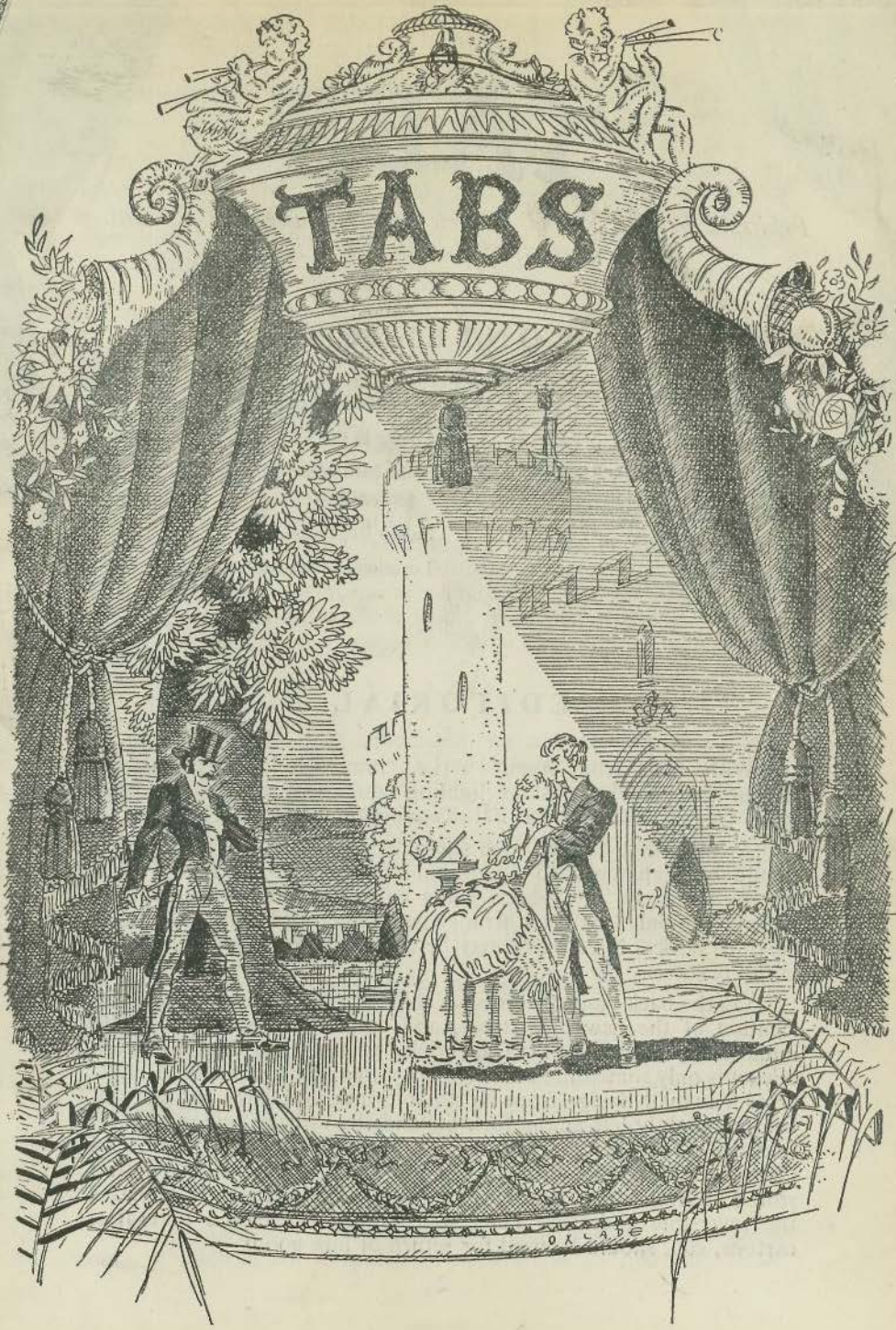


TABS



O. K. L. A. D.

TABS

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EDITORIAL

With this issue of TABS we put up the editorial shutters until the Autumn, plant our feet on the desk (practically) and put our ear to the ground (metaphorically at least). Our reason for such contortions is that we hope to hear between now and the Autumn something of what our readers are thinking and saying about our recent efforts in print. A gratifying number of people take the opportunity, when writing to us about other matters, of telling us what they think of "TABS", but we would like to hear from many more and at greater length, please. Which article or series have been found most interesting, helpful or amusing? Are there any particular subjects on which it is wished that we discourse in the future? No prize is offered for the best letter, and indeed the only reward will be our editorial gratitude. It should, however, be obvious, but it is perhaps worth pointing out once again, that it is in the readers' own interests to tell us what they want, though clearly we can never hope to satisfy all the people all the time.

Tommy Bamford, the genial Secretary of N.O.D.A., assures us that he is neither a perruquier nor a professional actor. He learned make-up the hard way by trial and error with his own face in amateur circles in the North of England. Be that as it may, his book "Practical Make Up For The Stage" (Pitmans) remains one of the most authoritative books on the subject and we are therefore all the more glad to meet him once again on page 9 of this issue.

* * *

A man of many parts is Mr. Christopher Ede who gave up amateur acting in 1933 to become a pro. After a spell at the Festival Theatre, Cambridge, he became associated with large-scale productions—pageants as well as Opera—was responsible for decor at the Bradfield Greek Theatre since 1938 and has produced Shakespeare in the West End, New York and Canada. He joined the Guild of Adjudicators three years ago and it is in that capacity that he replies on page 5 to our own regular contributor, P. C. on the subject of Drama Festivals.

* * *

The firm of L. & H. Nathan, Ltd., whose Chairman contributes to this issue on page 16, are the oldest theatrical costumiers in the world, having been founded in 1790 and the fourth and fifth generations in the direct family line are now in control. The firm's letter heading used today quotes "Court and Theatrical Costumiers". In the past visits to Balmoral and Sandringham were not infrequent in connection with Command Tableaux. More recently the firm has provided fancy dress for the heir presumptive to the Japanese throne and Queen Ina of Spain. On the theatrical side the firm's records include personal correspondence from Charles Dickens, Henry Irving, Beerbohm Tree, Ellen Terry and so on *ad lib*. The files of examples of the Costumier's art over several centuries form a veritable museum.

