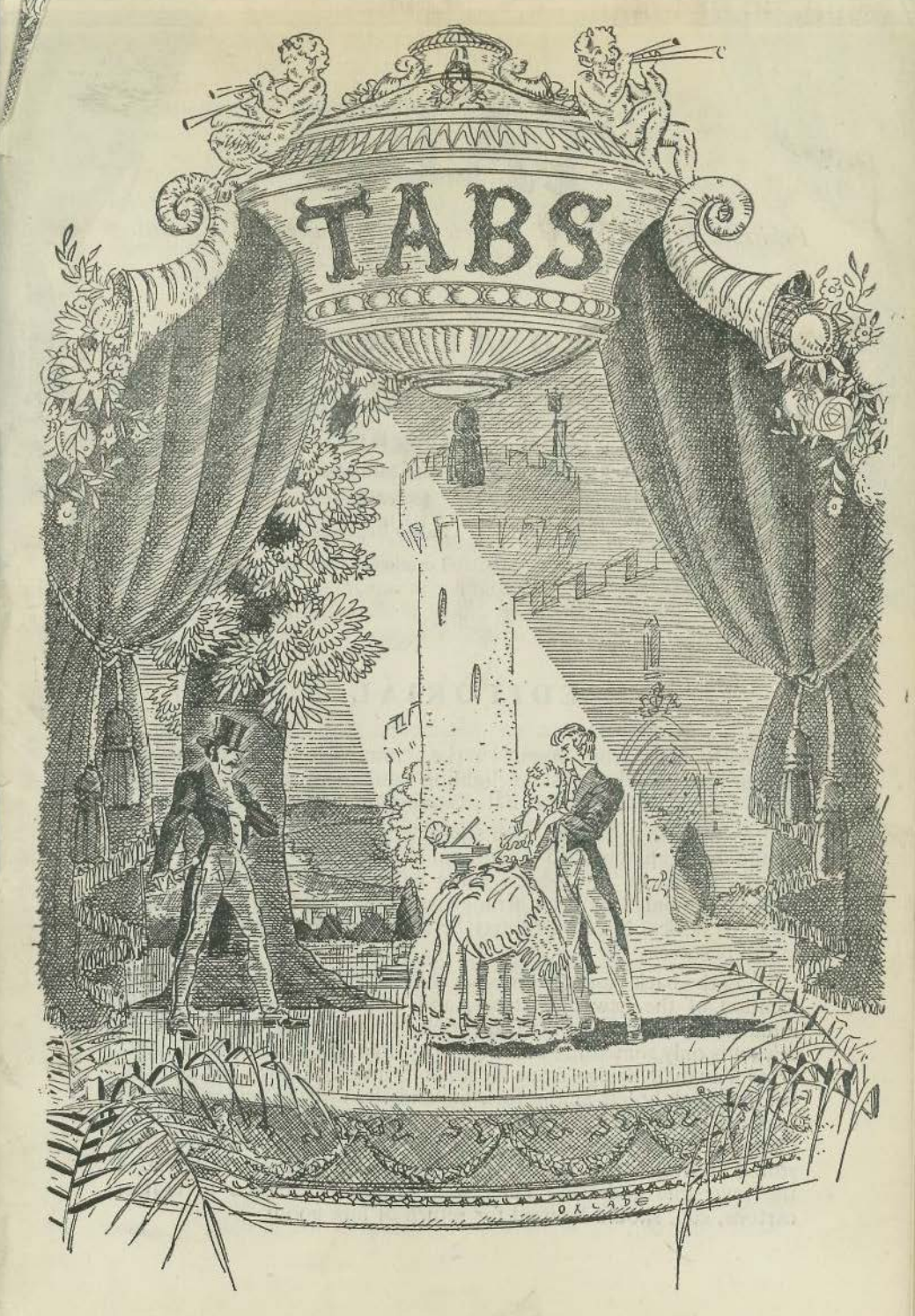
TABS

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EDITORIAL

Anyone who has been immersed up to the neck, so to speak, in a particular art or trade for some time tends to forget that anyone else with whom they may have conversation or correspondence may not be equally well versed in the jargon peculiar to the subject. While there is usually little merit in slang as such, technical jargon usually has the advantage of being both brief and to the point. It is obviously quicker and less capable of misconstruction to say " Hang a Pageant from the O.P. end of No. 2 bar " than to say " Put one of those what'sits with spill rings over there where Ada makes her big entrance in Act 3." We ourselves have to scratch our heads on occasions when people refer loosely to " limes " and it is not possible from the context to decide whether they mean sunspots, floatspots, or anything between the two. For our mutual benefit we therefore draw readers' attention to the Glossary of Technical Theatrical Terms which is advertised on the outside back cover of this issue of TABS. Copies may be had from Head Office or branches at 2*s.* each post free. Any profits on the transaction have been assigned to the Actors' Orphanage.

* * *

" *I said it very loud and clear;*
I went out and shouted in his ear.
But he was very stiff and proud;
He said ' you needn't shout so loud.' "
—*Alice Through the Looking Glass.*

Never mind, we'll say it once again, not loud but, we hope, very clear.

For the purposes of giving maximum service with minimum expense to all concerned we have divided the British Isles into four areas each with its own branch or distributor. Two of them—Eire and Scotland—speak for themselves. England, however, we have divided into Northern and Southern areas as shown on the map on page 27.

Residents in the Northern Area of England should correspond and conduct their business (*including* the return of hire equipment) with our Manchester Office (address opposite), which holds both sales and hire stocks.

Residents in the Southern Area of England should do likewise with London, but please:—

All correspondence to Head Office.

All returned hire goods to Kennington Stores.

The relative addresses are given on the opposite page.

" FOR EVERY PASSION SOMETHING "

" As You Like It"

Advice to the Players

*Reprinted with acknowledgment to " Theatre " **

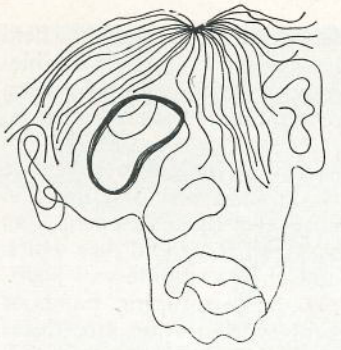
This is the season when, regardless of Equity's warning of six jobs for every ten actors and what Noel Coward told their mothers, the Miss Worthingtons and their brothers go willingly to drama school, *en route* they hope for Shaftesbury Avenue. We felt it was up to *Theatre* to produce some really practical guidance, none of your second-hand Stanislavsky. Recently, as our readers may recall, we unearthed the short-lived magazine *Theatre* published in Edinburgh a century ago. We find our worthy predecessor had just the thing. Not only a series modestly entitled *The Way to the Stage, or How to Become an Actor and Get an Engagement*, but two instalments on *Expression of Character* consisting of excerpts from an un-named but " celebrated work on the passions." We are pretty sanguine that any student who follows the hints we are now passing on will shake the complacence of examiners and eventually elicit from managements at auditions emotions as strong as those they will so vividly portray.

