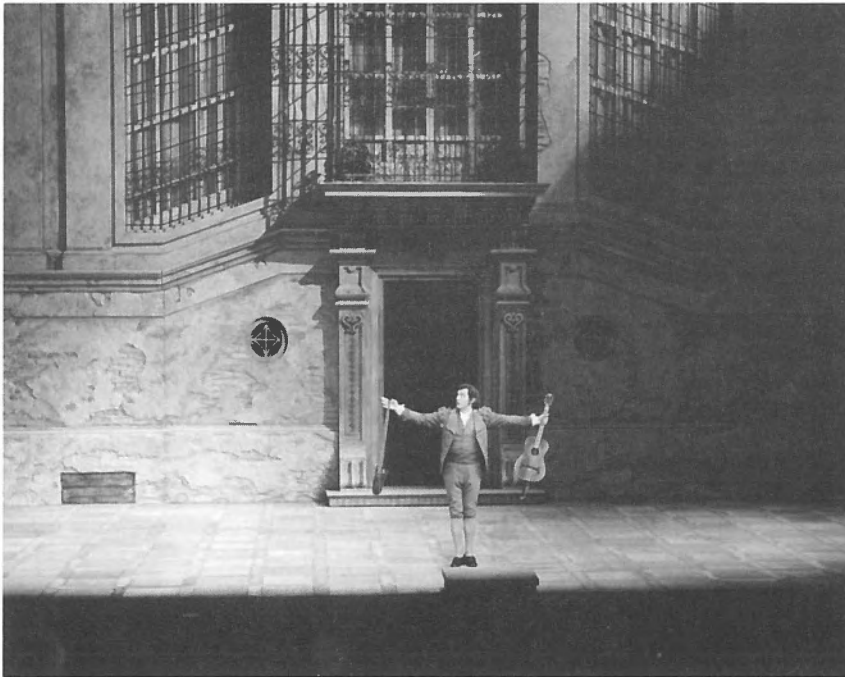
English National Opera's 'Xerxes'. Producer Nicholas Hytner. Designer David Fielding. Lighting Paul Pyant. Photo. Catherine Ashmore.

the team responsible for the National's admirable *Guys and Dolls*, director Richard Eyre, designer John Gunter and lighting designer David Hersey. Here they took as their theme the mountainous bureaucracy of Tsarist – and contemporary – Russia, and offered as a permanent setting a vast mountain of yellowing paperwork, stacks of official documents with huge flies trapped upon them, gigantic pencils and rotting files to imprison the action of the play. Using trucks and revolves each separate setting

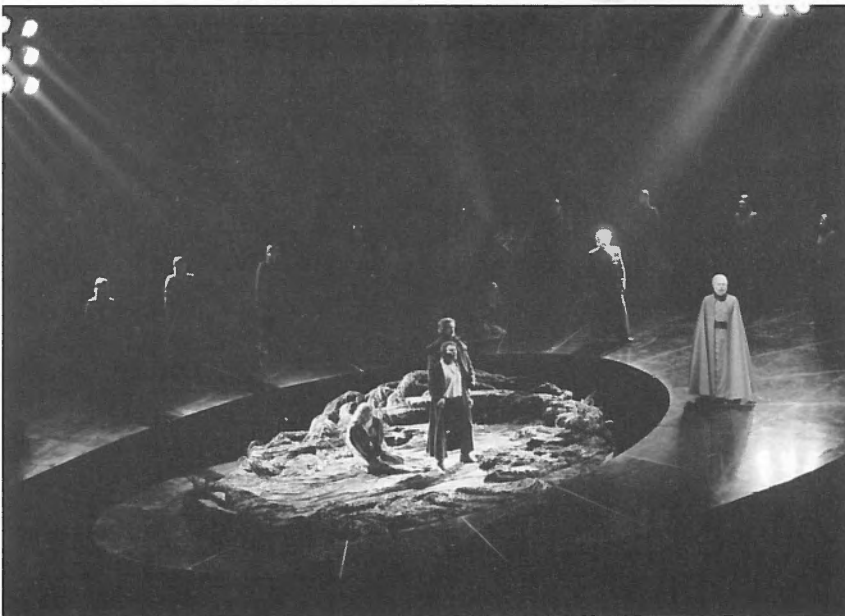
was then brought in, a succession of brilliantly realised cameos of Russian provincial life: the sleazy inn and mayoral parlour both being masterpieces of imaginative stage design. Within these settings we saw superbly apt furniture and props, and inspired, almost surreal, costumes by Deirdre Clancy that had the power and social awareness of Rowlandson or Daumier. David Hersey's harsh, overhead white lighting kept one's attention in a grip of steel in a production which provides the

National Theatre with the strongest of answers to its critics.

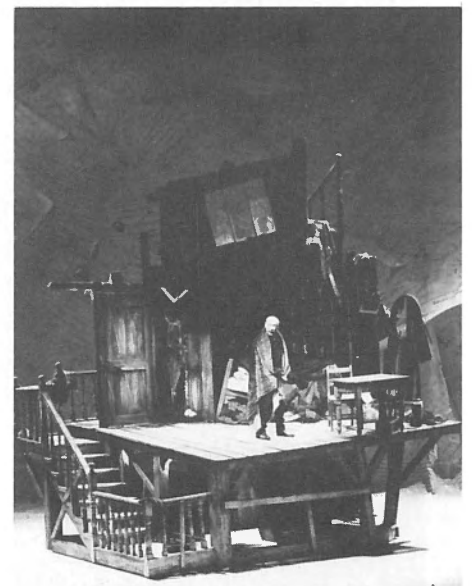
In Russia itself the problem of funding the arts, as encountered here, simply does not exist. The state has taken over and thus provides the audiences with any number of productions of opera, ballet and theatre, with best seats at the Bolshoi in Moscow and the Kirov in Leningrad for opera and ballet costing no more than £3. With repertory seasons at both these houses being the rule, some productions are decidedly dated and worn – Ivanov's settings for *Swan Lake* – I saw the 1307th performance at the theatre since its premiere there in 1895 – for example looked positively archaic. But the previous night at the Kirov I had seen a comparatively recent (1980) production of Donizetti's *Don Pasquale* which displayed a remarkable degree of imagination and inventiveness. Here Filomonov's designs had reduced the stage size with a gorgeous cameo setting, with the characters beautifully dressed and including commedia dell'arte figures who had previously danced the plot of the opera during the five minute overture. At the Bolshoi too I saw a ballet double bill of recent works which offered an awareness of modern design trends that slightly astonished me. Lyemeshyev's setting for *Kalina Krasnaya* used a steep rake and relied heavily upon projections on gauzes, as well as offering light, decidedly modern costumes, and *Eskisi* (Sketches) – a choreographic fantasy on themes from Gogol had similarly exciting designs by Benediktov. This latter work, new this year, once again relied heavily on projections and offered a similarly fantastic and surreal approach to Gogol as that demonstrated in the National's production of *The Government Inspector*. It was good to know that enterprising and original work in ballet is now being done in the Soviet Union, and, that as here, choreography and design, is being used to entertain as much as to offer history or social-realist messages.



The Royal Opera's new production of Rossini's *'Barber of Seville'*. Producer Michael Hampe. Sets realised by Peter Davison after a design concept by Ezio Frigerio. Lighting designer Hans Toelstede. Photo. Clive Barda.



English National Opera's *'Tristan and Isolde'*. Producer Goetz Friedrich. Sets by Heinrich Wendel. Costumes Jan Skalicky. Lighting Stephen Watson. Photo. Clive Barda.



The National Theatre production of *'The Government Inspector'*. Director Richard Eyre. Design John Gunter. Costumes Deirdre Clancy. Lighting David Hersey. Photo. John Haynes.

Art Decor in Melbourne

FRANCIS REID

Welcomes the Return of the Painter as Theatre Decorator

In Cue 27, Iain Mackintosh reported on his 1983 visit to the Victorian Arts Centre in Melbourne. He quoted the philosophies of its instigators, sketched its extended gestation, and described his own response to a performance in the Concert Hall and to the remainder of the complex then nearing completion. Visiting Melbourne a year later, I found that all the spaces were housing regular performances and only small details of furnishing remained to be finalised in readiness for the autumn (antipodean spring) formal opening that has now taken place. Iain (with some amendment from Denis Irving in Cue's correspondence columns) having described the concept and history in general, and the Concert Hall in particular, it is appropriate that I concentrate on the theatres. (We have both, in Cue 27 and 32 respectively, demonstrated our enthusiasm for the Performing Arts Museum within the complex.) But, firstly, a few words of general impression. . . .

