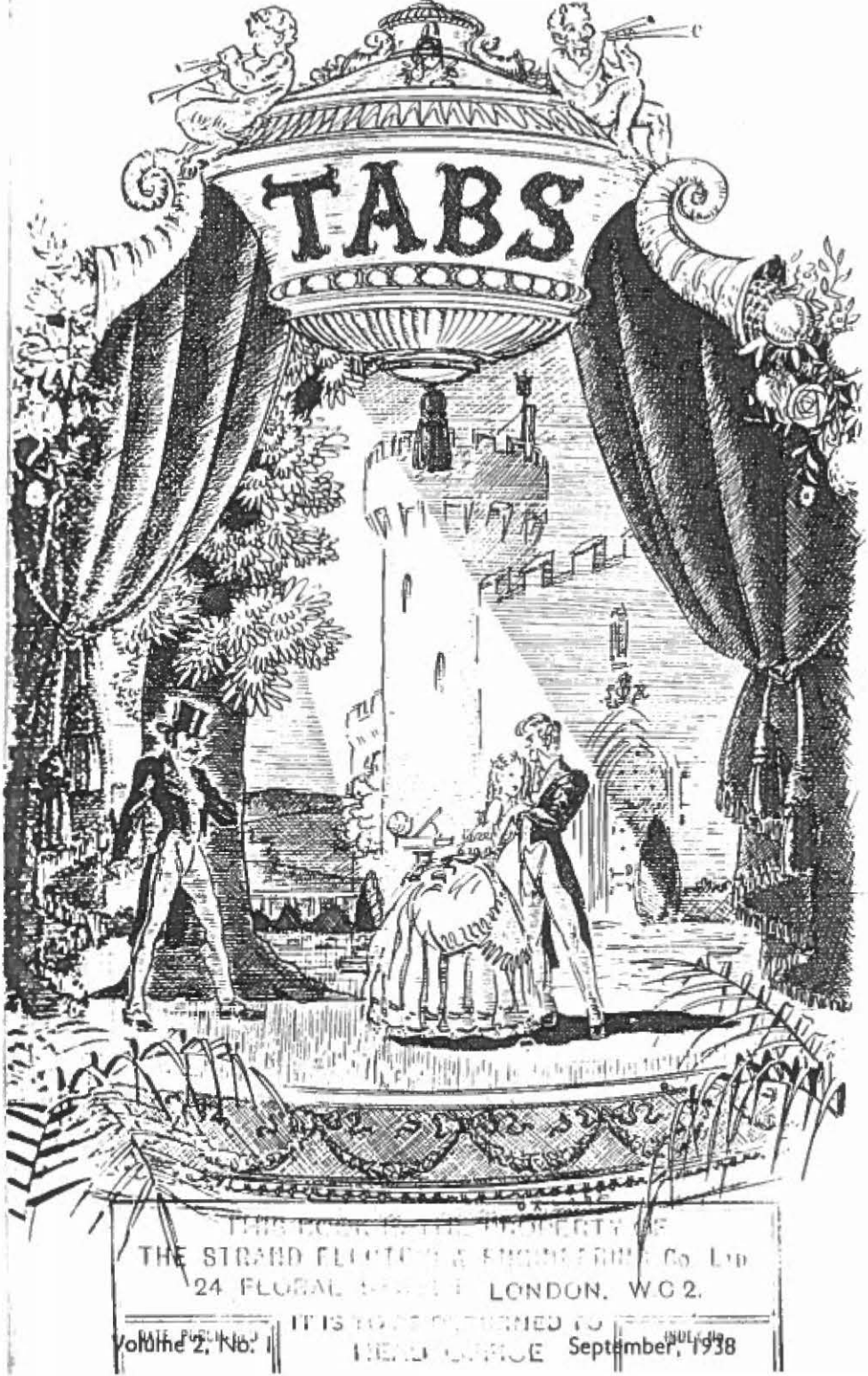


Volume 2, No. 1 September, 1938

TABS

ISSUED BY THE STRAND ELECTRIC COMPANY
IN THE INTERESTS OF THE AMATEUR THEATRE

Editorial

ON WITH THE MOTLEY

BY the time this reaches our readers the holiday period will be over and thoughts turning once more to the forthcoming Dramatic season.