* * *

The nom de plume "Peter Quince" (page 19) conceals the identity of an elderly accountant, now retired, and living in the Cotswolds. Such time as he could spare from an exacting job has been largely given to the Amateur Stage in one way or another. His motto, he tells us, has always been "With mirth and laughter let old wrinkles come". And we always thought accountants were stern, serious minded types! Perhaps, however, it has been his association with the Amateur Theatre that has been his salvation. We certainly hope so for although he may have retired from his own local dramatic society, he will not be allowed to disappear from our list of contributors without a struggle.

DECORATIVE FITTINGS

We would like to remind Societies that a catalogue of Decorative Fittings for Hire is available which is intended to give an indication of the range available—in no sense can it claim to be a complete and comprehensive catalogue. Choosing fittings is difficult at any time, and for the majority of our customers becomes doubly so, as it has to be done by correspondence rather than personal inspection. It is hoped that this publication will not only make the customer's task easier, but will help us to ensure that he gets what he specifies, or at any rate something so nearly approaching it as makes no difference.

All the illustrations are reproduced to a scale of one inch representing one foot and the contents give information regarding the finish and availability of the various types with a guide to the Hire Charges.

It is worth mentioning that the prices shown are per fitting per week as some misunderstanding has occurred where sets are concerned.

* * *

STAGESOUND

In our last issue we described the service of sound effects we can offer. We would like here to emphasise that each record is made to measure and that stocks therefore are not held in our Showroom. We like full details of the exact noise you want with its timing so that we can ensure satisfaction. For all noise effects the purchase of the disc carries with it a licence to play it in public; for music recording however, the following should be considered.

For any copyright musical recordings supplied by us you will be provided with a form to be completed and returned to the Performing Rights Society. They will then charge you with any royalties due for the replaying of that piece of Music in Public. If, however, the Hall in which you perform, holds a Performing Rights Society licence, no further charge will be made. Should you wish to use commercial recordings however, prior application must be made to Phonographic Performance, Ltd., without whose permission no such record may be played in public.

Thus musically we can only supply as standard, a limited range of recordings of certain film background music and some traditional airs. We can, of course, record special music, but this entails fees to the performers plus the subsequent royalties due to the Performing Rights Society.

FESTIVALS MUST BE FAIR

By CHRISTOPHER EDE

There are several points in P. C.'s article "Festivals must be Festive" which cannot remain unchallenged between the covers of TABS Vol. 7, No. 3. I agree whole-heartedly that Festivals should be fun, and indeed the spirit in which a Festival is tackled is half the battle. Festival is a very popular word these days and is often used to describe any annual event which concerns more than a dozen people. It is a mystery to me why Industry and Commerce have not used the word; perhaps 1951 will produce a Festival of Fashion, Festival of Food or even Festival of Pharmacy. It is to the credit of Strand Electric that they have not run a Festival of Electronics! In Drama Festivals there are two kinds of people that militate against festive Festivals, the pot-hunters and the societies that do not enter because they have more important work to do.

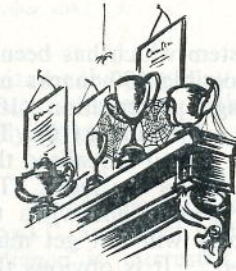
These latter teams are, of course, so good that they have nothing to learn from any adjudicator, nor anything to fear or learn from their fellow actors in other teams. To the pot-hunters, I would say, I hope your wives like cleaning cups and like your walls lined with certificates. **One day you may find time to think about Drama and the Theatre as something more than a device for winning**

competitions and then there are more rewards for you, albeit less tangible though they take up no space on the mantel-piece.

To the teams that don't compete, there is little to be said; they are so wrapped up in their own satisfaction, that the outside world hardly exists, and certainly they are outside the scope of this article.

This business of converting "mere opinions into mathematical forms" is not half so difficult as P. C. imagines, but first I do not like the expression "mere opinions".

An adjudicator is not expressing mere opinions, he (or she) is someone whose training and experience gives him special faculties. We English love and laugh at our experts. Expert witnesses have long been a legal joke, but we are discussing judges, not witnesses and no one laughs at judges. Many adjudicators have had years of experience in the professional theatre, while others have special experience in the amateur world. The Guild of Drama Adjudicators was formed to organise these people and to raise the standard of adjudication, and membership involves what amounts to an



"... I hope your wives like cleaning cups ..."

examination by members of the Guild. So, avoiding the dangerous word expert, what really worries P. C. is the conversion of *informed opinion* into mathematical form. Mathematical form at once suggests a scientific approach. If the simple word "marks" had been used, the problem would not look so difficult. To suggest anything scientific in the theatre is misleading; theatres are places for emotions, for laughter and tears, and now and again for thought.

Not even the lighting experts dare talk of the wave-length of a pink spot, nor the lumens on Hamlet's face.



"... no one laughs at judges ..."

I am not suggesting that any two adjudicators will agree down to the last mark, but I do suggest that they will arrive at an average which is near enough for practical purposes. Remember also that we are dealing with comparative marking, not an absolute percentage. It does not matter if the best team gets 90 or 9, as long as the second team gets 87 or 7.

The "complete impartiality" is simple, why should there be anything else?

The British Drama League marking system which has been in use for a good many years cuts up the possible 100 marks into five sections: Choice of play (10); Stage presentation (10); Production (30); Acting (40) and Dramatic achievement (10). The Choice of play is not very difficult to assess, once it is realised that it is *choice* of play, a play suitable to the skill of the team. The dramatic merit of the play has obvious repercussions when the acting has to be marked; an unactable play will not get many marks however original or beautifully staged. It is obvious that the adjudicator must know every play well, and even if he has seen the play some fifty times before, it is what the team does with the play that really matters.

The presentation at first sight seems to earn very few marks when it is realised that setting, lighting, costume and make-up all come under this heading. The small total does, however, prevent the rich teams trying to dazzle the adjudicator with £ s. d., and these important details of presentations have never killed or made any play. Imagination and knowledge are what count as the adjudicator will have examined the stage before the Festival, and will know what can or cannot be done with the equipment and space available.

