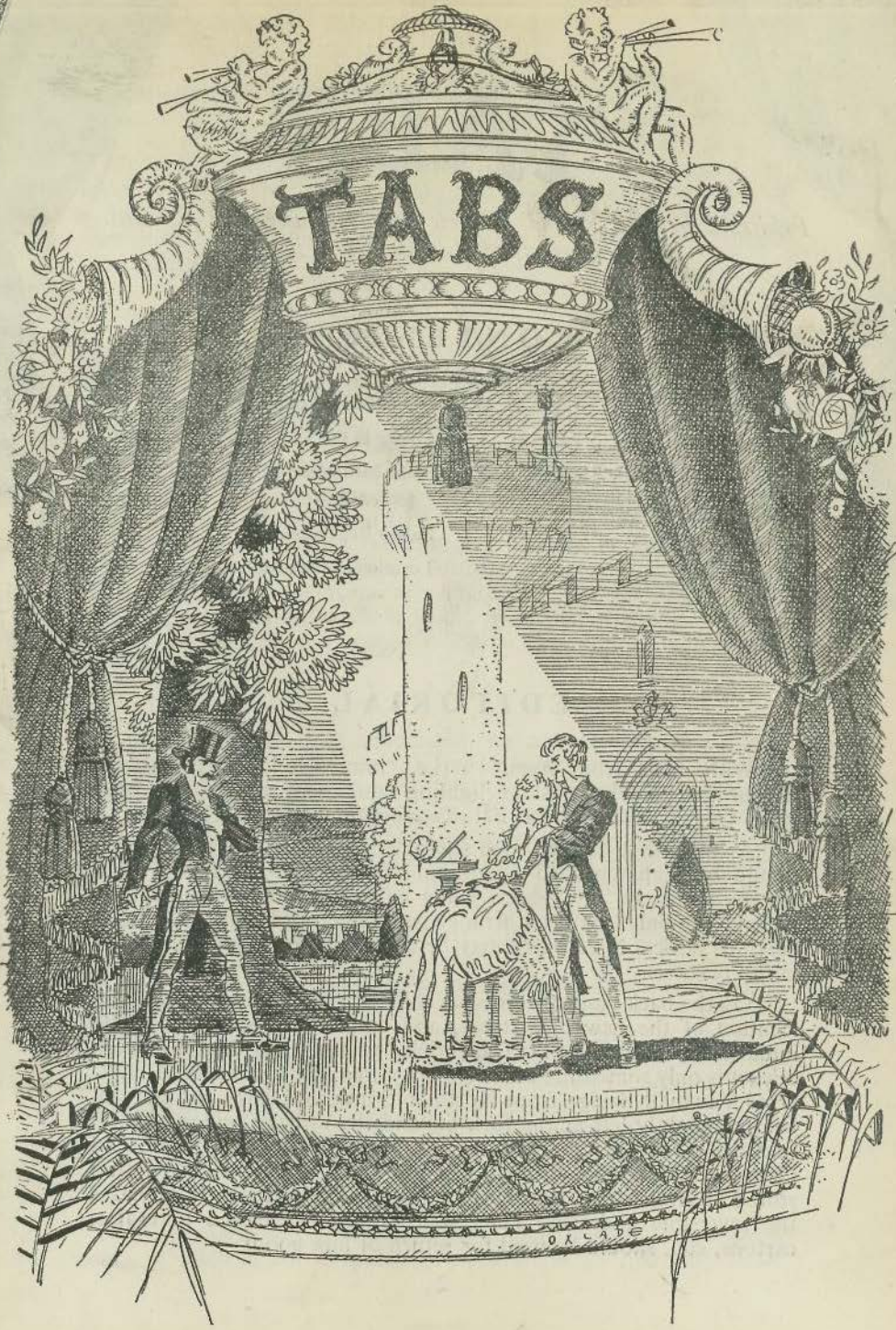


TABS



O. K. L. A. D. C.

TABS

Published in the interests of the Amateur Theatre

by

The Strand Electric and Engineering Co., Ltd.

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Phone: Dublin 74030

Scottish Agents Stage Furnishings Ltd.,
346, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow
Phone: Glasgow, Douglas 6431

TABS is published in April, September and December. All correspondence relating thereto should be addressed to The Editor at Head Office. Ordinary business communications should in all cases be addressed to the office of the Area in which the correspondent is situated.

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EDITORIAL

Our issue of April 1948 included, by gracious permission of The (then) Queen, an article by the late Hubert Tanner about the Royal Pantomimes which took place at Windsor Castle during the war years, and of which he was author-producer. The article is reproduced in part on page 5 of this issue, and the following are extracts from two letters which the author subsequently received from Buckingham Palace.

From a Lady-in-Waiting:

"I am commanded by The Queen to write and thank you for your letter of May 6th, and for your kindness in sending copies of TABS which Her Majesty and Princess Margaret were so delighted to see."

And from the lady who so shortly afterwards was to become our beloved Queen Elizabeth II:

"Thank you so much for sending us a copy of TABS. I enjoyed reading the article so much, and it brought back many happy memories. . . ."

Yours very sincerely,

Elizabeth."

The thought that we may have contributed in some small way to a few hours of happiness within the Royal Family circle makes us the more ready to declare ourselves Her Majesty's loyal and devoted subjects.

* * *

Colour

Peter Goffin, who contributes the article "The Dramatic Value of Colour" on page 16, is Examiner in Design for the Theatre for the Ministry of Education, a Council member of the Association of Theatrical Designers and Craftsmen, and author of *The Realm of Art, Stage Lighting, The Art and Science of Stage Management*, etc.

He has designed costumes and décor for London productions of plays by Shakespeare, Ibsen, Chekhov, Turgenev, O'Neill, Ben Jonson, Granville-Barker, Shaw, T. S. Eliot and others and for the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company designed the new productions of *The Yeomen of the Guard* and *Ruddigore*.

Lighting on a Model

Robert Stanbury, whose article "Planning Lighting on a Model" appears on page 29, has learned the hard way, having served his time as a stage director. He lit the model of the reconstructed Old Vic Theatre, illustrated in our issue of September, 1950, and, though modesty apparently forbids him to mention it, we understand that it was his lighting equipment on Mr. Northen's model that was used for planning some of the lighting for *Billy Budd* referred to in the article.

* * *



Are you a Mr. Dim?

Mr. Dim, like Rudolph, manifests himself in many ways. One is the reader who sends us a new address but neither his name nor previous address. The other says he "used to receive 'Tabs' regularly but hasn't seen it for ages." Invariably our records show that past issues have been returned marked "Gone away, left no address" or some such simple legend.

To all such unwitting offenders "Tabs" is still free but please give us a clue which would enable us to trace you on the mailing list.

A Social Error

We can't help feeling that for an author to write even semi-anonymously in praise of his own books is a form of hitting below the belt which should not be encouraged. In this case, however, we feel the social error is justified as we consider it is a good book. Otherwise we wouldn't have published it ourselves. The crime is committed on page 15, where we refer to "Stage Planning and Equipment" by Mr. P. Corry.

The present tendency to reduce budgets for educational and cultural needs gives this book an added value just now. Its sound and economical approach to the problem of stages for

schools and civic centres will ensure getting the best value for every pound spent. A few copies are still available at 5s. 4d. post free from our head office or branches.

Canada

We regret that lack of space compels us to hold over until a future issue the survey of the Amateur Theatre in Canada, referred to in our last issue.

PRODUCING A ROYAL PANTOMIME

By the late Hubert Tannar, Esq., M.V.O.

Master of the Royal School, Windsor

Author and producer of the Royal Pantomimes at Windsor Castle 1941-1944.