Life has been no holiday for us this summer as we have, for a period of five months or so, been " carrying on " to the accompaniment of the dirt, noise and general inconvenience and discomfort of builders, plasterers, carpenters, painters, plumbers, and other trades.

As a result we are now housed in larger and more congenial office premises, and in a very short time now will also be in occupation of our new Demonstration Theatre and Showrooms.

What used to be our front door is now virtually our back door, and whereas our new frontage and main entrance is now at 29 King Street, anyone who is not sure of his whereabouts can always enter the premises by the old Floral Street door, on their first visit.

We extend a cordial welcome to all of our friends to visit our new home, where we hope to be able not only to maintain, but to improve our previous service. We are also looking forward to seeing you at Leeds in September, see page 19 for details.

MODEL STAGE LIGHTING

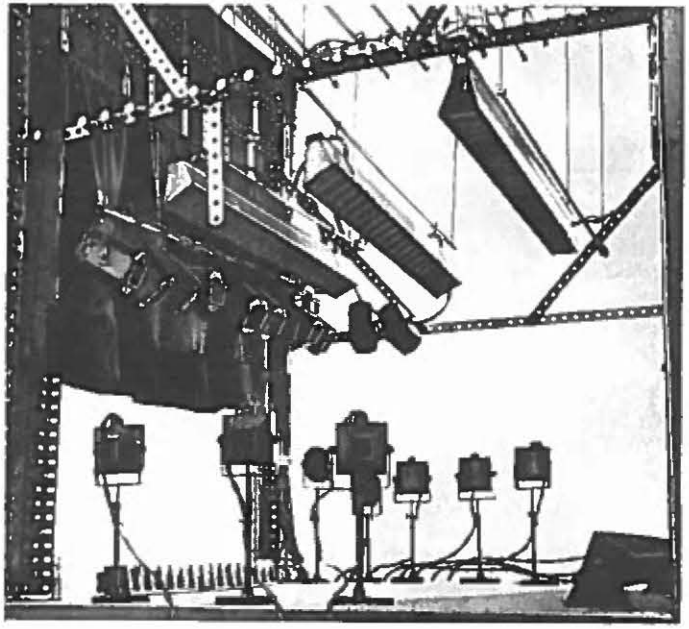
THERE is a growing tendency among Producers, Scenery Designers and Schools to try out their ideas in model form before embarking on the actual building of full-size stage settings.

The making of model settings is, of course, a precaution against mistakes which is taken by professional and amateur alike, but whereas the professional has usually sufficient experience to visualise the effect of his lighting, the amateur has not always this advantage, and for societies who take their stage-craft seriously, model lighting can be a great help.

It is naturally somewhat expensive considering its size, but when it is appreciated that it may save scrapping several pieces of scenery or repainting or reconstructing at the last moment, it may save its own cost in a single production and, of course, once acquired, it can be used indefinitely for hundreds of subsequent shows.

It is this use of model equipment for which Strand Electric cater, although we have also produced another type of model equipment which could be described as somewhat of a luxury.

The difference between the two types is one of practicability, in that whilst models can be produced purely to fit in a scale stage looking exactly like their full-sized counterparts, these are often not suited at all to the working out of a lighting scheme in miniature, since the show equipment must be built exactly to scale which, in most cases, precludes a performance scaled to that of its original.



This scale model stage is the property of Miss Esmé Church and is constructed mainly of Meccano, using Strand model stage lighting equipment.

For practical purposes the models need not be perfect to look at, but they must give a scale performance of their pattern. For example, a model spotlight must have a variable angle of beam, the equivalent of its pattern, and the light output must be proportionate when compared with other units. This is most important, as when working out the equipment required for an effect a false value of light could be misleading.