Production and acting together account for 70 per cent. of the total marks. It is often difficult to decide what is due to the actor and what is due to the producer, but it does not matter. What matters is that 70 per cent. is available for acting and its direction, which is surely what the theatre is about. Some adjudicators divide the acting marks between the cast, giving each part a sub-total, but consciously or sub-consciously it is the team as a whole that is marked. Finally Dramatic achievement is a concise way of gauging how the play, as a whole, came over. In practice, it is conditioned by Choice.

P. C. agrees that to present a Festival where the same play is "set" would be fatal to audience and adjudicator, and commends

variety as giving "greater scope to the adjudicator's versatility after the performance." What about the teams? If the amateur cannot choose the plays he wants to do—the hobby, social activity or craze has no point in it. P. C. has a fixed idea that adjudicators are, as it were, visiting stars engaged to give a performance at the end of the Festival. On the score of versatility any adjudicator will tell him that the major problem is to deal freshly with the same basic faults that crop up in most amateur performances,



"... trying to dazzle the adjudicator with £ s. d. ..."

whatever the play may be. (Anyone who can give me a simile for "pace and attack" that I have not already used, will earn my undying gratitude.)

An adjudicator, like any public speaker, must be able to "get across", and what he has to say must be made interesting, but his audience is interested in the plays and the teams, not in the adjudicator, or, I might add, his past achievements. The audience want to hear the "informed critic", but they want to hear what he thinks about the plays and the players and check his reactions with their own. Festival audiences are rather a special audience with a keen interest in the craft of the Theatre, and at times intensely critical which cannot but be a good thing for the amateur theatre.

P. C. underestimates the intelligence of the majority of amateur teams and certainly overestimates the influence of adjudicators. Adulation is not sought for, and any actor who is praised in public has to face his own producer and fellow actors at the next rehearsal

and justify his praise for months long after the adjudicator is forgotten.

A final word on the question of non-competitive Festivals. Personally I have found more animosity and "gladiatorial blood" than in competitive Festivals. This means, of course, that the humans taking part had not reached the stage of the "cultural ideal". I am not convinced that we shall ever get to that stage. The theatre is highly competitive and always has been. The Greeks presented their plays in competition, the Mediaeval Guilds vied with each other in producing their Miracle plays, Shakespeare had to keep his public and at one time suffered serious competition from the "little eyases," the children of the Chapel Royal who were performing at the theatre in Blackfriars in the 1580's.

Competition in amateur drama tends to improve standards, and the greatest value of Festivals to my mind is that teams do see the work of their fellows, which prevents the mutual admiration society attitude which is fatal. Provided that the competitive spirit is one of healthy, friendly rivalry all is well, but once let the pot-hunters gain ground, and we shall have vast transfer fees paid for producers, police protection for adjudicators, and examination of their sandwiches in the intervals for hidden notes.

These are the characteristics of English "Sport" so let's keep our Festivals festive and fair.

* * *

RETURN OF HIRE EQUIPMENT

We would again remind customers of their responsibility to ensure that equipment is actually dispatched immediately after use and not left in Halls or Theatres for someone to call and collect it. This latter has often resulted in misunderstandings and unnecessary delays.

Again, equipment is sometimes carelessly packed and damage occurs on the return journey. This is most noticeable when shades for fittings are packed in the same box as heavier goods such as cable.

WHY USE MAKE-UP ?

By T. W. BAMFORD

Secretary of the National Operatic and Dramatic Association

The question might just as well be "Why paint scenery?"

Were you to place on a fully lighted stage a perfect Adams door complete with mouldings and decoration, alongside the scenic artist's representation of that same door, the answer would be apparent. The real thing would look flat and unimportant but the artist's painted canvas would look handsome and impressive.

Whether you like the analogy or not it's just the same with your face. You must have seen unfortunate persons such as mayors at amateur last nights and authors at professional first nights who are inveigled on to the stage to say a few words. Compared with the cast they look ghastly. That's because they have no make-up and the lighting has got them.

Stage lighting is essential to bring the actors into prominence. To do that satisfactorily requires a great volume of light directed on to the acting area from above and below, from the front and the sides. This essential light must be supplemented by a further great volume to neutralise the shadow of the players and furniture that will be cast on the setting. On a well-lighted stage a player is saturated with artificial light.

It must be accepted as fact that artificial light differs from daylight in colour. It has a higher proportion of red and yellow. Coloured light on coloured objects has queer results. If red light is directed on to white, pink and red objects side by side the white and pink will appear a rather drab red but the red will not become a brighter red, it will become duller. That's rather extreme, but it illustrates what stage lighting does to a normal complexion of pink and red. It dulls the colour and takes away the contrast of varying shades. The intensity of light has also a bleaching effect owing to reflection. That is one effect of stage lighting—to make a normal healthy complexion look drab and pasty.

The most devastating effect of the lighting, however, is that it robs the face of light and shade owing to its multiple sources of origin and the neutralising of shadows. Quite subconsciously we visually interpret shape by light and shade. So it follows that without them a face appears featureless and flat.

This is where make-up comes in.

Its object is to give your face the appearance your audience expects. It must be used to counteract the bleaching effect of the lighting by means of the correct shade of foundation. On top of that the variations of complexion tints must be imposed in darker tones on cheeks and lips. Then, according to the lighting, the highlights and the shading must be added to accentuate features and eyes and generally to give shape.



"... police protection for adjudicators ..."

Without make-up your face on the stage has no identity. This can be a great advantage when cast for character parts. With practice you can disguise your appearance enormously by shading and lining. A well-applied foundation practically gives you a clean sheet to work on. Your foundation can also, according to the shade selected, determine age, state of health or nationality.

There is no short-cut to becoming adept with make-up. There is, however, a lot of precious bunk talked about the "art" of make-up. Once a person understands the need for greasepaint and powder and masters the simple rules of applying them it becomes a matter of observation and practice.

A "straight" make-up is needed by everyone to look like himself or herself on the stage. The mirror is the guide to that and at the dress rehearsal, the producer the improver—"a little more No. five"—"too much blue"—"far too much lips"—"you've got a squint"—*ad lib.*

Certainly you must use make-up. But remember the popular advertisement "Not too much—not too little—just right."

If you don't know how—you should learn. It's worth while.

* * *

CONCERNING GAUZES

It is a long-established stage practice to obtain illusions, "visions" and transformations of scene by using gauzes in conjunction with lighting and it is surprising that one so rarely sees gauze used with maximum effect in a modern production.

