

# TABS

Published in the interests of the Theatre

by

The Strand Electric and Engineering Co. Ltd.

HEAD OFFICE	}	29, King Street, Covent Garden
SOUTHERN OFFICES, SHOWROOMS		London, W.C.2
TABS EDITORIAL OFFICE		Phone: Temple Bar 4444
Southern Hire Stores		271, Kennington Lane, London, S.E.11
Manchester		313/7, Oldham Road, Manchester Phone: Collyhurst 2736
Glasgow		Stage Furnishings Ltd. 346, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow Phone: Glasgow, Douglas 6431
Dublin		30, Upper Abbey Street, Dublin Phone: Dublin 47078
Bristol		56, Fouracre Cres., Downend, Bristol Phone: Bristol 651460
Darlington		3 Kemble Green North, Newton Aycliffe near Darlington Phone: Newton Aycliffe 593
Australia		Strand Electric (Australia) Pty. Ltd. 212, Graham St., Port Melbourne Phone: 64-1267
Canada		Strand Electric Limited 755, Yonge St., Toronto 5 Phone: Walnut 5-5108

## CONTENTS

	Page
Editorial . . . . .	3
Stratford-in-Aldwych . . . . .	4
Staging at the Aldwych—by Keith Green . . . . .	4
Lighting at the Aldwych—by John Wyckham . . . . .	8
Tyrone Guthrie on Lighting . . . . .	14
Theatre Technicians Associate—by Percy Corry . . . . .	15
Theatre in the Round—by Ian Albery . . . . .	16
Civil Defence . . . . .	19
New Stages with Exciting Possibilities—by Frederick Bentham . . . . .	21
A Theatre in Hungary—by Michael Wooderson . . . . .	28
Book Review—by Martin Rubeck . . . . .	32

## Lighting Lectures

The following lectures will be given in the Strand Demonstration Theatre at 29 King Street, Covent Garden, London, W.C.2. The "Colour Music" lecture will be a repeat of that to be given on April 21st for which we already have a full house. Admission is by ticket only, to be had free on application, enclosing a stamped and addressed envelope.

Monday, April 24th, 6.30 p.m.

"Colour Music." By Frederick Bentham.

Wednesday, May 10th, 6.30 p.m.

"Lighting the Scene." Recorded lecture No. 1 with slides.

Tuesday, June 6th, 6.30 p.m.

"Stage Lighting 1961." Talk with demonstrations by Frederick Bentham.

## Lectures in Australia

A series of lecture demonstrations will be held by Strand Electric (Australia) Pty. Ltd., at the C.A.E. Russell Street Theatre, 19 Russell Street, Melbourne, during the week September 4th to 9th inclusive. Those interested can write to Strand Electric, 212 Graham Street, Port Melbourne, for full particulars.

## "Cinemoid" Colours

We are about to add a further seven colours to the "Cinemoid" range. The following list gives the number and title with a brief description of each.

No. 27 Smoky Pink	A chocolate pink similar in hue to No. 10 Middle Rose combined with No. 55 Chocolate Tint and No. 56 Pale Chocolate.
No. 46 Chrome Yellow	A strong colour tending towards sodium. Similar in hue to two thicknesses of No. 2 Light Amber and one thickness of No. 1 Yellow.
No. 47 Apricot	A combination of No. 3 Straw and No. 53 Pale Salmon. The name of this colour was inspired by Sir Tyrone Guthrie's remarks in <i>A Life in the Theatre</i> (see page 14).
No. 57 Pink	Slightly darker than No. 7 Light Rose with the addition of a faint gold tint.
No. 61 Slate Blue	A greyish blue, similar in density to No. 18 Light Blue and in hue to No. 43 Pale Navy Blue.
No. 62 Turquoise	A brilliant blue similar in colour to two thicknesses of No. 15 Peacock Blue and two thicknesses of No. 18 Light Blue.
No. 63 Sky Blue	A colour falling between No. 32 Medium Blue and No. 19 Dark Blue.

## "Tabs" Index and Binders

Copies of the Subject-Index of TABS articles covering Vols. 4 to 18, i.e. September 1946 to December 1960, are now available free\* and binders of the "do-it-yourself" type with stiff board covers together with the Index are also available and now in stock at 7s. 6d.\*

\*Post Free in Britain.

## STRATFORD-IN-ALDWYCH

The Repertory Season which started at the Aldwych Theatre last December has caused a wave of excitement throughout Theatrical circles. The introduction of Mr. Peter Hall's scheme for artistes of all grades to be selected and contracted for three years, together with the decision to give the Stratford-on-Avon Company a London airing in plays mostly of non-Shakespearean authorship, and in February the world première of the first play to be especially commissioned for this company, have largely overshadowed the enormous face-lift which has gone on within the Aldwych Theatre itself.

Two aspects of the immense operations leading up to this event are discussed here by Keith Green, Stage Director for the Company, and John Wyckham, the Lighting Designer.

## STAGING AT THE ALDWYCH

*by Keith Green*

The changes to the stage of the Aldwych have given to this theatre an acting area almost identical to that of Stratford-on-Avon and thus productions staged at one theatre can easily be transferred to the other. The alterations enable directors, actors and playwrights to get away from a proscenium type of presentation, and the apron of the new stage, pushing out into the auditorium, has destroyed the barrier of footlights and orchestra pit. An actor standing down-stage, where the front row of stalls used to be, has a contact with the audience that before would have been impossible. Obviously if our programme were one of drawing-room comedies demanding naturalistic sets we would be better off with the original arrangement—but plays that demand large casts, many changes of scene and extrovert acting, demand greater freedom of presentation. This I think has been achieved, and the Aldwych now has a stage with breadth and, despite its thousand seats, has become an intimate theatre.

Also, to bring the Aldwych into line with the Memorial Theatre, we have permanent masking which consists of "tormentors" down-stage, and three arches at approximately 8 ft. intervals. This means that all we need to do is to put down a floor covering, hang a back-cloth and we can open the doors.

This sounds a simple matter but, when we stood in the stalls under a working light on the November Sunday morning after *Watch it Sailor* had transferred to the Apollo, the task looked formidable—but not impossible; we only started thinking it was



*Auditorium, Aldwych Theatre, showing some of the new F.O.H. lighting. There are further positions adjacent to the stage boxes, altogether 33 dimmers are used for F.O.H. spots.*

impossible about a week or less before we were due to open. The jobs to be done were legion—strip out two lower fly platforms and the old switchboard, convert what had been the stage boxes into the console and sound rooms, prepare the “prop” room to house the dimmer banks, put down the new hexagon-shaped stage, replace the old proscenium pelmet with a steel-supported fibrous plaster one and then install all the new equipment (the console, the sound system, the dimmer banks, the 35 sets of double-purchase counterweights, the lanterns, etc.).

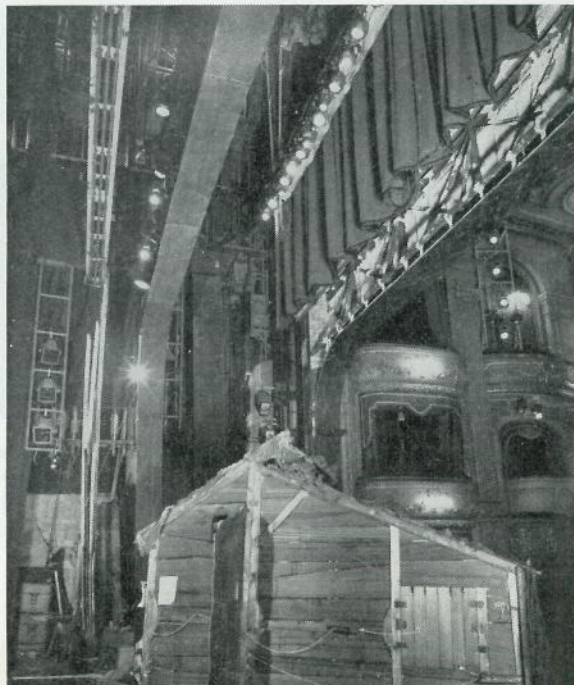
Of course there was a schedule for all this. But to stick to it was a different matter; inevitable difficulties, as well as unforeseen problems, slowed us down and we were soon several days behind. But somehow, as always happens, the work was finished in time; we got *Malfi* and *Twelfth Night* in, fitted them up, set the spots, the company arrived, we dress rehearsed and opened.