We have recently completed a practical model equipment for Miss Esmé Church, who uses her model, not only on her own production work but also for educational work at the Old Vic. This stage is built of Meccano on a scale of ½ in. to 1 ft., but the lighting equipment is out of scale in that it is nearer 1 in. to 1 ft. Apart from anything else,

there is a limit to the smallness in which electric bulbs can be obtained.

As can be seen from the illustration, the equipment looks out of proportion to the stage, but it has been so designed to give on that stage the equivalent in lighting of a reasonably well-equipped theatre. As it is being used for definitely practical reasons this accuracy of light output was essential. There is a 10-way spot bar immediately behind the proscenium, each unit being capable of an adjustment in beam angle between 42° and 13°, and each of them is separately controlled by a dimmer.

There are two similar units for use as perch spots and six portable units on stands for the stage (two spots and four floods).

The Nos. 2 and 3 battens consist of battens wired for three colours, and there is a three-colour lighting system for the top and bottom of the cyclorama, independently controlled.

It is possible with this equipment to attempt in model form the actual lighting of any model set and to find out the best position, colour and relative intensity for all the units to obtain the best effect. From a producer's point of view, of course, a model is of enormous assistance in arranging the grouping not only of the furniture and the props but also of the actors themselves.

On an installation of the scope of Miss Church's it is necessary to feed the switchboard from the electric mains through a transformer, as the total load is nearly 80 amps. at 6 volts, but for small installations it is possible to use accumulators. Every circuit on this model is controlled by a separate dimmer, so that it is possible for students to be taught the whole system of lighting from the model.

PIN-PRICKS FOR PRODUCERS *by*

BUSKER

THE producer . . . or director, as the Americans more aptly describe him . . . is a comparatively modern innovation. Or should one say "infliction"? At any rate, he appears to be a necessary evil to our present age, which demands that it shall be *taught* almost everything—salesmanship, authorship and all the other "ships" . . . excepting courtship. It may be remembered that Bernard Shaw once wrote: "He who can does; he who cannot teaches." And *he* should know.

There are two kinds of producers . . . (*a*) the ideal, and (*b*) the real. That is to say . . . (*a*) the one you haven't got, and (*b*) the one you have. Or, in other words . . . (*a*) one who knows something about everything, and (*b*) one who knows everything about nothing.

The ideal producer is emphatic but not aggressive; precise but not pedantic. He is a brilliant actor, a creative scenic designer, a skilful musician, a lighting expert and an authority on costume, furniture and make-up. He is a man of infinite tact and infinite wisdom. A practical psychologist . . . and altogether a blooming marvel. But . . . as the inebriated Cockney said when he met a dachshund in the street: "It's a lie! There ain't no such thing."

The real producer is the poor mutt who is expected to make silk purses from sows' ears and bricks without straw; to take the blame for every diabolical deficiency and to distribute lavish praise to everyone who has but narrowly escaped lamentable failure. It is to him these following hints are offered. The flowers are his to pick:

1 When chosen to produce, you will probably find it an advantage to arrive at the first rehearsal with some slight knowledge of the play. You should, at least, have read it. Of course, if you are really serious about the job you will have some fairly clear idea of what the author is driving at and what each character should be like. In that case, don't gaze round the cast with despondent gloom and mutter "Gawd! What a bunch!" They might hear you. Besides, they might not be as bad as that on the night. And, anyhow, you won't have to be in the audience.

2 Having decided to make the best of a bad job, proceed on the assumption that each member of the cast has a modicum of intelligence. Explain your interpretation of character and situation. If you are a good actor demonstrate your meaning. If not, stick to explanation . . . it's safer. But if you can and must act the parts for the cast, do so discriminatingly. Don't overdo the bits you enjoy acting.

3 Remember that although you are expected to attend every rehearsal, it is needlessly cruel to expect the small-part people to endure constant repetition of those scenes in which they have no lines. If you study the convenience of the cast when possible you may get consideration from them when desired . . . if you're lucky.

