

CUE

Technical Theatre Review 39

January/February 1986 £1.75



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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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Cover picture
David Roger's set design for Nigel Osborne's
Hells Angels from David Freeman's Opera
Factory at the Royal Court Theatre. Lighting
by Peter Mumford. David Fingleton reports on
page 5. (Photography by Bo Lutoslawski)

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CRYSTAL BALLS

It is not the habit of CUE to greet the dawn of each new year by recalling the past and speculating the future. We did this in 1980 because it heralded a new decade: anyone wishing to rate the performance of our crystal ball should turn to page 3 of CUE 3. Our self-assessment is that we got the general trend right although progress has been slower than was perhaps anticipated.

Now, halfway through the decade, we have been peeping once more into the future. Perhaps because we are 36 Cues older, our vision is just a little clouded with cynicism and our predictions much simpler. Whatever else happens, we feel reasonably confident that:

Sound will get louder
Lights will get brighter
Cuts will get deeper
Bureaucracies will get larger
Casts will get smaller
Stars will get richer
but Most of US will get poorer.

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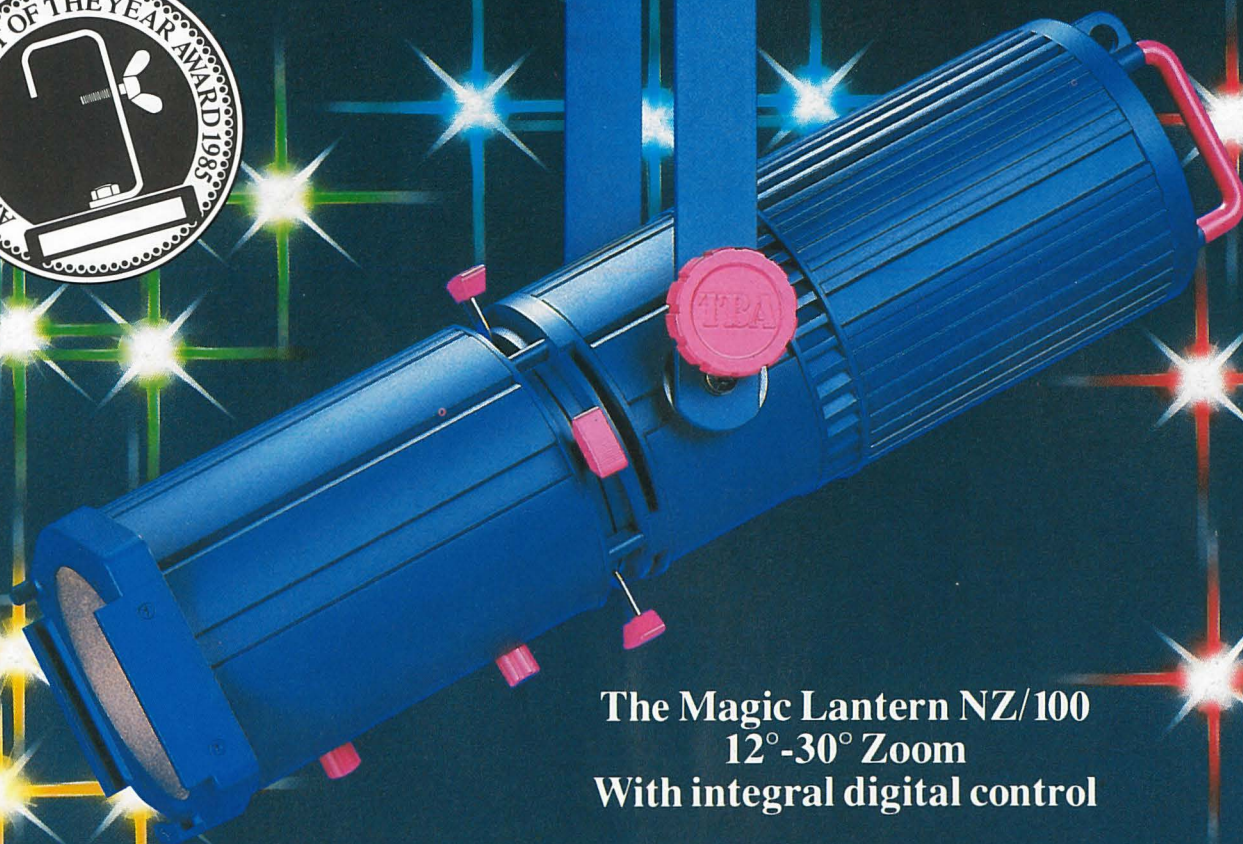
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STAGE DESIGN

DAVID FINGLETON

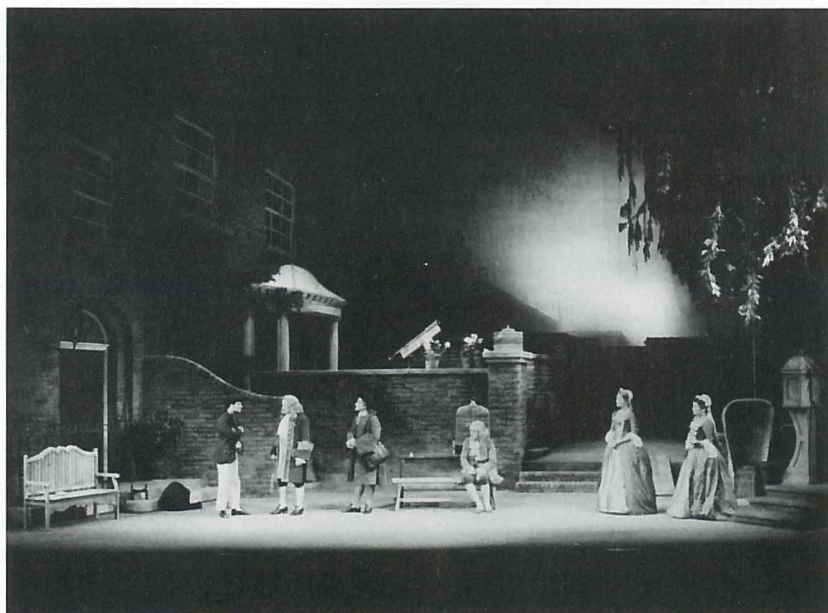
Koltai's abstract (*Othello* at the Barbican) □ Bury does *Vonadab* proud at the Olivier □ Exemplary settings and exquisite lighting for Congreve's *Love for Love* □ Welcome authenticity at Covent Garden for Royal Ballet's *Giselle* and *Horus* □ Admirable designs for London Festival Ballet's *Land* □ Ballet design of a very high order at Sadler's Wells and a small and economical opera from the Opera Factory at the Royal Court Theatre □ A new *Don Giovanni* and re-designed *Katya Kabanova* from the E.N.O.

Othello is never an easy play to stage. There is the problem of period, of location — how to differentiate between Venice and Cyprus and of style — whether to aim for naturalism or to settle for a stylised, or even abstract approach. Ralph Koltai has plumped emphatically for this latter option in designing Terry Hands' new production of the play for the Royal Shakespeare Company, which has recently transferred from Stratford to the Barbican, and in doing so has succeeded triumphantly. This is Koltai at his very best: abstract, high-tech, and yet powerfully atmospheric, capturing the mood and message of the play, pointing up the drama, yet never distracting by mere 'design'. His basic plan has three rectangular glacial surfaces, unevenly juxtaposed on the stage, from front to back of the playing area, behind these a succession of screens, and behind these a dark cyclorama upon which a muted projection of storm clouds plays throughout. Colours are essentially black and white: the former for Cyprus, the latter for Venice, which also boasts a golden lion effigy, behind a gauze stage right, and the edges of both playing areas and screens are frequently lit with a translucent glow by means of fibre optics. Skilfully lit by Hands himself and Clive Morris, the result, even from my seat at the extreme edge of the auditorium, was superbly involving, powerfully claustrophobic, unabashedly 'modern', yet totally in tune with Shakespeare's play. Alexander Reid's costumes were less decisive, though I shall long remember Desdemona's stunning appearance in diaphanous blue nightdress, arms outstretched, between two black screens, and I was less than happy with *Othello*'s plaited, Guru hairstyle. But taken as a whole this was design of great distinction, looked marvellous on stage, and did credit both to play and company.

Further fine design, though in a vehicle less worthy of it, came from John Bury at the National's Olivier Theatre. Peter Shaffer's *Yonadab*, based on the biblical tale of King David's relationship with his sons Amnon and Absalom, and Amnon's rape of his half-sister, Tamar, David's only daughter, seemed a slight and self-indulgent piece, and Peter Hall offered an equally self-indulgent production; but Bury did it



National Theatre's production of Peter Shaffer's *Yonadab* at the Olivier. Director: Peter Hall. Design and lighting: John Bury. Photo John Haynes.



Peter Woods production of Congreve's *Love for Love* at the Lyttelton. Lila de Nobili settings recreated by Bruce Snyder. Lighting: Richard Pilbrow. Photo Zoë Dominic.



RSC's *Othello* at the Barbican directed by Terry Hands. Design by Ralph Koltai. Costumes by Alexander Reid. Lighting — Terry Hands and Clive Morris. Photo Ivan Kynce.

proud. He opted for the sparest of settings, using a square playing area and turning it by 90 degrees on the Olivier stage, then enclosing it in multi-layered, parallel-spaced white gauze curtains. This had the effect of concentrating the attention within the Olivier's vast playing area, yet provided a welcome flexibility for the action. Musicians, dimly seen but clearly heard, behind the furthest gauze further heightened atmos-



David Bintley's *The Sons of Horus*, Royal Ballet world premiere. Music: Peter McGowan. Set design Terry Bartlett. Photo Leslie E Spatt.



The London Festival Ballet production *Land* Choreography: Christopher Bruce. Set Designs: Walter Nobbe. Lighting: John B Read. Photo: Leslie Spatt

phere. Bury supplied his own precise white lighting, and costumes, though I must confess I did not warm to Yonadab's pale blue dressing gown.