Melbourne is a milestone in the development of theatre architecture. It marks a turning point. It re-admits the decorator. It recognises the essential illogicality of art. It signals the decline in that worship of purity of form which admits only functional elements, preferably displaying their material of origin, raw and unadorned. In its decorative philosophy, Melbourne points the way forward. However, its approach to the performance space is a summary of the dominant form of

our century. (Art centuries seldom correspond with neat symmetrical spans of 100 years. In theatre architecture, the current century seems likely to run from 1920 to 1990.)

The Victorian State Theatre takes the proscenium theatre of cinematically pure sightline to the limits of development. As I walked around the empty auditorium I admired the sweep of the balconies raking down towards the stage but stopping well before the proscenium so that their occupants' view is inescapably focussed on the acting area. I tried a selection of the 2000 seats and nearly every one provided a more than adequate position for a single-camera video of the stage, although in the remoter parts a spectator might well long for zoom eyesight.

But that evening, sitting in one of the best seats in the house — centre of the fourth row in the circle — I felt surprisingly distanced from the action. However, in a nineteenth century romantic opera such as *Faust*, a slight distancing is not necessarily a disadvantage. Especially as the sound was so good — not merely well balanced but positively enhancing to the voices of singers previously heard sounding less attractive in other houses that are generally regarded as having sympathetic acoustics.

Alas I also felt distanced from fellow members of the audience. We were a full house and we applauded like crazy (although, curiously, our hands did not seem to be making much noise) but there

was a distinct lack of that corporate audience togetherness that is a feature of similarly sized traditional opera houses with imperfect sightlines.

During the long period of gestation since the Victorian Arts Centre was planned (the conception in mid-sixties, revised, mainly in terms of audience capacity, in the mid-seventies) many parts of the world have felt a growing disenchantment with the loss of contact in the triangular audience-actor-audience relationship that seems inevitable when good sightlines are provided to a proscenium stage in an auditorium of any considerable size.

I believe that Melbourne has in its Victorian State Theatre a pure sightline theatre that is as near perfect as such a theatre can be. Particularly at 2000 seats. But there are inherent problems. Individuals do not readily become a corporate audience when they are isolated by not being readily aware of each other. And the rapport between audience and stage suffers when the seating does not reach completely along the side walls and through the orchestra pit zone to link with the proscenium. This theatre belongs to the period when cheap seats were placed far away but with a clear view. Increasingly it is being felt preferable to put those cheap seats close to the stage but with an impaired view.

However as a lighting designer, I should welcome forms of theatre which do not hang audience on the wall — they get in the way of good side lighting positions! And the



The largest of the three theatres, The State Theatre, seats 2000 with near perfect sightlines.



Looking across the auditorium of The State Theatre.

provision of front-of-house lighting in the State Theatre is, both from ceiling and sides, excellent. Not just in angle and access, but in the generous equipment provision:

No 3 FOH Bridge (28.5m to stage)

20 × Cadenza 12/22
8 × 4-colour semaphores.

No 2 FOH Bridge (20m to stage)

30 × Cadenza 19/32
12 × 4-colour semaphores

No 1 FOH Bridge (15.5m to stage)

20 × Harmony 15/28
10 × Silhouette 30

6 × Cadenza 19/32

Balcony Front (27m to stage)

20 × Harmony 15/28

Circle Front (24.5m to stage)

No fixed allocation

PS & OP Box Booms

25 × Harmony 15/28
5 × 5-colour wheels each side.

Available for stage use are:

104 × Harmony 15/28

60 × Prelude 16/30

20 × Prelude 28/40

23 × Harmony Fresnels

75 × Castor Fresnels

9 × Pollux Fresnels

75 × Coda 4 batten sections

10 × Coda 4 float sections

12 × Iris 4 cyc units

12 × Palas 4 groundrows

20 × 5-colour wheels

24 × 12-way bars (4.5m)

8 × 6-way trackable ladders

2 × 8m perch ladders

14 × 6m booms

Control is by a 240-way Galaxy with:

- 2 × playbacks
- 1 × channel controller
- 1 × power and mimic panel
- 1 × memory keypad panel
- 1 × preset master panel
- 1 × group master panel
- 1 × alpha keyboard
- 1 × printer
- 1 × disc drives

There is an identical Galaxy in the Playhouse Theatre (but with 180 ways) while that in the Studio (100 ways) omits only the group master panel and one of the printers. The operational benefits of standardising to the same system in all theatres within a complex are obvious. But it is particularly interesting to note that virtually all Australian theatres are standardising on Galaxy and I, for one, shall be very interested to hear of the extent of the gains that must be derived from a uniformity of control desk. And facilities to cross reference between channel numbers of different layouts presents an open door to simplified touring.

There is a basic sound system which looked to my unsophisticated eye like amply adequate for effects and for the reinforcement of shows that were written in the pre-acoustic area. Productions where electronic sound is an intrinsic component of composition will be served, as is proper, by a temporary touring installation that transcends a mere "main auditorium speaker system based on a central cluster above the proscenium covering all seating

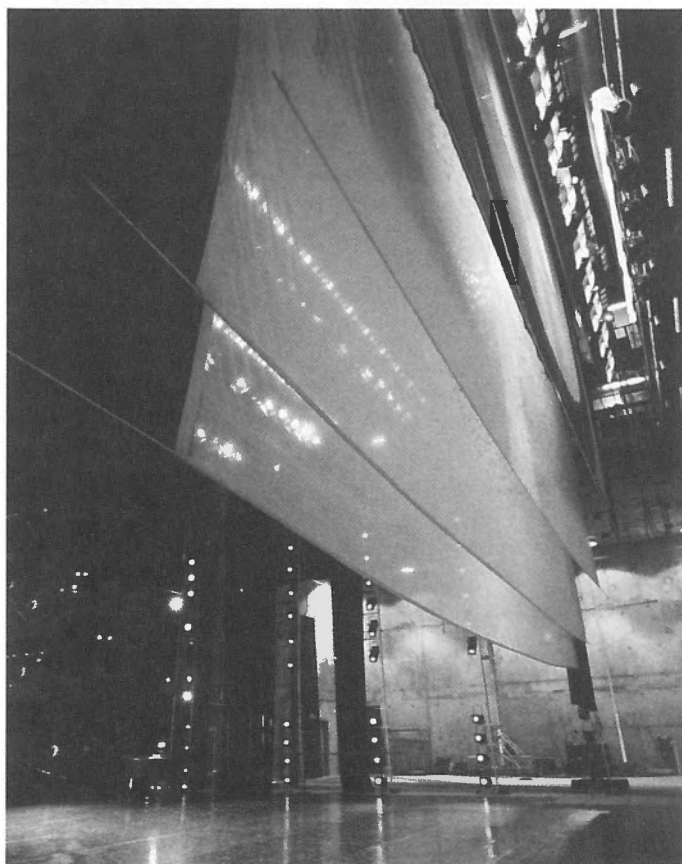
areas" and a "16 channel, 2 output mixer with a 2 post-fade auxiliary sends".

The proscenium width is variable between 12 and 15.5m with a wall to wall of 45.88m (22.45m between fly floors). Proscenium height can vary from 6m to 9m and the depth of the main acting area is 17.5m or 31.95m to the back of the rear stage which is the parking area for the rear wagon of 16.44 × 13.21m (incorporating a revolve of 12.9m diameter). The side stages have wagons of half stage width (8.22m) and there are two of 6.6m depth at each side. All wagons are motorised with a speed range of 0-1m per sec, and they all can be equalised flush to the stage in both onstage and offstage positions. The flying system has 105 sets — up to 30 sets plus 5 spotlines can be patched to the control console at any one time to fly in up to six different modes of speed, direction etc.

In the face of all this space and flexibility, it seems churlish to question the practicality of the half-wagons from the side stages. Stage sets rarely split conveniently down the centre line. So will Melbourne see a lot of island sets, 8m wide, sitting within masking boxes?

Getting these sets in is by a hydraulic lift shared with the other stages in the complex. Capable of side or end loading, it is 15.37 × 4.10m and accepts a maximum height of 4.24m.

