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Cover Picture: Clutching their brown envelopes the audience at the Bristol New Vic discuss the show with Author David Illingworth and Director Howard Davies.

Running in – please pass!

Every dog so we are told has his day, but presumably this is only brought about by the non-presence of any other dogs or at any rate by prior arrangement with the others to take a back kennel at that time.

We all know that "the show's the thing" and the theatre but a building to house it. What we would like to see is that building given a good start in life—an opportunity to show itself off. Since a theatre without a show isn't a theatre there has to be a show, but for this one occasion—the first production in a new theatre—it would seem but sensible to choose something that would allow that theatre to appear at its very best. Instead it seems to us that the opening production is often chosen to allow all the individualists to show-off.

With everyone trying to shine the result is often disaster. It is commonplace for new theatre openings to get rotten notices. The show simply does not rise to the occasion—it is, to put it quite plainly, a flop, and the risk is that it will flop the theatre with it. Most members of an audience cannot separate a theatre from what goes on there and if one has had to sit there for hours longing for the final curtain it is going to take a lot of effort to go back. Curiosity has after all been satisfied.

The TABS formula for opening the new theatre is therefore first choose a safe play, and a safe play is never a new play—be the author ever so well known and trusty. Then eschew the large cast and technical complications. Keep the lighting simple and straightforward. The audience must be able to see, and it will be the equipment that will get the blame if the actors as they are prone to do, wander out of the spotlight. Lighting changes should be few and positive and this also applies to scene changing and sound effects—should either be necessary. A minimum of mechanical gimmickry is absolutely essential. A jammed stage lift could steal the opening notices; besides it takes more time than you think for staff to feel they have command of new technical equipment rather than it of them.

The play must have a high eager-to-return-after-the-interval component in the shape of a plot and should err on the short side. Nevertheless the intervals must be longer than usual—the bar and other amenities will be taxed as never since. The inevitable speeches are better delivered to an audience warmed by the final curtain call—a time of mutual congratulation.

The first night of a new theatre is the house warming. Even if the play is a well-known one, it may not be so to a large proportion of that audience and anyway what they want to show off and congratulate one another on is *their new theatre*.

Even a complete architectural disaster has a charisma (to use an in-phrase) when brand new. The building, complete with company and staff, is so to speak a glossy new car which needs treating carefully and running-in. It is a time to be proud of it but not to test it.

Glistering Attack

Gold and Silver and of course Bronze? No—not bronze but Standard! These are the three choices open to man and, in these days of sexual equality, to women also. Which to strive for? Which is within our capacity to achieve? Should we plan for the highest—the Gold—even to risk failure, losing all? Better perhaps to set the sights a bit lower, put pride on one side, make a little more sure and aim for the Silver—the second best. Or why not play really safe and make certain of a Bronze—or rather of the Standard?

The stakes are high; these are decisions not lightly to be undertaken. The lure of the magic Gold dangles before us but the perils of overreaching are great—to begin and then half-way find the gas has run out. It is

a cold world which surrounds the over-ambitious. The finger of scorn would point. The insulting letters begin to drop in the letter box—each more brusque and more luridly coloured until finally the knock on the door and with it the Gas Man Cometh. There followeth the peremptory order. "Turn it up and turn it off"—a spanner literally flungeth in the works.

What are the Gold and Silver decisions to be made? Well they were known until recently as *Special Tariff 1 General Two-Part Rate* and *Tariff 2, Heating and Hot Water Two-Part Rate*. They have now been divested of their prosy nomenclature and the option is to pay the gas bill on a *Gold Star Tariff* or on a *Silver Star Tariff*. Think on't; down among the gas pipes something stirs. It is the same old gas—unless of course it is that noisy ocean-fresh North-sea stuff—but it comes to you in Gold and Silver wrappers or at least the bills do! It is not necessary to add that not only has there been a name change but the price of each tariff has increased. Nor need we point out that consumers cannot stay with the old tariff. It is bootless to protest that they want to remain faithful to dear old, cheap old *Special Tariff 1 General Two-Part Rate*.

We in TABS now know how to recognize Marketing Genius when we see it. May we therefore here present the highest award—our Gold—to the North Thames Gas Board who dreamt up this bespanglement of their gas bills—but the value of our award? It has none; it is debased currency—mere paper like the Gold and Silver stars for which it is bestowed.

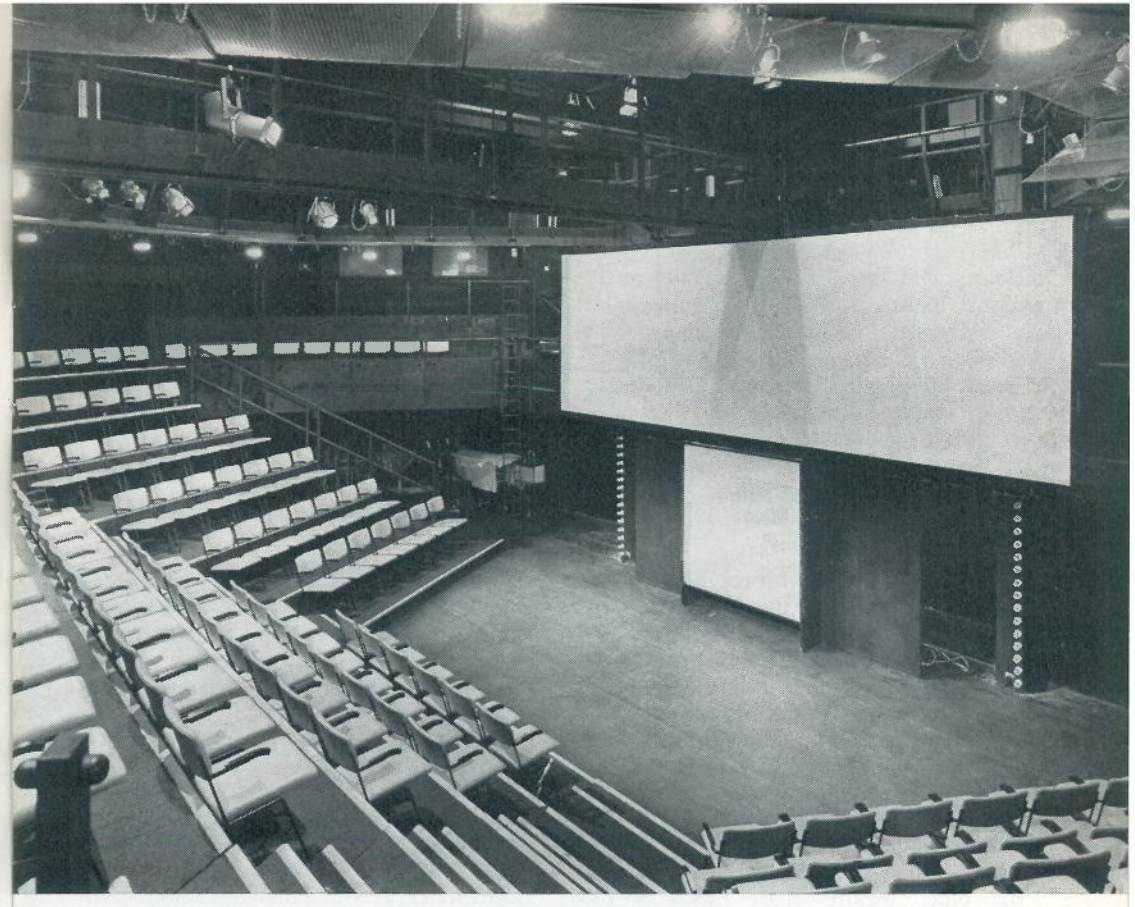
Orbi et Urbi

In these tough times of re-organisations and "rationalisations" with consequent rapid turnover of staff at all levels as an occupational hazard, it is refreshing to be able to announce two retirements from natural causes so to speak. Both are equally well known figures from the old Strand Electric days. J. T. Wood, better known as "Woody", has not only been running the Export Department officially and unofficially for more than 20 years but he could be said to have made the department itself. He has been tireless in expenditure of airport hours to travel to and fro, to talk theatre, provide solutions to its problems and in his own very individual way build up that unique commodity, Strand Electric goodwill. He is a legendary character in Europe, one of the firm's immortals.

In immobile contrast so too will Len Jordan ("Maestro") leave a gap. For 40 of his 50 years with the company he has been there in the Covent Garden Showroom ready to attend to customer needs. His merit of always being there in the same place for all that time has represented continuity for our visitors—and continuity is a thing which customers much appreciate. It is our opinion that the smile of recognition, human to human—the word of one man known to another—is the real foundation of business.

Beware the Ides of March

Friends and countrymen will learn with surprise that they are to pay to lend their ears. In spite of the exemption of books from VAT, that even more important form of communication—the spoken word in the theatre—will not be exempt. Sadly this means that from April 1st Rank Strand will have to charge this tax. The increase it will represent is not precisely known at the moment; meanwhile a word is surely enough for the wise.



Change Ringing in Bristol

Barbara Berrington

For the most part the developers have not got hold of Bristol in the way they have seized on London. Not yet! The modern centre was built after bombing not after demolition and elsewhere there is still a pleasing irregularity in the architecture—quaintly angled roofs with curious sculptures atop—the flavour in stone of many ages which rarely seems to jar. A merchant bankers' city with history and style.

The Theatre Royal with its new entrance through the eighteenth century Cooper's Hall looks out onto a quiet road leading from the old docks. There is a warehouse, an almshouse and an ale house and one side of the road is straight while the other, carrying the theatre, follows the curved foundations of the old city wall. The buildings cover every period from Elizabeth and are every one in modern use.

Of all this background Peter Moro's design and adaptation at the theatre are splendidly aware. He himself has described for TABS the work involved* what he has not described is the sense one gets of the rightness of it all. It is a real pleasure to go into the entrance, to feel that steel banister and crystal chandeliers are equally correct,

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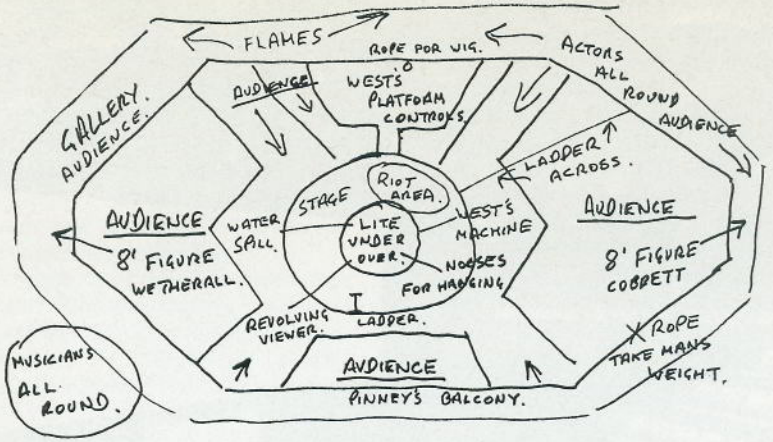


The Great West Show—"*The Bristol Old Vic . . . offering a foretaste of future activities in the Studio . . . at the end of May at an interim stage in the completion of the building.*"

and to walk around with room to breathe but also with the sense that if you lose track of your escort you will not need to spend the rest of the interval finding him. Incidentally, two of the theatre staff have already discovered that it can make a marvellous place for a wedding reception.