4 Be positive. Don't woffle. Decide what you want and try to get it. Be thankful if you do, but don't be peevish if you don't. Be philosophical. Don't be afraid to change your mind on occasion. And when, as is inevitable, Miss Smarty says, "You wanted me over there last time"—don't argue, even if you know she's wrong. Smile at her rather patiently and say: "Did I? Well, I think this position is rather better." It's more dignified than calling her a liar and gives her less satisfaction.

5 At the dress rehearsal, when the doors are in the wrong positions, the furniture at the wrong end of the social scale, the stage manager "touchy" and the electrician

awkward . . . keep calm. When the " slatternly wench " walks on wearing sleek silk stockings, court shoes and a frightfully new " perm," or your juvenile lead wears spats with brown shoes and a natty tweed suiting . . . don't shout. Don't scream. Whatever the provocation, don't lose your head—even though its loss may not be serious. Be patient. Keep cool. (For further particulars see " IF," by R. Kipling.)

6 Having seen " IF," turn to " Measure for Measure," wherein Shakespeare says : " Man, wrapt in a little brief authority, performs such antics before High Heaven as make the angels weep " . . . or something like it. Don't throw your weight about just for effect ; but don't be perturbed if some of your actors say you're too kind-hearted. They mean soft . . . but it's only the *other* people they expect you to bully. Anyhow, bullying is always a sign of weakness and a lack of real authority.

7 Insist on the cast knowing their lines sufficiently well to dispense with books for not less than ten rehearsals before the show. They can't act with books in their fists. Probably they can't without them, but at least they have a better chance. And don't take the job of prompter at rehearsals. Your own book should be unnecessary to you after the first few rehearsals. You can't produce with your eyes on the page instead of the stage.

8 It is part of your job to enthuse the actors and create an illusion of significant life, of which variety is a most piquant spice. Don't let them become slow and monotonous. They certainly will if *you* don't prevent it. You must get from them pace, poise and purpose . . . and the greatest of these is pace. The worst possible cast will always seem less appalling if they have speed. The audience has less chance of spotting the weaknesses.

9 If you really don't know much about directional and colour lighting, go into session with the electrician and seek his guidance. If you're both in the same boat and

perhaps afflicted with an amber fixation . . . well, that's just too bad. If you know all there is to know about lighting, don't blame the electrician if every spot is not on an individual dimmer. It is probably the treasurer whom you should slate. In any case, have a lighting rehearsal without the cast. Stage lighting is not an exact science, and most of your problems must be resolved by trial and error, which provide good experience for you but tend to fray the nerves and temper of a waiting cast.

10 Never address a theatre electrician as " Sparks." It might be permissible in the Navy, but is not good theatre. Find out his Christian name ; it will probably be Laurie, Alec, Harold or Cyril—but use it unflinchingly. He will be accustomed to it.

11 Don't indulge in a lot of arty-arty clap-trap to impress people with your cleverness. It probably won't. An ounce of sincerity is more precious than gold or oodles of blah.

12 Learn to suffer fools with a little tolerance. You'll get plenty of practice.

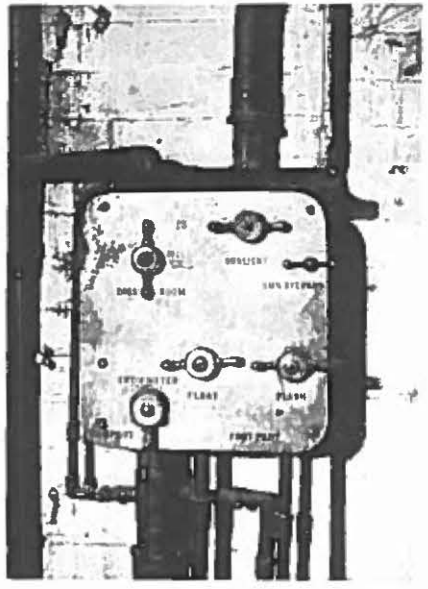
13 When on the final night you make an appearance in deference to the calls of the dutiful few . . . take care. If you must make a speech, temper your mercy with justice and your praise with discretion. Don't prattle about the difficulties you have all experienced. Audiences are like sales managers—only interested in results. And remember that on a well-lit stage without make-up you don't look so good. Don't stay too long.

