



# TABS

*Published in the interests of the Amateur Theatre*  
by  
*The Strand Electric and Engineering Co., Ltd.*

HEAD OFFICE	P.O. Box 267 29, King Street,
SOUTHERN OFFICES, SHOWROOMS	London, W.C.2
TABS EDITORIAL OFFICE	Phone: Temple Bar 4444 (16 lines)
<i>Southern Hire Stores</i>	271, Kennington Lane, London, S.E.11
<i>Northern Branch</i>	313/7, Oldham Road, Manchester Phone: Collyhurst 2736
<i>North Eastern Depot</i>	26, High Northgate, Darlington Phone: Darlington 67350
<i>Eire Branch</i>	62, Dawson Street, Dublin Phone: Dublin 74030
<i>Australian Branch</i>	212, Graham St., Port Melbourne
<i>Scottish Agents</i>	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.

## CONTENTS

	Page
Editorial—Lectures and Demonstrations . . . . .	3
Une Entente Cordiale d'Eclairage by G. Leblanc. Two stage lighting firms co-operate . . . . .	5
Production and Playgoing by Ernest Burbridge. Thoughts on dramatic appreciation from Australia . . . . .	8
Lighting Control—II. A further discussion on switchboard design . . . . .	10
Conception and Realisation. A stage designer's model and the finished setting . . . . .	19
A Message from the President by J. Diment. Advice to an Amateur Dramatic Society . . . . .	20
The Actor's Art . . . . .	21
The Sunburner. A note on gas lighting and ventilation in the auditorium . . . . .	23

## EDITORIAL

Forthcoming Lectures, etc., in  
Head Office Demonstration Theatre, 1957

"Lighting the Stage." Demonstration and Talk. By William Lorraine.	Wednesday, January 9th, 1957
"Advanced Technical Lecture," Part I. Dimmers and Direct Operated Boards.	Monday, January 21st, 1957
"Advanced Technical Lecture," Part II. Remote Control. Both by Frederick Bentham.	Monday, January 28th, 1957
"Colour and Directional Light as Applied to the Stage." Lantern Lecture. By L. G. Applebee.	Wednesday, February 6th, 1957
"Producer's Uses of Light." Lecture and Demonstration. By P. Corry.	Tuesday, February 12th, 1957
"Basic Stage Lighting." 1956/57 Edition. Demonstration and Talk. By Frederick Bentham.	Tuesday, February 26th, 1957
"Cue for Questions." Quiz Lecture. (See overleaf for details.)	Tuesday, March 5th, 1957
"Make-up." Demonstration and Talk. By Richard Blore and P. Corry.	Wednesday, March 20th, 1957
"Colour and Directional Light as Applied to the Stage." Lantern Lecture. By L. G. Applebee.	Wednesday, April 3rd, 1957
"Lighting the Stage," Demonstration and Talk. By William Lorraine.	Friday, April 12th, 1957
"Basic Stage Lighting." 1956/57 Edition. Demonstration and Talk. By Frederick Bentham.	Tuesday, May 7th, 1957

The above will be at 6.30 p.m. on each day. Entrance to the theatre is at 29 King Street, W.C.2, from 6.15 p.m.

Those wishing to attend should apply in writing as early as possible to Head Office, 29 King Street, W.C.2, marking the letter "Demonstration." Personal applications can also be made at the Hire Showroom, at the same address, and sales counter in 25 Floral Street, W.C.2, but should be confirmed in writing.

### Our Guest Speaker

Mr. Richard Blore is Leichner's Studio Manager which speaks for itself. He has been an actor and producer in both the professional



and amateur theatres and is, therefore, fully conversant with the many problems which arise, and on this occasion he combines with Mr. Corry to demonstrate the way that lighting and make-up are related.

### The Regular Speakers

Mr. Applebee needs no introduction and his lecture is a well-established favourite which covers a great variety of aspects of Stage Lighting. It is illustrated by many lantern slides and includes a demonstration of Samoiloff make-up in use.

Mr. Bentham is our foremost authority on Stage Lighting Control. His two lectures on control will be illustrated by a number of slides of both his own work and examples of American and Continental practice, both of which he has studied on the spot. His Basic Stage Lighting talk has been revised and re-staged and may be considered as the complement of all the other lectures scheduled. The use of the various types of equipment together with the principles of colour are fully covered.

Mr. Corry brings his extensive experience as actor and producer to bear and illustrates his lecture with actual lighting sequences taken from his productions. Among the lighting staged (not merely illustrated with slides) will be excerpts from *King Lear*, *Venus Observed* and the Don Juan in Hell sequence from *Man and Superman*.

Mr. Lorraine is a man who actually "does the lighting." His experience is mainly with the professional theatre, but his range is extremely wide and covers anything from "Legit." to Pageants and Ice Shows. In this lecture he concentrates on the former. His talk will be illustrated by staging simple but practical examples.

### Cue for Questions

This session, which was originally scheduled to take place in November, was unavoidably postponed. Here is a serious attempt to answer on the spot many of those problems which most of us have to face on stages both small and large. Although cast in "Brains Trust" form the team of four regular staff lecturers named above will endeavour not only to answer, but perhaps demonstrate their replies. For this latter purpose a rather typical box set with a ceiling will be on the stage. The set will have a window upstage centre backed by the cyclorama and doors downstage left and right. There will also be a fireplace and lighting fittings.

Questions are welcomed both in advance (addressed to the Editor, TABS) and at the time. The questions will not be shown to the team and they will have to use their imagination in setting the stage to anticipate likely questions. All are welcome whether they have questions to ask or not. The Editor of TABS will be in the Chair.

## UNE ENTENTE CORDIALE D'ECLAIRAGE

by G. Leblanc, Compagnie Clemançon, Paris.

Art is international. It is only therefore logical that those ancillary trades and professions on which art relies to a greater or lesser extent as allies towards the creation of a perfect whole should also be unconfined by such man-made limitations as territorial boundaries.

In the theatre, for example, we are to-day experiencing an ever increasing interchange of individuals or complete companies of actors, singers and dancers. Why not, therefore, an equally free interchange of ideas regarding stage lighting? To this very end, in 1954 an experiment was made in Helsinki when the Svenska Theatre was re-equipped by Strand Electric in association with Messrs. Clemançon of Paris, who supplied the necessary dimmer regulator. Another experiment along the same lines took place in Paris earlier in 1956, when the Alliance Française erected a new building which contained a charming multi-purpose hall, designed by the Architect Mons. A. Balme, D.P.L.G.

