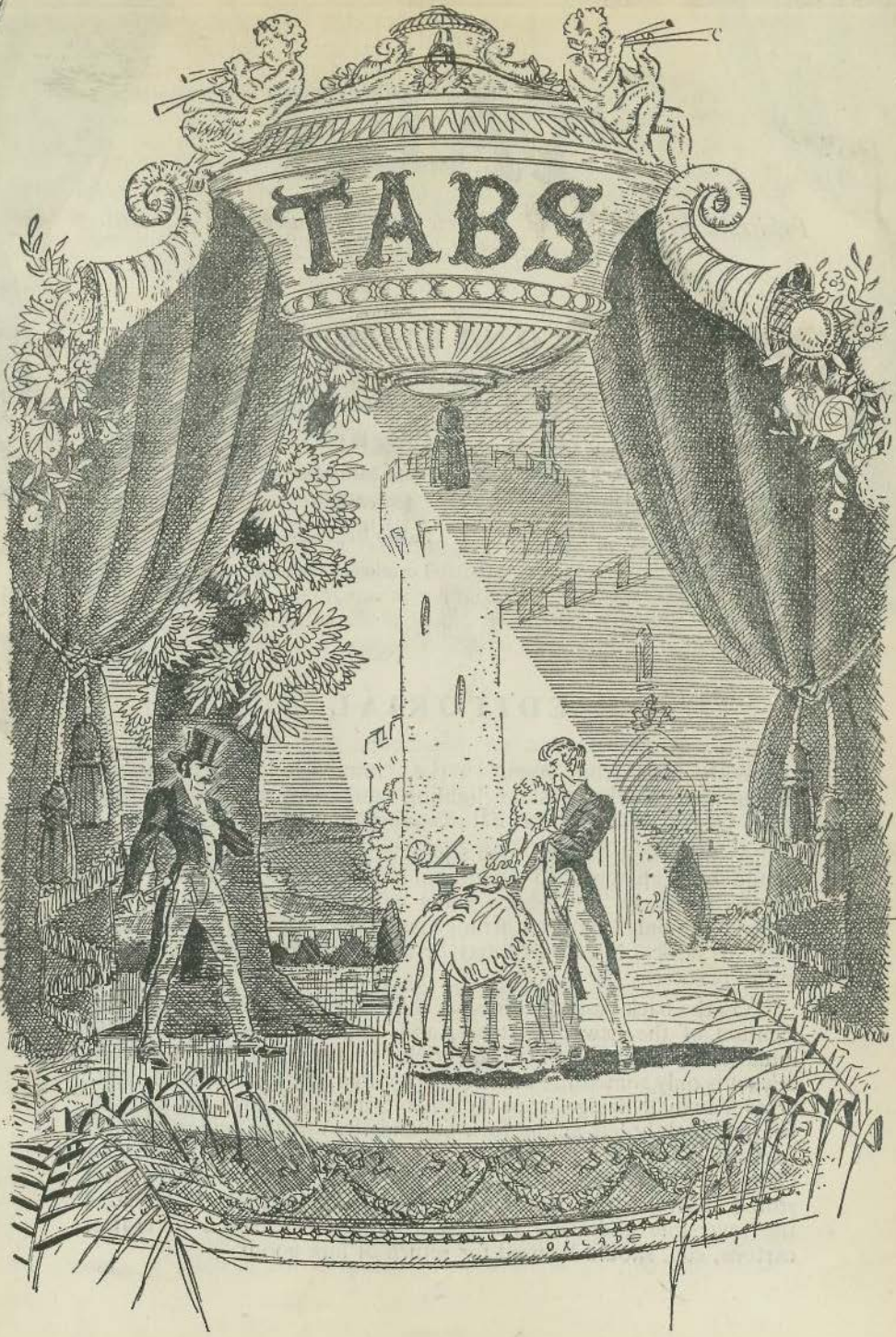


TABS



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TABS

Published in the interests of the Amateur Theatre

by

The Strand Electric and Engineering Co., Ltd.

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CONTENTS

	Page		Page
Editorial	3	More About Optical Effects	18
A One-eyed Theatre <i>Strand's demonstration stage.</i>	5	The Acting Area Flood and Stage Lighting	20
Reviving Revivals by Harold Downs	9	<i>It's history and present day application.</i>	
Everybody Must Do Every- thing	12	Classics in Modern Dress by Paul Bedford	25
<i>Concluding article in the "Must" series.</i>		Was My Face 6 by Alan Jefferson	28
Bring Me a Tucket by Paul Lorne	15	<i>A colour medium quiz.</i>	
<i>A commentary on some theatre sound effects.</i>		Book Reviews	29

EDITORIAL

To See Ourselves as Others See Us

We are always grateful for the scores of appreciative letters which readers send us about TABS.

At random, unblushingly and without authority, we reprint the following extracts. From Manchester: "Thank you also for the copy of TABS which arrived this morning. My wife asks me to tell you that she would be obliged if you could arrange in future for it to arrive by the afternoon post, as when it comes at breakfast-time she can't get any sense out of me. It is a most valuable little publication."

From Eugene Braun, Chief Electrical Engineer, Radio City Music Hall, New York: "Also I want to express my appreciation for the many wonderful copies of TABS. I really and truly enjoy reading the contents, since they are very interesting and informative. We have nothing here to compare with it and I would feel very much let down if I could not look forward to its continued receipt."

Your meat . . .

With this issue we welcome to the ranks of our readers a further 77 Amateur Dramatic Societies in New Zealand alone. Encouraging as all this is, we would very much appreciate constructive comment from all quarters of the globe as to the kind of articles which appeal most and, by the same token, which are of least interest. Here, if ever there was one, is a case of one man's meat being another's poison.

We hear from the electrical enthusiast, for example, who wishes us to give circuit details of the latest electronic switchboard. Equally, on the other hand, we are besought by the less ambitious type not to devote space to descriptions of equipment and practices which are beyond the pocket, or indeed requirements, of any but the commercial theatre. "Will you please give help on the conversion of biscuit tins to spotlights?" Between such a Scylla and Charybdis we must navigate our editorial cockleshell.

Let none, therefore, be disappointed if his impassioned plea for this or that appears to fall on stony ground. A majority vote may require our limited space to be used in other directions. But do at any rate let us hear from you.

. . . may be our poison

Two subjects, however, we cannot consider. We cannot give lighting plots for this or that play. Conditions vary so much as to make this unpractical, impracticable and impossible anyway. On the other hand, help in the obtaining of specific effects is always gladly given, though not always, of course, through the medium of TABS. Secondly, we cannot "write up" specific productions either by way of advance publicity or by reviews or notices submitted to

us subsequently. We are always glad to hear how any particular problem has been tackled or overcome, but correspondents should not expect us of necessity to give TABS space to their endeavour. The odds are that we did not see the result to judge for ourselves and, although we know that no one would wittingly fool us, inventors *do* tend to wear rose-coloured spectacles. Anyway, we *might* feel that, although the solution to the particular problem was ingenious, it was not perhaps the best and should not, therefore, be broadcast.

Vale . . .

With this issue, our faithful contributor P.C. brings to a close his "Must" series, which has graced our pages for so long that one has wondered just who in the theatre would finally escape the fury of his pen. The last instalment of the series appears on page 12 of this issue. Judging by the number of requests we have received for permission to reprint these articles, this constructively destructive series will be missed by many. Who knows? One day we might even see the series in collected book form. And that might make quite a number of us laugh on the other side of our faces! Regular readers will understand.

. . . atque Ave

Commencing with our next issue we shall embark on a new series around the general theme "What, not enough . . .?" Obvious subjects for consideration are inadequacy of available amps, dimmer ways, dips, wing space, stage depth, head room, and possibly even shekels. Personally, we would like to see included something about the lack of sympathy of certain landlords and their caretakers, which prevents even a drawing-pin being inserted in the structure of their affections without incurring a bill for major redecoration. At first blush, lack of dressing-room space might seem to qualify for inclusion in this series, but the first blush might not be the last, and P.C.'s well-intended constructive suggestions might cause embarrassment in the rectory drawing-room or the common room at St. Trinian's.

The object of the new series is not, of course, just to recapitulate the many trials and tribulations which beset all of us, but to try and offer some practical solutions. If readers will only act on our earlier invitation, we certainly may expect to learn in due course whether or not we are succeeding.