14 It is possible that you regard the acme of production to be a stage illuminated by a single spot directed on a packing case rostrum on which two people of doubtful sex, dressed in hessian costumes, languidly discuss their passionate perplexities in obscure blank verse. If so . . . sorry you've been troubled . . . these pearls have been cast in vain.

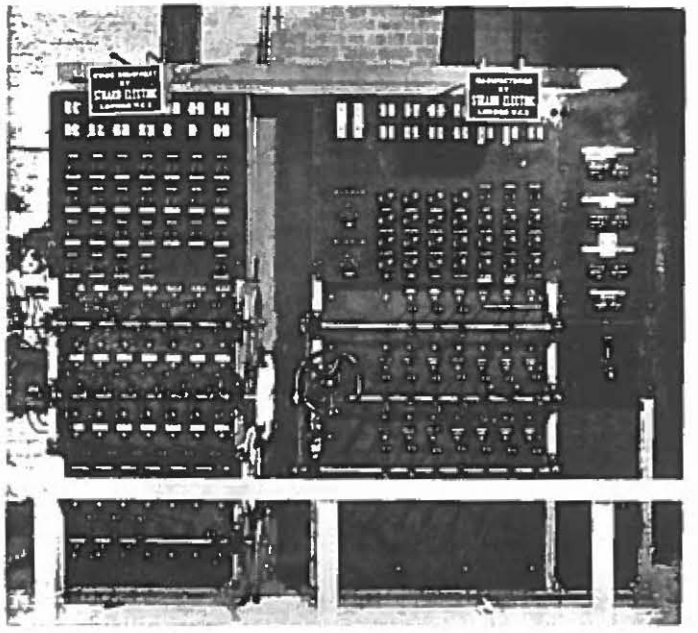
BUXTON OPERA HOUSE

THE photograph reproduced on this page places interesting emphasis on the rapidity with which the use of electricity in the theatre has grown. The Buxton theatre was built in 1905 and the panel illustrated was installed to control the gas supply to the auditorium, stage and dressing-rooms.

The switch labelled " Sunlight " controlled the large pendant in the dome of the auditorium and the " Sun Bye-pass," of course, was the small jet which ignited these lights. The " Flash " was a similar jet lighting the footlights, and on occasions when an adverse draught affected the flow of the gas there often occurred a time lag followed by a resounding explosion as all the footlights ignited. Colour change was obtained by pulling up in front of the footlights a frame containing coloured glass: the pulling was often referred to as " floating." This is one of the many varied reasons offered for footlights being dubbed " floats."



In those leisurely days the lighting plots were of delightful simplicity and control was bereft of the intricacies



that make the modern theatrical switchboards a thing of bewildering complexity to the novice. It is perhaps typical of all civilisation that the greater the progress, the more involved does life become and the more we must depend on the specialist.

Compare the gas panel of 1905 with the Strand switchboard recently installed in the theatre. This board controls the four colour circuits of the stage lighting, F.O.H. spots and auditorium lighting.

The stage lighting has now been completely modernised and all equipment is by Strand Electric. This provides for:—

Four-colour compartment footlights.

No. 1 Batten, consisting of 1000-watt spots.

No. 2 has sections of four-colour compartment battens and two Patt. 56 Acting Area Floods.

No. 3 Compartment battens with a central Acting Area Flood.

No. 4 for Cyclorama lighting. Consists of Patt. 60 500-watt Floods in four colours.

A Front of House Arc; 1,000-watt Wing Floods; and six 1,000-watt Patt. 73 Mirror Spots complete an equipment sufficiently comprehensive and flexible to meet most requirements.