The Alliance Française is an organisation to teach foreigners the language and culture of France. In Paris, it offers a number of

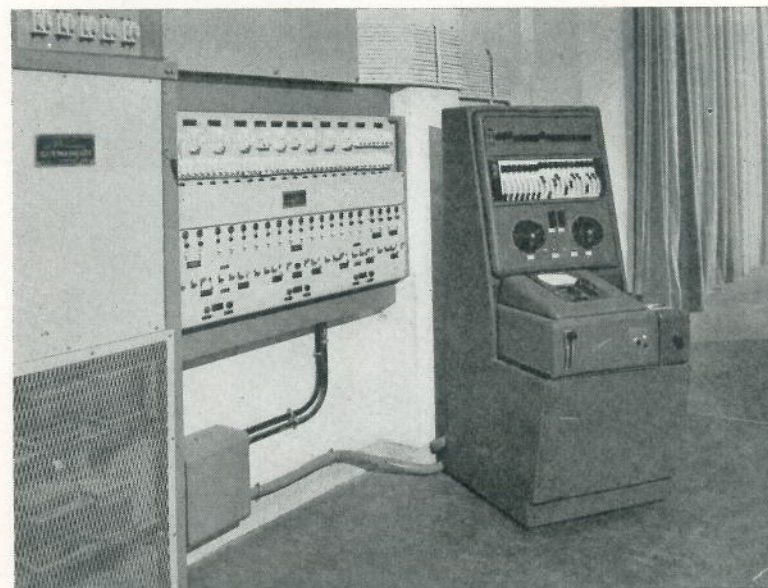


FIG. 1. The dimmer board at the Salle de l'Alliance Française in Paris combines a Strand reactor with a Clemançon "Chromon." The control console can be moved about the stage, or the "Chromon" (lower) section removed and operated from several front-of-house positions.



general courses and a residence for overseas students. There is an auditorium in this building that can be used for many purposes (conferences, film-shows, concerts, meetings, exhibitions and theatre productions) and it provides an opportunity for contemporary French civilisation to give expression to its many facets. Facilities have been provided which will permit a full theatre production to be staged there. The administrative body decided that the best use for the room was to hire it out to the highest number of representative young groups in the contemporary French theatre.

The stage lighting was carried out by Clemançon, who wanted to present a synthesis of two modern lighting control techniques, both well suited to this type of hall, the saturable reactor or choke, and the "Chromon." Readers of TABS are familiar with the former; the principle of this type was described in TABS (Vol. 13, No. 2, September, 1954). Strand Electric have devised a board with a reactor rack and control levers, quite light and manageable on each circuit, with small moulded handles, whose economy of space and easy handling all contribute to the scheme like the one described here.

The "Chromon" is a lighting control system which can be combined with existing switchboards, and which carries additional exciting possibilities by which certain colour mixing, not possible up



FIG. 2. The auditorium at L'Alliance Française, Paris. Architect Mons. A. Balme, D.P.L.G. Note English and French spotlights used together.

to now, can be achieved giving a far greater range of tint and graduation (Fig. 1).

At Zurich, in the C.I.E. (Commission Internationale d'Eclairage) Committee Report on Theatre Stage Lighting (3.1.9.1) it was claimed that this typically French control showed characteristics which were superior to the usual series of coloured effects, in as much that one could proceed from one selected effect to another using any chosen intermediate effects on the way. With the usual type of control the colour changes occurring between one effect and the next are not at the option of the operator, but are forced on him by the limitations of the apparatus.

Apart from the recognition given by the Alliance Française Technical Council Board to the "Lighting Entente" achieved by Clemançon and Strand Electric, the desirability has been demonstrated for possible co-operation between the type of equipment already described in TABS, and the "Chromon" which the French have already tested in action, for example at Versailles (*vide* the C.I.E. Report, 1955, 3.1.9.1.) at Annecy, and most recently at the "Theatre-in-the-Round in Paris."

The installation at the Alliance Française includes the type of lighting equipment used on large stages :—

Footlights and compartment battens with reflectors wired in four circuits for different colours created by Cinemoid filters, and forming the blue, green, yellow and red essentials of a four colour lighting system.

Cyclorama lanterns throw a diffused light, also coloured as desired, on the back cloth.

Front-of-house spotlights, both English and French, have been used together. Those on the balcony 'front are furnished with remote magnetic control of the colour mediums; the Pattern 23 Baby Spots are placed on the balcony columns, arranged in groups of four to allow the four-colour system to be worked (Fig. 2).

An essential part of the "Chromon"-Reactor combination is a portable console which can be moved about the stage as required; the "Chromon" control can alternatively be placed easily in either the orchestra, the radio room, or the cinema projection room.

By these means it has been possible to achieve a great deal of variation in the Alliance Française Hall. Concerts, talks, radio, or cinema shows are each treated according to their needs, and not only can the strength of the lighting be controlled, but the colours of the different areas of light can be varied either from the auditorium itself, or from rooms adjacent to it.

This brief description will serve to show how any country which hesitates between two methods—the one perhaps English, the other French—knowing the advantages of both, and seeking a switchboard to suit its own particular requirements, can decide on the solution of combining the two. Une entente cordiale du théâtre? Assurément!



## PRODUCTION AND PLAYGOING

(Thoughts prompted by Hugh Hunt's production of  
*Twelfth Night* in Australia.)

By Ernest Burbridge, British Council Liaison Officer, Canberra.

Sir Barry Jackson, a former Director of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, and still directing the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, is a keen student of audience reactions, and cunningly contrives to mingle anonymously with his "customers." One of the gems that he has thus gathered tells of two elderly ladies at a Stratford matinée of the *Tempest*, when, half way through the performance, one remarked to the other in a tone of disappointment (yet strong conviction): "Agnes, we've seen this play before."

This anecdote is worthy of deeper examination than we can give it in this brief space, for, though authentic itself, it has many apocryphal relations. Lower down the social scale is the story of the mother and father who would not buy their son a book for his birthday on the grounds that he already had one. Freud would discover many of us to be members of this family when we speak of having "done" a play by Shakespeare at school. The play having been done or seen can be ablatively and absolutely set aside; culture has been recognised, saluted and disposed of. It is said to be a typically Anglo-Saxon attitude towards culture generally, to classical drama in particular, but not towards music. Would anyone say of Beethoven's "Fifth" "I've heard this piece before?"

It is commonly held that the attitude of the French towards the theatre is different. Playgoers in France (so it is said) will be familiar with the text of their classical drama, and their purpose in going to see the same play many times is to note what the producer or actor will make of it. The emphasis will be on Copeau or Barrault rather than Racine or Molière. It is doubtful whether this differentiation between British and French playgoers is as valid to-day as it was in the early part of the century. The last two decades in the United Kingdom have produced large new audiences for Shakespeare who know the texts and who have become discriminating "collectors of productions." Unlike Agnes and her companion, they delight in recalling the former presentations of the play by Tyrone Guthrie, Peter Brook, Hugh Hunt or Anthony Quayle; and they speak of the Hamlets they have seen—Olivier, Gielgud, Redgrave, Scofield, Helpmann and Burton. Until recently Australians have not had the opportunity to indulge in this luxury, but with the formation of a National Company by the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust, the development of the same kind of regular and critical audience may now become possible. It may therefore be worthwhile to suggest what kind of audience reaction can assist most sympathetically in the encouragement of good drama.

The first advice is the most important of all; let us not be Agnes-like and say we have seen this play before, simply because we saw it by a different company on some previous occasion. Drama is not a fine or pure art, but it is a noble and inspiring one, and it must always come to us through interpreters. Of Hugh Hunt's production of *Twelfth Night* (or anyone else's) it will be meaningless to say "we have seen the play before" unless, in fact, we have already been to see his production. Even then it will not be exactly the same, because performances (and therefore aspects of production) vary from night to night. It is basic to the enjoyment of a Shakespeare play, that the playgoer should not say "I have seen this play before," but "I have seen other productions of this play and I wonder what this one will be like." The emphasis should be on *wonder* and speculation, and for the time being oblivion to past delights. Eager-ness to discover something new and not desire for conformity to old memories should be the dominating attitude of our expectations. We do not attempt to erase forever from our mind the imprint of past productions; but rather we let the floods of a new one make fresh tide marks on the shores of our attention. An almost child-like excitement to see the curtain rise is the first qualification of a theatregoer. How for example is such an attitude rewarded in the case of Mr. Hunt's *Twelfth Night*?

