



# TABS



*Published by The Strand Electric and Engineering Co., Ltd.  
in the interests of the Amateur Theatre*

## CONTENTS

	PAGE		PAGE
Editorial... ..	2	Don't Rake the Stage ... ..	20
Producing a Royal Pantomime	4	Correspondence—	
All the World's Their Stage ...	10	They also serve ... ..	24
Actors Must Act ... ..	11	Philology for all ... ..	25
Colour in the Theatre... ..	14	Book Reviews ... ..	26
Drunks, Dogs & Defaulters ...	18	Society for Theatre Research ...	27
Not for Love or Money ... ..	18	Stockton Y.M.C.A. Little	
The Light and Life of Electric		Theatre ... ..	28
Filament Lamps ... ..	19		

---

---

## EDITORIAL

We are honoured by Her Majesty The Queen's gracious permission to include in this issue an article about the Royal Pantomimes held at Windsor Castle, by the author-producer. We are proud too, to think that we may have subscribed in small measure to their success and venture to hope that from time to time further such opportunities may arise when we can be of some slight service.

\* \* \*

We read that New York Cinemas are placing television screens in their foyers for the benefit of waiting patrons. Is there a point here for the Amateur Dramatic Society? Present day transport difficulties frequently lead to a large proportion of the audience arriving unduly early, and more often than not little or nothing is done for their comfort or amusement. In consequence, they are not always in the best possible frame of mind when eventually the curtain rises.

\* \* \*

Congratulations to the G.P.O. A letter simply addressed to Mr. Jack M . . . . , Hire Department, Strand Electric, was recently posted in Aberdeen (yes—unstamped), but it reached us within 48 hours. Such is fame !

We were gratified to note the usual credit to this Company at the foot of the programme of The Boltons Revue (St. James's Theatre), but the opening number made us wonder if we were dreaming. Here is an extract :

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Lyric by Michael Treford  
Music by Jack Strachey

We wish to thank Kayser-Bondor for the Lights !  
We wish to thank Strand Electric for the Tights !  
Abdulla's did the furniture we're using in the show,  
The cigarettes supplied by Old Times Furnishing and Co.  
We wish to thank Cecil Beaton for the Wigs !  
Yes—and Gustave for the Sets and Curtains too !  
And for the generous applause, for all our pre-arranged encores,  
We particularly want to thank . . . . . YOU !  
We feel that our material should get some panegyrics.  
Moss Bros. did the Music—Morris Angel wrote the lyrics !  
Drinks supplied by Sanitas—Smokes by Insulin !  
The theatre's disinfected throughout with . . . . . GIN !  
The lovely Ladies' Dresses are by Horne's of Upper Tooting !  
Darling Norman Hartnell did the nicely natty suiting !  
Production by a miracle (with errors and omissions),  
Musicians by arrangement . . . . and arrangements by musicians !

There is more but we have not room to print it. The solution is obvious. Go and see this sparkling show yourself. But Billy Milton tells us not to blame him if there's not much room in the theatre either, so book early.

\* \* \*

The directional use of sound can be very helpful in producing certain effects. The Oxford University Experimental Theatre Club recently obtained very good results for the sound effects of trains passing overhead by passing the amplifier output from loudspeaker to loudspeaker down the Hall. Only too often, amplified sound effects are spoiled by the use of a single loudspeaker, set to fixed volume throughout the evening.

\* \* \*

We were particularly taken with a phrase used by the writer whose letter appears on page 24 of this issue. It is this. "Lighting, like good clothes, should be so right as to be unnoticed." This phrase strikes us as being so right itself that it requires no elaboration. On the other hand we shall not feel called upon to apologise if we repeat it *ad nauseam*.

\* \* \*

The retiring Director General of Works, Air Ministry, recently calculated that the air runways he built during the war would extend from London to Peking. By way of comparison, the amount of electric cable shown in the stock sheets of our Hire Dept. would more than reach from England to France.

In our last issue we allowed ourselves a Deliberate Howler or Intentional Inaccuracy, in order to see how many of our readers would take us to task. We said that "current equals pressure divided by voltage." The correction was most neatly made by a reader as follows :

OHM-MY  
I fear you've broken Ohm's Law,  
A misdeed which I can't ignore,  
" Pressure divided by Voltage equals Current,"  
Is a statement without warrant;  
I trust you'll pardon my insistence,  
But current equals voltage divided by resistance.  
OMEGA.

\* \* \*

*Lack of space compels us to hold over the article on arcs mentioned in our last issue, until September.*

## PRODUCING A ROYAL PANTOMIME

*By Hubert Tannar, Esq., M.V.O., Master of the Royal School.  
Author and producer of the Royal Pantomimes at Windsor Castle.*

"I know exactly what lighting effects I want and I know exactly how to give them to you if you give me a Strand Electric Lighting Set." This from a competent electrician was an eminently satisfactory arrangement throughout our run. I'd ask for the almost impossible and he would invariably provide it.

Scenery, fresh and bright on the same basis—"Tell me what you want and I will produce it." Costumes too—a Castle staff of expert seamstresses possessing imagination and enthusiasm produced marvels of colour and design, literally from odds and ends. Willing Castle craftsmen provided the carpentry, upholstery, properties—all led by a Castle Superintendent possessed of an artistic eye, infinite patience and boundless resource. These were our stage foundations. And what motivated these enthusiasms? What prompted the desire to get things done and done perfectly, irrespective of late hours, shortage of staff and materials, and wartime calls on leisure time? Love! Love and a desire to please a Master and Mistress who encouraged, appreciated, and helped. Helped? Yes, materially helped—in production and suggestion—as well as giving that concrete help in the finding of "the right piece of stuff to make a perfect drape," an article of jewellery to adorn the head of the Fairy Queen or spangles for the last act costume of the reformed Wicked Uncle.

Their Majesties, the King and Queen were the encouraging and practical leaders. And what knowledge have Kings and Queens of production and stage direction? Our stage productions each Christmas from 1941 to 1944 provide an adequate answer to that question. From script to final performance both the King and Queen spared whatever time there was after their day's work in examining, polishing, cheering on, criticising—in no uncertain



terms—and inserting those multitudinous touches which make for finished production. “After the day’s work” may seem to you inappropriate when applied to the labours of a King. I wonder if it has ever struck you that, during the War, the King went “to work” as regularly as any office or factory worker at 8 o’clock each morning, arriving “home” at Windsor Castle at six to seven in the evening after a “working day” which consisted of climbing bomb damage, visiting poor distressed bomb victims, walking through endless miles of factories, inspecting endless miles of ranks of soldiers, walking endless miles of training grounds, travelling endless miles of railways—and, I have no doubt, politely enduring endless miles of none too entertaining conversation. This, day after day, was not conducive to further evening work on pantomimes. But two intelligent daughters can work wonders on an adoring father—tired though he may be. And I suspect that pantomime activities came as a relaxation, especially as the pantomimes owed their origin to their Majesties’ natural parental desire to see their own children in happy circumstances, surrounded by other happy children of their own age. Indeed, let it be whispered that the few occasions when the King was confined by the doctor to the warm air of the Castle on the occasion of a cold or chill, was a secret occasion for rejoicing to us “mummers.” We knew that the few days’ convalescence that His Majesty was allowed would be devoted to our rehearsals in the warm Waterloo Chamber. There were very few nervous flutterings among either players or workers. I must confess that I, as producer, kept myself a-tiptoe—but rather less out of nervousness than out of a desire to discover points that had, in the excitement of chorus training, eluded my notice. And, be certain, His Majesty would find them—a piece of business which was out of the view of the end seats of the front stalls, an improvement in an entrance, a piece of furniture which slightly clashed with the lighting—and particularly a detail of chorus precision. The King is precise, neat, likes things ended neatly and does not hesitate to voice his opinions. I suspect, too, that he likes to set you a poser and to watch your struggle in unravelling. Your success is His Majesty’s joy and your ample reward is His, by no means cheaply won, dazzling smile and admiring “Well done.” I remember, when a famous slogan was very popular, His Majesty convulsing us all when one girl, in a finale, had a long distance to cross before “freezing” into the tableau. She *would* take that one more step after the last note of the music had died away. We repeated and tried different poses, but she still continued to arrive late—until the King’s deep voice was heard to boom in the darkened auditorium—“Is her journey really necessary?” The moment of tension was relieved and a tired chorus had its strength renewed with a hearty laugh.