Also at the National, in the Lyttelton Theatre, came a welcome revival of Congreve's *Love for Love* in the settings designed by Lila de Nobili, now recreated by Bruce Synder, for Peter Wood's production for the National at the Old Vic twenty years ago. It was a pleasure to see these two classic settings once again, for they splendidly demonstrate a precise sense of period and social structure, possess an archetypal Englishness, have a magnificent grasp of perspective and make exemplary use of the stage. The first act set of Valentine's study admirably conveyed the aura of a rather

dilettante intellectual, and made it abundantly clear that financially he was down on his luck. The setting was splendidly spacious and yet remained convincingly a room. Then came Sir Sampson Legend's glorious red-brick suburban house — in Hampstead perhaps — impeccably accurate William and Mary architecture, complete with bricked-in upstairs' windows, brimming with elegance and wit, and with its garden wall and distant vista of London, exquisitely lit by Richard Pilbrow, conveying a welcome feeling of space as well as intimacy. It also offered a multitude of natural entrances and exits, both on stage and within the set itself. These were exemplary settings, utterly imbued with Congreve's period, yet making the maxi-



The Royal Ballet's new production of *Giselle* by Peter Wright. Design: John Macfarlane. Lighting: Jennifer Tipton. Photo: Leslie Spatt.



Also from David Freeman's *Opera Factory*, Cavalli's *La Calisto*. Costumes: Belinda Scarlett. Lighting: Peter Mumford. Photo: Bo Lutoslawski.

mum use of modern resources, as well as being a great joy to see.

Further welcome authenticity was to be found in the Royal Ballet's new production of *Giselle* at Covent Garden, for which producer Peter Wright had chosen John Macfarlane, a distinguished painter and designer of plays and modern dance, to make his debut both at Covent Garden and as a designer of classical ballet. It was a highly successful choice. Like Wright, Macfarlane aimed for historical and literary accuracy in setting this *Giselle* correctly in its early 19th century German romantic context. The curtain rose on a credible forest clearing in the Rhineland, *Giselle's* cottage a genuine working peasants' home, with wood stacked around and behind it: no twee gingerbread house this. The peasants looked like real workers, not dancers acting it up, and their costumes blended with the browns and muted greens of the forest background, so that the arrival of the court made, for once, a strong impact. Better still was the second act where the realm of the Wilis was evoked by the romantic desolation of a painting by Caspar David Friedrich, the gothic romanticism of Weber's *Der Freischutz*, rather than the habitual prettified gallic version of *Giselle*. The whole thing was impeccably lit by Jennifer Tipton and gave us a great classical ballet in which, for once, we could believe dramatically, as well as merely admire. Other good work recently for the ballet has come in one act works. At Covent Garden David Bintley's *Sons of Horus* had satisfyingly authentic Egyptian designs by Terry Bartlett, with powerfully dramatic masks and a fine frieze which dropped away at the end of the work to commendable effect. For London Festival Ballet Christopher Bruce's gauntly gripping *Land* had admirable designs by Walter Nobbe.

His bare, bleak backcloth with ever-changing projections, superbly lit by John B Read, and forlornly grey costumes succeeded magnificently in evoking the horror and misery of war, destruction, even holocaust, and the desolation of grief with a minimum of detail and thus a minimum of distraction from the high quality of choreography and dance. At Sadler's Wells Theatre, which must be kept open at all costs, Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet recently showed two attractive new works by dancing members of the company. Both Susan Crow's *Track and Field* and Graham Lustig's *Caught in Time* had pleasing designs by Tim Shortall and Fiona Barclay: Shortall's for the athletics of *Track and Field* being particularly agreeable. For Michael Corder's strongly atmospheric *The Wand of Youth* Charles Maude has designed a splendid section of a conservatory in metalled glass, almost a mini-wing of the Crystal Palace, which became transparent at the end to reveal a haunting backcloth of the trenches of World War 1. Superbly lit by Nick Chelton, this was ballet design of a very high order.

Even if at times it shoots woefully wide of the mark, one would not be without David Freeman's *Opera Factory*, for it demonstrates how that normally extravagant and unwieldy art form can be performed on a small and economical scale and yet still have plenty to say in terms of stage design. The Factory's recent season at the Royal Court Theatre in Sloane Square offered a world première — Nigel Osborne's *Hell's Angels* to a text by Freeman himself — which if it angered by the paucity of its music, the unwieldiness of its libretto, and by its extravagant desire to shock, was nevertheless admirably staged and performed. David Roger's designs had to encompass Heaven and Earth both at the end of the 15th century and today, and its series of cardboard cut-out motifs succeeded pretty well in doing so. This may have been a comic strip staging, but it undoubtedly had both clarity and atmosphere, much helped by some habitually skilful and pointed lighting by Peter Mumford. I was less happy with some

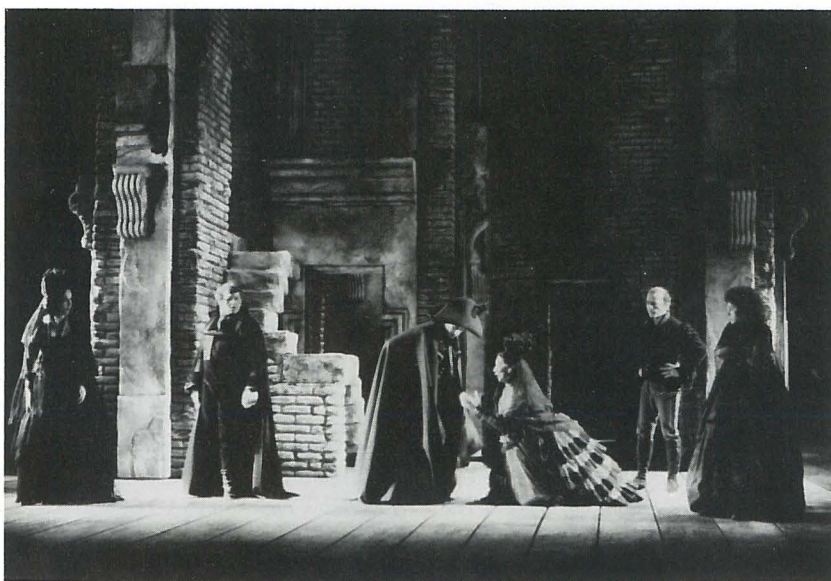
of the costumes: those pale blue romper suits for the Angels are in dire need of reconsideration. Even better visually was Freeman's updated staging of Cavalli's *La Calisto*, revived from last year's season. Here the removal of Baroque opera into the world of rugger clubs and beauty contests worked a treat, and enormous impact was achieved with minimal means, again immensely helped by Mumford's lighting, and, in this case, by Belinda Scarlett's skilfully considered costumes. Red and black Mary Whitehouse tweed for the Furies was a glorious touch.

Back in the world of full scale opera came a new production and a redesigned revival by English National Opera at the Coliseum. Jonathan Miller's new production of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* had Philip Prowse as its designer, and clearly simplicity and economy were the aim. But curiously for a

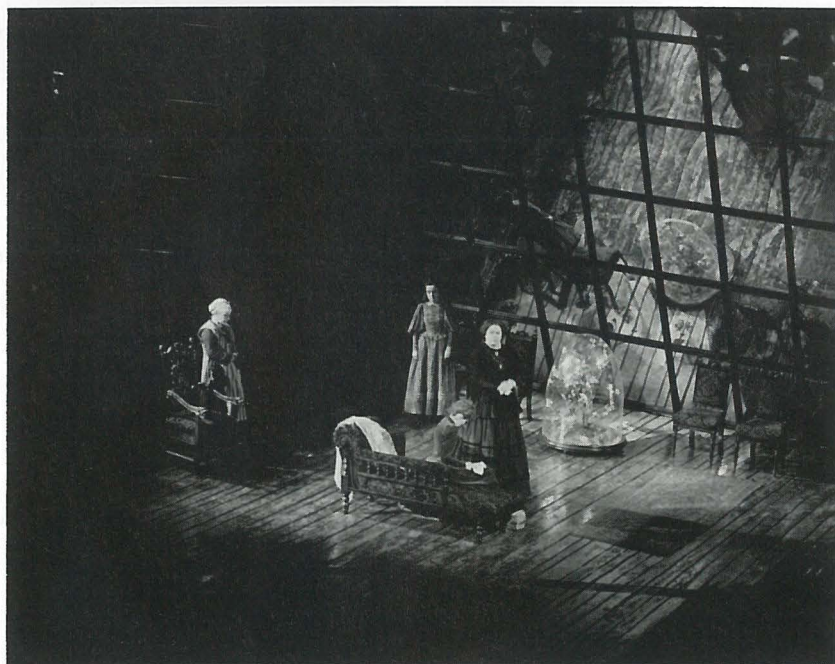


The new works by Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet. Susan Crow's *Track & Field* designed by Tim Shortall. And (below) Michael Corder's *The Wand of Youth* designed by Charles Maude and lit by Nick Chelton. Photos: Leslie E Spatt.





English National Opera's new production of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* at the London Coliseum. Conductor: Mark Elder, Producer: Jonathan Miller, Designer: Philip Prowse, Lighting: Robert Bryan. Photo: Zoë Dominic.



Also from English National Opera a re-designed revival of Janacek's *Katya Kabanova* at The London Coliseum. Re-staged by David Pountney with designs by Stefanos Lazaridis. New lighting by Nick Chelton. Photo: Donald Southern.

designer of Prowse's imaginative power, what we got was monotony, neither fully representational nor fully stylised, three trundling grey towers which looked much the same whichever way they revolved, a floorboarded stage and an eternally black backcloth, with costumes running the spectrum of shades of grey and black. Moreover Robert Bryan's lighting was oddly heavy-handed with jarring changes and floodlit moonscapes. The result became tedious to look at and did little if anything to evoke the message and spirit of Mozart's opera. At least we can see the Miller/Prowse staging

of *The Magic Flute* in February, an achievement on an altogether different scale.

The ENO revival was of Janacek's *Katya Kabanova*, originally John Blatchley's production, and not seen there since 1977. Now David Pountney had restaged it and Stefanos Lazaridis had re-worked his original designs, with new lighting by Nick Chelton. The result was a triumph. Still the same raked uni-set, but with much more glass now, reflections, projections, the feeling of an ever-threatening world outside. The Kabanov living room had become more claustrophobic than before, with a

vase of dried flowers under a glass dome providing a masterly focal point and an allegory of Katya's condition. More questionable perhaps was the decision to have the new costumes echo the paintings of Edvard Munch — hardly apposite to Ostrovsky's *The Storm*, whence Janacek drew his libretto. Chelton's lighting was superb and his projections powerful, both enormously strong in atmosphere, as of course is Lazaridis' basic setting, tipped towards the audience and thus involving it totally: an object lesson in what good stage design is all about.