" trying to register pain or anger."

Take Love. The celebrated work on the passions is admirably explicit. " Kneeling is often necessary in all suppliant passions," we are told, " but it is only necessary to bend one knee in cases of love, desire, etc., which must never be the one that is next the audience." Now just take a look at Alan Badel in the current Old Vic production of *Romeo and Juliet*. Love, indeed? *Watch his knees*! In the same production you can watch Laurence Payne trying to register rage or anger. Do you once see him with " the mouth open, and drawn on each side towards the ears, showing the teeth in a gnashing posture? " Already, you see, we are way ahead.

But this sort of under-playing is distressingly common nowadays and, to say plainly, John Gielgud has a lot to answer for. We are told a lot of people actually liked his Hamlet. *Sancta simplicitas*!

* *Fortnightly* 1/- *from* 77 *Dean St., London, W.*1.



" despair can seldom be overacted."

What do you have to play in Hamlet? Grief, to begin with. Now grief " sudden and violent, expresses itself by beating the head or forehead, tearing the hair, catching the breath as if choking; also by screaming, weeping, stamping, lifting the eyes from time to time to heaven, and hurrying backwards and forwards." It becomes painfully obvious that Mr. Gielgud did little more than walk through the part. And what about his Despair? Despair " bends the eyebrows downward, clouds the forehead, rolls the eyes, and sometimes bites the lips, and gnashes with the teeth." (You must watch this, students; if in gnashing the mouth begins to get drawn up towards the ears on each side you will find yourselves doing rage and anger again. Try it for twenty minutes in front of the mirror every morning. We tested our own technique on the printer recently and the production schedule improved out of all recognition.) But to proceed with Despair: " the heart is supposed to be too much hardened to suffer the tears to flow, yet the eyeballs must be red and inflamed." (The red eye-balls are a bit tricky, we find. We can only manage a rather bloodshot and dissipated look that has occasioned rather a lot of comment in the neighbourhood.) If any envious detractor suggests you are overdoing the Despair, he is answered conclusively by the celebrated work on the passions: " When despair is supposed to drive the actor to distraction and self-murder it can seldom or ever be overacted." So much for Gielgud.

" the least invidious passion."

It is, of course, essential to make all these passions quite natural and we had the rather clever idea of rehearsing at breakfast while reading notices in the morning papers. We decided that Wonder or Amazement was the least invidious passion for this particular exercise. Unfortunately there were practical difficulties: " If the hands hold anything at the time when the object of wonder appears, they immediately let it drop, unconsciously: the whole body fixes in a contracted,

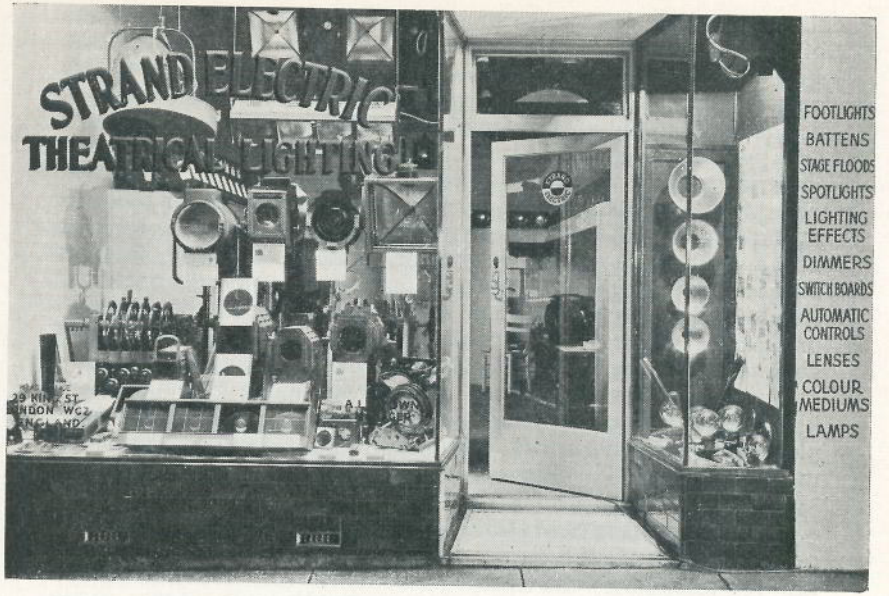
stooping posture, the mouth open, and the hands held open." This proved to be rather hard on the clothes, the tablecloth and the china, and the children—born actors who have been practising Wonder and Amazement from infancy—began rather to overdo it.

So we decided to do our spot of practice on the way to the office and, since drama critics are not always at their best first thing in the morning, what with the late nights and the excitement, we thought we would have a shot at Dotage, Infirm or Old Age which " shows itself by hollowness of eyes and cheeks, dimness of sight, deafness and tremor of voice, hams weak, knees tottering, hands or head paralytic, hollow coughing, frequent expectoration, breathless wheezing, occasional groaning, and the body stooping under an insupportable load of years." On the first morning we got one and ninepence in coppers and a lift to town in an ambulance. Let no one say a good actor cannot make a living nowadays. We have half a mind to throw up criticism and show the performers a thing or two on the stage ourselves. Acting like ours, we think, has not been seen for a very long time. But first we must just get the Despair right. Pardon us while we gnash our teeth.

* * *

STRAND AUSTRALIAN BRANCH

Strand Electric's branch in Australia was opened earlier this year. While the present ban on imports continues, sales are necessarily somewhat restricted but the branch Hire stocks are in ever increasing demand. The tour of New Zealand and Australia early in 1953 by the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Stratford-on-Avon, Company will be serviced from 481 Malvern Road, Melbourne, S.E.1 (Telephone BJ 4503).



The Strand Electric Branch, Melbourne, Australia—see opposite page.

THE THEATRE GOES BUSH

By COLIN BADGER, M.A.
Director of Adult Education, State of Victoria, Australia

Australia is not a country with a theatre tradition and the knowledge and love of the drama is not widespread. Some people here think that the virtual monopoly of the theatres by one Company—J. C. Williamson Ltd.—has retarded progress but looking at the matter realistically, it is hard to see how there would be any theatre at all without " The Firm " as this company is universally known in the Commonwealth.

The real problem lies deeper down. It is that there has been a virtual theatre interregnum since the advent of the Cinema. Its cheapness, relative low cost and ubiquity make the cinema an ideal entertainment form for a country like Australia, with its great distances and sparse population. The problem of the Theatre here is basically a problem of education. How to get people back to the Theatre. How to train an audience to the conventions of the stage, how to overcome the problem of large populations in the cities and sparse populations in the country. A city season in the Theatre may be a good and profitable one—but there are no provinces to tour after it—20 actors go without jobs and managers go broke.

A very small experiment in re-education of audiences to the Theatre has been going on in Victoria for some four years now and

the results have been interesting. It is conducted by the Council of Adult Education, a State subsidised educational agency, with a strong interest in amateur drama. The Council wished to get some amateur dramatic societies established in country centres, so it decided to send out a Travelling Theatre unit, to visit country towns and put on plays. The principal motive was educational, not theatrical and the results have been most interesting.