After the scramble before the first night, work afterwards was still pretty arduous. Three opening nights in as many weeks proved very hard going indeed (from November 15th to January 12th, the first night of *Ondine*, the staff worked morning, noon and night with only one day off, Christmas Day), and had we not had a hard-working and willing team that really knew its job, it would not have been possible.

### New Productions

By and large the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre makes all its own sets, props and costumes. At one time everything in all the productions except for wigs, shoes and swords, was made at Stratford. This is not always possible now because of the number of major productions presented by the company.

The Sunday before the production week-end of a new play there is always a technical rehearsal. This is of great value to all. Everything comes together for the first time, actors, costumes, lights,



*Aldwych stage from wings. Stage is roughly twice the depth shown.*

sets, props, and staff. Everyone concerned in the production has a chance to get acquainted with anything that is difficult or unusual and without the pressure that is always felt during production time. This early dress rehearsal also gives a week in which to alter or adapt anything which isn't right. One might argue that such a day's work was a waste of time and that the same result would be achieved over one week-end. Without doubt the play would open, but with shows as complex and difficult as *Ondine*, for example, the extra week-end makes for more straightforward final rehearsals and for a higher standard.

Over a production period the general plan we follow is to strike on Saturday after the performance and then work through the night getting-in and fitting up the new set—trying to get most of the work done by nine o'clock on the Sunday morning. This gives the electricians a chance to set the lanterns and plot at least a few cues before lunch. In the afternoon the company are in and the tedious business of trying to make everything work and fit together begins. On the first Sunday there is no attempt to get anything perfect or timed correctly. Just to go right through the play is the aim. Such a rehearsal will last from two o'clock until midnight, with a half-hour break for coffee and sandwiches. The second Sunday—which is the beginning of the production week-end, is a repeat of the previous one in all respects, except that, the ground being broken, a lot of time can be spent on all the cues and changes to perfect them. And so comes Monday; technical work on the stage in the morning (resetting of spots, jobs left over from Saturday night), and dress rehearsals afternoon and evening. The actors are now no longer puppets giving cues and doing moves for the benefit of scene changes or lights, but are given a chance to rehearse properly and with concentration. Tuesday is like Monday, technical work morning and rehearsals afternoon and evening. A preview perhaps on Wednesday and the opening on Thursday.

The general day-to-day running of the stage at the Aldwych is not easy. There is a complete lack of wing space on the OP side, the grid is only 50 ft. from the stage and the dock area on the prompt side is only 14 ft. by 18 ft. Add to this the loss of the old prop room, a company of nearly fifty, an orchestra, a large staff and then try to find room for the scenery, costumes and props of three heavy shows. No wonder we feel we're bursting at the seams. Naturally, we store outside the theatre, but, nevertheless, lack of space on the stage means that during change-overs there is constant moving of scenery, which, had we more room, could remain undisturbed until needed for a performance. Being so cramped does waste a lot of time and energy; but a very real compensation for the labour that goes into the running of the repertory is the knowledge that it's a worthwhile project and that we work in a vital theatre.

## LIGHTING AT THE ALDWYCH

by John Wyckham

Many people find it hard to believe that there were still a dozen or so saltwater dimmers in use at the Aldwych Theatre when *Watch it Sailor* transferred from there to the Apollo Theatre in November, 1960. These almost indestructible old-timers had seen wonderful service, and saving their tendency to boil at most inopportune moments had certain undeniable advantages over more modern dimming methods. However, "salt of the electrical world" though they may have been, the advance of modern mechanics and electronics must not be hindered we are told, and the old geysers under the stage had to make way for fourteen young pistons!

"Green Preset speed six, all Green Preset speed eight, follow on Raise Piston Twelve speed four, and Remainder Dim. Pause five seconds then All Dim lagging number fifty-seven. Plot and break for tea!"

Something like that was my last instruction to the switchboard operator at the conclusion of the lighting rehearsal for *The Devils*, thus bringing to a close phase one of Lighting for Repertory—Aldwych style. The designs of Lila de Nobili, Leslie Hurry, Tanya Moisevitch and Sean Kenny could not be more different, each requiring a special treatment from a lighting viewpoint. With *Twelfth Night*, Michael Northen's beautifully designed and gently flowing Lighting Plot had first to be translated from its original form used with the Stratford-on-Avon electronic switchboard. This was no easy task, but once done it became a simple plot to handle on the new C.D./Th/II Control. The General Move, or Remainder Dim as it is now called, was in constant use as also were the Master and Independent Dimmers. Now, whereas all the other C.D./Th. Controls in the country could operate this plot, the Aldwych version, the first of its kind in British Theatre has one advantage over them all—it "Can Do This Twice"—which I presume is how it came to have such an unwieldy method of identification. (Perhaps the "CanDo" and the "CanDoTwo" might simplify matters and readily distinguish these controls from "Choke", "P.R.", and "Grand Master"?)

The two presets (Green and White) really came into full use with *Ondine*, an immensely tricky show, where, during production, Peter Hall was frequently wanting to go back over certain sections.

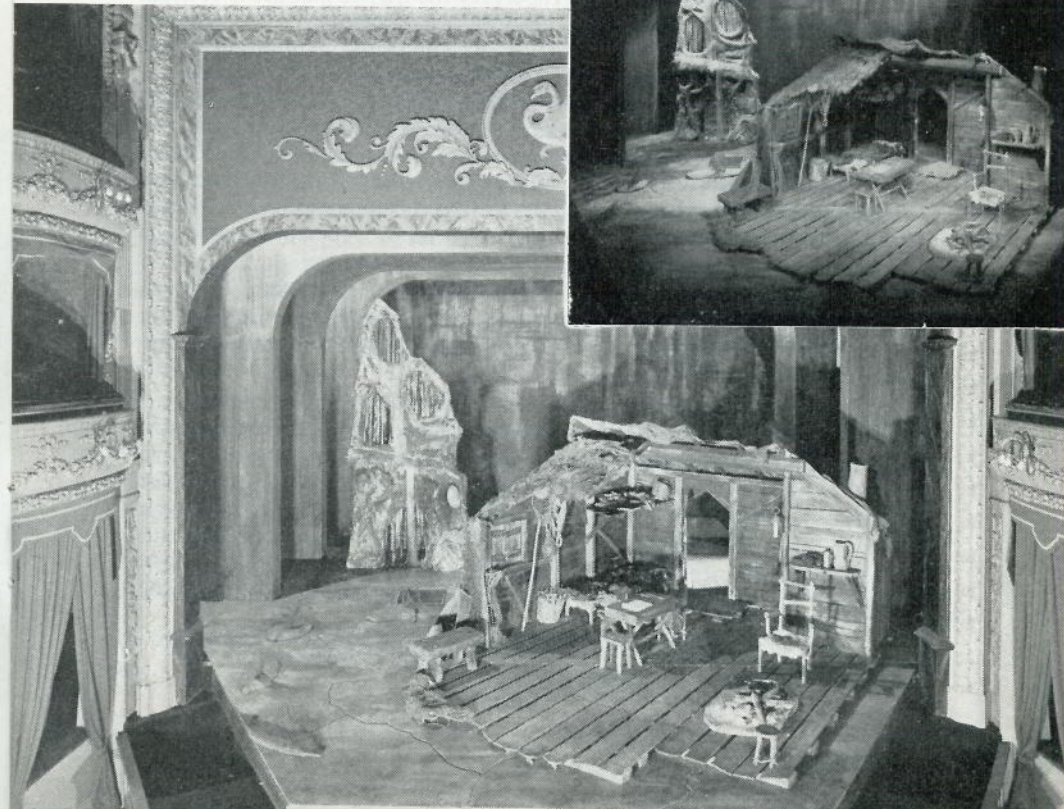
*The Duchess of Malfi* used just about every facility the board could offer, with Blackout, Blackout Trip, Master and Independent Dimming and Motor Stop being used, each on at least one occasion, to say nothing of the two presets which were in constant use. Strangely enough, by no means all the pistons were used for this show.

Brian Freeland, the console operator, put to good use a trick which we nicknamed "overdrive", so that "follow-on" cues could literally "follow-on" without even the three-second delay normally required once pressure is taken off a preset or move button.

By the time *The Devils* joined the repertoire, John Beaumont, the Chief Electrician, had moulded his staff into such an excellent team that it was possible to actually light the show for the first time whilst the company were doing the first "technical" or "stopping dress rehearsal" on the stage. This was a great achievement, and I think represents a very great advance in lighting technique. To be able to keep up with the Director and actors whilst actually lighting and plotting cues is no easy matter, and *The Devils*, with 38 scenes in the First Act alone was a tremendous challenge to the system.