The form of the 850 seat Playhouse follows the same sightline philosophy as the State Theatre. Stalls and a single circle give each member of the audience a clear focus towards a proscenium stage with an elevator option for orchestra pit or apron stage. With a depth of 2.96m, this apron is rather token and represents the sort of restrained tinkering with the proscenium zone that produced a lot of head banging (especially at



Over the main stage are 111 power driven flylines.



The auditorium of the 850-seat Playhouse.



Visual excitement is given full opportunity in the foyers.

conferences) in the sixties but has in practice turned out to be something of a red herring in the quest for discovery of the true nature of audience/actor contact. Like so many restrained thrusts, it rapidly loses significance with every row that one is removed from it. However the auditorium is very comfortable, although I do find that the Australian preference for high seat backs in the upper regions seems to increase circle rakes, both in reality and in illusion, to a degree that causes me personal unease when

I sit there.

With a proscenium of 12.09m x 8m, the stage has a depth of 12.47m (without thrust) and there are 70 flying sets. There are three good foh lighting bridges (at 9.5, 13, and 18m throws to the stage) and a pool of equipment which includes:

- 180 x Silhouette 30
- 48 x Silhouette 15
- 20 x Silhouette 10
- 27 x Harmony fresnels



The Studio Theatre seats up to 420 in its various configurations of stage and seats.

- 30 x Castor fresnels
- 12 x Iris 4
- 12 x Pallas 4
- 15 x 12-circuit spotbar sections (4.5m)
- 6 x 6-rung trackable ladders
- 2 x 8m perch ladders
- 6 x 6m booms

The sound system is based on a 12-channel mixer with eight assignable outputs and two quadrophonic panners. There is a fixed loudspeaker system in walls and ceiling with additional sockets for portable speakers in the ceiling and at the back of the auditorium. There are ten speaker outlets on stage and fourteen microphone lines.

The Studio Theatre is the adaptable neutral box of so many dreamers – although many of those who once dreamed (and I am one of them) have found the reality less stimulating than the dream. However in juxtaposition to the decorative glories of the rest of the Victorian Arts Centre, this type of space may well have just the right astringency for the more informally experimental aspects of the Centre's programme.

Seating up to 420 in its various configurations of stage and seats, it is a good example of this kind of space. Wall to wall width is 21.95m (of which 17.5m is between balconies). There is a trapped area (1.75 x 1.25m modules with 3m clearance below) and a cat-walked grid at a clearance of 5.79m from the stage. There is a rostrum stock (12 at 2.4 x 1.2 x 0.6m) and tracked black serge masking or 24 metres of white filled cyc cloth.

The Galaxy controls a rig for which the basic inventory is:

- 10 x Harmony 22/40
- 10 x Silhouette 30
- 30 x Prelude 16/30
- 40 x Prelude 28/40
- 20 x Harmony fresnels
- 10 x Prelude fresnels
- 5 x Coda/4.



'Gloria Swanson's Last Silent Movie' by Noel Tunk in the Studio foyer.



The Vic — one of a wide variety of restaurants & bars available.

The sound mixer is 12 input into 4 submaster and 2 main outputs plus one foldback send. There is a fixed loudspeaker system under the catwalks and on the walls; and the studio is provided with microphone and speaker sockets at appropriate positions throughout.

Off-stage technical facilities are designed to cope with storage and handling of current repertoire, with provision for rapid changeover of productions in all theatres. Workshop facilities for the manufacture of scenery are not included but there is a set assembly area, with 9m clear headroom, for final assembly, modification and general refurbishments. Rehearsal rooms, wardrobes, dressing rooms, green rooms, offices, maintenance workshops and all

ancillary accommodation are on a scale, and to a standard, that should ensure efficient working in conditions that provide a much greater degree of amenity than could have ever been thought possible in a complex whose accommodations are so largely subterranean.

In all its technical planning and equipment, the Victorian Arts Centre must be a fancied candidate for any *Theatre Technology of the Century* award. Backstage provision hits a happy optimum. It is big but balanced. The scale is human. It feels like a theatre rather than a factory.

So, if I were an Antipodean, I would be happy to toil technically in the V.A.C. And I would be happy to live in any city which honoured its citizens with such a house to enjoy the arts. Three theatres, concert hall, art gallery, performing arts museum and a college of arts. All combining to offer a programme so full of choices and quality that I would nightly cross the River Yarra, enjoying the delicious agonies of indecision, but knowing that my soul would be pleased — either soothed or stimulated according to the needs of the moment. And, for the maintenance of the physical frame that supports the soul, a suitable diversity of rooms dedicated to eating and drinking.

My only reservations, already expressed, relate to the form of the theatres — even if they represent the peak of their philosophy's format.

However the unique joy of the Victorian Arts Centre is the way in which the decorative arts are embraced. Functional

purity and visual restraint are the natural consequences of the logical thinking generated in an age dominated by scientific progress; art does not respond to analysis and visual images resist verbal translation. Consequently the idea that decoration should be added to a building, rather than grow organically from its form, has found little favour with recent generations of theatre builders.

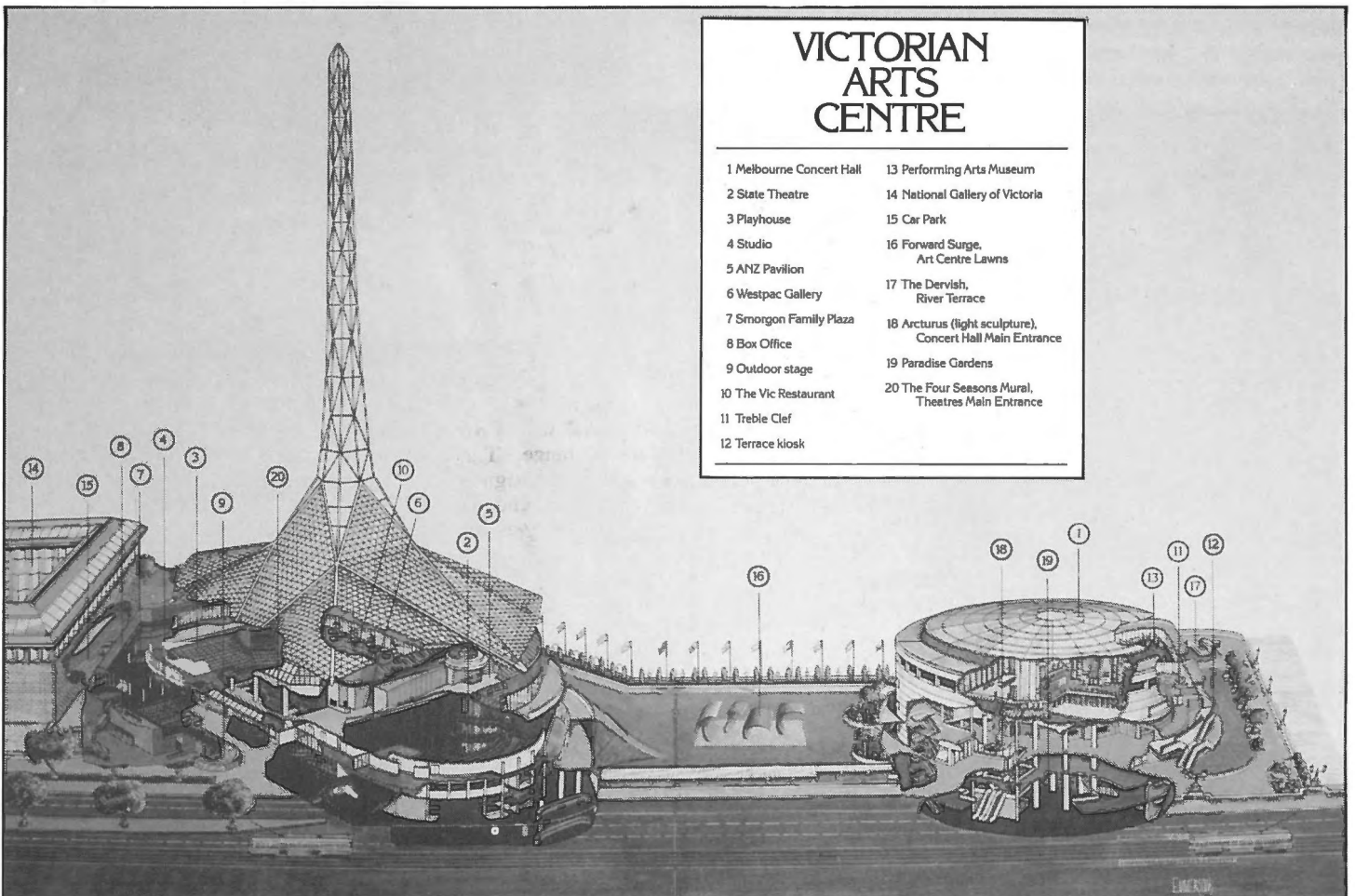
In Melbourne, John Truscott was invited to decorate the surfaces of a building which had been conceived and built as a statement of the materials of its construction. Although individuals will respond in different ways to certain details of Truscott's distinctive approach, I believe the results to be a stunningly appropriate environment for the performing arts.