But the Queen was more often available. It was not always necessary, or indeed possible, for Her Majesty to accompany the King on all His duties in wartime. Her Majesty’s duties took

Her to less distant places at less regular intervals. And so Her Majesty's experience and light touch was more easily accessible and at our disposal. Experience?—Her Majesty was brought up in a home where the family provided its own amusements. In Her case it took the form of dramatic performances arranged sometimes on the spur of the moment and sometimes with full rehearsal, costume and scenery. These would be interspersed with song, dance and poetry. And so here we had the invaluable aid of a practical "actress" who knew only too well the difficulties of writing a script to fit the actors, devising scenery capable of being constructed and painted by the available talent, inventing costumes which could be made from the existing odds and ends of material which were remnants from upholstering and curtaining jobs that had, before the War, been carried out at the Castle. And, above all, Her Majesty brought that unerring touch and judgment which always was part of Her. That "something," developed by happy practical experience, brought to our productions a solid artistic background which was at our service practically always.

The first script was written for a two-act pantomime and later, as confidence came with experience, for quite elaborate multi-act affairs with magic caves, comic indoor sets, dainty woodland scenes and gorgeous ballroom finales. The words and music had to fit the age and capabilities of the principals and chorus. This meant a distinct change in style from year to year; our principals were of that age when their minds were receptive and retentive, eager and agile, where the producer had to be sure of his ground when expounding a principle because of the seriousness and trust with which it was imbibed by the young actors and actresses. Songs and choruses had to be up to date—yet leaving space somewhere in the pantomime for the popular old time choruses. Some educational value was also desirable in the introduction of gems from comic operas of the past. Each scene had its quota of well-worn sure-fire gags which ensured the certain laughs and, as experience grew, we introduced the more subtle gags and the slapstick gags with comic props. Above all it had to be a show not too childish, yet not so sophisticated as to mar the freshness and sparkle that only children can give. Dialect and low comedy were welcomed in just proportion and indeed were necessary if only to throw into relief the beauty that good children's voices can put into carefully written lines. And we had the good children's voices, as many of you have heard in broadcasts by the Princesses. But more of that later. The chorus movements and singing were in my hands and were carried out by the children of my school—The Royal School which was established in Windsor Park by Queen Victoria in 1845 for the children of employees on the Crown Estate. Our numbers were very small and practically every child had to be used—there was no opportunity for the picking and choosing of actors. Therefore, to a certain extent, we had to choose our song numbers to suit the capabilities of our chorus. But hard and tiring work though



*" Her Majesty brought that unerring touch and judgment . . . "*

it was, the result and the experience more than repaid everyone for the efforts they expended.

The set dancing was in the hands of a very capable dancing mistress and the orchestra was a military band stationed in the vicinity. And all these considerations had to combine into a show which was value for the money charged to the four hundred people who saw each performance. Princess Elizabeth contrived each year to give to charity some hundreds of pounds which were the proceeds of our week's performance.

And so, back to the writing of the script. During the year I would receive from Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret odd little pieces of paper from time to time. These were suggested gags that they had read in the papers, heard on the radio, or more often, had been tried in their own intimate family circle. Frequently the handwriting would be The Queen's and sometimes in these one would spot a story that The King had brought home. These augmented my own store of gags and the whole were thrown into the pool ready for the script. So with all these considerations I sat down to burn the midnight oil to produce the script. Each scene had to be carefully timed in the first production—Cinderella. The actors were so young that we had to ensure that the whole pantomime ran to no more than an hour and a half. Each afternoon I would take the result of my last night's labours to Windsor Castle where, after tea, I would read it amidst giggles, or loud laughter or in solemn silence according to the mood of the scene. An animated discussion followed interspersed with impromptu gagging, inevitable reminiscence and piano playing. Then the script would be left

for Her Majesty's scrutiny, to be returned next day with a few corrections and very many additions. I would hear next day of the family discussions that had gone into the script and to this day I treasure my pencilled drafts so neatly corrected and expanded in the handwriting of the whole Royal Family. This process would be repeated for about a week, the tea party being joined frequently by Her Majesty who could not resist the temptation of joining in the hearty laughter which reached her ears from the Schoolroom.

From this time forward the Queen's judgment became more and more in demand. First each evening the learning of parts by the Princesses. The Queen's delight in their keenness, Her Majesty's care for their diction and gesture, her suggestions for stage business and the lending of treasured and often very valuable hand props. Then followed a period of chorus rehearsals at School, principals' rehearsals at Windsor Castle, band rehearsals at the barracks, consultations with the Superintendent regarding amenities and material; discussions with the scene painter; arrangements for dances with the dancing mistress; entertaining of friends and costumers who were willing to help from their stock of knowledge or costumes. And above all these, Her Majesty ever ready to help with tactful advice, friendly consultation and artistic judgment. Never did a producer have such a helpful "proprietor." Did we want a special piece of decorative material? The Queen would find it. A hand prop or a large stage prop? The Queen would know where there was one. Flags? The Queen could find them. If any personal troubles arose in cast or craftsmen the Queen would, with a smile and gentle charm, smooth them all over. And, above all, Her Majesty's experience had taught her to have full confidence in the Producer. Her support for me was solid even with her own Royal Children and from Her Majesty's loyalty sprang a confidence which pervaded the whole atmosphere of the production.

And now, my Principals—Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret. How often have I been told "what an eye-opener it would be to the world at large if you could produce the Pantomimes throughout the country!" How privileged we have been at Windsor to see them and to recognise them as two charming girls enjoying the thrill of the footlights, striving to please, anxious to gain what Princess Margaret called "The Claps." And their exalted rank entirely submerged in the welfare of the show; the hardest workers in the cast, putting out every effort to obey instructions and rejoicing in the success, not of themselves only, but of the harmonious whole. And, in what lay their success? As a teacher and a light opera producer of twenty-five years experience I saw here those attributes in children which would mark them as a success in whatever line it was my good fortune to teach them. First, intelligence coupled with strict obedience. At a very early age the intelligence of both Princesses taught them that obedience to a mentor in whom they had confidence invariably led to, at least, moderate success. But when these attributes are coupled with

that intangible "something" which the stage demands, then indeed your success is assured. And both Princesses possessed this "something"—each in her own particular fashion and each showing it in an entirely different way—as instanced by the excited expression of nervousness from Princess Margaret before the curtain went up, and the cold silence of real nervousness evinced by Princess Elizabeth; the confidence of Princess Margaret when she feels success, even to the extent of adding to the rehearsed business—successfully too, in most cases, it must be admitted; the solid and certain reproduction of instructions given by Princess Elizabeth with brightness and confidence; Princess Margaret's sensing of the audience's admiration compared with Princess Elizabeth's sinking all thought for herself in the part she is playing. What a blessed thing is personality! How two of the same family could possess such abundance in such different ways. Obviously much is derived from both their devoted parents whose outward manifestations of character are so different yet whose temperaments are really so closely akin. We, who have watched the Princesses grow from childhood, see traits of both their Royal Parents. But who can wonder when one sees the happy, loving family life that they lead.