Speaking personally, it was a great joy to be able to "light" with the actors on the stage instead of having to use the ever willing

*New stage at the Aldwych showing its projection into auditorium, and entrances for actors to left and right via steps from the orchestra pit. Permanent masking of stage can also be seen. Inset, scene from "Ondine" as lit.*



Stage Management. Not to keep the Director waiting more than three times during eight hours of rehearsal was gratifying, but perhaps the greatest delight of all was being able to go back two, three, or even four cues without undue difficulty, and consequently enable the director to rehearse difficult changes three or four times. Credit for this must of course go to John Beaumont and Brian Freeland, but even they could not have achieved this without two presets and the fourteen memory pistons, all of which were put to good use on this production.

I seem to have put the end first, so to speak, but since the success of any lighting scheme depends upon the method of control and its operators perhaps it should be discussed first and last.

Having agreed that "CanDoTwo" with 120 dimmer ways, mostly of 500/1,000 watt or 1,000/2,000 watt capacity, together with eight transformer dimmers, should be the means of control for the Aldwych scheme, the problem was to site the circuit outlets and lanterns in such a way that maximum flexibility might be attained. Details of the actual console and dimmer bank, together with the layout, have appeared in an earlier edition of this magazine,\* and so I won't repeat them here. Instead, it is of interest to note some of the facts about how this layout has worked out when applied to four very different productions in three months.

Many people think that in repertory the way to run the Electrical Department is to set the lanterns in the Front-of-House for the season, together with a selection of the most commonly used colours in them and leave thus for all productions. This, however, is impracticable with the style and complexity of the Stratford-on-Avon productions, particularly since, with the introduction of the large apron stage, the most important acting areas have to be lit by Front-of-House positions. Therefore, the siting of the new equipment must be done in such a way that it can be easily maintained and quickly reset for each production in a repertoire which is changed every three days.

The result has been a great success from the point of view of economy and practicability, and the 52 lanterns on the auditorium side of the Iron Curtain can be completely recoloured and reset by the electrical staff in 35 minutes.

Since the eyes of the audience should at all times be on the actors it was decided not to waste money masking these Front-of-House lanterns, with the result that many of them are visible throughout the performance if the public cares to look in their direction. This was by no means an attempt to follow the "new look" in theatrical presentation, whereby the audience can see everything, but rather in the nature of an economy. If money becomes available in the future, some form of masking may be considered.

Back-stage flexibility is also of prime importance, and a notable

\*"Tabs" Volume 18, No. 3, pages 6 and 7.

feature is that stage dips as such do not exist, since they would always be located underneath scenery and rostrums; therefore, the plug boxes have been arranged in batches on the walls up-stage and down-stage, either side of the acting area. These plug boxes also have loops up on the fly rails each side, and to avoid overloading a change-over switch on stage level makes it possible to plug booms and ladders at ground or fly floor level, whichever is the most convenient.

Battens and floats are rarely used, and once again their plug boxes are so arranged that these circuits are available for other equipment when necessary.

The spot bars are four in number, the first being a 12-way bar with a selection of Patt. 23's and Patt. 123's connected in pairs on a 12-way barrel. The second spot bar contains three pairs of acting areas (Patt. 76's), three pairs Patt. 123's and two pairs Patt. 23's. The third spot bar contains six pairs Patt. 123's, and the fourth or back-lighting bar has on it four pairs of Patt. 243's.

In practice the No. 1 spot bar is reset and recoloured for each production. The No. 2 spot bar is shared amongst all the repertory plays and where possible left untouched. At the time of writing, the two pairs of Patt. 23's and one pair of acting areas are for *Ondine*, three pairs Patt. 123's are set for *The Duchess of Malfi*, one pair of acting areas is set for *The Devils*, and the last pair of acting areas, which was used for *Twelfth Night*, is at present lying idle. The No. 3 spot bar seems to be working every other production, that is to say, used exclusively for *Twelfth Night*, but not at all for *The Duchess of Malfi* or *Ondine*, and now that *Twelfth Night* is out of the repertoire this bar has been completely commissioned for *The Devils*. Finally, the No. 4 spot bar, although set permanently in one position, is recoloured to suit the current production.

Elsewhere every lantern is fairly accessible and is reset for each and every play. A particular point of interest is that the ladders are made to hold three or four Pageants or Patt. 243's, and run on tracks up and down stage bolted to the underside of each fly floor. Although their position is pretty constant, it is extremely useful to be able to move these ladders to one side during a "Get-In" or "Get-Out".

The six Patt. 243's used each side of the stage on the fly rails are somewhat of a headache for three reasons.

1. On the prompt side they are frequently in the way of the fly-men.
2. Owing to the fact that the grid is low and always full of scenery for all the plays, it is very rare indeed for all twelve lanterns to have an uninterrupted throw to the stage below.
3. The fly rails, being very high, make the angle of tilt very acute, thus limiting the setting of these lanterns to the opposite side of the stage.

Barn door shutters are invariably necessary to keep the light spill off the three false proscenium arches, and this, of course, further restricts the angle of tilt of these particular lanterns.

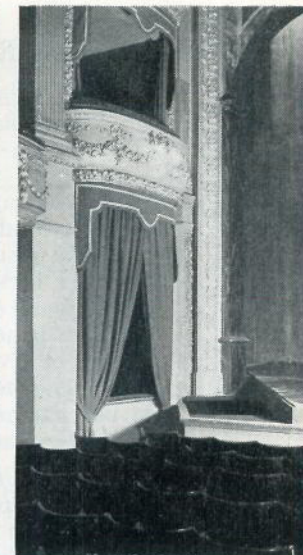
Enough said about the actual lay-out, but I think I have made the point that every effort is made to keep the installation flexible.

#### Change-overs

The Monday and Thursday change-overs from one play to the next, involve an immense amount of hard work by all concerned, and teamwork is essential if the task is to be completed before the House is open to the public at 7 p.m. The resetting of the electrical equipment can be done in anything from 1½ to 2 hours, with the Senior Stage Manager for each production being responsible for checking the setting of the lanterns for his or her play. Apart from actual setting, replugging and recolouring, there are sundry special effects, smoke, bombs, fountains, sound and the like to be checked by the Electrical Department, all of which need meticulous attention to detail in order to ensure that a high standard of production is maintained. There is little time for boredom, which is perhaps one of the many reasons for the success of this type of Repertory. The staff, most of whom are employed full time, are all genuinely interested in Theatre, and the constantly changing programme helps to keep them alert, interested and, most important of all, always on the look-out for ways of getting the correct result by simpler methods!

#### New Productions

The scheme of things on the occasion of a new production is somewhat different. A preliminary "stopping dress rehearsal" is invariably arranged about a week in advance of the actual opening date, in order for everyone to assess the state of the whole production. It is a long and dreary business, but one of inestimable value. Most of the electrical equipment is recoloured and reset to the requirements of the Lighting Designer, although he invariably leaves a small number of circuits "up his sleeve", so to speak, and obviously does not touch the few circuits which are reserved exclusively for other plays. The setting for the first time on a new production may take up to three or four hours. It is followed then by either a short lighting rehearsal without actors lasting one or two hours, during which time the Lighting Designer and switchboard operators can become conversant with the new arrangement of things, or if the production is complex this is scrapped in favour of getting the company on stage as soon as possible and lighting as we go, during which an attempt is made to work slowly through the play putting all the different effects together. If the lighting is taking good shape then an accurate plot is made for the following week. However, always at the back of one's mind is the thought that it is not yet too late to change things, and that this first "technical rehearsal" is one of experiment.



*Interior view of lighting control box together with external view as seen by audience. Note stage entrance from orchestra pit.*

The following day, back to normal, and the current repertoire is put into action for another week. Seven days later starts the Production Week-end proper, which is the same as that for any West End opening with the added advantage that everyone has had a preview of what the production may, or should, look like.

Contact with the switchboard can be made direct from the stalls by an intercom, set which usually resides in the prompt corner, thus giving the Lighting Designer and switchboard operator undisturbed communication, even when the quietest scene is being rehearsed on the stage. It is of interest to note that although the architecture of the Aldwych Theatre prevented the switchboard from being placed in full view of the stage, its position in the old "O.P. prompt" stalls box gives the operator a view of the most important acting areas. This has proved very worth while, since the board operator is frequently asked to take cues visually from the action on the stage; particularly when the Stage Manager's view happens to be obscured.