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

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

Their Majesties, the King and Queen were the encouraging and practical leaders. And what knowledge have Kings and Queens of production and stage direction? Our stage productions each Christmas from 1941 to 1944 provide an adequate answer to that question. From script to final performance both the King and Queen spared whatever time there was after their day's work in examining, polishing, cheering on, criticising—in no uncertain terms—and inserting those multitudinous touches which make for finished production. "After the day's work" may seem to you inappropriate when applied to the labours of a King. I wonder if it has ever struck you that, during the War, the King went "to work" as regularly as any office or factory worker at 8 o'clock each morning, arriving "home" at Windsor Castle at six to seven in the evening after a "working day" which consisted of climbing bomb damage, visiting poor distressed bomb victims, walking through endless miles of factories, inspecting endless miles of ranks of soldiers, walking endless miles of training grounds, travelling endless miles of railways—and, I have no doubt, politely enduring endless miles of none too entertaining conversation. This, day after day, was not conducive to further evening work on pantomimes. But two intelligent daughters can work wonders on an adoring father—

tired though he may be. And I suspect that pantomime activities came as a relaxation, especially as the pantomimes owed their origin to their Majesties' natural parental desire to see their own children in happy circumstances, surrounded by other happy children of their own age. Indeed, let it be whispered that the few occasions when the King was confined by the doctor to the warm air of the Castle on the occasion of a cold or chill, was a secret occasion for rejoicing to us "mummers." We knew that the few days' convalescence that His Majesty was allowed would be devoted to our rehearsals in the warm Waterloo Chamber. There were very few nervous flutterings among either players or workers. I must confess that I, as producer, kept myself a-tiptoe—but rather less out of nervousness than out of a desire to discover points that had, in the excitement of chorus training, eluded my notice. And, be certain, His Majesty would find them—a piece of business which was out of the view of the end seats of the front stalls, an improvement in an entrance, a piece of furniture which slightly clashed with the lighting—and particularly a detail of chorus precision. The King is precise, neat, likes things ended neatly and does not hesitate to voice his opinions. I suspect, too, that he likes to set you a poser and to watch your struggle in unravelling. Your success is His Majesty's joy and your ample reward is His, by no means cheaply won, dazzling smile and admiring "Well done." I remember, when a famous slogan was very popular, His Majesty convulsing us all when one girl, in a finale, had a long distance to cross before "freezing" into the tableau. She *would* take that one more step after the last note of the music had died away. We repeated and tried different poses, but she still continued to arrive late—until the King's deep voice was heard to boom in the darkened auditorium—"Is her journey really necessary?" The moment of tension was relieved and a tired chorus had its strength renewed with a hearty laugh.

But the Queen was more often available. It was not always necessary, or indeed possible, for Her Majesty to accompany the King on all His duties in wartime. Her Majesty's duties took Her to less distant places at less regular intervals. And so Her Majesty's experience and light touch was more easily accessible and at our disposal. Experience?—Her Majesty was brought up in a home where the family provided its own amusements. In Her case it took the form of dramatic performances arranged sometimes on the spur of the moment and sometimes with full rehearsal, costume and scenery. These would be interspersed with song, dance and poetry. And so here we had the invaluable aid of a practical "actress" who knew only too well the difficulties of writing a script to fit the actors, devising scenery capable of being constructed and painted by the available talent, inventing costumes which could be made from the existing odds and ends of material which were remnants from upholstering and curtaining jobs that had, before the War, been carried out at the Castle. And,



"Her Majesty brought that unerring touch and judgment . . ."
 Right to left (as they now are): The Queen, The Queen Mother, and Princess Margaret.

above all, Her Majesty brought that unerring touch and judgment which always was part of Her. That "something," developed by happy practical experience, brought to our productions a solid artistic background which was at our service practically always.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Editor is granted an interview by

TYRONE GUTHRIE

Director of the Old Vic.

ED.: Tell me, Mr. Guthrie, do you consider stage lighting an asset to theatrical production or a necessary evil? Purely from the point of view of lighting, would you in fact have preferred always to produce in the roofless daylight theatre of Shakespearean times?

T. G.: In a better climate I would prefer the roofless theatre, but in this Blessed Isle a roof and therefore lighting, are necessities. In my opinion, however, we have become altogether too "fancy" on the whole visual side of theatrical production.

Since you mention Shakespeare specifically, in these productions I think you should put on all the white light you have, and leave it on. Isn't it rather impertinent to throw shafts of coloured moonlight, for example? Shakespeare does all the painting in the text, and far better than anyone can do with lighting.

ED.: Yes, maybe, but stage lighting doesn't consist entirely of attempting realistic effects or conveying time and place. What of such applications as heightening a dramatic situation, and so on?

T. G.: I agree stage lighting can be of assistance in such directions; but in my opinion working inside a proscenium straight away throws too much emphasis on the visual side and we tacitly accept that the stage is a place of illusion, which personally I don't agree it is or should be.

ED.: Very well, so much for Shakespeare. I presume you would not give all dramatists the same degree of credit for their ability to "paint" so perfectly in the text?

T. G.: Absolutely not. The late nineteenth and early twentieth century dramatists (e.g. Ibsen, Chekhov) wrote with the idea that light would be sympathetically used to reinforce their text.

ED.: What about stage lighting then, as applied to a play with a twentieth-century setting? Is it an asset or a necessary evil?

T. G.: I think it is an asset, but as I said before it should not be over-exploited.

ED.: Would you say the general standard of lighting plays in England was good, bad or indifferent?

T. G.: The general standard of lighting in London seems to me to be higher than in most other countries which I have visited. Few theatres however seem well equipped to light actors becomingly and at the same time in such a way as to bring them "nearer" to the audience, without at the same time overlighting the scenery.

ED.: To what extent do you consider any shortcomings in lighting are due to improper or inadequate use of present day equipment?

T. G.: I consider there is far too much use of the spotbar from the No. 1 batten position. The direction of the lighting is just as

important as the intensity, and this is not the right direction from which to provide the greater part of the light falling on actors' faces.

ED.: Is the Producer in your opinion the proper person to light a play? He doesn't do the décor—at any rate not the detail of it, however much he may brief his designer in the first place.

T. G.: A wise Producer lights in close collaboration with the Designer. I do not see the need for a "lighting expert," though an expert electrician is, of course, vitally important; but his job seems to me to be technical—to make the lights work as required by the Producer and Designer. His status is analogous to that of the carpenter, dressmaker and painter, but his, and their, contribution must not be under-valued because it is technical rather than creative or directive.

ED.: Reverting to, shall we say, "imperfections" in present day lighting, to what extent are these due to shortcomings in the equipment available today?

T. G.: In my opinion the greatest shortcoming today is the necessity to depend too much on either a spot bar right above the actors' heads or on a group of spots on the dress circle front, throwing crude beams straight on to the scenery.

ED.: What is your particular lighting bugbear—what would you like to see Strand do tomorrow in the cause of better stage lighting?

T. G.: My particular bugbear is the difficulty of lighting actors effectively, by which I mean in such a way that most of the light on the faces comes from below or at actor's eye level, without lighting a lot of other irrelevant objects. I should like the Strand Electric to invent a lamp that threw a beam of light on to an actor's face and then miraculously dived into the earth.

ED.: Oh! A case of "Out damned (front-of-house) spot," to misquote Lady Macbeth! What do you consider, then, has been the greatest recent advance in stage lighting?

T. G.: I have no idea. I have a minimum of technical knowledge and am inclined to think electric light is a recession from gas.

ED.: Help! Many of our readers are as you know, amateur producers. Would you care, in conclusion, and before you give me any more rude shocks, to give them one or two golden rules, so that they may look back on their next production and say proudly to themselves, if not to their committees, "that is how Tony Guthrie would have done it"?

T. G.: I am convinced that there are no such things as golden rules; in all artistic matters there is no single right way.

Exit Ed. muttering

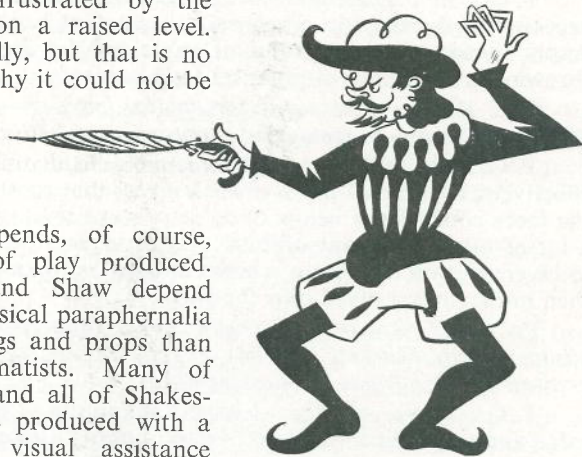
"This battle fares like to the morning's war,
When dying clouds contend with growing light,
What time the shepherd, blowing of his nails,
Can neither call it perfect day nor night."

HENRY VI, PART 3, ACT II, Sc. 5.

NO STAGE: NO PROSC: NO GRID.

Those amateurs whose temporary home is a bare room, without even a rostrum that might be dignified by the title of "platform," need to be more than a little fortified by the burning conviction that their art is important. The obstacles to be surmounted might well deter any in whom a fanatical zeal is lacking. Unfortunately, the zeal is often more prevalent than adaptability.