The theatre is intimate and has an atmosphere that at once satisfies the sensitive playgoer. It has been redecorated throughout, and although since 1932 it has served the dual purpose of cinema and theatre, it nevertheless remains unmistakably theatre. When in 1932 the owners, the Buxton Corporation, found it necessary to authorise cinematographic entertainment in the theatre, the present lessee, the Buxton High Peak Entertainment Ltd., accepted the proviso that in each year there were to be eleven weeks of live entertainment of which two weeks were to be reserved for amateur performances.

Last year the Old Vic Festival, lasting three weeks, made local history and substantial profit. The Company included Diana Wynyard, Marie Ney, Emlyn Williams and Jay Laurier. The success was immediate, and to use an overworked theatrical adjective—enormous!

This year, on August 29th, the Old Vic Company commences the second three weeks' Festival, during which they will present "Hamlet"—full length and modern dress—"The Rivals," and that marvellously evergreen "Trelawney of the Wells." The producers are again Tyrone Guthrie and Esmé Church, and the company . . . the company is Old Vic, which is sufficient.

Buxton, situated amidst the Derbyshire hills, whose beauty is fully known only to those who have explored them, has much of which it is justly proud. Not least is its Opera House and the progressive *personnel*—civic and otherwise—who control its destinies.

TOYNBEE HALL

THE good work which has been going on at Toynbee Hall, in providing in the East End of London opportunities for better education for the youth and girl of moderate means, is so well known that it is not surprising that when they turn their attention to theatrical matters considerable care and thought is bestowed on their equipment.

The Governors have installed what is—though only on a small scale—one of the most complete Stage Electrical Equipments in the country.

The equipment consists of a Switchboard embodying features which are seldom to be found on even the largest professional Switchboards: Footlight, Two Battens, and Cyclorama Lighting equipment. The front, or No. 1 Batten, takes the form of a combined Flood and Spot Barrel for lighting the Acting Area, whilst the second Batten consists of sections of the ordinary type of compartment Batten with Acting Area Floodlights spaced at intervals, to light directly downwards. These latter lanterns have been designed to provide a sharp angle of cut-off so that they can be used without fear of spreading spill light on the Cyclorama when this is in use.

The Cyclorama is flat in form and is lit from both top and bottom. The top lighting equipment consists of a double row Batten, one complete row being devoted to Blue lighting and the other row shared between Red and Green circuits.

It is well known, of course, that by varying the intensity of the three primary colours—Red, Green and Blue—intermediate shades such as Ambers, Yellows, Purples,

Blue-Greens, can be obtained. The absorption through Blue colour filters is always considerably higher than in the case of Red and Green, owing to the fact that an incandescent lamp emits less light at the Blue end of the spectrum than at the Red end. It becomes necessary, therefore, to provide an additional quantity of light in the Blue circuits over the other two colours, but although one complete row of compartments is devoted to Blues, these are sub-divided so that only alternate compartments may be lit if required. There are occasions when it is desirable to reduce the quantity of Blue light in order to obtain certain shades of light on the Cyclorama, but it has been found that when a Blue circuit is dimmed, as the lamp filament becomes cooler the light from it changes in quality and the Blue light tends to become Purple. Instead, therefore, of providing a single dimmer and switch to control the whole of the Blue lighting, two dimmers and two switches are provided so that when, for example, only half the amount of Blue light is wanted, only half the compartments are lighted and correspondingly less dimming has to be done, thereby preserving the qualities of the Blue lighting.

The Cyclorama is also lit from the bottom by means of similar equipment situated in a pit in the Stage floor.

Eight Stage Plugs are provided for plugging-in portable equipment as and when required. One of the most interesting features of this installation are the special dimmers which control these circuits, a description of them being given below.

Front-of-house lighting is provided from the Auditorium ceiling by means of six 500-watt spotlights, and as these are used primarily for front lighting rather than for actual spotting work, they are controlled in two groups of three.