There are, of course, improvements which could be made, and doubtless these will come in time, but I venture to suggest that anyone invited to light a production at this theatre will discover a keen, friendly and efficient electrical staff, an adaptable layout, and a switchboard which can do just about everything except brew the electricians' tea. At the risk of appearing patronising to the sponsors of this magazine, I cannot over-estimate the advantage of the second preset on the Strand Electric C.D./Th. Control. To have only one preset nowadays is rather like buying a car without a reverse gear.

## TYRONE GUTHRIE ON LIGHTING

*By kind permission of Sir Tyrone Guthrie we print the following extract from his autobiography, "A Life in the Theatre", published 1960 by Hamish Hamilton.*

Experts in stage lighting, like experts in every other field, are seldom content to adopt a simple or easy way their wonders to perform. They like to surround their craft with a bit of mystery. Just as doctors prescribe bread pills in Latin and a handwriting totally baffling to every human eye except that of the particular pharmacist with whom they are hand in glove; just as musicians have to say fortissimo instead of "very loud", so stage lighting experts like to make use of a highly technical vocabulary, to provide more equipment and to usurp more time than, in my opinion, their contribution to a production usually justifies.

In the United States, particularly, it is current practice to work with a tremendous number of quite low powered lamps rather than a smaller number of greater power. This means that a great deal of time has to be allotted to the process of "focusing"—mere focus-pocus. It is also customary to filter the light through a number of different pale-coloured mediums. I entirely see the advantages of coloured light in certain contexts. But on Broadway hundreds, even thousands, of man-hours per season are spent setting up elaborate combinations of pale rose pinks, salmon pinks, "surprise" pinks, gold, pale gold, old gold, greeny-blue, pinky-blue, steel and grey-blue, in order to light very ordinary interior sets for very ordinary little comedies. I hate to think of the money all this costs; and I hate to look at the result, which is as if the stage were bathed in a weak solution of apricot jam.

Constantly, in my opinion, light is used to do a colouring job which a competent designer should have already achieved in the painting of the scenery and the choice of dress materials.

There is a theory quite widely held by actors that white light is "unbecoming". Ageing leading ladies, who know nothing whatever about lighting but are accustomed to getting their own way, insist upon being lit in their own pet shade, usually of pink. This is nonsense. If white light makes a lady too pale, the answer is not to colour the light but to colour the lady. It is not the colour which makes light "hard" or "unbecoming", it is the degree of intensity and the angle at which it strikes the face. In general, the American practice of using the first pipe almost directly above the actors' heads as a dominant source of light makes for extremely ageing and unbecoming results. Lit from this source, even the tiniest, most retroussé button of a nose casts a shadow, endowing its wearer with the appearance of a moustache; eye sockets disappear in heavy shadow; fat faces appear fatter, craggy ones yet more craggy. Miss Ruth Gordon, a brilliant actress who makes no secret of her years,

wisely includes in every contract a clause that footlights shall be used. She realizes that from a source below the eyes an actor can be lit more glamorously; also, that only so can the expression of the eyes be fully revealed.

\* \* \*

## THEATRE TECHNICIANS ASSOCIATE

*by Percy Corry*

About a hundred people interested in the varied techniques of the stage met under the chairmanship of Norman Marshall in the Strand Electric Demonstration Theatre on March 3rd to discuss the formation of an Association of British Theatre Technicians. The need for such an organisation in this country had been emphasised to those who attended a conference held in Berlin under the auspices of the Internationales Theater-Institut, reported in the December, 1960 issue of TABS. As a result, they met and formed an *ad hoc* committee to create the Association. The meeting on March 3rd was called to enable the committee to explain its purpose and to seek the necessary approval and support of potential members.

Richard Southern, Frederick Bentham, Stephen Joseph and Eric Jordan, all members of the Committee, explained what they considered to be the purpose of such an association, the nature and extent of its probable activities and the qualifications for membership. The latter proved to be the subject on which most of the subsequent speakers from the floor of the house had comment to make. Peter Hall argued the desirability of including actors and making membership as wide as possible. John Wyckham, while supporting the plea for comprehensiveness, warned the meeting of the dangers of the association becoming dominated by those who had a lot of spare time: he had the "resting" actors in mind. The platform countered with a suggestion that the subscription of two guineas might deter any who were not seriously interested. A suggestion was made that only those stage technicians who were employed full time in the theatre should be admitted to membership. As an alternative it was suggested that stage technicians only should be admitted to full membership, but that associate membership should be available to those others (e.g. actors, choreographers, architects, etc.) whose interests were less concerned with the technicalities of stage presentation.

It appeared that the main purpose of the Association would be to provide a forum for the discussion of modern developments of stage techniques, probably with particular concern for stage planning, machinery, décor, lighting and sound amplification. The Association would co-operate with the original international body,



the Association Internationale des Techniciens du Théâtre, and be able to provide accredited delegates to its conferences, one of which is intended to be held in England this year, with the new Association as hosts.\*

Although there was a rather curious absence of formal resolutions, there was general approval of the formation of the Association and most of those attending made application for membership. A meeting of members is to be called for March 23rd, at which the *ad hoc* committee will present its considered recommendations as to membership, etc., and at which the officials and committees will be formally elected.

There is an obvious need for the Association. Like all other such organisations it will be as strong and effective as its leadership. \*The subject for this conference to be held in London, is "The Planning of Adaptable Theatres," with special reference to Civic Centres and to theatres under 1,000 capacity and the date proposed is June 26th to 30th inclusive.—EDITOR.

\* \* \*

## THEATRE IN THE ROUND

by Ian Albery

*Mr. Ian Albery, one of our younger production managers, has had, as becomes the son of Mr. Donald Albery, a wide experience of the technical side of stage production. He was associated with Philip Wiseman in the production at the Comedy Theatre, London, of "Fairy Tales of New York," which began its London career "in the round" (or nearly) at the Pembroke Theatre, Croydon.*

In the theatre, as in every interpretative art, the creative element is the constant; it is merely the presentation that changes. The author and the actor in every age use the mechanics made available to them by the technician, though their essential message remains the same.

In this country we can trace the movement of the theatre from the church to the mediæval cart; from that, as machinery became more elaborate, first to the Elizabethan playhouse, and finally, with the development of scenery and perspective by Palladio and Inigo Jones, into the proscenium theatre.

The proscenium was built simply to mask the means by which elaborate effects were contrived; the development of its resources has continued from the seventeenth century to the present day. It reached its apotheosis with the productions of Beerbohm Tree in the early 1900s, but it was development pure and simple; there was no possibility of significant *change* in methods of staging until the introduction of modern spotlights.

With the arrival of F.O.H. lighting, and the ability to reproduce natural light, new techniques were available, as it was now possible not only to light an area down-stage of the setting-line, but also to use controlled directional light for staging with the audience on two or more sides. However, this facility was seldom used until recently, except in *avant-garde* Shakespearean productions and experimental theatres.



*The Pembroke Theatre, Croydon. A performance of "theatre in the round" in progress.*

The move to arena staging and theatre in the round was an effort to regain the contact with the audience that was lost when the theatre moved indoors, to artificial light.

This closeness with the audience is one of the obvious advantages of theatre in the round. Others that might be instanced are the ability to seat a larger number of people near the stage—a physical advantage to the audience, and a financial one to the management; the fact that a good many existing halls can be adapted to this type of staging, and the comparatively low cost of production, due to the extreme simplicity of scenery needed.

However, these apparent benefits are not without their committant drawbacks. To take the first point—*individual* participation is undoubtedly greater than in the proscenium theatre, but the corporate entity of the audience is often lost. It is impossible for an audience to react as a whole when they are seeing something from a great many different angles, or even, perhaps, not actually seeing the same part of the action at all. The fact that a significant expression or gesture has to be broad enough to reach people behind or to the side of the actor, destroys the opportunity for intimacy and subtlety that the nearness of the audience should give. The only way to overcome this would seem to be the *reductio ad absurdum* of the circus clown, running round the ring to repeat his gesture to all the audience. It is perhaps for this reason that plays for children have been among the greatest successes of theatre in the round. Children prefer bold and simple effects; they are usually readier to accept a convention, and the willing suspension of disbelief is far greater than among adults. Incidentally, the difficulties of this type of acting should dispose of the theory that arena staging is particularly suitable for amateurs and young artists, as it calls for the maximum experience and professional skill, both from actor and director.

The disadvantages of the round seating is obvious: instead of playing against a constant background of appropriate scenery, the actor is seen with audience as backing destroying much of the hard-won illusion.