It is axiomatic in the amateur theatre that a play must be performed on a stage that is essentially an imitation of the stage that is currently orthodox, complete with proscenium picture-frame. The devotees of the "arena stage," however, have discovered much virtue in the abolition of the picture-frame, which should encourage those to whom its absence might be practical and expedient. Equally virtuous reasons could, no doubt, be applied to the stage itself. It could be argued, quite plausibly, that the intimacy between actor and audience gains enormously by the physical nearness that is frustrated by the actors being on a raised level. It doesn't, really, but that is no good reason why it could not be so argued.



"Shakespeare and Shaw depend less on props . . ."

Much depends, of course, on the type of play produced. Shakespeare and Shaw depend less on the physical paraphernalia of stage settings and props than do most dramatists. Many of Shaw's plays and all of Shakespeare's can be produced with a minimum of visual assistance without depriving them of their essential qualities, although they can both lose much by the lack of illusion that is inevitable with too close a proximity.

To the arena type of production the stage itself is unnecessary if . . . ay, there's the rub . . . if the auditorium is raked or stepped to enable the audience to see what is happening. The best modern arenas, of course, are those of the circus and the ice-show, for which they are ideal as the performers are exhibiting skill, not creating illusion. The circus and the ice-show invariably have a stepped auditorium and obviously, the amateurs whose problem is under consideration have not. The cost of providing raised seating would be infinitely greater than the cost of providing a raised stage. A state of impecuniosity is assumed to be inevitable and that the

greatest possible facilities are required for the least possible expenditure. A stage of sorts could be created by appropriating the trestle-tables normally used for hot-pot suppers and the annual flower show. The tables should be of a type that may be fixed together in a state of reasonable stability, to avoid throwing the actors into a panic-stricken feeling of insecurity. As any psychiatrist will confirm, insecurity of any kind plays havoc with the emotions and an actor needs his emotions to be in good working order.

The best type of temporary stage consists of a number of solidly constructed rostrums. If portability and storage are important, as they usually are, the rostrums could be collapsible. If properly constructed and assembled they will not collapse, or wobble and groan, at inconvenient moments. Rostrums, however, require a considerable amount of expensive and scarce timber and it would probably be more economical to hire them from a scenery contractor for occasional use. Alternatively, if a local builder can be inveigled into playing a lead in the show or being stage manager, he might be willing, without monetary reward, to construct a stage from his stock of tubular scaffolding and planks, provided he is able to do so without imperilling the 300,000 housing target.

If the arena type of production is intended, the position of the stage should be studied carefully. The room will doubtless be long and narrow and normally the stage would be at one end, making the sight lines intolerable from 30 feet back. Production "in the round" assumes the audience to be on three sides, at least, and the obvious position, therefore, would be in the centre of a side wall. If the centre coincides with an exit to a corridor it will be a blessing, as the entry and exit of the actors can be arranged least obtrusively. Of course, the use of orthodox scenery on such a stage would not be possible and stylised screens at the back of the stage could best suggest the settings. It will be realised that a production of this sort cannot, paradoxically enough, be entirely "naturalistic." It also assumes acceptance by the audience of a new set of conventions which, in the absence of a proscenium and main tabs, would include changes of furniture and props being made in full view. After all, why not? It's an old Chinese custom.

The lighting of such a stage has its problems. With an audience on three sides it is difficult to avoid projection of light into the eyes of people opposite. If the equipment cannot be concealed in the



"The centre coincides with an exit . . ."

ceiling, the lanterns must be suspended in positions that are, on æsthetic grounds, as unobtrusive as possible. If the lighting is all directional (Spots and Acting Area Floods) and the acting is good enough, the audience will probably not notice the lanterns over much.

Most producers seem to prefer the orthodox method of presentation and most modern plays would best suit such production, having been written for the modern orthodox stage. In that event, the problem of constructing the stage is not much different and the choice of trestles, rostrums or scaffolding remains. For the rest, even if there is a permanent platform, a portable fit-up is probably the answer. The height of the room will materially affect the problem. If the building has a conveniently low ceiling, the best method of forming a temporary proscenium is to fasten curtains to the ceiling. A leg-curtain at each side and a border (or pelmet) in



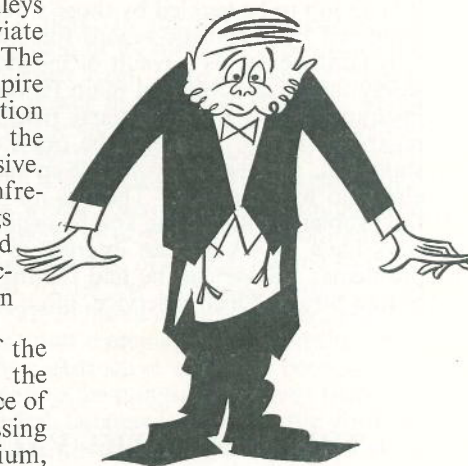
“Fasten curtains to the ceiling . . .”

the centre would form the proscenium opening, behind which would be fixed the track for the main tabs. An alternative method is to substitute the side and top draperies by scenery flats but unless the flats are made and painted specially for the job, the draperies are likely to be more attractive in appearance.

All this assumes that fixing to the ceiling is practicable and is not prohibited. If the ceiling is inconveniently remote (or taboo) a fit-up frame becomes a necessity. There are in existence many and varied forms of fit-up frames. Some were constructed in periods of plenty when neither priorities nor prices prevented a lavish use of substantial timbers by handy men with a pessimistic regard for safety factors. Others, no less numerous, have a flimsiness and originality that defy all known rules of stress and strain. All of

them have one thing in common. Each can only be assembled by its creator, who is the only person who knows how the jig-saw fits together. The show must depend on his not having lumbago at the critical time.

The most effective fit-up is constructed of tubular steel welded into sections that are cross braced to give maximum strength and stability. Such frames can be assembled without much fuss or bother under the supervision of anybody who has had a Meccano apprenticeship. The trickiest part of the assembly is hauling into position the units that form the upper part of the frame. Two or three lines operating over pulleys in or above the ceiling can obviate a lot of perilous ladder work. The caretaker would probably expire of apoplexy at such a suggestion but a few sleeved apertures in the ceiling can be quite unobtrusive. Such apertures have, not infrequently, been created in ceilings regarded as sacrosanct and have, for years, escaped detection by caretakers with an earthbound vision.



“Anything suspended is subject to the law of gravity . . .”

The upper framework of the fit-up, of course, acts as the equivalent of a grid, the absence of which, in many halls possessing permanent stage and proscenium, is lamentable evidence of the lack of knowledge of stage requirements on the part of the designers.

There is no longer any excuse for this lack of knowledge as the functions of the grid and the alternative methods of dealing with the problems of suspending scenery and stage equipment are dealt with very fully in *Stage Planning and Equipment* by one P. Corry (obtainable at 5s. 4d. post free from Strand Electric Head Office or branches). Whether or not this epic has been read and understood, it will be realised that anything that is suspended above the acting area has weight as well as bulk and is subject to the law of gravity as postulated by Sir I. Newton. If the weight suspended is insecurely fixed, or exceeds the resistance to stress and strain of the structure to which it is attached, the result is likely to be one of extreme gravity. The human cranium is not constructed to withstand the forcible impact of a lighting batten detached from its moorings, or of a roof-member that has been over-weighted.

The most effective substitute for a grid is provided by suitably placed beams of steel or timber running from front to back of the stage and supported at each end by the proscenium and rear walls—if they are capable of such support. On small stages the beams are

sometimes replaced by lengths of tubular steel firmly supported at each end and anchored to the ceiling at intervals. Alternatively, the equivalent of the upper framework of the fit-up can be fixed to the ceiling or suspended by means of cables passing into the roof void and either anchored there or fastened to a winch so that the framework can be raised and lowered. In many cases, particularly when the space above the stage is open to the roof, suspension pulleys or the equipment itself may be fastened to the roof trusses, purlins or beams.

Whatever method is favoured as best meeting the conditions, it is no job to be tackled by those whose optimistic enthusiasm is not tempered by a realistic regard for technical details of construction. It is fatally easy, as a result of misplaced enthusiasm, to reduce the safety factor of roofs and main fabrics to zero, or even minus. An insurance policy for third-party risks does not justify a reckless disregard of safety. It might be one's own life and limb that are at stake but, as there is no justice in accidents, it might be somebody else who would suffer. There is no need to fumble inexpertly with the problems outside the ken of ordinary mortals. There are those who have an avuncular interest in the amateur theatre and its problems; advice can be had for the asking. All part of the celebrated Strand Electric service, of course.