The Dimmer Board controls thirty-three circuits which are

balanced over a 3-phase supply. Each circuit is fitted with a two-way-and-off Switch so that any circuits may be left alight when the Blackout Switch is open. This feature has been found very useful when it is desired to black out the whole stage, leaving only, say, moonlight streaming in through a window, or a glow from a fireplace.

The Dimmers are controlled by special handles which can be locked to their respective shafts for group manipulation, and a slipping device is incorporated so that when any handle reaches its top or bottom limit of travel, it automatically releases itself from the shaft. It is often found that when working on colour or group master dimmer handles, a circuit which, shall we say, was only at half intensity, reaches the bottom of its travel before one which started at full intensity. If the dimmer handle which reaches the bottom end of travel first were not arranged to release itself automatically, it would become necessary for the switchboard operator to leave his position at the master control and unlock the various handles as they reached the end of travel and started to jam the shaft, thereby stopping operation.

The Dimmers controlling the majority of stage circuits are of the ordinary wire-wound type with eighty contact studs These Dimmers are all made to handle the exact load which is connected to them, but in the case of Dips or Plug points about the stage it is never known exactly whether 500 watt or 1,000 watt or any other size of load will be plugged in. It is common practice in these cases to supply a wire-wound dimmer which has what is known as a "plus or minus" rating. That is to say, it can be arranged to be flexible within certain limits. These limits are determined, of course, by the smoothness of the dim required. If an ordinary dimmer which has been wound to handle a load of 2,000 watts was only called upon to dim a load of 1,000 watts, it would be

found that the dim was not altogether satisfactory and tended to be jerky. With these variable load dimmers it is, however, possible to dim satisfactorily anything which is within one-third greater or less than the actual rated capacity of the dimmer. That is to say, a dimmer rated for 1,500 watts plus or minus one-third, would satisfactorily dim a load of 1,000 watts or 2,000 watts or anything between these figures.

The Toynbee Hall Switchboard, however, has a different type of dimmer fitted, which will dim any load between 2,500 watts and 60 watts, so that it might control two 1,000-watt Floods in one scene and only a small candle bracket in the next. This type of dimmer is known as the Variable Load Transformer type, and it will readily be appreciated how much they add to the flexibility of any stage switchboard.

Very often, in the interests of economy, Strand Electric are asked to build switchboards which embody some form of plugging system. The danger in this is always the same namely, that an inexperienced operator may connect to a dimmer a load which is considerably greater than that for which it has been wound, with consequent overheating and perhaps even burning out. These Transformer-type Variable Load Dimmers obviate this danger, and although no plugging system has actually been incorporated in the Toynbee Hall switchboard, absolute safety is assured in the dip circuits, as a load greater than 2,500 watts cannot be connected to any one dip dimmer.

Sub-warden Hodgkinson of Toynbee Hall and the architect, Mr. Alister MacDonald, are to be congratulated on installing what constitutes one of the most complete and up-to-date installations in the country.

GLOSSARY

OF ASSORTED STAGE TERMS

A very complimentary reader has suggested that we should include this glossary for the benefit of those who often find themselves perplexed by the curious jargon of the theatre. We have entrusted the task to one of the less disciplined contributors, who refuses to make the glossary alphabetical on the ground that his method is easier for himself and more exciting for the reader.

DEAD — Most popular word on the stage. Verb: "to dead" serves dual purpose. (1) To "dead" a border cloth, batten, etc., is to raise or lower at each point of suspension to a position in which its edge is parallel to stage level—perhaps. (2) To "dead" a piece of scenery, furniture, prop, etc. (the provision of which has usually involved long and perspiring overtime by somebody) is to dispense with it entirely and cause heartbreak and bad language.

KILL — Verb: to extinguish. Used of light not life (usually). Hence "Kill those babies quick, someone" means "Will one of you gentlemen over there put your beer down for a moment and either unplug or switch those small spotlights (or floodlights) for me, but don't burn yourself, as they may be rather hot. Your partner can finish the rubber without you, it's his lead anyway."