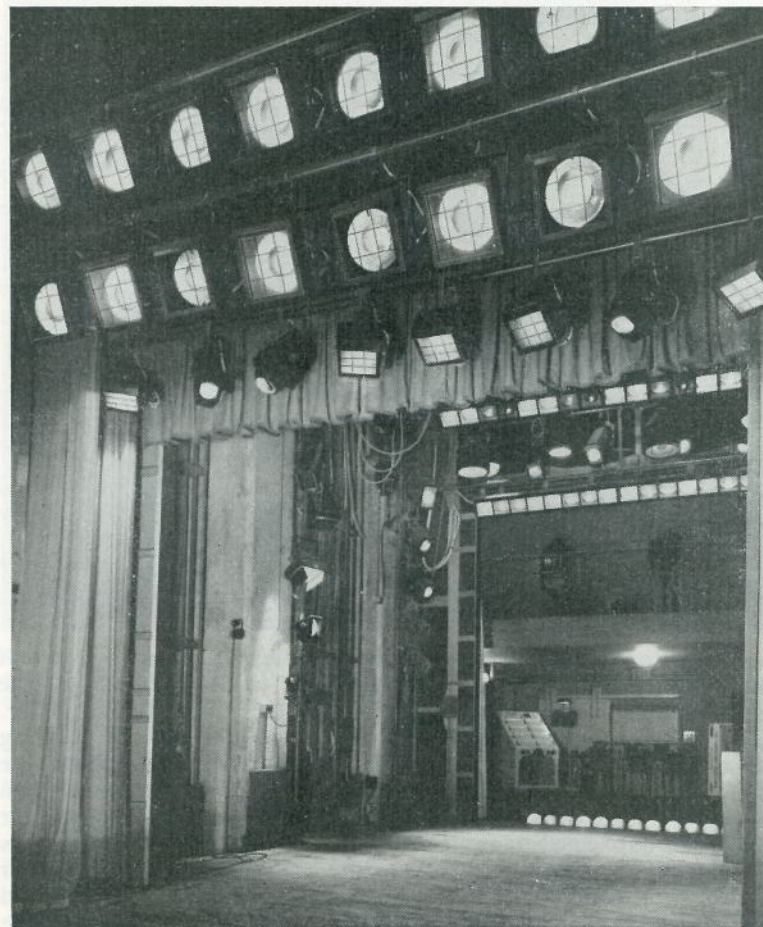
International Theatre Week

The British Centre of International Theatre Institute are organising their first British I.T. Week November 12th to 18th, 1951. Object, to stress universality of the Theatre and sister arts and their power to link and influence peoples of different nations. Much help and information, including choice of plays, lecturers, press and radio publicity may be had from British Centre of International Theatre Institute, 7 Goodwin's Court, London, W.C.2. TEM 0691.

A ONE-EYED THEATRE ?

Strand's new Demonstration Stage

It is a fact, I think, that most people are considerate to the blind. It is therefore strange to find that the term "one-eyed" has joined such others as "cock-eyed" and "half baked" as an expression of aspersion if not of actual abuse. If I describe as "one-eyed" the Strand Electric's new demonstration stage (and it *is* a demonstration stage as distinct from a demonstration theatre), I



The Strand Electric demonstration stage has a depth of about 38 feet and overhead equipment is flown at about 15 feet above stage level.

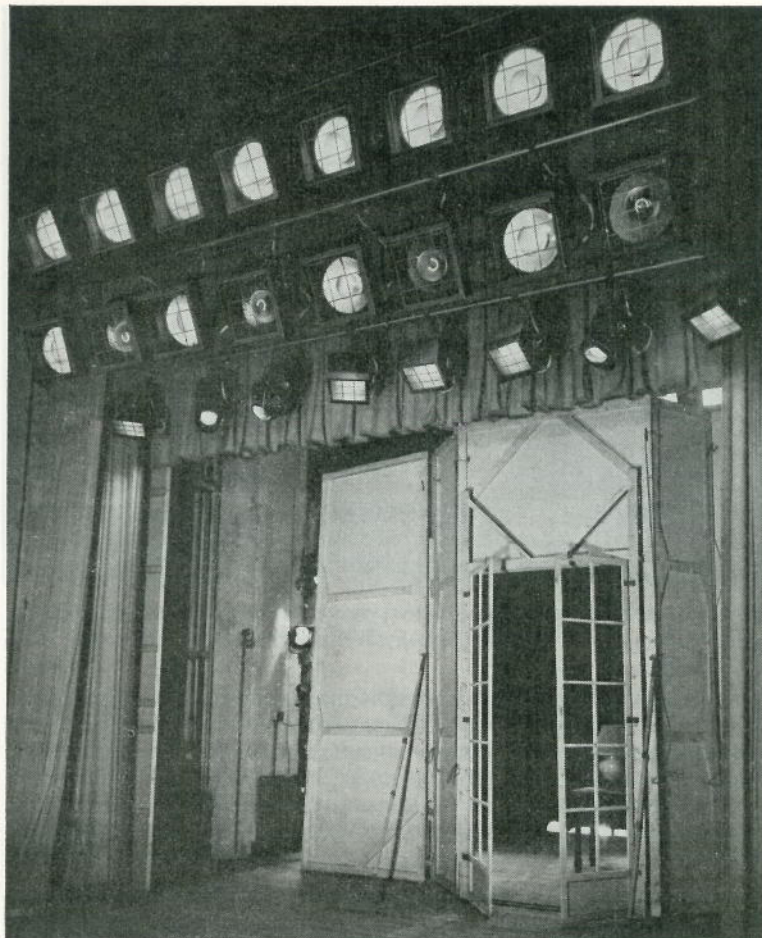
beg leave to be taken literally. There is nothing cock-eyed about this affair, and the fact that it is only half as wide as one might have wished is its only shortcoming.

Until it was destroyed by enemy action in 1941, we had at 29, King Street, London, W.C.2, what the Press described as a "bijou theatre"—a ghastly term to describe a small stage and auditorium. Now we have decided to use the available space as a stage at the expense of an auditorium. As a result we have managed to contrive a stage within a stage. The outer stage—with its one single limitation of width—bears comparison with a small professional stage. The inner stage is comparable in all respects with most amateur and school stages.

To take the two in turn, our full-sized stage has a depth of about 38 ft; battens and other overhead equipment are flown at about 15 ft. above stage level, and then comes the rub. We have only a width of 19 ft. Rather than fully equip such a space, thereby producing a tunnel-shaped stage, we decided to close the left eye, as it were, and to treat the available space as the right-hand half of a stage as seen from the auditorium. We have our height, we have our depth. All we lack is our width, but by painting the left-hand wall of the stage a matt black, leaving it as bare as possible, and by inviting any visitors to imagine they are looking out of one eye instead of two—a false analogy of course—we now can, with that single limitation, produce any lighting result or effect reasonably to scale. That was, of course, one of our pre-war shortcomings. We could produce the effects but they were not to scale. On a stage of very limited depth we had a host of lighting equipment, little of which could be seen under true working conditions.

Under the new arrangement any lantern or group of lanterns can be seen operating at approximately the right length of throw and from the correct angle. If we can produce the required result on half a stage then clearly we can do so on the whole to even better effect. More room, more opportunity and best of all, presumably, more equipment.

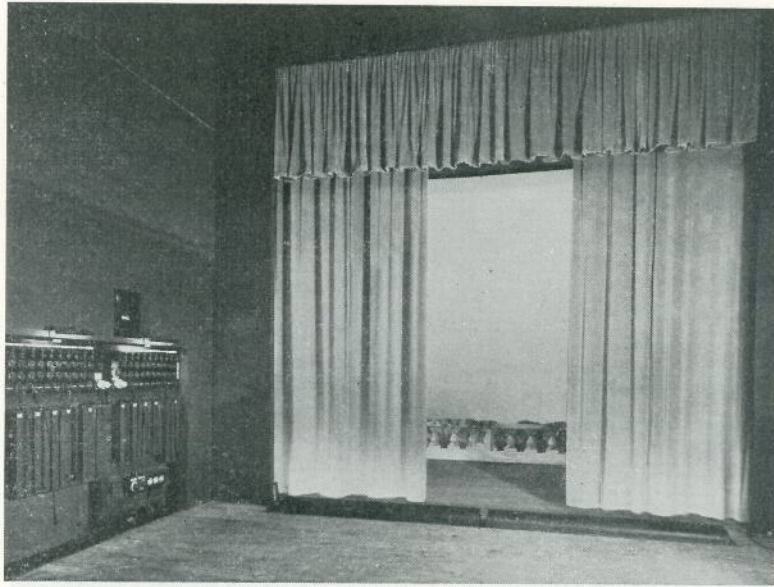
I mentioned earlier "a stage within a stage". The up-stage half of our demonstration stage is convertible to show the use of the smaller types of equipment required by the school and amateur. There is a separate proscenium with its own tabs and disappearing footlights, which are brought into use for the amateur type demonstration and which can be closed up and forgotten when using full stage depth. The lighting of the cyclorama in particular has been duplicated to suit both large and small user. The same is true of the lighting controls. On the one hand we can show our latest electronic type switchboard as installed at the Old Vic and Stratford-on-Avon, whilst at the other extreme we can show what we call our "Junior" school type switchboard, consisting of a simple angle-iron frame with a switch and fuse panel below to which can



A backstage view of the Strand demonstration stage with scenery set. When using the upstage portion of stage for amateur or school type demonstrations the scenery is struck and removed to the wings.

be added slider dimmers as and when finances permit. In addition, for the benefit of the potential hire customer we can show both interlocking and non-interlocking types of portable switchboards.