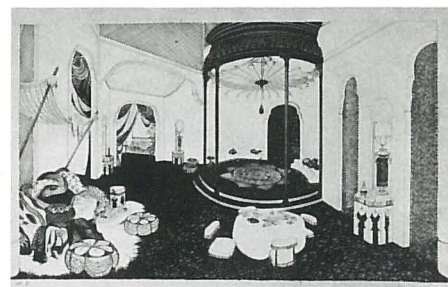
Scenario

An exhibition of set designs and models from Royal Opera House productions of Italian operas 1964–1986.

Olivier Theatre foyer of the National Theatre.
12 March – 19 April

The variety and excellence of design seen at the Royal Opera House since the theatre's reopening in 1946 is well illustrated by the Italian operas in its repertory. This exhibition offers examples of the work of many designers, including Wakhevitch's *Otello* 1955, Visconti's *Don Carlo* 1958, Zeffirelli's *Lucia di Lammermoor* 1959, Mongiardino's *Tosca* 1964, Frascà's *La traviata* 1967, and Jacobs' *Turandot* 1984. The exhibition is prepared by Francesca Franchi, Archivist at the Royal Opera House, and designed by Barry Mazur.

Admission is free, Monday to Saturday, 10am – 11pm.



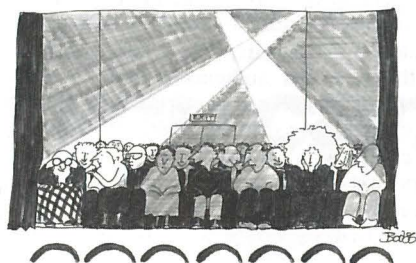
Design by Nato Frascà for Luchino Visconti's 1967 production of *La traviata*

FOOT NOTES

STEPHAN CHAMBERS

The essence of dramatic spectacle has been debated, quarrelled over and mined for since Aristotle observed that women and slaves seemed to him unfit spectacle for the tragic arena. 'Two planks and a passion' has been one attempt at minimalist definition and one to which *CUE* readers would at least want to add: 'and light to see the rustic passion by'. While not wishing to offer any more definitions, I would suggest that one important aspect of dramatic spectacle has been sadly neglected, a branch of theatre which seems to be growing and which has hit upon a box-office ploy to make more established impressarios despair at its brazen ingenuity.

Imagine a production in which the cast is also the audience. Imagine it is a venue which is splendidly equipped to house its audience and performers, and imagine attendances of several thousands in 3 days. Such spectacles, rarely noticed although often serialized in book form, are conferences. What American would call Conventions.



... the cast is also the audience

From the widely noticed and meticulously stage-managed international summit to the annual assembly of left-handed palaeographers, conferences are theatrical events, with all the attendant fuss and publicity, triumph and despair. They share too, many of the technical features of more conventional drama. Speakers require amplification, star performers require lighting and audiences require shepherding and seating.

The most obviously theatrical of gatherings is clearly the exhibition. These, almost always in the promenade mode, have precise analogies to theatre. There is kitchen sink drama, in which designers and manufacturers of lavatories, sinks and baths lovingly assemble naturalistic sets which are clearly designed to mimic our own. As with epic pastoral, however, they clearly contrive to improve on life. Toothpaste tubes retain their tops and never split, none of these suspiciously short, curly hairs clings to any surface and the taps don't drip.

Each scene is flatteringly but rather statically lit and strolling players carry off passable interpretations of embarrassed purchasers. In a similar mould are the much more grandiose motor car exhibitions. These are the direct counterpart to West End or Broadway musicals. They take place in swish purpose built theatres in Geneva or Paris.

The star turns are assisted by hydraulic staging, highly sophisticated lighting and sound. The real drama, though, goes on in promenade, with bit players and the chorus line fly catching for all they're worth. Each second passer by is another role in search of a model. Like musicals, they have happy if rather safe endings and audiences leave, secure in their aspirations.

Where the theatrical passion of conferences is at its most powerful, however, is at academic conferences. There the residential nature of the events makes them perfectly carnivalesque. Every second Professor is Feste or the Fool, on parole with unlimited license and free to exchange a mortar board for a coxcomb.

The dramatic effect of academic conferences derives in part from their incongruity and in part from their likeness to mainline theatre. They are stage-managed like the most sophisticated of productions, with casts much larger than would be common in even the most epic piece. Their incongruity results from the mass assembly of several thousand (at the major conferences) people whose job and vocation it is to live solitary, contemplative lives, troubled only by students for a few weeks each year. Thrust into close contact with their direct peers, they are struck by their own mortality ('they seem to be giving chairs to my students'), professional jealousy ('of course, s/he omitted to cite my paper as the inspiration for the discovery') and insecurity ('what will I say if anyone has read *Finnegans Wake*?'). They are then, dead ringers for tragedy and farce; making us laugh and making us cry. They also involve the organisation and coordination of productions on the grandest scale.

In the closing days of 1985, 7½ thousand Professors of English literature gathered in a hotel in Chicago for perhaps one of the most bizarre and theatrical of such conferences. Fully in the spirit of the most sophisticated and arch of dramatists, one of its themes was 'theatre'. Its venue was the Chicago Hyatt, a huge, twin towered, concrete and glass representation of the American dream, whose twin towers form a neat proscenium arch which frames an artificial lake, several trees and escalators with the grace and elevation of RSC ramps. Its most baroque feature is a bar which is flown in from one tower and which quivers,

suspended above the lake. Into this set came the 7½ thousand, each with a different script (all monologues) and a programme giving them their cues. The front of house managers, while expecting the size of the cast, were clearly not expecting it to be quite as scruffy. More used to processing travelling executives, they were thrown by academics in traditional costume. Many were wearing national dress: the British came in brogues, tweeds, woollen ties and egg stained shirts; the Americans came either in British costume in an act of defiant anti-nationalism or as lumberjacks. Some even came dressed as travelling executives. No doubt they'd been tipped off about the hotel staff. More striking were those who came in period dress rather than in national costume. There were a number of nineteenth century figures wearing felt capes,



... many wear national dress

south bank hats and matching pallors, there were some in Edwardian suits and brocade waistcoats and others modelled on pre-Raphaelite paintings. Each of them, moreover, came with changes of costume; a necessity in the unevenly heated setting. The stage itself was heated to an uncomfortable level, the backdrop and surrounds chilled with a savage wind (very convincing too, that wind machine. Someone should track down and interview its designer). Costume changes, as a result, were both necessary and complicated, leaving performers with several entries and exits every day and a bulky wardrobe to put on, put off and store.

Dressing rooms for the event were lavish although it was left entirely to the per-



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formers to appear on time. As Boxing day became the otherwise torpid interlude between Christmas and New Year, the Chicago players, and their behind the scenes organisers and technicians went through scripts one last time, straightened rows of chairs and checked the lights and sound systems. The real drama, however, had begun the moment the cast arrived. Throughout the building vignettes of astonishing virtuosity and poignancy were taking place. People tested their punch lines in casual, throw away fashion with only the slight excess of pressure on the stems of glasses to say how deeply they felt the rejection if nuances were missed. Clever puns were heard in lifts and hastily scribbled in to scripts. People sat around with furled newspapers, or carnations in their button-holes awaiting appointments and tragically unaware that we'd seen that somewhere before. Characters passed on elevators, in opposite directions, and relived *Brief Encounters*. When tragedy repeats itself, it does so as farce. Several thousand characters, in search of a play, were behaving out of character. Away from campus and constraints, they acted as they imagined they should; with fraternal bonhomie or with solitary angst. The stage fright was palpable.

When the curtain finally went up on the show the real difficulties of stage managing such an affair became apparent. With no cues scripted, technical crews needed to follow speakers, questioners and hecklers with amazing reflexes, with all spots controlled manually. Get-ins and get-outs followed each other with programme interludes of never more than a few minutes, for staging blocks to be moved, seating dismantled and rearranged and microphones to be rigged. These problems were exacerbated by uneven attendance. Box-office forecasts were often wildly inaccurate, with some sessions attracting numbers to make the average fire officers arteries stiffen and others which were attended only by a handful of faithfuls. Meanwhile, of course, the real show was going on all around with no interlude at all. Speakers whose props had not arrived needed hasty substitutes (usually the xeroxing of abstracts: the academic's

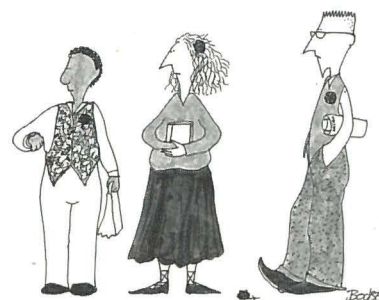
equivalent of review clippings or press photograph), performers who had fallen ill or been left stranded in Colorado needed instant understudies and actors who had had their lines stolen (their ideas shot to flames) needed instant alternatives.

For students of dramatic spectacle, such a conference is worthy of serious attention. For students and practitioners of technical aspects of production a conference is both an object lesson and a nightmarish vision of all those things that sometimes go wrong, all happening simultaneously.

If academic conferences are the equivalent of tragedy and farce, motor shows the equivalent of musicals and trade fairs the equivalent of kitchen sink drama, there is one more breed of conference which would appear to include each of these elements with one vital addition. Party political conferences are all of these plus soap puppetry and *commedia dell'arte*. Like television comedy, they are quite literally 'clap traps', with carefully timed crescendos designed to elicit rapture or carefully considered approval. The technicalities of such conferences are awesome. Not only must the sets be colour coded but tricky decisions need also to be made. The Union Jack (clearly a good thing) includes both red and blue. Should it or should it not be used? Sound systems need to be the embodiments of discretion. For once the problem is not to project sound clearly and without distortion but to seal off input from any but the immediate source. While for journalists and cynical observers it is only the overheard which is interesting, for the organisers and stage manager, the overheard is potentially disastrous and the heard almost irrelevant. Lighting too is a problem. One gell will not do for all. A young minister whose rising star belies less than the desirable maturity needs to be lent the skin tone and shadow of sage years. The fluorescent pallor of an old, overworked and clearly unwell minister will not benefit, under the gaze of television, from similar lighting. Many lighting controllers in mainstream theatre would blanch at the thought of lighting such a show.