P. C.

THE DRAMATIC VALUE OF COLOUR

By PETER GOFFIN

Human vision is a matter not only of sight, but also of insight. It is a process in which physical and psychological factors co-operate. Although our experience of the phenomenal world is primarily sensuous, we perceive with the imaginative mind; and since individual human beings profoundly differ from one another in mind and outlook, a fool, as William Blake has pointed out, sees not the same tree that a wise man sees.

But the enormous range of variation in human sensibility and vision would not be apparent if the faculty of our imagination had no creative power; if we could not give objective expression to our feelings and thoughts, or reveal, in forms of art, the qualitative difference in the way the world presents itself to us. By virtue of his creative faculty man is unique in the animal kingdom, and its infinitely varied expressions bear witness to the uniqueness of each human personality.

In the psychophysical process of transforming our sensations, feelings, and thoughts into the various forms of art we make use of conventionalised signs and symbols, which have fallen in and out of currency during the course of the evolution and enlargement of

human consciousness, multiplied, and become charged with numerous subtleties of meaning.

We distinguish the use of the sign from that of the symbol rather as we distinguish between sight and insight. Thus, when we use the colour green merely to represent the sensation of green which a tree may present to the sense of sight, we are using the colour as a sign; but if we use green to represent the tree as perceived in its universal implications, as the renewal of life, or as an image of fertility, we are using the colour as a symbol charged with psychological meaning.

We do not know at which point in the development of the human aesthetic faculty, nor in which of its forms of expression, the process of symbolisation, as distinct from mere sign-using, began. But it is generally assumed that it was in the art of dancing, which is the expression of life itself in the human person. The development of symbolic gesture from spontaneous emotional or practical movement probably initiated the whole order of ritual performance long before verbal language, in which conventionalised sounds and shapes combine, extended our means of expression and communication. The use of verbal language alone is, of course, limited to those who understand and know how to use the particular system. The traveller abroad, who is master only of his own native tongue, might as well be dumb. And it is evident that dancing, music, and the visual arts still flourish and retain their distinctive existence because they are as capable as ever of extracting meanings and values from our sensuous experience which verbal language, even in the form of poetry, cannot express. Moreover, there is one art activity in which elements drawn from many arts are fused. This is the fundamentally ritualistic art of theatre.

Much has been argued and written about the relative importance of the various elements of which a work in theatre must be composed. At one extreme the only true essentials are held to be bare boards and passionate speech, presumably in the dark; while at the other extreme, the visual effects of light and decoration are rated higher than anything else. Thus we have the pendulum swinging between the notion that theatre is something we go to hear and not to see, and the opposite.

The complexity of theatre is, however, its essential character, and we do not overcome its difficulties as a medium for the dramatic symbolisation of life by treating some of its material parts as vital components and the rest as mere appendages. The plain fact remains that theatre is a medium through which works are presented to the eyes and ears at once. If the work presented is to be taken seriously as a work of art, then it must possess the quality of homogeneity that we recognise as essential in all other forms of art; it must be organically whole. When it is not, it becomes in effect a variety show in which all the star turns—vocal, musical, and acrobatic—are worked simultaneously; and we who bear witness, not

knowing how to look or listen, or where to turn our attention, are distracted from distraction by distraction.

In certain respects, the people who work together in the medium are like the members of an orchestra. Each member may be a soloist, but when he is performing in the orchestra he is making a contribution to a whole in which he is a part; and instead of being responsible, as a soloist would be, for the interpretation and performance of a complete work, he is responsible for the interpretation of only one part of the musical score, and for the behaviour of one instrument among many. Even in the case of, say, a concerto for piano and orchestra, the special emphasis that may be given to the piano part does not reduce all the other parts to the status of mere accessories. The music itself is heard as a progression of sounds extended in time and forming a complete configuration. Expressed in visual terms, the particles of this constellation of sound may—indeed they must—vary in shape, size, brightness, and colour; and they are perceived in many different relations to one another as they formulate and express the composer's design. It is from our perception of the evolving system of sound relations that we extract the value and meaning of the entire work.

A work composed for theatre must be expressed in terms of its medium of interpretation, and the terms of theatre are both visual and aural. The dramatic score must be transformed into a progression of visual and aural images, presenting themselves directly and simultaneously to our senses of sight and hearing. The material elements employed in this process differ in some respects from the materials of other arts. Action, for instance, which may be either imitative or symbolic, is not represented by means of an inanimate sign or symbol, but is expressed through the movement of living actors; and the light and colours of the natural visual world are not represented in some other form, but are themselves presented directly to the senses.

All this, it might be said, is obvious. Why, then, is light, rather than speech or action, so often treated in theatre as if it were a mere accessory? Do we regard it as such in the context of life, from which all our dramatic themes and values are drawn? I am inclined to think not. Light is indeed the life and colour of the visual world. In our daily life we enter imaginatively into the nature of colour and respond to its objective qualities; and, in accordance with our human sympathies and interests we identify these qualities with our emotions.

Without light we cannot perceive form, and form cannot be perceived except as colour, for colour is the reaction of an object to the rays of light which make it visible. If all nature manifests itself to our sense of sight by means of chromatic relationships, by what other means can we symbolise in art the hues, tones, and intensities of our corresponding emotions?

There can be no doubt, of course, that light and colour effects are often used well enough in theatre as simple illumination; and

that ordinary natural phenomena such as the light of the moon, or a fiery sunset, are often faithfully reproduced, though not always in the best interests of the drama. Simply as sign-users, with electronic control of our magic lanterns, we could hardly be more efficient. And yet it is against this concentration of technical genius on the imitation of physical phenomena that we must, to some extent at least, charge the neglect of the creative use of chromatic qualities, alive with meaning, to express dramatic values in theatre. But dramatic literature itself cannot be left out of account. Far too much of it in our time has encouraged the prosaic or factual representation of life rather than the poetic interpretation; and certainly a play in which the dramatist has only expressed a narrow "photographic" view of reality does not inspire or need a symbolic interpretation. We identify the character on the stage with the man in the street, and his cigarette with the one between our own lips. We see him only with our eyes, without insight. As he was conceived, so is he represented; for theatre is sometimes a plain mirror, reflecting no more than the familiar face of things, and sometimes it is a magic casement through which we see the strangely illuminated world of human imagination. But the magic depends on the magician, since it is from the study of his dramatic formula that the entire work of interpretation must proceed.

THE CYCLORAMA

When originally introduced into large Continental theatres and opera houses,* the cyclorama (Greek *kuklos*, circle, and *horama*, view) took the form of a curved wall or section of a dome at the back of the stage, giving, when properly lit, an illusion of infinite space. In order that it should do this it was important that it should encompass as much as possible of the stage (Fig. 1), forming a barrier which superseded the overhead borders and side wings as a means of masking those regions of the stage where the eye was not supposed to wander. Relieved from the duty of masking, the scenery could then fulfil its proper function. Previously this duty had often conflicted with the artistic effect required, and the new freedom was particularly valuable in exterior settings. No longer need the trees lining the woodland glade entwine their boughs overhead, and if no scenery was required to indicate place, the area of the stage could become more spacious against the lit or unlit cyclorama.

General adoption of this form of cyclorama has been prevented in all but special instances by the expense involved and the space required. Obviously few theatres could allow the cyclorama to be taken up high enough to cut out borders (Fig. 2) without also cutting

* One of the earliest cycloramas was dome-shaped, made of silk and installed at the Scala, Milan, in 1902 by Mario Fortuny.

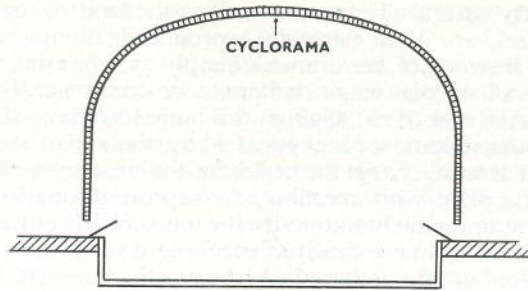


Fig. 1. Plan view of full Cyclorama.

out the all too useful grid as a scene changing device. On the plan view also the true cyclorama obstructs the wings for scene changing, making entrances and, of course, side lighting. To overcome such difficulties various solutions have been evolved. Canvas cycloramas have been made to rise vertically, roll up to one side of the stage and at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, described in our last issue, a plaster cyclorama weighing 22 tons can be moved up and down stage by hand. All such subterfuges are obviously both costly and complicated.