His approach, quite correctly for today's theatre, is a reversal of that of the baroque artists who often used very simple neutral foyers as a prelude to the complex decorative splendours of the auditorium. The auditorium of the State Theatre is restrained, visual excitement being given full opportunity in the foyers. The auditorium painting, however, has just the right degree of pre-performance richness yet is neutralised as the houselights lower. It is a rich red — a bluish-red — and drawn out with the brush in the technique that scenic artists use to impart a vibrant texture. It is a paint technique that has also been used for centuries in Central European buildings, both spiritual and temporal.

At the main St Kilda Road entrance, the

VICTORIAN ARTS CENTRE

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| 1 Melbourne Concert Hall | 13 Performing Arts Museum |
| 2 State Theatre | 14 National Gallery of Victoria |
| 3 Playhouse | 15 Car Park |
| 4 Studio | 16 Forward Surge, Art Centre Lawns |
| 5 ANZ Pavilion | 17 The Dervish, River Terrace |
| 6 Westpac Gallery | 18 Arcturus (light sculpture), Concert Hall Main Entrance |
| 7 Smorgon Family Plaza | 19 Paradise Gardens |
| 8 Box Office | 20 The Four Seasons Mural, Theatres Main Entrance |
| 9 Outdoor stage | |
| 10 The Vic Restaurant | |
| 11 Treble Clef | |
| 12 Terrace kiosk | |



76 panels of Hugh Oliveiro's mural 'The Seasons' reached up through three levels. This entry leads to the Box Office plaza with raspberry carpet, black glass ceiling and chrome finishes. From here every part of the building is accessible including the Centre's car park under the National Gallery, the rendezvous bar, the cloak room and the three theatres.

In John Truscott's view, the paintings are so strong a statement that people will know instantly where they are in the theatres. For example, the State Theatre circle foyer has 16 works commissioned from Arthur Boyd, the balcony foyer has 84 frames by Sydney Nolan and the stalls foyer nine opera-inspired paintings by John Olsen (commissioned by John Truscott who motivated the painter with selected tapes, records and libretti). The Playhouse foyers include aboriginal paintings from the Northern Territories western desert, the Studio foyer has Noel Tunk's 'Gloria Swanson's Last Silent Movie' and Jeffrey Smart's 'Container Train in Landscape'. The Vic Restaurant is decorated with 222 original costume designs, mainly Edwardian, from productions staged in Melbourne and London between 1898 and 1920.

The Country Visitor's Lounge, is for visitors to Melbourne and is equipped with telephones, showers, comfortable seating and tea and coffee making facilities. (Now there is an idea!) It is decorated with Anne Graham's triptych depicting 132 people at leisure in the Royal Botanic Gardens.

Of the mass of images which decorate, stimulate and perhaps even provoke, I mention but a few. I do believe, deeply, that such positive and hitherto rare co-existence of the visual and performing arts can only result in an enrichment of all forms and our perception of them.

The Victorian Arts Centre is a turning point in theatre architecture. It summarises the dominant form of our century and points the way forward to the decorative philosophy of the next.

Architects: Roy Grounds & Co Pty Ltd
Theatre Consultants: Tom Brown and Associates
Interior Design Consultant: John Truscott



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ABTT Trade Show Report

JAMES LAWS

Deadlines for Cue copy are to be respected, so I am writing this even as the last pieces of trussing are being loaded on the last lorry out of Hammersmith. There being no time for reflection, these notes on the best ABTT trade show ever, are doubtless sprinkled liberally with technical inanities but hopefully the main message — that this year Roger Fox, Ethel Langstreth and Ken Smalley got it right — will come across clearly. If anything was needed to persuade the powers that be that the ABTT's well being is vital to our industry, then this event was it.

The gamble in booking the entire Riverside Studios for the Trade show paid off handsomely and the resulting space between stands, more stands and larger stands gave exhibitors and visitors alike a chance to converse. The resultant blossoming of traders made one realise that we really do have a flourishing industry, not only is the rest of the world taking our products and consultants seriously but there are several foreign companies eager for our business.

A feature of the show was again the presentation of ABTT awards. **Len Tucker** was a popular, nay, unanimous choice as **TECHNICIAN OF THE YEAR**. The marvellous job he made of taking over the lighting of Forty Second Street from Joe Davis in the saddest circumstances deserved a lasting tribute as did his many years at the Old Vic and the National. Len Tucker now joins the Board of Theatre Sound and Lighting (Services) Ltd where, as director in charge of lighting and design, his flare and experience will continue to serve the theatre.

The award for **STAND OF THE YEAR** went to **Flint Hire**, whose display of supplies for Carpentry and Paint shops was superb. The chippie standing amid sawdust at his bench was a nice touch — in fact this was one of the few stalls which had a feel of Theatre about it. Flint have been going since 1980 and now have their own range of powder paints and market their own stage braces and small scenery fittings.

PRODUCT OF THE YEAR was **TBA Technology's** Magic lantern range. This really is a new concept in spotlight design — a range with a distinctive shape (rounded), colour (blue) and the feeling that they are designed to a specification rather than down to a price. Optically for the Profile Spot, the 36 volt 400 watt Zenophot lamp's output is maximised by a twin-element condenser system. The conventional twin zoom lenses are anti-reflection coated and there are fresnel and pebble convex lensed versions. According to the excellent literature the useful light output is comparable with that from conventional 1000 watt units, which are much more expensive to run.

The traditional problems of low voltage-transformers and dimmers being non-compatible and the slow rise and decay time have been solved by two options, both

involving electronics in the rear of the spotlight. The "Dimmer Follow" is an electronic dimmer output converter with a dimmer knob built in for local use. This can be upgraded to the full magic of Networking where the control signal from the lighting board is fed to the dimmer on the Magic Lantern — will there come a time when theatres are built without dimmer rooms? Quite likely, quite soon is my guess.

TBA have also produced a 500/650 watt range of spots — the TBA 65 series, with the same quality of bodywork — easy access to lens cleaning, barndoor/colourframe retention and so on. Again the Zoom Profile's condenser optics give it a great increase in output compared with other 650 luminaires. Pruvature did well to back TBA's manufacturing division — as Tom Burnham says "As a lighting designer I can't wait to get my hands on a rig of profiles." Production commences in the early autumn.



Len Tucker (right) winner of the 'Technician of the Year' award.

Last year in my Trade Show review I bemoaned the fact that "there was not one single British designed CSI or HMI followspot on show." This year **Rank Stand** repaired the omission with their **Solist** — available in 2KW or CSI version. Although not as smooth mechanically as others on view it is a robust unit with good mechanical dimming, three brightness settings on the ballast of the CSI, a curious optical sighting arrangement which some people will find quite useful and good variable beam optics. The Rank controls on view included the compact Act 6 which is a 6-way dimmer pack which has its own built in control faders or the facility to connect the rack to any output of a remote controller via Soft Patch. The Gemini memory control with its designer created effects system was also creating much interest. Again Strand laid emphasis on their dealer network and the now-familiar yellow jerseys were much in evidence.

CCT Theatre Lighting also had one new luminaire on display — the 1000 watt Starlette flood. This is the first asymmetric flood with removable lead but most users

will appreciate it for its ability to light a cloth from 1.5 metres with 2 metres between floods. The stand was dominated by the Neithammer HMI Unispot followspots whose precise mechanics testify to a home market which is prepared to pay for quality. The Avab range of Swedish control systems was also on display including the advanced Viking and a motorised Rigging control which is weight sensitive and on which every line is monitored continually for speed. For the confident there is the facility to run the flying from the Viking light controller. **CLT Hire Superstore** was also at the show with a range of spares and representative hire items. As CCT distributors of South Essex and North Kent **Raxcrest Electrical** were almost part of CCT's stand but their own electrical wholesale lines, including all sorts of cable were shown.



'Product of the Year' award went to TBA Technology for their Magic Lantern range.