Conferences then, are theatrical. They are 'staged' in a fixed space with an audience. But their theatricality goes further than that. Some are precisely choreographed and directed and as precisely scripted as the most formalist play. International summits are a good example. There a fluffed line may mean more than a bad review. Camera calls are standard procedure and both make up and costumes carefully controlled. Each sort of conference borrows from theatre not only its staging techniques, however, but also its tone, rhythm and purpose. We enter an auditorium with very strong expectations surrounding character, timing, dénouements and climax. We expect to be entertained, edified and to learn, either about ourselves or others. While this idea may seem a little absurd when attached to an academic conference or motor show, it is less absurd than it may appear. Drama, we are told, in another definition, shows us how

we are, how we should be and how we could be. It cheers us up by showing people worse than us, it shows us a purpose by representing people better than us and it makes us laugh at ourselves. To do this it has evolved over thousands of years, retaining a space to play in and an audience to play to. Conferences, without usually being aware of it, do very much the same things. The one crucial difference is precisely that theatre does it knowingly. It has no other purpose than to present itself. Other forms of display are usually allied to a purpose (to sell cars, parties, ideas,



... I'll be wearing a red carnation

lavatories). In this, they are both more revealing than drama (the actors are not acting) and less revealing (when we act we choose representative moments to avoid the clutter of incidentals). More interesting still is the fact that audiences, without being aware of it, behave in such dramatic situations in highly stylized ways. They behave 'in character'. The organisers of large trade fairs and the increasing sophistication of retail selling (with its sets, lighting, sound) testify to this. When we enter into public relationships of this sort, we are bound by rules as strong and as intangible as those which say we don't talk at the theatre.

It may be, if these analogies work, that the definitions of drama which we initially stretched to include non-dramatic performances like reading papers on theatre to 7,499 Professors in Chicago, may be at fault simply because they have the problem reversed. Imagine if it were restated; instead of theatre being a useful metaphor for life our lives were only ever approximations of theatre. The Professor who, far from family responsibilities, arranges a rendez-vous saying 'meet me at the foot of the escalator. I'll be wearing a red carnation' is simply selecting from a repertoire of possible gestures, all of which are theatrical, but some more theatrical than others. Some people, of course, get the best parts.

Cartoons by M. Gretton-Davenport

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REIDing SHELF

For many years there has been a major gap in theatre literature — a German book on stage lighting. Max Keller's **BÜHNENBELEUCHTUNG** will therefore be particularly welcomed, not only by the aspiring stage lighters of his own country but by those of us in other lands who are anxious to contribute to an international cross-fertilisation by gaining more understanding of our colleague's concepts and the technology by which they implement their ideas.

There are two aspects of German lighting which I have always personally admired. One is their willingness to make bold visual statements with intuitive theatricality being allowed precedence over the kind of strict logic that can, too often, lead in Anglo-American lighting to a discreet but rather bland illumination. The other is the organisational means by which the daily change-overs (twice daily, counting rehearsals) of their elaborate repertoire programme are sustained.

Readers of Michael Ramsaur's recent Cue articles will know of Max Keller's innovative lighting at Munich Kammerspiel. He is to the fore in the group who have been seeking — and earning — for his country's

lighting designers the sort of recognition as full contributing members of the creative team that is coming to German theatrical life rather later than in many other countries. His book includes many impressive illustrations of his work at Munich and, although these are all of drama productions and therefore perhaps not fully representative of German theatre which embraces the world's greatest concentration of active opera houses, they should provide a stimulus to anyone working in any form of staging. Most German drama is produced in a style whose departure from naturalism is far beyond the most heightened realism deployed on Anglo-American stages. This enables the lighting to be deployed in wide strokes which determine the tightly choreographed positioning of the actors — a style where the overall visual impact of the stage picture may be accorded priority over an individual actor's use of subtleties of facial expression to project character.

Publisher DuMont has adopted a generous approach to quality in the book's production, allowing extensive use of colour so that the many illustrations coupled with a text that is frequently punctuated with cross-headings make it accessible to those of

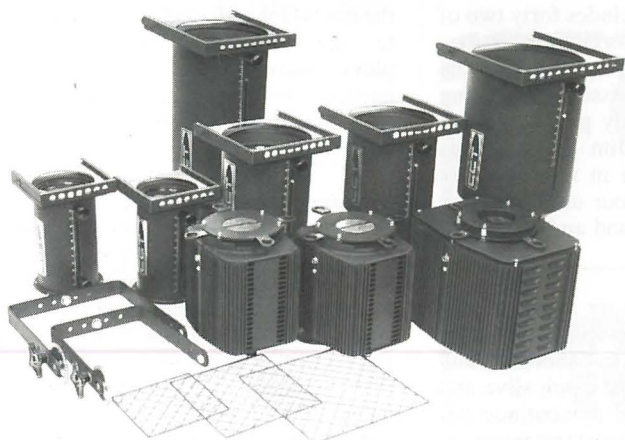
us whose ability to read German is as hesitant as mine.

In 'Bühnenbeleuchtung', Max Keller explains the technology in use in the German theatre, and shares with us his experience of how it may be used to further the art of the theatre. It is an essential addition to the international bibliography of theatre design and technology

Everyone must read **ARTS FOR EVERYONE**, a detailed yet crisply set out *manual of guidance on provision for disabled people*. I would be not just surprised but amazed if any single one of us failed to make a discovery through consulting this book. It overflows with an abundance of practical ideas for easing access to the arts and the buildings that house them. And there are hints on human relationships that seem so simple that you may, like me, wonder why we have never thought of them before. Even if you are convinced that you know all about access for the disabled, please use the book as a checklist.

THE EVERYMAN COMPANION TO THE THEATRE has no illustrations and the entries are so selective that I could bore you with an extensive listing of what Peter Thomson and Gamini Salgado have chosen

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to omit. But, on the contrary, I hereby urge all librarians to put this Companion on all their reference shelves. (It is certainly going into my own working library — defined as books which I can reach at three paces). It is full of goodies written from a strongly personal point of view and all praise to publishers Dent for encouraging this approach.

The fat volume is organised into Theatre and Theatres (covering styles, stagings, companies and the like), Theatre People (potted biogs from Burbage to Bury and Kean to Koltai) and a Theatrical Miscellany that ranges from corpse via green baize and murdered actors to skid-talk. Do you know what skid-talk is? I discovered it on page 402. And I also now know who Hernia Whittlebot was and that F.R. Benson was an expert ponger. There is a chronology from 1513 to 1982 with nearly 200 intermediate datings of comparative developments in Britain, Continental Europe and the USA, plus comprehensive cross-referencing through 58 columns of indexing. While this Everyman Companion may not appeal to those seeking balanced solemnity, it is likely to entertain and instruct those of us who feel that the enjoyment of theatre has perhaps become too much of an over serious, even pompous, matter in recent years.

It was not in mere theatres that variety flourished but in **EMPIRES, HIPPODROMES AND PALACES** — bold names to convey the sumptuous grandeur that was the hallmark of masterbuilder Frank Matcham. Jack Read's new book is a sequence of short pieces on thirty or so of these Matcham houses and the stars who played them.

There is something of a consistent pattern to the life story of Matcham theatres. Each opening was invariably hailed by owners, audience and (especially) the local press as the finest theatre ever built by Matcham or by anyone else. In their golden years they prospered as touring dates for all the great star turns. Their decline, delayed by the war if they had survived that far, was an inevitable consequence of social change. The survivors, often pickled in Bingo until rescued by local authorities or trustees, have become cherished national monuments playing a mixed programme of the performances that are too big for video screens or regional playhouses.

Jack Read's book is a cosy, suitably sentimental look at the Matcham variety theatres, particularly strong in its detailing of their opening and closing moments. I found myself wondering what the future holds for the playhouses of the post-war building boom: will there be a cycle of decline and conversion to disco, followed by rediscovery and restoration?

KINDLY LEAVE THE STAGE takes a much more objective look at Variety. Restricting himself to the period 1919–1960, Roger Wilmut uses scripts and anecdotes to analyse the various types of Act from stand-

up comics through every kind of speciality to nudes and the advent of rock. He considers the influence of films, radio, television and war; but, while seeking to diagnose the nature of star quality, he does not ignore the importance of the 'twenty-five pound acts' in constructing a well-balanced variety bill. Students of administration will be intrigued by the slender management structure which every Sunday shuffled (mostly via Crewe Junction) thousands of self-employed artistes into hundreds of new permutations in time for first-house Monday. These were not packaged tours: each act had to be issued with a separate contract for each week.

I was in the audience during the war and after. Although I never worked in Variety, I was privileged to feed variety comics in pantomime gags during the fifties: their rehearsal methods were a key part of my theatrical education. But then I have always been happiest with staging forms (including opera) where the actors play out front to the audience rather than to each other. The Variety Stage of 1919–1960 was more important than it seemed at the time and Roger Wilmut has captured the essence of it. A valuable book for anyone seeking an entertaining summary of the subject — complete in itself or as a source of interesting leads for more detailed follow-up by the curious.

The tragedians of our theatre's Georgian heyday are well researched. But a theatre as popular as it had become in the early years of the nineteenth century also cherished its comics. The Society for Theatre Research has redressed some of the balance by publishing Jim Davis's account of **JOHN LISTON COMEDIAN**. As a comedian, Liston was fortunate in his face. It was much engraved and the book includes forty two of these contemporary pictorial impressions which indicate the subtle yet positive use he could make of this natural asset in projecting characters. Nothing dustily pedantic about this piece of research: Jim Davis brings Liston alive, setting him in socio-theatrical context to help flesh out our understanding of a great age for actors and audiences.

Gerald Jacobs had an easier research task for his authorized biography of **JUDI DENCH**: his subject, her collaborators and her audiences are still very much alive and active, with the potential to continue delighting us with years of performances yet to come. But recording the story of a live subject is no sinecure — especially in the acting profession where sincerity is an emotion often more easily conveyed on stage than off. However Judi Dench seems to be one of those rarities about whom colleagues have no reservations, personally or professionally. Their love and respect comes over without a trace of sycophancy.

Alas we do not learn much about her personal creative process: it would take an autobiography to reveal her inner agonies. But they are touched upon from time to time

in Gerald Jacobs's book and I do not know whether I am relieved or saddened (I am certainly not surprised) that her creativity continues to be based on hard questioning work — even after nearly thirty years of continuous leading roles. What seems to have eased the creative pain for Judi Dench and for all with whom she has worked, is the ability to laugh — a quality that seems, alas, increasingly rare in today's theatre.

I wonder if my grandchildren will be impressed when I tell them that I worked with Tennessee Williams. The scars that will never completely heal from that week of anguish in the Piccadilly were not made by the playwright, nor indeed were they due to the twice daily consumption of Big Macs which the management supplied in lieu of meal breaks. I have, hitherto, always ascribed the pain of that week to the normal pressures of creative rehearsing being inflamed by an insecure director. However, after reading Donald Spoto's new biography, **THE KINDNESS OF STRANGERS**, I began to wonder if we had not all been the victim of the fatalistic circumstances which seem to have pervaded Tennessee Williams life with an intensity and inevitability on the scale of grand tragedy.