So far as the inner school or amateur stage is concerned, we have a proscenium height of 13 ft., a width of 14 ft. and a depth of about 17 ft. A feature of which we are particularly proud is that cyclorama top lighting may be demonstrated either by means of a floodlight bank or using a compartment batten. Both of these sets of equipment may not only be raised or lowered in a matter



The small inner stage which has its own proscenium, tabs and switchboard, has a width of about 14 feet and a depth of 17 feet.

of seconds but may also be brought up or down stage as required. If, therefore, anyone should wish to see the effect of lighting his or her backcloth or cyclorama by means of a batten (or floodlights) from a distance of so many feet and a height of so many feet, in a matter of moments we can show exactly the result which would be obtained, together with the effect of altering these one way or the other.

Apart from the more obvious types of lighting equipment there are also available on view such things as floor and fly dip boxes, cue boards, special effects boards, colour-change lanterns, effects and so on. To facilitate operations and to help complete the picture, counterweight gear and curtain tracks have also been installed, and even the right-hand half of a proscenium arch with its appropriate half of the tabs curtain.

On the stage, the right-hand half of an interior scene can be set or struck as required. Everything is complete, down to the inevitable french window up-stage centre with balustrade ground-row outside. Every type of stage lighting equipment available is on view in its right place, and it may be seen working. Such lanterns as are not within easy reach of the stage or not mounted on stands, towers or boomerangs, can be lowered to stage level for closer inspection in a matter of seconds. What more could one want?

Obviously the thing to do is to see it for oneself, so an early visit is indicated to iron out any problems for that next production. You often meet quite interesting and important theatrical folk there, anyway. Even they seek our advice or the opportunity of carrying out practical experiments every now and then.

H.

REVIVING REVIVALS

By HAROLD DOWNS

Does the ordinary theatre-goer respond promptly and generously to the appeal made for his support of a revival?

Does the average revival justify itself in terms of theatrical and dramatic art, its mainspring, perhaps more often than not, being embedded in the business of profit-making?

IS it any easier to gauge the commercial success of a proposed revival than of a contemplated new production?

No doubt answers to these questions given by people who are keenly interested in the Contemporary Theatre, on either side of the curtain, would reveal widely differing views and sharply contrasted opinions.

My purpose is to enter a special plea for the worth-while revival and to suggest that one tendency is to overrate the appeal of the play that some influential person or group is convinced will be "a sure winner" because it is "just what the public wants" (perhaps!), and to underrate the potential success of a well-timed revival of a play which, when first produced, was acknowledged to be a worth-while play but which had not a spectacularly profitable "run."

One important factor that tends to be overlooked is that there is always both a floating theatrical population and an oncoming new generation of theatregoers.

The "ordinary" theatregoer is, paradoxically, the extraordinary person. He (or she) cannot be compelled to go to the theatre. He can, however, be "tempted" by clever advertising and ingenious publicity—but not often if he decides not only that he does not receive value for money but also that he is likely to be the victim of misleading claims and suggestions advanced, directly or indirectly, by those who are closely associated with the business side of the rightly-named "commercial theatre." Such a theatre is one of the essential institutions of modern society, and no apology needs to be made for its continuing existence in changing times. Nevertheless it too, like so many other things in present-day life, could be improved.

The lesson to be learned here is that the ordinary theatregoer should be given value for his money by offering either productions of new plays or new productions of old plays, good quality being the hall-mark in either case.

Men of the theatre who are interested in the traffic of the stage primarily for money-making purposes are also more than averagely knowledgeable about the facts of the first production of any play that it is thought by interested parties would be successful in revival. It follows that some revivals are renewed attempts to test the further money-making possibilities of "popular successes," and that some revivals are the re-presentations of plays which can be reintroduced to average theatregoers who, for a number of varied—and sound—reasons, were not theatregoers when these plays were first produced. There is also an entirely different section of potential support—average theatregoers who recall the pleasure they derived from first productions and who wish again to see performances of these pleasure-giving plays.

"Just what the public wants" is not one static thing, but a great variety of things that are drawn upon to meet moods of the moment and fleeting fashions. Accurately to gauge these is a recurring problem for which there are different solutions that spring from time and circumstance.

One critic, commenting upon the recently published "*Theatregoing*,"* said that it was a pleasure to see "once in a while" that John Galsworthy was "given his proper position in the current scheme of things." And why not? Galsworthy and his contemporaries, as creative literary artists, not only understood (in part) the world in which they lived, but also "sensed" (to state the fact loosely) the on-coming world and reflected the spirit of both worlds in some of their plays. Neither what they thought of the theatre nor what they wrote for it is "a spent force." Illustratively, G.B.S. many years ago pointed out that in his plays he had dealt with Slum-landlordism, Doctrinaire Free-Love, Pseudo-Ibsenism, Prostitution, Militarism, History, Current Politics, Natural Christianity, National and Individual Character, Paradoxes of Individual Character, Husband-hunting, Questions of Conscience, Professional Delusions and Impostures, Democracy, Theories of Government. During his playwriting career he added to these subjects! These are still "live" subjects as treated by him, although some of his successors are responsible for different treatments.

There is seldom favourably unanimous opinions on the first production of a play, and unanimity cannot be expected to be achieved by revivals.

When Mr. Ivor Brown saw in quick succession, and recently,

* Reviewed on page 29 of this issue

Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* and Shaw's *Cæsar and Cleopatra* he wrote: ". . . what is a certainty is that I myself have never enjoyed greater writing for the stage better presented on the stage. Not acted only, but presented. For the adroit use of a revolving stage and the faultless stage-management, as well as the choice of decoration and the brilliant use of lighting, were the more remarkable when two major productions were being given on successive nights." Referring to the last two acts of *Antony and Cleopatra*, he stated "To see them performed with a majesty equal to their mighty utterance of desire, ecstasy, despair, and the brave end has been my life's desire in the theatre, and now I have seen it done." This distinguished dramatic critic has evidently had to wait more than 30 years after beginning professional dramatic criticism for the *Manchester Guardian* for the realisation of one desire!

In contrast, when the playwright J. B. Priestley—some of his early plays are overdue for revival in the professional theatre—saw the Old Vic production of Shaw's *Captain Brassbound's Conversion*—first given by the Stage Society in 1900 and at the Court in 1906—he wondered why he found "this play so irritating." (By the way, seldom has the brake had to be applied to the number of revivals in the West End of the plays of any one playwright as was deemed necessary with Shavian revivals during this Festival year.)

I have not in mind only plays of ideas and Naturalistic Drama which, it is seriously contended by some, has "had its day." Also to be considered for revivals are the colourful spectacular "musicals" and the light and bright plays of "the good old days." That fashions change has already been acknowledged. The foundations of many a theatrical appeal to the eye by "mounting" and lighting, design and movement, and to the ear by melody and rhythm, remain as firm to-day, however, as on the day they were laid. Moreover, important is the fact that what father and mother can legitimately term "old" their sons and daughters can classify as "new" as far as their theatrical experiences are concerned.

Who, then, should sponsor revivals—if it be granted that revivals are suitable present-day theatrical and dramatic material? The brief answer is: All who are interested in exploiting every angle of appeal of the Contemporary Theatre.

From time to time those who are associated with the Professional Theatre reveal their awareness of the value of revivals. They could be more adventurous.

Those who are associated with the Repertory Theatre wage a persisting, but not hopeless, battle with prejudice against "the old" because the "brand new" in West End successes is the recurring fashion. They could intensify the fight.