At last production starts on the stage; the principals, minor characters and chorus come together, the initial tangles, the excited dawning of the idea that the combining of the parts begins to make sense, the awed silence of the chorus when the principals speak, the joining up of the dances—and there in the hall will often be seen the dim figure of the Queen, quietly uncommunicative at this stage but imbibing the feel of the show in readiness for suggestion in the more advanced stages.

Then through the final rehearsals—band, lights, scenery, props, costumes to the performances. You, who have attended these performances, have had your eyes glued upon the stage—a well-deserved compliment to the players. But, if you had looked around, standing at the back you would have seen an eager figure watching, listening and occasionally disappearing through the door. This was Her Majesty judging for colour, light, clarity of diction and precision. Later, in the dressing room, she would praise all round and suggest improvements if necessary. Then, at the last two performances Their Majesties would be in official attendance. At these performances the King and Queen were our recognised "claque." By now, knowing the script by heart, their hands were ready for "claps" at that precise moment which "brings the house down" and we had, there in the front row, two valiant leaders of audience choruses. Success is assured, happiness is spread around, knowledge has been gained and Charity has benefited to the extent of some hundreds of pounds.

And the Producer? Happy and tired; but more devoted than ever to the Royal Family who amidst all the worries and distraction of their rank can find time to give pleasure and glorious example to those who are fortunate in working under the cool shade of their kindly influence.

## ALL THE WORLD'S THEIR STAGE

The Old Vic Company at present on tour in Australia and New Zealand were seen off from Euston Station by a large crowd. Our photographs show Miss Vivienne Leigh and Sir Laurence Olivier chatting to the High Commissioner for New Zealand on the station platform just before leaving.



Our other photograph is of Miss Elsie Beyer who, after many years with H. M. Tennant Ltd., travels with the Old Vic Company as General Manager. On her return she will be taking up a similar appointment at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Stratford on Avon.



The Old Vic Company took over 50 cases of electrical equipment with them including 67 Spotlights, 18 Floodlights, Dimmer boards with over 60 ways and over three-quarters of a mile of cable of different sorts and sizes.

This is however by no means the largest consignment of Strand Electric equipment to tour overseas. An Ice Show in Belgium is carrying 120 Lanterns of different kinds apart from all the other accessories which go to complete a stage lighting installation.



## ACTORS MUST ACT

An actor must not confuse realism with reality. Realism is a theatrical illusion of reality, an illusion that must always be more than life-size if it is to reach the back row of the gallery. It must be projected with more than commonplace emphasis if it is to achieve the kind of significance that creates the difference between flat photography and the painter's art. The dramatists who have replaced the purple passages of a pseudo-romanticism of Ruritanian palaces by the pale pink prattlings of inarticulate inmates of modern Bridge Club and Cocktail Bar are merely following a change of fashion in form. The fundamentals of acting are not affected by mere changes of fashions in technique. Pseudo-realism does, perhaps, make it easier for emotionally restrained Britishers to *think* they are acting when they are merely reading aloud from an



"Emotionally restrained Britishers . . ."

invisible book. And many modern actors are so terribly afraid of being "ham" that they aren't even very good "Spam."

It is not possible to define the strange faculty by which the actor sublimates a character that lives vibrantly yet is not of this life. It is no mere trick of technique or a proficiency to be acquired by attending a couple of week-end drama schools. It is the essential difference between Laurence Olivier of the Old Vic and Lionel Lincoln of the Old Borstolians Dramatic Society. The effort is common to both; the achievement is exclusive and individual. Each may have learned the same lessons, acquired a comparable technique—but the gulf between them is that which must always separate the artist from the artisan.

Obviously, the actor must learn the mechanics of the job. But he must not delude himself into believing that when he has acquired the knack of adapting to the stage his speech, deportment, gesture and make-up, he has done more than achieve a *method* of acting; he has merely learned to use the tools of his trade. He must acquire skill by practice and he may do so in a school of drama, in the school of experience, or both. He must gain by experience the confidence and ease which enable him to lose such dreadful vices as pawing the furniture, fumbling an exit, gazing fascinatedly at the footlights, taking too literally the punctuation used by the author, mumbling or elocuting his lines and constantly exploring the depths of his trousers pockets. These are common faults of an actor's stage infancy and adolescence, of the period of his apprenticeship. When the technique is properly assimilated it

will be used to conceal the artificiality of the emotions he wishes to express.

There is much glib talk of the need for the actor to "live" the part. It is quite credible that some actors are able to do their best work in a state of self-hypnosis. It is, however, very rash to assume that intense feeling is synonymous with intense theatrical expression. Whether or not the actor feels intensely the emotions



*"Feels intensely the emotions he expresses . . ."*

he expresses is not very important ; that he should be able to convey those emotions to an audience in such manner as will provoke complementary emotions is supremely important. An actor is rarely, if ever, unaware of the people in the audience. They are as much a part of the performance as are the other actors. Without an audience the actor is a musician without his instrument ; and an audience is an instrument of unique delicacy and sensitivity. The quality of its response to the actor's playing is the only

true measure of achievement available to him. The actor who blames the audience for a bad performance is rarely justified in doing so ; he is trying to find an excuse for his own failure. The actor who establishes with an audience that perfect unity for which he must always strive, receives as much as he gives ; he is given the exaltation of supreme power. He knows that by a nod, a whisper, a gesture, a sigh, he may heighten the collective emotion . . . . or let it fall with a sickening thud. Like the tight-wire performer, he is precariously poised between heaven and hell and his margin between the two is as slight. And because all audiences are not alike he must be capable of sensing the subtle differences and varying his performance accordingly.

It would seem to be obvious that he can best control his performance if he is not relying on emotional reflexes but is, so to speak, standing beside himself and consciously directing operations. Actors must act. It is not sufficient to feel. It might be excitingly dangerous for an actor to rely on "living" the part if he happens to be playing say Danny in "Night Must Fall" ; one can imagine his wife anxiously secreting her set of carvers and the paraffin can for the run of the show. Night might not fall with the curtain !

Whether he "lives" the part or "acts" it, his technical equipment must be similar. Like the lighting artist he must use shade and colour to give the character dimension and the speech significance. The written words of the play are the rawest of raw materials. The most important part of any play is the part that cannot be written. Almost any sentence from any play may

be given half-a-dozen different meanings by varying pace, emphasis, accent, phrasing and the rest. It is not sufficient that a speech shall appear to be uttered for the first time. It must convey the thought that prompts its meaning ; and it is incomplete without the impact on the other characters being displayed. The actor who cannot convey his emotions and thoughts without speech is not an actor. He must never be afraid to give point to the other person's lines. Unless both "act" each other's speeches neither can give a perfect performance. It is, of course, impossible to give a specific formula for the perfect performance. One of the curious fascinations of stage presentation is that there is no infallible guide. Each artist involved has wide discretion which he may exercise with individual choice, yet he may never lose sight of the compelling fact that he is but a part of a more considerable whole and must always subordinate the lesser to the greater.