MEDIUM — No connection with spiritualism. Refers to gelatine, chromoid and glass placed in front of the batten, flood or spotlights. Theatrical plural is "mediums"—not "media" as at college.

ARTIST — The description applied to actors and actresses —but not necessarily true.

CAST	List of characters appearing in a play. Should not have a final " e," which means something *quite* different. A cast might or might not have caste.
MALE PLUG	See Female Plug.
THE IRON	The Fire Curtain, which is usually made of iron plates. You'll think it sounds very grand and *blasé* when you first say it—unless you discover it to be one of the asbestos variety.
STAGE ENGINEER	Known in the provinces as Chief Electrician.
S.M.	Stage Manager—not Sergeant Major—but fulfils same purpose with same methods.
A.S.M.	Assistant S.M.—a kind of Orderly Corporal. Usually prompts and kicks call boy into activity.
STAGE DIRECTOR	West End—Company Commander. Provinces—Regimental Sergeant Major. *Verb sap.*
APRON	Extension of stage, built outside proscenium. Has strings to which many highbrows are tied.
FEMALE PLUG	See Male Plug. What man hath joined together . . .
PLOT	1. Line. 2. Lighting. 3. Gunpowder. 1. Back of envelope on which is shown which border or cloth is suspended on which set of lines. 2. Bottom of chocolate box on which is entered cues for fixing, colour changing, switching, dimming, direction of lights, so that electrician may know when to forget them. 3. A " Fawkes Pas."

NORTHERN EXHIBITION

at

Leeds Electricity Department Showrooms Headrow, Leeds

From Monday, September 12th until Saturday, September 17th, there will be an Exhibition of Strand Lighting Equipment in the Electricity Department's Showrooms, Headrow, Leeds, to which all our friends in the North are invited.

There will be a comprehensive selection of Strand Equipment suitable for every type of Stage Lighting. Representatives from Head Office and the Manchester Branch will be in attendance anxious to discuss any special problems, and demonstrate the uses of the equipment.

On Thursday, September 15th, Mr. L. G. Applebee, Manager of our Theatre Lighting Department will lecture in the Showroom at 7 p.m. on " Colour and Directional Lighting as applied to the Stage," giving demonstrations of unusual effects.

Most of the equipment displayed is available in London and Manchester for hire to both professional and amateur companies, and it is believed that many producers and others will welcome this opportunity of discussing their requirements for the coming season.

Note the Dates: September 12th to 17th inclusive.

Exhibition: 9.30 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily (or later by appointment).
9.30 a.m. to 1 p.m. September 17th.

Lecture: 7 p.m. Thursday, September 15th.

For any further particulars write to Manchester Branch, 399/405 Oldham Road, Manchester.

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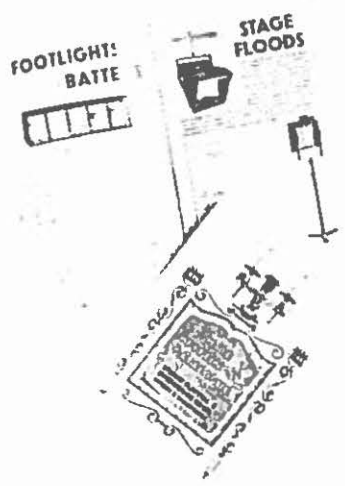
MR. P. CORRY, Manager of our Manchester Branch, has been appointed a Lecturer on Dramatic Art and Modern Theatre Practice at the Stockport College. It is understood that the course will include Elocution, Acting, Production, Stage Design and, of course, Stage Lighting.



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Every Producer should have these two booklets by him for reference. The first contains descriptions and hire charges for all our standard equipment, such as Spots, Dimmers, Footlights, Floods, etc. The second gives details of Decorative and Period Fittings, Imitation Fires and other special equipment available for Hire to Societies. Send for your free copies to Strand Electric, 24 Floral Street, W.C.2.