Next to the Theatre Royal—half underground, the playbills wandering across its front and theatre's crest above—is the New Vic, the youngest part of the building and street. It shares the entrance and foyer of the older theatre—shares with it too "financial assistance from the Arts Council of Great Britain and the City and County of Bristol"—possesses nevertheless a suitable sense of drive and of rebellion and of something to be lived up to.

There are now four companies under the aegis of Val May's Old Vic Group. Too many ideas under one roof, you may say, but they are not exactly under the one roof and there isn't at all a sense of sameness about their activities. When I visited them in October you could choose between *Henry IV* in the Theatre Royal (660 seats), *Streetcar Named Desire* in the Little Theatre (360 seats) and *The Bristol Road Show* at the New Vic. The fourth company, working from the New Vic, will be out for the most part touring the schools of the area. Its actors have as much interest in teaching as in performing. They use the New Vic studio to work out what they are doing and then the set packs into a box—black cut-outs with coloured streamers and gaudy costumes. They can put it up anywhere and the children will gather in a ring on the floor—an audience splendidly non-critical of its seating.

All the companies share some staff and their programme is worked out together. It is to be hoped that this does not mean too short a run of the more popular shows and certainly there are key figures in the change-over crew of twenty who are somewhat overworked at rig week-ends. Still with four companies and students of the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School to boot there is a decided pool of talent from which to draw for any production.

When I went to see *The Bristol Road Show* the New Vic had just acquired its seating. Needless to say being a studio theatre it had opened weeks before, seating 211 on a makeshift of chairs and levels with ladders to the catwalks, lights under plastic-topped rostra and a romp in the round called *The Great West Show.*

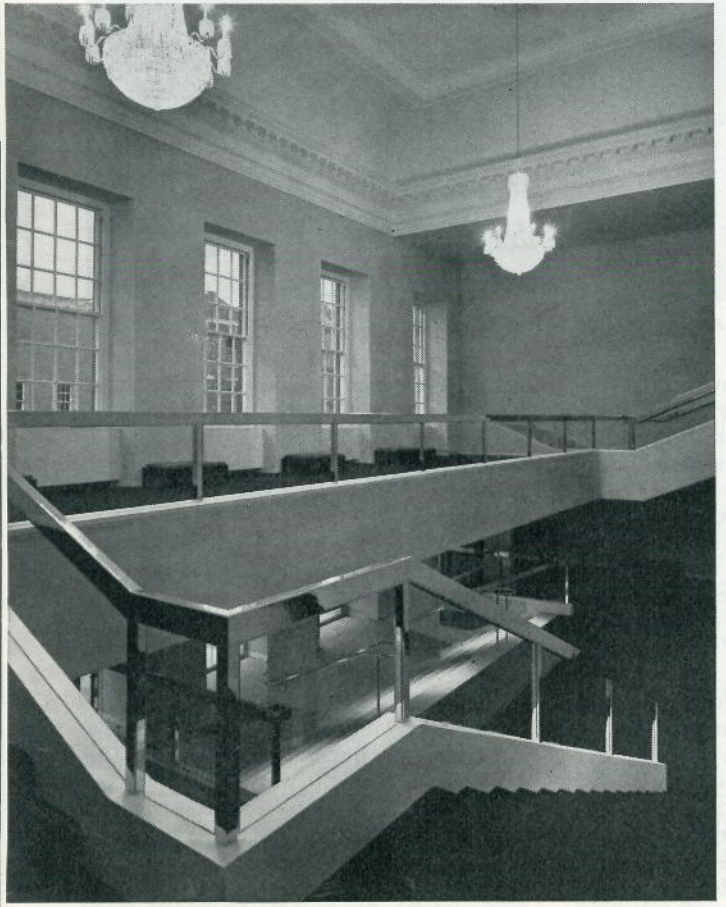
The audience were very relaxed—prepared to put their feet up and bring their drinks in from the bar—even prepared to be co-operative and take them out again. The new seats are bright yellow (an absolute necessity where everything else in sight—Strand lanterns excepted—is the regulation matt black) and make a tremendous difference to the place.

The main risers are linked by groups of three steps, with a 6 in. tread and 6 in. riser and fastened to the main seat riser by small pins. On the whole the units appear to be both flexible and economic. In the present thrust form the angle between the steps and the end seat in a row tends to create a triangular gap into which I saw two of the audience stumble on their way out.

Minds have been changed of course—the gangways are not where the architect planned them. Economies have been made—a seat less down each extremity in virtually every form. But the notion in a studio theatre is surely that one *should* be able to change one's mind, and that every seat one can get in should be there to be used because every penny will be needed from those already packed Friday and Saturday nights. You find your own seat incidentally (price 50p) and this seems to pose no problems for 157* people.

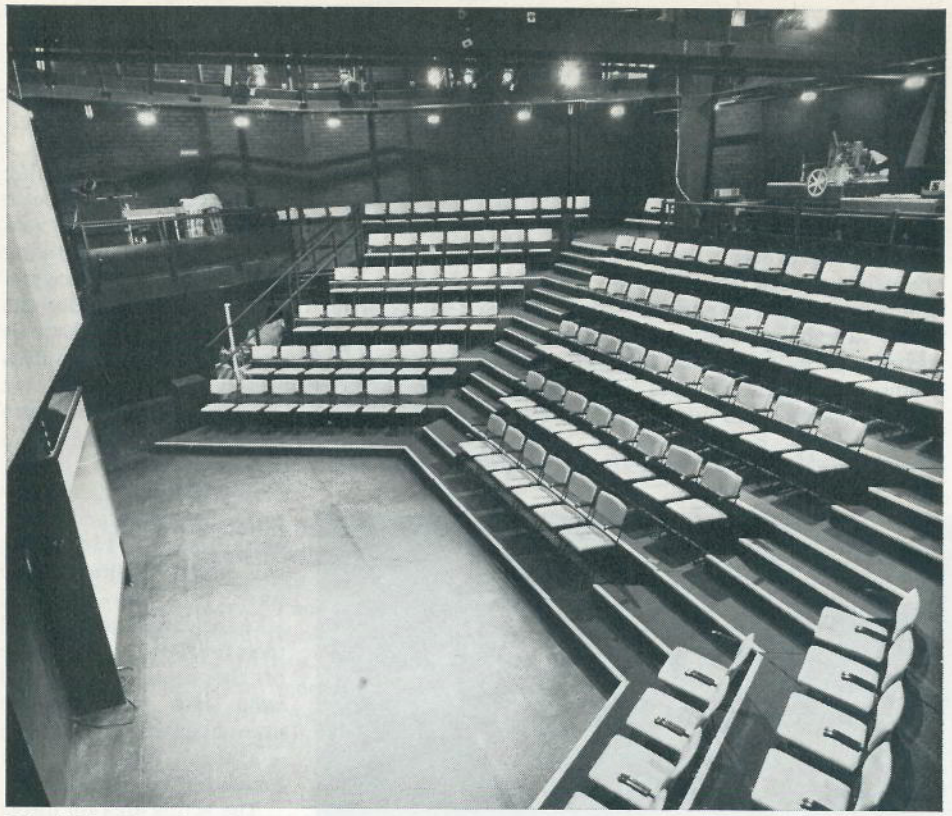
As ever it is the need to use an existing space—the old entrance to the Theatre Royal—that provides the odd problem dimension-wise but with careful working out the six forms planned for the place will all be able to happen and no doubt the studio will then settle down to the shape or shapes it finds work best. Teething troubles are already being solved. On my first visit the fans weren't working because they were too noisy and there was a delicate smell of drains. Now they purr inaudibly and all is peace and freshness. The first two shows will use the thrust stage form, *Sky Blue Life* will take the end stage form and then for *Blood Wedding* one of the centre stages will come into play with its unusual parallelogram form—a shape which I gather fascinates the Company.

Bristol: New foyer in Coopers' Hall shared by the Theatre Royal and the New Vic studio.



The acting area for thrust is quite large about 28 ft. by 20 ft., but the back three feet to the rear wall under the balcony must be kept clear because of the fire regulations. The absence of a fire curtain has of course brought several attendant problems—the "3 ft. gangway round the seating blocks at all times" from which the actors' props must constantly be removed; the fact that the set for the next play must be made entirely of hardwood, the need to

**Some seats at the top sides are abandoned in this form as having inadequate sight lines and the stage left of these areas was utilised for the pop group.*



Bristol New Vic: thrust form as set for The Bristol Road Show: *contrast original plan opposite.*

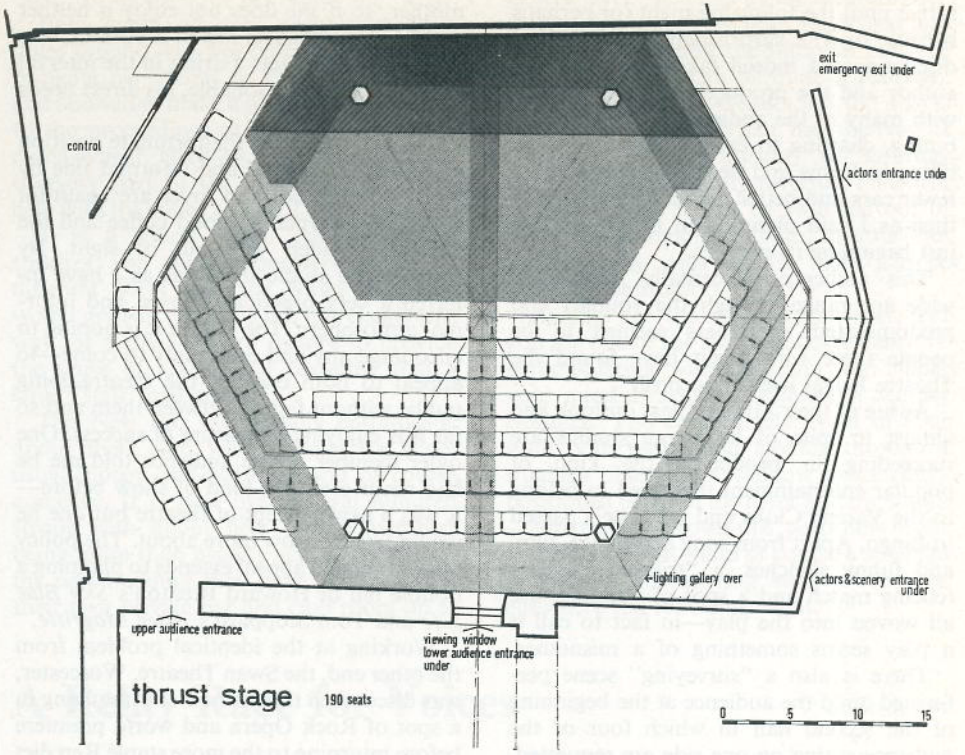
specially fire-proof any canvas used on stage. Similarly the balcony above must now always have a panic rail along its outer edge. Outside London there is no written document saying exactly what is or is not acceptable and apparently fire officers can change their minds. Never to employ that upper level for actors would be a severe blow, but to have to retain the removable panic rail makes the area very hard to use.