Fortunately, the opening words of this play are well known to most of us and as they charm our ears without our effort, we can pay greater attention with our eyes in the first moments. We are well rewarded, for Elaine Haxton has designed a set which combines the two moods of this play. It is at once solid and earthy enough for the low humours of Sir Toby, and yet elegant, light and courtly to give romantic colour to the love scenes. How one dovetails and slides into the other always gives a chuckle of pleasure, but never detracts our attention from the words where the words are the important discipline. Where they are not (as in some of the Toby Belch scenes), Mr. Hunt has not hesitated to introduce some comic apparatus. The use of the barrel and the ladder in Act 2, Sc. iii, create a new atmosphere without taking us out of our main surroundings and without any loss of the essential speed at which Shakespeare must be played. The barrel, if you wish, can symbolise Belch's depravity and the ladder the ambitions of Malvolio; it will then please your fancy to note how the ladder see-saws upon the barrel: yet none of this imagining is necessary, because the invention is contained within the action and dialogue of the play at its pure entertainment level.

If you agree that the décor establishes and supports the mood of the play, you are likely to think the same about the costumes. The fresh satins and silks came from no old theatrical rag-bag and their lovely sheens strike the right note of delight in extravagance. Orsino's love is as hungry as the sea and this is matched by his appetite for rich apparel. *Twelfth Night* is sentimental and urban, whereas *As You Like It* is romantic and rural; the former invites all



the richness that costume, music and stage lighting can give it. This is not to agree that Shakespeare depends upon these accessories (except where his jests have become obsolete); but rather that, if he is to be continuously presented in our modern theatres, he will need to be reclothed according to the best modern standards. Although we repeat that with Shakespeare the important discipline is always the spoken word, this can never be an excuse for slipshod costuming or dowdy décor.

The business of the producer and designer is to draw us into the play, but on our side there must be the willing suspension of disbelief for the moment which constitutes poetic faith! With that kind of faith in producers and designers we can look forward to a new age of theatre-going in Australia. It was always felt that the actors were here; now thanks to Mr. Hunt and his associates, we have been given settings for their labours, which will stand comparison with the best that are seen in London, Paris and New York. *Twelfth Night* has set a new standard and made its mark in Australian theatre history.

\* \* \*

## LIGHTING CONTROL—II

*(The first article appeared in our issue of April, 1956.)*

The Grand Master switchboard with 80 or 90 Dimmers (see Fig. 1) represents the ultimate in direct operated control as far as this country is concerned. By virtue of the type of production it stages, in the theatre whose switchboard is shown in Fig. 1 (the Haymarket, London) "colour shafts" on the board have become absolutely meaningless as such, and one must rely rather on picking out dimmers scattered all over the board and working them from the centre wheel. Had this switchboard been for some theatre playing variety or perhaps a musical show or pantomime, then there might have been some logical allocation of lighting equipment to group or colour shafts and we would have found a Grand Master cross control. In this case, individual shafts would be locked on or not, to go in the same or opposite directions by means of reversing gear on turning the master wheel. As it is, on the Haymarket board, all shafts, and therefore any dimmers locked to them, travel in the same direction.

The switching for all these kinds of Switchboards is two-way-and-off (see Fig. 2 of previous article, TABS, April, 1956, p. 15) and would have master blackout switches for various lighting groupings. In addition, there is a Dead Blackout switch [D.B.O.] overriding everything else.

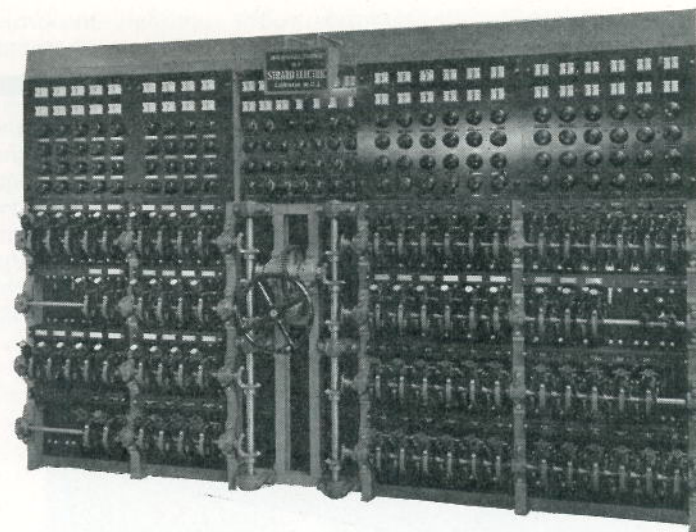


FIG. 1. *Dimmer Board at the Haymarket Theatre, London. Dimmers are equipped with self release handles and the various shafts are permanently geared to the slow motion wheel at the centre. Cross control is not, however, provided and all shafts, and any dimmers locked to them, move simultaneously in the same direction.*

Dimmers on these larger boards have handles which provide a very clear indication of whether the dimmer is locked on to its row shaft or not, as there is a kind of tommy bar in the handle the whole of which turns round to lock. The dimmers also release themselves from their shafts at the top and bottom ends of travel, which facilitates the dimming out of a lighting group the individual circuits of which are at different intensities. On the cheaper types of board the handles neither slip nor give an indication of lock. This is a very bad fault, but it is one due to the need to economise and keep the price of the control down. It is obviously better to have a set of dimmers, however limited their control, than to have none at all owing to their being too costly. However, no economy measure should be allowed to intervene and prevent the fitting of dimmer scales, because without these, dimmers are virtually unusable; we must always be able to plot and repeat intermediate dimmer positions.

It is difficult to work up much enthusiasm over the large Grand Master board unless we approach it from the strictly historical standpoint. After all, this type of control virtually reached its present stage of development round about 1930 and it now subscribes little or nothing to modern lighting techniques. In those days 50 dimmers was considered a large job, and the magnum opus of the Grand Master world, the Strand board for the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Stratford-on-Avon, in 1932 had only 56 dimmers



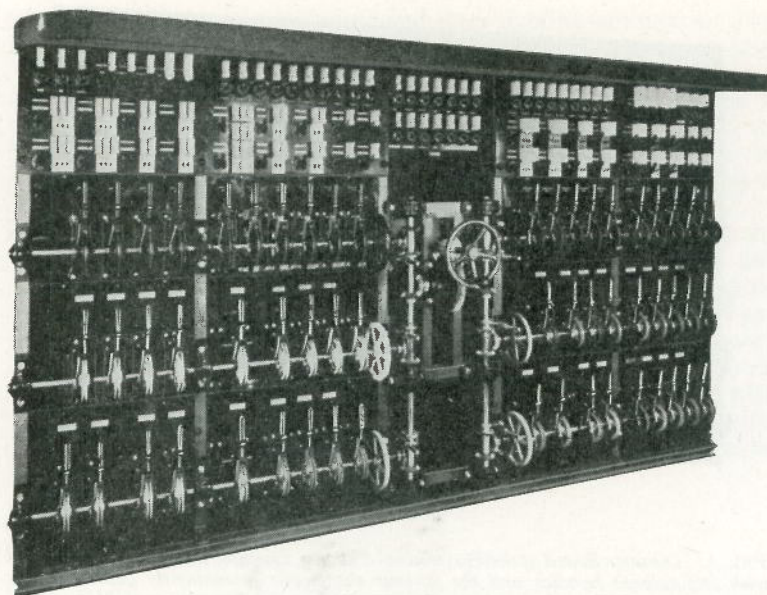


FIG. 2. *Dimmer Board at Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Stratford-on-Avon, 1932. Cross control of shafts is provided so that the operator can select whether or not a shaft will move and in which direction, on rotation of the Grand Master wheel at centre.*

in all, about one quarter of these being devoted to spotlighting. (See Fig. 2.) The remaining circuits were for flooding, battens and footlights. All compartment battens were fitted with centre and end switching, but this form of light localisation was very crude. Incidentally, although the full Grand Master cross control was provided, only the spotlighting circuits had two-way-and-off switching. When the lighting layout of the theatre was revised and a new remote control switchboard supplied in 1951 (see Fig. 3) the number of dimmers went up to 144. Needless to say, the vast majority of these dimmers are associated with spotlights, controlled for the most part singly.