After the initial difficulties inherent in pioneering of this sort were overcome, the touring unit has steadily made its way and is now a very popular affair. It gives performances in about 50 towns on each tour—the tour lasting for eight weeks, mostly one-night stands. The C.A.E. does not produce plays itself, but engages professional or semi-professional companies for the specified period, guaranteeing wages, production costs, etc., and handling publicity organisation, front of house and other business management itself. Equity rates are paid and the tours are quite a useful supplement for many actors during " resting " periods from the theatres in the capital cities.

Standards have been steadily improved year by year—although educational, the C.A.E. is not necessarily highbrow. Plays toured are for example, Shakespeare and Shaw (*St. Joan*), Priestley (*Laburnum Grove* and *The Inspector Calls*), an Australian play (*Enduring as the Camphor Tree*), *Young Wives' Tale*, *Love from a Stranger*, *The Importance of Being Ernest*, *The Miser* (Malleson's translation). Occasionally, the Travelling Theatre takes a ballet instead of a play and has toured one opera—*Don Pasquale*.

The unit is quite self-contained—it consists of a large semi-trailer vehicle with passenger compartment in the front, wardrobe compartment and all the gear for the play, lights, settings, props, etc., in the rear. Every effort has been made to improve the standard of **lighting and setting—the opening up of** a Strand Electric branch in Melbourne is naturally therefore, a matter of great interest. Two Strand dimmers are being used on the present tour, which happens to be a ballet tour.

There are stern limitations to this kind of work. Financially, the Travelling Theatre works at a loss. Victorian country towns are very small—we often play in towns with a total population of about 1,500 and with a hall capacity of 350-600. Apart from the need to provide a service for the small towns, we must play small towns in order to get eight performances each week without travelling impossible distances. The loss is falling steadily with each tour and is now about £50 p.w., which includes depreciation, salaries of the two men (manager and advance agent) who are employed for the whole year. It is estimated that we will reach financial stability soon, if the rate of progress shown over the past three years is maintained.

At first, the audiences were very thin indeed. A new venture doesn't easily " take on " with country folk. To-day, it is necessary

to carry a " full house " sign, though it is not used as often as we would like.

The Travelling Theatre is undeniably popular. From the Council's point of view, it has succeeded beyond our hopes, because it has stimulated a prodigious growth of amateur dramatic societies. These groups are phenomenonally active, organising play reading groups, putting on plays, demanding scripts, books about the theatre and theatre techniques, attending lectures on production and so on. A branch of the British Drama League has been formed in Victoria and the first One-Act Play Festival has attracted 18 entries of which 10 are from country centres. There are now about 120 active amateur societies in Victoria and there will be more; in 1947 there were three.

Altogether, it has been a stimulating experience. In the long run it will undoubtedly mean a better public opinion and a more favourable atmosphere in which the " live " theatre may flourish. It means some additional employment for actors and artists and a good training ground for technical people whose apportunities are unduly restricted. If C.A.E. can make a success of it, we hope in a few years to see the fully professional theatre back again in the major towns, with the active support of our groups.

In our own view the Government subsidy (£5,000 p.a.) is well spent on this work. There are worse ways of spending money than in attracting 19,000 people to the theatre in an eight weeks' tour. The Victorian Government has given and continues to give its fullest support, and although it may seem a little out of the beaten path for an Adult Education organisation, the Council is not dissatisfied with its experiment.

* * *

NIGHT SKIES

How to light a night sky? The Editor has been pressing me for some considerable time to tackle this subject. On the last occasion the topic came up I said " It can't be done; witness the fact that you never see a convincing night sky on the stage; anyway even if it could be—it couldn't on the kind of stage most TABS readers have to use." " Never mind," was the reply, " begin with the ideal stage and see what happens."

Now the great trouble with night skies as portrayed on the stage is that they are almost always too blue. This blueness comes from trying to represent darkness by use of light. The backcloth or cyclorama tends to be liberally bespattered with diffused and spilt light from the acting area in even the best arranged installation.

On this surface we have to portray blackness most of the time. As an unlit cyclorama would only show the oddities of stray light, resort is made to drowning the unwanted light by blue light.

This is obviously a contradiction—darkness can never be represented by light, whatever the colour! If a deep 20 blue is chosen the result might be at home in the Mediterranean and even there perhaps only at early evening, but never has the remotest resemblance to anything English.

Beginning with the ideal as suggested by the Editor, we must allow sufficient space between acting area and cyclorama to prevent any scatter reaching the latter. This achieved the rest is easy. A touch (and I *mean* a touch, so slight as not to be seen) of 20 blue to take away the complete deadness and an effect of velvety darkness is obtained—or is it? It is! provided sufficient contrast is there. A cyc. faintly lit will appear quite bright if left to itself. However, as soon as some contrasting light, the glow from a window perhaps, appears; then the sky recedes in a wonderful manner. Some stars in the sky would be another way of achieving contrast.

On a cyclorama with a real no-man's land between it and acting area, all things are possible but we must now turn to reality in the shape of most of our stages. In this case the sky is going to be a few feet away, perhaps not even that, therefore the scatter has to be fought.

When only a reasonable intensity of blue is necessary to drown the scatter, then stars or night clouds projected on the cyc. will as before give a better effect of darkness by contrast. This will apply also to skilfully used acting area lighting—after all, interior or exterior scenes will need light for the actors.

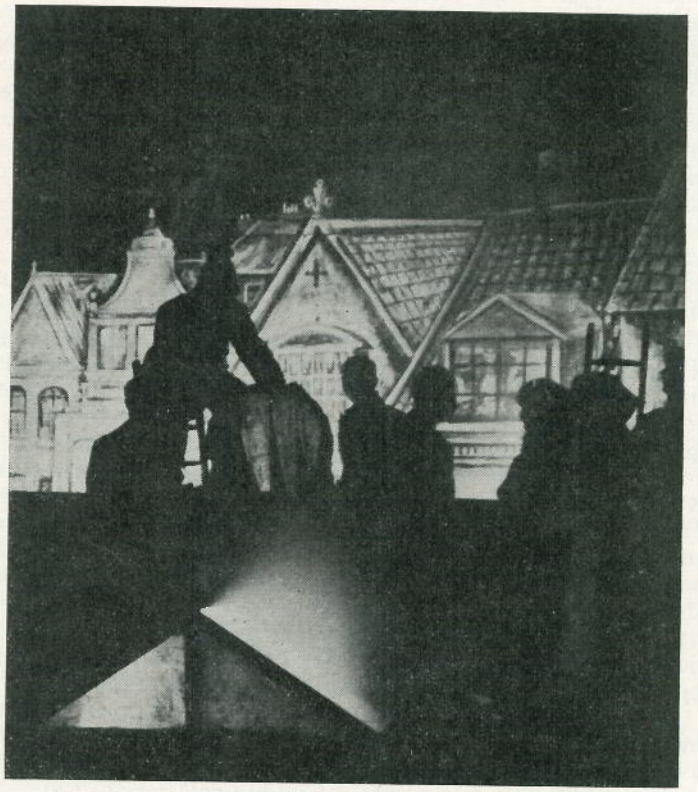
Here is another way of avoiding too blue a sky—avoid too warm a contrasting colour anywhere as it will stress the blueness. To put this in an extreme way, if a street lamp is made to glow amber then a 20 or 19 blue sky will appear very blue; but if the street lamp is a pale blue (a single or double 17) then we shall see a less blue sky because our eyes are attuned to blues only.