It is a shame, because it is a lovely little theatre; it looks right and it feels right, but add all these things together and the idea of a space where you can do *anything* recedes. *Das ist* nicht *alles möglich*, you might say.

The control room can be reached up in the far corner not only along the balcony through the audience but also via a trap door and cat ladder from below. It houses the old PR system rescued from the main theatre and it is an unfortunate feature of that kind of desk that being upright it has to be set at an angle sideways on, so that the operator has to look over her shoulder to the stage.

Aluminium bars form a grid-like structure over the stage while for the lanterns there are catwalks (they would like a Tallescope as well!) and trim little wire mesh shelves run round to protect the audience beneath.

To launch this building, seats and all, on the not wholly unsuspecting public the New Vic chose the thrust formation and *The Bristol Road Show*. It was a new play and chose a local subject—the construction (and attendant destruction) of the proposed new ring-road. Its relevance in a city like Bristol and to a theatre in this situation



Bristol New Vic: architect's plan for thrust form. Peter Moro and Partners.

had the effect of simultaneously pleasing the locals and the critics and was just right for a multi-media studio-style presentation. There was a film projector and slides; there was a group—songs, dances, pretty flashing lights and send-ups of every imaginable kind. Above all there was a zest and panache and a decided ability to entertain in this cast of five.

It began when you found on your yellow seat the large brown over-printed envelope that serves as a cast list and contains information sheets, forms to fill in and the like. On the front the New Vic Company declare that they are given a grant by the Council to put on this show. They had tried to be impartial but as far as they could see the ring-road was not a Good Thing and virtually all Bristolians thought likewise. Dangerous stuff this. That the arch planner should hold the purse strings in the town might limit our English freedom of speech in the theatre—with the best wills in the world an arrangement that must have been inhibiting one way or another. During the show it was actually mentioned that one "town planner", the spokesman for the 'bus company, had refused to commit himself in such a context. Theatre was not the place for such matters to be raised—too serious an issue one supposes for so light and immoral a setting.

The third act was labelled simply "Discussion" and an amazing number of people stayed for it—over half in fact so those plastic padded seats must have been fairly comfortable ones. Regardless of the fact that Wedgwood Benn* was not due to

**M.P. for Bristol South East.*

arrive until the following night (or perhaps because of it) a surprisingly well-informed discussion did indeed take place with the author and the producer of the piece and with many of the audience actively contributing, chatting to each other afterwards, filling in forms and declaring in favour of fewer cars and better public transport. But then as I said planning in Bristol is only just beginning its ravages.

This audience incidentally spanned a wide age range, though the younger end predominated and there seemed to be people there who might have found the Theatre Royal itself "too posh".

Aware of their Middle Class outlook and almost in spite of it, drama studios are succeeding in producing the kind of popular entertainment that used to belong to the Variety Clubs and ultimately passed to Bingo. Apart from song and dance, film, and funny sketches, a "tricycle" race, a fencing match and a spot of wrestling are all woven into the play—in fact to call it a play seems something of a misnomer.

There is also a "surveying" scene performed amid the audience at the beginning of the second half in which four of the audience sitting on one side are requested, with many apologies, to change places with four of the audience on the other and the centre block is asked to "look thin and lean to the left". The audience co-operate as they would at the Pantomime or the Palladium. The strength of good satire is that it can offer the enjoyment both of the satire itself and of the thing satirised. The TV quiz game came in for an incidental hammering but the excitement of its competitive spirit remained. "Would Mrs E win against the Land Tribunal?" was something I could willingly have taken anyone to see—including my 86-year-old grandmother.

A visit to the theatre is for most people a highly composite experience. It often starts as a treat of some kind and women in particular when going there want a sense of occasion, of luxury and cosseting which theatro-maniacs, when planning new theatres tend to forget all about. Moreover a man will rarely go to the theatre on his own. He usually goes and takes a girl/wife/mother, so if *she* does not enjoy it neither will he. His interests are in a curious way secondary. If he gets a drink in the interval and the show is reasonable, his direct needs are satisfied.

The New Vic is in the fortunate position of having the formal and informal side by side. The entrance and foyer are beautiful with heavy carpeting, good coffee and the Paraloks hidden well out of sight. By contrast the studio itself has as I have inferred a very practical, relaxed and informal atmosphere. The New Vic is hoping to encourage any and everybody to come—to appeal to both ends of the theatre-going public without falling between them and so far it is enjoying a measure of success. One older member of the audience told me he had never seen this kind of show before—it was a new concept of theatre but one he would like to know more about. The policy of a two-ended appeal extends to planning a double bill of Howard Brenton's *Sky Blue Life* and Tom Stoppard's *After Magritte*.

Working at the identical problem from the other end, the Swan Theatre, Worcester, was discovered that same week indulging in a spot of Rock Opera and world première before returning to the more staple Rep diet of *Ring Round the Moon*. It is amazing how generally the idea of projection has caught on—even if your fire regulations don't make it cheaper than buying hardwood. At the New Vic the screen ran the full width of the thrust stage above head height. At the Swan for *The Real McCoy* a full seven screens each six feet high and each with its own projector were dotted about the stage. It is nice to have technology around—especially when as in both these shows it is well thought out and relatively simple—but it can so easily do more harm than good. In fact if anything was wrong with the *Bristol Road Show* it was the fact that for most of the first half the sound seemed to get in the way of the sense.

The remarkable thing about the Worcester production was the marvellous way the theatre uses its Supporters' Club. There they are night after night a girl on every Rank Aldis Tutor, two boys perched in the FOH lighting slots each armed with a parabolic reflector for the sound, and two more as follow-spot operators out front.

Here every amateur technician from miles around was welcomed to the theatre bringing his friends to form the audience and allowed to make a positive contribution to the proceedings at no real cost to the management. Needless to say it is the same in every part of the building—volunteers help with the coffee and staff the auditorium—it is a grand social club. Different theatres use their supporters' clubs in different ways and the Swan approach would not suit everyone but it is clearly one way for a small-crewed theatre to provide the sense of luxury and cosseting that a large "staff" can give.

The New Vic was equally enthusiastic about their club who provide the more usual money and publicity and of course audience. It is now over several hundred strong with about fifty of the members being more than usually active. As part of the new building they have just acquired their own private bar and club room up at gallery level. As many of the facilities such as bars are shared by both the Royal and the New, arranging the intervals between the two theatres can be quite a problem. From Monday to Wednesday the Royal starts its show at 7.15 p.m. and the New at 7.45 p.m. From Thursday to Saturday these times are literally reversed. (The call system, though it can be switched out of either, is common to both theatres but unfortunately calls to the foyer can be heard in the studio.)

Assume for the moment, however, that you are one of the audience from *Henry IV* perambulating with your gin and mink, your mind awash with eighteenth century elegance. You can scarcely avoid in your walk both seeing and looking through a smallish observation window tantalizingly positioned between the foyer and the studio—a marvellous grown-ups' peepshow of the brave new world—and of course a splendid preview of the stirring stuff to be seen elsewhere the following night.

A Relay Race for Voices

John Barber

An attentive audience is waiting, in a brightly lighted hall, to see a matinee of *Twelfth Night*. A special occasion—the production is sponsored by an international arts festival, with leading critics present, some from abroad.

After 15 minutes an apologetic man comes on stage and says there is trouble in the lighting system. If we will be patient . . . 15 minutes later, we are told to leave Edinburgh's Assembly Hall. The switchboard* has packed up, and there will be no performance.

"Just act the play!" calls an American voice. Here was audience, lighted stage, costumed players standing by. But no: the "artistic people" have decreed the show is impossible without the special lighting effects. Everybody goes home.

In Chicago lately, 2,800 people were sent away in the middle of Lauren Bacall's opening performance of *Applause!* because the amplifying system broke down. One recalls Tommy Steele's remark at the Adelphi, when he was trying to tell us in song how things were in Glocca-Morra and the loudspeakers conked out. "I would like to thank the British Museum," he said, "for the use of the sound system."

But it is not very funny, this increasing dependence of the living theatre on technical means. It is more than a menace; it is a denial of its whole nature.

Like the fountain pen, the microphone is a boon and a blessing to men. Postage stamps glorify it. Let us consider its merits. By its aid, we can hear those artists who do not think, as Vanessa Redgrave says she always does, of that boy in the back of the gallery. Big theatre stages are as fully

**The switchboard in this story was one of ours and a simple one at that. The law of averages ensures that one of ours is more likely because there are many many more of them than of any other firm anywhere. All equipment is liable to fail and this article from the* Daily Telegraph *by its drama critic poses such fascinating questions that we could not resist reprinting it.*

bugged as a Russian hotel, and you hear the voice-level change as an actor moves from one to another. At least you do hear.

But microphones have cords. In one production of *Jesus Christ Superstar*, the Saviour had to pick his barefooted way through a spaghetti of wires connected to each actor's mike. The Twelve Apostles, going down on their knees while hanging on to mikes, looked as if they were sharing a communal hookah. Aesthetically disconcerting, maybe; but people prefer electronic sound they can hear to real voices they can't.

However, the newest equipment frees the artist from trailing wires. He can conceal a mike the size of a button in his clothes. A transmitter attached to it is tuned to a frequency which is picked up off-stage and fed into loudspeakers. There are snags, though. You need a GPO licence for each frequency, or the voice will get mixed with radio taxi calls. And there is a limit to the number of artists who can use these simultaneously, or the Apostles would not have been in such trouble.

We are used to seeing huge loudspeakers (so aptly named) flanking the stage, monsters up to 8 ft. tall known as thunderboxes. The Palladium uses 14 main ones and various others dotted about. "Hear Tom Jones live!" say the posters.

But how live is he? You are not listening to his voice, but to his voice distorted and distended by electronic hardware. Many enjoy the effect. But today some artists in the theatre are often hard put to it to imitate the sounds the recording engineers souped up in the studios when they cut their records. The disc, as all Barbra Streisand fans know, can be superior to the real thing.

At least the accompanying orchestra is live? Well, yes. Only the sounds they make are often miked too, and come out from loudspeakers on top of their own music. Nor are singers all they seem. Shows like *The Black and White Minstrels* pre-record the music. The artists on stage may be singing, or only miming, while the sound comes from a perfectly synchronised tape.

But all this is a negation of what the theatre is about. We playgoers expect to see real people, hear real voices—to be one side of what Dorothy Tutin called the triangle formed by herself, the character she is playing, and the audience. "That's what's exciting about the theatre," she says. "The audience are seeing something that is literally an active and unique thing. And one is immensely affected by audiences." Only here does the artist have complete control over his performance, and can adjust it to the pace and the numbers of the night.