Those who are associated with the Amateur Movement, perhaps too slick on "releases," extend the "lives" of West End successes.

They could develop a deeper interest in the renewal of the lives of "old favourites."

The fact is that ALL plays that have been produced cannot be kept alive through decades by revivals. That many plays should not be buried, as now they are, beyond hope of interesting and justified exhumation is equally factual.

EVERYBODY MUST DO EVERYTHING

During the present century the Amateur Theatre has become a quite phenomenal feature of British social life. Every hamlet, village, town or city has its group or groups of play-makers. Their productions range from the superlatively good to the intolerably awful and, although they always know how good they are, they seldom realise how bad they can be. This ceaseless activity gives lots of fun and interest to hundreds of thousands of otherwise normal citizens, many of whom do, in fact, satisfy a creative urge that might have been suppressed by our materialistic civilisation.

It is obvious that those who are blessed with the divine gifts that make them into creative or interpretive artists are lamentably few; fortunately, however, there are still fewer who have not some faint glimmer of a divine spark, lacking though the spark may be in luminous output. A feeble spark may often be fanned into a fairish blaze of comforting warmth if an encouraging skill is brought to the kindling.



"... if an encouraging skill is brought to the kindling."

ably liable to either cynicism or complacency. Of the two, cynicism is surely the lesser evil. Complacency inevitably stifles enthusiasm, of which cynicism is but a perverted form. Not all the host of workers have been subjected to critical review. Their omission means not that the importance of their efforts is underestimated, but that their name is legion and the series has already

lasted long enough; it should end before one becomes too tediously repetitive.

For every actor who struts and frets his hour upon the stage there are a score or more persons whose energies are needed to put him there and keep him there. It has been stressed that there are supremely important things to be done by playwright, producer, actor, stage-manager, designer, lighting artist, "props", adjudicators, critics and audiences; **but what of the scene-shifters who shift scenery, the wardrobe mistresses who are mistresses—of wardrobes, and prompters who are sometimes too prompt?** And what of all the host of other people whose activities are less directly concerned with the stage itself? The production of a play is a curious, and often uneasy, alliance of art and commerce. Even the



"... uneasy alliance of art and commerce."

most pure-minded protagonists of art for art's sake must face the unpleasant fact that somebody has to pay for their fun. Usually it is the audience, but, even if some council, committee or authority can be persuaded to subsidise such efforts at intellectual slumming, an audience still has to be obtained. Without an audience a play is a barren thing, and any organisation that wishes to present plays must be composed not only of artists and artisans who concern themselves with the mechanics of production, but also of the artful executive types who have a nice regard for matters monetary and the acquisition of audiences. There must be business managers who are businesslike, secretaries who are secretive, treasurers who are treasures, publicity hounds who publicise, committees who are non-committal, chairmen who take chairs, caretakers who take jolly good care, booking officers who book seats, stewards who become shepherds and the whole host of others to whom the cause is sacred; they also serve who hand out cups of tea.

All these people of varying capacities and interests combine to make the complete Little Theatre and provide it with all the components necessary to a lively conflict. But, since conflict is the very essence of drama and is indicative of energy, it is no great disadvantage, provided the conflict is kept within reasonable and impersonal bounds. It should never be allowed to deteriorate into an undignified scramble for kudos. It often does, with unfortunate results, when over-zealous members are disposed to take themselves and their responsibilities too seriously. Shakespeare had several

words for this disposition, the most apt collection being: "Man—drest in a little brief authority, plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven as make the angels weep." Each committee-room—and dressing-room—should have the Shakespearean statement blazoned on its walls as a warning to its occupants.

The latter will, of course, heartily approve the implied admonition which, as they will all readily recognise, applies with peculiar aptness to the other fellow. It would not be amiss also to display, with equal prominence, that playful prayer of Bobbie Burns: "O wad some power the giftie gie us . . ."



“. . . the whole is greater than the part."

The performers, who are the direct recipients of the plaudits of the multitude, are often inclined to forget the immense amount of contributory effort that has anonymously aided their show. And quite often the subsidiary contributors are inclined to forget the purpose of their efforts. They become so immersed in their particular problems that they wouldn't notice the difference if the purpose were changed from producing plays to the organisation of whist drives or jumble sales.

Everybody *must* do everything but they must do it as a team—not as a collection of individualists each seeing only the restricted limits of his own field of activity. The success of the whole is a tribute to the skill and energy displayed by each individual member of the varied team; and is usually a tribute to an effective captain of the team somewhere in the offing. For it is the captain who is best able to impress on his team the important fact that the whole is greater than the part—even the leading lady's part.

P.C.

BRING ME A TUCKET

By PAUL LORNE

*With acknowledgments to the Tyneside "Phoenix,"
Journal of the People's Theatre Arts Group.*

It was William Shakespeare, as usual, who started all this trouble of noises off in the theatre, with his ill-judged *alarums without; excursions; a tucket sounds a parley*. And what kind of language is that, may we ask in passing? If he wanted somebody to blow a trumpet off-stage, why didn't he say so, instead of having the harassed producer hunting around the second-hand shops to see if he could pick up a tucket anywhere?

However, the subject is noises off, and we may as well say right at the start that these fall very readily into two categories, viz.: (a) noises off which are meant to help the play, such as horses' hooves, wind blowing, cocks crowing and B.B.C. seagulls; and (b) noises off which are not meant to help the play, such as stage-hands chatting, the thunder of feet as the theatre personnel move about the wings on their legitimate business, the sound of stage-hands falling from a great height upon the wooden boards of the stage, and the stertorous breathing of the stage-manager. It is with the first category that we have to deal, and we may well open with the most familiar sound of all, that of horses' hooves. It has long been a popular feeling in the theatre that the sound of horses' hooves may be accurately simulated by striking together the two halves of an empty coconut shell. Whether this is true or not, there is more to it than that. It would be well if the operator would study the rhythm of moving horses, or the impression given may well be that of two horses (inebriated) dancing the "Dashing White Sergeant". An element of timing is desirable, too, or it may appear that the hero has left the saddle while the horses are in full gallop, and the clatter of hooves is maintained until, apparently, one horse whispers loudly to another, "Sh. That's enough," whereupon the horses all crawl away on their knees without making any further sound.

Every well-equipped amateur theatre has its peal of tubular bells, a number of pieces of brass tubing of varying lengths hung upon an unstable frame. After playing the first quarter chime by striking the tubes with a little hammer, the operator is often alarmed to find that the entire frame has collapsed with a melodious crash. The audience is left with the idea that a nearby church has fallen to the ground, and spends the rest of the evening trying to fit the incident into the play. In a well-known play of Shakespeare the repeated note of a single bell is called for, and frequently the bell chosen has an abominably tinny sound. Thus it occurs that Othello's cry of "Silence that dreadful bell" may well be heartfelt.

The thunder sheet is also a familiar weapon of the noises-off experts. It is a sheet of iron which is shaken to reproduce the noise of thunder. What emerges is very similar to the noise that people make propping their trays against the legs of tables in a cafeteria. One would think that the simple matter of knocking upon a door would present no particular problem to either the technicians or the actors themselves, but here again trouble awaits the unprepared. Usually the knocking is left to the actor, and he arrives in the wings in good time to take his cue, knock, and be admitted. If he follows the simple expedient of knocking upon the door, as in real life, he will find that (a) the door is made of canvas, (b) that his knocking produces nothing but a faint scrabbling noise, (c) that the door and the wall in which it is set will tremble violently, (d) that all the pictures hung on the wall on that side of the stage will fall to the ground. The audience will infer from this that an earthquake is about to ensue, and will settle down with contented signs to see something really exciting for a change; they will soon infer from the studious disregard of these things by the people on the stage that they were only accidents, and that the drama is just one of these dreary metaphysical things after all. Life is full of these disappointments in the amateur theatre.

The reproduction of water noises presents some fascinating aspects. Sounds of continuous rain or rough seas breaking on rocky shores are often called for, and it has been averred that the manipulation of dried peas upon a board will give a satisfactory effect. In our experience the peas will always roll off the board, and unwary people walking in the wings will sustain heavy falls. The same dried peas, if they can be collected again, are said to convey faithfully the sound of people plunging from a great height into the sea, if they are hurled in a thin continuous stream into a tin bucket. What they do reproduce, with startling fidelity, is the sound of dried peas being hurled in a thin, continuous stream into a tin bucket. There is no other sound quite like it.