In the theatre, "gauze" is rather widely applied to any fabric that has the necessary openness of weave. The fabrics used include mosquito netting, scrim, butter-muslin and cheese-cloth. As it is desirable to avoid any cloth that must be seamed, the fabric used in the professional theatres must be one that can be produced in widths of 24 ft. or more. If the gauze is used as a curtain with fullness the presence of seams is not so important, but if, as is usual, it takes the form of a front or back-cloth, seams could be very intrusive. It is sometimes used, similarly to scenic canvas, to cover flats, when the width of material needed is obviously much less.

Any fabric that becomes transparent when lighted solely from behind and opaque when lighted solely from the front is suitable for use as a stage gauze. When a scene is painted on the front it

should be little, if any, different in appearance from a scene painted on canvas. If, however, canvas and gauze are used together, say on a scenery flat, the difference of texture is liable to become obvious. One should avoid having them both too closely together.

The best effect is usually obtained if the scene on the gauze is painted in dyes rather than with pigment colours. The dyes are more difficult to apply but do not interfere in any way with the transparency of the cloth. If the mesh is very fine it is possible for pigment colours to affect transparency quite appreciably.

Assuming a good standard of transparency, the scene painted on the front of the gauze disappears entirely when lighted from behind. If there is any light at all on the front, some of the transparency will inevitably be lost and the painted scene might become partially visible. This partial visibility is sometimes used to create a desired effect. Careful graduation of lighting of the gauze can produce a fascinating variety of subtle changes of scene.

If there is any light at all behind a gauze it is impossible to obtain complete opacity. If the mesh is too wide it is doubly difficult. It is not always possible to exclude all light. Even remote light of low intensity can be very penetrating and the common practice is to use black curtains as a backing. These are flown away or drawn off when the transformation is required. It is important that removal of the blacks should synchronise with a change of lighting in such a way that the alteration is least obvious. This calls for a perfection of timing that is rarely possible unless the switchboard operator is in a position from which he has a full view of the stage. It is slowly but surely becoming recognised that the effective control of dimmers, to achieve the subtle changes of lighting so frequently desirable, is only practicable from such a position. Front of house control is no longer a novelty and will, in time become as traditional a necessity as the popular platform in the prompt corner. When the operator sees what happens in response to his controls he becomes as important a part of the production as any of the actors instead of being a disinterested automaton working to numbers. When he is working blind he has a reason for his failures; when he can see what he does, he has no excuse.

If a gauze is not fortified by a black backing it must be realised that as some light inevitably passes through the gauze it is imperative that there shall not be any movement at all behind it. If it is unavoidably necessary for actors to stand behind the gauze before they are intended to be seen they must be made to realise that absolute stillness is imperative. Any movement will cause a change of reflection and, therefore, of visibility; their presence will be

betrayed and the surprise of the effect lost. This is even more important if the gauze is black or is painted in dark colours. Any contrast then becomes more emphatic and more obvious to the audience.

It is a curious fact that when gauzes are used there is usually an indecent haste to be rid of them once the transformation has taken place. An effect of great beauty is often completely ruined by the sight of the bottom edge of the gauze rising in a series of spasmodic jerks. When a gauze has to be taken away it should be moved as unobtrusively as possible and the changes of lighting carefully designed to assist in making the transition a smooth one. All too rarely is a scene actually played behind the gauze although its presence can give an "atmosphere" that cannot be obtained in any other way. The use of several gauzes simultaneously, combined with delicate changes of lighting can provide delightful effects.

When gauze is used as a background to the actors during its transparency, the lighting of the acting area can be quite tricky. Light from battens or footlight, except at very low intensity would, **almost certainly, make the gauze intrusively visible.** Directional lighting is necessary and the actors should be so placed as to prevent light being reflected from them to the gauze. Reflection from the stage itself might also give trouble. It must be remembered always that the angle of reflection is equal to the angle at which the light falls on the reflecting object. The direction from which the light is projected is therefore most important. And anything that is not pure black will reflect some light. Vertical lighting, from Acting Area lanterns, or spot lighting from side booms is likely to give the best results. Obviously, arcs should not be used at all if their insistent beams are likely to touch the gauze either directly or indirectly. The lighting problems involved will need careful study and much experiment. Stray light from the orchestra pit or elsewhere in the auditorium could spoil an effect laboriously obtained at rehearsal. This must be anticipated and arrangements made for all such offending lights to be dimmed, shaded or extinguished at cue.

The appearance of any stage setting is determined by the quality and quantity of the light that makes it visible. Direction, intensity, beam-angle and colour all affect the stage picture. But whether the lighting be good, bad or indifferent, the scenery in general could still be functionally acceptable. The lighting of a gauze, however, is absolutely vital to its function. Ineffective lighting can make it theatrically useless . . . and sometimes does. The sensitive use of gauzes and lighting together can produce perfect examples of the pictorial art of the stage. That it so rarely does is rather sad.

P. C.

LIGHTING MUST ENLIGHTEN

Although lighting was dealt with in a previous contribution to this series we make no apology for the additional emphasis. After all, it is our main preoccupation. This further comment has been induced by a reader whose sufferings in West End theatres and elsewhere have provoked him to plead passionately that his wrongs be righted. He implored us to "write till your ink be dry and with your tears moist it again"—or at any rate, that's what he meant.

We are, of course, ever striving to increase lighting-consciousness in the theatre—always emphasising that light on the stage is an incomparable medium of expression, to be used by the artist with acute sensitivity. The artist occasionally forgets that sensibility is also necessary and that quantity must not be neglected because of regard for quality. It might well be—and frequently is—intensely dramatic to have a single shaft of light piercing an inky blackness, but such an effect must be used with a nice discretion and considerable restraint. That sort of lighting can be stimulating in very small doses but can be depressing when given to excess.



" . . . a minimum of visual distraction."

The senses of vision and audibility are sympathetically associated. If it is difficult for members of the audience to see, it is usually difficult also for them to hear. When vision is unnecessary, as in radio drama (unaccompanied by T.V.), the best listening is achieved when there is a minimum of visual distraction. It is not merely the courting couples who concentrate best with lights out. If the visual sense is relaxed the oral sense is free from conflict. In the theatre, of course, the audience expect not only to hear the words and music but to see the spectacle. There must be complete harmony between sound and vision or, inevitably, there will be distraction.