This does point the change that has happened, at any rate in England, over the past 25 years or so. Flooding from battens and floats was common in those days, supported by directional light from floods in the wings. (See Fig. 4.) Spotlights were used extensively only in very advanced productions and the fact that the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, whose consultants, Messrs. Ridge and Aldred, represented the advanced school at the time, should have considered what I have just described as adequate, is added confirmation of the change that has taken place in the past years. It is a sad commentary that even to-day some small Community Halls still put in stage equipments primarily of magazine battens or

fluorescent lighting, which automatically overlooks that such changes to spotlighting ever took place.

When we have to deal with a large number of spotlights (see Fig. 5) all individually controlled, obviously the number of dimmers runs up. Nowadays, nothing under 100 can be considered for a first-class, full-sized theatre—actually the figure of 120 seems more appropriate. Very big theatres run to 200 or more, and in fact German opera houses seem to have settled for between 200 and 260 dimmers. Such an increase in the number of dimmer ways means a departure from the direct operated type of board. It must be obvious to all that such boards, governed as they are by the number and size of the dimmer immediately behind the handles, will become



FIG. 3. *Part of the Pre-set Switchboard situated in the front-of-house with an unobstructed view of the stage, at Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Stratford-on-Avon, 1951.*

very large indeed. These will be impossible to position on the stage with a view of the acting area and all will take up much stage space which can ill be spared. They will require several operators, due to the difficulty of reaching and setting all the levers as required in the



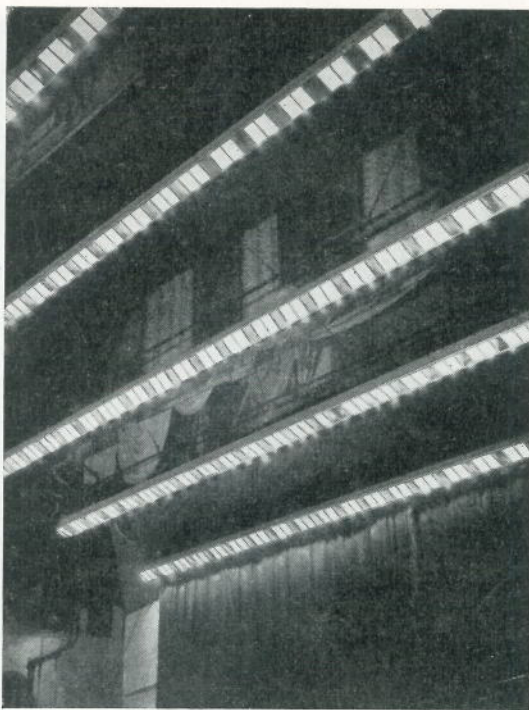


FIG. 4. View of lighting battens hanging between flown scenery. *Wild Violets*, Drury Lane, London, 1932.

time available. This latter point condemns these forms of switch-board even before they become really large. Nowadays, an installation consisting largely of individual spotlights, even if there were only 50, could not be adequately controlled on the old direct operated system.

Consider for a moment that these spotlights will be balanced to various intensities and that even in an apparently fully-lit scene we may expect to find at least one third of their dimmers at some intermediate positions. If it is a night scene then we may expect to find an even higher proportion at intermediate or check positions. Now if a group of these lights have to be dimmed in or out we have to bring each dimmer handle to a certain point on the scale, take them out from there perhaps and then return each to its previous intensity. How can this possibly be done on a Grand Master board? Again, if we are, say, taking out the dimmers, as the Row or Grand Master Wheel runs the dimmers down to the bottom position, all dimmers line up at point 0 on their scales. (They slip on the shaft to enable this to be done as some will reach the end of travel before

others.) When in reverse, we turn the Master Wheel handle to bring the dimmers up again we have to unlock each dimmer at its appropriate intermediate scale mark while still turning the handle. Obviously this is a very crude method and can only be used in a rough and ready manner, even if several operators are available to unlock the dimmers for us. How can we expect one or even two operators to unlock 30 dimmers at various intermediate positions on a cue which may have to take but 2 or 3 seconds?

What happens, of course, is that the producer is either persuaded into thinking that his particular cue is being carried out, or he gives up in despair and settles for something more simple. It might be argued that he was asking for something too complicated in the first place, and I personally am all for modifying the lighting to suit the available board, because I feel that the former must not "fight" the latter. On the other hand, since spotlights are there for "modelling" it is not unreasonable to expect that one should be able to balance their various intensities and paint the requisite picture. This is the very essence of painting with light—the balancing of intensities here and there, and then the gradual or fast change from one set of balances to another. We might question whether all the dimmers that are used nowadays are necessary, but we cannot question that having dimmers, we should be able to use all that these dimmers in themselves can offer.

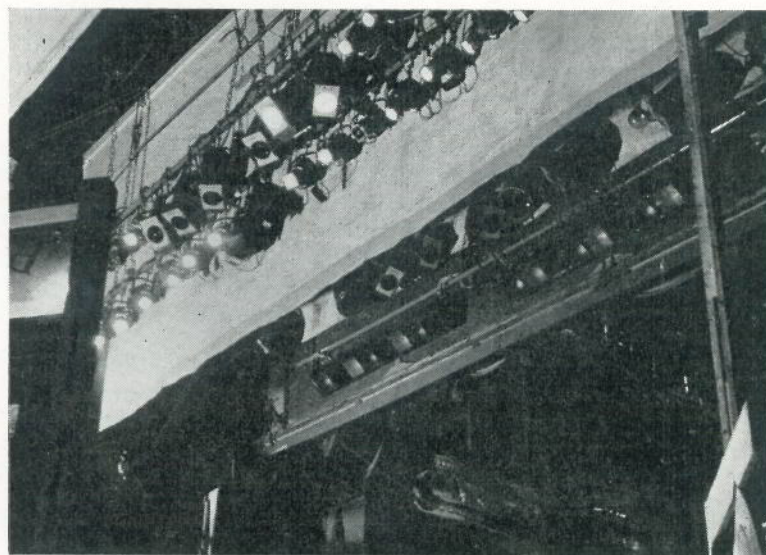


FIG. 5. A view of the spotlighting used in *Under Milk Wood*, at the New Theatre, London, 1956.



Before, therefore, we consider other forms of control of dimmer, we must examine whether all the dimmers we have are in fact necessary. We must surely agree that the change in technique from all over flooding of the stage, with very little localised light, to a technique of many localised sources (which therefore must be separately controlled), obviously implies an increase in dimmer numbers. On the other hand, it is sad to find in the case of, say, the Coliseum or Drury Lane, London, that there are 26 dimmers on the circle front controlling 26 spotlights, when these are so often used together as if it were one dimmer controlling 26 spotlights. I would say that the usual form at these theatres is that the vast majority of these spotlights move *en bloc* and only one or two in the centre follow an independent career—perhaps not a very adventurous one, as most of the American musicals seem only to require these latter for fogging a gauze from that position.