It is said that dried peas, if boiled over a slow heat will make a savoury meal, but this is outside our scope.

It is difficult to discuss the question of the sound of gun-fire without passion. Guns are, by a careful computation, seventeen-and-a-half times more temperamental than actors. They will go off in the dressing-room, in the green room, in the workroom, or in any sort of testing conditions, without fail. Carried into the wings preparatory to being fired upon a cue, they will even go off if breathed upon. But when they are required to go off on or near the stage they will consistently refuse to oblige with an obstinacy that would make a mule seem like a weak-willed yes-animal. We can suggest no remedy to this save that authors in killing off their characters should confine themselves to stabbing, poisoning or lingering

diseases, all of which methods of dying may be encompassed with the accompaniment of no other noises than those which may be reproduced upon the vocal chords of the human being. Guns are not reliable. It might be well for the experts of the small-arms industry to look upon this. The thing might spread.

The reproduction of noises off-stage used to be one of the jolliest fun-and-games departments in the theatre, with its experts inventing all sorts of quaint devices and complicated mechanisms to achieve their ends. The march of science has now caught up with all that, and all one needs in these happier days is a turntable, a set of records, and an amplifier to reproduce any sound from the inhalation of soup in the near distance to the Fall of the House of Usher. No longer is it necessary, for the sound of a trumpet, to have in the wings a bugle with a Boy Scout attached, ready inflated to bursting point. No longer, when seagulls are indicated, is it necessary to have a stage-hand, shrieking dismally, perched in the flies. These things, and many others, are all obtainable on gramophone records. Restraint, rather than ingenuity, is to be desired. We remember, in this connection, a play which took place on board ship. The enthusiastic sound expert surrounded the drama with the noise of ship's engines, breaking waves, crying seagulls, fog-horns and muffled oars until the actors couldn't hear themselves speak, and the more susceptible members of the audience were sea-sick. Or at any rate, sick. Enough is enough.

There is only one sound which cannot satisfactorily be reproduced on the gramophone, and that is the sound of a shot, which brings us right back to the small-arms problem. When the harassed producer has considered all the possible solutions to this problem without reaching a satisfactory answer, and despair has set in, he should load a real gun with real bullets, present it to his forehead, and pull the trigger. It will go off all right, and if he has been a good producer his spirit will ascend to Heaven to the sound of harps, off.

NOW WE SOUND OUR OWN SENNET

We are glad to remind readers that *all** the effects mentioned in the article above are available from us on Stagesound disc recordings. For a few shillings and at short notice any desired effects can be recorded consecutively or simultaneously for as long as required and in any order. The manager of the recording studio is, however, anxious to make it clear that, although he can provide harp music *ad lib.*, this is not fully authenticated as being of angelic origin. Indeed, in order to avoid any difference of opinion in the matter, it is suggested that anyone requiring sound effects of a

* Recordings of bombs, guns and small arms fire are available, but, of course, the effect depends on the volume obtainable from the sound amplifier to be used.

supposedly Heavenly nature should himself select the music to be played or sung, having of course due regard for any copyright which may be involved. Self-styled angelic choirs and cherubic trumpeters do, strangely enough, have to eat like the rest of us, and this should be borne in mind when stipulating the number of choristers and musicians.

MORE ABOUT OPTICAL EFFECTS

In our last issue we could devote no space to a detailed description of certain of our effects, but only to their use in a general kind of way. The following information may be found useful.

Clouds

These are made in two types, "storm" and "fleecy." The former projects mostly white light broken up by small shadows, and the use of other lighting on the cyclorama or backcloth will, therefore, soften or colour these dark patches as required. This effect is best used a little out of focus and it will be found that side projection with its consequent distortion is not impossible. If a still cloud slide is projected from one lantern and a storm cloud faintly moves over it from another, a better illusion of a stormy sky is obtained and quite often a piece of 17 Blue colour-medium across the lens will correct an apparent slight tendency to yellowness in the clouds. The "fleecy" cloud effect can be used in similar circumstances but consists of small areas of white light with a greater preponderance of shadows in between. All cloud effects, and particularly fleecy ones, should be run slowly.

Smoke

This effect is similar to storm clouds in design but has a much more confused pattern.

Flame

This consists of red and orange tongues of flame and can be used quite effectively as a projection on to real smoke or on to gauze, especially so if more than one projector is used.

Snow and Rain

In the former of these effects, light passing through small holes in a revolving disc produces the effect of snow, whilst in the latter a pattern of short lines or streaks produces the effect of rain. Both are best employed from the front of house on to a gauze and should be sharply focussed. Again, if two are used greater depth is obtained and the effect is greatly heightened if the speed and direction of fall of the two discs be slightly dissimilar. A mask

should be used to contain the picture or pictures exactly within the proscenium arch. A sound effect should always be used with rain to achieve an illusion.

Wave, Ripple and Undersea

These effects do not use rotating discs but consist of a fixed slide with distorting glasses moving up and down. Consequently they should not be turned upside down, although within certain limits tilting is possible to counteract the distortion of side projection. Thus used across a painted groundrow, with consequent distortion and loss of sharpness, they can give a credible appearance of water, apart from their value as a direct projection.

Tubular Ripple

This type of ripple effect, which was described in our last issue, does not use a projecting lantern but consists of a 1,000-watt sausage-shaped "horizon" lamp in front of which a perforated metal cylinder rotates. The spread of light from this effect is wide horizontally but of limited height, and it is, therefore, extremely useful for, and should only be employed on, very short throw work.

Forked Lightning

This consists of a metal lantern slide in which the forked pattern of lightning has been cut. There is an operating handle for flashing this on to the backcloth when required. Used in conjunction with clouds and reduced light on the backcloth it can be very effective. In view of the greater intensity obtainable an arc lamp is to be preferred to a Pattern 51 Effects Projector as the light source.

Sheet Lightning

For the general flashing of lightning we strongly recommend the use of photo flash-bulbs, which we can supply. These lamps have an overrun filament giving a high brightness with a correspondingly shorter life. The latter is, however, no real handicap to such uses, and the flashing is controlled by means of a push-switch wired in series with the lamp. This method is much to be preferred to the old carbon stick and file system.

THE NATIONAL THEATRE

The Editor was privileged to be amongst those present when Her Majesty the Queen laid the foundation stone of the National Theatre in London on Friday, July 13th. Both Her Majesty and Princess Elizabeth were presented with bouquets made up of flowers and herbs mentioned in Shakespeare's plays. Theoretically the choice should have been very wide, but the problem was to find varieties which were in bloom at the right date. The final selection included about twenty-five species. How many flowers and herbs did the Bard name altogether?

THE ACTING AREA FLOOD AND STAGE LIGHTING

On stages devoted to spectacular productions in this country one is almost certain to find a number of barrels suspended overhead, each of which will resemble that shown in the photograph (Fig. 1). These acting area bars have become a commonplace here, but that they should do so was by no means fore-ordained and obvious, nor is such a quantity of them to be found elsewhere in the world. In time, however, thanks to the great increase in British stage lighting export in recent years, this and other home-grown ideas tend to spread.

When one considers that to-day all the overhead lighting of the acting area in a theatre like the Palladium consists of these lanterns and that in 1935 it

Fig. 1. A 12-way
Pattern 76 Acting
Area bar.

was impossible to hire or buy even a single lantern with illumination characteristics remotely approaching, it is obvious that in the past decade or so an interesting change in technique has been going on.

As the writer, in the then very young Research Dept. of the Strand Electric, was intimately concerned with the introduction of this lantern, it may be of interest to recall how it all happened. Which comes first, the apparatus or the demand? In general I think, in stage lighting, the apparatus comes first, and it may be some considerable time before producers get around to realising its possibilities.

Strictly speaking, all lighting localised to light the acting area as distinct from the surrounding setting, should be known as acting area lighting. This would include the spot batten, the spots in

front-of-house and so forth, but not battens, footlights and other lanterns which flood or scatter their light. Up to 1934 the sole source of localised light other than the arc spot was the $\frac{1}{2}$ -watt spotlight or focus lantern. The common wattages were the same as now and the veteran 1,000-watt Strand Pattern 23 spot was the only directional lighting unit up to and including Cochran's *Cavalcade* (1931), *Bitter Sweet* (1931) and *Evergreen* (1930). Except for shape it does not differ from the Pattern 43 of to-day—same lens, same lamp. To get more light without the inconvenience of stage arcs, resort was made to a 2,000-watt version, though still with a 6-in. diameter lens, and these were the master lanterns used by Hassard Short in *Waltzes from Vienna* in 1931, *Wild Violets* in 1932 and *Stop Press* in 1935.