Although theatre in the round can be presented in many halls, ballrooms, etc., the fact remains that no existing commercial theatre could be adapted to its use without great expense, and the loss of suitability for any other form of presentation.

As for the scenery: its simplicity, while an advantage from the point of view of expense, is in fact a limitation. The fact that even furniture has to be kept low, and that any form of realism has to be expressed by skeletal sets, means that a great deal is lost pictorially. In practice, very few productions are played fully in the round; in many cases (as for instance the recent presentation of *Fairy Tales of New York* at the Pembroke Theatre, Croydon, which transferred successfully to proscenium staging at the Comedy with increased scenic effect), the audience is seated on three sides only of the acting area, giving a permanent means of entrance for the artists, and a locale for conventional scenery.

Of course, the fixed-proscenium theatre, as typified by the box chamber set, has its own disadvantages. The chief of these is the divorcing of the actors from their audience by the artificial barriers of the setting line, the footlights, and the orchestra pit. Until recently, the inadequacy of F.O.H. lighting, and the fact that the setting line was governed by the spot bar and side lighting from perches, emphasized this difficulty.

Nowadays new modes of staging are being developed, which should enable us to utilize the best features both of the proscenium

and arena stages. Ideally there should be an adjustable show portal, instead of a fixed proscenium; in other words, a movable house border and proscenium wings, with built-in spotlights. F.O.H. lighting equipment should be hidden in the auditorium side walls and ceiling.\* Full use can then be made of the forestage below the proscenium line, right down to the front row of the stalls. In musical productions, the same effect can be produced by cantilevering the stage over the orchestra pit, which is feasible with modern acoustic treatment. This area, also called the apron, is the link between audience and artist that was lost when the theatre moved behind the proscenium, and which theatre in the round was devised to recapture.

The real obstacle to full and ideal use of the apron stage remains the compulsory and obsolete iron safety curtain, which prevents the free movement of scenery, stage levels and effects.

The rightly strict fire regulations in the commercial theatre today, with compulsory fire-proofing of all stage scenery, etc., the use of modern sprinkler devices, and the possible development of foam equipment, could surely render the fire curtain unnecessary for the safety of the audience. The County Council Fire Prevention Departments, with all their latest fire-fighting techniques, should certainly be able to develop some new specification for the theatre.

Flexibility of proscenium opening and apron should make it possible to construct a theatre that would give an author or director exactly what he wants—a theatre in which we can produce with equal facility an old-fashioned Lyceum pantomime or open-stage Shakespeare; designs by Cecil Beaton or Sean Kenny, and plays by Noel Coward or John Osborne.

*\*Architects should refer to page 5, for an awful warning of what happens if they do not make provision for F.O.H. lighting.—EDITOR.*

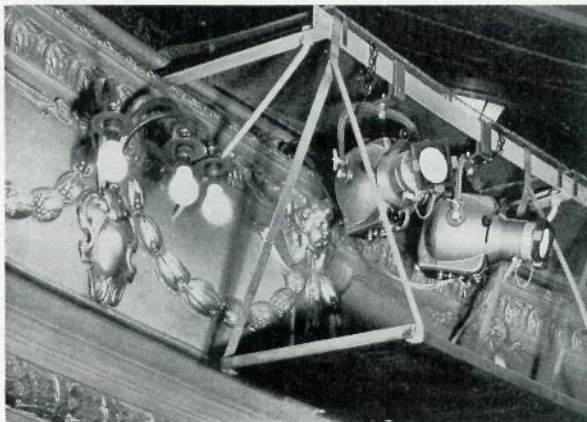
\* \* \*

## CIVIL DEFENCE

The photograph on the next page shows the effect of local licensing intervention on what would otherwise be neat, unobtrusive F.O.H. lighting by Patt. 23 Mirror Spots. The large tray underneath is presumably to intercept the bits likely to fall off or out of these Strand spots and plunge nearly 6 ft. to land upon the heads of those seated in the front row from burning their hands while attempting to steal a spot during the performance. If this is so, why not such a barrier against the more obvious temptation offered by the "decorative" fitting next door? Maybe the barrier is to intercept an explosion! Of course it could be claimed with justice that these Civil Defence precautions could have taken a more elegant form. There could have been complete housing. Not, one hopes, of sheet metal, having seen the standard Strand utility housing which disfigures the auditorium of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, and many others.

It would have been better for the architect to create something of plaster (strongly reinforced of course) to form part of the décor. It would, however, have been awfully large for such little spots, judging by the skeletal requirements demonstrated in the right-hand photograph.

Nigh on 90,000 of this particular type of Strand spot are in use all over the world. A great deal of care went into its design. We wished to achieve something which is quite pleasant to look at as well as being efficient. It is neatly constructed of very few items precision made.



One supposes that outside this particular theatre, in others, in exhibitions, hotels and so on, these ugly precautions which must double the cost of the spot, are considered unnecessary. What is likely to fall? Should the fork break there is still the safety chain. The lens tube has its own chain; the lens is held by a strong spring ring in a groove. Masks and colour frames cannot fall upwards. Surely the circle ceiling is more likely to give trouble, falls of ancient or not so ancient plaster are far from unknown. Where is the wire netting to catch that? Suppose a bulb works loose in a decorative fitting. Does not the picture above illustrate the inconsistencies of our licensing authority regulations. Are we not confronted here with regulations which are a hangover from the days of arc spots on the circle which required operators to direct them, to change colour, and above all to re-carbon them. Thus there was a risk of bits, including bits of hot carbon, descending on those below. As with the great fire-curtain problem, inspectors who are often very sympathetic are nevertheless hamstrung by the letter of the law, a law for other conditions in other days.

## NEW STAGES WITH EXCITING POSSIBILITIES

by *Frederick Bentham*

One of the most pleasant features of my work at the Strand Electric through the years has been the way I have been concerned directly with developments in theatre planning and in theatre technique. This is because stage lighting is absolutely inseparable from either stage of the development of a hall or theatre. One must be in at the planning stage very early, and present during the building of the hall, in order to make sure that proper provision is made for the lighting installation. Once a hall is opened it is usual to say goodbye to the planners and meet someone quite new—the users of the hall. Then follows a period in which the installation is perhaps modified, and any rate the various equipment forming it is recoloured and redirected to put on actual shows.

A stage lighting installation has no life of its own. In this respect it differs from the lighting of a workshop or of an hotel dining room: in the first case because the lighting engineer's contact is probably with the user whilst in the second case it is with the architect—by no means the same thing in both cases. The lighting installation once completed can be surveyed and said to be good or bad. With stage lighting this is never true because for a long time one has had to co-operate with the architect (often one fears, more with the purpose of ensuring that his décor is not spoiled), until the day comes when he vanishes and is replaced by the user, who inevitably applies totally different standards. He is no longer concerned with the beauty of the hall as a work of art, and the more intimately bound up this particular user is with the production to be put on there, the more the production takes over from the hall as the end to which everything must be sacrificed. Thus we see that in the planning stage there are certain absolute values and aims to which everything is directed, i.e. an **effective-looking complete hall**, but these are afterwards supplanted by a **totally different aim** associated with something (the production) imported into this hall—this, after all, being the reason for building the place.

It may be said, no doubt with truth, that this applies in other fields, but I think it applies more than ever where questions of theatrical production are concerned. For here clash head-on the two views—that of the architect with an opportunity, rare nowadays,



*“it is usual to say goodbye to  
the planners”*

to get hold of a large lofty space and do something excitingly memorable with it and that of the user who will import something the very essence of which is makeshift and something in which change and variation was considered more a merit than otherwise. Something also which is at the mercy of changes in fashion. Other trades can supply seating, hang curtains, put down flooring and put up decorative lighting to receive a pat on the back or a kick from the architect and then depart, probably for ever. Not so the Strand Electric, who know they will be called upon to return later to explain to the user how on earth the equipment they have supplied can be applied to his particular production.

Perhaps a specific example will make clear what I mean. In early 1950 I was in consultation with the L.C.C. engineers: we were trying to light the concert platform at the Royal Festival Hall. It became apparent to me that, whatever the architect might say, this hall was bound, sooner or later, to be used for performances of a dramatic nature. I based this view on experience in other halls, notably the De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill, which had served a like fate from time to time. In fact it is my belief that no space capable of holding an audience of any kind, not even when they are a congregation in a church, is immune from this kind of usage.