Further imported Followspots came from Italy, where the **Coemar Pilota** is much respected. This company has a large range of spots with many light sources both discharge and filament. The 1000/2000 watt Antares parabolic beam light is an interesting item in their catalogue. Coemar is under the umbrella of **W.B. Lighting Ltd** together with DeSisti. Mr. Mario DeSisti was on the stand to show his range of film, E.N.G. and T.V. lighting, including, for Theatre applications, the 1000/1250 watt Raffaello soft light and very robust stands. There is a 1 Kw Fresnel with sensible barndoors which will mask the beam in flood focus. Interestingly there is a 3mm mesh guard beneath the lamp tray for catching broken glass — this may become a future requirement for manufacturers.

Pulsar Light of Cambridge were also showing a new fresnel spot — their Pulsar 650 series will become a complete range as the year unfolds. I personally hope that the mechanics can be beefed up a bit — the price is good but this perhaps has been achieved by savings on materials. By comparison the new Pulsar 6x5 Amp Rackmount hard-wired Dimmer Pack is a fine piece of work and the ability to dim low voltage transformed loads will be important to many users.

These users will be attracted to the Microlights range marketed by **A.J.S.**

Theatre Lighting & Stage Supplies from their base in Dorset and their new London Theatre Centre at West India Docks (a very new place to be into I am assured). **A.J.S.** has a very impressive range of stock lines and have been expanding into sound equipment sales and hire over the last year with items by Harrison and Seck amongst others.

It was good to see **Avolites** at this year's show. This firm has a great history of providing rock tour dimming and the neatness of their rack mounted dimmers is excellent. They were featuring their Rolacue desk and the newly expanded QM desk with up to 180 channels. **Colortran U.K.** also features high density dimming with their Dimension 192 series of slide-in models from 2x2.4 Kw to the double size 10Kw module. Their cadet memory system is a distillation of system two with soft patch and disc drive option. There is a multiplexed hand held control option.

There were some interesting developments in the lower end of the memory market — what I call the Threeset Barrier of 40 to 80 ways. **Touchstone Technology** of S.E.15 had their Tigers Eye board with few moving parts — all the dimmer scales are touch sensitive. Claimed as an operators and designers board it appears to me to be certainly worth a trial — perhaps a Theatre such as the Intimate, Palmers Green would be interested in running it in parallel with their existing board and giving its designer Charles Wood, valuable feedback.

Of the established small memory desks, **Zero 88** had their touring Eclipse desk with a host of accessories including the Cigar lighter. The page overlay and extended memory panels (200 memories over 25 pages) will be found of more practical use. **Cerebrum** had their now well known Celco Series 2 Desks on display — since last year I have put my money where my mouth is and Ancient Lights has bought a 30 way version which we and our hirers are very pleased with.

Dynamic Technology (DTL), best known for their T.V. lighting controls were showing their Memory Multiset which enables the Threeset/AMC devotee to ease his/her way into memorising states. The Chameleon System also from DTL is a very compact extension of the Datalite Modular System and as such is ideal for Outside Broadcast work. The DTL Stackpak dimmers have been joined by the 18 to 72 way Wallpak range with British or European fusing and wiring configurations.

Another established control marketing company has changed its name — for Cosby Controls read **Eurolite**. They had sold two Microlite 200 systems in the first day of the show and each of these is in fact 2 independent boards which can be played through each other or used as backup or used for undistracting modification of the plot by a second operator, useful with tight touring schedules. The **Concord** (ex Green Ginger) 6 way dimmer racks with earth leakage warning and M.C.B. protection are going to be popular. Also on this stand **Mike Sweetland** showed his remote gobo changer for the Silhouette range of spots. This

device will work on an MX colour wheel controller.

D.E.W. Electrical Engineering, heirs to Thorn Theatre lighting, showed their new versions of the Concept Memory Desk and the club series of manual desks. Their expansion into the export market is good news and their list of recent clients is impressive.

At least two firms were busy moving light around. This year **Pancan**, the 1982 prizewinners, have now marketed a control facility with 128 units over 96 presets. Colour change is an easy option on the Pancan head which fits onto any luminaire. By contrast **Lighworks Ltd** have decided to move the complete luminaire and sizes up to 5 Kw can be accommodated as well as E.N.G. cameras. 70 lights are controlled on their system for Starlight Express.

Lighting accessories were well represented at the show. **D.H.A.** showed further extensions to their Gobo range including the potential use of special glass to create multicolour gobos. Fibre optics developments are underway and gobo techniques are used to screen print a design on fabrics or any flat surface. The lamp suppliers each had their own specialities — **Action Lighting** displayed their range of EEC architectural strip lights with cutout switch and their flicker candles. **Specialist Lamp Distributors** showed some of the robust ARRI series of ENG/Video Heads and Kits and the S.L.D. Superfilter. **Valiant Electrical Wholesale Co.** concentrated on emphasising the wide range of lamps held in stock for all aspects of performances.

Primarc's comprehensive list of lamps with ANSI codes and equivalents will be useful to anyone confused by the biplane equivalents and other recent imports. It was interesting to see the different approaches to stand displays this year. Amongst the supplies of lights and other hardware there were those like **A. & B. Theatre Services** and **Trafalgar Lighting** who had stands packed with hardware — the former showing their 50 volt Pyro detonator set for use with mains flash boxes and **Knowles Cosmetic's** fibre specialist makeup cases. **Trafalgar** displayed illustrations of their second-hand lighting and sound services, including a T/11 Burning Patt. 50A Pageant lantern. **Lancelyn Lighting** showed aspects of both their hire and sales with awesome 125 Amp 3 phase Ceeform plugs and

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sockets and an early telephone being particularly noted.

By contrast there were suppliers who thought that the show was about meeting people and the hardware didn't need to be present. **White Light** for their 15th Anniversary produced a splendid hire and sales list (weights, measurements and projection distance/size charts). They market the ADB range including an effects disc compatible projector. With an expanse of carpet, soft furnishings and greenery this was a very relaxing stand. **Playlight Lighting & Sound Service** for their 10th Anniversary had a smaller version of the same; easy chairs and one or two technical objects d'art. Playlight now have 4 main depots and their curtain making up service will be of interest to Londoners and Mancunians alike. At **Ancient Lights** for our 5th Anniversary we decided to bring our usual clutter along in spirit rather than the usual bulky flesh and beneath our 24 light (count 'em) cut crystal chandelier hung from Cyberdescences. Trilite Trussing, we had tables and chairs backed by a 16'x8' mural by Sarah Pew of some of the items we keep in stock including our unique Period Theatre lighting collection for hire. We were commended for this but admonished for having the chandelier two points high and the Venreco floods two points low, who said you can't go wrong with a simple lighting rig?

It was heartening to see a number of very specialist stalls. **RAT** (Manufacturing) make nothing but music stands but their range is neat and comprehensive and has been supplemented this year by their microphone boom. There were two stalls featuring marking tape. **Cambrian-Stuart** whose range of adhesives and decorative laminates will be familiar now offer flame proof floorings and screen printed signs, stickers and advertising specialities. A colour catalogue is available on request. **Le Mark Self Adhesives** have a new 'Studio Vinyl' being a strong, durable self adhesive material in a choice of colours and widths. **Pakman Research** again brought their snow-shower machine with fire-resistant paper snow. Their 'Formis' range of vacuum moulded scenic panels continues to expand and their floor-pattern painting machine must be a boon for busy T.V. studios. **Peter Evans** range of mouldings has now been extended to include metallic as well as clear PVC-stamped out legions of gilt cherubs are now a possibility.

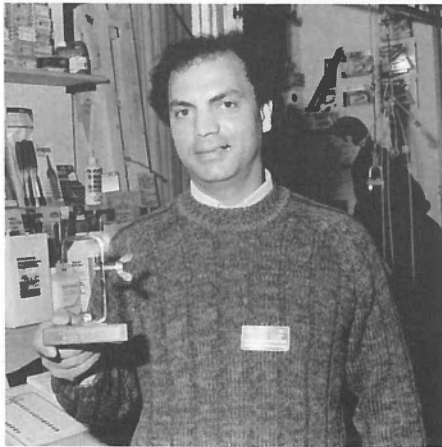
Northern Lights speciality is making up lecterns, stage managers desks and other control/distribution points.