The actor who is completely master of his craft is by no means universal in the professional theatre. He is much rarer in the amateur theatre but however much or little of the artist he is, the actor must be technically proficient. He cannot begin to be technically effective in any play until he has memorised the lines. Until he has absorbed them so effectively that he is able to use them without a conscious exercise of memory, he cannot hope to clothe them with the significance they demand. He is trying to write a poem without knowing the alphabet. He is trying to break a Brooklands record before he has learned to drive the car. The actor who fails to learn his lines promptly and properly is guilty of an unpardonable crime. He is denying a responsibility voluntarily assumed and deliberately insulting the playwright, the producer, the cast and the audience. He is an anti-social spiv and entirely less than the dust.

The actor who is a genius may be, and is, a rare bird but between his grade and that of the complete ham-bone there are infinite degrees of artistry. However high or low in the scale may be the actor's true position, he can at least be efficient if he spends sufficient time and effort in making himself so. He must be able to take a cue with the split-second timing of a catch in the slips by Archie Maclaren ; he must never be dull or dreary ; he must appreciate the value of a perfectly-timed pause and know the difference between lingering and loitering ; he must for ever be changing pace and emphasis yet never neglecting the rhythm ; he must dress, walk, stand, sit, shout, cry, kiss, kick, eat, drink and be merry *in character*. He must . . . well, dammit, he must ACT.—P.C.



"Anxiously secreting her set of carvers . . ."

## COLOUR IN THE THEATRE No. 5

From the correspondence which has arisen from this series of articles it appears that many readers are assuming that Primary Colour Mixing and Modern Stage Lighting are synonymous. This is vexing because in every article we have been at pains to explain (a) that Colour is but an adjunct to the art of stage lighting, that in fact we could, if necessary, manage without it and rely on intensity and direction as in the black and white film ; (b) that Primary Colour Mixing is only applicable to a small part of the lighting installation and then only when plenty of equipment is available ; (c) Primary Colour Mixing is very wasteful and several other combinations of filters (such as 5A Orange, 16 Blue-Green and 20 Blue) are likely to be more suitable for most purposes.

In spite of this we get lamentations from our Hire Advice Section " will you please stop telling people to use Primary Colour Mixing."

Admittedly this series began with Colour Mixing as the main topic, but this was due to the fact that the lay press was at the time (June, 1946) " running " Colour Mixing and elaborate apparatus to dispense it, as the key to the future of stage lighting ; and it was thought to be our duty to satisfy everyone's curiosity and explode the myth, carefully fostered by some initiates, that there was anything difficult in the technique of mixing the three primaries (RED, GREEN, BLUE) to obtain a range of secondaries. The real problem (as pointed out in article No. 1) is not the production of colour but what to do with it when produced. We can purchase fifty tubes of coloured paint, fifty Cinemoid colour filters, or have a schedule indicating how to use three dimmers and three primary colours but we shall have still to face the real problem which is " how to paint the picture or the stage " and that *cannot* be explained.

The hardest blow came recently in the shape of a letter which said : " We are producing ' Quiet Week End ' and would like to light the stage in amber and thought of mixing two spotlights, one Green and one Red as explained in ' Colour in the Theatre No. 4 ' (the last issue) ; we have a beam 20 feet from the stage. What wattage should we use ? " These may not be the exact words but certainly represent their intent. As in that very article No. 4 we had been at pains to explain with a diagram that colour mixing from spotlights on to the acting area was impossible because of the coloured shadows, we took this very hardly.

Therefore instead of the promised discussion on particular colours for specific effects let us examine a small installation and see what colour work is feasible.

The writer considers the *minimum* lighting installation for a stage

is:	Front of House	2 Spotlights	2 circuits.
	Behind Proscenium (Down Stage)	4 Floods	2 "
	(Up Stage)	4 "	2 "
	Stage Plugs, Left and Right		2 "

The wattages will depend on the size of stage and money available, therefore the total load may vary from 15 to 40 amps. The Up Stage floods (for sky cloth or cyclorama) will be of higher wattage than those Down Stage. Thus, one combination might be

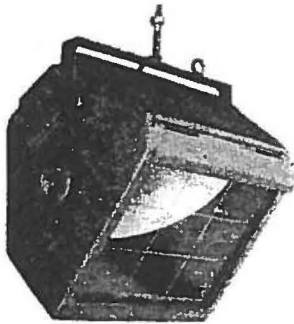


Fig. 1. Baby Flood.

1,000 watt Spots, 150 watt Down Stage floods and 300 watt Up Stage. The Down Stage floods would be of the type shown in fig. 1, those Up Stage might consist of pairs of these small floods (giving 300 watt) rather than the larger 500 watt lanterns with a 300 watt lamp. It is possible, where the electricity supply or expense demand it to consider 500 watt spots, 60 watt proscenium floods and 150 watt backcloth floods.

A tiny installation such as this could scarcely run to separate dimmers and the most one would expect to find would be a master dimmer to which circuits could be grouped and provision for plugging in extra dimmers (hired ?) as fig. 2. The diagram shows only three circuits, but for this scheme there would be eight. The lighting plugs would not necessarily be on the stage board but situated in various positions conveniently to feed the lighting apparatus.

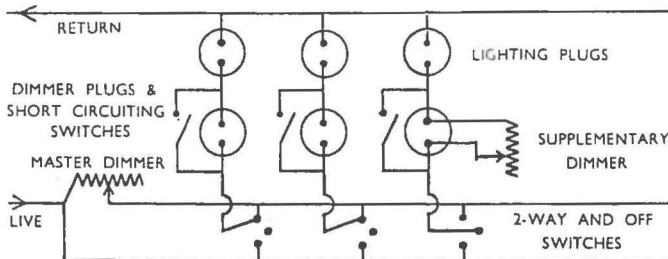


Fig. 2. Schematic circuit for minimum switchboard. Three circuits only are shown. the full board described in the article calls for eight.

An installation on these lines will seem excessively simple to some readers yet to others one knows from one's own amateur days, it will appear Utopian. However, provided a ceiling masking is used (as shown in fig. 3) instead of borders, then much good work can be done.

It will be obvious that only broad effects are possible, and the first step will be to fit light tints in the spots and direct them generally over the acting area, the beams being crossed so that the "on stage" aspect of the actor is directly lit. By dimming or choice of colour filters, a variation of lighting from one side of the stage to the other is possible. Obviously these lanterns cannot be

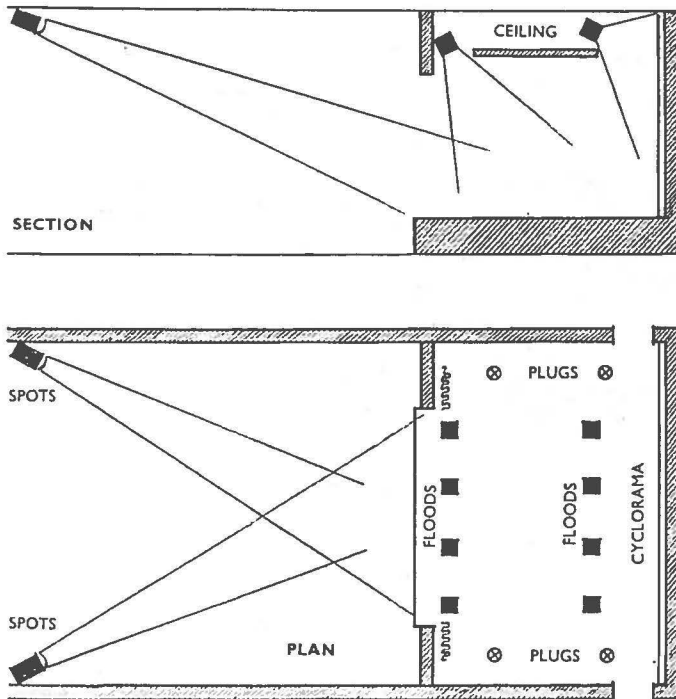


Fig. 3. Section and Plan of minimum lighting installation.

used for colour mixing since, even if their beams overlap completely, coloured shadows will be thrown on the stage floor or scenery.

