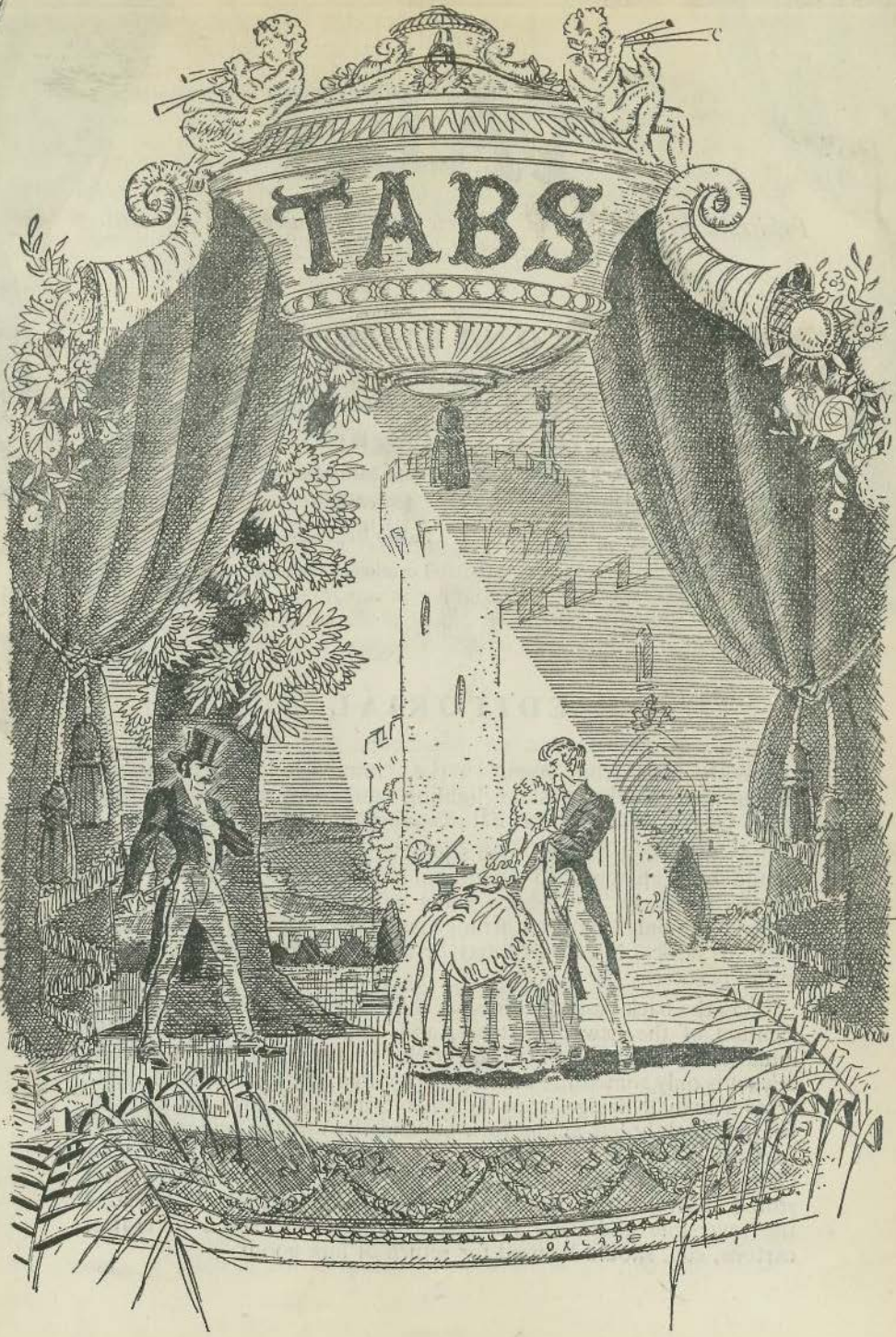


TABS



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TABS

Published in the interests of the Amateur Theatre

by

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EDITORIAL

Our Quarter Century

This issue of TABS is the 25th since we started in 1937. Our beginnings were humble—we even printed some of the earlier issues ourselves—and there was a gap of seven years (1939/1946) for the obvious reasons.

All the same, we have disposed of upwards of 150,000 copies in our seven years of actual publication and to-day circulation exceeds 25,000 per annum. This would seem, therefore, a suitable moment to offer our sincere editorial thanks to those who, literally and otherwise, have contributed so much and in so many ways. More power to their elbow and may they—or at any rate most of them—never get writer's cramp!

Gone Away

We suspect that even the TABS editorial chair may be tottering—threatened by the Persian crisis. A copy of the last issue of TABS addressed to an employee of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company at Abadan has been returned to us marked with the simple legend "Gone Away." But then, as a race, we are always supposed by foreigners to be masters of understatement. Not a bad fault sometimes, as long as it doesn't involve false modesty.

International Theatre Association

Following a very successful inaugural meeting at the Arts Council, which was addressed by Mr. J. B. Priestley and Sir Laurence Olivier, an INTERNATIONAL THEATRE ASSOCIATION has been formed, under the auspices of the British Centre of the International Theatre Institute. The aims of the Association are:

1. To support the work of the British Centre of the International Theatre Institute.
2. To further goodwill among nations.
3. To promote interest in all aspects of the theatre, everywhere.

Membership (10s. per annum) is open to all theatre professionals, and all persons interested in the theatre. Full particulars can be obtained from:

MISS KATHLEEN BOUTALL, Honorary Secretary, I.T.A., 7 Goodwin's Court, St. Martin's Lane, London, W.C.2. (Telephone: TEMple Bar 0691.)

Patience !

In conjunction with the International Theatre Institute (British Centre) we are at present compiling a dictionary of theatre terms in five (or is it six ?) languages, viz., English, American, French, German, Italian and Spanish. A theatrical paper recently suggested that we should include a Russian section "as a friendly gesture." Hands across the Iron Curtain !

The need for such a dictionary may not be immediately apparent but the following true tale may indicate otherwise. A French company recently visited London bringing with them their own scenery, curtains and so on. Among the many items on the list were "8 jeux de patience." This, so we are told, was translated by a kindly Customs official as "8 games of patience." Simple enough, but nowhere amongst all the props could 8 packs of cards be found. If only our dictionary had been available, reference thereto would have disclosed that 8 curtain tracks were in fact the goods referred to !

A Correction

In our last (September) issue a most unfortunate error occurred on page 19. When writing of Sheet Lightning effects we referred to photoflash bulbs. This should of course have read photoflood lamps. But see page 30 for the whole story.

Not Strictly Theatrical

Floodlit football seems to have caught the fancy of team managers, press and public alike. The first big match played under such conditions was Arsenal v. Rangers at Highbury. And whose floodlights were used ? Having decried false modesty in an earlier paragraph we must confess—they were ours.

Canada

The recent Royal Visit to Canada leads us to include in this issue an impression of the Canadian Amateur Theatre. In our next issue we hope to give an outline of the more physical and practical side of the same movement—the layout, dimensions and equipment of small stages as recommended by Canadian Governmental, Educational and other Authorities. A comparison with conditions in this country will make many an English Amateur mouth water.

Our Contemporaries

Several Societies and Groups are kind enough to send us copies of their own magazines and publications from time to time. We would, however, like to see many more and would be grateful if other editors would co-operate in the same way.

SHAKESPEARE MEMORIAL THEATRE

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON

By PETER PAGET SMITH, Chief Electrician

On March 24th this year the Memorial Theatre at Stratford-upon-Avon re-opened after having been closed for six months for extensive structural alterations (Fig. 1), which included a virtually new stage lighting installation, incorporating the new Strand Electronic Control.

Readers may be interested in the technical details of this equipment, for in addition to being one of the largest installations in the country, there are lighting problems peculiar to the type of production which this theatre stages and to the theatre design itself.