About this time an attempt was made to popularise an 8-in. diameter lens for the 2,000-watt spot, and at this point British stage lanterns might have continued on continental lines to include lens spotlights in which 2,000-watt or larger lamps were common. That they did not do so can be ascribed to the reluctance of British lamp manufacturers at that time to produce large-wattage lamps as convenient as those available on the Continent.

The lack of high-power lamps has caused us to concentrate on more efficient optical systems to make the most of the light the 1,000-watt lamp emits. An early attempt was the Stelmar optical system used by Strand for special jobs at this time. It was the first precision optical projector used on the stage in this country. As the 1,000-watt model was over 3 ft. long its applications were limited. The "Pageant" lanterns, "Mirror Spot" and "Acting Area" flood are the solutions of the problem of efficiency without size increase. All three appeared round about 1935.

The "Acting Area" flood is of different derivation from the "Pageant" or "Mirror Spot," since it is a fixed beam lantern—a member of the floodlight family. 12-in. 500-watt and 17-in. 1,000-watt square Sunray floods enjoyed a long career alongside the Pattern 23 focus lantern. These two had a more or less medium-angle beam (though beams were not defined and stabilised until 1936) and could be used hanging on a spot and flood batten or on telescopic stands as stage floods. When a less spreading vertical flood was required near the backcloth it was customary to use a

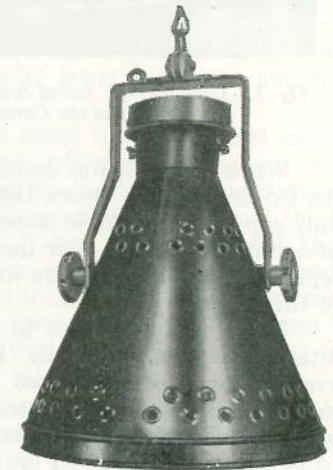


Fig. 2.
Pattern 35 Arena Flood.

1,000-watt Arena flood (Fig. 2), originally designed for Bertram Mills' circus ring at Olympia.

This was a very wide-angle lantern—so wide in fact that the reflector was later used without alteration as a cyclorama flood, and in fact still exists in the Pattern 60 flood to-day. To the front of the Arena flood was attached, of all things, a circular hood 2 ft. deep. The hood intercepted all but a fitful glimmer of light which was allowed to escape to the stage floor.



Fig. 3. German type Acting Area lanterns between 6-foot lengths of batten as installed at the Covent Garden Opera House in 1934.

When in 1934 it was decided (at short notice, of course) to equip the Covent Garden Opera House with a new stage installation, the only gap in the available lantern range that was noticeable was that of acting area flood. For the rest of the installation, including the remote-control board, there was equipment to hand to suit the ideas of the time.

No one had the face to suggest Arenas with hoods! In the little time available, one of the many German types then available was manufactured here and hung between lengths of magazine batten as can be seen in Fig. 3. This lantern arrangement was, and is, common opera-house practice, because it allows operas to be presented either on the old cutcloth and backcloth principle, or with built-up scenery and cyclorama.

This lantern, like its German prototype, had a stainless steel reflector and, though better than the previous makeshift, was far from efficient. When more light was required the German practice was to use acting areas with larger lamps, but that could not be done here. After comparatively little experiment a lantern using a very efficient silvered cathedral glass reflector giving a 26° beam was produced. The direct light of the lamp was intercepted by spill rings, but these were made conical so as to follow the crossing beam and obstruct it as little as possible. This lantern, the Pattern 56 (Fig. 4), was not handsome to look at—the German one had a more graceful line—but it gave ten times the light using the same

1,000-watt lamp. It is this lantern which enabled the present fashion of massed acting area floods with their narrow beams and sharp cut-offs to come about. It is now being replaced by the Pattern 76 (Fig. 1), in which efficiency has at last been married to compactness and a pleasing outline.

Theatres did not adopt the Patt. 56 at once; I remember being much pained by the way people still stuck to the arena and hood. This was not surprising since this really efficient lantern is an arrogant neighbour to gentle-focus lanterns. A strong beam from overhead simply could not be countered for facial correction.

It is true that "Pageant" lanterns for side lighting and "Mirror Spots" for front lighting were developed at the same time, but the adoption of all three meant quite a revolution. As I pointed out in my last article, "Scale in Lighting," one must be careful of balance and proportion, and for straight plays and most amateur productions opportunity to use these high-efficiency lanterns is infrequent. A drawing-room set can be beautifully and softly lit using the older but far from obsolete focus lanterns, relegating the Pattern 76 "Acting Area" or Pattern 50 "Pageants" to the job of sunshine or moonlight through the window—effects lighting. To replace the many focus lanterns in this context by fewer but more efficient lanterns means stridency.

For spectacular productions and ballet it is a different story. Until the arrival of these new lanterns, effective lighting was not possible on the large stage. To judge by the lighting methods of at least one ballet company at the moment one would not think these lanterns had arrived yet! It was Robert Nesbitt who first saw

the potentialities of the acting area flood, and he set about using rows of them overhead and balanced them by using "Pageant" lanterns on vertical barrels (boomerangs) in the wings for side lighting.

This form of lighting became particularly useful during the war to make the most of limited or rather shabby scenic materials; bright light concentrated on artists and costumes, the *décor* often being lit only by diffusion from the stage floor. An excellent example of this kind of lighting was initiated in *Gangway* at the Palladium in 1941, when all overhead lighting was really acting area batters, and it is this layout which has persisted with but slight modification at that theatre ever since.

High-intensity colour can be very exciting; warm amber of real kick is quite a different thing from the amber so often seen.



Fig. 4. The Original Strand Acting Area Lantern.

Then, again, intense blue no longer tied to nocturnal gloom opens up a new world of experience. The only drawback is the difficulty of accommodating sufficient lanterns of each colour and yet retain adequate coverage on the stage floor. To get over this a motor-driven solenoid selected mechanism can now be fitted to some or even all acting areas and four colours (separately or in combination) and white obtained by remote control from the switchboard.

The commonest beam angle for an acting area flood is round about 24°, but obviously there are occasions when a *much* wider beam is desirable, and this involves a different lantern and reflector. In designing for a beam of 55° one is in rather a quandary since the most efficient form will cross the beam on the colour filters and greatly shorten its life. However, experiments continue.

Generally speaking, a reflector lantern of this sort does not lend itself to a variable beam, but recently it has been found possible to modify the lampholder mounting so that a variable beam of 21° minimum to 39° maximum can be produced; this is described below.

F.P.B.

MODIFICATION TO PATTERN 76 ACTING AREA FLOOD

Up to June of this year this lantern has been manufactured to give a fixed beam of 24°. It has been found possible to incorporate an adjustable clamp which allows the lampholder to be set to give a variation of beam. The adjustment is as follows.

Slacken off the locking screw to loosen the lampholder clamp. The holder may then be moved right up until stopped by a fixed band on the lampholder. The lantern beam angle will then be 21°. If the lampholder is pushed down until stopped by the holder lip the angle will be 38°.

With practice, the adjustment can be made without opening the back of the lantern and removing the reflector, by simply putting the hand up the front of the lantern, slackening the fixing screw and resetting the lampholder by touch.

The total travel is not more than $\frac{5}{16}$ in., so the adjustment is tricky, but, bearing in mind the two outside limit beam angles, it is possible to obtain an intermediate, and tighten the clamp. Unless otherwise specified the lanterns are sent out with the holder in the 21° position.

The modified lanterns will be supplied for sale from now on, but it will be some considerable time before there will be more than a small proportion in hire stock. Where they are particularly needed it will increase the chance of obtaining them if reference is made to "1951 modification" on the order.

CLASSICS IN MODERN DRESS

By PAUL BEDFORD

Whenever a producer, for reasons best known to himself, decides to put on a classic play in modern dress there is a furore among the sons of Momus, whose divergences are seldom more marked, for the simple reason that there is no final answer to the question, except in relation to a particular production of a specific play, whether or not such "experiments" can be justified.

After seeing the excellent production of *The Rivals* in modern dress (done by Willard Stoker and the Birmingham Repertory Company over two years ago) one critic summed up his reactions by saying: "Good fun, but hardly Sheridan." I am still not quite clear what he meant. Sheridan wrote the play; and it is as much Sheridan as *Hamlet* is Shakespeare or *Blithe Spirit* is Coward. What was doubtless meant was that the production in no way resembled what we imagine it might have been like in the author's own day; but this is axiomatic, whether the costumes are modern or not, because theatre conventions have changed in the interim. No production of any Shakespeare play to-day can possibly be anything like what he might have countenanced at the old Globe; but they are none the less "Shakespeare" for that.