The same argument would seem to apply to much of the equipment behind the proscenium—the rows of acting area lanterns and spotlights on the overhead bars and on the booms and ladders at the sides. Very often these are connected individually or, at the most, as pairs in parallel to a large number of dimmers, yet in the actual show it appears that control of individuals or pairs is not required and it is simply a matter of blocks—the centre block of acting areas, the blue block or the amber block.

If only one could rely on these individual lanterns being used in the same blocks, for the purposes of increasing the size or intensity of light on certain areas of the stage, we could legislate accordingly. Such is, however, not the case and in *Mr. Roberts*, for example, at the Coliseum a few years ago, only about half the front of house spotlights were used as a block for area lighting, the remainder being used individually for accentuation. For this reason it would be most unwise, if indeed it were at all possible, to plan a new lighting installation with the next production particularly in mind. Thus there is no alternative but the provision of many separate circuits from the stage back to the control position.

Now even if we have these circuits, it might be our policy that we need not provide dimmers for them all, provided we had some form of jack plugging arrangement (see Fig. 6). That is a more elaborate form of what was shown in the case of the Junior board in the last article—some means of sharing out a lesser number of dimmers among a greater number of circuits. This has been called “patching” in America and the term is here too to stay. This system is often required in television studios. Although extensively used all over the stage of many American theatres it finds little popularity in the European theatre and then only for a small part of the stage lighting installation. This applies both to Germany and France.

Even in television, where patching is an essential—or near essential—and has been extensively practised, the true solution has

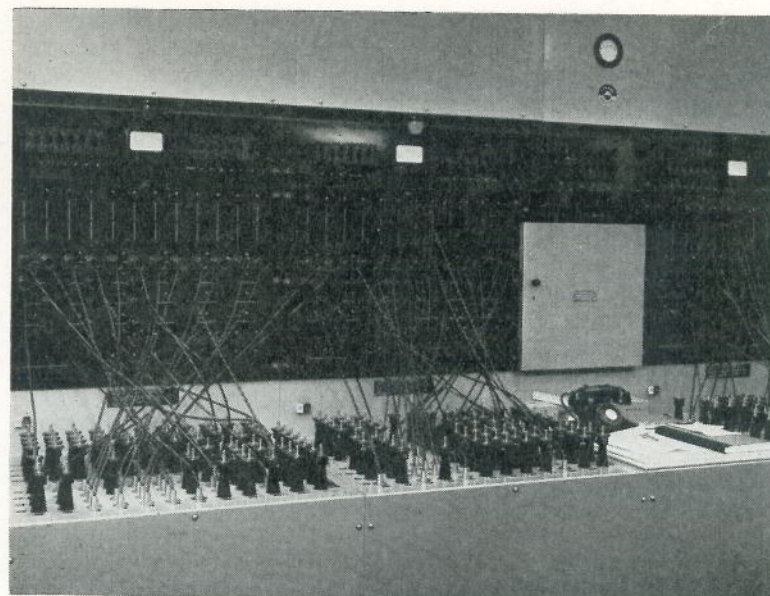


FIG. 6. Part of the 300 circuit patching plug panel at the British Broadcasting Corporation's Riverside Television Studio No. 2.

not yet been found. The trouble is that when we deal with a large number of circuits—200 or even more—we get an immense giant type of telephone switchboard, which becomes very difficult to manage, or if we use something more progressive we can easily spend as much money on the patching system as we would have done in order to provide a complete set of dimmers for every circuit. Consequently patching, if used, must be relegated to the small installation where the method used can be simple and really a money saver. (See Fig. 5 in the previous article.)

If what I have been saying shows that we need a large number of dimmers in the long run house, such as Drury Lane or its lesser brethren in the same field of business, it may be said to apply with even greater force to the repertory theatre. At the top of the list of the repertory type of theatre comes the large opera house of which we only possess one, Covent Garden; but on the Continent there are many. Now in these a different production is given every night and this greatly restricts the amount of re-arrangement that can be permitted between one show and another, even if the repertory is limited to, say, five or six plays. (Note the distinction between this kind of repertory and the repertory theatre, where the programme changes each week or each fortnight; here we are dealing with a change each night as at Stratford-on-Avon.) In these instances it becomes absolutely essential to have a large number of lanterns



hanging or positioned in such a way as to suit the various productions in the repertory, the minimum of re-arrangement taking place between one performance and another. Re-arrangement involving patching could also be time-consuming, so consequently it becomes accepted that these various lanterns are brought back to a large number of dimmers. This explains in part the increase at Stratford from 56 dimmers to 144 and I have no doubt that if the form of board adopted there had allowed some further spare ways, the number might by now have been even further increased. Not all these dimmers are used each night, but over a season they all are no doubt used.

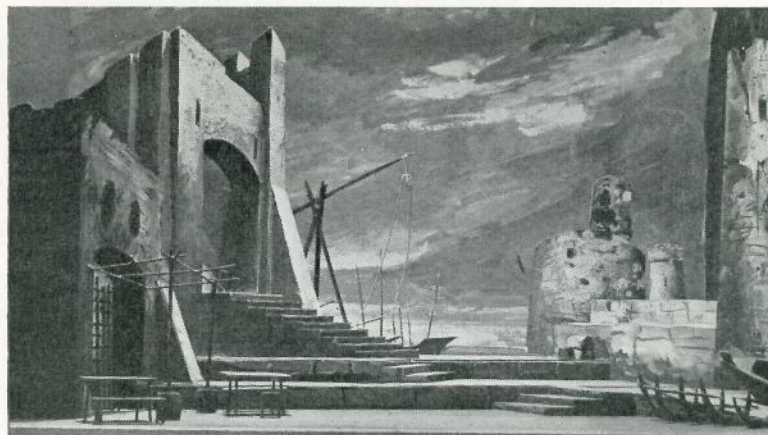
As far as the German opera house (to which our nearest equivalent is Covent Garden) is concerned, these have now standardised on about 200/300 dimmers, 260 being a very common figure. In their case as, for example, at Hamburg and elsewhere, 200 are permanently connected and the remaining 60 or so only have patching arrangements for the less used circuits. Thus, these latter dimmers are able to control a very much larger number of highly specialised circuits, which are only occasionally used. For example, dimmers devoted to very deep stage work or to the footlight might be released for other purposes.

Ideally, a footlight should have 12 dimmers in order to give us the centre, left and right sections. But most of the time only one or two circuits right across may be used or even no footlight at all. If, therefore, the footlight is operated via a patching system we could obviously often use these dimmers for something else, and there are many other examples of this kind of thing. Observe, however, that in this German arrangement there is a very high proportion of fixed circuits that are permanently connected to dimmers, and this seems to me a good rule for all work. We can see that whether we are considering a small, a medium sized or a large theatre, we are likely to require the maximum number of dimmers possible and these are going to run into numbers which are not convenient to mount for direct operation—into numbers which will require collective control so that they can be used properly—into numbers that will set the operator immense difficulties the moment the lamps are to be balanced at various levels as is the usual practice.