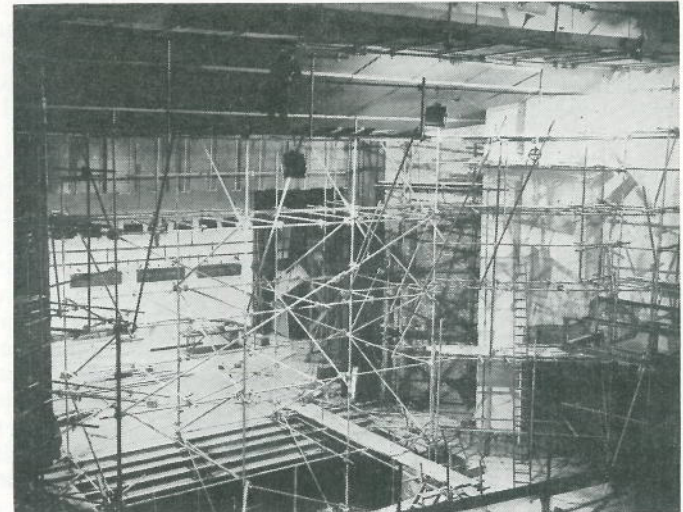


Fig. 1. Extensive alterations to dress circle, proscenium and forestage were carried out under the architect Brian O'Rorke, A.R.A., F.R.I.B.A., in addition to the electrical work mentioned in this article.

Prior to the recent alterations the theatre was equipped with an early Strand 60-way Grand Master board supplemented with a 12-way dimmer board for the spot bar and a 6-way board controlling the fly rail circuits, these additions being made in 1945-46.

It was obvious, however, that the style of lighting had changed so much since the original installation was put in, in 1932, that the existing equipment could no longer adequately meet the demands of present day producers, who are as fickle as the leaders of Paris Fashion: for they have forsaken that good old standby of the touring musical, the magazine batten, in favour of more and yet more

directional units, i.e. spots and acting area lanterns, all of which use rather a lot of current. The old D.C. mains were rather well loaded in consequence!

A decision was taken to change over to an A.C. supply for the stage load, which would enable us to take advantage of the new Strand Electronic Control, which seems ideal for the "straight" theatre, and in addition a large number of new circuits were run to positions in the auditorium which was being re-modelled.

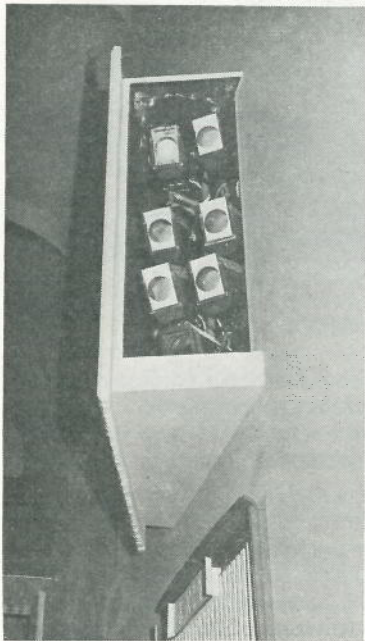
One of the features at Stratford is a large forestage whose area is almost equal to that of the main acting area behind the proscenium. In consequence the lighting installation is necessarily large and over half of the lighting load is devoted to Front of House equipment covering the forestage up to the curtain line. Starting from the back of the auditorium, the units are as follows:—

Six stelmar units in the roof, twelve mirror spots on the front of the balcony, six spots mounted in slots in each auditorium side wall (Fig. 2), above the Dress Circle, and two spots at each end of the Dress Circle next to the "Assemblies" which are curtained entrances to the forestage, and part of the auditorium furnishing. Within the assemblies a further five spots per side are fitted on permanent boom arms. In addition, points are provided on the front of the Dress Circle for the projection of effects on gauze curtains, etc. Above the forestage are apertures containing a further eight spots and another eight points are provided in the orchestra

pit for feeding footlights (not used except for touring shows in winter-time), but used quite a lot for float spots during the Festival.

On the stage proper there are sixteen dips a side wired in pairs, four perch spots on each side of the proscenium, and a 12-way spot bar. The permanent directional equipment is completed by an 8-way acting area bar, and plug points, six a side, are provided on the fly rails and are taken up by a mixed assortment of spots and pageants and prove very useful for Shakespearean productions. The non-directional units comprise two magazine battens, a flood batten and a battery of magazine units

Fig. 2. Six spotlights, concealed from the audience, are housed in slots in each side wall above the dress circle. One of these slots is just to the right of the right-hand edge of Fig. 1.



totalling 22,000 watts for lighting the permanent plaster and steel cyclorama which weighs 22 tons and can be moved up and downstage to mask in sets of widely varying depth. Special dips are also provided for the trucked double-bank groundrows used for lighting the bottom of the cyclorama. An important point is that every circuit in the installation terminates in a plug point so that the equipment is completely flexible, a serious fault in the old installation.

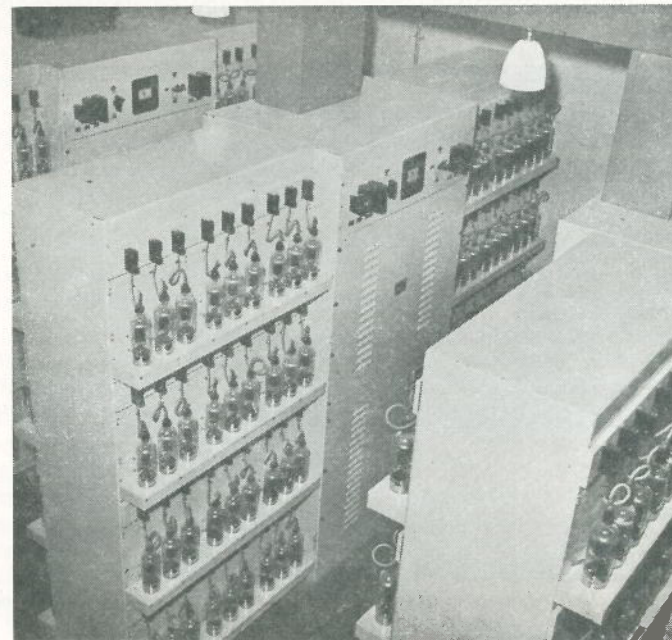


Fig. 3. The electronic valve banks are housed in a room above the scene dock at the back of the stage, thus saving valuable stage space.

The reader may have noticed that no mention has been made of "booms" or "ladders," much favoured in current West End productions, but apart from visiting companies who bring their own, they are impracticable at Stratford. This theatre is unique in this country in that it possesses a permanent sliding or "rolling" stage, the downstage edge of which is only 4 ft. from the proscenium line, the upstage edge being another 15 ft. upstage so that it is impossible to fix booms for the Festival when the rolling stages are in constant use, if not during performances, then during the heavy set changes due to the repertoire of five or six plays each season. Two lighting towers are sometimes used, each carrying two spots, and these prove very useful for side lighting on rostrums, for example the upper stage of the permanent set used in the Historical Cycle this year.

The valve room for the electronic control is situated above the scene dock at **the back of the stage, an excellent position as it is away from the dust and vibration on the stage.** The three banks are installed parallel to each other (Fig. 3).

The 144-way Control Desk is placed in a room at the back of the Dress Circle (Fig. 4). A perfect view of the stage is obtained, high enough for the pattern of light on the stage floor to be seen, but low enough for the whole of the cyclorama to be seen clearly, an important point when delicate changes in colour and balance have to be made.



Fig. 4. The electronic control desk is situated in a room at the back of the dress circle in a position previously occupied by the Royal Box, and from which the operator enjoys an uninterrupted view of the stage and cyclorama.

At the moment 133 dimmer units are utilised, some of these controlling more than one set of valves, which have a maximum loading of 2 kW, but the plan is to use 5 kW valves on these doubled circuits, thus releasing more valve sets for the inevitable "further developments" which occur in all theatres, despite all planning.

The large number of spotlights in use may seem extravagant, but in order to get "pace" into Shakespearean productions it is often necessary to isolate portions of the stage for short scenes whilst properties, etc. are being moved in the darkened remainder. In addition, the same acting areas may have to be lit to represent, say, daylight at one moment, candle light later on and moonlight for yet another scene and the apparent *direction* of the lighting changed together with a change in "props" to suggest a change of locale.

Actual lighting rehearsals are usually rather tedious things in most theatres but a system has been worked out here which reduces

the experimenting, beloved of some producers, to a minimum. The person designing the lighting, usually the producer, sometimes an outside expert, or sometimes a member of the theatre organisation, attends all rehearsals of the company until completely familiar with the actors' moves. Then at a technical conference the producer's wishes with regard to "mood" are resolved into terms of colours, lighting units to be used, together with any special effects, projections or pyrotechnics that may be required. These are all detailed on printed charts which indicate the unit, its colour, its position, focus, circuit number and the area to be covered. This chart is vital when it comes to resetting lights during the changes of play each day.