Cinema and television are more fluid. They enlarge and distort voices, and faces, to stupendous effect. But they are mechanical. The show would be the same if no audience was there, whereas the theatre performance is new every night.

It is suicide for the theatre to cast away this unique advantage so as to imitate, badly, what the other media do better—that is, by plastering the players all over with visual and aural *maquillage* in the form of endlessly changing lights and phonic effects. We sneer at the Victorians for their elaborate stage machinery. Ours is different in kind, but even more obtrusive. A singer with a mike must be more aware of his own amplified voice than of the audience. An actor miming to a pre-recorded tape is a puppet. The sacred Tutin triangle is shattered.

You may say it is all right for musicals to exploit microphones and tricks. I agree. You may add that they are not really serious theatre, and don't matter. I would not allow that. But anyway, the classical theatre is now invaded, or that *Twelfth Night* would not be cancelled. In our new theatres, the stages become ever more elaborate, and the computerised switchboards make Würlitzer organs look like yo-yos. No wonder serious playgoers enjoy so much those basements and cellars where conditions are primitive and actors merely act.

As for musicals, the new one at the Round House shows the way things are going. The *Mother Earth* programme lists the producers, the director, the lighting designer, the special effects man, and the projectionist. The names of the composer, and of the author, are nowhere to be found.

Harrogate's Old New Theatre

Percy Corry

Far too often the unholy partnership of bulldozers and concrete-mixers results in the obliteration of interesting relics of past glories to make way for mediocrities of redevelopment. It is a relief, therefore, to report preservation of a representative specimen of Victorian architecture in spite of a need to provide the amenities required to lure potential customers from their television sets into the theatre. In October 1972 the Harrogate Theatre reopened after extensive internal operations.

In the eighteenth century Harrogate had one of the Georgian theatres in the Samuel Butler circuit of which the sole survivor is the one in Yorkshire's Richmond, restored and reopened 1962*. The theatre that is now refurbished began as the Grand Opera House in 1900 and until 1927 it was a popular booking in the No. 1 provincial circuit for star-studded touring companies. The Divine Sarah, the Vanbrugh sisters, George Grossmith, Martin Harvey, Forbes Robertson and most of the other famous performers who constituted glittering galaxies of Victorians, Edwardians (which, of course, included the George Edwardesians), and later the neo-Georgians, all visited this attractive Spa during the summer seasons. Perhaps it should be explained for the

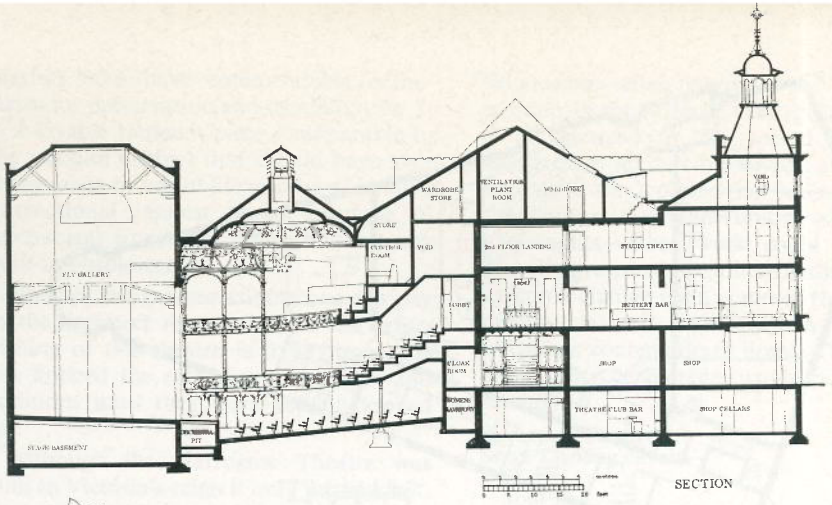
**Reviewed in* TABS *Vol. 20, No. 2, Also included in* New Theatres in Britain.

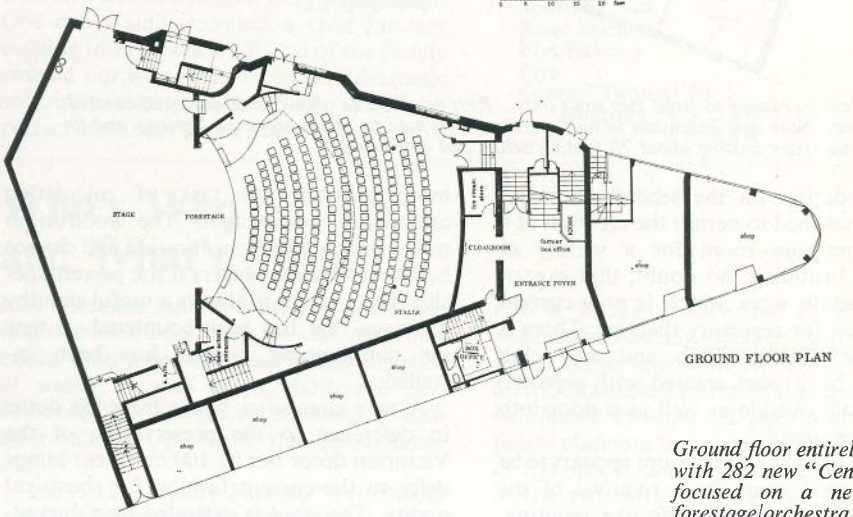
benefit of readers who are under fifty that George Edwardes (1852–1915) was the Irishman who became putative father of English Musical Comedy and platonic father of the Gaiety Girls who were a godsend to the purveyors of picture postcards and to the British peerage.

In 1933 the Opera House became the home of the White Rose Players, claimed to be one of the first repertory theatres in the country. May one with fealty to the Red Rose offer a gentle reminder that *the* first was Miss Horniman's Manchester company, formed twenty-six years earlier. But in the theatre (and in any part of the country not privileged to be in the North) the floral colours of York and Lancaster become cosily complementary and the traditional rivals become a fraternity of comprehensive rosarians.

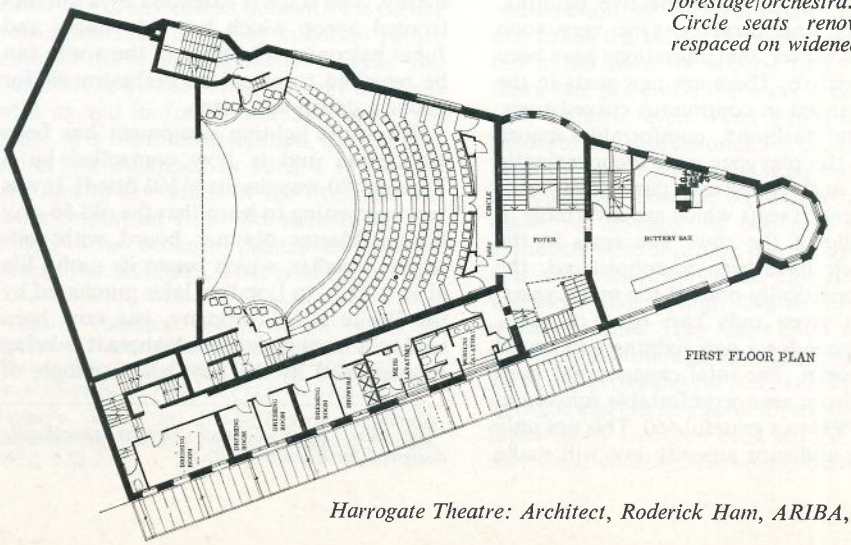
In 1961 the theatre ceased to be a nominal opera house and when it was taken over by the Harrogate (White Rose) Theatre Trust, sponsored by the local council, it became quite simply the Harrogate Theatre. It is an excellent example of Victorian theatre architecture internally: the exterior has no outstanding quality. Its historic merits are now officially recognised by the Department of the Environment and its cultural activity is financially acknowledged by the Arts Council whose contribution, plus a matching grant from the Harrogate Corporation and the donations of those who responded to the Public Appeal, have made possible considerable alterations at a cost of something over £90,000.

Gone are the separate entrances at which proletarians were wont to pay their shillings or sixpences (Early Doors extra) to scramble for the best places on the benches in the Pit and in the gallery: the latter, because of its greater proximity to heaven was, of course, always referred to as "the Gods". There is now a classless entrance to all parts of the house from a foyer that has been completely replanned. It has, however, retained an impressively sculpted frieze, the work of a local artist completed a few years after the theatre was built. A new box office spaciously replaces a claustrophobic cubicle. The space occupied by the old bars and café at circle level has been open-planned for the new bar and catering facilities, plus a concourse intended for use as an exhibition area as well as for circulation to and from new toilets and lush powder rooms. A clutter of assorted

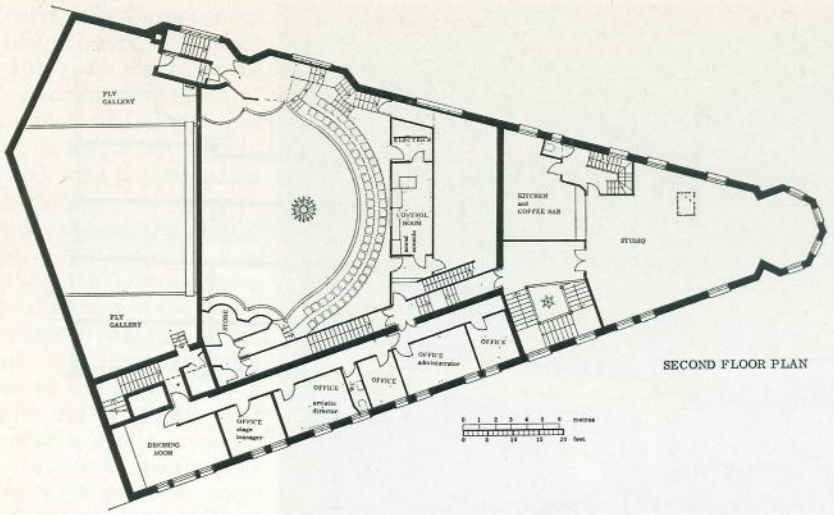




Ground floor entirely reseated with 282 new "Centra" seats focused on a new curved forestage/orchestra. 170 Circle seats renovated and respaced on widened steps.



Harrogate Theatre: Architect, Roderick Ham, ARIBA, AA Dipl.



Balcony reduced to front two rows only. Rest removed to allow construction of control room. Note new extension to main staircase formed to allow access to balcony and to studio space seating about 70 (with kitchen and coffee bar).

accommodation on the second floor has been demolished to permit the creation of a general purpose room for a variety of activities including, no doubt, that experimental studio work which is now current convention for repertory theatres. There is an active Theatre Club and new club premises have been created with separate access from outside as well as a door into the theatre area.