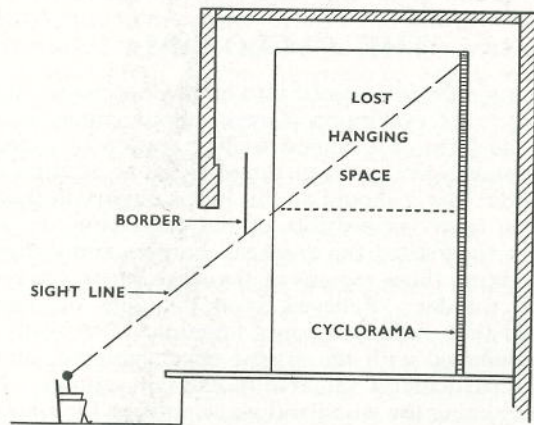


Fig. 2. Section of full Cyclorama.

By common usage, however, the term cyclorama can today be employed to mean something very much simpler and smaller, and the amateur or little theatre designer need consider only cementing the rear wall of his stage, or where this is not possible, hanging up the largest plain backcloth that can be accommodated. Even in such modified form it can still be very well worthwhile and should

be considered by every little theatre or amateur company which has any influence on the hall where it plays.

It is essential that the cyclorama surface should be absolutely smooth as the lighting will reveal and exaggerate any bumps or ripples. If it is to be a permanent structure it should be finished with Keene's cement—not plaster which will dent, scratch, and possibly crack—and be painted a flat off-white for preference, though a very pale blue is sometimes used. A plain cemented rear wall to the stage can replace the sky part of backcloth and backings—that part in fact which usually is least effective. Scenery is then reduced to a simple groundrow standing 18 in. or more in front of the cyclorama when possible, or against it when not. Such a cyclorama assumes that the rear wall is, as it should be, devoid of obstructions, radiators, centre doorways, windows and so on. Side doors are however essential to allow access from one side of the stage to the other when the cyclorama is in use. If the wall is impossible, then a rectangular frame with canvas laced to it will have to be adopted. Even a plain backcloth with a tumbler at top and bottom may be better than nothing. The joints in canvas must be horizontal.

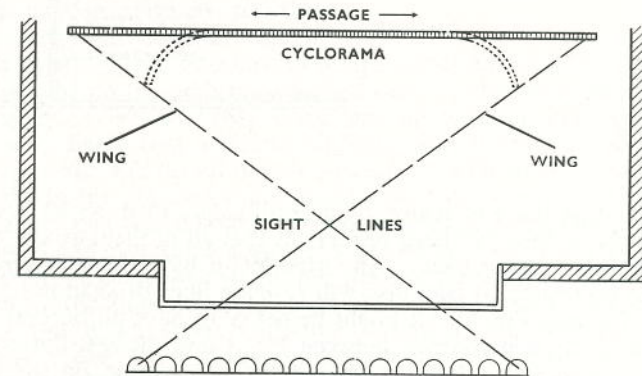


Fig. 3. Plan showing Cyclorama width reduced by curving the ends.

Whatever its form it is important for the cyclorama to be as large as possible because its main aim is always to reduce the amount of scenery required. When it cannot be sufficiently large in plan then the cyclorama may take a slight curve or the ends be turned in (shown dotted in Fig. 3). This should only be done as a last measure as it obstructs the wings on a small stage and contributes nothing to improve the visual effect. It should never be done in the vertical plane as it leads to lighting difficulties and reduces suspension and flying facilities.

A flat or near flat cyclorama obviously does nothing towards masking the downstage part of the stage. This therefore remains a

problem, the incorrect solution of which can nullify the cyclorama's effect by making it impossible to light or by ensuring a plentiful supply of shadows thereon. Shadows from the actors are troublesome enough without the addition of those from borders. It is this matter of shadows that may suggest that a cyclorama will not be worthwhile on a shallow stage. After all, however it is lit, a back-cloth is by convention established as a suitable background to the stage whereas a plain ground must be reasonably well lit and free from shadows if it is to be acceptable as representing anything.

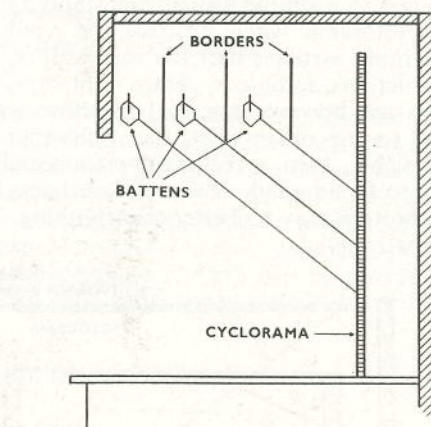


Fig. 4. Section showing multi-borders and lighting shadows.

The first thing to realise on a small stage, 15 ft. to 20 ft. deep, with three or four overhead borders, is that all of them except No. 1 will have to remain dark. Any attempt to light them by rows of battens according to tradition will provide lines of shadows across the cyclorama (Fig. 4). It might be better to have all borders dark instead of the bad contrast between No. 1 and the rest but we can seldom avoid some flooding behind the proscenium on the small stage with consequent scatter on to this border. The same, of course, applies in a lesser degree to the other borders.

One would like to say that no more than one border should be tolerated, but since practically no stage of the kind we are considering can mask with this, an alternative must be sought. Such is the ceiling type masking which reduces overhead lighting to two positions—that immediately behind the proscenium for the acting area, and that over its rear edge for the cyclorama (Fig. 5). Extreme upstage lighting is done from the sides high up, perhaps from the end of the cyc. batten. For interiors the value of the ceiling is obvious, but for exteriors it is just a matter of substituting one convention for another, since borders seldom if ever look convincing on a small stage anyway.

Lighting of the cyclorama affords little difficulty—it is merely a matter of scale whether a few 150-watt baby floods, a magazine batten (single or double) or a battery of 500-watt floods is used. With details of the particular hall and circumstances to hand, we can easily advise.

Inevitably the mention of cyclorama lighting brings up the question of colour mixing, and here it is very necessary to keep a sense of proportion. While it may be comparatively easy to ensure that when the decoration of the stage rear wall is under consideration it should be done in such a way as to provide a cyclorama, it does not mean that a lavish lighting installation should automatically follow. The main expenditure in lighting should always be concentrated on the acting area and control. After all, for many plays, interiors only are required and for these a flood shining on the cyclorama behind each window may be all that is necessary. When a play does turn up with an exterior, it is more than likely that a circuit of blue, or perhaps one light and one dark blue, will do all that is needed. It follows therefore that the lighting for the cyclorama should tend to be simple and not extravagant and that colour mixing equipment is not a *sine qua non*. Footlights and cyclorama groundrow are seldom wanted in the same production on a shallow stage, and the one piece of equipment can be used for the alternative purposes. If the plug points are duplicated up and down stage, the same dimmers can also be used. Similarly cyclorama battens and top floods can be employed on other parts of the stage when the cyclorama is not in use.

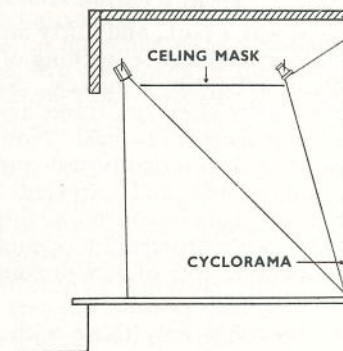


Fig. 5. Section showing Ceiling Masking.

Where sufficient money is available for a three-colour installation, or where one is hired for a special production with many colour changes, the colour filters 5A Orange, 16 Blue Green and 19 or 20 Blue are to be preferred for most occasions to the Primaries 6 Red, 39 Green and 20 Blue. The former combination gives all usual requirements, such colours as Red, Green and Magenta being superfluous for sky purposes. What is more, the recommended combination gives a greater intensity of light and is easier to use than the primary combination. There are many beautiful colours and much pleasure to be produced by colour mixing on three dimmers but it is more than likely that blue effects only will be required.

OPENING A THEATRE

A Midsummer Nightmare, 1951

Scene: Theatre Royal, Hanley

It was 7 p.m., and thirty minutes later the Midland Region were due to feature the re-opening of a theatre which was destroyed by a fire and rebuilt by a miracle. Six months previously the theatre had been a mere steelwork frame and a terrifying collection of architects' and engineers' drawings. Now it was a sumptuous reality with a three-tiered air-conditioned auditorium, seating over 1,800 people in upholstered and carpeted comfort; spacious and amusingly decorated bars in which one might sip tea or sup beer; a stage with a 40 ft. wide proscenium opening, equipped with all modern aids to production; lots of airy dressing rooms, shower baths, a lift and a stage canteen.