I think one can establish some kind of law of probabilities which puts churches and swimming baths so low on the list that although they cannot be completely excluded, it would nevertheless be reckless to consider for them any provision for stage lighting. However, with the Royal Festival Hall this was obviously not so, and, despite every declaration to the contrary, I began to pursue my private notion that this hall would find other uses than music and I must say that, unlike their architects, the L.C.C. engineers agreed with me. In due time there was appointed a manager who immediately declared that for roughly a quarter of the year, while the Royal Albert Hall Promenade Concerts were on, he was in fact going to stage ballet, because he could not see how to collect an audience otherwise. In face of this demand it was then declared that a proscenium could not and never would be used in this hall.

As it was obvious that it was impossible to do so and in any case open staging would be exciting and new and very suitable for this hall, a lighting layout for the open stage was designed and installed. I think it would be true to say that the Royal Festival Hall is the only one in the country which has such a complete installation directed at giving lighting from every angle on to an open stage. Furthermore, this open stage can have the audience on one major



*"said to be good"*

side of it, on three sides, or even all round it using the choir seating. The various apertures exist and lighting controlled by 60 or more dimmers can be brought to bear. A very exciting project indeed and one which I personally enjoyed immensely.



*"at the mercy of changes in fashion"*

In due course the hall was taken over by another division of the L.C.C. as a running concern and we at Strand Electric found ourselves in these early days still on the job, first advising on the use of the equipment to light concerts and then when the ballets appeared on the open stage we found ourselves working the lighting control and taking a leading part in lighting these. The rest, ten years later, is now history.

There was only one season on the open stage and there followed the next year the temporary fit-up proscenium which clutters up this hall for three or four months every year. Contrary to plan and prediction, this temple of St. Celia is invaded for a quarter of its life each year and becomes the London home of the Festival Ballet. Furthermore, this ballet does not perform on the open stage but on a temporary proscenium stage which everyone declared would never, never be permitted. To rub salt in, the scenery and lighting is of the type so despised in those earlier planning years. The same set-up has also been used for staging opera.

I could continue moral tales such as this for a long time. There is the sad case of the Bournemouth Winter Garden, surely one of the nicest of provincial concert halls, where curtain tracks are now fixed over the orchestra platform and which now spends most of its time in pursuits far removed from symphony concerts. There is the case of the Portsmouth Guildhall, whose fine concert platform with acoustic reflectors is hidden by deep pelmets and curtains most of which seem now to be left in position even for the rare concerts of serious music.

All this experience conspires to make one very suspicious of statements of aim when one is called in to advise on lighting some platform or stage. For many years now it has been my practice and that, no doubt, of many others on the firm, to carry out quite an extensive probe into the ultimate use of a hall and even then to go further than the initial brief. One puts oneself in the position of trying to use the place knowing full well that in due course one is going to be advising the user. This deeper interest, which means we spend more time probably discussing matters other than the lighting itself, is sometimes welcomed but sometimes resented by architects who cannot see any reason for us to go beyond our brief. Quite recently I sensed that there was a feeling at a meeting that I was

being far too inquisitive and having far too much to say, for one, who if he got the job, would be only a small sub-contractor in a very small part of a very large project.

However, by pressing our attentions, welcome or unwelcome, at last a stage has been reached where there is a likelihood of our advice being taken. The popularity of our booklet *Stage Planning*\* and of TABS itself is proof of that. It would be improper for me not to recognise that in the situation in which we find ourselves my own part is relatively small when compared with that of my colleague and friend Percy Corry. Be that as it may, there is now established a well laid down code and line on which one can proceed to attack the task of providing a stage in a hall, whether it be devoted to drama continuously or only part time.

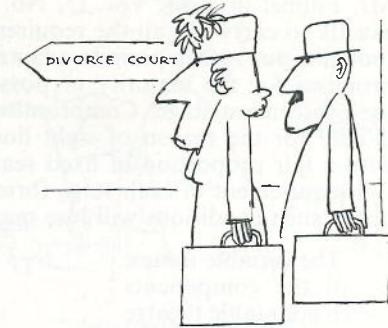
After a quarter of a century of pioneering it is possible for someone to take their copy of *Stage Planning* and set out the basic facilities necessary for stage production. There is no excuse for the frightful halls of which there are all too many examples in the country. At last one can relax—but can one?—for just at this moment of general acceptance a new menace appears in our midst.

This new menace is nothing more or less than the “new staging”—the theatre of adventure and progress, the theatre of no scenery and little requirements and no expenditure. The protagonist of these new theatres will have nothing to do with the stages established and fought for by Corry and myself, because these stages are tainted by the possession of a proscenium arch. The vociferous minority advocating these new stages feel ill at the thought of scenery and reject any form of stage designed for or derived from its use. While I personally like scenery, I can also enjoy simplicity of background and have strong feeling towards production without the proscenium or scenery as a form of expression. I had hoped to see this style employed in 1951 at the Royal Festival Hall and, in fact, played some part in productions of this sort in Lincoln's Inn Hall and elsewhere before the war. My objection to the squawkings of the new progressive “theatre-ites” is directed at their intolerance of other forms of theatre and also results from alarm at the harm their claims may do.

The principal trouble lies in the claim of simplicity and economy in staging. This arises because no scenery is used and in consequence no proscenium opening is required, and thus in theory we have a bare platform upon which actors will strut, the only concession being that this form of stage needs a very comprehensive method of lighting. Now it seems logical that if we compare say the stage at the Mermaid Theatre, which has no proscenium, with the stage at a theatre of similar size which has, and which therefore has to provide methods of flying scenery and storing scenery, the Mermaid will represent a less expensive solution. Furthermore, the Mermaid

\*Yet another revised edition—“*Stage Planning 1961*”—has just been published.

type of solution is likely to fit into existing halls easier than a proscenium stage. This is perfectly true but, unfortunately, the progressive school are not agreed on the form of stage. Only some of them are content (and not many at that) with the Mermaid form, others denying that it gives them the intimacy of having the audience within a few rows of the stage. The last row at the Mermaid is just as far away as any orthodox theatre of comparable size. This intimacy



“the only thing they can agree on”

can only be satisfied for some by placing the stage in the centre of the hall and putting the audience of three to five rows all round. This stage now resembles that of a circus. What, it may be said, could be simpler than this. We need no stage platform, we can put the stage where we like on the floor and put the audience round it, but, alas, this is not as simple as it appears.

It has been discovered, from practical experience, that the best arrangement to get this so-called intimacy is to place the stage flat on the floor, but all the seats must be sharply stepped. Very sharply indeed, nothing to resemble the gentle rake of an orthodox auditorium. Unless this is done an audience in relation to a “theatre in the round” is much worse off than an audience in relation to an orthodox stage. It is even necessary to step all rows, including the front one.

We have now got something which promises to be fairly awkward in a general-purpose hall, namely the erection of tiered seats, but this is not all, because the “theatre in the round” has by no means been agreed upon by the progressives. Some say the audience should be placed on two sides facing each other with the stage running down the centre with an entrance at each end. A more common version is the stage at one end of the hall with the audience encircling on three sides so that there can be a backing of some sort of token scenery if necessary against the wall. Others require a long narrow arena in the middle and yet others require what they call a space stage, which is a stage much wider than it is deep and, in consequence, only achieved by backing it with one of the longer walls of the hall. There is also, for some, the strict Elizabethan requirement of a balcony across the back of the stage and a recess under it.

So divided have the progressives become that the only thing they can agree on at the moment is that any hall for a theatre had better be a versatile adaptable stage hall. One such project which has probably received more limelight than the several others is that of the projected Questors Theatre in Ealing described by

Mr. Emmet in TABS, Vol. 15, No. 3. Such a project does not aim exactly to **carry out all the requirements of each of these schools of thought**, but rather permits adaptation to provide a series of compromises for the majority of possible stage forms, even including the proscenium stage. Compromise is the operative word, because, if only for the reason of sight lines, no hall with fixed seating or with a fair proportion of fixed seating can carry out effectively the full requirement of each stage form. Certainly the proscenium stage under such conditions will lose many of its facilities.

The variable nature of all the components for an adaptable theatre has led to an amount of work outside this country which involves provision of moving seating as well as stage platforms and rostrums. Furthermore, this work has been realistic in the realisation of the amount of labour (that scarce commodity) needed. In consequence there arrives on the scene a project such as that



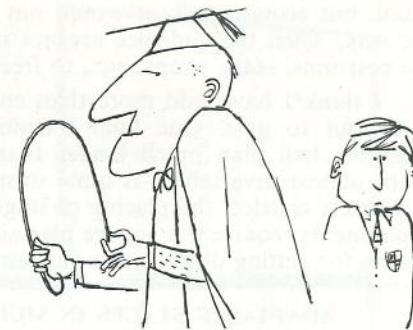
*"labour does not concern us"*

associated with George Izenour in America, where all things are motorised and are to be controlled ultimately by some form of analogue and digital computer. Such a project is sufficient to make our hair stand on end in this country. For I think two reasons. First, what of the simplicity claimed for this new theatre of our time when in fact the building has to be so mechanised? Secondly, what of cost?