The 17 blue lamp will appear quite warm and natural, the eye being deceived. In the same way a camp fire should not give too rosy a glow for night scenes where the sky is to be dark not blue.

To help a night sky the cyc. might well be painted blue to prevent too easy a reflection of light tones scattered by the acting area. For all this, there will still be times when a jet black sky is needed and this simply will not come. On a large stage, draping an unlit cyclorama with black will give the necessary effect, but on a small stage black drapes will show folds which will not vanish and a curtain effect will always be visible, however rich the curtain material.

To my mind a real *black* background, even if curtain folds are seen, is preferable to the blue effects and overlighting otherwise needed. What must register at first sight is that the sky beyond or outside is *dark*. Therefore conventional folds of a dark curtain will be preferable to a plain surface without folds, but obviously lit in blue.

It might be argued that a better solution would be a black painted cyc. or flat cloth but unfortunately such a distempered surface is far from black and therefore looks unconvincing, and so will the cloth unless it has a thick pile like velvet or velour. Obviously a second cyclorama cloth of this latter material just for such purposes is not economic. A black cloth can, however, look well if there is some light coloured painting on it to take the main attention of the eye. In the photograph, the scene is the last act of Galsworthy's *Roof* in an amateur production. The contrast between the houses, lit by the glare of the hotel on fire, was perfectly obtained by painting on a cloth previously distempered black all over.



Scene painted on a black backcloth.

So far we have considered the use of visible light, but there remains ultra-violet lighting. Using this "invisible" light the most mediocre black surfaces become rich velvet black by contrast with the vivid fluorescent pigments. A backcloth for a spectacular

non-realist production could present a wonderful picture of jet sky bespattered with stars, comets, signs of the Zodiac and whatnot.

Of course ultra violet of itself does not impart anything and as soon as any normal lighting is brought in, the familiar problems of spill and scatter will occur. What ultra violet does give is brilliant apparent illumination of objects painted in fluorescent pigment and no illumination of immediately adjacent regions painted in black pigment, which therefore by contrast appear velvety black.

If I seem preoccupied with dark night skies that is because these " no-light " conditions are harder to achieve in stage lighting than lighting itself. We must remember that sometimes a dark night sky is inappropriate. The sky over London and other cities before midnight is far from dark or blue—there is quite a pronounced orange or ruddy glow from lighting and neon signs, so there may have to be quite a lot of red tint in our cyc. lighting if realism is sought.

F. P. B.

LIGHTS IN THE DARK

By WOLFE KAUFMAN

This comment on conditions in the American Theatre is extracted, with acknowledgment to both author and editor, from an article which appeared in the " New York Times."

Let's go back. Not too many years ago every theatre in America was equipped with a footlight trough and a certain amount of lighting equipment. When a show came into a theatre, it either used what lights there were, or added to them. As knowledge of stagecraft and technique (technical) grew, we found that most of the elemental equipment in theatres was outmoded and actually was in the way. Instead of adapting it, but using it, we permitted the theatre operators (who have no interest in Theatre, by and large, except as an unfortunate auxiliary to business) to save themselves money and add to the expense of play production by doing away with it almost entirely. To-day there is little electrical equipment in any theatre. (There are a few rare exceptions, mostly auditoriums, which do not normally book plays.) The producer of a play must supply it. Since he cannot afford to buy it, he has to rent it.

The rental of lighting equipment for the various Broadway shows costs an average of $300 a week. Not a great deal, perhaps, but it is added to an already high production situation. And usually it means additional man-power (at additional wages), too. And sometimes there are other dangers.

There was a play on Broadway this season which was panned by all the critics and disappeared in a few weeks. It had been a big success in London but seemed hopeless on Broadway. Why?

In London, the show was produced at a total cost of £4,500, or a bit over $10,000. In New York, this same show cost $90,000.

In London it was a delicate, carefully nurtured special item. It played in a small theatre. It had a minimum of " production " and a maximum of acting and creation. It was intended for a limited but highly cultured audience. It won that audience and more.

But in New York the show got mammoth scenery and gigantic lights. Then the producer said, " This thing costs so much we've got to insure it; let's get a Hollywood name for box office." The " name " he got was wrong, as it turned out, and brought in no box office. But by then it was hopeless. The critics spoke about the lovely scenery and hated the play—which they didn't see, couldn't see, because it was drowned.

This is not always true, of course. Not too long ago, for example, I had the misfortune of seeing *A Streetcar Named Desire* in Pittsburgh. It was a fourth or fifth company, the lighting equipment and scenery were cut down to practically nothing, and the play went right out the window. If either Mr. Kazan or Mr. Williams (or Mrs. Selznick) had seen it, they would have insisted on a removal of their names from the signboards. I can't tell you whether the actors were any good because they didn't have a chance. I know the words were good because they had moved me tremendously several times previously.

Similarly, there has been a considerable splattering of so-called " arena " theatre productions during the past few seasons. Mostly, this has been an attempt to avoid expensive scenery and costumes. And, mostly, it has failed because saving money is not a sufficient excuse for avoiding the responsibility of choosing plays properly and presenting them in the best possible manner.

No. Words alone are not enough, and words plus actors are not enough. You still need technical assistance from direction, lights, scenery and costumes. But it has to be right. And not too much. And not lights for the sake of lights, but lights for the sake of the play. And not scenery for the sake of scenery, but scenery for the sake of the play.

* * *

THE AMATEUR STAGE IN ARGENTINA

By DAVID BALFOUR

No English professional company has toured Argentina for a good many years with the exception of the " magician," Dr. Fu Manchu who is 100% a North Countryman from Derby, but who has sufficient a following to justify his presenting magical extravaganzas (in Spanish), during most months of the year throughout the principal Latin-American countries. Consequently, British " theatre " is upheld solely by the amateurs.

In the English community there is a substantial fund of amateur talent on which to draw, some of it very experienced, but it is

argely unorganised, in the sense that Societies are few and their membership small. Apart from one or two somewhat amorphous groups whose activities are largely confined to the reading and but occasional production of classic and experimental plays before very small audiences, the only two established groups with a reputation covering a number of years are, in themselves, small: nevertheless they exert a considerable influence in that, a very small committee having chosen a play, the group issues invitations to potential performers, few of whom may have any membership rights whatsoever in that or any other Society.