The dramatist's life is well documented. A selective bibliography in this book lists eighty nine references by leading literary commentators, he has long been a favourite subject for learned theses and dissertations, and we have his autobiographical *Memoirs*. Full marks to Donald Spoto, therefore, for now assembling a tale which is as absorbing as a good novel, made all the stronger by our knowledge that it is not mere fiction. The creative process can involve a deep element of self-destruction. This book clarifies that interaction between author, life and theatre which will enable future generations to capture, through Tennessee Williams plays, something of the details of the anguish and dilemmas in the human relationships of our century.

Christmas Pantomime is the only truly indigenous British theatre form. (But have you ever tried explaining panto to someone who has never been to one?). How did this extraordinary entertainment evolve? Gerald Frow has written a new history to accompany a BBC Radio 4 series, using as his title that battlecry of audience participation **"OH YES IT IS"**.

The book's strengths are in the 18th and 19th centuries. Our own times are dealt with rather more perfunctorily: the ability of pantomime's adaptable format to embrace the television star is acknowledged but there is no mention of Freddie Carpenter. However we know about pantomime's development in our own era — and, like previous generations, we do not always like the changes that we see. Panto, like all major institutions, is considered to be in a continual state of decline. Yet it is an ability to survive that is the hallmark of great institutions.

Frow traces this survival from the invasion of the spirit of commedia dell arte into early eighteenth century afterpieces in the patent theatres of Covent Garden and Drury Lane. (It was for the Lane's 1759 panto that Garrick wrote the lyric for 'Hearts of Oak', set by the theatre's musical director William Boyce.) John Rich, The Dibbins, Grimaldi, J.R. Planche, Madame Vestris, August Harris, Dan Leno, George Lacey and John Morley are just some of the stars in an intriguing tale that read well on boxing day. A book to lay down, alongside the port, for future festive seasons.

DuMont Handbuch der BÜHNENBEL-
EUCHTUNG. Max Keller.

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ARTS FOR EVERYONE. Guidance on Provision for Disabled People. Anne Pearson. Carnegie UK Trust & Centre on Environment for the Handicapped, 126 Albert Street London NW1 7NF. £6.00 (paperback) (UK).

THE EVERYMAN COMPANION TO THE THEATRE. Peter Thomson and Gamini Salgado. J.M. Dent & Sons. £15 (UK)

EMPIRES HIPPODROMES & PALACES. Jack Read. The Alderman Press. £12.50 (UK).

KINDLY LEAVE THE STAGE. The Story of Variety 1919-1960. Roger Wilmut. Methuen. £12.50 (UK).

JOHN LISTON COMEDIAN. Jim Davis. The Society for Theatre Research, 77 Kinnerton Street, SW1X 8ED.

JUDI DENCH. A Great Deal of Laughter. An Authorized Biography. Gerald Jacobs. Weidenfeld & Nicolson. £9.95 (UK).

THE KINDNESS OF STRANGERS. The Life of Tennessee Williams. Donald Spoto. The Bodley Head. £12.95 (UK).

"OH, YES IT IS!" A History of Pantomime. Gerald Frow. British Broadcasting Corporation. £12.95 (UK).

British Consultants named in the Design Team for Asolo Center Sarasota, Florida

A team of architects and theatre consultants has been named for the Asolo Center/The Theatre, Inc., a \$10 million dollar theatre and education complex to be built in Sarasota, Fla.

"I am delighted that such an outstanding team of architects and consultants with such a proven track record has been assembled to bring into reality what has up to now been but a dream," said actor Burt Reynolds, who along with Asolo State Theater Executive Director Richard Fallon conceived the idea for the Asolo Center complex. Reynolds personally has pledged \$1 million dollars towards the project.

Selected as the project architect with responsibility for a majority of the design work for the center is R. F. McCann & Company of Seattle, Wash. A team from the firm, headed by Richard F. McCann as project architect, will be involved in the project from the programming and schematic phase, which pinpoints the general requirements for the center, through design, engineering, construction document preparation, construction and the final testing and installation of equipment.

Commented McCann, "This project, with its television capability in combination with the live theater, has a real possibility for opening a new approach to the economics and subsidy of performing arts in America, and can take theater into the

next century. The Asolo Center will make possible the creation and production of new material for American theater, and by the same token it provides an opportunity for playwrights and directors to become known and to try out their ideas."

Theatre Projects Consultants, Ltd., based in New York and London, will act as the theatre consultant, with Richard Pilbrow as the lead consultant. Theatre Projects will advise and collaborate with architects on the design, space planning, equipment needs and numerous other special requirements for the complex. "The incorporation of state of the art television technology into the 900 seat theatre presents a particular challenge" said Richard Pilbrow. "The aim is to produce a theatre which is not only ideal for live audiences but can allow unobtrusive video and television recording of performances. This is an extremely exciting project and Theatre Projects are delighted to have been invited to participate."

Named as the acoustics consultant is the firm Purcell, Noppe & Associates, based in Los Angeles, Calif.

"We will be coordinating our efforts and will assist in establishing criteria for performance to insure optimum conditions for both speech and music," Jack Purcell explained. "The two proposed sizes of the theater are excellent selections from the acoustics standpoint, and for all musical

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performances there will be no need for amplification of the live program source . . . utilizing the natural acoustics of the theater," he added.

The Asolo Center will house the Asolo State Theater, now in its 26th year. The Theatre, Inc., an institute for professional theater and film training, and the Charles MacArthur Center for American Theatre with its library and theater memorabilia. Actress Helen Hayes is the Honorary Chairperson of the MacArthur Center.

Florida State University's graduate conservatory will continue in cooperation with the complex. The new facility will provide high caliber training to aspiring actors, technicians and other trades allied with theater, film and television production. The Asolo will continue its professional theatrical presentations in repertory, while The Theatre, Inc. will feature celebrity performers in premier theatrical presentations.

"This center represents a cultural, educational and economic alliance that is unique in the country," Asolo State Theatre executive director Richard Fallon said. "We will have the opportunity to provide training in the various aspects of theater and film while providing high quality, exciting entertainment to our audiences."

The budget for design and construction of the facility is \$10 million dollars. The Florida Legislature has granted \$5.5 million dollars and Reynolds personally has pledged \$1 million. Local citizens have launched a campaign to raise an additional \$3.5 million dollars of which \$920,000 has been raised to date. Those amounts already raised, plus accrued interest of \$381,292, bring the total dollars to \$7,801,292.00.

The London International Opera Festival

A new and younger audience for opera. That is one of the main aims of the London International Opera Festival, which has its premiere during March and April 1986. The Festival is a celebration of opera: opera in the classical tradition with the Royal Opera and the English National Opera, opera through recitals at the Wigmore Hall, opera through films and discussion at the National Film Theatre, and generally in the streets and restaurants around Covent Garden and its Piazza.

The Festival will feature some of the world's leading singers, including Monserrat Caballé, Marilyn Horne, June Anderson and Samuel Ramey. There will be a concert by the accomplished British singers, Cathryn Pope and Arthur Davies, and the open air events of the Festival feature hundreds of young people, who have won acclaim for their joyful and professional approach to opera.

Opera is an area of the Arts which has often been viewed as only relevant to a minority audience, but recently that audience has broadened, and it is the intention of the Festival to bring an even wider range of people to it, by combining the truly popular with the more esoteric, to increase enjoyment and awareness across a variety of works. By presenting events at the Royal Opera House, in the Piazza at Covent

Garden, at the London Coliseum, at the National Theatre, at the National Film Theatre and the Wigmore Hall, and in the daily meeting places around the area a great number of people, many of whom would not perhaps consider opera as part of their interests, will be brought to it as a new and young audience. The Festival also plans to present operas which the opera-going public have made clear they wish to see but which have rarely been produced in London because of cost and are in fact usually only performed under festival conditions.

The Festival is produced by David Buchler and Lionel Rosenblatt. David Buchler is a partner in the accountancy firm, Arthur Andersen and Co., and Lionel Rosenblatt is a partner in a firm of City solicitors. The Director is Evvy Edwards, who was formerly Arts Director at Sutton Place. Their passionate interest in opera and a desire to bring to it a new and younger audience made them put their heads together to work out a way to fulfil their dream.

The London International Opera Festival is the result of their vision and endeavours and they have been greatly encouraged by the support of the Festival's sponsors, Hillsdown Holdings plc, and by a generous award under the Minister for the Arts' Business Sponsorship Incentive Scheme, which is administered by the Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts.

One of the most exciting aspects of the Festival is a Youth Subscription scheme. The London International Opera Festival has initiated and set up a subscription scheme in conjunction with the Royal Opera House, the English National Opera, the Wigmore Hall and the National Film Theatre by which anyone under the age of 30 can buy good seats at events at those venues for £23. This represents a saving of approximately 50 per cent. on normal ticket prices and it is the first time that there has been such a scheme involving these four venues.

Many Festival events will be completely free of charge. The first of these is "Scenario", an exhibition of set designs in the Olivier Theatre foyer which opens the Festival. Details are on page 8.

The Piazza at Covent Garden is the stage for several other events which the public will be able to enjoy free of charge. Notable among these is the full length production by Prince William School, Oundle, of "The Bartered Bride", performed in costume by 200 children from the school. An interesting comparison to their performance can be made four days later when Smetana's opera is staged by the ENO at the London Coliseum.

Children of all ages will love the world premiere of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. This is another free Piazza events which has been specially commissioned for the Festival and is pure street opera.

Many young people will be taking their Easter holidays during the Festival and special events have been arranged for them at the Royal Opera House and at the National Theatre. At a very low cost they will have the opportunity to go backstage,

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attend rehearsals, watch craftsmen at work and hear a number of interesting talks and lectures.

The Festival is to be an annual event. The Royal Opera House has given a commitment to participate in future years and discussions are already taking place with it and other organisations for the 1987 programme. The foundation of the Festival will have been established in 1986 from which will be developed a Festival widening in the nature of operatic events, their venues and, most importantly, the audience brought to opera.

ABTT's Weekend Course on Sound in Entertainment

Every artist, agent and manager has a horror story about the sound in a theatre, hall or club where they were at the mercy of the local facilities.

Despite the inevitable exaggeration that creeps into these travellers' tales there is no doubt that with the pace of development many halls are unaware of how to get the best out of their equipment and unsure of what improvements would really show the most benefit.