Stage presentation is a visual art—or at any rate, it should be art and must be visible. The extent and nature of visibility, as has already been stressed *ad nauseum*, is dependent on the quantity, quality and direction of the light. Light does not merely reveal truth but may be used to express an acutely significant aspect of truth by creating illusion. But the artist who would use light in such fashion must realise that the principles of physics cannot be suspended for his benefit. The producer who is able to achieve "expressiveness" of lighting only by sacrificing *comfortable* visibility, fails even more lamentably than the one who is content merely to play in a perpetual "full-up".

The producer's familiarity with the play and the characters is delusive when he is devising his stage pictures. After protracted rehearsing, he knows the lines Macbeth will probably substitute for those created by Shakespeare and memory will come to his aid when the impact of the sound-waves is less than perfect. But the customer who has paid good money for the doubtful privilege of experiencing constant conflict between his visual and oral senses is not so lucky. While he is peering through the pervading gloom to decide whose whiskers are so effectively lighted, and straining to detect some clue that will decide whether speech and whiskers belong to Macbeth or Macduff, he is losing all sense of unity with the stage and being deprived of the emotional response for which both producer and actor are supposed to be seeking. An audience that is not able to relax is one that will be difficult to convince; and it is impossible for anybody to relax if he or she is straining to hear and see what is happening. True, it is always possible to give up the struggle and relapse into slumber—a favourite method of self-defence in the theatre—but the penitential nature of the seating of some of our improvised little theatres may be relied on to deprive the sufferer of any such relief.

It is, perhaps, a matter for regret that we are such a tolerant people. So frequently we are acquiescent when we should be rebellious—so often silent sufferers when we should have the courage to protest vociferously. If audiences would more actively register their disgust instead of passively enduring the results of inefficient or ineffective presentation, the cause of the suffering would occur less frequently and the theatre would be all the healthier. Our ancestors could give a nice persuasive emphasis to their feelings with the aid of well-directed tomatoes or eggs of doubtful origin but undoubted antiquity.



“ . . . so often silent sufferers . . . ”

Perhaps rationing has created an excessive regard for edibles of any sort, but it is at least possible to register a polite protest by walking out in the middle of the show or by writing a letter to “The Times”, the “Oswaldtwistle Observer” or the manager of the theatre.

Lighting that is emphatic to the point of being obtrusive is like acting that is known theatrically as “ham”. Both acting and lighting are at their best when they are least obvious. The Greek tragedy that is supposedly happening in a sun-drenched country will lose both credibility and dramatic effectiveness if it is insisted that the impending doom may only be stressed by a constant

environment of dismal murkiness. We are notorious for our tendency to take our pleasures sadly but there is no excuse for treating high tragedy with mawkish preciousness. Great tragedy does not thrive in gloom. Its high lights may be strongly accented, its shadows profoundly deep, but the producer who achieves both by destroying general visibility still has an awful lot to learn about stage lighting. Adequate visibility is always imperative; those who neglect to provide it are deluded artists or bad craftsmen, or both. They are serving the theatre badly.

Light may be used to express a mood, to emphasise a motif; but it must be used to create unity of time and place. Above all, it must illuminate the actors sufficiently to enable the audience to decide without stress or strain who is who, and who is saying what. Our theatre of today may not be the actor-manager's theatre of the nineties, but the actor is still the most important person in the theatre to the people who pay the piper; and they pay to see the performer as well as to hear the tune.

The use of expressive lighting can be an incomparable aid to the whole art of production; its misuse can be a menace to the whole appeal of the theatre. If the producer becomes too bemused with lighting that does too little to illumine, he is likely to lose his present influence—and, perhaps, his job. And who, then, shall mourn his passing?

P. C.

REVIEW

“LIGHTING FOR THE AMATEUR STAGE” (Modern Stage Handbook No. 6) by M. G. SAY. Paper cover, 62 pages. *The Albyn Press* 2s. 6d. net.

The title of this little book is rather misleading. A better choice might have been “Physics without tears” for one suspects that the author is more at home in the laboratory than the theatre, and the reader is perhaps entitled to be disappointed that a greater proportion of space has not been devoted to matters strictly theatrical. Nevertheless, the sections dealing with light and colour are both interesting and useful. On the other hand one must find fault with the electrical wiring diagram on page 26 and the relative text. The use of fuses and dimmers in the neutral of an alternating current supply are reprehensible as is the use of two pin plugs and sockets which will not permit apparatus to be earthed. Then, too, the suggestion that the spring loading could be removed from a knife switch in order to quieten it seems passing strange since there are available, as indeed the author himself points out, silent switches of tumbler pattern for use on A.C. circuits.

Nevertheless, many amateur societies will doubtless find this little book helpful.

H. M. C.

DRESSING A COSTUME PLAY

By ARCHIE J. NATHAN

Having seen so very many historical productions, and, strange as it may seem, having been interested even more, I realise probably more than most people the spate of difficulties besetting the producers and wardrobe departments. These difficulties are so varied that one could elaborate on them *ad infinitum*, but in order to give a general clarification I should like to take the most important subject of "characterization"—so often not utilized to the full by producers in spite of its paramount importance to the actor in helping him to 'feel' his part.

To delve more fully, it is worth a survey of the interesting subject "transition of costume". This began in the early ages, and I will illustrate with a description of 7th Century male attire.

Take an ordinary sack, and cut out a twelve-inch hole in the centre of the seamed end; cut away the two corners, and then put your head through the centre hole, and an arm through each of the others. A rough hide thong round the waist will complete the costume.

When William the Conqueror landed some three centuries later, he found most of this island's inhabitants clad in this manner—roughly trimmed shirts, and tights, with cross-gartering of leather or fur.

If space permitted I could take 'transition' step by step from here, but a better illustration might be to jump a few centuries to the early Tudors, and it is interesting to find that their basic garment was still the 'shirt', though, of course, much elaborated. As the years went by the skirts of this 'shirt', or tunic, gradually shortened, and the body part fitted much closer to the figure, to become the Elizabethan doublet, which, in its own turn, was modified over a century to Charles II's reign, when a major revolution in male costume occurred.