Probably only those with similar experience were really convinced that the theatre would actually open to the public twenty-four hours later. Every conceivable variety of craftsman was still audibly active. On the stage the scenery for the opening show was being set. A scenic artist was deftly touching-up to make good the ravages of a precedent tour and a ballet mistress was giving mimetic instructions to a bevy of dancers. In one corner, the architect was radiating cheerful confidence as he settled the urgent problems of a lugubrious clerk of works; grimy electricians hurried hither and thither with coils of cable and a pianist was idly strumming on an incongruous upright instrument intruding downstage in readiness for the broadcast; a tall, handsome young man in a pull-over was **silently rehearsing his impending commentary, with eloquent gestures.** Throughout the building the screech of saws and the banging of hammers vied with the persistent whine of vacuum-cleaners fighting a losing battle with the ambient dust; a french-polisher remotely plied his art with calm concentration; a worried musical director explored dejectedly the chaos that would be the orchestra's pit, while the managing director strolled around with an expression that fitfully alternated between apprehensive bewilderment and the resignation of despair. Two cheerful sound engineers were rehearsing the alphabet and demonstrating their ability to count up to ten as they strove to obtain a less bronchial standard of amplification. Periodically an unbelievably tall attendant made tentative entrances and exits, quite obviously in the throes of acute self-consciousness induced by the resplendence of the new uniform he was breaking in. The imperturbable stage manager emerged occasionally from an off-stage hinterland to a forestage eminence to signal mysterious instructions to invisible fly-men. Small groups of people, betraying varying degrees of assurance or nervousness, began to assemble for impending interviews at the microphone. As zero hour approached we retired to the projection room behind the

upper circle. From a position near the stage lighting control desk and an imported radio set there was a perfect view of the stage. The B.B.C. Adonis leisurely brought his hand-mike to the ready and his voice asserted from the adjacent loud-speaker "I am standing in the centre of the stage of the new Theatre Royal, Hanley. . . ." He wasn't. His opening recitative was actually put over, with admirably smooth competence, as he squatted nonchalantly on the floor of the forestage. Later, two principals of the visiting company tunefully contended that there's no business like show business and more than one present might have murmured "You're telling me."

Twenty-four hours later, however, the auditorium was filled with evening dress of both sexes. Without let or hindrance the opening ceremony and the show did, in fact, go on. There were, of course, a few eleventh-hour panics culminating in a flooding of the stage when somebody had an unfortunate curiosity about the operation of the drencher system. But the opening was triumphantly achieved and after being for two years in a theatrical void, the Potteries people were now proudly able to provide No. 1 Tours with a house that is patriotically claimed (not without some justification) to be the finest in the country.

Long may it prosper.

P. C.

THE RUPERT GUINNESS MEMORIAL HALL

Dublin's New Theatre

By JAMES J. HENRY, Resident Stage Manager and Producer

Speaking at the concluding performance by the Abbey Theatre Company playing in the Rupert Guinness Hall, Dublin, Dr. Lennox Robinson, the celebrated Irish dramatist, said that everybody was familiar with the well-known slogan, "Guinness is good for you." He stated that on this occasion he felt the slogan should read, "Guinness is good *to* you" because his function that night was to thank the directors of Messrs. Guinness for their very generous gesture in placing their magnificent new theatre at the disposal of the company when the disastrous fire in the famous Abbey Theatre left the players without a home. I'm sure Dr. Robinson's words will be echoed by the Dramatic, Musical and Debating societies attached to the world-famous brewery because in the Rupert Guinness Hall they have one of the best equipped little theatres in Ireland.

The firm of Messrs. Arthur Guinness Son & Co. Ltd. have always been noted for the attention they show to the welfare of their employees, and for many years the Workmen's Rooms, Belview,

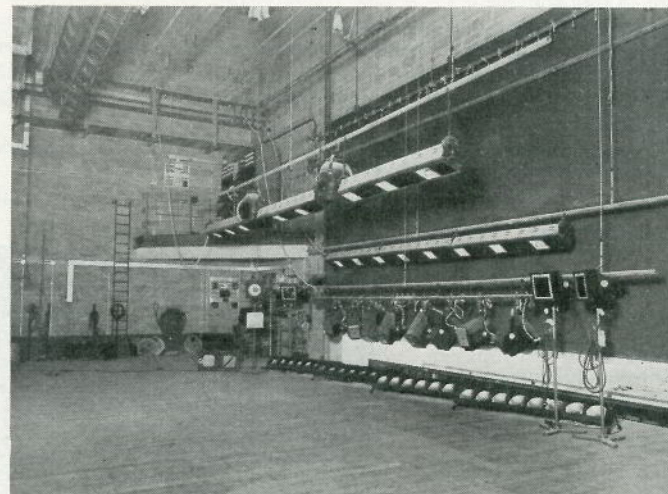
have been the centre of the social activities of the Brewery employees in Dublin. These rooms contained a concert hall, billiard room and library together with refreshment rooms. When the space occupied by the concert hall was required for other purposes the management decided to adapt a former store to the requirements of a modern assembly hall and the Rupert Guinness Hall, named after the present chairman of the company, the Earl of Iveagh, is the result.



*Fig. 1. THE AUDITORIUM LOOKING TOWARDS THE STAGE
The rear rows of seats are on tiered removable platforms as the floor is flat, the Hall sometimes being used for Dances, etc.*

Despite its rather austere exterior the interior of the hall presents a very pleasing picture to the eye and a feeling of spaciousness is enhanced by the delightful colour scheme, the large windows with their golden velvet draperies and the particularly beautiful lighting fittings. A spacious foyer is approached by a short staircase from Watling Street and leads directly to the ground floor of the auditorium which measures 46 ft. in width and 62 ft. from rear to orchestra pit. The height of the auditorium is 22 ft. and there is seating for 552 persons (118 in the balcony and 434 in the stalls). The auditorium has a level, oak floor so as to be suitable for dancing and, in consequence, the seating is on tiered, movable platforms. The hall is plenum heated from a chamber in the roof through two ornamental grills beside the proscenium opening. There are two extractor fans situated in the balcony ceiling and the temperature is thermostatically controlled. A very roomy balcony foyer affords accommodation for serving refreshments during intervals and at

dances and an unusual and valuable mural decoration arrests the attention of every visitor, for I'm sure the Rupert Guinness Hall is the only theatre that can claim to possess two large Landseers, "The Stag at Bay," and "Braemar," and a Romney, "Mrs. Webster." The loan of these magnificent paintings from Kenwood was arranged by Lord Moyne, a director of the firm.



*Fig. 2. LOOKING DOWN STAGE
The fire curtain has been raised sufficiently to show the footlights, the cyclorama ground rows have been brought right down stage and the overhead lighting equipment is shown lowered. The double batten for cyclorama top lighting can be seen top left.*

The extremely well equipped stage measuring 54 ft. by 22 ft. 6 in. is surmounted 30 ft. above by a grid capable of taking sixteen sets of lines exclusive of permanent counterweighting for lighting battens, cinema screen and house tabs. Two fly galleries are provided, one of them accommodating fire curtain controller and counterweight loading platform as well as ordinary cleat rail. A passage behind the very fine cyclorama offers convenient access to both sides of stage and the orchestra is adequately provided for by a sunk pit 7 ft. wide, capable of seating 22 musicians. As well as a considerable quantity of stock scenery, two complete sets of curtains, one black and one grey, are available all complete with necessary steel tubular curtain tracks. The house tabs of old gold with trimmings to blend perfectly with the auditorium draperies can be "flown" or operated as ordinary "trailers." Control of the "hall" fire curtain is secured by a push button from the stage manager's desk in the prompt corner, and incorporates drencher

equipment operated by a lever also located near the stage manager's desk. The stage lighting comprises the following equipment:

Front of House. Six Front of House Pattern 43 1,000-watt spot lanterns are concealed in a recess in the ceiling of the auditorium. These lamps are accessible during performance.

Footlights. "S" Type, 18 ft. long, wired for three colour circuits, with wide angle reflectors.

Spot Batten. 18 ft. long, internally wired for eight individual 1,000-watt Pattern 43 spot lanterns.

Batten No. 2. 24 ft. long, containing three 6 ft. "S" type magazine batten lengths wired for three colour circuits and two Pattern 76 Acting Area lanterns each with individual circuit.

Batten No. 3 (Cyclorama). Two 24 ft. lengths of "S" type magazine batten wired for four colour circuits.