The Association of British Theatre Technicians is, therefore, launching a weekend course on Sound In Entertainment to take place at the Barbican Centre, City of London on Saturday & Sunday March 1st and 2nd 1986.

The course will take the form of small groups each looking at four areas in turn — microphones; mixers; the use (and abuse) of signal processors; loudspeakers and acoustics. This will allow the maximum time for individuals to get 'hands-on' experience on the equipment and discuss particular problems they have encountered with the tutors. The Course will have the use of the facilities at the Barbican, including the main concert hall.

Participants are expected to be in-service technicians, with some experience of working concerts or musicals. Course fees are £95 for non-members of the ABTT and £75 for members.

Further details from the ABTT at 4 Great Pulteney Street, London W1R 3DF. Telephone 01 434 3901.

Josef Svoboda Master Class

JENNY PULLAR

Josef Svoboda is a truly remarkable man, and without doubt a genius. At 65 he exudes an amazing charisma and energy. He still works 7 days a week, but has a bit of a holiday every year for 3 weeks taking a Master Class in Scenography at Banff School of Fine Arts in Canada. He appears to have reached a stage where he is very interested in teaching what he has learned — in passing it on to the next generation — and he puts out a lot of energy in his class. I was fortunate enough to receive a QEII Arts Council of New Zealand grant which enabled me to attend this year. Meeting Svoboda and studying under him was a fantastic experience, though at times it also had certain similarities to being put through a mincer. It was exhilarating, frustrating and inspiring.

It was Svoboda's philosophy of design which I found most interesting. He is into Approach, rather than style (though his designs are very stylish) and he spoke a lot on the education of a designer, and how to work at being good.

Course Structure

There were 12 people in the class, 7 of whom were University Lecturers from Theatre Departments (from places like Waco, Texas)! Fellow New Zealander Peter Bartlett also attended, as did a Czechoslovakian Town Planner, who found himself playing an important role as translator in some discussions. Svoboda spoke reasonably good English — his 7th language. The days were structured with a 2-hour lecture in the mornings where Svoboda spoke of his philosophies and showed numerous examples of his work. This was followed by 'consultation' which was the ordeal of the day. Everyone without exception had their work rubbishised virtually every day, and phrases like 'more dramatique' and 'completely wrong' abounded. It was fascinating, however, to watch Svoboda working. He would extract a very simple idea from a design, rework it and say 'this is how it should be'. The rest of the day and into the early hours of the morning were spent working on our designs and trying to come up with something which would please the Master (impossible).

There was also a daily 2-hour life drawing class — alternating between a female and a very cheeky male nude. This was a lot of fun, and I was amazed at what hopeless drawers most of the University Lecturers were. Our first 1-day project was to build a tower using one piece of paper. We then worked on Sophocles' 'Oedipus Rex', followed by a choice between Puccini's 'Tosca' or Wagner's 'Flying Dutchman'.

The Man and his Approach

SIMPLE and CHEAP is Josef Svoboda's

philosophy of design, though if you talk to anyone who has helped put a production together for him they would probably dispute this. It is true that he does always try to find one simple form or scenic form or scenic element to make all possibilities. It's just the reality of getting it up and working may not be simple or cheap. We were always being told to make our proposals MORE DRAMATIC. If you're going to make mistakes make BIG mistakes.

Svoboda says

- * You must think in SPACE.
- * Find which INFORMATION is important — the atmosphere.
- * Find the concept of the play in FORM — the Philosophy or Drama in space.
- * Make sense or LOGIC of a story and extract a few or just one simple idea.
- * Design for today's audience — 1985 — whatever period the play is set in.
- * Ideas, not technology, are important.
- * Suggestion is stronger than illusion.
- * Lights and set the same thing, also costume.
- * Think what is happening in the material on a molecular level — know your materials.
- * Smooth changes — as part of the choreography.
- * Good designer is half director and vice versa.
- * Designer equal partner to director (ideally)!
- * It's like an orchestra — designer must be a soloist, but silence just as important.
- * Architect, Designer or Artist is a Philosopher first.

Svoboda has designed over 600 new productions and he 'knows anything that is possible'. He believes that the design for an Opera or Musical (set, lights and costume) should take one person one week — you just have to THINK what you are doing.

Svoboda is not interested in Scenography. Nature and Life are his biggest inspiration. He certainly doesn't go to the theatre very much, and would rather go to a good Fellini on a Friday night. Banff is the only place he normally teaches Scenography. In Prague he has an Architecture school. He has designed a theatre which can change from Proscenium to Arena in 15 minutes, and this can happen during a play.

Nobody escapes from Svoboda's critical

eye. He thinks Picasso was a genius but why have a whole 5 years on a blue period? Frank Lloyd Wright was a great designer, Falling Waters is wonderful, but why not draw his trees as in nature on his plans?

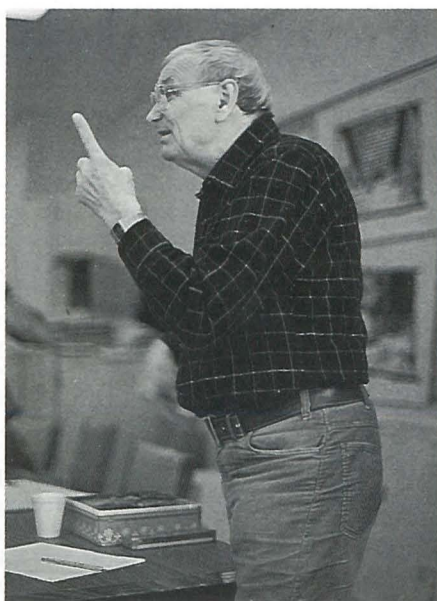
Josef Svoboda has a delightful sense of humour and told us many stories of his eventful life. A truly charming man.

Examples of his Design

Svoboda showed us many slides and explained in detail the workings and ideas behind many of his designs. I will only attempt to spotlight a very few ideas. Many people will have heard of his design for the Czech Pavilion at Expo '67 in Montreal, or his designs for the "Amadeus" movie. If you want more detail buy the book (if you haven't already) or take the course.

Major elements which often appear in his designs are: steps, mirrors, projection and sophisticated engineering (moving parts):

- * He thinks nothing of a 3-ton mesh hung over the stage.
- * Maximum performing rake is 20 degrees — provided your actors wear special shoes.
- * Scenery — tables, chairs etc. are set up on a black cloth which can be pulled off from the wings for a smooth change.
- * Screens without Projection must be Art.
- * Svoboda has been known to use 6,000 cotton strings covering the whole stage which were then projected onto.
- * He has numerous methods for creating miracles — people passing through sets and screens. One is fabric shingles on a curved frame or a carefully designed slashing of a cyclorama made of a material with a good static memory (think about it).
- * One very stealable idea is his technique for getting a wrinkleless cyc. cloth: made out of sections of fabric with slightly curved sides so as to be a little narrower at the bottom than at the top. The weight of the cloth makes it hang out smoothly. (Careful joining techniques involved).
- * Mirrors, which can be concave or convex for larger or smaller reflections. Done using Mylar and involving bellows to fill or empty the space behind.
- * Then of course there's the table tops (originally a staircase) which flip for an instant banquet setting.
- * Costumes for Opera (static) with different fabric front and back for reflection and absorption properties.
- * The only secret he wouldn't tell us was how he achieved in a produc-



Joseph Svoboda, banff, 1985.

tion some people having black shadows and some white. The above is a hint (I think).

Probably Svoboda's finest design, in his own words 'perfection achieved' would be Wagner's "The Ring" at Covent Garden (there's a book about it). The main scenic element is a large platform with one central support which can raise to 3.5m above the stage, or lower to 3m below in the large pit they have at Covent Garden. It can also tilt in any direction up to 45 degrees (computer controlled) and automatically forms steps when tilted past 20 degrees. It has a wooden surface on top and mirror underneath. With this instrument he could truly create anything.

Lighting

Lighting as such was not something Svoboda talked about a lot. Projection, however, often plays a major role in his designs and he sometimes lights a production entirely with slide and film projection. Using this method you can get wonderful colour variations not possible by conventional means. In fact the element of colour is normally only added by using projection in his designs. There are certain key phrases Svoboda uses which help to define his lighting techniques.

- * Contra light otherwise known as back light. Open white contra light, and lots of it, is Svoboda's trade mark in Lighting Design and often a major lighting element.
- * Parasite light — spill, flare around a spot and bounce of reflected light. Control of parasite light is critical to Svoboda's lighting methods, particularly where projection is involved. He calculates all light intensities and optics precisely. It is necessary to know the reflective and absorptive properties of all surfaces and think on a molecular level.

* Light Architecture: Light curtains are all the rage in England and Europe, but Svoboda did it first and has his own unique methods. He uses two rows of close-packed lights with very expensive special lenses to get a true parallel beam. The lights are in a narrow pit, and there are mirrors in the grid to reflect the light back so that there is no parasite light. He then uses a fine water vapour sprayed through an electrostatic machine to give all droplets a positive charge so that they will remain suspended in the air. To clear the air the electrostatic filter is changed to negative, the droplets join and fall (elementary physics)! Light curtains are used in conjunction with contra light, which doesn't show up too much (elementary optics)!

* Projection. Light intensity is a matter of relations and contrast. Because projection is generally at low levels it should be used in conjunction with velvet cloth covered sets (to absorb light) and special make-up to reflect light. Svoboda has a collection of over 100,000 slides, many of them photos of paintings he has done (500mm × 350mm). He also makes slides by scratching on film or glass using dentists' tools. Grey is the best colour for projection screens. Svoboda uses screens made of net sprayed on the back with black velvet fibres using an electrostatic process so all the hairs are vertical. This means that the contra light is absorbed by the back of the screen (controlling parasitic light) but still shines through the holes to light the actor. This type of thinking (optics) can extend to mirrors sprayed with small particles for diffusion and reflection.

Examples of Lighting Designs

- * An electric candle with a radio-controlled dimmer so that when the actor walks the candle dims as it would naturally — it's the little details that count.
- * 62kW of front light focussed on one small screen. When it is brought up it is so bright the audience is momentarily blinded; the screen flips and the actor disappears but he appears to have just burnt up.
- * In a production of "Carmen" Svoboda used 600kW of open white light (all on together). The set was a long-haired black carpet hung to form a huge valley. The light was so bright that the carpet looked white from the auditorium. The air conditioning had to be used at maximum, and Svoboda later used heat-absorbing glass in the lenses.