Clearly, if this system is to operate satisfactorily, the persons constituting the hierarchy must be themselves experienced, free from prejudices and have a sound reputation among local audiences based on presentation over a period of years of a number of worthwhile plays satisfactorily mounted, lit and cast. Provided it may be regarded as working well, this system of an " inner circle " solely responsible for the choosing and presentation of plays does tend to obviate the disputes which so often arise in Societies with a large membership and the necessity of choosing plays which will provide parts for a substantial number of full members at comparatively regular intervals. The oldest established of the two groups mentioned consists of but eight members, some of whom may not have a part or produce as often as once in 18 months or 2 years; yet so successfully has this group appealed to local audiences in its choice of plays and players over the years, that it is now sufficient to announce that the group will present a certain play to ensure a well-filled house at all performances.

Whatever company is concerned, productions are always in aid of the funds of some charitable or social organisation, such as the British Legion or the British Community Council. The sponsors meet all expenses but have never yet been involved in a loss. The season is roughly from June to November, the remaining months being too hot for rehearsals or certainly too hot to be assured of full houses at every performance. This schedule permits of from two to three plays per season. As in the commercial theatre, the amateurs have to put on as nearly as possible what the local public wants, otherwise the audience—which looks forward to these productions—is disappointed and a financial risk arises. With this in mind recent and scheduled productions are *An Inspector Calls*, *Worm's Eye View*, *Lady Precious Stream* (with the co-operation of the Chinese Legation), *Madame Louise*, *Home at Seven*, *The Happiest Days of Your Life*, *The Paragon*, *Flarepath*, *They Came to a City*, *The Hasty Heart*, *Traveller's Joy*, and *Twelfth Night*, the latter to be presented in the grounds of the British Embassy.

Unlike Rosario, Argentina's second city, Buenos Aires (to which these notes apply) has no British Community theatre. Only one of the two principal amateur companies ever operates in a professional theatre; then only for one performance on a Monday night when the professional theatres are normally closed. Subse-

quent performances are given by this company on the stage of one of the English schools in the inner suburbs and at the British Community Centre at Rosario. The stage at the school is 37 ft. wide overall, 28 ft. deep, and there is a fully-equipped fly-tower with grid 60 ft. high. What a tragedy it is, however, that the permanent stage switch-board consists of only eight ways and no dimmers whatsoever! Fellow stage managers and electricians will appreciate the problems of providing, connecting and operating the supplementary apparatus which has to be brought in for every production. The stage at Rosario is slightly smaller but beautifully equipped by an enthusiast and expert in every respect.

The most noticeable difference in production methods is a continued use, on occasion, by professional companies, and by amateurs, of paper scenery, almost always accompanied by inferior framing. In the past the professional companies have made great use of paper scenery and the scenery stores have endless shelves of disused paper sets carefully folded up and ready to be brought out again when the time is ripe. During the last few years there has been a greater tendency towards the use of scenery painted on material (it is hardly stage canvas as known in England) and also towards very heavy standing sets, on the assumption (usually fulfilled) of a long run, constructed of plasterboard and heavier framing on the lines of ciné studio sets. The national film studios are very active and the scenic construction methods therein current are now infiltrating into the theatre proper. Generally speaking, however, scenic construction as we know it in England is somewhat backward, and framing and the ultimate effect, is inclined to be slipshod rather than otherwise. Framing usually consists of 2 in. by 1 in. " pino," a term which covers the cheapest and softest wood imaginable, invariably roughly sawn and hammered up with nails. Bracing frequently consists of odd lengths of pino and 3-in. nails. Stage carpenters here are past masters at knocking up a scene framing in a very short time, but the results are untidy, weak and inefficient and I have never yet seen even the best of paper sets without its quota of creases. Following the Continental practice, scenery is painted laid out on the floor, the painters standing and using long-handled brushes. In general, the standard of scene painting itself is quite high. Lighting of straight plays is very fair (I have not seen lighting of the big " musicals ") but many of the professional switchboards are sadly out-dated and with " live " fronts. Dimming systems and master control are not highly developed. I do not feel able to say whether the absence of extreme refinement in lighting is due to lack of equipment or some inertia on the part of producers and electricians. Probably the former is the fundamental cause. The internationally known Colon Opera House has good modern lighting equipment which is used most skilfully, on occasion surpassing the results achieved at Covent Garden, in the case, for example, of Madame Butterfly and the coming of dawn on the ramparts in Tosca.

It is probably true to say that amateurs regard it as a reproach to themselves if the prompter has to speak up. In this country most of the professional theatres have a prompter who attends throughout each performance, sits in his little box in the centre of the footlights, and speaks every line of the play a sentence ahead of the actor. Whether this is strictly necessary I know not but the practice presumably cuts down the time and expense involved in rehearsals; albeit the actor's performance may not always be what one might desire. The amateurs have their prompter it is true, but he is kept in the wings and more than three prompts on the first night calls for an inquest.

Thus, although the road we tread, particularly from the production point of view, is not entirely the same as that followed by our fellow amateurs at home, we continue to strive, not only to keep " theatre " in English alive in this country, but to fill a real need of theatrical entertainment on the part of the British and English-speaking community.

* * *

INSURANCE FOR THE AMATEUR STAGE

By L. A. WHITTAKER

Although profit making is not the first concern of the Amateur Society the organisers naturally take care not to incur a heavy financial loss. It has been known for a claim against a Society to turn what would otherwise have been a profitable production into a heavy loss. It is, therefore, essential that Societies should protect themselves from losses by fire or theft, claims for damages by members of the public and other contingencies, and the prudent Society accordingly takes out adequate insurance cover.

It is appreciated that the amount the average Society can afford to pay out is strictly limited, and in the past organisers have preferred to " take a chance " rather than incur the substantial premiums that have sometime been demanded for risks attached to amateur productions. In recent years, however, special insurance policies have been devised giving adequate cover in return for a very modest premium.

The Combined Policy for instance embraces " All Risks " cover on wardrobe, scenery, properties, electrical equipment and the like, hired or loaned by the Society, including full transit risks, and the cover can be extended to insure members' personal clothing used in the production or whilst contained in the building where the production is being staged. Employers' Liability risk is included in the policy giving full protection to the Society for their legal liability for accidents to any persons employed in connection with

the production; it must not be forgotten that any casual labour should be covered. The other risk covered under the Combined Policy is the Third Party or Public Liability risk, and the cover fully indemnifies the Society for any accidents, personal injuries or damage to property belonging to Third Parties caused by the negligence of the Society or its members. Sometimes an omission or oversight on the part of the organisers can constitute legal negligence and give the claimant a right to damages, and as the only safeguard they have against such a contingency is a Public Liability policy, they are well advised to take out the cover. Even if there is no legal right of claim a Public Liability policy is a useful asset since it provides legal advice and service, thus relieving the Society of dealing with claimants.

All these risks as previously mentioned are covered under the one Combined Policy at an inclusive premium. This is based on the value of the property to be insured and the period of cover required.