Cyclorama Groundrow. Four 6 ft. sections of "S" type magazine groundrow wired for two colour circuits with wide angle reflectors.

Side Floods. Four Pattern 60 500-watt floodlanterns on telescopic stands.

Switchboard. The switchboard is situated on a railed platform over stage level on the Prompt side. It has a 36 dimmer bank divided into a colour section and an independent section with a master handwheel and chain interlock mechanism. Any section can be left on independent of the master blackout switch.

All the lighting battens, cinema screen and front tabs are counter-weighted so that mediums can be changed or adjustments made in a matter of seconds. A signal light cueing system to flies, O.P. corner, switchboard and orchestra is augmented by a telemaster system to these points in addition to all dressing rooms and foyer, thus obviating the necessity for a call boy.

There are eight dressing rooms amply fitted with illuminated mirrors, hot and cold water, etc., a wardrobe room, green room, band room, two cloakrooms, property room, electrician's room, stage carpenter's room and stage manager's office.

Productions to date include Gilbert and Sullivan's *Trial by Jury* and *The Yeomen of the Guard*, *Samson* (Handel), *The Shadow of a*

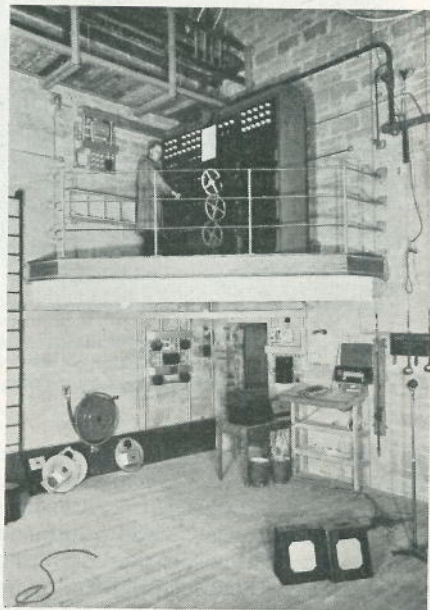


Fig. 3. PROMPT CORNER showing Stage Manager's Signals and Controls with Switchboard Platform and Flyrail over.

Gunman (O'Casey), *The Jailbird* (Shiels), *Ladies in Retirement* (Percy and Denham), several film shows, two dances and the memorable two months' visit of the Abbey Theatre Company during which they staged *The Plough and the Stars* (Sean O'Casey), *Boyd's Shop* (St. John Ervine), and the first production of *The Devil a Saint Would Be*, by Louis D'Alton. Messrs. Guinness may rest assured that in building this magnificent theatre for their employees they have afforded them an opportunity and a means to use their leisure time and artistic ability to the best advantage, and I feel sure that the high standard already set will continue to improve. This centuries old brewing firm has set a standard for many other firms to copy.

PLANNING LIGHTING ON A MODEL

"To plant and o'erwhelm custom"—*The Winter's Tale*.

By ROBERT STANBURY

For some considerable time I had realised how exceptionally useful a model theatre could be, but it was not until two years ago that I settled down to produce one that worked accurately in every detail. It has proved a long job, but having seen in the Theatre the difficulties, the time and money wasted, the lack of opportunity for experiment, not to mention the trying of temper and health when getting a production on, the need for some help in the matter was more than apparent. To me this help was the Model; if it was good enough. . . .

To be good enough it meant that any technical production points planned on the model must translate to the full-size stage with but little error: otherwise the model would be an encumbrance, not a help. It meant also that the model must be exceedingly flexible so that the dimensions and particular arrangements of equipment peculiar to any stage could be fairly represented on it. Lastly it meant lighting and control equipment—the most important and the most fascinating item, for without lighting a model is hopelessly limited.

Obviously the lighting equipment was the only difficult part of the model to make. At least so I gathered from the contemporary scene. So I started off with that. The first results were very disappointing. The equipment was vast and evil-looking (imagine a designer in a bus with a 2 inch to 1 foot scale scene model!) and dismally inefficient with hot-spots, dirty-spots and irregular "spill" everywhere. It was the blindness of the sheep. But who could be blamed for hoping that crown-glass lenses, small light sources and polished reflectors would combine to form an efficient basis for small equipment? Yet they don't, and the reason for it seems simply that

when dealing in such small dimensions, any optical or constructional error becomes disastrously apparent. So the basis then became only the highest quality lens and for the optical lanterns no reflector at all, while the flood family needed highly efficient diffusing reflectors to smooth out the relatively poor quality of the small lamp, but without destroying the necessary cut-off. Lamps became a problem on their own. Ordinary battery lamps, etc., just would not do in many cases, either because they lacked watts, or were too big (one



Settings & Figures—Yvonne Gordon

Photos—John Cowderoy

Fig. 1. A scene from Webster's "The White Devil" photographed under stage lighting only. The cyclorama is lit by G.P. groundrows. The proscenium opening which is fully adjustable was 14 inches wide for this set.

could not even get $\frac{1}{2}$ inch centres in the floats), or because the filaments were large or irregularly placed and the resulting ghost-image within the bulb rendered them unsuitable for spotlights at any rate. Also, and probably most important of all, these lamps tend to have a markedly yellow light output which ran contrary to one of the first precepts. If the light sources in the miniature lanterns were yellower than those in the full-size, then accurate transmission of the gelatine colours was impossible. Unfortunately over-running rarely overcame this colour defect satisfactorily, so the slightly more expensive krypton-filled small lamps, made for scientific purposes, were mainly resorted to.

Slowly, through a maze of experiment, the equipment became efficient, but there was still the incredible difficulty of getting down to the scale of half an inch to one foot without sacrificing any qualities of the equipment in performance; accuracy of colour

transmission, of beam angles, of focusing, of dimming and general flexibility, being perhaps even more essential than scale in actual physical size. And in conjunction with all this there was the almost unending matter of scale in intensities and "spill" (for "spill" must be accurate too). I thought it would never end. The finding of the lamps and lenses, and the substance that would form a satisfactory diffusing reflector, were all tests of perseverance; and ventilation problems I still have nightmares about. Dimming too was not easy, due to the very low ohmic values required and the consequent flicker all too often experienced, except where dimming on the primary sides of the transformers was possible.

At this point I met Michael Northen to whom I am greatly indebted, for it was the existence of his magnificent model that showed me clearly what was required of my lighting equipment. Since then the question of scale has been largely dealt with and the one quality sacrificed noticeably, though I believe not drastically, has had to be that of size. For instance, the "1,000-watt" spotlight (what you might call my Pattern 43) is $1\frac{1}{8}$ in. long, whereas it should be about $\frac{3}{8}$ in. At present (one cannot ever say one has finished) this has happened throughout the whole range of equipment, the floats having lamps with bulbs rather larger than match heads at $\frac{1}{2}$ in. centres, and so on.

So the end of the first stage of experiment has been reached and my model is finished, having taken six months to build. Its lighting equipment (see Figs. 2 and 3) is as follows: 12 F.O.H. focusing spotlights with barn-door shutters and colour wheels (all these lanterns are movable regarding their position in the "auditorium"), 12-way focusing spot-bar and 4 "boom" spots either side, floats and battens in three circuits, 6-way focusing A.A. bar, cyclorama horizon flood unit in three circuits, float spots, 18 dip-plugs and 12 fly-plugs for all the extra spots, floods or groundrows that producers sometimes want suddenly. And



Fig. 2. Backstage during a "performance." Photographed under stage lighting only.

Fig. 3. General view of the stage and its equipment. The large spotlight with colour-wheel in the middle distance is ordinarily used for F.O.H. work. At the foot of its stand, a groundrow can be seen. The cyclorama is here shown flown, but the horizon floods which light it are visible just below the fly floor (top right). Note the match-box at stage centre.

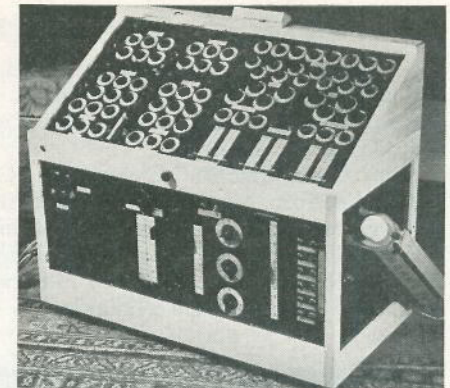


for this installation the remote control board (see Fig. 4) carries some hundred odd circuit dimmers, group masters and one grand master, not forgetting numerous "two way and off" switches and pilot lights. All master dimmers are potentiometer connected so that dimming is proportional when, as often happens, a multiple circuit is used only in part. The curtain, etc., are also remotely controlled from the board.