'You must know the ABC'

Drawing is the language of the Scenographer. To DRAW EVERY DAY was probably Svoboda's strongest message to us. Drawings do not have to be 'painting'; rather direct your energy to function.

'Draw with love or like a scientist'
'Try to understand the stone . . . the logic of the flower'

Svoboda believes that Architecture is the best training for the Scenographer. If you're any good at Architecture you'll learn about the theatre in two weeks. In Architecture you learn about everything. To just learn about the theatre is not enough, and means your only learning half-way. Svoboda is very much a Renaissance Man, and believes in a general education and knowledge in order to be a Designer. For him Leonardo Da Vinci and Michelangelo were the great examples.

The ABC of Scenography:

- * Drawing (as a tool, not an Artist).
- * Philosophy.
- * Physics.
- * Music (to read and play).
- * Literature.
- * Art History (and Architecture).
- * Optics.
- * Engineering.
- * Sociology.
- * Travel (to see original Art, Architecture and Nature, and to meet the great masters).
- * Design.

To Conclude

Svoboda is a Master of his Art and the Banff course offers a unique opportunity to meet and study with him. Like all truly creative people he can be arrogant and impatient of people less talented than himself. Nevertheless I would absolutely recommend taking the course now while it is still available. It's worth going to Banff just for the environment — a paradise in the Rocky Mountains, and there is an Arts Festival happening at the school at the same time. They also have costume and stage design classes with different visiting artists. It's not so hard as all that to get in; don't be put off if you don't have a University Degree as stipulated in the handbook. In actual fact they have a shortage of adequate applicants and last year had to be cancelled! Write to The Banff Center Box 1020 Banff, Alberta TOL OCO Canada.

A word of warning — don't be too exhausted when you arrive, because you certainly will be when you leave!

We are indebted to the New Zealand Association of Theatre Technicians for permission to reprint Jenny Pullar's article which appeared in the December number of "Profile". Jenny Pullar is a New Zealand lighting designer at present on a world theatre study tour.

THEATRIC EPHEMERA IN PARIS

FRANCIS REID

In terms of both numbers and diversity, Paris must be a prime nominee for the world's most museum conscious city. Yet, despite the glories of the French theatre tradition, there is no centralised display of highlights celebrating the key moments of national theatre history. Specialist researchers have a wealth of centrally collected material, but tourists with theatric inclinations must seek their images and ephemera by means of a journey where the joys of discovery compensate for the frustrations of inadequate signposting.

Perhaps there will be a Paris Theatre Museum (national or municipal) before long. It would be a logical step in the cultural expansion which is revitalising the Marais district whose Rue des Francs Bourgeois is becoming a street of museums linking the Beaubourg arts centre of Pompidou to the new Bastille opera houses of Mitterand. A theatre museum would seem to have become more of a possibility (even an inevitability) as a result of the creation in 1976 of a Department of Performing Arts within the Arsenal Library.

The core of the Department of Performing Arts collections is the Auguste Rondel archive, constituted in 1895 and given to the State in 1925. Rondel (1858–1934) was interested in all the performing arts and their related architecture, whether in France or abroad, and he strove to assemble material having historic, documentary or artistic value: manuscripts, autographs, printed works, rare editions, periodicals, prints, posters, scene and costume designs, programmes, technical drawings and press clippings. This Rondel collection includes (with numbers of units in brackets): Drama French (86,000) and foreign (20,130), Music Theatre (8,000), Dance (4,000), Marionettes (500), Music Hall (2,500), Circus (500), History of theatres and actors (11,420), Architecture and Design (1,500), Festivals (4,900), Film (18,000) and Periodicals (4,725).

Twentieth Century material includes:

for Jacques Copeau

- * Manuscripts of his works, adaptations, critical essays and lectures.
- * The archival records of the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier and its school, comprising log books, administrative documents, plans and designs.

for Louis Jouvet

- * Authors manuscripts, by, eg, Jean Giraudoux, Jules Romains, Marcel Archard.
- * Annotated working scripts.
- * Correspondence with playwrights, actors and designers.
- * Original designs of the scenery and

costumes for all the productions of his company, as well as a series of photographs for each performance.

- * A complete set of programmes, posters and press clippings.
- * The theatre music recorded for each performance.
- * His working library of 2,000 books, particularly rich in theatre architecture.

for Charles Dullin

- * Costumes and 150 designs.
- * Masks created under the direction of Cocteau and d'Adam.
- * Photographs, press articles and manuscripts.

for Gaston Baty

- * Manuscripts or transcripts of most of his directorial projects, including files of preparatory studies.
- * Original scene and costume designs for his dramatic and marionette presentations.
- * Correspondence with playwrights and translators.
- * A series of photographs of the scenery, programmes and posters, and a set of newspaper articles for each presentation.

for Edward Gordon Craig

- * Scene designs
- * Autographed manuscripts, preliminary sketches, directorial notes, manuscripts of books and articles.



Chinese Shadow Puppets at the Musée Kwok On

* Correspondence with the leading personalities of the theatre and the arts during the first half of the century.

* 8,000 volumes in Italian, French and English, frequently annotated.

* Correspondence, pictorial sources and records relating to the Mask magazine.

* Javanese shadow puppets, and Japanese, Javanese and African masks.

Other personal collections include that of Andre Barsacq (comprising dossiers relating to the creation of works by Anouilh, Ayme, Billetdoux, Obaldia, Sagan and Russians from Gogol to Maiakowski; together with posters, photographs, plans for scenery, regie books, collections of newspaper cuttings, costumes and props, etc). Theatre archives include those of the *Odéon* (play texts, and the directorial con-

cepts in written form for productions under the Renaud-Barrault management), the *Variétés* (plays, scores and set models), the *T.N.P.* (films, colour slides and costumes) and the *Théâtre des Nations* (programmes, posters, press notices, and a very rich collection of photographs of the great international seasons of 1954–65).

There is a strong mime collection and one on shadow theatre. Music Hall material includes the collection of Yvette Guilbert and Gustave Frejaville, while circus is represented by the former private museum built up by the performer Sandry Geo. There is the Clemancon (France's answer to Strand Electric) archive of technical drawings and blueprints of the electric installations for spectacular theatre and son et lumière performances. Other media

include film, radio and TV collections, while the spirit of the turn of the century is evoked by

* 486 watercolours by Draner on the theme of exaggeration in the theatre of the nineteenth century.

* 600 sketches of actors drawn by Luis Eduardo de la Rocha during their performance.

* 1,800 designs and caricatures executed between 1905 and 1914 by Yves Marevery.

Meanwhile the Department of Performing Arts carries on collecting on the scale of 40,000 press clippings and 8,000 photographs per year; and by a 1981 agreement with the Union of Scene Designers, their original designs are photographed, producing 15,000 colour slides in the first three years.

The only major groups missing from the Department's collections seem to be the two venerable Parisian institutions — the *Comédie Française* and the *Opéra* — who maintain their own archives. The *Musée de l'Opéra's* public display was described in Cue 10 but at the turn of this year a decaying hand-written notice declined visitations. However the Opera House itself has become more accessible: it has subscribed to that very slow international realisation that many theatre buildings can be regarded as architectural monuments which benefit from being explored when unoccupied by their audiences, just as churches have long been recognised as continuing to command attention in the absence of their congregations. In both church and theatre the fabric engages the mind with its form and decoration — and the soul with its cumulative witness of events.

So one may now ascend, solo, the grand staircase and contemplate the empty auditorium from the stage boxes or a pair nearer centre. A sombre, small but not intimate, house: its majestically ancient chairs, tired gilding, dull red facings and mature brown paint provide a perfect restraining frame for the chiaroscuro of the ceiling which Chagall painted in 1964 to complement the great chandelier. Without a performance crowd, it is easier to examine the extravagances of the foyers — my personal prime delight being the group of statues which, with their coils and magnets, pay homage to the electricity that was a promising infant when the opera was opened in 1875. The christmas season brought an exhibition of children's toys and games to complement the performances of *Nutcracker*, and the staircase wore its discreet seasonal paper-chains with somewhat self-conscious dignity. Will the new *Opéra* at the Bastille have such character?

There is one section of the Department of Performing Arts with a permanent display. This is the KWOK ON collection of the performing arts in Asia. The collection is named after the benefactor whose material was donated to the University of Paris in 1971 and deposited with the department in 1977. An exposition of the most important pieces of the collection and a documentation centre for study has been set up at 41 Rue



Indian Marionettes at the Musee Kwok On



Commedia dell'Art figures in a room of theatre ephemera and paintings at the Musee Carnavalet.

des Francs Bourgeois in the heart of the restored Marais district. The material is organised according to the three performing arts in Asia: the theatre of live actors, the puppet theatre and the shadow theatre. Within these categories may be found costumes, masks, libretti, paintings, musical instruments, props and porcelain figurines.

Currently, until June, as part of the Paris *Année de L'Inde* which is featuring all aspects of Indian culture, the Kwok On Museum has mounted a special exhibition *Fetes et Theatres Indien*. The core of this exhibition is, rightly, the actor — whether in the form of dancer or marionette. Dancer's costumes are grouped in tableaux of figures with masks for their heads. As make-up is heavily formalised into a style that is superficially mask-like (although allowing subtleties of facial expression), this is an appropriate and attractive method of display ... particularly in the case of the Kathalki

and there are photographs of the very long daily process of their elaborate facial make-up. A historical sequence illustrating Indian theatre buildings shows the conventional western theatres of the colonial period, such as the 1840 'Theatre des Britannique a Calcutta', giving way to simple, more appropriate, spaces such as the 'Theatre Moderne de Bengal'.

A group of Marionettes from Yakshagana are fierce and godlike whereas some from Rajasthan are almost human. Others, lacking that flavour of the grotesque that we associate with most forms of puppetry, are so natural that, standing about a metre high, must surely be mistaken for real actors under the conditions of some performance scales.

Music instrument displays include the traditional wind and strings, plus an exotic gramophone — its original hand-wound acoustic being supplemented by a compact loud-hailer of the tannoy type. (Cynics will

reflect that in all cultures the move to electronic sound has given volume priority over quality!)

A little further along the Rue des Francs Bourgeois, the Musee Carnavalet holds a miniature treat for theatric tourists. A single room has a theatre bias in its furnishings. This is not emphasised — one just gradually realises that the paintings in the room are all of theatrical subjects and on the mantelpiece there is a splendid set of wooden figures of stars of the commedia dell arte — Pantaloon, Arlequin, Brighella and Le Docteur.