At the same time a scale drawing of the ground plan becomes gradually covered in many-coloured circles as the lighting plan is worked out, so that when the actual rehearsal takes place the setting of lights is carried out quite quickly and the "Do you remember where Prompt Perch Three shines" sort of question doesn't arise.

The time taken to set and light a show varies considerably, but some thirty hours may be considered average for the Stratford productions.

If ever the wheel turns full circle and producers go back to three magazine battens, a footlight and a couple of spots in the wings, this time will be reduced considerably but the writer sees no indication of this happening in the near future!

Extensive use is made of a three-way talk-back system during lighting rehearsals, communication being between the Control desk; the Stalls, where the producer and the senior stage manager (who does the plotting of completed cues) are seated with the Stage Director (who makes sure, amongst other things, that the A.S.M's who are standing-in for the actors, are in the right positions); and the stage.

The "One Scene preset" or duplicate panel on the desk is of immense value for saving time at this juncture, as it is possible to set up the scene lamp by lamp, as required by the producer, and then plot it while the next scene is being set up on the other panel. The cue is also there should the producer wish to go back to the previous scene. Plotting on the board is done using the circuit numbers on each dimmer lever, instead of the name of the circuits as in the final or working plot. This saves time, for it often happens that the first lighting rehearsal is followed by the first dress rehearsal, without time for the working plots to be typed.

Three more lighting rehearsals, a technical rehearsal when the actors wander all over the stage trying to find their lights and three dress rehearsals, run as performances without stops, and one more production is ready to be placed before an ever-critical public. We technicians, for our part, hope that our work will in no small measure help all the other artists and craftsmen to another successful interpretation of the work of the master-playwright.

DOES WRITING FOR AMATEURS PAY ?

By HAROLD DOWNS

There's money in writing one-act (or three-act) plays, but it is not money to which I wish to give first place.

The art of playwriting is difficult; to exert it is fascinating to the point of self-absorption, especially when the writing of plays is the natural expression of the creative urge.

I have not in mind either playwriting for the West-End stage or for the commercial theatre elsewhere. The professional production of a play in the ordinary way may involve £ s. d. considerations that are beyond the range of interest—or practicability—of amateur playwrights.

The Amateur Movement merits the special consideration of would-be playwrights as well as of would-be actors and actresses, stage managers, electricians, and other people who want to be active in the World of the Theatre. There are varied possibilities. For examples, the experimental playwright may require the co-operation of actors and actresses who will disregard well-grooved, histrionic conventions; the producer, under the obligation to interpret a new type of play, may decide that he himself requires to create new lighting effects to suggest "atmosphere," to give significance to "lines," to intensify the flow of action: imagination, harnessed to practicalities, can work wonders and also suggest artistic permutations that are well worth trying, although they may never have been thought of before.

As I sat in St. Martin's Theatre enjoying the presentation of *Shavings*, and later in the Arts Theatre, the thought occurred to me that, notwithstanding the performances of series of one-act plays from time to time in the professional theatre (think of the theatrical entertainment that has been provided by Noel Coward's one-acters), it has been superseded as the "home" of one-act plays by the Amateur Theatre.

My purpose is to focus attention on the attractiveness of playwriting as a recreative hobby, on the potentialities of the Amateur Movement as a "clearing-house" for plays that are written with clear-cut requirements in mind, and on the influence that the Festival Movement within the Amateur Movement has exerted on playwriting plans and practices.

Playwriting stands in no need of defence or justification as an æsthetic and intellectual activity that can be indulged in accordance with personal whim and fancy. When what is written is produced by amateur players and witnessed by their admirers and supporters pleasurable benefits and much good can accrue through entertain-

ment that has a co-operative base and that brings, among other things, teamwork into play.

Within the Amateur Movement playwriting can be encouraged in several ways.

Years ago I ran a Modern Drama Club. Each season a one-act playwriting competition was organised. The Club paid a fee to an "outside authority"—expert or organisation—in order to obtain an independent adjudication. On some occasions the entries numbered more than a dozen. Each play that was considered to be worth bringing before the notice of members was read. If, arising out of the readings, it became obvious that public performances would be justified, productions were organised. For a time, I remember, one writing member was Mr. Arnold Ridley, author of *The Ghost Train*, etc. He was a prize-winner before he had made his reputation in the West End. These competitions, with the subsequent readings and productions, became one of the most popular features of the season and brought before the public the work of writers who have subsequently registered appreciable writing successes.

On several occasions I was asked to adjudicate a one-act playwriting competition organised by an important group of provincial amateurs. In these cases the magnet may have been the promise of public performance of the winning play (and for several of the runners-up, if quality justified production), plus a money prize.

In the Provinces I was also associated with another amateur society which made a special feature not only of producing plays specially written by members, but also of securing subsequent "bookings" for repeat performances within a somewhat rigorously limited area owing to the special circumstances that influence amateur work.

Since those days the development of the Festival Movement has done much to direct attention to playwriting as one of the several desirable expressions of the Amateur Movement.

Different opinions on the value and appeal of festivals are held, and basic organisation differs from place to place.

Some enthusiasts who dislike the competitive element think of festivals as opportunities for creative writers who express themselves in play form to concentrate on the æsthetic and artistic appeals that are inherent in "a good play" without being troubled by monetary considerations. Other supporters of the Amateur Movement, equally as enthusiastic, see in the competitive spirit, generated and intensified by "festivals," an impetus to latent or lagging desires which merit written expression in play form but which would remain only desires in the absence of the incentive that is given to personal endeavour by the promise of publicity, success, and (perhaps) financial gain.

Questions arise. Here, illustratively, is a tabulation, with illuminating replies by one who knows his subject—Mr. Norman Holland, prolific and successful writer of one-act plays that have been extensively performed in Great Britain, the United States, Africa, Australia, and elsewhere, and whose *Dimitrios* was recently published in *New Plays Quarterly*.

What types of one-act plays are popular in the Amateur Movement ?

*Difficult to say. A few years ago I would have said that comedies were the thing, but two of the most popular modern one-acters I know (Philip Johnson's *Dark Brown* and my own *Liberation*) are gloomy in subject. But I would say that any well-written play with good acting parts has a chance of obtaining many productions provided that the author can bring it to the notice of societies. The best way he can do that is to get his play published. Societies seeking festival material are looking for "something different"—a play which will, quite legitimately, catch the eye of the adjudicator.*

Does production by one society lead to inquiries about production by other societies ?

Yes. Especially if the play has "gone well." The best recommendation for a play is for it to win or be placed in a festival.

Does writing for amateur festivals stimulate or stultify creative writing ?

It stimulates. Adjudicators, for the most part are men of sound theatrical taste and judgment, and they are only too willing to praise and encourage the worthwhile entry.

How can the reluctance of some amateur societies to produce and perform new one-act plays be broken ?

Are they reluctant? I have not found them so—I have often "placed" new plays within hours of having them typed. In a recent festival of fifteen plays, there were five new plays. Amateurs are encouraged to do new plays because most marking systems give a five-mark advantage to a performance of a new play.

Do amateur productions of one-act plays receive adequate and helpful publicity ?

Not always. It varies with the festival organiser—some are publicity-minded. Some organisers are too harassed to deal with publicity. On the other hand, some festivals have somebody to take the cares of publicity off the burdened shoulders of the organiser. Poor publicity usually results when the local papers give no support.

Is there evidence that amateur societies here influence amateur activities abroad, especially in the Commonwealth countries and the States ?

Yes, they do. But I don't know how a beginner would be affected. Last year plays of mine which had been successful in festivals here

were performed in U.S.A., Canada, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand.

Is the attitude of some publishers towards the publishing of one-act or three-act plays, produced or not produced by amateurs, encouraging ?

Publishers are business men beset by serious problems, as you know better than I do. They are not likely to risk money on a play which has no obvious appeal and which will not obtain for them a return from a number of performances. For this reason, most publishers like to play safe with established authors who have a following. There are about six one-act playwrights—I would put the figure no higher—who are certain to get a good number of productions for every play they write. For the newcomer the way is harder than it was but only because of paper supplies. I believe that a good play has every chance of finding a publisher, but there may be initial rebuffs before he sees his work in print. Publishers are looking out for new writers because, of the six I mentioned, four are no longer young men and the way is open for a good writer who can write plays with varied themes, good dialogue, and sound characterisation.