Nerva Metals Ltd. are makers of Aluminium mirror finish sheets and they have a variety of special finishes. They can supply pre-scored sheet to ease covering rounded surfaces and they are stockists of alloy scaffolding tubes. **Foy Invenenterprises Inc.** had their heavy duty aluminium track - as used to fly Liberate (all up weight inc Cape & Candlestick 250 lb) as well as smaller versions.

Most of these specialist stalls were in the smaller Hall 3 as was **Graham Walne's Leisure Plan**, which is now divided into

Leisure Plan Services, where advice is given and the equipment sold and Leisure Plan consultants where a consultant service only is required. Across the aisle from this stand was **Radcliffe Transport Services**, who have just completed a European Tour for the Almeida Theatre production of *The Possessed* in two 40ft vehicles. They have bought 7 new vehicles this year, replacing four and adding three to their fleet.

Roscolab again had a large and theatrical stand - I thought their backcloth of an auditorium as seen from the stage was magnificent. Rosco is rightly pleased to have been given a Scientific Technical Award by the Hollywood Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences for the development of the Rosco Fog Fluid. There is now a more powerful version of the Popular Rosco Fogger with 4 times the output. Supergel and Sparklene designer products all have new colours and the faceted Fleximirror is a new concept.



Flint Hire & Supply Ltd won the 'Best Stand of the Year' award.

Theatre Flooring, specialists in stage flooring are particularly pleased because their Harlequin dance flooring was used by the Olympic Arts Festival in Los Angeles last year. They now have a wide choice of flooring materials for every performance situation.

There seems to be a hotting up of competition on the textiles front this year. **Neville's Textiles** specialises in dancewear and was showing florescent lycra for leotards, flesh-coloured stretch body stocking and lurex stretch jersey. On the scenic side **Gerriets Great Britain** were showing their welded back-projection and other plastic screens and coverings, and **Varia Textiles** had a vast range of scenic materials on display and pattern cards. Their sequined velours are particularly interesting and one has the feeling that any reasonable request can be met. For the lighter side, **N. & I. Costello** displayed slash shimmer curtains and a range of christmas garlands, tinsel and stars. Their Penny Disc was used for the rainbow in the recent Ideal Home Exhibition.

Besides **Flint Hire**, scenery was represented by **Hall Stage Products Ltd**, whose rearfold track is an innovation, enabling a design on a cloth to be kept in view without progressively folding as it moves off stage. Halls also have a points

system for the remote switching of cyc cloths along different tracks and their new rope lock for counterweight systems is adjustable for different rope sizes. **Edelstein Engineering Ltd.** showed their unjack system of truck lifts and brakes, including a removable version. They are steadily expanding their range of scenery fittings.

Now at last, do I hear you say, to Sound. **M.A.C. Sound Hire** is a regular to the trade show and their range of sound equipment includes the largest stock of Radio Microphones outside London. M.A.C. Communications also sells its own intercom units. **Spectrum Audio** also showed their intercom, their Tipspot remote wireless lighting call-up system and a new 200 watt Amplifier. **Canford Audio** showed some of their large range of mail-order sound equipment all listed in a good catalogue. We find their musiflex cable very good for headsets.

Technical Projects have been making their way mostly in the communications side but they are now expanding into acoustic and audio measurement and their Auditorium 2000 sound mixing system is a top of the range machine. **Sennheiser** was displaying their extensive range of microphones with emphasis on 816 Rifle Mics and the miniature MKE2 SK2102 Radio Mic/Transmitters. **John Offord** specialises in books for the entertainment industry. Two among them, *The British Theatre Directory* and *British Alternative Theatre Directory*, are to be found in my own bookshelf. Offord also runs the entertainment and arts exhibition. Last year it was at Eastbourne and is scheduled for Bournemouth in 1986. Membership details of Entertainment Express, the discount travel service for the entertainment industry, were also available here. This seemed a far cry from the old "Book a railway coach for the company and the scenery travels free in a cattle truck". **Cara Lancaster's** book bazaar is a great favourite with me: A goldmine of theatre books and catalogues. On an archival note I also enjoyed the display of drawings, models and documents about the old Playhouse, Charing Cross presented by Joe Aveline and his students from the **Central School of Speech and Drama**.

Jane Rumble Display was the only craft practitioner with a formal stall - she specialises in costume accessories and small props but there was a craft display area with some very interesting work - furniture, puppets, masks, fabrics applique and embroidery were all featured. Trainees in the ABTT Training Scheme mounted an excellent exhibition of the whys and wherefores of their courses. That this training scheme could fold through lack of grant funding is a disaster to be avoided. I cannot understand the thinking behind giving large grants to theatres and companies for Hi-tech equipment and then denying financial support for training in the proper use of this equipment.

Jim Laws is senior partner of Ancient Lights, Attleborough, Norfolk.

REIDing SHELF

Theatre buildings have souls. But they do not communicate with words. So, alas, they cannot write the autobiographies which would surely fascinate and excite us with revelations of secrets and opinions. However there seems to be quite an upsurge in the publication of theatre biographies, often linked to the anniversaries now being reached by the survivors of the late nineteenth century theatre building boom. Biographers may not know what a theatre was thinking or feeling, but they can recreate something of the actuality of lost performances from diligent research plus their own response to the intangible atmosphere that departed audiences and actors leave within the theatre's walls. As a biographer Donald Campbell perhaps veers towards the analytical rather than the emotive, but his **A BRIGHTER SUNSHINE** does a useful job in celebrating Edinburgh Royal Lyceum's elevation to centennial dignity.

His title is derived from the extensive prologue spoken, or rather 'delivered', on the opening night in 1883 by J. B. Howard and F. W. Wyndham –

To picture out fresh glories, and to cast,
A brighter sunshine o'er our Scottish stage.

For many years the Scottishness of the stage referred to its geographical location rather than the scripts that were produced or even the actors who performed. But a substantial part of Donald Campbell's story is the emergence of a Scottish national (but not yet with capital N) Theatre – and the part played by the Lyceum in the drama segment of the Scottish performing arts renaissance that has been a feature of the thirty years since I left Edinburgh to seek my theatrical fortune in the south.

Although I have lit only a couple of shows at the Lyceum, its seats are well acquainted with the contours of my bottom. Especially in the gallery where I had a permanent booking on the Saturday nights of my last years at school and first years at university. So it is a theatre for which I have a special affection – but not for its current (1977) decorative scheme. Some day it shall be restored to the cool elegance of C. J. Phipps. An elegance which survived the only other major refurbishment, carried out in the 1930s.

For a theatre history to offer any remote prospects of viability as a publishing venture it must, in the words of the blurb on this book's jacket, be 'written from the viewpoint of an ordinary theatregoer'. Does this however really exclude a few architectural photographs and plans, ancient and modern? But I must not quibble: I enjoyed the book enormously.

Although it is ludicrous that Edinburgh has failed to build a festival opera house, the Lyceum, whose demolition featured in most

of the discarded proposals, has at least been spared. And so, when Edinburgh eventually builds a large theatre as Edinburgh eventually must, the Lyceum will remain. It has survived into an era when we cherish, preserve and write books about the theatres of our architectural heritage.

All biographies of British theatres share a common theme: survival. Merely to be still standing after a century is quite an achievement. The theatre we know as *Stratford East* stands uniquely, battered and alone, amidst the concrete jungle of developer's architecture at its bleakest and blandest that is the centre of London's E.15. But the **THEATRE ROYAL** whose history Michael Coren records has not just survived the standard traumas of apathy and poverty. It has survived the aftermath of nearly two decades as one of the twin powerhouses that set the style of today's theatre. Whereas George Devine's Royal Court developed the textual aspects of the new drama, Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop at E.15 liberated performance from the confines of text.

The account of the seventy years prior to Littlewood is rather skeletal – but then there is nothing particularly unique to report. Stratford's story of that period is largely interchangeable with that of dozens of other theatres. The key years are well conveyed and form a most useful record, in conjunction with Howard Goorney's 'The Theatre Workshop Story' (see Cue 13). The account of the subsequent decade provides a useful piece of the jigsaw recording the traumas of playhouses in today's age of the committee.

Readers of Cue will be pleased that proper credit is given throughout to the contribution of John Bury. The interaction between John Bury and Joan Littlewood has had an immense influence on today's theatre design and technology. And so the naivety of the author's 'footlights were considered outmoded' can be overlooked, particularly as it shares a sentence with a more fundamental and timely observation for 1953 – 'from the very first productions hardly any stage make-up was used'.