At this point amateur concerns will say "Ah! but in our case labour does not concern us, we can push our simple rostrums and components around by hand"—admittedly a thing that the professional theatre cannot do. But I must say, with memory of the days when I used to be the scenery and lighting manager of an amateur society in London, I never found that there was much labour available. People wanted to act, but when it came to the scenery and lighting brigade there were just the faithful few that turned up and did these chores.

Now I come to the point which set this article in motion. Whereas so long as the proscenium stage only was concerned, one had an established set of rules derived from practical experience with which to feed the architect, or in many cases with which to do battle with the architect, nowadays we are in a different position.

Sooner or later someone is sure to say, "What about the new simple staging? All we need is a space; we can then erect our stages and make provision for the particular form of theatre we propose to adopt for this particular production." The moment this is said, the way is clear for the architect to dismiss all needs of the theatre as merely an open flat floor to his hall. His plan need not be cluttered up with provision for a proscenium and platform at one end with wings, cyclorama and what not, for they play no part in the new theatre. No one can make up their minds there and then as to what the simple stage will need or even where it will be sited, and so these problems are dismissed to some time in the future when someone responsible for drama in the place will come along and—poor devil—have to fight his own battles. Having taken part in just such a conference over a hall somewhere in England, I know what I am talking about. It was with gnashing of teeth I realised that, the moment the principal of this college announced himself as the apostle of vital theatre, any chance of obtaining any provision for anything in the hall, already seen as a long narrow elegant, in the modern idiom, edifice with a splendid roof, had vanished.



*"the ultimate in flexibility"*

It does seem to me that only in the large projects such as Peter Moro's Nottingham Theatre and Norman Branson's Questors Theatre is there a realistic approach to the adaptable theatre which the chase after new theatre requires. The smaller enterprises such as training college, school or other assembly halls, are bedevilled by the words "simple staging". The new theatre may too often betoken to those in charge of the exchequer less expenditure and, to the planners, less to plan for or build for. The enthusiast may well find himself the unwitting victim of these two forces and be landed with the ultimate in flexibility, a flat floor *sans* everything. A theatre studio—how exciting!

Into this space an acting area can possibly be placed without too much difficulty, especially as theatre in the round is preferably staged on the floor. The problems will arise in making entrances and storage of properties, and above all the accommodation of an audience all of whom must see the stage properly. Exercises or adventures in new theatre are all based on one thing—closer contact between actor and audience. The latter cannot be dismissed as a token row of seats. Not only is such an audience embarrassingly

small, but economically it would not provide a viable theatre. By the way, when the audience are not in residence where do we put the rostrums, seats, props, etc., to free the floor?

I think I have said more than enough to provide the warning I set out to give. One final warning, however; the rectangular assembly hall plan much longer than it is wide—so common as to be almost invariable—is quite unsuitable for adaptable staging. It severely restricts the placing of stage and audience. What today's experiments require is a square plan so here, you see, is yet another reason for getting down to the fundamentals.

#### ADAPTABLE STAGES IN MULTI-PURPOSE HALLS

An afternoon conference for County Architects and Drama Advisors was held in the Strand Electric theatre on March 15th. The Chairman was Mr. Jo Hodgkinson, O.B.E., Drama Director of the Arts Council, and the two speakers were Percy Corry and Frederick Bentham. As in the above article, the problem posed was in the main the multi-purpose hall now complicated by the multi-form theatre to be staged therein. Some suggestions were made and a lively discussion from the floor ensued, among the speakers being Mr. Peter Moro, the architect of the Nottingham theatre scheme.

### A THEATRE IN HUNGARY

by Michael Wooderson

The art of the drama in Hungary goes back to the 17th century, to the age of the Hungarian mystery and folk plays. The main influence was the Germanising efforts of the Hapsburg Court during the late 18th and early 19th centuries in the days of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In 1837 the Hungarian National Theatre, Nemzeti Színház, was established in Budapest. This was the first established Hungarian theatre and began the development of the Hungarian traditional theatre. Today Budapest houses two million people and boasts of twelve permanent theatres and two opera houses. The theatre is very popular in Hungary and to cope with this demand new theatres are being planned and built.

Ten years after the Nemzeti Színház was built in Budapest, a theatre was built in Miskolc, the second largest town in Hungary and today the centre of a rapidly developing industrial area with a population of approximately 140,000. This theatre was named the Deryne Theatre after Mdm. Dery, the first actress to speak parts in Hungarian where previously only German had been spoken. It is in the early 19th-century classical style with an arcaded front.

In 1959 the theatre was modified and renamed the Nemzeti Színház Miskolc. The stage was modernised and enlarged, whilst the auditorium, which was left structurally unchanged as far as possible because of its historical value, was redecorated. The stage dimensions are quite generous for a theatre seating between 900 and 1,000, being 65 ft. wide and 47 ft. deep, the proscenium opening is

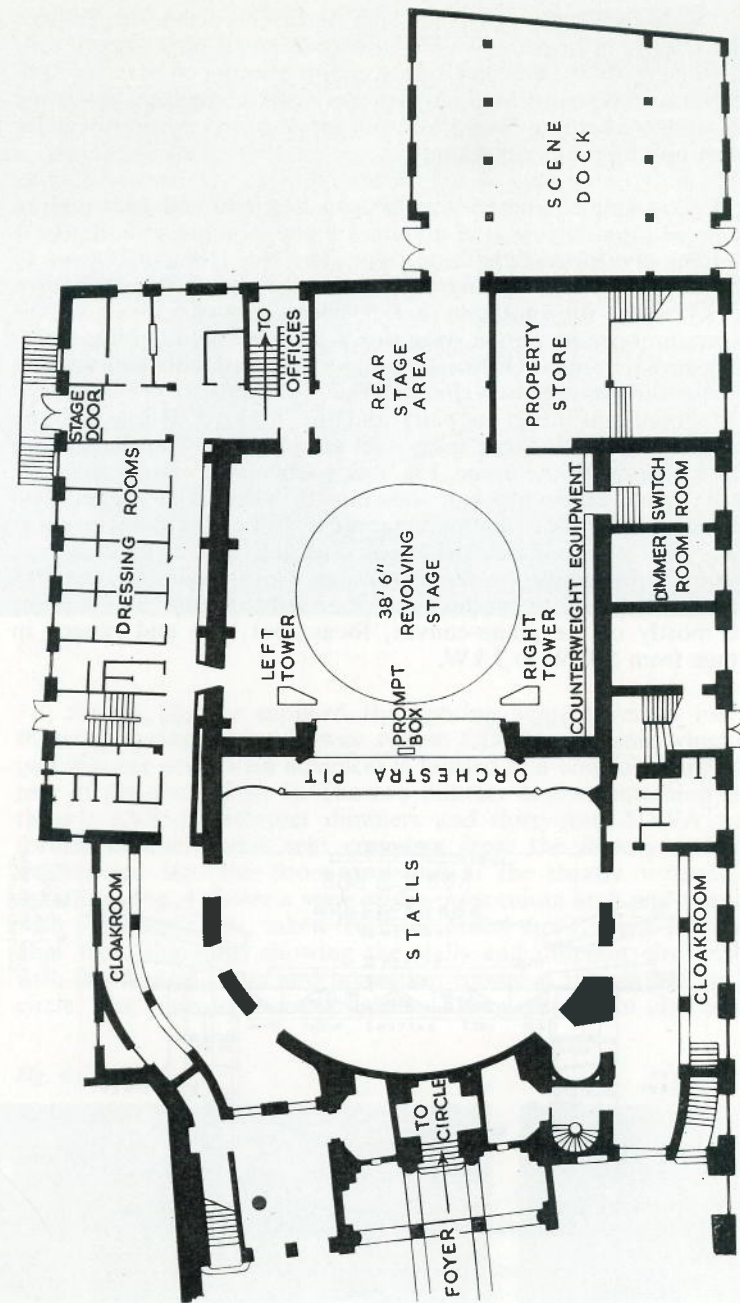


Fig. 1. Plan of Nemzeti Színház Miskolc Theatre, Hungary.