The Merry Monarch brought back after his exile on the Continent a garment known as the 'Persian' coat, because of its general cut and Oriental style of trimmings. The very long and wide sleeves of this coat were turned back to above the elbow, and buttoned down to form, as it were, a large cuff. The coat, owing to its extreme length and bulkiness in front, was found to be impracticable, especially for riding, and soon the two front points were buttoned back to give freedom of movement, disclosing an undervest, or waistcoat, which in itself was equally long and bulky. The coat then went through the transition of being cut further and further away until it was found that no more could be dispensed with; thus, at the end of the 18th Century, there was introduced

the 'step' coat. The skirt of this coat did not start from the centre opening as before, but was set back some two or three inches each side. From this point it was easy to realize that by various extensions of the last described style, the modern evening dress coat materialized.

Returning to the question of cuffs, it can be imagined that they were two feet or more wide at the advent of the 'Persian' coat, but gradually this was modified, the buttons becoming ornamental, and at the end of the 18th Century the cuffs had become tight on to the sleeve. The legacy of three horizontal buttons can still be seen on Naval and full-dress Military uniforms. It is also the origin of the buttons on a modern jacket, though in the early 19th Century these got inverted for some unaccountable reason.

The collars progressively became of a more important design, reaching a climax at the introduction of the 'step' coat, and finally modifying themselves to the article on modern tail coats. The waistcoat and breeches can be followed through in the same way—the former becoming shorter, and the latter, which were originally almost a petticoat in Charles II's time, gradually tightening to the leg, and eventually the breeches seen today in Court and Diplomatic suits materialised.

The development of female attire can be studied in the same way through the centuries. From the simple, belted, one-piece garment which so gracefully formed its natural folds to the freely moving limbs, to the revolutionary advent of the corselet around the 10th Century; this in turn leading to the hip-length tunic of the 15th Century; to the Elizabethan stomacher, etc.

It is strange to note the peculiar influence new political ideas, and world upheavals had, and still have, on the female attire. The most striking example is the sudden appearance of the Grecian, non-restricted, transparent dresses of the Napoleonic war period—a complete change from the formal style of ten years previously. In its way this interesting revolution of fashion re-occurred after World War I, though in a much less charming form, of the 'flapper' girl.

This short, general survey of the transition of costume now brings us to the chief point of characterization.

Let us imagine the production of a play set in the early Elizabethan period. There are two principal characters—father and son. The producer can here greatly help his artistes, and give his audience the correct atmosphere by dressing the father in the late Henry VIII style of the much embroidered and pleated, but basic style of the 'shirt', and not by just putting him into an

Elizabethan doublet, with grey wig and beard to make him look old. On the other hand, the son can anticipate a bit by decking himself in all the finery of the late Elizabethan period.

Another example would be a Charles I play. Keep old characters, particularly if humble or of the peasantry, in late Elizabethan or James I costumes. In the same way, take the Georgian play, "School for Scandal"; let old Sir Peter Teazle wear a square cut of the earlier part of the 18th Century, while Charles and Joseph Surface, the young 'bloods' should be dressed in cutaway coats and shorter waistcoats of the latter part of the century.

If the above-mentioned theme is followed, producers will find how great will be the help to his actors, and get the audiences to understand the play much more spontaneously. For women's clothes, they should be even more careful, and it would be wise to check-up to see what major historical event took place at the time of the play's action. Smart women throughout the ages have always been insistent on the latest fad or fancy, and have generally wished to identify themselves with contemporary events with a significant ornamentation on the dress or headdress.

At this point I must apologise if I am thought discourteous in giving such a short revue of the history of female attire, but I feel that this is such an interesting and detailed study it would deserve a separate article on its own, should space be available in a future issue.

Finally, a word on make-up and wigs. Nothing looks worse and immediately irritates an audience than to see a young-looking face swathed in a white beard and crowned with a white wig. Try to get expert advice and instruction given to your artistes. Do not let a young man of the 1870's appear with a pair of Spanish side-boards, but make him have a full moustache, or even beard if he can carry them without looking ridiculous. Check your period again—facial hair has been in and out of fashion continuously since the Conqueror's time.

I hope in this short space I have been able to be of assistance to many producers. It is worth remembering that good costuming goes a long way to stamping a production with the satisfactory hall-mark—"well produced".

GROUSE

By PETER QUINCE

Let me say at once that I am not thinking of those succulent birds which frequent Scottish Moors, and which have such a well-founded aversion to August the Twelfth. The Grouse I have in mind is not Animal, but Abstract, and has theatrical rather than feathery or heathery connections. As I shall write of more than one Grouse, and not the sporting variety, I suspect my title should have been written Grouses.

First, then, there is this question of the National Anthem, and when it should be played. When I was young, theatrical performances finished loyally with God Save the King. For some reason or other, some Theatres express their loyalty nowadays by playing the said National Anthem at the commencement of proceedings, and a very inconvenient arrangement it is. Just when one has successfully mastered the spring seats for oneself and one's wife (and some spring seats are almost maliciously non-co-operative), and the masculine overcoat is safely stowed, and the feminine fur coat is tastefully draped round the shoulders, there comes an ominous whirring sound from the Orchestra Pit. Everyone straggles up, while an asthmatic record wheezes out the well-known strains. It seems to be almost a point of honour in Theatres to go on using the same old disc, long after it has qualified for the retired list.

The worst of it is that the female lap, and the male apology for one, are laden with various impedimenta—a lady's handbag, two pairs of opera glasses, a programme, a box of chocolates (on red-letter days), a pair of gloves, and so on. In the sudden uprising, some of these are successfully clutched, some are not. When the general subsidence has taken place, and the spring seats separated from the flowing fur coat and persuaded once again into their proper positions, a rapid stocktaking reveals that some of the moveables are, alas, rightly named. There follows an uncomfortable grovelling in the dark while a glove is retrieved from under the seat in front, and the chocolate with the soft centre which dropped and got trodden on is scraped off the sole of one's boot.



"... some of the movables are, alas, rightly named".

Now, the National Anthem is either a prayer, or a symbol of loyalty; sometimes it is both. Under such circumstances it is neither, but simply an unmitigated nuisance. It provokes "curses,

not loud but deep," though occasionally the curses can be very audible. Recently, in one of London's most fashionable theatres, a lady behind me let out quite a lurid word with such emphasis that none of it was wasted. Surely our friends the Theatre Managers who do so much so well, will look after our comfort in this little particular, and realize that we prefer Loyalty after, rather than before the Show.