At first sight the auditorium appears to be little changed apart from removal of the ravages of age by some effective painting, upholstery and carpetry. One very soon realises, however, that alterations have been quite extensive. There are new seats in the stalls arranged in continuous curved rows, continental fashion*, comfortably spaced even for the playgoer with inconveniently long legs and for the easy passage of bulky late-comers to seats which are invariably in the middle of the row. The seats in the dress circle have been re-upholstered: the gallery, practically unused for many years, has been given only two rows of seats, leaving space for a new lighting and sound control room. The total capacity has been reduced from an uncomfortable maximum of about 800 to a grateful 460. This not only increases audience amenity but will make more pleasant the task of calculating attendance percentages. The auditorium now merits a 100 per cent rating and cannot be blamed by the players if the percentages slip. The weather is always a useful standby but even that has been countered—a new air conditioning system has been installed.

A new chandelier hangs from the dome in deference to the preservation of the Victorian décor but its 100 mm clear lamps defer to the current fashion for theatrical nudity. The stage is extended by a curved-fronted apron which has side stages and Juliet balconies. The floor of the apron can be removed to reveal an orchestra pit for about a dozen musicians.

The stage lighting equipment has been augmented and is now controlled by a Threeset 80-way thyristor [60 fitted]. It was very interesting to learn that the old 56-way Grand Master dimmer board with self-release handles, which began its useful life at R.A.D.A. in London, later purchased by the White Rose company, has now been sold to a local high school where it is being re-assembled by the boys and a couple of masters who have commendable enthusiasm for preservation and rehabilitation. It is a lovable museum piece (comparable to the traction engine) that should have very many years of useful life and be of abiding instructional interest as an example of mechanical equipment which has not any built-in obsolescence.

Perhaps the greatest tribute one can pay to the architect responsible for the refurbishing of this theatre is to say how little one noticed the extensive alterations and additions until they were actually looked for.

Although the Harrogate Theatre was built in Victoria's reign it only just made it. One can vividly recollect a cold January evening in 1901 when a friend of the family entered our living room and with dramatic solemnity merely said, "She's dead". A perfect entrance: we all knew who *She* was. What is now often referred to as Victoriana is quite likely to have been post-Victoria if it belonged to the period that was shattered by gunfire in Flanders and on the Somme. It was a period that had a generous share of theatrical giants among whom were playwrights whose work could be more liberally presented to modern audiences as a welcome change from some of the boring, pretentious and rather jejune exposure offered as contemporary drama. The effect on capacity percentages would perhaps be salutary.

Harrogate Theatre
Stage Lighting circuits

FOH	18
Spot Bar	12
Stage Boom	6
Flys/Balcony	14
Flys	10
Control Threeset 80	
Dimmers 54 × 2 kW	
6 × 6 kW	

**The new Rank Strand Centra specifically designed for Theatres* (Ed.)

Who's Who and What's What

Editor

It is a strange but appropriate coincidence that two such closely related and important books should be published within a matter of weeks of each other. Both are new editions, both are pricey but bulging with information, but there the resemblance ends.

The ABTT *Theatre Planning** is virtually a new work, any connection with the earlier version of 1964 is one of intention rather than of form and content, whereas the Parker *Who's Who in the Theatre*† has been with us and its format familiar for a long time—it is the fifteenth edition, no less, of a work first published in 1912. I suppose if one had to say which of the two were the more important it would have to be the *Who's Who* because theatre consists of people not buildings. That is of course why it is a happy chance that the two have appeared so closely together. All the established names appear in the *Who's Who* and all the established planning concepts appear in *Theatre Planning*. If one wants appropriate planning to house the living content of the one, it can be found in the other.

The two arts—casting for theatre and construction of theatres—have gone on, one inside the other, through the centuries but it has been the second that in recent times has presented the more serious hazard. Theatre, even when amateur, is the place for the professional, for the man who loves the job, whereas the design of theatre building has become nowadays mainly a matter of laymen. At one time firms of architects were churning out theatres. They and their successors—the cinema theatre builders—had a high degree of professional expertise. They really knew what was the intended function and therefore how to set about providing for it. Frank Matcham, Sprague and Bertie Crewe for example were followed by George Coles, Robert Cromie and Cecil Massey. However, between the

*Theatre Planning. *Edited for the ABTT by Roderick Ham, ARIBA, AA Dipl., 292 pages, The Architectural Press, London, 1972. £10.50. or University of Toronto Press $27.50.*

†Who's Who in the Theatre—*Originally compiled by John Parker. 1,751 pages, Pitman, 1972, £10.00.*

wars live theatre building was a rarity and was already the province of one-offs. Today the architect gets *landed with* a theatre to design, as a part of some complex or other, rather than going out to do a theatre because it is the kind of work that attracted him.

After the war the live theatre became *de rigueur* and the great "what is a theatre?" confrontation began. One thing was certain, a theatre was to be more democratic and "The Show" was not to be the only thing. Cafés and restaurants were now required of the live theatre while the super-cinemas which gave them birth cut back to a couple of perambulating ice-cream girls and a sweet kiosk in the entrance foyer. In fact the first important post-war theatre did brilliantly by the front of house but came unstuck backstage. It could be said perhaps that the money ran out, but of course no project should have got that much out of balance. Equally the stage must not be too grand for out-front. All must be in scale—proportion. This kind of thing has to be incorporated in the first step towards the building design —the brief.

The second part of the building design is a matter of detailing and it is here that the architect is really thrown back on his own resources. What exactly to draw on that sheet of paper so that it can be built.

The brief is a committee process and while a considerable degree of skill is needed to ensure that the brief is practical, i.e. capable of achievement, it is in fact couched in words. It is not generally realised that a great gulf exists between words and drawing. Ultimately someone is literally going to be looking at a drawing for all information. If the information there does not add up properly or there is something missing the workman on the site will have to botch the job. How different are the words that we use to describe a theatre. These words, lofty or mundane, can mean much or little—even when they purport to be of the nature of a specification "shall be carried out in a workmanlike manner". What constitutes a "workmanlike manner" is purely a matter of opinion.

So we see in the architect's office someone at the drawing board concerned with setting down exact detail. It could be the detailing of the location of seats in relation to the proscenium opening or the more humdrum setting out of scene dock doors. This is a world away from the architectural genius—the great man who scribbles a concept on the back of an envelope or the perspectives lovingly carried out in wash or whatever. This is the hurdle that brought down the great Joel Utzon at every step he took in Sydney. Those shells of his had to stand up. They had to be filled with a certain number of people. The people in their turn had to be comfortable and above all they wanted to hear and see the goings-on on the stage. The stage itself needed to be practical and workable so that theatre people could use it and want to perform there again. With all the time and money in the world behind it this detailing could not bring about a workable theatre and so what was to have been an opera house became a concert hall. We do not have to look far to find other examples. The English-speaking world seems to be full of mistakes in theatre building ranging from the disastrous to the merely vexing. Such mistakes are in the main not attributable to perversity on the part of the architect but to sheer ignorance —he did not know!

But who is the "he" in that sentence? probably not the great man at the head of the architectural office but rather some assistant way down on the office ladder perhaps but recently qualified. He or she it is that draws the doorways and passages that have to work and provides the spaces for all the bits and pieces that go to make up a theatre—and very peculiar bits and pieces they are to the stranger. So the problem has always been where to turn for information, and the worst possible source has been theatre people themselves. Most theatre people cannot read drawings and are therefore far from realising what is afoot. There is also the hazard that people who are called in to advise are not subject to the discipline of having to imagine themselves paying for the things they recommend. Of course what has been missing has been a

text-book and here for the first time in the English language is that text-book on Theatre Planning.

There have been other books on theatre design and architecture but they could not claim to be text-books. They have tended to be an author's comments on theatre design illustrated with examples he either approved or did not approve of. They have made interesting and often helpful reading but they are non-definitive and the nearest that one could get to a text-book has been the regulations published by the authorities—particularly the London County Council (later to become the GLC). There one could find some hard facts.

> "The seating area assigned to each person shall be not less than 2 ft. 6 in. deep where backs are provided and not less than 2 feet deep where backs are not provided, and shall be not less than 1 ft. 8 in. wide where arms are provided, and not less than 1 ft. 6 in. wide where arms are not provided."
>
> "The number of seats in a row shall not exceed . . . 14 seats where there is a gangway at each end; provided that . . .
>
> Note—Longer rows than 22 seats may be permitted subject to such further precautions as the Council may require, including the provision of gangways wider than, and of exits additional to, those required under regulation 3.08(9) and regulation 3.04 respectively."

and all the rest.

Stern stuff based on minimums but really something to get your teeth into. Many a man must have turned to such regulations with relief as providing some kind of framework within which to work.

Now all that is changed. We have the ABTT's *Theatre Planning* which is readable and inspiring and yet remains a text-book. This book contains a distillation of wisdom from many sources and is primarily aimed at the architect, but it should be read by all concerned with theatre building, for not only is it a guide to theatre design but also to the way an architect has to approach the task of designing a theatre. It helps us to understand what we must feed him with to assist him in his task.

Unusually for a brand new book its first edition is a second edition which has so to speak had a preliminary try out in sketch form. Some eight years ago members of the Association of British Theatre Technicians took part in a serialisation of the story of various crafts week by week in *The Architects' Journal*. The result was subsequently issued as two volumes—*Theatre Planning I* and *Theatre Planning II*. The bit-by-bit way the information has been issued, as data sheets and articles, coupled with the frightful formats adopted by architectural papers nowadays, produced a strange bound volume. A unique work, useful for those with lots of time to find their way around, but a scrap-book. No index was possible. The material itself was largely provided by the various technical committees of the ABTT plus certain individual authors which further ensured its "compulsive non-readability", but it did represent an immense step forward. Here were facts and, where facts were not possible, informed not glib theatre opinions.

In the intervening period the various committees have had the opportunity to reappraise their work and bring it up to date and, thanks to the provision of a grant from the Arts Council, it was possible to set about the creation of a real book this time. Roderick Ham the architect—a man drawn to the theatre—was commissioned as Editor, and in the end it would probably be more correct to say became the author. Thanks to his determination the book has a unity of style and approach which was completely missing in the previous hotch-potch. He has also been at pains to ensure a discipline in the presentation of the diagrams which form such an important part of an architectural text-book. The result in its A4 format is attractive and clear, printed on nice paper with wide margins.

The work is divided into twenty-one chapters plus a glossary of stage terms, a bibliography and, Hurrah!—beginning on page 286— the Index! The various chapters cover the type and size of theatre, design of

auditorium, sight lines, then progress from there to stage planning and scenery and technical aspects such as lighting, sound and communications. Subjects the like of which never appear in TABS such as dressing rooms, production spaces, heating, ventilation and economics are all to be found therein. Chapter 21, *Comparison of theatres*, appropriately concludes the work with a display of the vital statistics of twenty-five theatres already built—some of them a long time ago.