What we will now have to consider is how to set about a solution of this problem, what form we give the control whether it is for the 36 dimmer job, the 50, the 100, or the 200. These forms will differ somewhat, of course, because economics will come into the picture and furthermore, although it will be difficult enough to get 36 dimmers to various levels and intensities (and we shall need something pretty good to do this), it is obviously even more difficult in respect of very large installations. For this we shall find the only way out is to provide alternative sets of levers—possibly very many of them indeed—but all this will have to wait until our next issue.

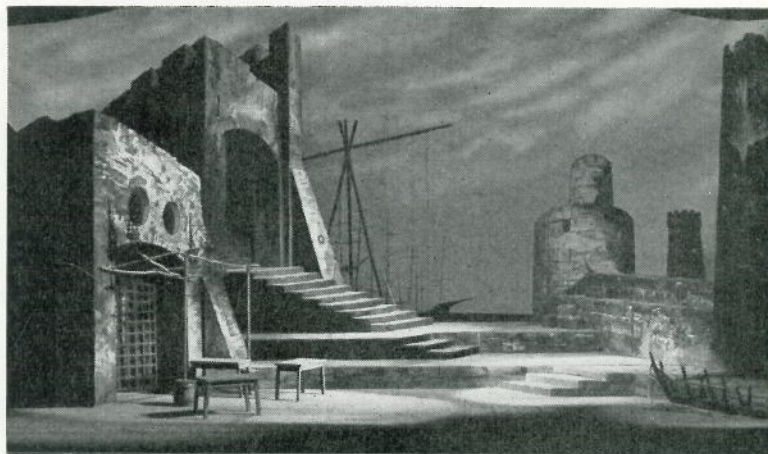
F.P.B.

## CONCEPTION . . .



Photograph of model of *Otello*, Act I, made in the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, Production Department from design by Georges Wakhevitch.

## . . . AND REALISATION



Photograph of *Otello*, Act I, at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden.



## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

*The following article was contributed to Spotlight—the journal of the Swindon and District Theatre Guild—by its President, Mr. Julian Diment. We feel that every Amateur Group and Society up and down the country would benefit from these words of wisdom and we gratefully acknowledge the permission of author and editor to reprint.*

I see that Miss Helen Haye has upset theatrical London with her outspoken criticism of the acting and production standards at present tolerated and even applauded. Slipshod she called them. And one Eminent Dramatic Critic has rallied to the defence and solace of the bludgeoned actors and producers. Whether his gallant action is prompted by a kindness not previously suspected, or by a resentment that Miss Haye should dare to crash in on the sacred preserves of the critics, I wouldn't dare to guess. Maybe it is just sheer jingoism.

But I was amused at the flash of temper and, ill-equipped as I am to speak on the main theme, I thought nevertheless that there might be something there worth pondering from the amateur's point of view, and thus pondering, I started off two of my favourite hares. For the Eminent Critic suggested that "Rules are for the talented actor, but the Genius makes his own Rules," a pernicious doctrine and a yawning gulf of self-destruction for the amateur, since it appears to invite us to dodge learning our jobs in the smug assumption that we are all geniuses and make our own rules.

Thus my first hare is the essential humility that every amateur actor must have—the knowledge that, for fun, he is doing those things faintly and in outline that the professional sweats blood day and night to do firmly in the round.

My other hare is the one about fooling the public. In our little world of make believe, we try to make an illusion—once the illusion is lost the play is down the drain and the audience has been cheated. If, then, we are faced with this decision—"Will the audience notice?" the answer should be always "Yes." In someone's memoirs, and nothing to do with the theatre, I came across the dictum "If you have any doubt as to whether your handkerchief is clean, take another from the drawer," and the moral is apposite. Please, Mr. Producer, if you have ever said (or thought) "You can get away with murder," will you tell yourself that the only murder that will be involved is the murder of the play—I know, I've done it.

I offer you, then, a good resolution for the new season. "In my acting and producing I will eschew the slipshod. Quite simply, within my limitations, I will pursue my artistic integrity." And if that sounds too high falutin' it can be freely translated, "Don't let the customers see the joins."

## THE ACTOR'S ART

Those many thousands who desire guidance in their theatrical activities are more than liberally catered for. Numerous books and periodicals are published for the purpose. Festivals, conferences, lectures, demonstrations, week-end schools and the like, are being constantly organised by the heterogeneous groups, societies, committees, federations, guilds, councils and leagues by means of which the amateur theatres pursue their collective purposes. None of us is deterred from adding to the spate of instruction by the Shavian assertion that "he who can, does: he who cannot, teaches."

Most of the instruction is directed to the technicalities of acting, production and staging. On the whole there is, perhaps, rather an excess of emphasis on technique, and not enough insistence on artistry. This is understandable: technique can be learned, but artistry depends on an undefinable personal quality. Not all actors and producers possess that quality. It would be true to say that most actors, professional and amateur, could best be described as craftsmen rather than artists. Nature is not prodigal with the sort of genius that enables a competent craftsman to become an outstanding artist. When the genius does exist, the outstanding artistry must be developed by conscious experience—the experience that is observed and savoured with detached objectivity.

Many actors are self-centred and self-complacent. They have possibly become actors because they are exhibitionists who love to wallow in their own experiences, quite unconcerned with the reactions of those with whom the experiences are shared. But the actor who is a true artist must be acutely conscious of those reactions. It is quite likely that he deliberately and ruthlessly studies them for his own purpose.

An actor should be an artist, an interpretive artist. He must never be guilty of mere self-expression; but, of course, he usually is. The real actor is one who is able to absorb the emotional, mental and physical characteristics of the individual created by the playwright, and to project those characteristics by conscious control of his own personality, which must be so transformed, that he creates a new living character for his audience. One could name many actors and actresses in the professional theatre, and there are some in the amateur theatre, who possess this great gift, which they have developed into the art of acting. Obviously, an actor cannot fully develop his art until he has mastered its technique. He must know, from experience, the possibilities and the limitations of the tools of his trade and must learn to use them skilfully. Not until he has acquired that skill, can he fully exercise his artistry. This could justify the constant emphasis on technique, and it is rather curious that in the amateur theatre, many of its devotees claim a special merit for what they call the amateurs' "sincerity" in acting. They



will often argue that this "sincerity" has a virtue that condones any lack of technique. This, of course, is nonsense. They fail to see the difference between sincerity and sensitivity. An actor can "feel" his part with tremendous sincerity and yet succeed only in convincing himself, if he lacks the technique that enables him to translate the emotions he feels into theatrical terms.

Sincerity must not be confused with artistry. It matters little or nothing to an audience whether an actor is sincere or not. It matters a great deal that he should present a credible and convincing character that is theatrically effective. The fact that he has submerged *himself* in a welter of emotion is quite unimportant. What matters is the effect on the audience; and the actor who is lacking in technique and relies on his own sincere feelings to convince an audience, is probably making the discriminating members of his audience feel very uncomfortable. The actor who is very obviously feeling sorry for the character he is trying to present, usually fails to make the audience feel the poignancy of his suffering; the actress who sobs and gasps in noisy paroxysms of grief, be it ever so sincere, is certain to irritate the sensitive playgoer, and to destroy the delicate tension that should exist between actor and audience, that always does exist when a competent performer achieves his purpose.