Grouse Number Two concerns late-comers. My wife and I are magnets for them. All the seats fill up except four next to us with a distressing regularity. Then, after the curtain is up, along they come, probably in two detachments, three first, and Father, after he has parked the car, later. Sometimes they apologise, sometimes they do not, but in either case they are a nuisance. They seem, too, to have a positive genius for timing their entrance so as to obliterate an operative speech from the Stage. I am not so

young as I was ; Time has dealt generously with me, till I seem to have been turned "sides to middle", like an old sheet. Anyway, I have plenty of equator, and am definitely Obstacle Number One. I have to hold my breath quite a long time while the sidling process continues.



"... the sidling process continues".

I have attended ideal performances where late-comers are retained in the side gangways, or even not allowed to enter the Auditorium, till the end of the Scene. That may be too much to ask as a general rule, but perhaps Managers might consider

it. Everyone (except possibly, the late-comers) would be behind them. I am afraid nothing can be done about the pestilential nuisances who move out just before the final curtain so as to get first go at the Cloak Room.

Grouse Number Three is against what I might call confidential actors. They make one feel that one is eavesdropping, and not doing it very successfully. I wish they would remember that the average age of the population is steadily rising, and that as people get older they cannot hear so well. Consequently, the average standard of acuteness of hearing must be dropping. Unfortunately, the average standard of Stage audibility seems to be dropping, too, and there is no reason whatever why it should. Recently I heard a play—I use the word "heard" euphemistically—in which there were two of the old school, and several younger folk. The only two who were consistently audible were the old stagers, and their speaking was quite effortless. As an example, one may cite Felix

Aylmer in "Daphne Laureola", where every whispered syllable in his death scene comes over with perfect clarity. Let the new generation of Actors remember that the customers pay to see AND HEAR them, and that the customers are always right !

There are other Grouses on which I could write at wearying length, but I will restrict myself to two—Producers and Critics. Of course we must have Producers ; we have always had them in some form or other. Many of them are beyond praise, but of late there are some who seem to misquote Shakespeare, and take as their motto "The Producer's the thing." I am weary of the Producer who feels that as long as he's different, he's interesting. I am tired to death of those eternal flights of steps that confront us, whether the Scene be The Plains of Philippi, Capulet's Orchard, Elsinore Battlements, or even a Blasted Heath. I am bored to

tears with the tacit assumption that the clever Producers of today have at last discovered the true secret of interpreting the giants of the past, and that as long as they put Hamlet in a frock coat, Cassius in red-tabbed khaki, or Titania in a farthingale, they have accomplished marvels.



"... I use the word 'heard' euphemistically ..."

As to the Critics, some again are excellent, but so many give the impression of perpetual boredom, and irritating omniscience. To them nearly every production in these decadent days is hopeless, and the greatest praise they allow them-

selves is a grudging admission that it might possibly have been worse. The fact is, of course, that great numbers of intelligent people, with long experience of theatre-going, thoroughly enjoy many of the plays the Critics condemn. It would be so much more helpful if the Critics could bring themselves to write from the point of view of the ordinary, intelligent play-goer to whom a visit to the Theatre is still a joyous adventure. As it is, how often one hears "The Critics' don't think much of it, but they never do".

I have groused for long enough, perhaps for too long. I love the Theatre, and I have the greatest admiration for many who join to entertain me—Playwrights, Actors, Producers, Managers, Critics, and, of course, Lighting Engineers. But I could find it in my heart to wish that the tastes and detailed comfort of the audience mattered a shade more, and that we were not dismissed, a trifle superciliously, as "The Box Office influence in the Commercial Theatre".

FLUORESCENCE AND BLACK LIGHT

A preview of Chapter 8 of a forthcoming Strand Electric publication

Just as there are sounds inaudible to the human ear, so there is light to which the human eye is blind. Beyond the Violet end of the visible spectrum, light merges into Ultra Violet and becomes invisible. Just between the two there is what is known as "near" Ultra Violet. From sources of light rich in radiation at this end of the spectrum, such as Carbon Arcs or Mercury Discharge Lamps, it is possible to filter out the visible wave lengths leaving only the remaining "Black Light". To eliminate most of the visible light a special "Black" Glass filter is placed in front of the arc whilst mercury discharge lamps are enveloped in a similar Black Glass bulb. Thus we can obtain invisible light.

Being invisible this light has only a limited value in the theatre and this is in being made visible. Certain substances have the property of effecting this change, as the Black Light excites them and is reflected as visible light. This property is known as Fluorescence. Thus in the dark, any material treated with one of these chemicals and illuminated by Black Light will glow visibly, whilst untreated or unlit materials will remain unseen. This phenomenon of Fluorescence is not to be confused with Phosphorescence, which is a property of other chemicals to store up the light they receive and to radiate it in the dark. This is most commonly seen on watches and clocks. In so far as the theatre is concerned the practical use of Fluorescence is limited to trick and decorative effects.

The standard Mercury Discharge Lamp encased in a Black glass envelope has a bayonet-type cap with three positioning pins. The lamp must be used only with a choke in circuit, and these positioning pins therefore prevent accidental insertion into a normal B.C. Holder.

Full instructions for connecting the choke to the special holder are provided by the manufacturers, but should the equipment be supplied by us on hire it will already be wired correctly. The source of light is tubular and the lamp can therefore be used with various reflectors and lenses in the usual way. We usually advise the Patt. 237c for flooding from the Footlight position, the Patt. 30c for general work, and the Patt. 43c. for covering limited areas with a high intensity. (In each of these cases the suffix "C" to the lantern pattern number indicates that the standard lantern has been adapted for use with the Black Lamp.)

When the lamp—correctly wired—is switched on, a dull purple flicker will be seen through the glass but the emission of "near" U.V. light does not reach full intensity until after 4 to 5 minutes' burning. Again, if the circuit is switched off, the lamp must be allowed to cool before it will relight. At full brilliance

there will be a considerable amount of visible violet light, especially close to the lamp, and to get the full effect of treated materials therefore, the rest of the stage must be of sombre colour so that there is no noticeable reflection of this visible light.

Black glass screens for Arc Lanterns are carried in masks which are adjustable to fit the various lanterns.