To quote its Editor,

> ". . . As more is known about the workings of the proscenium theatre than about open forms it is inevitable that there are more references to it than to the less orthodox types of theatre but this does not indicate an editorial bias in favour of the proscenium. We have described what there is to describe and many of the problems examined are common to all forms of theatre. There remain entertainments and dramatic activities from tattoos to television which neither need nor ask for the kind of facilities here examined.
>
> "One subject not covered in this book is the multi-purpose hall. We have been concerned throughout to describe the optimum conditions for housing live performances, and these remain the same whether the building is labelled 'theatre' or 'multi-purpose hall'. If the process of making a hall multi-purpose forces compromises and prevents proper conditions from being obtained, that is not a valid excuse for applying lower standards. A great deal of ingenuity has been lavished on schemes of adaptability and much time and sometimes money spent on mechanical methods of achieving them. The fascination of the gadgetry should not be allowed to obscure the shortcomings of the results. In any one conformation or arrangement an objective assessment of the result usually shows that it is less satisfactory than a building specially designed to serve that particular purpose.
>
> "Flexibility of use remains an important virtue in any scheme but it is not synonymous with machinery as some would have us think. While it is very simple to phrase a brief which calls for a building to house banquets, dances, professional theatre, amateur operatics, film shows and jumble sales all in the same space, if not at the same time, it is virtually impossible to translate such words into a satisfactory solution in terms of building. It has never yet been done successfully though the quest has been as obsessive as for the philosopher's stone or the elixir of life. . . .
>
> "In a work devoted to the study of the design of buildings for housing the performing arts it is well to sound a note of humility and remember that it is people and not buildings which make theatre. Dramatic magic can be created in the most unlikely places and in utterly unpromising surroundings. Nevertheless, good buildings can give full rein to the creativity of those who use them and can enhance the experience of those who come to watch and listen."

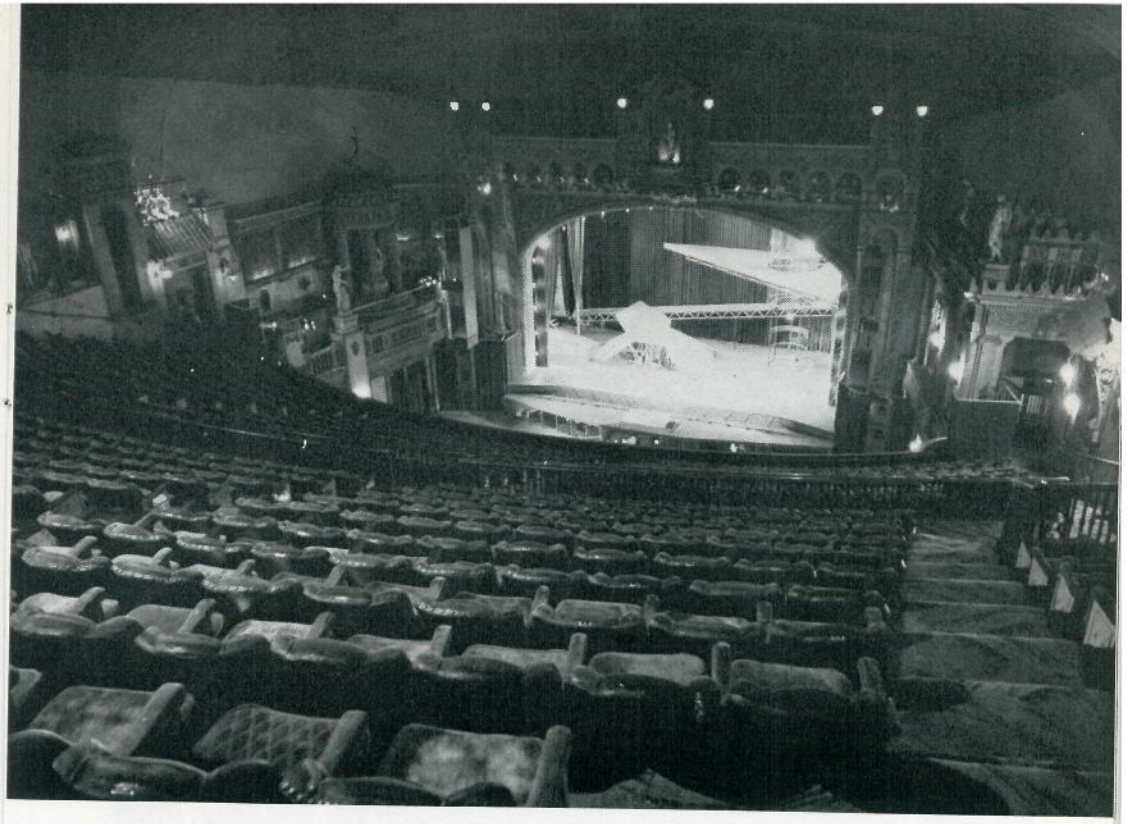
I cannot do better than repeat that for the theatre as a building this is the most important work ever produced in the English language. No architect should attempt to design a new theatre, alter an existing one, or even "refurbish" without having read this from cover to cover. No theatre consultant should presume that he can be without it. And what about the client? He himself should read this book and keep an eye on the copy the architect has by him. A well worn grubbiness with lots of dog-earing and marginal notes will be the best assurance that all is well until such time as the completed building itself confirms or confounds.

Tabs Index and Bound Copies

It has been our practice to publish an index so that readers who wished to have their copies bound could do so. It is in fact easy to get one-off binding done—even to the extent of having TABS and other information blocked in gold on the spine. The result is not expensive, especially when one takes into account that the literary content costs nothing!

We do ourselves have some complete volumes ready bound for sale. Volumes 28–30 covering the years 1970–1972 appear as one book at £2, and Volumes 25–27 (1967–1969) at £2.50, post free in U.K.

The index itself for those who wish to get their own copies bound is issued free on application to this office.



Southern Cross

Denis Irving

The last year or so has seen a welcome increase of theatre activity in Australia, which for Australian readers we must hasten to point out means activity in the world of live theatre, not cinema as it is known in other countries. This is partly due to the usual swing away from the first flush of enthusiasm for 'the box', and also because the responsibility for putting on shows has passed from the old 'establishments', such as Garnett Carroll or J. C. Williamsons, to a more vigorous and younger group of entrepreneurs led by Michael Edgley and Harry M. Miller. The former inherited a business from his father, who for many years operated Her Majesty's Theatre, Perth, and is well known for his negotiations with the Russians, culminating in successful tours of the Bolshoi Ballet, the Great Moscow Circus, and similar activities—which provided an excellent financial start to more regular productions of other kinds. Harry Miller's success is based on the philosophy of getting the most up-to-date, with-it productions, and staging them at minimum possible cost by equipping theatres specifically for a purpose, a method which he commenced with the much publicised production of *Hair* in Sydney and is now continuing with other shows.

Until recently, most presentations at regular established theatres in Australia were using buildings owned by the entrepreneurs themselves but Harry Miller has generally managed to avoid the pitfalls of real estate.

In Sydney at present a combination of fires and city developers has eliminated nearly all the regular houses, thus forcing showmen to use older buildings not really suited to modern productions. Notable among these is what is now known as the Capitol Theatre, a 2000-seat cinema which

"The Last Supper" at the Capitol Cinema, Sydney.

was refurbished in the boom days of film some time between the two world wars. It has severely limited stage depth and wing space, and very negligible electrics, not helped by an interior décor affording precious few locations for front of house equipment. The original use of the house as an enormous arena hippodrome meant that the shell of the building made the task of internal re-modelling rather awkward, to say the least.

Because of the aforementioned gradual reduction in the number of theatres available in Sydney, surveys have been made from time to time of the Capitol Theatre with a view to modernising and re-equipping it, so it could cope with all sorts of stage performance. These surveys, in which it must be admitted we took a part, generally came to naught because the estimated outlay of a proper conversion was usually of the order of two million Australian dollars. So it seemed that the Capitol would continue to rot in peace, until Harry Miller started looking for a venue for the big business musical *Jesus Christ Superstar*. This was a production which admitted of a change in the situation, as it uses a set consisting largely of purpose-built machinery with, therefore, a relatively small demand on conventional rigging. It also has lighting requirements which, although quite complex, can be fairly well defined and which can be satisfied by building a fair amount of the rig into the set itself.

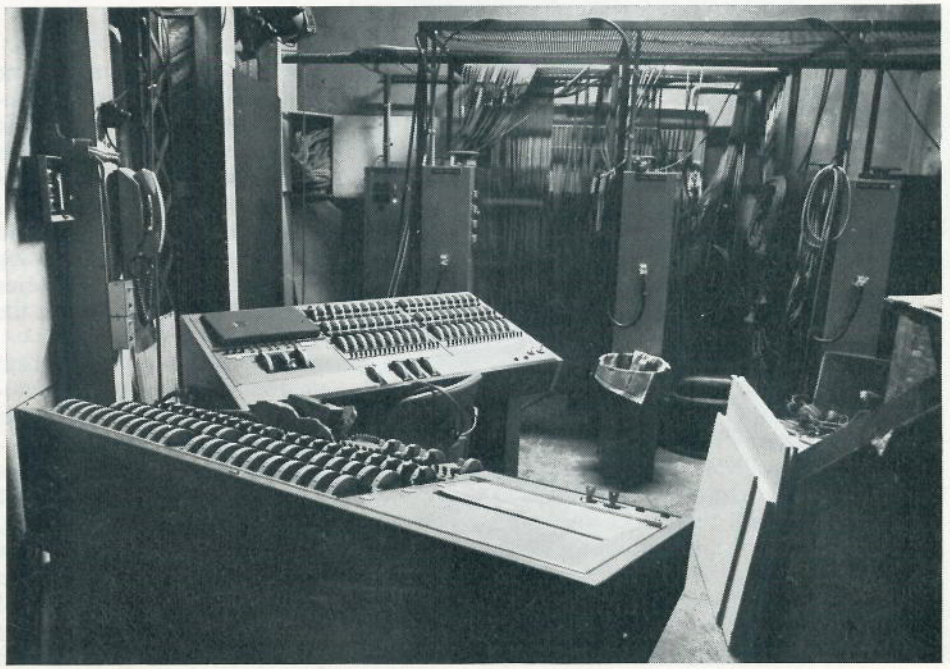
This plus the size of the place resulted in a lease of the Capitol and provision of sets, audio, lighting and other technical equipment specifically to suit the one show —a stipulation being that any equipment provided should be capable of being removed and toured to other venues, in a way reminiscent of the American practice of hiring bare boards. The difference was of course that in American practice, one hired truck loads and truck loads of stock equipment, including those revolting piano boards, whereas here the idea was to buy equipment tailored to suit the one production.

As usual, time became the biggest deciding factor of the lot, and when arguments with the owners of the building, local councils and various other administrative difficulties were resolved, there were only some eight weeks remaining from first access to the theatre to the date of the final dress rehearsal. During this time all the purpose-made stage machinery was built actually in the theatre, and many short cuts were found for the process of installing electrical and audio equipment. The photographs show the semi-permanent location of the dimmer racks which are sited, together with the two SP40/3 control desks, in a room behind what would be prompt-side box if it were possible to sit there.