It is interesting, in the context of Stratford as a popular theatre, to note the style of the opening night. Unlike Messers Howard & Wyndham at Edinburgh Royal Lyceum, no special prologue is remembered. But there is a press account of the first actor manager, Charles Dillon's, first night direct appeal to his audience –

Mr Dillon won much applause. He worked under difficulties and in one important scene had to interrupt the action of the play in order to reprove some inattentive gods who were appeasing their appetites. At the end of the act Mr Dillon

very properly delivered the dwellers on high a lecture on the sin of cracking nuts, and it is to be hoped they will profit by his very earnest reproof. 'You treat me fairly', said Mr Dillon, 'and I will treat you fairly, and give you good entertainment; but I will certainly not have the beautiful lines of this play spoiled and my artists insulted by your rude behaviour'.

The national theatre of my formative years was known as *Tennents* and directed by *Binkie* Beaumont who had earned access to all the best actors and best theatres. This gave him first refusal of most of the best scripts. His control was earned by pursuing quality: Tennent productions were staged with consistently high standards of direction, setting, costume and lighting. Through Joe Davis they pioneered lighting design in Britain and it will doubtless surprise Cue readers of *Kitty Black's UPPER CIRCLE* that her sole mention of lighting is a passing reference to Strand's Stanley Earnshaw. No Joe – and no Iain Dow either! Clearly someone must eventually record the full Tennent contribution to our theatrical heritage and I hope that their archives have been preserved for future researchers.

Meanwhile *Kitty Black* places on record a picture of Hugh (Binkie) Beaumont which ties in with my own received hearsay and is given the Gielgud seal ('The description of Binkie is accurate, amusing and admirable'). I never met Binkie, although I did journey in that famous Globe Theatre lift to be rejected as a potential asm – alas I am not he who shared the tiny cage with Marie Tempest when she said 'After that experience, young man, there is nothing for us but marriage'.

Although focussing on Tennents where she spent some fifteen years in key executive roles, *Upper Circle* is a chronicle of *Kitty Black's* professional life which included a successful career as a play translator and a spell in charge of the drama department at top literary agents Curtis Brown. West End Theatre at its final peak of commercial viability is therefore seen through the eyes of one who was involved at the centre of its action. This view from within will give the book a future importance. Meanwhile I, for one, enjoyed the stimulus to my personal memory of so many evenings of exquisite theatre – and not just in London, because Binkie's Theatre was truly National.

The Group Theatre's influence went far beyond its tangible performance achievements. As a Poet's Theatre exploring the integration of dance, mime and music with heightened styles of individual and choral speech, it was one of the key laboratories for today's stage. Its experiments were limited by the financial conditions of an age when funding was primarily dependent upon box office with only some slender private patronage to augment the basic subsidy offered by the grossly underpaid energies of the Group's members.

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Most of the Group productions were directed by Rupert Doone who remains, to me, something of an unresolved shadow despite Robert Medley's recent memoir in *Drawn from Life* (see Cue 27) and Michael J. Sidnell's new history of the Group **DANCES OF DEATH**. Doone, a dancer, was billed as 'producer' in the then, directorial, sense of the word. The missing person in the Group Theatre seems to have been the right someone to carry out the 'enabling' catalysis that is now understood to be the role of a producer. A group with talents so strong and personal needs the dynamic chairing of a Peter Hall or Joan Littlewood.

In 1934 Brecht offered the Group Theatre a play. Like so many of their plans and aspirations, his association with them did not materialise. But (remembering 1934 as the year when Ebert and Busch came to reform our operatic stage) it is a rewarding fantasy to speculate upon the course of British drama if Brecht had spent his exile in London.

During the life of the Group Theatre I aged from one to eight: I knew the years but not their theatre. In my teens I found the scripts of Auden and Isherwood's 'The Dog Beneath the Skin' and 'The Ascent of F.6'. The latter with music by Britten. Fleshing the words out with sight of a few production photographs, I welcomed evidence of an alternative to the drama of the weekly box set.

I therefore pounced on Sidnell's book in the hope that he would recreate something of the actuality of the Group Theatre. I was not disappointed. His narrative is founded on research whose air of thorough credibility adds authority to his analysis. Appendices identify sources and offer areas for further research. There is a complete listing of cast and production credits for all the Group's performances. The shortness of the bibliography demonstrates the need for this book which allows another piece of the jigsaw of theatre history to drop into place. Welcome!

Analysing star quality is one of the more fascinating pursuits of theatre thinkers – whether observing today's stars or researching yesterday's. There are those who abhor the whole idea of stardom and seek only perfection of ensemble. But whether the star is an individual or a group, there is something extraordinary and indefinable in the special relationship established between certain performers and their audience. Belief that star quality defies analysis only encourages the search for a definition.

After reading **THE GREAT LITTLE TILLEY** I am no nearer to fully understanding the undeniable magic of Vesta Tilley. But I do get hints of it from Gwynedd Sudworth's new biography and I feel quite a familiarity with the person and her performance. The strength of this book is the way that it sets its subject within the social context of her theatre and weaves in the anecdotes in a way which breaks up the potential heaviness arising from the

inevitable "and then" aspects of chronology which seem to afflict so many theatrical biographies.

When I found myself with a theatre to administer, I bought a copy of the first edition of Leslie E. Cotterell's **PERFORMANCE** which sets out as (and I quote) a study of organisation, business and law of entertainment and the performing arts to provide practical guidance on issues which matter to managements, producers, performers and all who write or compose or are otherwise concerned with entertainment. I found the book very interesting as an overview but, because of the width of its approach, inevitably too unspecific to be of much help in coping with the nitty gritty of the daily managerial grind.

However the new edition has upped its pages from 370 to 600. (Nearly twice the pages for less than three times the price is pretty good value for seven inflationary years – well below the rate of advance in theatre seats and contracts over the same period!). The extra pages allow more detail and this has increased the book's value as a source of directions to be pursued to find the appropriate small print for a specific situation. This is particularly noticeable in the new edition's approach to Equity contracts although, with updating to 31st July 1984, one might have expected some mention of Equity Designer's Agreements. Also, I would not care to set about organising a performance without some knowledge of the existence of NATTKE.

Nevertheless this book remains the standard British introduction to the contractual obstacle race that lies between an idea and its performance in all media.

A BRIGHTER SUNSHINE. A Hundred Years of the Edinburgh Royal Lyceum Theatre. Donald Campbell. Polygon Books. £8.75 (UK).

THEATRE ROYAL. 100 Years of Stratford East. Michael Coren. Quartet Books £12.95 (UK).

UPPER CIRCLE. A Theatrical Chronicle. Kitty Black. Methuen. £10.95 (UK).

DANCES OF DEATH. The Group Theatre of London in the Thirties. Michael J. Sidnell. Faber and Faber. £18.50 (UK).

THE GREAT LITTLE TILLEY. Vesta Tilley and Her Times. A biography by Gwynedd Sudworth. Cortney Publications. £3.95 (Paperback) (UK).

PERFORMANCE. Second Edition. Leslie E. Cotterell. John Offord Publications. £18.95 (UK). £14.95 (Paperback) (UK).

PRODUCT NEWS

A Brave leap into the Light

In just two decades lighting control development has been nothing short of revolutionary. Indeed for variety and choice of control we must be close to saturation point. The sad truth however is that this spectacular progress in control design has not been matched by any corresponding advance where the luminaires are concerned. Now, however, Tim Burnham, himself a lighting designer, has taken a hard look at the available hardware and decided that low voltage is the key to a serious breakthrough in luminaire design. With the result that his company, TBA Technology, has launched a new generation of luminaires.



TBA Technology F/65
650 watt Fresnel

These luminaires, branded MAGIC LANTERN, combine highly efficient optical systems with advanced electronics, enabling the 400 watt 36 volt lamps to compete on equal terms with currently available 1000 watt fixtures.

The manufacturers claim running costs 60% down against conventional units, and lamp replacement costs are less than half those for conventional 1000 watt lamps.

Even more exciting is Magic Lantern's networking capability: the integral electronics housed in each instrument permit direct connection to a 240 volt power supply, with a serial control signal looped from lantern to lantern. The Magic Lanterns will drive directly from the serial output of any of TBA Technology's or Colortran's recent memory control systems, and a low-cost encoder is available to interface to any standard analogue control system, memory

or manual. A low-cost version of Magic Lantern, without networking, will also be available. It will incorporate all of the advantages of low voltage technology, but will run in the usual way, connected to conventional dimmers. However, voltage conversion will be electronic, so that the problems associated with transformers, i.e. weight, size and induction, do not arise.