There are other questions; also replies different from those that I have given. I invite readers to let me have their experiences.*

Yes, writing for amateurs *can* be made to pay in more senses than one.

THE CANADIAN AMATEUR

through the eyes of a visiting English professional

When the English actor first arrives for a tour of Canada he is apt to be rather overwhelmed at the reception given to him by the numerous amateur societies of the Dominion.

The professional theatre, as judged by English standards, virtually does not exist in Canada, apart from visiting companies from Britain and the States. There is, however, a real and vital feeling for the theatre among Canadians, and this is manifest, as in most of the Commonwealth countries, by the number and enthusiasm of the amateur companies. Drama Festivals are frequent and very important affairs, and the matrons of Hamilton and London, Ont., will save up all year with a view to being present at the finals in Ottawa in much the same spirit as a "Geordie" or Lancastrian will visit Wembley for the Cup Final!

At the first one or two receptions given in their honour by local amateurs, the visiting professionals—fed, feted, questioned (and very occasionally patronised) by hordes of eager and knowledgeable amateurs—will tend to react in one of two ways. They either

* The Editor will be pleased to forward readers' letters to the author.

“dry-up” completely or take refuge in a rather truculent professionalism. Soon, however, they begin to realise that this terrific enthusiasm is the very finest thing for the Canadian theatre, both amateur and professional. The amateur wants to talk “shop” to you, not merely out of politeness, nor from a desire to convince you that he can do the thing better, but from a genuine love of the theatre. This sort of thing breeds the best kind of audiences.

The Canadian amateur group, like its English counterpart these days, does not consist of a few people who “want to go in for theatricals.” It is founded on the firm basis of a desire for artistic expression. One group in a mid-west city had acquired a fine period house just outside the town. The visiting professional company was taken out to this house which was displayed with understandable pride. They were shown the collection of modern paintings housed upstairs and then fed with the most delicious sandwiches, cakes and coffee. (It was rumoured that some of the men were fed on rye whisky in the basement where the women dare not follow!) And the talk was of theatre, theatre and again, theatre. This was typical of their experiences throughout the tour.

Apart from the Little Theatres owned by amateurs, the only theatres, as such, are one or two in the large cities of the east, and a visiting company doing a coast-to-coast tour is obliged to play most of the time in large cinemas or halls. At one city in Ontario performances of *Macbeth*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, etc., were given in a school hall, with all the men dressing in a long classroom, sitting at desks, while the wit of the company scribbled ribald rhymes on the blackboard!

Here and there, however, you come across a so-called “Little Theatre” which is capable of housing quite ambitious productions. A theatre in London, Ontario, for instance, under the direction of a local amateur group, is one of the best equipped theatres in Canada and visiting companies are delighted to play there.

One society in Toronto, doing extremely good work, was formed by a group of professionals. Not wishing to leave their native country for Britain or the States as others had done, they confined their professional activities to broadcasting and bound themselves together to give “art for art's sake” performances of good plays.

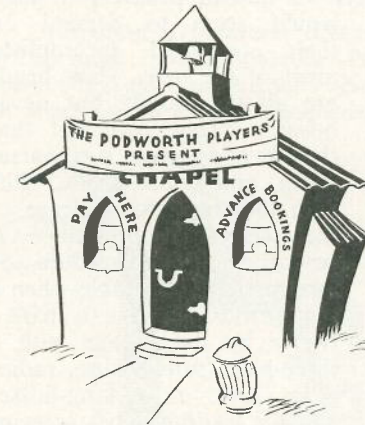
But one and all, small or large, the amateur companies of Canada all unite to give a great welcome to the visiting English professional, and in conclusion, the writer, who has had personal experience of the hospitality and interest of the Canadian Amateur, would like to say to any of them who may read this article: “Thank you so much for making us feel at home. Thank you for being such good hosts and such wonderful audiences!”

D.M.

NO HOME

Somebody has calculated that there are in Great Britain more than 30,000 groups of amateurs producing plays, operas or musical comedies, with varying regularity and bearability. Some of them have achieved an almost professional standard; most of them entertain themselves and don't appear to do anybody else much harm.

The more fortunate groups, comparatively few but growing in numbers, are justifiably proud of being the owners or lessees of their theatres. That they are invariably described as “Little Theatres” is not an indication of diffident modesty. There is some virtue in the littleness of theatres. Few of the buildings were originally intended to be theatres. Interiors of derelict churches, mills, warehouses and workshops have been subjected to amazing functional transformations. And it matters little if the exteriors fail to conceal a former servitude to evangelism or commerce; the Little Theatre is inevitably a combination of both.



“... a former servitude to evangelism.”

The majority of amateur groups, however, are probably those permanently attached to or semi-detached from schools, colleges, village-halls, miners' institutes, youth clubs, works' canteens and the like. These enthusiasts have to rely on their occasional share of the inconveniences of halls whose purposes are morbidly multi. They must compete for time and space with Badminton and Baby Shows; the Licensed Victuallers' Whist-drive and the Band of Hope Bun-fight; the W.V.S. Bring and Buy and the Choral Society's “Messiah”; the Jazz-Club in a Boogie-Woogie session and the Chess Club's exhibition of still life; anything and everything for which three or four may be gathered together. In spite of the daunting competition, the dauntless disciples of Thespis usually manage to stake an occasional claim; they gradually acquire a modicum of stage equipment with limited occupational rights of some storage space in the coal cellar. If they have no home to call their own they are, at least, permanent lodgers. In spite of all vicissitudes, they are accounted thrice blessed by the poor, benighted homeless wanderers who have not **where to lay their progs.**

The homeless ones are not exclusively vagrant. They may be divided into two classes—the travellers and the tramps; the customers of the Dorchester and the doss-house respectively. The

former are in no need of pity and would, in fact, resent it. They are the lordly ones, whose annual production at the local theatre or cinema is a major social event which gives impetus to local charities and to the circulation of the local newspaper. Our tears are not for them but for their humbler colleagues whose persistent efforts to keep the torch of drama burning brightly, in spite of the indifference of our urban and suburban philistines, are a veritable martyrdom.

It is difficult to say what inner urge may be responsible for the existence of the Pedestrian Players or why they should seek to prove again the indomitable spirit of man by insisting on giving their interpretation of *Nothing But The Truth* or *The Liars*; or, if they are on the appropriate plane of dramatic endeavour, of vainly struggling with *St. Joan* or even the other lady who was *not* destined for the burning. The whole march of human progress (if any)

would seem to depend on their successful accomplishment of the task. Their heads are always bloody but never bowed. They care not that they have not even a rehearsal room and must make shift with the chairman's garage or the secretary's pre-fab. A certain lack of freedom of movement is inevitable when a cast of fourteen have to share a twelve by ten lounge with a three-piece suite, piano, radio-gram and a rocking-horse; and the leading lady's screams must be cut when the kids are in bed. But, at least, it is something; a rehearsal of any sort is good for learning lines. It is the dress rehearsal that really tests the stamina and the staying power.



"... a certain lack of freedom of movement."

It is usually something of a miracle that the hall has been booked at all. The cost per night ensures that the Society will be "in the red" for months. Inevitably it is a building that was erected as a redundant memorial to the local benefactor who had bequeathed the money for the purpose, at a time when functionalism in architecture wasn't even pretentious jargon. The platform is bound to be a foot too high and at least three sets of stairs will have been gouged out of its incredibly raked floor. The back wall consists mainly of a massive window of anonymous period and a stained glass of pallid pink in a design of repulsive symmetry;

what isn't window is two doors and panelling of Jacobean intention, with a couple of massive early twentieth-century radiators nullifying 18 in. of the 12 ft. depth.

The caretaker is certain to have graduated in the Caretakers' College that must exist somewhere or other. He will have a joyless outlook on life in general and a jaundiced attitude to amateur acting in particular; he will be allergic to nails, screws and drawing-pins and have a sacred regard for anything that could claim to be polished and liable to be scratched. He would never profane such surfaces even with a duster. He fosters a belief that such diabolic contraption as a ladder has never defiled the sacred precincts and has a nice choice of negatives in which "mustn't," "can't" and "haven't" are dominant. By practised obstruction he ensures that a dress rehearsal cannot begin before 9.30 p.m. and loudly insists on "locking up" at 10 p.m.