The floods behind the proscenium can either be used to project a general even light over the stage, or a graded variation across it, by using different filters in each; or, with the aid of masking hoods (fig. 4), used to localise lighting where emphasis is needed, the lanterns being free to swivel vertically and horizontally, and can also be re-grouped—for instance all four lanterns hanging one side of stage centre. Although two circuits are provided here and in the Auditorium, very little actual changing during a scene will be possible. All equipment will be working full-on in "day" scenes and a change to "artificial light" will be achieved by dimming the lanterns with the lighter colours somewhat, leaving the deeper tints to dominate. Colour mixing cannot serve us here.

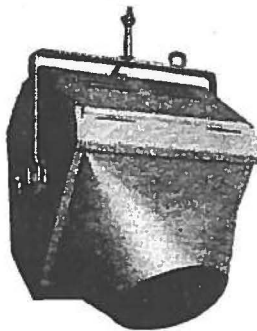


Fig. 4. Baby Flood with Hood.



On the backcloth (if we are lucky, a plain white plastered back wall "cyclorama") we have to use our four lanterns with maximum efficiency if we are to represent the open sky in an exterior or a sky backing to an interior window. No matter how carefully floods and spots are directed to clear the cyclorama there will be a certain amount of light diffused onto it from floor and scenery. To kill shadows of scenery and actors as far as possible, we shall have to use light colours, say a circuit of No. 40 Pale Blue and a circuit of No. 32 Medium Blue. By dimming the 40 Blue a darker sky will be obtained for evening and night scenes and by switching on the 40 Blue only, a grey sky for early morning or a cold day. If a blush of pink for sunset is needed we can't waste our precious lanterns for this and so a flood will have to be acquired for the purpose, fitted with No. 4 and 10 filters and fed from a stage plug.

Of course colour mixing is perfectly feasible on this kind of cyclorama but it can't be done from a few floods. Mixing one blue with another lighter blue is one thing but mixing green and blue to get light blue is another ; when in addition the blush of dawn is introduced from red lamps we are very likely to obtain a series of disturbing green, blue and red patches on the cyclorama, The prime essential for colour mixing is a large number of sources (wide angle floods or compartments of a magazine batten), placed at least 5 feet from a small cyclorama or more in the case of a large.

To suit the scale of the rest of our minimum equipment this means at least 18 feet of batten (24 compartments) with 150 watt lamps for the blue and 100 watt for the red and green, together with three dimmers. This is obviously out of economic proportion, since we would be spending more on the lighting equipment for a few auxiliary effects on the backcloth, than on that for lighting the all-important acting area.

Therefore, additional lighting for the acting area must have first place in the budget ; only after the F.O.H. Spots have been increased to three and the proscenium floods have been augmented by three baby spots, can the claims of three-colour lighting equipment be considered for the cyclorama. Even when this latter is in position, the writer would be surprised if it is ever used with the three primaries red, blue and green ; probably three shades of blue, 40, 32 and 19 will be usual, and occasionally the special three colours mentioned in the last article, 5A Orange, 16 Blue-Green and 20 Deep Blue, when much colour variety is needed.

F.P.B.

We learn from our Hire Department that Strand equipment is at present on tour in the following :—

AUSTRALIA, CANADA, NEW YORK, SWEDEN, FRANCE, BELGIUM,  
HOLLAND.

## DRUNKS, DOGS AND DEFAULTERS!

In our last issue we gave some details of working conditions in the early Italian Theatre. In the current issue of "Theatre Notebook" Cecil Price quotes extracts from an English Theatrical Agreement in operation between 1780 and 1790. We reproduce some of these extracts with acknowledgments to Mr. Price and the Editors of "Theatre Notebook."

"No member of the cast was permitted to introduce any *Interlude, either Speaking or Pantomimical, as they only tend to disgrace the business.*"

"The prompter," writes Cecil Price, "is the subject of two clauses. He forfeited one-and-six if he did not put up in writing, on every play night, the names of the pieces that were to be rehearsed next morning. The time of starting the rehearsal was to be taken from whichever public clock stood nearest the theatre, and if the prompter himself should be more than ten minutes late, he was fined a shilling. Actors paid sixpence if they missed the first scene or half-a-crown the whole rehearsal. Similar regulations governed the attendance of the musicians who were fined sixpence *for neglect of each music.*"

"Penalties were also enforced for drunkenness, lateness and wilful neglect of business. Actors and actresses were not allowed to plead sickness whenever their absence was in any way caused by irregularity of living. A curious distinction, however, was made between sharer and salary actor over the question of drunkenness: any sharer drunk on a play night forfeited a crown; the salary player only half-a-crown."

"Three of the regulations are rather amusing. Article XIV laid down that members of the company must pay for every person (except a hired servant) introduced by them into the house or taken behind the scenes. Article XVI declared that if an actor's dog appeared on the stage at a rehearsal, his owner should forfeit a shilling; if during performance, half-a-crown. These fines were only levied if the dog was not wanted *to attend his master or mistress in character.* The most curious of the clauses is that which states that any performer who goes home wearing any of the clothes, hats or properties of the company shall forfeit half-a-crown. Evidently the comedians eked out their own wardrobes from the stock." C.

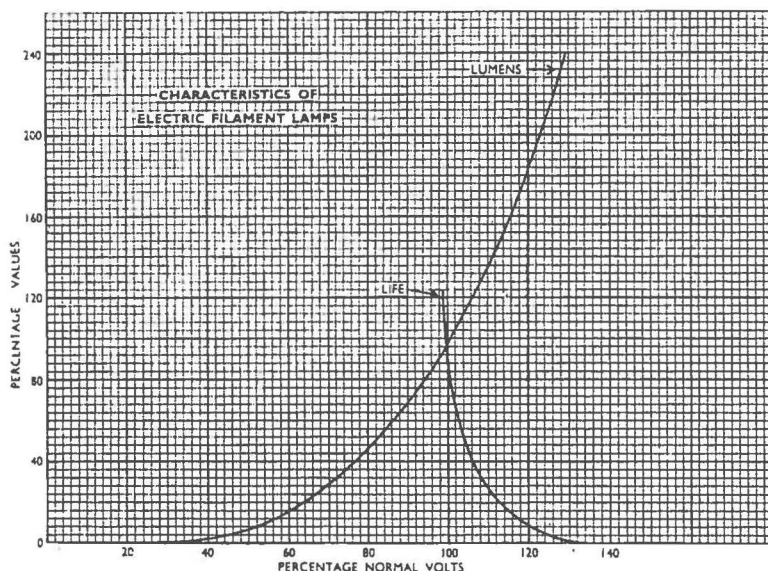
## NOT FOR LOVE OR MONEY

The following announcement is typical of many which we are asked to insert in "TABS":—

"The Medway Theatre Guild Third Annual Drama Festival will be held at the R.E. Theatre, Brompton, Chatham, on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, 25th, 26th, 27th and 28th May, 1948. The adjudicator is John Bourne. Full details may be obtained from the Hon. Secretary, Phil Lines of 3 Mill Road, Gillingham, Kent."