Although the manufacture of low voltage spotlights has never been seriously developed in this country, though Reiche and Vogel Beamlights were imported in the 1960's, the highly successful use of low voltage sources by designers such as Svoboda and David Hersey is very well known.

The theatre has ever been ready to adopt and use a new lighting technique when presented with it. Magic Lantern should prove no exception.

A full technical report on these exciting lighting instruments will appear in our next issue. Meanwhile more from TBA Technology, 31 Corsica Street, London N5 1JT.

Musicals Nostalgia

Peter Wood specialises in books and ephemera of the theatre, circus and music hall. His latest catalogue of goodies he calls "Musicals". Apart from records of musical shows, which Peter Wood is quite happy to leave to other specialists, his 1300 item catalogue lists pretty well everything else: books, music, posters, programmes and illustrated souvenirs, plus autographs, portraits and other items featuring star performers in musical theatre.

There is even a Musicals sweat shirt incorporating a portrait of Ben Vereen in the musical Pippin at £12.95.

So how about a signed portrait of Noel Coward or a 1943 letter from Bing Crosby at £35.00 each? Or a poster of Sondheim's "A Little Night Music" with the ravishing Mucha design used for the Adelphi production, at £12.00? Or perhaps a programme of "Oklahoma" at Drury Lane for only £2.00?

This 36 page catalogue contains 19 splendid full colour reproductions of some of the books and posters on offer. Available at a modest £1.00 from theatre bookseller Peter Wood, 20 Stonehill Road, Great Shelford, Cambridge CB2 5JL.

Stop, Freeze, Flash

New from Colortran, four Strobes covering the range from 0 - 15K flash rate. As well as models for disco, theatre and TV use there are variants for scientific and educational purposes. The Super Freeze Flash and Blitzer has a powerful Lux output which carries through most ambient lighting to give a brilliant wide beam for special effects.

More information from Colortran U.K. PO Box 5, Burrell Way, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 3RB.

Court News

A new catalogue of Loudspeaker systems from Theatre Projects contains good news of price reductions and improved specifications for professional sound systems.

Centred on their Proflex 200 and its variants Court Acoustics now cater for the sound needs of the largest live performances in stadiums, concert halls and theatres as well as the more modest requirements of clubs and discotheques.

Clear unadorned specifications of the speaker systems and associated electronic cross overs and equalisers make this catalogue an indispensable addition to the technical library of every theatre sound designer.

Copies obtainable from Theatre Projects Sales, 10-16 Mercer Street, Covent Garden, London WC2E 9LN.

Another Hollywood Academy Award for Rosco

Roscolab wins another Scientific Technical Award by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. This time for the development of the Rosco Fog Fluid - in recognition of a significant contribution to the technology of film production.

The Fog Fluid, developed specifically for use in theatres, film and TV studios, overcomes the problems of flammability, irritation and oily residues on floor and equipment. Earlier systems, which were based on petroleum and mineral oil, irritated the skin, eyes and throats of performers, crew and patrons alike and in addition often left an oily, slippery residue on the stage or studio floor.

This is the second time Rosco has received an Academy Award, the first being awarded in 1977 for the development of the company's Cinegel system of light control materials.

Full details of the Rosco Fog and Smoke System are available from Rosco at 69-71 Upper Ground, London SE1 9PQ.

Riggers speak easy

Lancelyn's Radio & headphone set sounds good news for riggers. The Maxon Speak easy as it is aptly named, has a transmitting range up to 400 metres and voice operated transmission which can be switched to manual switch-to-talk mode if required. Both transmitter and headset have High-med-lo switching to reduce false triggering by ambient background noise and to control listening volume. A crystal controlled dual conversion super Heterodyne receiver accounts for its amazingly clear noise free reception. At £32.50 + VAT it has the sound of good value about it too. But get the full specification from Lancelyn Lighting (Oxford), 102 Walton Street, Oxford OX2 6EB. Tel. 0865 511522.

Computerised Ticket Printing Service

The Lancelyn Ticket system is intended for Amateur Societies and the smaller user not requiring tickets for every night of the year but who would still like the convenience and professionalism of row and seat numbered tickets.

Each ticket has two perforated stubs and a box office stub, all bearing brief details, as well as the main portion with the date, time, place, title and seat and row number in large print. A "Logo" or design can be produced to order for the company (or N.O.D.A. designs can be printed if the society is entitled to use them).

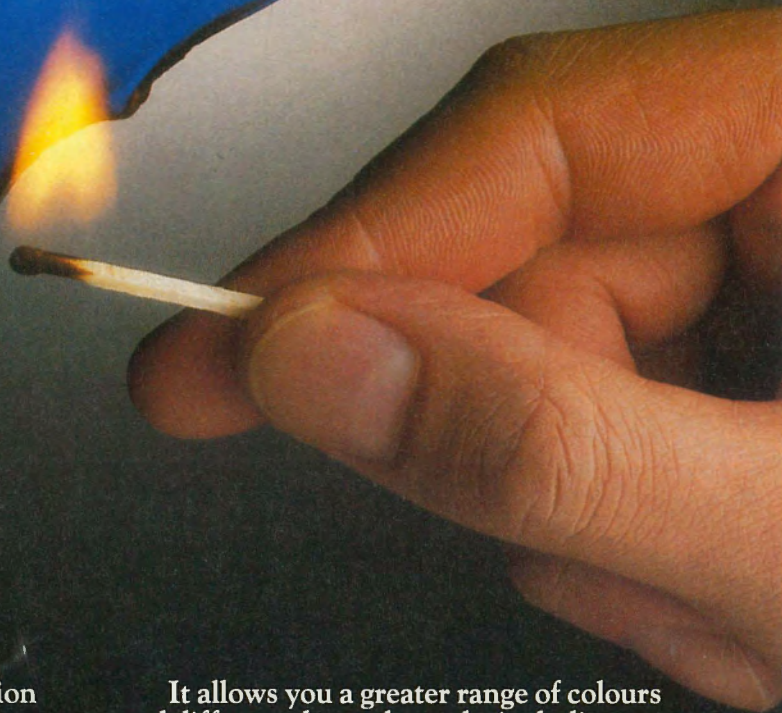
Available in white, red, blue, green and yellow. The tickets are printed on good quality card on continuous stationery, folded in sixes which makes them convenient for distribution among the company for direct selling if required.

Tickets cost 3p each plus a £5.00 setting up charge, VAT and postage. Obtainable from Lancelyn Lighting (Oxford), 102 Walton Street, Oxford OX2 6EB. Tel. 0865 511522.

			LANCELYN LIGHTING presents	
7.30pm	7.30pm	7.30pm	"JUST THE TICKET"	
			102 Walton Street Oxford 511522	
12/10/84	12/10/84	12/10/84	Friday 12th October 1984 at 7.30pm	
£2.50	£2.50	£2.50		
G.Circle	G.Circle	G.Circle	£2.50	
L7	L7	L7	inc VAT Grand Circle	L7
			LANCELYN LIGHTING presents	
7.30pm	7.30pm	7.30pm	"JUST THE TICKET"	
			102 Walton Street Oxford 511522	
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£2.50	£2.50	£2.50		
G.Circle	G.Circle	G.Circle	£2.50	
L8	L8	L8	inc VAT Grand Circle	L8

The reverse of the Lancelyn ticket contains standard terms and conditions.

Try this simple test on any other gel.



All new generations of theatre and television lights place additional heat stress on gels.

This increases the risk of fire. That's why our test is so important.

Simply take a sample of colour film from any other manufacturer along with one of ours and apply a lighted match to the edge of each.

You'll notice that Supergel extinguishes as soon as you remove the flame.

Most other gels will continue to burn and shed flaming droplets.

That's because most gels are only surface coated which makes them a fire hazard.

Supergel, on the other hand, has its colour and flame retardancy element impregnated all the way through the copolymer resin base.

This ensures that the colour is highly resistant to fading.

And that it can never become a fire hazard.

It's the first truly self-extinguishing filter that fully complies with British and European fire safety standards — including those of the GLC.

But there's more to Supergel than just safety.

It allows you a greater range of colours and diffusers than other gels, including our own Roscolene — that's creative freedom.

So what you have is a gel that's better, that lasts longer and that's safer as well.

Who says you can't be all things to all men.

Please send me a free swatchbook, Colour Media Guide, and Technotes.

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