Addiction to amateur dramatics is stated to be a peculiarly British habit. But of course. People of any other race or nation know when they are beaten. Not so our native drama groupers. Of what use to proffer good advice to them. Good advice could



"... attempt to placate a peeved editor."

only be "Don't do it: try something easier, like climbing Everest or swimming Niagara." And it would be contemptuously rejected. Homeless they may be—but hopeless never. Their signature tune is "Excelsior."

Alas! a reckless editor has promised "advice, practical, problems for the solution of," and is disposed to frown on further frivolity. Life is real and amateur drama is frightfully earnest. Lest a peeved editor be tempted to reduce an erring contributor's fee from zero to minus, an attempt must be made to placate him.

In subsequent contributions to what will inevitably be referred to as the "No" series, an attempt will be made to grapple with problems that beset those who seek to produce plays in premises that were never intended to be theatres of this or any other period. The problems are shared in more or less degree by the homeless ones, the permanent lodgers and the owner-occupiers. Those problems arise because there is no stage, no pros., no grid, no width, no depth, no cyc., no spots, no floods, no dimmers, no amps., no

men, no money, no plan, no faith, no hope, no charities—no nothing. Excelsior! No surrender!!

It cannot be guaranteed that the approach to the problems will be of a solemnity sufficient to suit those who found the "Musts" irreverently flippant. The clown often conceals a seriousness of purpose beneath his clowning. Those who seek may find. Bernard Shaw, the world's greatest clown, asserted that "You get something from my plays only in proportion to what you bring to them—which usually results in your getting nothing for your money" . . . And Bernard was a knowledgeable man!

P.C.

THE ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL

The Arena Stage

At the present time one can hardly mention theatre design or lighting without being called reactionary unless one scorns the proscenium arch. It is therefore remarkable how little attention the stage at the Royal Festival Hall has received, for here is a stage not only without a permanent proscenium, but unlikely ever to have even the most temporary one. Furthermore, for most performances the audience sits all round the stage and for the remainder, on three sides of it.

The reason for the neglect is no doubt the hall's primary dedication to music. Yet for most people a concert is a dramatic performance, relying on vision and unity between audience and stage, like any other. If this were not so we should prefer to listen at home to our high fidelity reproducers, rather than suffer the painful distractions provided by our neighbours in the audience—even perhaps by some performers on the stage itself. The entrance of the famous conductor without spotlight or announcement is still one of the most dramatic entrances achieved on the stage. Those who attended the opening night of this particular hall will know beyond doubt that it was the sense of theatre, not music alone, that made the occasion for ever memorable.

Thus, although it will surely be stoutly denied by the purists, each concert here requires (and receives) theatrical lighting. For orchestral concerts part of the audience sits at the back of the orchestra, in the choir position, and so the problem of lighting an arena stage, surrounded on all sides by audience, is raised. To this is added the need of the orchestra to read their scores free of shadow and to see the conductor free of glare.

Inevitably this restricts the lighting to positions immediately overhead and consequently a battery of thirty-three 1,000-watt acting area floods has been sited over the stage behind apertures in the acoustic canopy which features prominently in Fig. 1. Each of these lanterns can be dimmed separately so that the pool of light

can be suited to the size of orchestra or even down to a soloist. When Heifetz gave his recital, for example, it would have been a serious dramatic error to leave him a lone figure on a vast illuminated stage. As it was, four lanterns only were used and seats for the audience were placed on the normal orchestra part of the stage: only accurate beam stage lanterns without spill would have been suitable.

The procedure at concerts is to begin with the auditorium brightly lit but the stage in darkness. The appropriate area of stage lighting is gradually brought in on dimmers to half check while the orchestra file in. Just before the conductor makes his entrance the

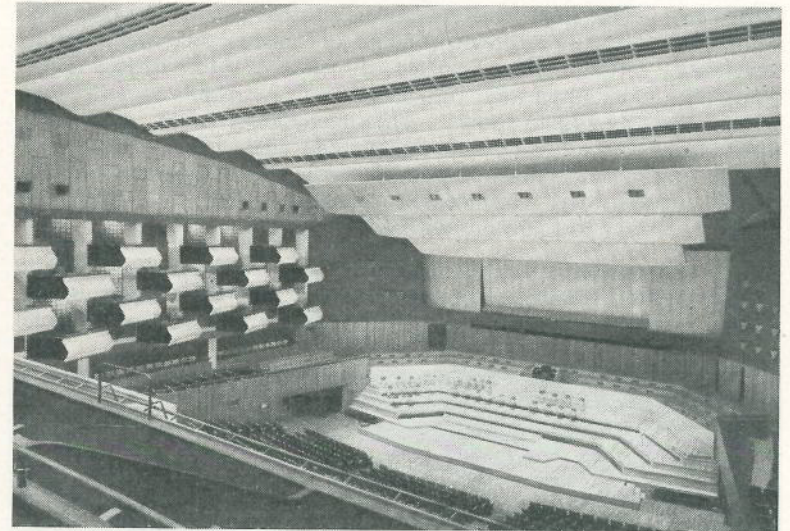


Fig. 1. The overhead lighting equipment of the stage at the Royal Festival Hall, London, is concealed behind the acoustic canopy. The platform is here stepped as for concerts.

stage dimmers come to full. Once on his rostrum, the cold-cathode fluorescent lighting in the decorative ceiling coves dims right out and a series of miniature 150-watt acting area floods in the ceiling over the audience dim to quarter check to give the audience enough light for score reading. Thus, including intervals and perhaps an increase in area of light for the choir at the end of Beethoven's Ninth (for example), each concert tends to have quite a lighting plot.

We now come to bigger stuff, the presentation of full theatre productions, particularly ballet, on the open stage. For this purpose a flat stage is built over the top step of the orchestra concert platform and perfect sight lines are ensured. To me these sight lines amply compensate for the fact that many seats are far away from the stage. Whatever I am told of the wonderful intimacy of the horseshoe tiers of the older theatres goes for nothing if, alas,

I find myself high up at the side of one of them, sitting on the edge of the seat with a crick in my neck and seeing but the foreshortened actors and a small part of the set. It may be intimate for those comfortably seated in centre stalls or dress circle to have me and my fellows there, but that is poor consolation.

When the ballet stage is used, entrances can be made "up stage" left and right, *down* some steps (the choir terraces), or "down stage" left and right, *up* some steps. These steps are a legacy from the fact that when the hall was planned it was to be for concerts only. The "concerts only" element remained very powerful and battles had usually to be fought fiercely for each concession to "theatre." The steps and entrance problem can be overcome to some extent by the strategic placing of screens forming a simple permanent setting. As a matter of fact the International Ballet company who inaugurated this stage used a permanent setting on garden lines as Fig. 2 shows. They also preferred to rely on the up-stage entrances only, the down-stage ones being covered in. The setting masking allowed two entrances either side and, equally important, afforded a concealed passage at the back from one side of the stage to the other without leaving it.

In the matter of stage lighting the hall is, I venture to say, exceptionally favoured. I do not know of any other building with an open stage without proscenium which can bring such a large



Fig. 2. Ballet in progress at the Royal Festival Hall, on the flat stage.

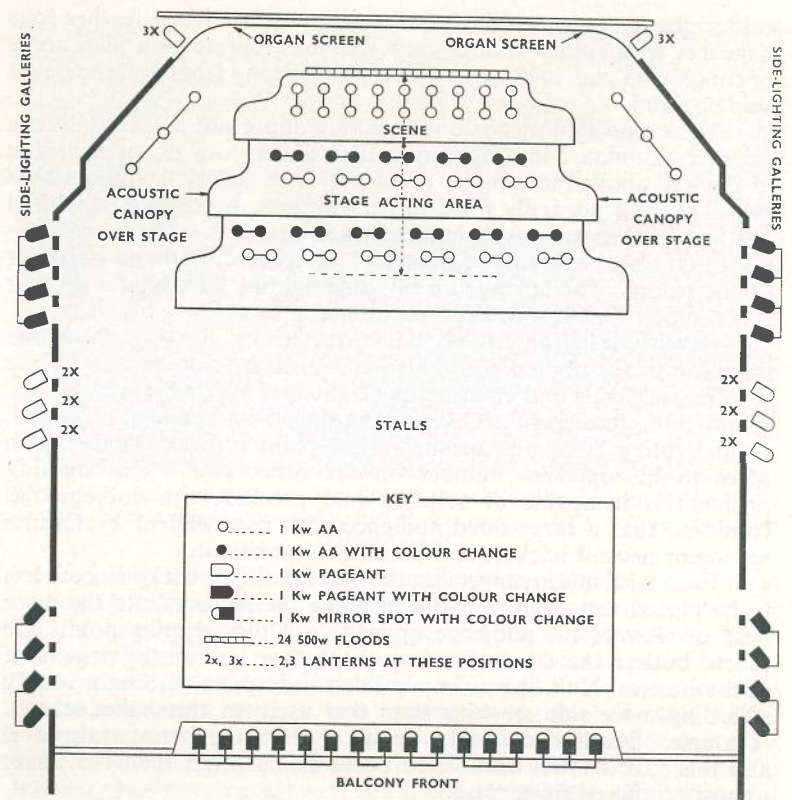


Fig. 3. Plan of the layout of lighting equipment for the stage of the Royal Festival Hall.

variety of lighting angles to bear. Fig. 3 indicates the principal of these.