Of course, it is quite possible for a master of technique to be an indifferent artist; but the great artist is never a poor technician. The art and technique of acting must be concealed. Acting must create an illusion of significant realism: it is not concerned with actuality. It demands conscious control of the subtle expression of thought and feeling with *theatrical* significance. Acting is not real-life behaviour: acting is an art. It does not present life: it presents a comment on life. When it holds up the mirror to nature, the audience sees the reflection—not the reality. Reflections can be distorted if the mirror be faulty; but mirrors can be moulded to provide controlled variations of reflections. The actor-artist consciously (and sub-consciously) controls the reflections. He does so with a skill that is compounded of natural gifts of expression, sensitive appreciation of human reactions, and a conscious and competent control of his own person and personality.

Any play—any stage production in fact—is an attempt at a work of art which is a combination of several arts. The actor contributes an important part of this composite expression of theatrical art and he must do so with sensitive appreciation of the significance of the whole. He must have complete control of voice and of body. His speech must have quality of sound as well as of meaning: it must have subtle variations of intensity, of tone, of pitch, of emphasis; it must have significant contrasts of speed: the use of a perfectly timed pause must be as eloquent as speech. Also, the actor must always be conscious of the visual presentation: of the fact that he is only a part of three-dimensional pictures which are always

changing, but which must constantly preserve significant composition, creations of form and pattern with essential focal points. **He must never upset the balance of emphasis by shifting the focus to himself when it should be elsewhere.** He does not merely play the part for which he has been cast; he must react to every character with whom he shares a scene. He must contribute something to their performances. A great actor is never a selfish actor.

Unfortunately, playgoers do not always recognise great acting when they see and hear it. There are many stars in the entertainment industry who are most loudly acclaimed and most lavishly paid for being consistently themselves. Appreciation itself is an art, and even professional critics, who could claim to be informed, impartial observers, rarely agree in their decisions. This is inevitable. There is no art whose standards are absolute. But the great actor, who may or may not be a star to the public, has an artistic conscience that cannot be deluded. Whatever the critics may say, he *knows* when he has succeeded and when he has failed.

These comments have been concerned only with acting in the theatre. Acting for the cinema, sound broadcasting and television demands a different technique for each, and each differs from stage acting; but acting for any medium is an art, an art that can be exacting and exhausting, often irritating and frustrating, sometimes exciting and rewarding, but an art that is always fascinating.

P.C.

## THE SUNBURNER

*Killing Two Birds (illumination and ventilation) with one stone.*

It must be many years now since any auditorium was lit by a sunburner, and there can only be a handful of Theatre Managers in this country who to-day can even point to one on the auditorium ceiling as a relic of a bygone age. Consequently, a note regarding them before they disappear for ever might not be out of place.

The use of gas as an illuminant, particularly in the not so recent times, was attended by several inconveniences. Apart from the fire hazard, provision had to be made for maintaining room temperature at a reasonable level and for ensuring a supply of fresh air, not only to maintain combustion, but to safeguard human life as the products of the flame were not exactly calculated to benefit the lungs.

The first Gas Company was established in 1809–10 by Windsor, and even three-quarters of a century later, opinions seem to have differed widely as to the amount of fresh air required to maintain the atmosphere within a building in a state of comparative purity. Some authorities required three cubic feet, other six cubic feet for each individual per minute. Authorities on the Continent and in



America varied from a minimum of ten to a maximum of thirty cubic feet per minute for each person. In England around 1885 it seems that for theatres, where the air space over the audience was of some magnitude, a minimum of four cubic feet was acceptable. This, however, was the requirement per person, without taking into account the deterioration resulting from gas consumption, for which a further allowance was to be made of three persons to each gas jet and from five to seven persons extra for each Argand burner. The latter was a "high efficiency" burner, which relied on a very low rate of velocity of the issuing gas, probably not greater than 2 ft. per second, "so that the *solid particles of carbon* in the gas flame had time to develop their maximum light."

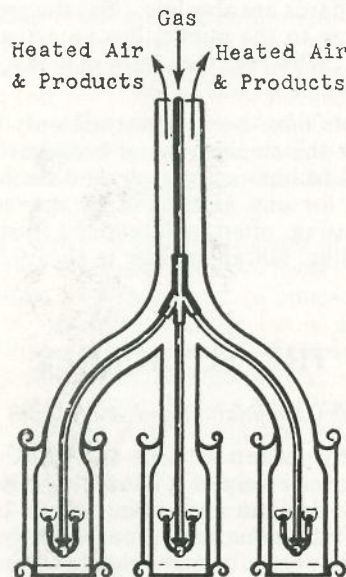


FIG. 1. Riddell's Burner, 1817, from *Lighting by Gas*, by Dean Chandler.

In these days when we are concerned about the effect on our lungs of smoke from chimneys and fumes from petrol and diesel engines, and more particularly from excessive personal consumption of tobacco, one is inclined to forget that our forefathers had problems of a somewhat similar nature without the same scientific and technical resources to meet them.

As long ago, however, as 1817 serious thought was being given to the necessity of having adequate ventilation with gas lighting, for reasons both of temperature and pollution, and in that year a patent was granted to Isaac Hadley Riddell, of Orange Court, Leicester

Square, in the County of Middlesex, Engineer, "for certain improvements in lighting the interior of Offices, Theatres, Buildings, Houses, or other Place where lights may be required." Fig. 1 is a reproduction of the drawing which accompanied Riddell's patent

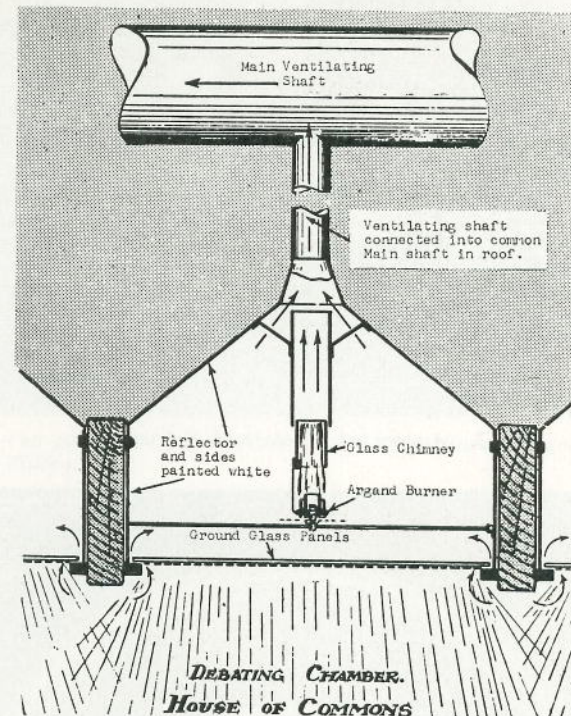


FIG. 2. Sugg's Ventilating Sun Burner, 1883, from *Lighting by Gas*, by Dean Chandler.

specification and from which it will be seen that the hot air and other obnoxious products from the gas jets passed upwards and out of the building, rising by reason of their heat, drawing a stream of air out of the room or auditorium beneath.