What we can so easily forget is that it is impossible to reproduce the attitude of an outmoded era even if we have sufficiently accurate historical detail to cope with the physical conditions. Every new production must be a new interpretation of the play in the light of current conventions, thoughts, habits and moods, whether the characters be dressed in detailed period habit or immaculate modern garb.

Ostensibly it would be inevitably strange for an actor dressed in sports jacket and slacks to say, "Knock down my Aunt Deborah! —Here, now, are two that were a sort of cousin of theirs. You see, Moses, these pictures were done some time ago when beaux wore wigs, and the ladies their own hair." But we can still find a Charles Surface in almost any fashionable London club.

Moreover, we must realise that there is more to a play than just the author's words. They are the recipe for the cake, but the ingredients are supplied by the performers in their various interpretations of their rôles; and the producer is the cook, who can make or mar the result by his knowledge of how to follow the recipe and use the ingredients he has to hand (provided he is one who regards the actor as a creative artist and does not try to impose some pre-digested interpretation on him). We might further this analogy by thinking of the settings and costumes as the icing on the cake; and no one can deny that the cake is still there, no matter what colour or shape the icing may assume, though there are, of course, some

delicacies that are mostly all icing, just as there are some plays that need the finer embellishments of dress and *décor* to make their appeal. But, while I beg leave to except Wilde's masterpiece, *The Importance of being Earnest*, these are rarely classics.

One of the qualifications of a classic is that it has stood the test of time. It is only the finest works, either practical or artistic, that will do so. Although one cannot accept this as a criterion, it serves as an adequate eliminator; and it does mean that a classic must generally be concerned with fundamental rather than temporal considerations; that its theme will be eternal even if its story, or context, is not. Very often, however, we discover that the whole conception is timeless, and that it comprises an indefinite but everlasting idiom of truth.

What Euripides says in *The Trojan Women*, and Aristophanes in *Lysistrata*, is as true to-day as when these early giants wrote their masterpieces of tragedy and comedy. The fact that each refers to a particular war in history is insignificant, because what is said can be equally well applied to any other war that has occurred since. The theme of man's love of peace is eternal; but the context of these plays will not really stand a change of place or time—particularly not the former, for we must consider the legends associated with Helen of Troy. Mention of Helen reminds us that what Goethe says in his version of *Faust* means as much to-day as when it was penned, even though the whole play is wrapped for ever in a legend. The only objections to this being played in modern dress would appear to be the associations conjured up in our minds by that very legend, coupled with the task of making the witches—and Mephistopheles—feasible. But we must recall that the Prince of Darkness has been furnished with a collar and tie (and even an umbrella!) by James Bridie in *Mr. Bolfray*. It is quite surprising what we will accept when it is dished up in the right way. Even Molière's *Tartuffe* was made quite plausible in the puppet-like modern-dress production, by Peter Powell, at the Arts; for the essential character of the hypocrite is as rife to-day as ever—not to mention the sad gullibility of many a citizen as respectable as M. Orgon.

On quite another plane, what Sheridan wrote in *The Rivals* is as true to-day as it was in the eighteenth century. The parts of the story, and the characters, that seem to-day to be exaggerated were equally well exaggerations then; the most conspicuous being Mrs. Malaprop, who is a delightful theatrical character and could never pretend to become anything more—or less. But basically the impact of the play is the same as when it left the author's mind, and I can find no real objection (nor, I should add, real object) to its being presented in modern terms. Not a word of the dialogue needs to be changed, so the "recipe" stands; and if the ingredients are different it is only because our tastes are attuned (for better or for worse) to our own times.

If a play has substance it matters very little how it is dressed, provided the costumes are designed to further the purposes of the author and are in keeping with the spirit of the piece and the social and other characteristics of the wearers. Certain clothes, certain eras, certain scenes are indelibly associated in our minds with certain customs, outlooks and practices; and the producer who selects a specific date in history must remember that he confines himself to its particular limits. This applies whether the date be that of the play, contemporary with the production, or even quite irrelevant to either. As examples of the latter we can cite Kenneth Tynan's First Folio *Hamlet* put into eighteenth-century dress; the Stratford *Hamlet*, produced by Michael Benthall, played in vaguely Victorian vestments; and John Burrell's fine production of *The Alchemist*, set a century later than the date it was written.

There is, of course, another way. That is to match the timelessness of the play with indefinite costumes and background, such as was done with reasonable effect by Sir Laurence Olivier in his production of *Antigone* (the play by Jean Anouilh, not to be confused with one of the same name by Sophocles). Here the only costume that was date-stamped was Olivier's own modern evening dress, which made his reading of the solitary chorus a cross between a lecturer with a date after the show and a compère who had a date with destiny. To me this was the biggest mistake in the production.

A similarly timeless production of *Julius Caesar* was attempted by Donald Wolfit not so long ago, when he played Brutus in a costume that was irresistably reminiscent of Goering's uniform in spite of the claim on the programme that "The uniforms are of no particular State or country, but chosen for their colour value as applicable to the main characters. The crowd is presented in terms of Greek Chorus." But this meant nothing, for even togas can be coloured to suit the main characters; and there can surely be no way in which we can reconcile modern dress with a Greek chorus in a Shakespeare play.

In conclusion I would like just to suggest that ultimately there can be but one justification for the transposition of any work of art, either in time or place, from one medium to another, or even from one language to another. That is that by so doing some fresh light may be thrown upon the subject (which must therefore be worthy) and that a greater number of people may be able to appreciate, enjoy or understand the work in question. It may be tempting to some to plead the possibility of using one work as a theme for another which can become itself a separate work of art; but this opens a wide field into which there is neither space nor profit to probe. In general we might just as well learn to leave well enough (i.e. accepted classics) to look after their own destiny and devote more time and energy to the not quite so fit, which can only too often use a helping hand.

WAS MY FACE 6!

Do you know your Colour Chart? Substitute the correct names for the colour numbers given below to complete the story. Where it occurs, the word "primary" should be omitted.

I left home as dawn was breaking and there was still a 31 on the ground. Over the distant hills the clouds were flecked with 13 turning to 12 and then to 4 and 8 as the sun rose, while the valley, still in shadow, ranged from 32 to 16. Soon the fast-disappearing clouds softened to little patches of 53, with here and there a splash of 51, and I knew I was in for a fine day. I had all day before me, so I sauntered along under a 18 sky with a 11 in my buttonhole, past 2 fields of wheat and flocks of sheep grazing on 23 grassy slopes, singing as I went my favourite song, "Oh, who will buy my sweet 36?" It was all very colourful.

After a halt, when I ate two 5's and a bar of what I please to call 56 (preferable to the plain variety), I pressed on until I came to a village sign which said 22. Round the corner I came to an attractive-looking inn with 54's clambering up the wall. I crossed the 39 lawn, went inside and ordered lunch. This consisted of some 21 soup to start with, followed by (sure enough) some John West's 9 cut with a 24 salad. I didn't care much for the look of the blancmange for a sweet, but the publican said, "It's all right, sir, there's real 55." He was perfectly correct; if anything it was too rich for my taste, but I swilled it down with a pint of beer.



After paying the bill I left the inn, wandered into a field and sat by a pile of 3 to have a nap. I must have been asleep for some hours, for I awoke to find a most attractive girl picking 18 flowers near me, and wearing a 15 dress with a string of 33 beads that admirably became her 19 eyes.

She was sobbing quietly to herself, so I asked if I could do anything for her. "Oh yes, indeed," she replied. I have done such a terrible thing and lost a real 14 ring in the stream—could you possibly help me to find it?" Needing no second bidding, I went with her to the stream, a lovely place where the water rippled over 60 stones through clumps of 50 cowslips.

"Is it near the 10?" I asked (having found out her name by now), but she didn't seem to remember. Suddenly I saw something 52 catching the 5A rays of a sinking sun and, leaning forward, I pulled out the missing article. As I straightened up I found Rose sitting behind me, looking too enchanting for words. It was by now nearly dark, so, taking the opportunity while it occurred, I slipped the ring on to her third finger and muttered, "Will you?" In the fading 7 looked more lovely than ever, and I was beginning to think that I was going to be lucky.