We estimate that if every Dramatic Society or other Organisation among whom "TABS" circulates were to give us notice of only two forthcoming productions per annum, each issue of "TABS" would require a supplement of 1,114 (one thousand, one hundred and fourteen) pages to deal with these announcements alone. We cannot satisfy everyone so please do not ask us to make exceptions. There are several admirable publications—subscriptions to which are extremely reasonable—which specialise in such announcements. We do not and cannot.

## THE LIGHT AND LIFE OF ELECTRIC FILAMENT LAMPS



We have been asked to give some information on the effect of voltage variations on the light output of electric lamps. The adjoining table is published from information provided by The Lighting Service Bureau. From this it will be seen that a voltage drop of say 5 per cent. reduces the light output of a lamp to about 84 per cent. of what it should be under proper conditions.

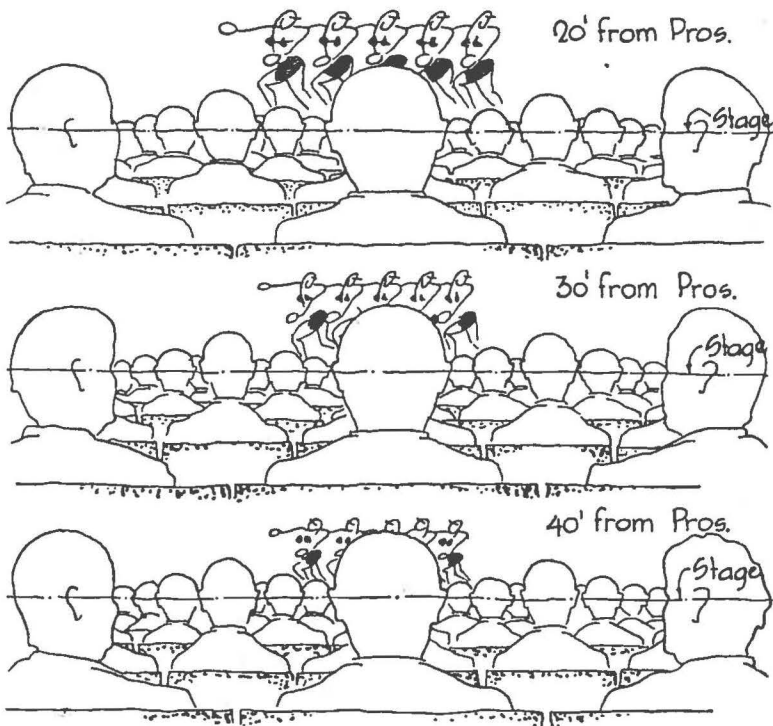
On the other hand an excess of voltage of 5 per cent. leads to an increase of about 17 per cent. in light output from the lamp but has the effect of reducing its life by about 50 per cent.

It should be pointed out that these curves show average results for a number of different types and sizes of lamps, and should not be applied therefore, when considerable accuracy is required in any specific instance.

## DON'T RAKE THE STAGE

Although the acting area is sometimes referred to as "the green" it is not suggested that a rake (agricultural) is likely to be used instead of a broom. The rake on the stage is, of course, the upward slope from footlights to back wall and is popularly and naively supposed to improve sight-lines sufficiently to justify flatness of an auditorium floor. Actually, the improvement in sight-lines caused by raking the stage is quite negligible; the trouble it causes is very considerable. The stage should not be raked; the rake should be applied to the auditorium. As Hamlet said to his royal mother :

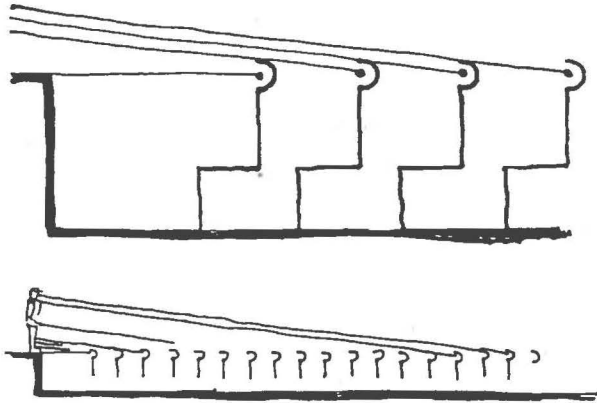
" Look here upon this picture :



**Fig. 1. The flat auditorium.**

*Diagrams showing the extent of visual obstruction at various distances from the stage.*

and on this :



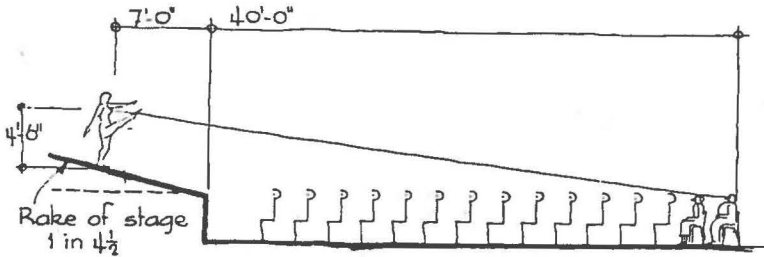
**Fig. 2. The flat auditorium.**

*Detailed and general views showing increased obstruction the greater the distance from the stage.*

the counterfeit presentment of two . . . . stages.”

A slight study of figure 1 will show very clearly that the unfortunate gent sitting immediately in front of you at 40 feet from the stage is not exactly getting his money's worth. He sees more of the heads of the people in front of him than the limbs of the dancing girls—and as a rule, gents prefer limbs. Figure 2 makes his position even clearer, but no better. The usual bright suggestion for overcoming this unfortunate situation is that the stage should be raked sufficiently to let him see the girls' knees.

So take a look at this :



**Fig. 3. The flat auditorium.**

*Even with an impossible rake on the stage the improvement in vision is imperceptible.*

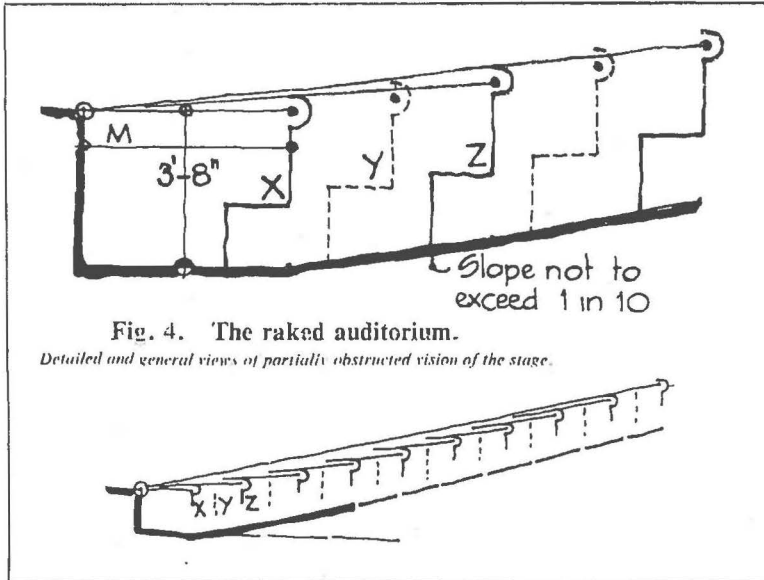
This represents the aforementioned gent who, as he is a long-suffering type, is still 40 feet from the stage, suffering silently instead of shrieking for justice. The rake on the stage necessary to enable him to see the top 1 ft. 6 ins. of a 6 ft. person at a distance of 7 ft. from the front edge of the stage would be 1 in  $4\frac{1}{2}$ . A rake of 1 in 10 is regarded as the maximum permitted for the *auditorium*; anything steeper would be a danger to people returning from the Bar; 1 in 10 would be wildly extravagant for a stage. The usual limit of rake on a stage is regarded as 1 in 30. It will be obvious that any permissible rake on the stage would make so slight a difference in sight-lines that our unfortunate friend would be unable to detect the difference.