32 ft. wide by 27 ft. high (Fig. 1). Compared to this the Sadler's Wells Theatre in London, which seats 1,548, has a stage area of only 45 ft. wide by 25 ft. deep and a proscenium opening of 30 ft. by 20 ft. The National Theatre Miskolc also has a 40 ft. diameter revolving stage, moving lighting bridge and full set of counterweight lines for scenery and lighting suspension.

The lighting equipment consists of a footlight and four rows of battens in four colours, the circuits of the footlight and Batten 1 also being divided stage left and right. The No. 1 Batten is fixed to the underside of the moving lighting bridge on which ten circuits of 5 kW each for spotlights are provided. At either side of the proscenium opening on the stage side is a three-tiered lighting tower having seven circuits. On the stage floor itself are conventional dip plugs totalling twenty-two circuits. The cyclorama is lit by eighteen 2 kW floodlights wired in pairs and the Front-of-House lighting consists of six 2 kW focus spots with automatic colour change and two 3 kW spots in the dome. Fig. 2 is a schematic view of the stage looking from the auditorium showing the position of outlets and other equipment. The lighting equipment of local manufacture was generally of a poor standard, both optically and in general construction, thus lamps of a larger wattage than those in this country are necessary there to produce the same light output. The lanterns were mostly of the plano-convex, focus spot type and ranged in wattage from 500 W to 3 kW.

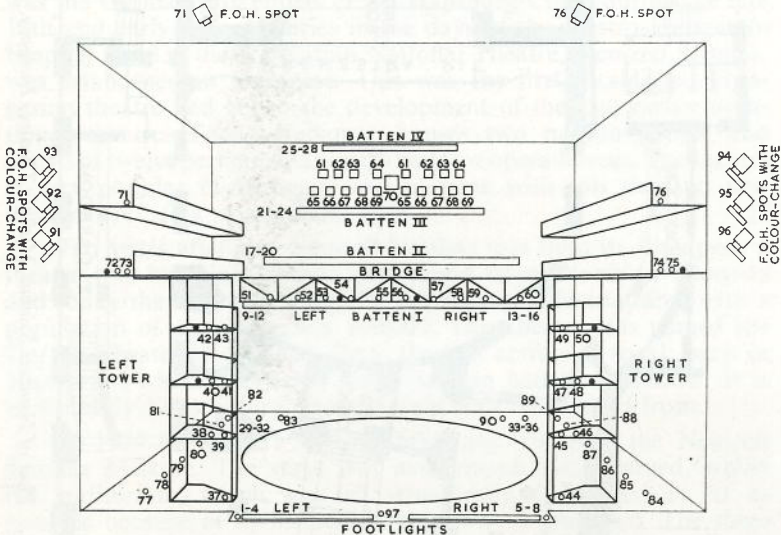


Fig. 2. Schematic of continental style lighting layout, the numbers identify the dimmer channels.

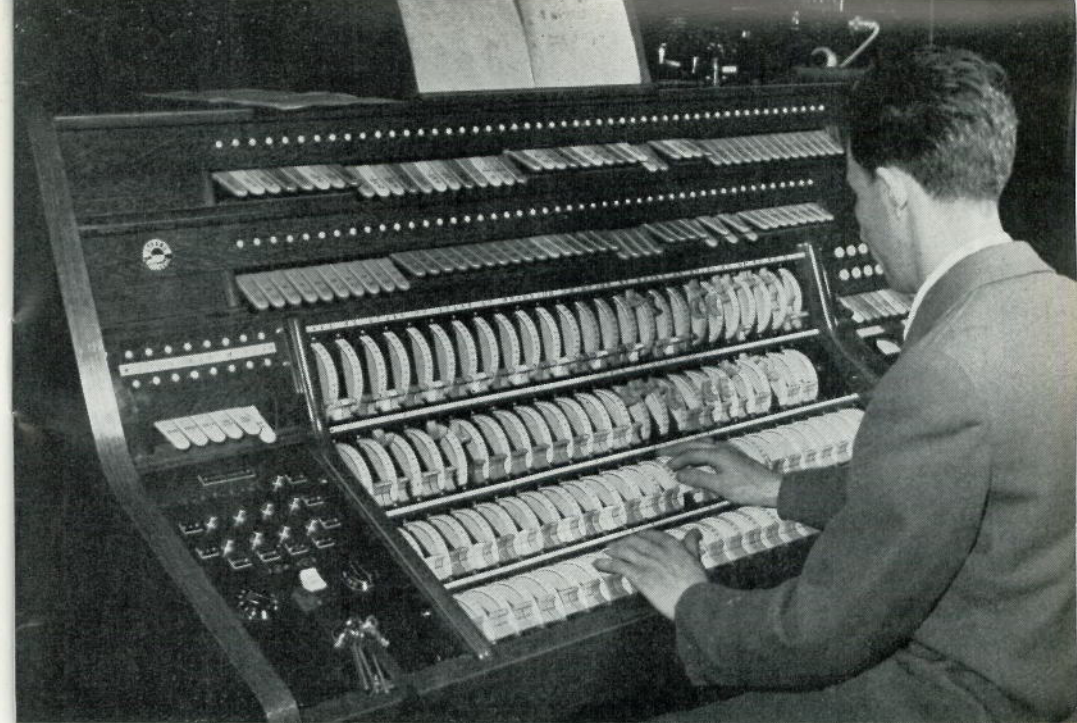


Fig. 3.

Strand Electric supplied the lighting control system for this theatre consisting of a 97-way system CD. The console which has two dimmer presets (in advance) is housed in a control room at the rear of the circle (Fig. 3). The two dimmer banks containing sixty-three 5 kVA transformer dimmers and thirty-four 2 kVA transformer dimmers were sent complete from the factory and were manoeuvred into the room provided in the theatre without dismantling. Fig. 4 shows a view of the proscenium arch and forestage with prompter's box, taken from the centre circle, while Fig. 5 is a view from the stage showing the stalls and different circle levels, with the control room and projection rooms at the rear of the first circle. The main auditorium lighting fitting, which can also be seen

Fig. 4.

Fig. 5.





on this photograph, is controlled by a three-phase up-down-stop motor-driven dimmer supplied as part of the stage control contract.

The theatre, which runs approximately a nine-month season, performs opera, ballet, straight plays and musical comedies, and concerts are also to be given there. The building houses all administrative offices as well as a small rehearsal stage, orchestra and wardrobe rooms, and a carpentry shop where scenery for all productions is made not only for the permanent company but also for a touring company which travels extensively throughout northern Hungary. Front-of-House facilities include cloakroom areas and wide passages on all floors, a large refreshment room which can be used as a ballroom at the rear of the circle and pillared foyers.

During my stay in Hungary I found everyone most kind and helpful and I enjoyed working with the Hungarian theatre technicians very much.

## BOOK REVIEW

**Stage Lighting for the Amateur Producer.** By Angus Wilson. *Pitman. 7s. 6d.*

This little book, written entirely for the amateur producer with little or no knowledge of electrical matters, fills a very real need.

Many amateur companies have a counterpart of "Joe", the frequently-mentioned electrician who possesses good technical ability but is without that sense of the theatre which is so essential. This sense must be added by the producer to "Joe's" knowledge to create a well-lighted show. I think that the book shows how to do this very well, setting out in Chapter 2 a clear set of "aims" which it would be hard to better, especially Item (F).

The list of technical requirements is good and can be easily followed, but telephone and house bells, though not strictly lighting, could be added to the switchboard with advantage. To the author's suggestions for lightning effects might be added a strip of clear lamps controlled by a Burgess Microswitch, which is both cheap and very good for this job.

Chapters 1-5 having prepared the way with equipment, we then follow with colour and a well-conceived chapter on miscellaneous effects. I do so agree with the author to avoid strong colours except in very special circumstances, but I think he could have stressed a little more the great value of Nos. 51 and 52 for so many applications.

The book covers the whole subject very well with nice little touches of humour and will be of value to any producer, who is led right through the lighting of a play in complete detail with excellent illustrations and many good hints.

The final chapter by another author, the Rev. P. Bullock-Flint, gives much good advice on lighting plays in Churches and, in my opinion, deals with the subject very well. I like his suggested method of hanging lanterns on ladders in places where there is no other means of support.

It is a pity that the crude ugliness of the dust cover, quite unrelated to its subject, could so easily make an interested reader shy away from examining the book's valuable contents.

MARTIN RUBECK.