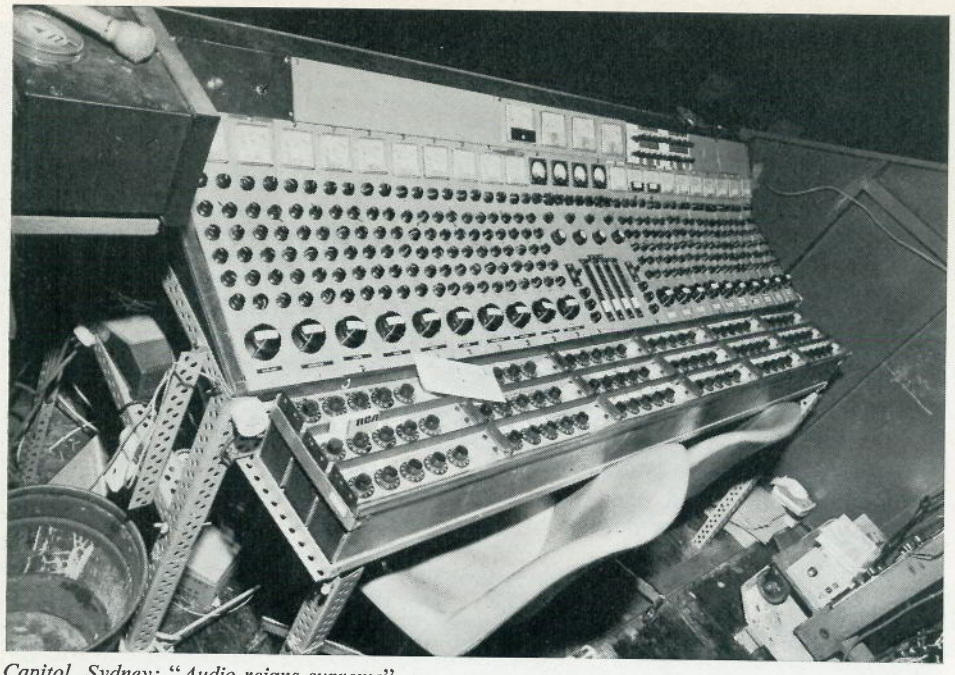
The two 40-way desks were chosen (a) because we could find them in time from parts in stock, and (b) so that for unknown future shows it would be possible to tour them as two separate control systems. One desk has an additional set of master faders, with switches enabling them to take charge of the standard controls as needed.

Wiring regulations insist that the main feeds to the three 20-way racks and two 10-way racks are permanently connected but all racks are provided with three-pin outlets down one side, thereby forming half of the patch panel.

Looking past the control desks and racks, you can see the semi-permanent wiring terminating in flexible cords and three-pin plugs for connection into these outlets. Our man in Sydney spent many hours in the early part of the mornings complete with ice pack, charged glass and worried frown, in order to arrive at a plugging plot which would reduce re-patching during the show to an absolute minimum. He was more or less successful, because it has proved possible for one man to operate the



Capitol, Sydney: "Superstar" fit-up two SP40 3-preset lighting controls.



Capitol, Sydney: "Audio reigns supreme".

show, albeit after some frantic moments during the first few days of the run. This was a case where patching was used as much to try and simplify the operator's task in driving the boards as it was to enable connection of loads to circuits purely from the supply point of view. All 80 dimmers are used, 20 of them 5 kilowatt and the balance 2 kilowatt.

The set is fairly open the whole time, and dominated by the large revolve slightly OP of centre, on which sits a folding dodecahedron. The photographs only show the lower part of this device, in other words a five-sided platform with five hinged "petals" which can be individually or collectively lifted up to form part of the solid shape or lowered down until they touch the stage. There is a further section not shown which lowers in from the grid, thus completing the geometric solid. As well as the petal action, the whole device revolves and the centre stem supporting it contains a lift which is just capable of lifting one man.

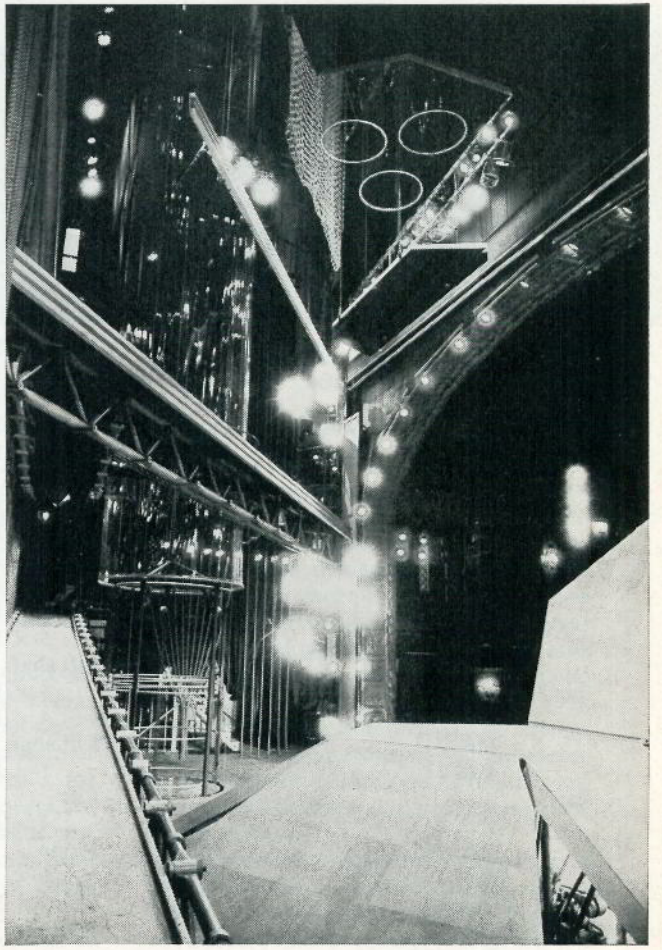
There are two fixed bridges for use by the company, which can be seen in the photographs, one running across stage against the "cyclorama", dark though it is, and the other one running at an angle across an upstage corner. Because of all this, cross and back lighting are used freely, and there is also some special purpose lighting as witness two Patt. 23s which form eyes in a big skull which lowers in just after the crucifixion.

An interesting feature is the vertical perspex shaft upstage prompt (see photograph opposite), in which there is a lift lit in two ways, first by some Patt. 223s pointing straight down from the top, and secondly by four Minispots which move up and down with the lift proper. With the 223s, one gets an effect rather like an enormous piece of fibre optic, as the light from the spots is contained inside the shaft by total internal reflection, giving good lighting all the way down to the bottom, with negligible spill.

The show is described as a rock opera, and this must have given inspiration to the lighting designer who has used the opera technique of follow spotting from either side of the proscenium, using the traditional perch position, in conjunction at times with fairly low-key stage lighting. The on-stage follow spots (Patt. 293s) are supplemented by two more at fairly short range on either side of the circle front, and the photographs just show the curtained cubicles which hide the operation of these from the horrified gaze of the audience. One unusual and effective technique is the Last Supper table, which is a trapezium shaped unit (to give exaggerated perspective) in the form of a flat translucent box unit internally lit so that when the Last Supper is in progress most light comes from the glowing table top itself. Good use of effect lighting is demonstrated by the act drop being gauze instead of the more usual material. Appropriate balance of light 'solidifies' this as required, the appearance being enhanced by an appliqué profile of *Jesus Christ Superstar* with shafts of light forming rays emanating from his head. These shafts are produced by 24 low-voltage narrow-angle display spot lights which are arranged around the proscenium edge.

Of course, being a "modern" show, audio reigns supreme, and more money was lavished on this part of the production than pretty well everything else together. On entering the theatre, one is overawed by two enormous loud speaker arrays, one each side of the proscenium, and I for one was pleased to be sitting in the circle and not the front stalls. There was a purpose-built 66 input audio console and the total audio output available is of the order of fifteen hundred watts.

Even though the house does seat 2,000 people, the effect is quite remarkable when all is wound to its maximum. In case despite all the amplification one might run the risk of hearing the sound direct, the orchestra pit (which contains the audio control console as well as the musicians) is fully enclosed. However, so as not to frustrate the audience, the front section of the enclosure is transparent, hence the musicians scrape, bash and blow to their hearts' content secure in the knowledge that they are seen. Not only this, but the conductor can still see the stage because he has a perspex roof above.



Capitol, Sydney, backstage "Superstar" fit-up.

When it was originally mooted around the country that the Capitol was to be the venue of such a major production, numerous pessimists avowed that the task was impossible, and indeed, during the seventh of the eight weeks get-in, several of us who were involved were inclined to agree! In Caiaphas' words—"We've not much time and quite a problem here". Miraculously all was completed, and apart from the gremlin which attacked the closed circuit television monitoring system, thereby delaying the opening performance for an hour or so, all went remarkably smoothly. Our particular comments are that we wish we had more of the new 700 series tungsten halogen spotlights to use, as we could have done with more light on quite a number of occasions, and we could still do with rather higher output scene projectors, as it seems that the trend for increasing light levels on stage is going to follow the trend for increasing sound levels in the auditorium.

Finally, you might wonder whether all the lighting and audio and mechanical bits and pieces for a production such as this one of *Jesus Christ Superstar* were really worth it. For myself, a notorious square as regards theatrical taste, I attended the performance with some misgivings, and finished up agreeing that the whole production was theatrically a very satisfying evening, much more so than might be imagined from odd extracts dished up to us with trite comments from disc jockeys on commercial radio stations.

Perhaps the stage crew could adopt the following extract from an early part of the show—"If we try we'll get by—so forget all about us tonight".

CAPITOL THEATRE—Rig for Superstar

F.O.H.
- 8 × Pat. 764
- 12 × Pat. 264

Boxes
- 12 × Pat. 23N

Pros. Bar
- 10 × Pat. 23N

Pros. surround
- 24 × 24 volt 60 watt beamlights

Follow spots
- 2 × Pat. 293

Stage Bar 1
- 9 × Pat. 243
- 14 × Pat. 223
- 8 × Pat. 123
- 2 × Pat. 763
- 1 × Pat. 263
- 5 × Pat. 23

Bar 2
- 12 × Pat. 123
- 6 × Pat. 243
- 6 × Pat. 23

Bar 3
- 9 × Pat. 23
- 1 × Pat. 763
- 8 × Pat. 743
- 1 × Pat. 243
- 7 × Pat. 123
- 1 × Pat. 223

O.P. Tower
- 1 × Pat. 293
- 1 × Pat. 152 Sea wave, Fleecy cloud
- 7 × Pat. 223
- 4 × Pat. 763
- 6 × Pat. 23

Prompt Tower
- 1 × Pat. 293
- 7 × Pat. 223
- 2 × Pat. 763
- 1 × Pat. 152 Sea wave, Fleecy cloud
- 11 × Pat. 23
- 5 × Pat. 123

Lift shaft (top)
- 3 × Pat. 223
- 4 × Pat. 60

Lift shaft (base)
- 1 × Pat. 223

Lift
- 4 × Pat. 101

Floor
- 6 × AR38

Control 2 × SP 40/3 Desks modified

Dimmers 20 × 5K
60 × 2K

Operation Opera

Frederick Bentham

Of all the mighty tasks undertaken by man in the name of theatre, that of designing and building an opera house is the mightiest. Not for nothing is the stuff performed there known as Grand Opera. Everything seems of necessity big—not least the bills for building and running the place.