Members engaged in the production may meet with accidents during rehearsals or performances for which the organisers, although not legally liable, may like to pay some compensation. A Group Personal Accident policy provides certain benefits ranging from a capital benefit of £1,000 for death, to loss of earnings up to £6 per week for temporary disablement or £1 10*s*. per week for temporary partial disablement. The maximum period during which the last two benefits are payable is 52 weeks. The cost is negligible, the premium being 1*s*. per person for 10 days cover, although, of course, the period may be extended at a proportionately higher premium.

It is possible to cover the Abandonment or Postponement of a production through causes beyond the control of the organisers, such as the death of a public personage, or an epidemic leading to restrictions on public assemblies, a fire damaging the theatre or hall where the production is due to take place. One could go on enumerating many causes which would prevent the show going on, but it is not possible to cover abandonment due to lack of public support, and as a rule the abandonment policy excludes the risk of the production being prohibited on moral or religious grounds. This abandonment policy includes the risk of postponement which, although not as serious as complete cancellation, may still involve heavy additional expenses. The compensation under the policy is measured by the amount of expenses incurred such as rental of hall or theatre, advertising, printing and the like.

Insurance in general is a technical subject but the policies which have been briefly described have been drawn up to give the fullest cover possible for the rather complex nature of the risks attached to entertainment, and organisers would be well advised to look into their insurance arrangements to make certain that their Society is adequately protected by their policies.

NO SCENERY

Scenery, to anybody with stage experience is, of course, the assortment of flats, back-cloths, borders, cut-cloths and all the varied bits and pieces that are made and painted to represent, with more or less verisimilitude, the environs in which play-people should live their brief span of unreality. Scenery of some sort is as old as the theatre. The degree of its importance changes with current fashions. In the present retreat from realism, a retreat that is tactical rather than strategic, the *avant garde* is inclined to make extravagant claims for the virtues of settings of simplicity; but virtue lies not in simplicity *qua* simplicity, but in simple artistry . . . acute expression in terms of seeming simplicity. Of such was that outstanding contemporary example, the presentation by Emlyn Williams of *Bleak House*. Aided merely by a setting of black draperies, a copy of Dickens' own reading desk, representational make-up and costume, and lighting that was sensitively devised and controlled, Emlyn Williams gave an exhibition of consummate theatre-craft. Here was the true virtuosity of a master of his art who, with seeming effortlessness, provided a rare theatrical experience. The simplicity of the visual presentation was a quite inevitable incidental to the perfect expression of dual genius.

"*live their brief span of unreality.*"

Neither elaboration nor simplicity of setting can be claimed to be right or wrong as a matter of general principle: either could be perfectly right or palpably wrong in particular use. Each production should have an overall pattern; and settings, costumes, props., lighting and the acting must be parts of a consistent whole. All the parts must be appropriate: none must be incongruous. Each must make its own particular contribution. In the illusory world of the theatre, subtle suggestion is more successful than the most meticulous imitation of reality. This is a fact that is so often overlooked: there is much too much slavish imitation and too little imaginative creation, whether settings be simple or elaborate, realistic or symbolic.

To many amateur organisations, simplicity of setting has an obvious appeal for economic reasons. Elaborate scenery is costly to produce. Yet there is a prevailing delusion that scenic requirements are completed by the possession of enough flats to make up

one complete box-set, with a few extra doors and a centre-opening thrown in to meet the demands of the more extravagant authors. This set is then expected to represent with equal conviction a Mayfair boudoir, Lord Loamshire's Library or the parlour of a class-

". . . *Lord Loamshire's library.*"

conscious proletarian. Not infrequently, the flats (fashioned by the prentice hands of a spare-time carpenter and painted by one with much enthusiasm but little craftsmanship), will fit together in a geometric design that would have scandalised Euclid, and make a pathetic pretence of being a room of period panels. The three-by-one stiles of the flats make unconvincing door-jambs; the canvas-covered doors, as they hang precariously from uncertain hinges, have a slightly shrunken look and are liable to give a partial preview of the butler waiting off-stage for his cue. The window, no doubt complete with criss-cross insulation tape, will sustain with difficulty any alleged social eminence of the players; and the fireplace will almost certainly proclaim the inspiration of an Edwardian tenement bedroom. It is not impossible that a final touch of incongruity will be supplied by a set of crumpled white-washed borders with tattered edges, lacking any functional or æsthetic justification. Fortunately—or should it be unfortunately?—audiences are very tolerant and rarely express their disapproval or disappointment with active violence. Probably the more sensitive ones stay at home and switch off the T.V.; or, if the acting is good enough, some will imagine the true setting and try to ignore the least flagrant of the visual offences. An audience in the dark is specially susceptible to suggestion. Its members are in a voluntarily assumed state of hypnosis; but producers must not take advantage of the fact. The imaginativeness of an audience is a great asset that should be fostered, not abused.

Scenery should be designed, constructed and painted to suit the particular production for which it is used. If this is not economically possible, it is preferable to cease the pretence that the old utility set can be made to serve all needs and to seek less expensive but more effective methods of suggestion. It is better not to have any scenery at all rather than inflict on the long-suffering customers scenery that is æsthetically offensive and inappropriate. Let the audience imagine the set. They are unlikely to imagine anything quite so awful as some of the settings that are put before them. Most stages now have at least one complete surround of curtains. If the furniture and props are entirely appropriate, curtains would suffice and the lack of actual scenery could be comparatively unimportant. If, in addition to the draperies, it is possible to provide one substantial full-scale unit that is practical and of impressive design, the setting would be completely convincing in a way that a stage full of scenery will often fail to be. For example, large double-doors with finger plates and handles of **rich design, set in deep reveals, surrounded by a massive-looking architrave, and standing against a background of neutral-coloured draperies,** will at once create, even on a small stage, the opulence and height of the ducal mansion. The doors must fit snugly and close with a comforting click; and the supporting framework must be firmly anchored to the stage to avoid catastrophe if any exit should be too realistically tempestous.

In designing settings of this description the aim should be suggestive simplification—not simplified elaboration. The producer must not expect the setting illustrated in the acting edition. That original setting probably cost £400 or more; any imitation within the £5 limit set by a grudging finance committee can hardly be expected to better the likeness. The wise producer will encourage his designer to **blue-in the fiver on a single** unit that looks the part and if necessary, adjust his production to suit the limitations. The result will be more satisfying than will be an attempt to apply yet another coat of distemper to the thickly encrusted canvas of the utility set. It is imperative that the single unit shall be impressive and substantial; it may be either realistic or symbolic but it must be effective. It should not be just an odd flat pathetically assuming the function of door or window or it will be an obtrusive irritant.

" blue-in the fiver on a single unit."

When draperies are used they should be suspended with some regard for symmetry. The fullness should be spaced evenly so that the curtains hang in graceful folds. They must not trail on the

floor in an untidy mass and the masking at the top must be effective. Curtains can provide settings that are completely satisfying; they can also be a graceless clutter of shreds and patches. There are lots of wrong ways in which curtains can be draped and it is amazing how often those ways are found.

Possibly neither scenery nor draperies are available and they cannot be begged, borrowed, hired or stolen; perhaps there is no designer, no carpenter, no painter, no money? Well, in that case there is no problem. Given a good play interpreted by good actors and a platform of sorts, there can still be good theatre; but if in doubt about the quality of actors and playwright, the solution would seem to be . . . no performance!