In the acoustic canopy, flaps can be dropped to form two borders behind which thirty-one 1,000-watt acting area floods (twenty-two of which have remote four colour and white filter change), supplement the thirty-three normally used for concerts. These overhead floods replace the battens of a-normal stage. They are, of course, **narrow beam with sharp-cut-off since the light must be restricted to the stage floor.** An exception to this is a row of wide angle floods on the back edge of the canopy, intended to light any cyclorama type backing that may be suspended between the rear of the stage and the organ show pipes which will be visible when the instrument is installed. Front lighting comes from sixteen remote colour-change mirror spots in the balcony front. For side lighting two angles are available as Fig. 3 shows. The first is immediately to the left and right of the stage—four pageant lanterns with remote

colour change to each side. The second position has a further four pageants with colour change each side and represents a plan angle of roughly 45°, i.e. half-way between the balcony front and the direct side position.

These side lighting positions are very important and the lanterns are accommodated in a lighting gallery which runs down each side of the hall above the top row of boxes. The gallery is masked by a panelled wall, normally filled in for concerts, but panels are lifted out and lantern apertures revealed when required. There are sufficient additional apertures for special equipment, perhaps hired for the occasion. The angle from this side lighting gallery is steep, but it is the best that can be done on an arena stage.

Overhead lighting must be corrected by lighting from the direction of the audience and also enlivened by side lighting. In a theatre, footlights and circle spots do the first job and wing lighting, booms, etc., the second. On an arena stage with audience all round, front lighting from one person's view point is back lighting with glare to his opposite number on the other side. This lighting problem is incapable of solution and precludes an audience all round so that a three-sided audience with rear wall of cyclorama setting or neutral background becomes a maximum.

Even with this arrangement the side lighting is tricky since it has to be placed very high to avoid bringing the lanterns into the main field of view of the audience opposite. Although plug points are placed both in the side boxes nearest the stage and on the stage itself at the Festival Hall, it was impossible to use them without a setting affording more side masking than that used for this ballet season. A couple of ballets required a fire glow from the left at stage level and this gave endless trouble to position and even then the boxes opposite suffered from glare.

Though the arena stage provides a fascinating problem and though the installation at the Festival Hall may be considered successful, words of warning are essential. Dealing with the lighting side alone, this form of stage does not provide a release from bondage; on the contrary it further restricts the possible lighting angles. Another point. On a proscenium stage the actors can be presented against a lighted or dark background at will. On any but a shallow backed arena stage we are restricted to dark backgrounds because the audience must remain dark.

As little if any scenery was possible at the Festival Hall, the lighting had to carry the whole burden of variety of scene and atmosphere. Furthermore the absence of a curtain required the fading in and out of lighting, back again for calls and so on, with great regard for timing. Most ballets begin with characters on stage and end with a picture. False timing might well lift the veil of darkness at an embarrassing moment. As the lighting is controlled by one man at a Light Console of eighty-four dimmers (Fig. 4) in a room which, if small, gives a good view of the stage, timing can be adjusted to a fine degree. For concerts the console is

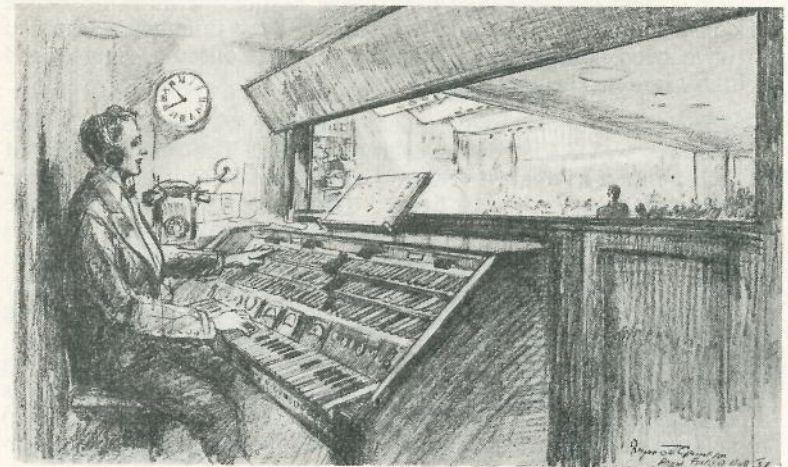


Fig. 4. Artist's impression of the Strand Light Console control at the Royal Festival Hall, showing operator's view of the stage. (By courtesy—Illustrated London News.)

worked automatically from a small preset panel in the stage manager's (concert steward's) corner.

To give variety in scenic background the experiment was tried of projecting scenery on the temporary screen to the organ chamber. This screen is of polished sycamore and it is not perfectly flat in one plane—hardly a good projection surface—but two 5 kW. projectors, sited in the box each side nearest to the stage, gave reasonable results for the less defined scenes such as forest effects. Intensity was not as great as it could have been because of the specular reflection caused by the polished wood.

The lighting layout was devised by the L.C.C. Engineer's department in conjunction with the Strand Electric by whom all the platform or stage lighting and dimming equipment referred to in this article were manufactured and installed.

F.P.B.

SWITCHBOARD SURVEY

During the summer months the Strand Electric conducted a survey of the switchboards installed in 41 London theatres, all situated within a one mile radius of Trafalgar Square. Only proper though not necessarily "legitimate" theatres were included, that is to say theatre clubs, dramatic schools, cine-variety houses and the like were excluded. The survey was conducted for our own edification, but some of the figures may be of interest to readers. Only permanent (as distinct from portable and temporary) switchboards are included in the figures below, and to give a picture which would

remain correct for more than a few weeks, switchboards in the course of construction but not actually installed at the time, were assumed to have been completed in the case of the Coliseum, Saville and Winter Garden Theatres.

The total number of permanent dimmer ways installed in the 41 theatres was 3,458, or an average of 84. The relative sizes of direct operated as against remotely controlled boards is interesting, by comparison with this last figure. Direct operated boards average 64 ways and remotely controlled boards 162 ways—over $2\frac{1}{2}$ times as many. The reason is probably a combination of two factors. Firstly, there is no doubt the desire to do away with the necessity of temporary boards by installing a house-board capable of handling the largest, rather than just the average, show envisaged. In this, theatre managements are no doubt influenced by the increasing disdain of the London County Council for temporary switchboards and wiring, and also the expense and technical (manipulative) difficulties in having several switchboard operators working simultaneously.

The second reason for the greater size of remotely controlled boards is that they are, generally speaking, the latest to be installed and so reflect the tendency to an ever increasing number of circuits on theatre stages. Stage lighting technique has of course been undergoing a change for some time. The trend has been away from a general overall flooding by means of such equipment as battens, and towards a greater number of more directional units. At the same time, however, there has been a demand for more and more light, that is to say not only has the number of dimmer ways increased but also the total KVA maximum demands. This latter tendency is not confined to the theatre. Codes of lighting practice, prepared by Government Departments and learned societies of lighting and electrical engineers for application in factories, offices and homes all recommend, through the years, more and ever more light. Are we as a nation or a race becoming more and more blind as time goes on, or were our parents, and our grandparents even more, continuously albeit unconsciously underlit?