The raked stage must be exposed for the menace it is. If it has a rake sufficient to make any appreciable difference to sight-lines it would be uncomfortable for the actor, a nightmare to the scene designer and stage carpenter and a positive source of danger to everybody when a vigorous pianist involuntarily finishes the Rachmaninov Prelude in a ghastly glissando over the footlights. Although this might provide a little light relief for the audience it could be a rather expensive alternative to engaging a comic or getting the vicar to recite.

The chief objection to the raked stage is a simple and practical one. Scenery must be interchangeable. Flats are usually constructed with stiles and rails at right angles to each other. If constructed otherwise to correct the rake of the stage they are suitable for use on one side of the stage only and then only in a straight line up and down stage. If fitted into raked shoes the trouble is reduced but not removed. Settings with interesting variations of shape at once create trouble. Furniture and fittings placed against the wall of the set are apt to look cock-eyed and the picture of Mr. Gladstone (or would it be Joe Stalin) over the fireplace can be a perfect scream. Of course, it is possible to damn the consequences, use square bottomed flats and pretend that the scene of action is inside the leaning tower of Pisa. O.K., but it rather limits the choice of the Plays' Committee. And the piano is still liable to slide into the footlights. And rostrums (the plural is *not* *rostra* in stage parlance) don't take at all kindly to the rake. It is clearly demonstrated in figures 4 and 5 opposite that the only satisfactory solution is to rake or step the floor of the auditorium.

The universal curse is the multi-purposefulness of our communal buildings. Yet, for most purposes of the communal hall—School Assembly, Speech Day, Public Meeting, Concert, Film Show, Lecture, Play, Ballet, Mime, Pageant and so on, the focal point of the entire audience is the stage. It should be possible for every person in the audience to see fully and hear clearly without stress or strain. It rarely is. True, our island history is the glory that it is because of an ingrained belief that comfort is in some vague way a trifle wicked. But as some countries are now constantly telling us we are decadent, should we not shed some of the austere



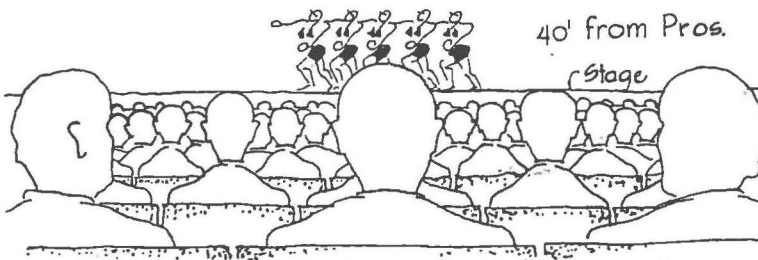


**Fig. 4. The raked auditorium.**

*Detailed and general views of partially obstructed vision of the stage.*

discomforts of our hey-day? We could, at least, counter-claim efficiency. It is *not* efficient to plan a building for its minority purposes.

We have to admit that a raked auditorium would defy the Palais-gliders and play havoc with the Hokey-cokers. But there are lots of other places where their mystic rites may be performed. They should not be allowed to intrude into buildings which demand the theatre form. Few people now insist on dancing or having bun-fights in St. Paul's Cathedral, the Royal Academy, the snuggerly at the local or in a condemned cell. Each has the constructional characteristics of its particular functions. And as the multi-purpose hall has its own particular functions there should be more restraint



**Fig. 5.**

*The same arrangements showing the view 40 feet back from the stage, the auditorium floor having a rake of about 1 in 10. The auditorium must be stepped to give perfect vision.*

in the dismissal of the vital obligations of its *main* functions. Those main functions demand that the floor of the auditorium shall be raked ; and the rake's progress must be arrested at the footlights.

In any case, even if the flat-earth practitioners succeed in ruining the auditorium . . . . even though these pearls of wisdom are cast in vain . . . . don't rake the *stage*. No ! *Don't* rake the stage . . . . *please* !

P.C. & H.E.

## THEY ALSO SERVE

Dear Mr. Editor,

A word in your private ear. I have had forty years' experience as an amateur producer, actor, playwright and what not, and still survive. Most of my time was spent in Norwich where accommodation varied from the Theatre Royal and The Maddermarket Theatre to the crudest of crude halls. Now I am in the country where on sufferance we use the Grammar School hall. There we have a stage, just too low to be high enough, precarious curtains, a power plug, distant dressing rooms connected to the hall by a dark passage (thoughtfully provided half way along with an unexpected step), a bitter draught across the stage and not much else. The roof is prodigiously high and unattainable, and the walls (which naturally we are not supposed to maltreat) seem made of some sort of composition roughly equivalent to granite in hardness.

A box set is out of the question as the School is used during the day, and we manage to hire stage hangings. By the time we have contrived to erect these there is not much scope for also erecting lighting equipment. We use footlights, and two so-called battens. There is really no room in the wings for flood standards.

I do not suppose these rather grisly conditions are unusual—in fact I know they're not. But I do feel that you—in common with other Dramatic publications—do not pay sufficient attention to the small fry, who also serve, but with extreme difficulty. I wrote to one maker of apparatus who advertised advice and help and was told :

(a) Apparatus was not available for sale ;

(b) The prices shown in their list were no longer applicable.

I was also given an outline of a minimum lighting outfit. It was full of technical jargon beyond me and even at their list prices would cost £70. I thanked them and said I was looking for a Morris Eight and not a Rolls-Royce. It may amuse you to know that these competitors of yours sent me a long typescript (three or four pages in single spacing) also a duplicate marked " Sales Records " and a third copy marked " Rotation File."

When I wanted moonlight for " A Midsummer Night's Dream " a gentleman on your staff helped me efficiently and economically, though we had no end of a job finding somewhere to hang the three floods sent us.

Of course niceties of lighting are helpful where they are possible, though continual fiddling with lights can be very distracting to an audience—*lighting, like good clothes, should be so right as to be unnoticed*, but a hint or two for the poor and afflicted would be very helpful from time to time.

Yours,  
“ Peter Quince.”

“ Oh Calamity ”—“ Outrageous Fortune ” as Messrs. Robertson Hare or Ben Travers might say. What a tale of woe—but what courage in the face of adversity. Unflinching in the face of overwhelming odds, the little band, etc., etc.

Yes, obviously these are just the people we ought to try to help, but we feel that our job in “ TABS ” is to generalise rather than particularise, unless any specific problem put to us should be of general interest. It is unlikely that any of our readers work under identical conditions, though we know of course that far too many Societies work under *some* difficulties. But improvisation calls for ingenuity, which is just our way of saying that Necessity is the mother of Invention, and improvisation is not only good fun but good experience. Even in the best equipped professional theatre a deal of improvisation is called for.