But then that is Paris — in almost every museum or gallery the theatric tourist will suddenly come upon an item to excite or delight. However, let us hope that the Department of Performing Arts in the not too fullness of time will be able to offer us an overview display into which we can relate the fragments that we discover elsewhere in this theatric city.

PRODUCT NEWS

New Polarising Filter

Until recently polarising filters have been used solely on the camera lens to reduce glare from smooth reflective surfaces. Now Roscolab Limited have introduced a Linear Polarising Filter to supplement their Cinegel light control range.

The large sheet size makes it possible to use on-light, allowing 'cross-polarisation' techniques to be used in conjunction with a polariser on the lens. The Rosco Polarising Filter also reduces glare in colour photography, giving richer colour saturation.

The filters, which are formed from a special .006" copolymer base, which gives a more durable surface than conventional Triacetate, are available in 19" x 20" sheets or 19" x 5' rolls.

Technical information and prices available from Roscolab Limited, 69-71 Upper Ground, London SE1 9PQ, telephone 01-633 9220.

Four New Lighting Filters

Smooth, even lighting of a backcloth or cyclorama is often difficult to achieve with conventional stage lighting, especially when the units are placed too close to the cyc, or too far apart, giving a 'scalloped' effect. Rosco's new series of Supergel filters overcome this problem by combining Rosco Tough Silk with a colour into one filter.

Tough Silk has the effect of spreading the light either laterally or vertically to smooth out the light distribution, thus minimising the scallop effect. The four filters comprise three specially selected high transmission primaries, Red, Blue and Green, plus an Amber. All are part of the Supergel range, which are designed to operate on hot lights. With increasing international concern about the potential fire hazard of using polyester filters in places of entertainment, Supergel, a polycarbonate body-coloured filter, is designed to comply with the latest and

toughest flame test requirements of public authorities.

New Fog Machine From Rosco

The PRO 1000 is a miniaturised version of the PRO 3000, Rosco's super high-output generator introduced last year.

The reduced size has been achieved by eliminating the internal fluid reservoir and connecting an intake hose to an external fog fluid container. The external tank gives the added advantage that continuous fog can be generated indefinitely, and as with the other Rosco fog machines, the PRO 1000 comes complete with a remote control station.

The PRO 1000 is designed for use with the Academy Award winning Rosco fluid, which is now also available in a scented range for club work.

A free leaflet on the complete range of Rosco fog machines is available from Roscolab Limited, 69-71 Upper Ground, London SE1 9PQ, telephone 01-633 9220.

ABTT Trade Show 86

Theatrical Trading Ltd, on behalf of the Association of British Theatre Technicians, will be presenting ABTT TRADE SHOW 86, the eighth annual exhibition of equipment, services and supplies for the entertainment industry, at the Riverside Studios, Hammersmith, London W6, from 20-22 March 1986. Open Thursday 20 March 10.00—18.00, Friday 21 March 10.00—20.00, Saturday 22 March 10.00—15.00.

Over 50 manufacturers, suppliers and craftsmen will be showing their products, both new and well established, including lighting equipment and accessories of all kinds, sound and communication equipment, scenic paints and materials, scenery fittings and hardware, special effects, props and prop making, stage flooring, costume fabrics, make-up, drapes and tracks and much more.

ABTT Silver Jubilee Conference

To mark the ABTT's twenty-fifth anniversary, Theatrical Trading Ltd will also be presenting a Conference which will run concurrently with the first two days of the Trade Show. Under the title PRESENTATION 2010 this Conference will seek to examine likely technical developments for the entertainment industry over the next twenty-five years.

The past twenty-five years since the ABTT was founded have seen a revolution. The development of lighting and sound equipment, the availability of new materials, the application of mechanical engineering techniques, the building of new venues and the refurbishment of old have created change. The period has also seen the application of new techniques not only to traditional performance but to a host of other activities such as industrial theatre, sporting events, conferences, exhibitions and museum presentation. In an age where technological development appears to move at ever increasing speed, where will the techniques be by the year 2010?

Conference sessions will be devoted to: Designing for Performance; Lighting the Show; Production Engineering; Industrial Presentation; Sound Developments; Safety and Constraints; Building for the Future; Chairman's Review. The event will be chaired by Richard Pilbrow and the speakers will include Ralph Koltai, David Hersey, Peter Kemp, Michael Wilson, Peter Mapp and Nicholas Thompson.

The Conference will be held at Novotel, Hammersmith, London W6, from 13.00—17.30 on Thursday 20 March and from 9.45—17.30 on Friday 21 March. A display and demonstration of RITA (Real Time Ticketing and Administration) developed by British Telecom in association with the Royal Shakespeare Company will be available in an adjacent room.

Further details and application forms are available from: Mrs Pam Lane, Barbican Centre, London EC2Y 8DS. Tel: 01-434 3901.

Basildon Points The Way

Francis Reid looks at RHWL's plans for a new
Towngate Theatre

This is an important time for theatre architecture. With the post-war building boom over, we have a few quiet years in which to think through the nature of housing for the arts in the next century — when mankind will be faced with a choice of renaissance or holocaust. In these circumstances it is particularly interesting that recent and projected theatres are showing evidence of fundamental re-evaluation of the nature of theatre experience, together with exploration of the possibilities of increased flexibility becoming available through new technology.

The news from Basildon is particularly encouraging in this respect. Work is about to start on a new Towngate to replace the present 1968 building. A second generation theatre for a post-war new town: is that not a symbol of hope?

Building starts in the spring and is scheduled for completion in two years. Meanwhile performance can continue to flourish in Basildon: the new theatre is across the road from the old. I have been talking to the architects (RHWL) and the clients (Basildon Council). I like what I hear them say and I like what I see in their plans.

The Basildon requirement is simple (in its complexity): their theatre must be able to encompass dance, opera, drama and music of every genre plus banquets, exhibitions and spectator sports such as boxing and snooker. Such versatility was possible when theatres were fitted out by carpenters and labour was cheap, but became inadvisable

with fibrous plaster and downright impossible with steel and concrete. Ingenuity was put to work but the world is littered with adaptable theatres which are so complex and labour intensive to adapt that they have settled down into whichever format represents the least uneasy of their compromises.

Then came a technological breakthrough: the air castor which allows chunks of the auditorium to be floated on an air cushion (like hovercraft) and rearranged with minimum effort by a minimum labour force. Northampton's Derngate demonstrated the possibility and now the same architects are refining the technique for Basildon.

The new theatre will have two auditoria: a main house seating up to 550 and a studio space for 200. Their foyers interconnect and they are linked backstage. The studio is a neutral box but I trust that Basildon's concept of neutrality does not include black painting.

The main auditorium harks back to an age when theatres were chummy places: Basildon's proposed pit, boxes and gallery have strong resonances of Bury St Edmunds. The stalls seating wagons can be moved via their integral air castors and a central elevator to basement parking 'garages', leaving a flat auditorium floor. The three-level box sections at the proscenium zone can be air-floated to vary the stage opening for a 13.5m concert width to a 9.5m framing for drama. The forestage elevator offers a 40 musician pit option. The

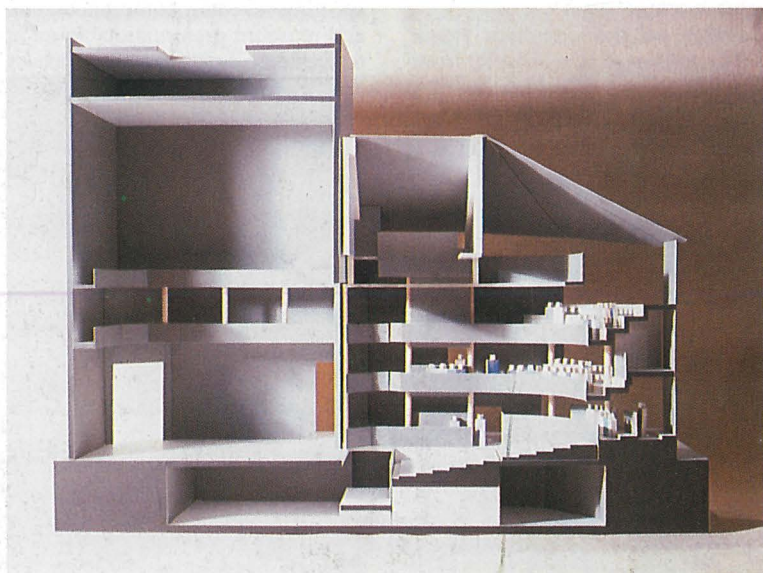
stage (19.2m × 13.5m) includes a sprung dance floor of 12m × 12m. In conventional stage formats the fly tower provides counterweighted flying, smoke venting and a safety curtain. For flat floor uses and orchestral concerts, this fly tower may be closed off by heavy flown ceiling sections. Acoustic adjustments are by tracked curtaining.

All this is proven technology: it works at Derngate and it can be fine tuned here. Basildon is all set to acquire a flexible space in which its citizenry can assemble for virtually every known indoor entertainment, most indoor spectator sports and some participating sports like eating and dancing. Plus many commercial activities from car launches to antique fairs. Indeed the flexibility will be such that the future can be met by building new bits of furniture and floating them around. And — a last word on this technology for those who have not sat in Derngate — there is nothing insubstantial about an air castored unit: when the air is switched off and the unit settles, it does so as firm as a permanent structure.

So do I have any reservations? Yes, of course I do! There are a number of matters which the RHWL team have to get right within the overall format. My checklist when I go to see the finished building will include:

- (1) Will the outside have the right mix of dignity and come hither?
- (2) Will the foyers welcome and impress, yet still allow a moment of excitement as one crosses the threshold into the auditorium?
- (3) Will the proscenium zone be equally convincing in all its arrangements?
- (4) Will the auditorium decorations be entrusted to the brush techniques of the scene painter?
- (5) Will the auditorium lighting combine a welcoming brightness with a subtle chiaroscuro? (Perhaps they will commission a sculptor to rediscover the chandelier in 1990 terms?)
- (6) Will the overall decorative approach certainly avoid municipal bland and, if possible, not err on the side of good taste?

GOOD LUCK!



Model of Auditorium section.

TOWNGATE THEATRE BASILDON

Client — Basildon District Council
Architects and Theatre Planning — RHWL
Structural and Services Engineers — Ove Arup and Partners
Quantity Surveyors — Widnell and Trollope
Theatre Equipment Consultants — Technical Planning Limited

Construction Costs — £6.26 million
To start on site March, 1986
Contract to run for 2 years.