The desire on the part of certain managements to accommodate a greater number of dimmer ways on their house-boards, when replacing them, has not always been capable of such easy fulfilment as simply ordering larger switchboards. There is a limit to the number of circuits which a single operator can reach, let alone accurately manipulate, on a direct operated board. The development of remote control has achieved three objects simultaneously. It has made possible a saving in stage space for a switchboard of any particular number of ways. The reduction in size has made it a practical proposition to house the board where the operator can see the stage, instead of being relegated to the wings with a view, usually, of nothing more useful than the back of scenery

flats. Thirdly, it has of course increased the number of dimmer ways a single operator can handle.

It follows that the development of remote control was to be accompanied by an increase in dimmer ways, and the effect can already be detected. Before the last war there was only one remote control installation (Covent Garden Opera House). Now there are eight (or 19% of the possible total) and an even greater number in the provinces.

So what of the future? It seems certain that the requirements will be for (1) an increased number of dimmer ways without increasing the number of operators or the stage space involved and (2) the facility of housing the control panel where the operator can see the stage. These points indicate remote control in some shape or form. Already 37% of the total number of dimmer ways installed in the 41 theatres under review are controlled from remote positions and it would seem to be a matter of time alone until many more follow suit.

Where does the "little man"—the amateur or school—fit into all this? Quite honestly, at the present time, the cost of remote control is beyond his pocket. Furthermore, on small installations it is not so essential. But it might be pointed out that there is no reason why a direct operated switchboard of modest size should not be placed where the operator can see his results. And the smaller the board the easier it is to fulfil this objective. Stop "working in the dark," you Sparks!

C.

LIGHTING REHEARSALS

"To set to and paint a scene with light is very exciting. As one goes on, so the setting collects atmosphere, ceases to be a collection of painted canvas, becomes real. The more lighting and scene changes there are, the bigger the challenge to all concerned and the more exciting it all becomes."

At this point some of my professional friends, at any rate, will begin to ask themselves "what has happened to F.P.B.—?" lighting rehearsals exciting indeed, when he knows they are the most frustrating bore, stretching further and further into the night and only terminated by the fact of a company call at 10 a.m.—"Raise this, dim that—little bit more—no, up a bit—won't the producer ever make up his mind."

What is the difference between the two paragraphs? Well, the first describes a lighting rehearsal as it could be but seldom is, and the second as it usually is but need not be. I am writing this article about the professional theatre, but needless to say some of it is applicable to the amateur.

Assuming a show with a large orchestra, one will usually find that the musicians have first call on the choice of working hours of the day, thanks to their now strong Union. Producer, stars and all the rest take second place to them, and after those come the scenery gang (it's not much use lighting if their gear is not up anyway) and lastly there are the odd hours during the night which nobody wants and in those one frequently has to do the lighting. One can't so much as try a cloud effect or position a few spots during the day without taking off the working lights and raising a howl—"LIGHTS!"

So we see it is probable that the lighting rehearsal will take place at night and here we can enunciate our first golden rule. *Call everybody concerned for the exact time you will begin and state how long the session is going to last.* It is much better to be called for 9 p.m. and know you are to work all night than to be called for 7.30 p.m., wait till 9 p.m. to begin, spend the hour before midnight split between the work you are doing and the desire to catch your last train and finally be released at 3.30 a.m. Personally, I consider "all nights" a bad thing. More work can be done in two shorter sessions from 8 p.m. till midnight than in an all-night, usually running into a day dress rehearsal with lights, by which time all interest is submerged in a desire to sleep.

Interest depends on two things: having something to do and knowing what you are doing it for. Therefore, *call only those absolutely necessary for the conduct of the rehearsal.* I attended one recently in which two poor devils were kept back at night till ten minutes to twelve to move two chairs only. *Issue a short synopsis of the show and the lighting changes to all as early as possible.* One cannot take an interest in mere dimmer movement or plugging. Why are we taking the pink Acting Areas down to $\frac{1}{4}$ in No. 2 and 3 bars? Is he only fiddling to get the balance of lighting right; is it a lighting change, perhaps the beginning of a sunset; or do these lights go out for the duet and come back afterwards? In these **days of mikes and loudspeakers** it is simple enough to say before asking for a thing, why you want to do it.

Once the opening lighting of a scene is set you say "Opening Act 1, Scene 1—Plot it" and *wait until the board man gives you the O.K. to proceed.* All this adjusting here and there may give the board a lot of writing down to do. To hurry here is to run the risk of an inaccurate repeat. Plotting time is something even a modern board (console or electronic preset) in full view of the stage cannot reduce. Indeed it may take longer—nine men each writing down the position of their 12-way portable boards will be quicker than one man writing down for a single 108-way one. Two men should be used on a one-man board for rehearsals and first nights, one to operate, the other to plot and act as prompter till the show is familiar. This has the further advantage that a deputy is available

right from the beginning of a show. They might split the show between them, one operating the first half, the other the second; or where there is a different show each night (ballet and opera), change places for alternate shows.

We now come to the first cue. "This is the beginning of a sunset consisting of several parts and lasting about eight minutes." There are two ways of doing this. One is to experiment, find a suitable change for the first part—plot it, then proceed to the second part and so on until the sunset consists of, say, eight slow changes each started by a cue from the stage manager. Where there is a *good* man on a board with a view this could be left to the operator. He could "ad lib." the sunset for eight minutes from the first set of intensities ending at a final defined set. He would be told of the action and of any parts of the action requiring stress.

Assuming a scene of a number of changes terminating in a very complicated one, *try not to ask the board to go back except to the beginning of a scene.* Too often the producer says "go back and do that last change again," or the last but one. This is a favourite demand for a board that will go back, but to ask for this is to expect a board with a memory; it is the man who has to go back. Sometimes it may happen that what seems to be a complicated return may, because of some happy chance, suit the board and the operator has to do next to nothing to get back. Usually, the place to which a return is required is the result of a series of cumulative cues all hastily plotted. These have to be added and subtracted from one another simultaneously by the operator so it is no wonder that when finally he gets back ("what is taking all this time, I only want Cue 5") there may be some further fiddling to do ("don't you know that Batt. 2 red is not on in Cue 5, haven't you got it plotted right!!!").

Much better *go right through each scene cue by cue, then break and allow some time to write a fair copy of the plot, set any presets or work out how to use the board to the best advantage for each change.* The next run through would be with the company. Lighting without them should be kept to a minimum. *Always give an approximate timing between changes or cues.* Many operations that appear impossible at the lighting rehearsal, because they follow each other without time to think, are found during the show to be separated by several valuable minutes.

The producer or whoever is arranging the lighting should have a fair acquaintance with the mechanics of the board in the particular theatre. One often has a strong feeling on the board of turning oneself inside out to carry out some change which, by a simple alteration, would become more satisfying to do (and more likely to come off each time) and be equally effective visually. There is a tendency to decrease intensity on certain lanterns until they no longer

throw any shadow, say on the cyclorama. These then get plotted faintly glowing while all the time they are making no contribution to the lighting at all. I have in mind a show which ran many months in the West End. For one scene, among all the other lighting to be brought up, the circle spots in purple were solemnly moved to the lowest stud on their dimmers. I know their light never reached the stage, but because they hadn't been taken right out when the distinguished American producer, with his back to the circle said "plot," there they remained show by show, a fearsome manipulative difficulty to get the bottom stud each time.

Reviewing and comparing the many switchboards available a couple of years ago,* I said what I cannot do better than repeat here, "—ideal boards do not and cannot exist. If for no other reason than finance, we must not fight the machine but allow the technique peculiar to each form of control to set the framework within which we are free to build our lighting. For this reason I regard it as essential that whoever may be arranging the lighting for a production should have spent some time working preferably, but at least watching, a board of the type installed in the theatre in question. There is no better way to get the true feel of lighting changes than to handle the dimmers oneself."

Unfortunately lighting layouts vary from theatre to theatre and show to show, so that switchboard circuit labels do not always give a good or indeed any idea of the lanterns controlled. Much time, temper and money can be saved at rehearsal if sufficient advance information has been given to group the lighting conveniently over the dimmers available and make a plan which identifies these groups. If lighting changes are not indicated at all in advance then the electrician has no alternative but to put every lantern on a separate dimmer, which either means more dimmers than a theatre can afford to carry on the permanent board, or the hire of extra boards and operators.

Identification of circuits will be dealt with under "Lighting Plots" in the next issue of TABS, but I must say here that I have seen lack of this, especially when combined with a poor view of the stage from the board, give more trouble than all the other trials put together.