As to the stage itself, which in this article has been somewhat eclipsed by the lighting, there is little to say except that it has been built as flexibly as possible. All equipment is easily movable, the proscenium opening adjustable and the floor made in sections so that lifts or a revolve of any diameter and in any position can be fitted when required. There are 45 sets of lines; a sufficient number to allow of there being one there when, as happened recently, a producer says, "That cloth is 18 ft. up from the setting line and the Acting Areas I want just there."

Finally, the advantages and the limitations—for they are inseparably linked—of my model at its present level of development must be gauged. How successful have the attempts at accuracy of intensities and colour transmission, etc., actually been? Unfortunately, opinions are divided over this, presumably because it is difficult to judge by eye, and even meter readings are open to suspicion when intensities and throws are so small. But personally, my own opinion is that if one plans a lighting composition on the model, one can expect the dimmer settings to be only relatively accurate when one gets to the full-size stage (they vary from theatre to theatre anyway), and there may also be some slight variation in

Fig. 4. The remote control board. Length—three feet, height at front—two feet.



certain colours. But not very much and probably nothing to worry about provided that one builds the lighting composition precisely in the same order and manner as one did on the model. In this way any slight error can be corrected as and when it arises and the model will still have been a direct aid and an enormous economy as well as having provided extensive opportunities for experiment at an earlier stage. I believe this sincerely and although opinion varies, clients are gathering slowly.

Meanwhile the work goes on, the present task being the development of suitable model effects machines which will probably be available by the time this is in print. There appears to be a certain demand for private experiment in this field! All the limitations of the model also have to be watched, slowly comprehended and eradicated. Especially difficult are the subtle ones which are apparently inherent in the model's very size. Colour appears among these. In addition, there is the inevitable stray light one finds in a theatre, from exit lights and pilots, etc., which may be impossible to capture in the model, if one were to want to. And when in the near future my model is used for a new opera, how do I know there is precisely the right light in the orchestra pit? I can't be certain. Indeed, there is always something and it is all agonisingly difficult. Yet I believe it is worthwhile, especially now that I am informed that the under-deck scene in "Billy Budd", the lighting for which was planned entirely on Mr. Northen's model, translated precisely to the Covent Garden stage, even to the dimmer settings. A fluke? Yes, it had better be admitted.

Strand Electric neither manufactures nor supplies model lighting equipment. Readers in search of such gear for the purposes Mr. Stanbury outlines above should contact him direct at 239, Goldhurst Terrace, London, N.W.6. If economy is more important than accuracy of results, e.g. for use in toy theatres, less elaborate model equipment is available from Mr. Robin Hood, 50, Pont St. Mews, London, S.W.1. (Editor.)

CHRYSALINE

Chrysaline lamp shades and lighting fittings are made by a patented process of spraying plastic on to a wire frame. Any shape or size is possible and the resulting fitting is fireproof, weather-proof and translucent.

For the Stage the obvious use is as Chinese Lanterns and we have, therefore, taken into our Hire Stock a quantity of these units in various shapes and sizes. These are supplied with a cable and short tail to each lantern, carrying lamps of various colours.

Similar fittings for outdoor illuminations and for the decoration of Dance Halls are also available.



Settings by Gurschner and Stanley Moore
Photo—Houston Rogers
Act III of "Colombe" by Jean Anouilh produced for H. M. Tennent Ltd. by Mr. Peter Brook at the New Theatre, London, showing Chrysaline Lanterns.

REVIEW

A Second Anthology of Play Scenes, Verse and Prose. Edited by Harold Downs. (Pitman's Theatre and Stage Series, 16s.)

Here is an infinitely varied choice between the extremes of *vers* that is not too *libre*, and comedy scenes that couldn't be more naturalistic. One may open the book at random and pass or choose, to meet the mood.

The selection and division have been influenced by the needs of students at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama but the book merits a place on anybody's shelf of favourite poets and playwrights. Its pages provide generous scope for the student actor who would practise control of pace and pause, of accent and rhythm and all the other vocal subtleties of his craft. P.C.

THOSE PLAYS YOU'VE WRITTEN !

By HAROLD DOWNS

Mr. Arthur T. Gill, 1628, Great Cambridge Road, Enfield, Middlesex (I invite readers to note the address—they may need it), thanking the Editor of *Tabs* for publishing my article *Does Writing for Amateurs Pay?*, sends me particulars of his experiences as a playwright. They are informative and relevant alike, and I gladly pass them on in the hope that they will not only appeal to readers but also induce other writers of plays to contribute their experiences.

The author of three one-act plays written specially for performance by young adolescents and produced successfully for school performances, Mr. Gill, like others, has encountered obstacles that he has not been able to surmount. For example, each play has been performed only once, causing Mr. Gill to wonder whether the plays (to use his own words) "are destined for oblivion." Having read the plays, I am in a position to express the opinion that they should not be, although Mr. Gill, probably unjustifiably pessimistic, states "perhaps they deserve it," adding "but the fact remains that there is still a great lack of plays for adolescents. These are a special class of children: too old for the fairy stuff of those 'plays for children' and not emotionally mature enough for the adult repertoire."

Mr. Gill's first play was "written in 1949" and "placed with a reputable educational publisher in July, 1950. It had previously been refused by four other publishers. I received a fee for the first rights of the play, which may not now be published elsewhere for two years after their publication. Because of paper shortages and other difficulties, I have not yet seen even a proof of the play and the publishers can offer no hope as to when they can put the play on the market." (This, by the way, is not exceptional. To maintain what may be termed the normal flow of publication at present, some publishers work on the assumption that the time lag between acceptance of a MS. and the publication of it in book form must be eighteen months to two years. Some MSS. "go through" at a quicker pace!)

"My second play," Mr. Gill proceeds, "has been refused by all the publishers listed as interested in plays in *The Artists and Writers Year Book* and one or two others besides; twenty-two publishers in all. The firm publishing my first play are interested, but until the earlier volumes in their new series are issued, they are making no further plans." (It may be consoling to remember that authors who have established their reputations have, from time to time, either had "to hawk" their literary wares in the Publishing World or get their agents to do the "hawking" for them and that, even then, not every MS. has been accepted for publication.) "This long list of refusals," Mr. Gill continues, "depressing as it is, would

make one wonder if the play is any good at all. I think it is a good play. My friends do too; and most telling of all, my enemies—or shall I say those not favourably inclined towards me—admit it is a good play.” Mr. Gill sent me a copy of this play “in the hope that you can spare time to read it. If you could even spare time to give me a brief appraisal, a thing publishers have no time for, I should be more than grateful.” (In the spirit of the Festive Season I broke my (almost) inexorable rule not to read MSS. received in this manner, and made (I hope) a pertinent point or two.

“My third play,” Mr. Gill concludes this part of his letter, “which has just been produced and judged to be ‘better than ever,’ has, to date, been refused by three publishers, and I haven’t yet had the energy to send it further on its rounds.”

It might be helpful to know how other playwrights, excluding those who have established themselves as contributors of one-act plays of significance to the Festival and Amateur Movements, have fared when, having had their plays produced by their own local society, of which they may be prominent members, they have desired other amateur societies to undertake productions of their works. Have they waited for the officials to approach the playwrights, or have the playwrights, acting in accordance with business procedure, made direct contact with societies that are known to be interested in the production of original one-act plays? Again, have the playwrights, desirous of having their plays published, submitted their typescripts to the publishers, made use of agents, or waited (probably in vain!) for publishers to communicate with them?

I have space for only concise comment. My generalisation is that the publishing of plays is not particularly attractive to many publishers. Apart from the collected volumes of West End successes—say the Paul Elek series edited by Mr. J. C. Trewin—and a few others that bring into greater prominence well-known names, there is relatively little demand for the printed play, especially when one takes into special consideration the impressive numerical strength of the Amateur Movement. The reaction of amateurs to the Literature of the Theatre repeatedly tells a story of apathy and indifference among those who might reasonably be assumed to be potential buyers.

Production is in a different category—but not easy to realise outside one’s own circle of associations, unless, of course, one keeps alert-minded and searches for particulars of the organisations that are willing to consider new plays for production. In this connection *The Amateur Stage, Drama, Noda Bulletin*, etc., should be studied; the societies that enter new plays for the various festivals should be noted and followed by appropriate action; and the possibilities among youth organisations, in the world of adult education, etc., should be probed.