In no circumstances should Medical lamps giving true Ultra Violet radiation be used on the stage, as they can damage the eyes and skin unless they are used under the supervision of a doctor.

So much for obtaining and directing the Black Light. We must now consider the methods of using it on the stage. Firstly, there are what are known as "Fluorescent Spirit Dopes" available in nine colours.

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------|
| 1. Invisible Dark Blue. | 5. Yellow. |
| 2.* Invisible Light Blue. | 6. Orange. |
| 3. Invisible Green. | 7. Mauve. |
| 4. Light Green. | 8. Pink. |
| | 9. Red. |

When activated by Black Light the brightest of these are the first three, which otherwise are clear colourless liquids invisible in ordinary light. In white light, the remainder show a lighter form of their name colour which then becomes richer in the Black Light. It is important that they should be applied to a white surface for full brilliance as this reflects the light made visible by the film of "dope," whilst if they are used on dark materials the dope, of course, will fluoresce in the same way, but being only a thin film, without surface reflection, it will appear comparatively dull.

The dope is a volatile liquid with a very low flash point and strict precautions against the risk of fire must be taken when using it. For most purposes it is best applied with a fine nozzle spray gun, as this is more economical than brushwork and will give a more even surface but small pieces of material can, of course, be dipped in the liquid. Whichever method is used the treatment will tend slightly to stiffen materials and will flake off highly polished surfaces. Sprayed on canvas one pint of dope will cover 80/90 sq. ft.

In addition to the above dopes there are available jars of make-up impregnated with either No. 2.* or No. 3 colours. Very little should be applied and it should be massaged until no trace remains, to obtain full brilliance. It should not, of course, be applied over ordinary make-up nor should it be powdered or the effect will be lost. Fluorescent chalks can also be made for trick effects. All these fluorescent materials fade if kept for long periods and especially if exposed to strong daylight.

* Temporarily unobtainable

In addition to these dopes, Fluorescent fabrics are made by Messrs. British Celanese Ltd. in five colours of naturally dyed satin as follows :—

White fluorescent Blue.	
Yellow	„ Yellow-Green (brilliant).
Pink	„ Red-Orange.
Green	„ Green.
Orange	„ Yellow Orange.

For dresses the use of these materials is much to be preferred to that of the dopes and they can easily be obtained through certain recognised dealers. British Celanese Ltd. should not be approached direct, but we can always put you in touch with suppliers and offer advice on the use of the fabrics.

So much for the available materials and the mechanics of the effect. In the Theatre its employment must be very carefully considered and planned as it has, after all, a surprise element in it which can very easily distract by attracting attention. It should never be used just because it exists as an effect, but only because it proves to be the only way of achieving a result in certain circumstances. As an example of correct usage we might imagine the effect of Blue Light on yellow or orange dresses ; in short it kills their colour. Should they be made of fluorescent orange fabric, however, there will be just enough near Ultra Violet light in the Blue to give them a true colour and if some Black Light is added these costumes would stand out brilliantly. For straight plays, even for Ghost effects, it must be used with discretion to avoid upsetting the balance of the play, especially as natural teeth and the whites of the eyes fluoresce. It is this latter phenomenon which makes the lamps uncomfortable to look at.

One other problem must always be faced—that of stray light from other equipment which can ruin a well-planned effect. The most common is that from an orchestra or other lights in the auditorium and a method of reducing the light from the orchestra is to give them Blue lamps in their desks or to fit a dimmer in that circuit to check the intensity.

And lastly, it is most important to note that owing to their inflammability, dopes cannot be sent by Passenger Train. We therefore require sufficient notice of your needs to enable us to deliver by Goods train.

THE NOT SO GOOD OLD DAYS

In these days of restrictions, regulations, controls, rations, licences and all the million and one things which are sent to try us, it is only too easy to look back to the so-called good old days with much longing. Indeed it is not only too easy, but also rather too convenient, as we wallow in self pity, to assume that our fathers had no troubles of their own, and that all was plain sailing. Consequently it is perhaps good for the soul if every now and then we are proved wrong.

I have in front of me a programme, the front cover of which reads as follows :—



Fig. 1

Strangely enough, Messrs. Verity occupied precisely the same premises as those now in use by the Strand Electric. That is, however, of purely passing interest.

Inserted into the programme was a pink slip which is reproduced

in Fig. 2. So even 60-odd years ago our ancestors were already experiencing power cuts! The management's ability to open the theatre at such short notice (both programme and slip are dated October 1st) without any electric light, points of course to the fact

NOTICE

ELECTRIC LIGHTING

THE ELECTRIC LIGHT (although installed throughout the Building both before and behind the curtain to the extent of considerably over 1,000 Lamps), unfortunately, cannot be used for a few days owing to the arrangements of the Metropolitan Electric Supply Co. being at present incomplete (through a strike at the works by their employès). By the middle of the week however it is hoped all the machinery will be in thorough working order.

*Avenue Theatre,**H. WATKIN.*

October 1st, 1888.

Fig. 2

that the gas equipment had not been removed and was no doubt being retained against just such as emergency. In the early days of electricity one had but to be able to hang an electric lamp on a couple of wires to be hailed as a combination of genius and public hero. Nevertheless, those who had not been initiated into the

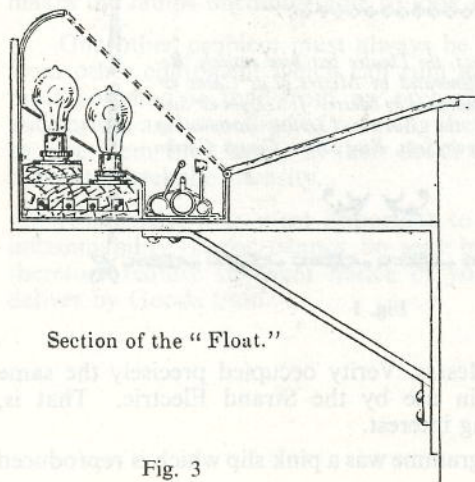


Fig. 3

mysteries of "the electric light" very often seemed to have serious misgivings, as is evidenced by the footlight designed to take both gas and electric light which is shown in Fig. 3 and which is reproduced from a manufacturer's catalogue dated as late as 1899. So maybe after all they did occasionally have their own worries and troubles in those "good old days".

H. M. C.