P. C.

SUPERSTITIONS IN THE THEATRE

The Sunday morning train crawled wearily along with its load of actors and fish. A herd of cows lying in a field beside the track gazed at it lazily. The " heavy man " of the drama company turned to the " juvenile lead " sitting beside him.

" No good, laddie. We might as well go back to Oswald-twistle! "

This seemingly incomprehensible remark might well have been made about 40 years ago, in the days of the old drama companies. It is an old touring superstition in the theatre (probably unknown to the majority of the present generation) that an uninterested cow seen on a " train-call " is a sign of an uninterested audience in the next town. If the cows flee from the train in apparent horror all will be well and the box office will be clicking away happily. It is left to the reader to discover a connection between the discernment of cows and that of audiences.

" the sign of an uninterested audience."

Theatre folk are generally supposed by the public to be more superstitious than most people. Whether or not this is so it is certainly a fact that there does exist a large number of superstitious traditions which govern the behaviour and are reputed to affect the destiny of artistes and technicians in the theatre.

In point of fact it is often difficult to separate what is actual tradition from mere superstition. Several so-called superstitions are really traditions which have grown up from very practical origins. Take for instance one of the better known " superstí-

tions "—that it is unlucky to use real flowers in stage decoration or as a " prop." Apart from the obvious objection these days on the score of expense, there is an older and very practical reason for this taboo. Many years ago a very celebrated actress was in the middle of a tense dramatic scene when her foot slipped on some fallen rose petals. She twisted her ankle very badly and was unable to carry on with the show. Since that day real flowers have been considered unlucky and dangerous in the theatre. They are replaced these days by artificial (and fire-proofed) ones.

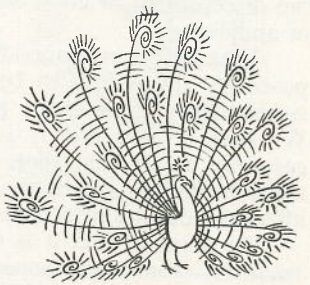
Many superstitions of the old days, such as the one mentioned above regarding the prophetic properties of cows, have become obsolete. In fact the theatrical profession would seem to be becoming less and less superstitious. But there is one heinous sin that will still send a chill down the spine of most actors. You must *never* quote from *Macbeth*! In fact *Macbeth* is considered by some to be such an unlucky play altogether that one wonders how Shakespeare ever dared to write it! There are various " antidotes " recommended for use when some unguarded person quotes *Macbeth* in one's hearing—the writer's favourite being to reply promptly with a stage direction from *Titus Andronicus*: " *Enter Lavinia ravished—her hands cut off and her tongue cut out* "!

" *unlucky to use real flowers.*"

It is rare these days to find an actor who avoids speaking the " tag-line " of the play, but at one time it was considered death to a show if the final line was heard at rehearsal. As may be imagined, this provided some surprises on the opening night.

A great many superstitions are concerned purely with life on tour. Many a stage manager, for instance, has cluttered up his luggage with small unwanted pieces of soap. On going round the dressing-rooms on Saturday night to see that they are cleared he has probably found that some careless or inexperienced actors have left these bits behind. This is a sure way of avoiding a return booking at that theatre.

Some superstitions are observed pretty generally. Many a newcomer to the theatre has been turned out of the dressing-room—whatever their state of dress or undress—for whistling. Once outside they must



" *decorating back-cloth with majestic peacock.*"

turn round three times, knock on the door and wait until they get permission to enter. First night telegrams are never taken down until the end of the run; it is very unlucky to spill face powder on your dressing place, and many non-theatre people have been taken aback by their professional friends rushing up to them, seizing a piece of cotton which had attached itself to their persons, rolling it up, kissing it and hiding it in their bosoms. A piece of cotton is a contract—the longer the cotton the longer the contract. Certain songs are considered unlucky. An awful fate awaits the thoughtless actor who bursts forth into " I Dreamt I Dwelt in Marble Halls " or Tosti's " Goodbye."

The theatre technical staff have their fair burden of these taboos. There are traps for the unwary scenic artist. Decorating his back-cloth with a majestic looking peacock he may have to face a wrathful and superstitious producer, while a certain famous playwright refuses to countenance any green at all on the sets of his plays. Some people have their own private fetishes. One West End stage director is careful never to close the prompt script at the end of a play, however long the play has been running and however safe the actors are on their lines, until the last call has been taken, the final curtain is down and " House Lights " have been called for.

From all this it would appear that the actor's life is indeed a precarious one! Always faced with the bogey of unemployment, he has further to guard against many seemingly trivial actions which may incur the wrath of whatever Thespian Gods watch over his destiny.

D. M.

FLUORESCENCE AND BLACK LIGHT

Certain parts of this article appeared in TABS *in substantially the same form three years ago. Sections II to V (inclusive) have been rewritten to cover the new and improved range of fluorescent paints which have recently become available.*

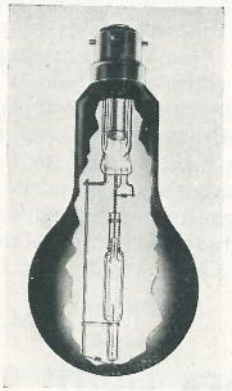
Just as there are sounds inaudible to the human ear, so there is " light " to which the human eye is blind. Beyond the Violet end of the visible spectrum, light merges into Ultra Violet and becomes invisible. Just between the two there is what is known as Near Ultra Violet. From sources of light rich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

Being invisible this light has only a limited value in the theatre and this is in being made visible. Certain substances have the property of effecting this change, as the Black Light excites them and is reflected as visible light. This property is known as Fluorescence.

Thus in the dark, any material treated with one of these chemicals and illuminated by Black Light will glow visibly, whilst untreated or unlit materials will remain unseen. This phenomenon of Fluorescence is not to be confused with Phosphorescence, which is a property of other chemicals to store up the light they receive and to radiate it in the dark. This is most commonly seen on watch and clock faces. In so far as the theatre is concerned the practical use of Fluorescence is limited to trick and decorative effects.

I. Equipment

The standard 125 watt Mercury Discharge Lamp encased in a Black Glass envelope has a bayonet-type cap with three positioning pins. The lamp which *must* be used on Alternating Current supplies only, is connected with a choke in circuit, and these positioning pins therefore prevent accidental insertion into a normal B.C. Holder. Full instructions for connecting the choke to the special holder are provided by the manufacturers, but should the equipment be supplied on hire it will already be wired correctly. The actual source of light is tubular and the lamp can be used with various reflectors and lenses in the usual way. We usually advise the Pattern 237c for flooding from the footlight position, the Pattern 30c for general work, and the Pattern 43c or 50c for covering limited areas with a high intensity. (In each of these cases the suffix "C" to the lantern pattern number indicates that the standard lantern has been adapted for use with the Black Lamp.) For special work other types of reflectors can be utilised, depending on the specified conditions.