It would seem that, in some cases at any rate, ventilation calculations were taken very seriously. Some engineers worked on the basis that an average man, breathing normally, inhaled and exhaled 40 cubic inches of air 18 times a minute. Others worked on abnormal inspirations and expirations, which were found to be varied, according to the height of the individual; thus a man of 5 ft. 6 in. was found to exhale 210 cubic inches on full expiration,



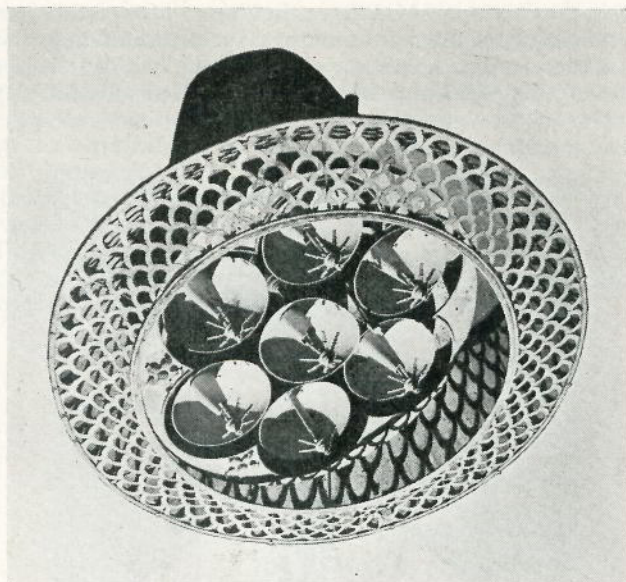


FIG. 3. A seven unit burner, each with seven jets.

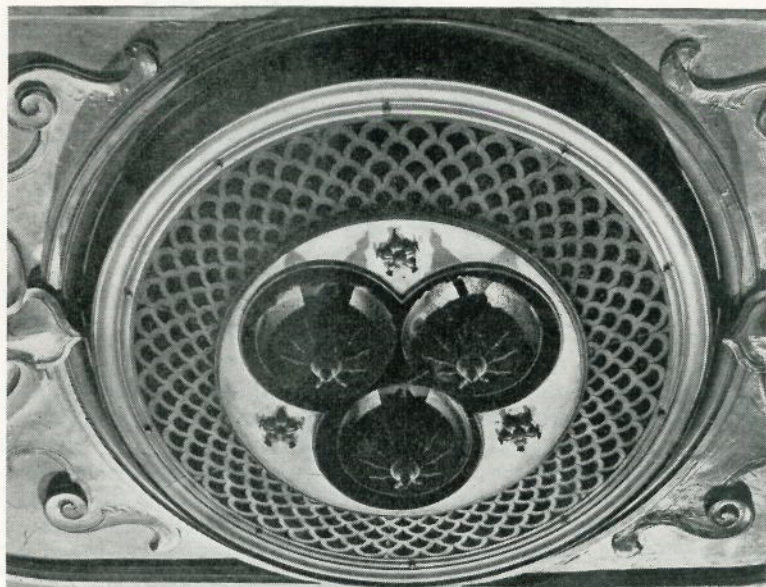


FIG. 4. A three unit sunburner, each with ten jets. (This illustration and FIG. 5 by courtesy of Hammer Theatres (Suffolk) Ltd.) Photo by Wilden.

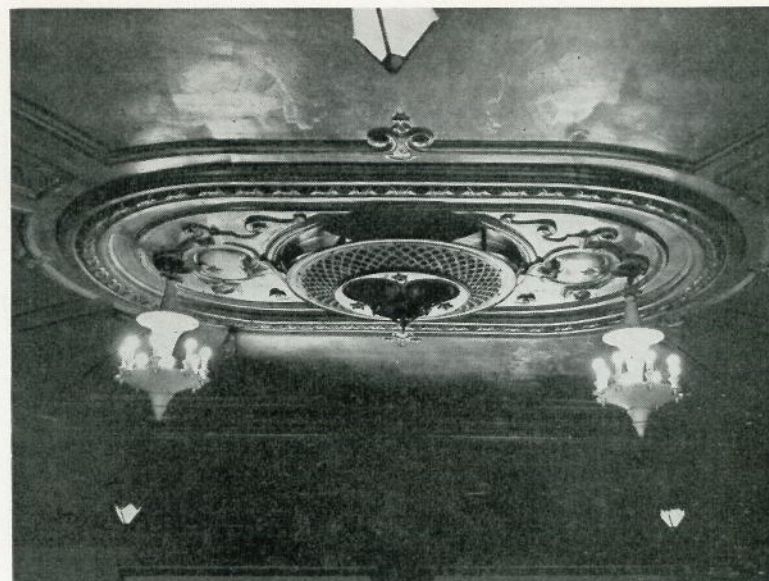


FIG. 5. The sunburner still installed in the Hippodrome Theatre, Ipswich. Photo by Wilden.

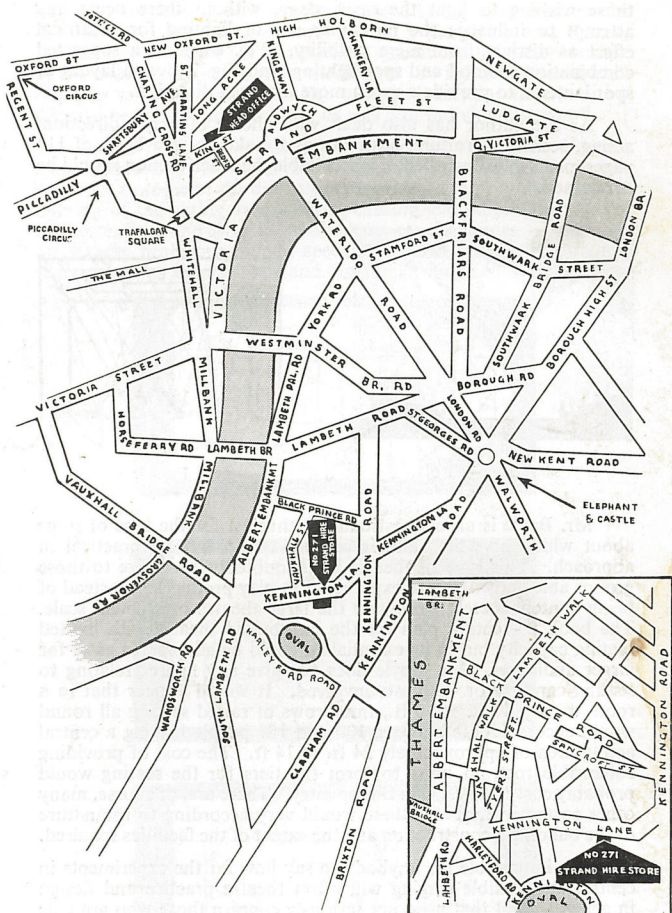
while a man of 6 ft. would give out 258 cubic inches. When calculating the cubic air space provided in a building, allowance was made for the displacement caused by the audience itself. One theatre, seating 2,444 persons, had an atmospheric capacity in the auditorium of 399,820 cubic feet, but this was reduced by 31,772 cubic feet when the audience were seated. It would be interesting to learn how the average figure of 13 cubic feet was first arrived at as being the cubic capacity of the average theatregoer!

In the course of time Riddell's patent was worked on, no doubt much improved, and widely accepted so that in 1852 this system was installed in the House of Commons, 64 Argant burners being employed. Fig. 2 shows how the principles were adapted for use in theatres, for example, by 1883.

Fig. 3 shows a theatre sunburner with seven clusters each of seven jets. The fitting shown in Fig. 4 with three clusters each of ten jets is still at the Hippodrome Theatre, Ipswich. Fig. 5 shows the same in situ with the more recent electric light fittings alongside.

H.C.





"Tabs" is published by the Strand Electric & Engineering Co., Ltd., 29 King Street, Covent Garden, W.C.2 (TEMPle Bar 4444), and printed in England by The Whitefriars Press Ltd., London and Tonbridge. (Copyright reserved.) Clifton 8761.9M.