Beyond saying that the board should be sited in the front-of-house and the producer ought to be sitting adjacent to it at rehearsal I shall not deal with board position here. If, as is usual, this cannot be achieved then "mike" communication is essential. Fortunately it is now common to use a microphone from the stalls during rehearsals but it is also necessary to give the outstations, particularly the board, the means to reply. If the board can acknowledge an

* Tabs. Vol. No. 6 No. 3 and Vol. No. 7 No. 1 Stage Switchboard Design.

order, ask for more time, ask a question when not sure, etc., the effect will be less vexatious in the stalls. Loud bellow from the loudspeakers "Cue 9, fade battens 2 and 3 to half." Nothing happens and a louder bellow repeats. Still nothing. "WHAT the . . . ?" Small voice from the prompt corner "he says he hasn't plotted the last cue yet" or "he says he took them to half in the last cue."

Of course not all lighting rehearsal is board work, though I tend to see it from that point of view. One does get a rest and an opportunity, especially if in front, of seeing someone else get into trouble. Adjusting lanterns on the spot bar from a ladder or tower, perhaps. A tower is better but the set or stage may not have room for it. Anyway make sure the man knows which way the lantern has to point so that he does not place the ladder to foul its ultimate position. He should mount complete with spanner and all the colours likely to be required.

Often, to get the effect required, the man on the ladder may have to clean, centre and adjust a lantern that seems red hot and many precious minutes are wasted. Therefore, *always clean, centre, and if aged replace, and test lamp and reflectors before a bar is hauled up to its "dead" position.* What is simple to do on the stage floor will take an eternity or be impossible to do in the air. This rule applies equally to the permanent as well as the temporary equipment in the theatre.

I cannot do better than to end the lighting rehearsal with the subject of thirst; lighting is not very easily carried out when tired, thirsty and hungry. It cannot be carried out amicably at all if the producer is eating rich foodstuffs and quaffing iced whatnots in the stalls, while his men are perched on ladders or hanging head down over the fly rail; or worse still have nothing to do but to think of foaming tankards. Now the musicians have this well arranged, but let's not start on them again. By the way, I prefer tea.

F.P.B.

CORRESPONDENCE

TO THE EDITOR,
Dear Sir,

In glancing through the pages of your Magazine I notice at the foot of page 19, the question "How many flowers and herbs did the Bard name altogether?" I do not feel competent to answer this question, but you may not be aware that in Brockwell Park, South London, there is a garden which is alleged to contain specimens of all the flowers and herbs mentioned in Shakespeare's plays. That may of course be only a local legend but was certainly the current belief some years ago when I lived in that neighbourhood (Herne Hill).

Yours faithfully,
P.J.F.

TO THE EDITOR, TABS,
Dear Sir,

TABS arrived this morning. Thank you as usual. May I be one of the throng who will all tell you different quantities of vegetable matter mentioned by W. Shakespeare. REF. *Come Hither*, assembled by Walter de la Mare, "... one hundred and seventy varieties of flowers mentioned by Shakespeare ..." and then refers to Canon Ellacombe "... who collected all such references into his delightful book, *Plant-love and Garden-craft of Shakespeare*."

Which sounds quite a lot.

I feel I should take a stand against P.C. on his "Secretive Secretary." It would seem in my own small experience that everyone is secretive except the poor Hon. Sec. who is expected to fix rehearsals, obtain equipment, get permissions, see somebody, and even ring Strand Electric three minutes before the curtain rises: and if it isn't done, to express surprise that the adjectival Sec. ought to have been told about it! Training in telepathy would be a boon.

"And I could a tale unfold" of a Midnight Matinee where the Stewards were stewed!

Yours faithfully,
S.C.C.

TO THE EDITOR,
Dear Sir,

On page 19 you are misleading. It appears you mean photoFLOOD lamps. By the way, for small stages to provide lightning during weakly-lit scenes, I have found a circuit or two of whites, with or without some photofloods, controlled by one or two of your sliding dimmers works fine—just slide the dimmers up and down rapidly.

People could, of course use their photofloods as we do in photography, at half voltage for general illumination until required at full. Essentially they are lamps which would give normal life on somewhere about 170 volts, but which only last two hours on 230 volts. Six-hour types are also made.

Yours faithfully,
M. K. KIDD.

THE EDITOR REPLIES:—

Unfortunately our correspondent is quite right. Photoflood lamps employ a filament which is overrun—hence their brightness and comparatively short life. The photoflash bulbs to which we erroneously referred in our last issue contain a magnesium foil and their first instantaneous flash is their last. They are not suitable for producing lightning effects and we apologise for the slip of our pen.

REVIEWS

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

The following Educational Drama Association Pamphlets published at 6d. each (7½d. post free) are obtainable from Mr. C. T. Marshall, 68, Dalbury Road, Hall Green, Birmingham, 28.

E.D.A. Pamphlet No. 1. **School Stages.**

The second paragraph of this instructional pamphlet reads "First we have to think of costs. If all schools were to have elaborate stages the cost to Local Authorities would be prohibitive. Fortunately this is, in any case, a debatable matter. Let us say quite briefly that we feel that proscenium stages are not a necessity in Infant or Primary Schools."

In such cases rostrums are recommended and dimensions and prices are given. The number of infants or juniors required to carry each size of rostrum is noted together with alternate uses. For Secondary Schools a stage is recommended but not necessarily of proscenium type and alternative shapes with

apron front are shown. Most commendable suggestions are given for headroom over the stage, flying facilities and the use of the back wall as a simple form of cyclorama. Wing space, height of the stage and dimensions generally are discussed, together with recommendations for curtains and so on.

The following paragraph is quoted verbatim. "Finally, if expense is a difficulty (which, in these days, might well be the case) make sure of providing the bare bones. These things are mentioned in the light of experience. See that the skeleton of the building is right, e.g. see to such things as the back wall being uncluttered, see that the beams or flanged irons are in the ceiling above stage, that doors are big enough, that plugs and sockets are put in, steps and apron stage are provided, and a heavy enough load of light is envisaged for the future. The extras can come one by one afterwards. It is the initial and basic mistakes that are so hard to rectify." One could not agree more. An admirable booklet in every way.

E.D.A. Pamphlet No. 2. **An Introduction to Stage Lighting.**

This, too, is an excellent pamphlet and even if we venture one or two criticisms it is a "must" for the book shelves of any who have not previously studied the subject.

The introduction to electricity and the simple electrical circuits used on the stage are admirable. In Figures 5 and 6, however, the dimmers are shown wrongly connected, having no off-position. This is a general requirement and it is important on small (school) stages where circumstances not infrequently demand the use of under-loaded dimmers. In such cases a dead position is essential, the resistance alone being inadequate.

The introduction to colour is first class, but it is a pity the reader was not warned of the pitfalls of using primary colours for lighting the acting area. In the section on composition there is perhaps rather too much emphasis on the achievement of the "dramatic" at the expense of the acceptable naturalistic, but the experiments suggested will be most helpful to the beginner. A list of available equipment is given but attention might have been drawn to the possible use of footlights as groundrows and of course the 150-watt baby flood which is not mentioned finds far more use on small stages than does the 1,000-watt unit which is. When discussing dimmer boards there is no mention of the use of plugs to share out a small number of dimmers between a larger number of circuits. This is a rather serious omission and it is a debatable point whether master dimmers are really essential if serious work is to be attempted on the small stages envisaged.

In spite of the few points raised above the E.D.A. are to be congratulated on both these publications.

Basic Equipment for the Small Stage. (Published by the British Drama League, 9 Fitzroy Square, London, W.1, post free 7½d.)

This pamphlet is complementary to the two reviewed above in that it deals with the equipment of stages for adult use, though these could of course be in schools. It takes the form of a report to the Standing Conference of Drama Associations by the County Drama Committees who sent out a questionnaire to a number of selected Drama Societies in their counties. Recommendations are made from the observations drawn and both the observations, which are really a summary of answers received, together with the recommendations are both illuminating and instructing. The shocking conditions obtaining on many small stages certainly call for comment and preferably for strong action, and anyone contemplating the latter should read the pamphlet from cover to cover. It includes a very useful priced schedule of equipment split into first instalment, second instalment and desirable categories.

A really informative and instructive booklet, but don't, please, plaster the back wall as a cyclorama. Cement it, and its surface may then survive more than one night of ardent scene changing without being covered with pits, scars and cracks.