Suddenly I felt the 17 barrel of a shotgun pointing at me, and a coarse voice, rich in the local dialect, rasped, "Don't 'ee 26!"

As I sat there gasping and paralysed with fright I could make out a huge man with an incredibly ugly face, 25 with rage. The girl had disappeared in confusion into the 20 shadows, and so, deciding that I too had stayed long enough and that it was high time for me to 30 off, I seized the gun and tipped the man over into the stream.

Taking to my heels, I soon got away until all I could hear was his voice, calling me a 1 skunk fading away into the distance.

Later on I found out, of course, that she was his wife, so it was all a 29 for me. Was my face 6!

ALAN JEFFERSON.

REVIEWS

(Orders for these books CANNOT be accepted by Strand Electric and should be placed with booksellers or direct with the publishers.)

Theatregoing. By Harold Downs. (Thrift Books. 1/- net.)

This extremely interesting survey of the theatre of this century, from a seat in the auditorium, is amazingly good value. Since Mr. Downs is obviously an admirer of Shaw it is not surprising that he states a very good case for acceptance of Shaw's affirmation that the theatre is "that older and greater church where the oftener you laugh the better, because by laughter only can you destroy evil without malice." Mr. Downs also pleads, albeit a little tentatively, for an audience with greater awareness of the theatre's background and history.

There can be no difficulty in accepting the spiritual or emotional affinities of church and theatre, but, as Shaw has also said, "We learn from history that we learn nothing from history." There is an absorbing interest but no especial virtue in the study of theatrical past; and it is doubtful whether second-hand experience ever creates a playgoer of more acute receptivity, save in the broad sense that study of the past in general can add to the cultural background. "The Cocktail Party" was a notable and laughter-making church-theatre service; appreciation of its sermon depended less on one's knowledge of the theatre's past than on a sensitivity to humanity's present and future.

The theatre of the masses could be likened more truly to the Salvation

Army than to the Church ; and it is wisest when it leaves the acquisition of theatre dogma to enthusiastic student-converts. Dogmas that become regarded as essential articles of faith are as like to destroy spiritual quality in the theatre as elsewhere, as Mr. Downs would probably agree ; he is stating a case not espousing a cause. Students of the theatre should thoroughly enjoy being members of his jury ; they will, almost certainly, fail to agree on a verdict.

P. C.

THE OXFORD COMPANION TO THE THEATRE. Edited by Phyllis Hartnoll. Oxford University Press, 35/- net. xii & 888 pages.

"Here's richness!" as James Agate might have greeted this monumental work had he not, with characteristic exuberance, already appropriated the quotation as the title for a book of his own. Richness, however, can prove indigestible, and the triumph of these near-nine hundred pages is that, for all the learning they contain, this is a Companion which is always companionable and never a bore. Eccentric occasionally, and tending to dwell on the lighter, more personal aspects of the theatre rather than on such abstract matters as the nature of tragedy or the place of poetry in the drama; but this, it appears, is according to plan.

In an engagingly honest preface, Miss Phyllis Hartnoll, the editor, tells us that the book has been designed as a companion to the playhouse; "It is meant for those who would rather see a play than read it, for those whose interest is as much in the production and setting of a drama as in its literary content . . . more space has been devoted to melodrama and the music-hall than to comedy and tragedy, literary quarrels have been ignored, actors have been rated above dramatists."

There may be some raising of critical eyebrows at this frank avowal, in a book published by a university press, of devotion to the theatre as entertainment rather than as literature, but, once Miss Hartnoll's premise is accepted, there can be no doubt that she and her many distinguished colleagues and contributors have magnificently succeeded. Certainly they have provided the ideal bedside book for anyone interested in almost any aspect of the theatre. Open it at random and what do you find? Garrick revealing that he modelled the madness of his Lear upon an unfortunate man who had accidentally killed his two-year-old child by dropping it from a window: Mrs. Kendal announcing that Adelaide Ristori was a greater actress than Sarah Bernhardt because she had no sex-appeal: an explanation (in an article on acoustics) why so many Wagnerian singers have to sing sharp. One could go on dipping and quoting for hours. See, for example, the fascinating descriptions of the Vamp Trap (a device to enable the body of an actor to pass through a solid piece of scenery), the Bristle Trap (which, by pushing the actor up through something that must have resembled the gadget with which men's hatters once used to measure customers' heads, made it appear that he had come through the floor without there being a hole in it) and the Corsican Trap (derivation obvious), or Ghost Glide, whereby an apparition slowly rose and seemed to drift across the stage.

But these are minor pleasures: turning from the shorter entries, and noticing incidentally that Euripides and Dame Edith Evans come next to one another, one finds a series of full-dress articles on the theatre of France (on which Miss Hartnoll is particularly well informed), of Italy, Spain, Germany and other countries, and others on subjects as various as architecture, copyright law, dramatic criticism, puppets, the Jesuit drama, the amateur stage, repertory theatres (here one wonders why there is no mention of William Armstrong until one sees that he has written the article himself), scenery, make-up and a 16-page essay on stage lighting.

The three authors of the stage lighting section are Miss M. St. C. Byrne, Chairman of the Society for Theatre Research; Mr. L. G. Applebee, Director

of the Strand Electric; and Professor S. McCandless, Associate Professor of Lighting, Drama Department, Yale University.

Miss Byrne, tackling the history of stage lighting from the beginning up to the introduction of electric lamps, has unearthed source material in a way which no one other than perhaps the late W. J. Lawrence has ever attempted. Even now, the data is so incomplete or conflicting that only a scholar of the theatre could hope to read between the lines and complete the story in the way she has done.

Carrying the story up to the present day, Mr. Applebee has been able to draw largely on personal experience; inevitably his matter is largely a résumé of what many of his present readers will already have known but may have forgotten. The Companion is, however, also published for posterity, so that in time this section will become as valuable as Miss Byrne's. I wish, however, that Mr. Applebee had been allocated more space. The work of Samoiloff, Basil Dean and Terence Gray might, for example, have been mentioned; some hint, too, might have been given of the fact that many touring companies take the bulk of their lighting equipment with them on the road. As soon as possible Mr. Applebee should be given the opportunity of bringing his section up to date. The last two years or so have seen some most important developments in this country, not the least of them being concerned with electronic control.

Professor McCandless ably reviews the contemporary lighting scene in the U.S.A. and gives many useful American terms with their English equivalents. His comparisons of American and English technique are particularly useful, depending as they do on differences in electric supply, lamp design, architecture and regulations.

Clearly all three authors have been severely edited; but when a next edition is published (as indeed it should be, if only to bring the lighting section up to date), they must be given room to turn what is already an outstanding contribution into one which is beyond compare.

Inevitably there are some strange omissions and disproportionate allocations of space. Eugene O'Neill gets nearly twice as much space as Bernard Shaw, which illustrates the tendency, all through the book, to inflate American entries; Shakespeare and all his works are given just over five pages, whereas an article on "The Negro in the U.S. Theatre" runs to seven. Sir Laurence Olivier appears, Miss Vivien Leigh does not; neither do Alec Guinness, Peter Ustinov, Elisabeth Bergner, Leslie Henson, Sid Field and Gracie Fields. Reverting to playwrights, Terence (190-159 B.C.) is in but, quite unaccountably, Terence Rattigan is out. Mistakes seem remarkably few. Constance Collier, however, played Gertrude, not Ophelia, to the Hamlet of John Barrymore (page 62); the name of Roger Furse, the designer, is mis-spelled on page 163, and it is at least 10 years since John Mason Brown (article on dramatic criticism, page 199) wrote for a daily newspaper.

These are but tiny faults and are quoted only to show how difficult they are to find. Certainly I have no wish to do so, for the book came into its own, as far as I was concerned, the very day I received it at home. Mr. Sam Behrman, the author of *Biography, No Time for Comedy* and many other successful plays, had come to lunch. So had another friend, who, seeing the book lying on my desk, cheerfully remarked, "Let's see what it says about Sam." Distinguished playwright as Mr. Behrman is, I confess that at these words my heart sank. I was convinced that he, like Terence Rattigan, would have been left out and that, although Mr. Behrman is the most modest of men, the discovery of such an omission was unlikely, I felt, to add to the gaiety of the occasion. There was no need for apprehension; the editor had done me—and Mr. Behrman—proud. "American dramatist," it said, "who combines deft characterisation and sparkling dialogue in the pursuit of high comedy."

Lunch was a great success. Full marks to a particularly good Companion.

ROGER MACHELL.