We feel that the problems in this case are as much structural as electrical and would suggest contact with our old friends, Messrs. Watts & Corry of 399 Oldham Road, Manchester. These people thrive on other people’s difficulties and this one seems just up their street. Maybe it’s not just a coincidence that Percy Corry has the same initials as a regular contributor to our pages, but at any rate both he and Peter Quince obviously have something in common. “ It’s being so cheerful as keeps ’em going.”—*Editor*.

## PHILOLOGY FOR ALL

To the Editor of “ TABS ” :

Dear Sir,

May I, in the friendliest spirit, lodge a mild protest against what I consider to be a flaw in the otherwise almost impeccable “ TABS ” ?

I refer to the use of the word “ media.”

The word “ medium ” has several meanings and it has two plural forms, the choice between these being governed by the precise meaning of the term. One may illustrate this by an example ; the production of colour on a cyclorama may be effected through the medium of (a) Gelatine ; (b) Cinemoid ; (c) Glass ; in other words there are three available media. But different shades of blue may be produced by the use of a No. 19 medium or a No. 2 medium ; in other words one has the choice of two mediums. Or again, to colour up one section of one’s float one requires eight mediums—not eight media.

In short, should not a number of pieces of coloured gelatine be called "mediums" ? Or better still "filters" ?

I may add that I was goaded into writing this by a frightful slip on page 25 of the issue for September, 1947, where "media" is used as a noun of singular number. "You see what happens to little girls who bite their nails" ?

Yours philologically,

Ericus.

The little lamb ! Have we bitten off more than we can chew ? Reference to three dictionaries produced the same result in each case. The plural of medium is given as either *media* (Latin) or the Anglicised version *mediums* but no restriction as to use is imposed. It hardly seems practical that two adjacent colour filters in a footlight should be mediums if they are both gelatine but media if one of them should be Cinemoid.

However, each to his own mutton. To us as practical people, the term filter appeals more than any derivative of the Latin adjective *medius* (middle) but then our minds are perhaps just mediocre, philologically speaking.—*Editor*.

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Play Guide for Irish Amateurs** by Mathew O'Mahony. *James Duffy & Co., Dublin.* 3s.

To say that Mathew O'Mahony's Play Guide fills a long-felt want is an understatement. Every Dramatic Society ought to have a copy as a reference work. There are 400 titles dealt with and all necessary information such as numbers in cast, settings, etc., is given. Some plays are conspicuous by their absence—notably Dion Boucicault's masterpiece "Arrah-na-Pogue." This play has had an honoured place in French's Catalogue for about sixty years, and indeed in James Duffy's own list for over ten years,

However, this and other omissions can be corrected in a later edition. L.B.

**The Theatre at Work** by James Cleaver. *Penguin.* 1s. 6d.

Anyone wishing to give a child a glimpse behind the scenes would do well to acquire a copy of this Puffin Picture Book, "The Theatre at Work." There is little text but the illustrations which are largely in colour, cover every department of the theatre both before and behind the curtain. While one might criticise some of the technical detail, this little book tells a complicated story in a simple and interesting way.

## A SOCIETY FOR THEATRE RESEARCH

Plans are being prepared to launch a society for theatre research. They have been initiated by the organisers of Theatre Notebook, and a small committee has been formed to call a public meeting and to lay before it the various uses and aims of the society. The committee consists of Miss M. St. Clare Byrne (chairman), Miss S. Rosenfeld, Mr. Bertram Shuttleworth (joint hon. secretaries), Mr. Ifan Kyrle Fletcher, Dr. Alfred Loewenberg, Mr. Llewellyn Rees, Mr. Richard Southern and Mr. Torin Thatcher.

The need for a body of informed and authoritative opinion on theatre history in all its branches is becoming increasingly apparent with the revival of the drama all over the country, and the importance to the theatre of to-day of the knowledge of its own history and traditions has never been more acutely felt. The society would provide the link between the practical requirements of the modern stage and the results of historical and technical research. To give an outstanding example: one of the indispensable needs of the immediate future will be to make available to the architects and builders of our new theatres the store of information that experts possess on the subject. Another important function of the society would be to promote and encourage research, and to bring workers in the field into closer touch with one another on an international level.

The recording and preservation of material has also become an urgent necessity and would be one of the primary objects of the society. It should, for instance, follow the admirable example of the British Records Society and cultivate local interest in order to preserve and chronicle the history of the provincial theatres in England. Ultimately the society would hope to find headquarters of its own which would house such adjuncts as a reference library, specialised collections and periodical exhibitions formed either by itself or by individuals.

Among those who have signified their support are Dr. F. S. Boas, M. Willson Disher, Prof. U. Ellis-Fermor, Mrs. Gabrielle Enthoven, O.B.E., Prof. Allardyce Nicoll and the Rev. Dr. Montague Summers.

The public meeting will take place at the Old Vic Theatre Centre, Waterloo Road, E.1, on Tuesday, June 15th, at 4 p.m., and tickets will be obtainable from Mr. Bertram Shuttleworth, 7 Ashburnham Mansions, S.W.10.

**S.O.S.**

**Will the author of a letter dated 16th March and signed  
C. D. W. MOORHOUSE please send us his address?—Ed.**

## STOCKTON Y.M.C.A. LITTLE THEATRE

We have to thank Mr. F. H. Pennock, the resident director, for an exhaustive description of this theatre which has evolved from a lowly provincial Temperance Hall into one of the most important amateur theatres in the North. Limitations of space prevent us from doing full justice to Mr. Pennock's report in which there is much of interest to those less fortunate organisations whose theatre is still in the planning stage.

The main entrance is complete with foyer, box office and cloak-rooms. The auditorium provides comfortable tip-up seats for a total of 335 persons of whom 70 are in a balcony. There is an orchestra pit with access under the stage. The proscenium opening is 20 feet by 12 feet with a stage depth of 17 feet to the back wall which is used as a cyclorama. When conditions permit a further 5 feet will be added to the depth which should add considerably to the usefulness and effectiveness of the cyclorama. The stage has reasonably good wing space and fly galleries ; the height above stage is sufficient to enable back-cloths to be flown and the equipment makes it possible to use either curtain settings or scenery with either borders or ceiling. The lighting equipment includes Front of House Spots, Compartment Battens, Cyclorama Ground-row, Batten Spots, Portable Floods, Stage Dips and a flexible switchboard which has dimmers for all circuits which may be operated either individually or collectively. This installation was one of the first supplied by Strand Electric to an amateur theatre after the war ended.

The backstage accommodation is unusually good. In addition to the spacious and comfortably furnished dressing rooms there is the cafe, workshop, library and wardrobe, rehearsal room and lounge.

The members of the Y.M.C.A. Theatre are fortunate in having such exceptional facilities which have been provided in spite of very considerable difficulties. As we have very good reason to know, only the untiring efforts of the architect with the enthusiastic co-operation of the Y.M.C.A. officials and committee made it possible for so complete a transformation to be made in so short a time. The theatre was opened within six months of the ending of the war and is now in constant use not only by the Y.M.C.A. Little Theatre Players but by other amateur societies in the district and occasionally by touring professional companies.

The Little Theatre has a large growing membership in the Stockton-on-Tees area and presents seven productions between September and May to consistently full houses. For the training of its members the theatre has a Drama School which is directed by Mr. Pennock, the resident producer.

The Stockton Y.M.C.A. are to be congratulated on the great success of their very ambitious planning at a time when the difficulties and restrictions would have daunted any who had not their unquenchable enthusiasm.

P.C.