125 watt black lamp with glass envelope cut away to show interior.

When the lamp—correctly wired—is switched on, a dull purple flicker will be seen through the glass but the emission of Near U.V. light does not reach full intensity until after 4 to 5 minutes' burning. Again, if the circuit is switched off, the lamp must be allowed to cool before it will re-light. At full brilliance there will be a certain amount of visible violet light, especially close to the lamp, and to get the full effect of treated materials therefore, the rest of the stage must be of sombre colour so that there is no noticeable reflection of this visible light.

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

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

So much for obtaining and directing the Black Light. The next consideration is its use on the stage.

II. Paints

A new range of Fluorescent Paints has recently become available, these having the merit, in addition to being more brilliant than heretofor, of being readily intermixed, and, owing to their high flash point, of being sent by post or passenger train.

The basic colours which are made up in ½ lb. and 1 lb. tins are as follows:—

Ref. No.	Colour.	
	Under ordinary light	Under Ultra Violet only
U.V.11	Blue	Blue
U.V.12	White	Blue
U.V.14	Green	Green
U.V.15	Yellow	Yellow
U.V.16	Orange	Amber
U.V.17	Cream	White
U.V.18	Pink	Pink
U.V.19	Flame	Red
U.V.10	Special undercoat	

The above paints can be mixed in varying proportions to produce different colours, and of course the admixture of white and a colour will give a wide range of tints.

III. Application and undercoat

These paints can be applied with a brush or sprayed on practically any material, and are light fast in daylight for 3–4 months. 1 lb. of the paint covers approximately 60 sq. ft.

Ordinary paint spraying equipment is used and care should be taken to use a clean gun since contamination with other colours may cause some loss of brightness. The spray-gun is cleaned after use with acetone or ordinary cellulose thinners, and the paint should not be allowed to dry hard in the gun since it becomes **slowly insoluble and is then** difficult to remove. For full brilliance it is important that fluorescent paint should be applied to a white surface as this reflects the light made visible by the film of paint. If it is used on dark materials the paint of course will fluoresce in the same way, but being only a thin film, without the assistance of this reflection it will appear dull by comparison. White matt or semi-matt cellulose paints produce good undercoats but before synthetic and oil paints are used a test should be made to ensure that lifting will not occur. In all cases the white undercoat should have good covering power and be applied as a sufficiently thick coat to obliterate completely the surface and give a uniform white

finish. A special U.V. undercoat is available for this purpose. It should be allowed to dry completely before applying the colour.

IV. Treated Papers

To assist users of small quantities, sheets of cartridge paper 25 in. × 20 in. (less a small margin) already treated with the standard colours are available so that simple designs can be cut out and applied to scenery, costumes, props, etc.

V. Other Applications

One of the most interesting developments is a paint known as U.V. Black. This is practically colourless under ordinary light and if applied over one of the standard fluorescent paints has the effect of negativing the fluorescence, thus making possible changes in pattern and design. Many other special problems using non-standard materials are being investigated, e.g. Water-colour Paint, Fountain Fluorescence, Make-up, Waterproof Lacquers, Glossy Lacquer Finish and so on.

VI. Fluorescent Fabrics

For complete costumes, the use of naturally dyed satins is much to be preferred to painted material.

The colours available are:—

White	fluorescing	Blue
Yellow	,,	Yellow-Green
Pink	,,	Red-Orange.
Green	,,	Green
Orange	,,	Yellow-Orange.

These may be obtained from:—

England (North)—Watts & Corry Ltd., 305 Oldham Road, Manchester 10.
England (South)—Hall & Dixon Ltd., 19 Garrick Street, London, W.C.2.
Scotland —Stage Furnishings Ltd., 346 Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow, C.2.
Eire —P. J. Bourke Ltd., 64 Dame Street, Dublin.

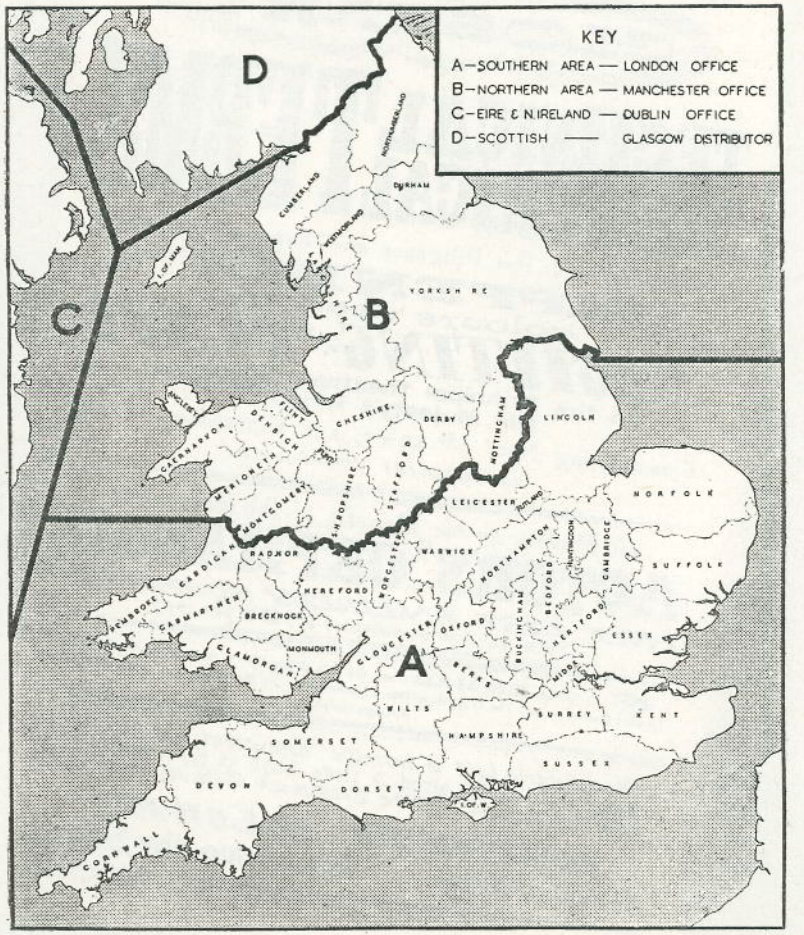
VII. Use in the Theatre

The use of fluorescence must be very carefully considered and planned as it has, after all, a surprise element in it which can very easily distract by attracting attention. It should never be used just because it exists as an effect, but only because it proves to be the only way of achieving a result in certain circumstances. An example of wise usage might be the effect of Blue Light on yellow or orange dresses. Such ordinary light kills their colour. Should they be made of fluorescent orange fabric, however, there will be just enough Near Ultra Violet light in the Blue to give them a natural colour and if some Black Light is added these costumes would stand out brilliantly. For straight plays, even for ghost effects, U.V.

must be used with discretion to avoid upsetting the balance of the play, especially as natural teeth and the whites of the eyes fluoresce. It is this latter phenomenon which makes the lamps uncomfortable to look at.

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

STRAND BRANCH AREAS



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