Of the big items first place must be conceded to the orchestra; some operas need 110 musicians. "Some operas need" could be better rephrased as "the composer stipulated", or indeed "stipulates", for some of these demons of large resource are living composers. Not all of them rest cosily underground leaving behind them this effective recipe for theatrical bankruptcy.

If one sits, as this one has, on a committee to draw up a brief for an opera house one cannot but be struck with awe at the space required to comply with anything like an international standard. Not that there is such a standard; the variations in dimensions are great but in fact all are big. It is merely a case of some being bigger than others and yet others being bigger than them. Large scale will apply backstage but not out in the auditorium. There seating capacity is relatively small—1,500 on average. Beyond this, out in the very front, we may encounter bigness again—some opera houses are really grand with great staircases and vast reception areas.

However, the sole area where vastness is specified as the *sine qua non* is backstage—but why? The only ready answer seems to be "Because of the scenery"—and this in a form of entertainment based on a *musical*

interpretation: the maestro with his orchestra and a handful of singers with superb voices—a type of entertainment that is successfully performed to thousands during the "Prom." Concert season at the Royal Albert Hall minus any visual aids.

One cannot help feeling a slight disturbance that the major part of the space allocated in the opera house is there for the reason that there *may* be a large amount of scenery. It *is* a maybe because the kind of space that the scenic consultants demand for their ideal opera house is only envisaged for use in an occasional opera. Now occasional operas are not only in a minority in the repertoire but, according to the way opera is produced in repertoire, would only appear for very few times in the year. There is no equivalent to the run of say a Drury Lane spectacle; the whole lot has to be lugged out of some store, hung up and put into position for the odd day here and there.

The theatre in Usti, Czechoslovakia.

There is no doubt that a session on Grand Opera House design tends to make one wonder about all this scenery, and before long such wondering strays outside opera to straight theatre. There too there is a lot of scenery and if some had their way there would be a lot of space allocated to it in use, in preparation and in storage—in case.

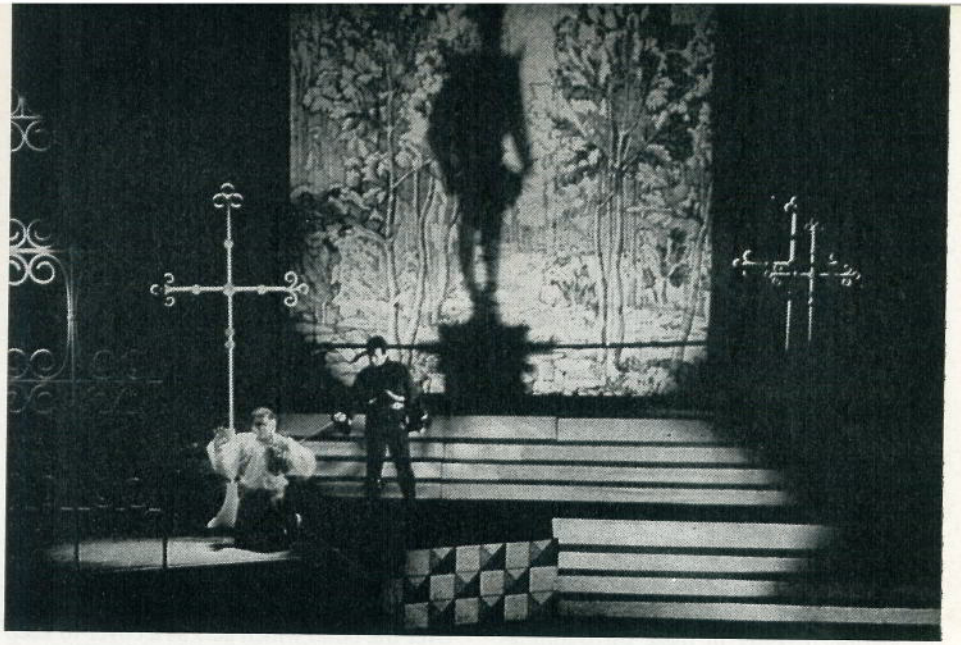
It was salutary to read, at the time when the particular opera house brief was being devised, of a production of *The Flying Dutchman* in Manchester*—in this case performed on the stage of a lecture theatre which is only 24 ft. deep. TABS readers will remember that long years ago we featured a production of the same opera on the stage of the Sadler's Wells Theatre in Rosebery Avenue, London—a small stage indeed†. This was of course before that opera company came to the London Coliseum. In the way that one thing comes on top of another Norman Marshall happened to mention that he had seen an excellent production of Vaughan Williams' *Hugh the Drover* in the Parry Opera Theatre. "Where on earth is that?" most readers will ask—and the answer is in a basement of the Royal College of Music in London where it has been situated ever since 1923. Sans grid, sans everything, it has been functioning happily for all those years.

It so happens that I have been visiting a small opera house in Czechoslovakia.

The town of Usti is an hour and a half away from Prague by fast train. Fast

*TABS, *Vol. 30, No. 3.*

†TABS, *Vol. 17, No. 1.*



Don Giovanni at the Usti Theatre.

really means It-does-not-stop, for "fast" is hardly the word for the kind of jog trot that multi-class international trains have been performing at since time immemorial. This one, which started in Sofia and intended to end up in Berlin, was redolent of a Hitchcock film. Crowded together like spotlights above a modern stage we were forced to travel in the corridor. This was fortunate since we were able to pull the dirty window down and enjoy some marvellous scenery with the station officials coming to "attention" to salute the train as it passed by.

Usti itself, although an industrial town in an area devoted to chemicals, was pleasant to look at with only the new International hotel to strike an all too familiar jarring architectural note. Incidentally, Prague should be numbered among the seven architectural wonders as possibly the only capital city in Europe unfouled by the hand of the developer but it desperately needs even more money spent on restoration if decay is not to overtake its buildings. UNESCO should not confine itself to the Abu Simbels.

The Usti Theatre stands at one end of a square, symmetrical and complete in itself, so that one can walk right round it—widdershins or not according to taste. It is quite charming with everything beautifully in scale—the auditorium, the foyers and the stage. It is one of those theatres that are nice to walk about, with nothing very far from anything else. Standing on the stage there is a sense that one could go up to the back of the balcony in a couple of minutes or so. No need to say goodbye to one's colleagues, arrange a rendezvous and set out on a journey to get there. Where the notion arises that humans *like* working or playing in big surroundings I do not know.

It is not of course mere bigness that is at fault, too often there is no clarity of plan. It is just not possible to know where the bit one finds oneself in is in relation to all the other bits. Out front one ought instinctively to know without signs where one is in relation to the auditorium on the one hand and the street on the other. Backstage, behind the iron, all ancillary spaces should relate themselves to the stage. This happens very effectively at Usti and also variation of ceiling height makes it clear whether we are on the *piano nobile* level or whatever.

The stage is small when considered in the

abstract but not when put in conjunction with the auditorium and the town outside. One should not find oneself here needing more scenic elaboration or a larger cast than this stage allows. Indeed, to judge by the photographs and the list of productions, the theatre has and does extend itself to provide a fine variety.

The resident company based on this theatre is concerned with opera and ballet but exchange of productions takes place with the theatres of Teplice and Most, towns with dramatic companies based on their theatres. Thus the theatre at Usti has to suit opera, ballet and drama, and this I imagine it does very well. The place is administered with sense; *Tristan* being put on with a orchestra of 57 which is the number that fits in the pit. No removal of lots of stalls seats to house the extra players Wagner demands. It no doubt sounds much better in these surroundings for the reduction. There is no reason why they should not allow the people of Usti to enjoy the Berlioz *Trojans* under similar "reduced" circumstances.

The theatre which originally opened in 1908 is being restored and modern technical equipment installed as funds permit. There is new flock wallpaper from England and a new instant memory lighting control also from England.

This last went in almost two years ago and operates dimmers made in Czechoslovakia where most of the lighting equipment also comes from. The control room is at stalls level—central with an excellent observation window, and has been extended by the removal of the last two rows of seats under the balcony which had poor acoustics anyway. It is now just right, not too large and not too small.

After several hours in Usti going round the theatre I ended up in this Lighting Control Room—a nice room with an ideal 120-way MSR desk. It was spotlessly clean, the operator was obviously proud of it and so were the other theatre staff. As I was about to leave, their eyes shining, they pulled over the blind which acts as a cover to keep the dust off the control desk and there on the front of that cover they had painted for themselves a vast STRAND ELECTRIC symbol. What a marvellous firm to belong to that can inspire such affection!

Colour Muse

We have often been asked to publish suggestions on the use of Cinemoid colour filters but have shied off this as being a matter too personal. However, the following notes were scribbled down during a discussion on colour between Philip Edwards and Dave Berrington, and they are appended as perhaps being of some use to amateurs. They both insist that these are only notes of the way they saw colour at the time they were talking about it.

Our reporter understands that in general they take Revue to include ballet and dance which use the strongest colours with greatest contrast. Likewise Opera tends to use strong rich blends of colour whereas Drama is more restrained, using paler colours.

The notes are published here as a starter for those who tremble on the brink and as a starter too for those who wish violently to disagree.

1 Sharp, acid yellow—revue lighting

2 Nice warm backlight—sense of sunlight. Combines well (in same colour frame) with all salmons and pinks.

3 Candle and lamp light. N.B.: turns some people green. Again combines well with salmons and pinks.

4 A stronger cross between 2 and 3.

5A Revues and pantomimes. Goes well on a stage with Cyan (16).

6 Primary red—firelight in heavy rich opera or stylised productions NOT naturalistic plays. Tends to be too orange for a real red.

7 Goes well (in same colour frame) with 2, 3 and 53 to enrich them. With a cloud slide a half colour in a frame gives lovely dawn effect.

8 Groundrow colour for dawns.

10 Pantomime or revues—"happy mood".

11 Daring version of 10. Useful on house tabs.

12 Useful on a chorus girl to make her body stocking disappear.

13 Revue—very nice on stage with rich Cyan (16) and ambers. (The three secondaries of course.)

14 Much more useful than six. Still too red for a realistic fire. If used in same frame as 27 produces "archivist red"—a deep vinous blood colour.

15 Moonlight for spectacular variety shows. Can also be used for bringing up stonework—e.g. produces a darker shadow on the set if used in ends of batten while acting area left in lighter tone. Used as nice Mediterranean sky colour in T.V.

16 As 15 only more so, marvellous for revue and ballet—especially sidelighting. See also 5A, 13, etc.

17 Cold acting area (this and 52 are the standard colours for drama), winter skies, etc. Very useful tint for any sense of chill. Tends to look green on check. Worth adding to moving clouds to prevent the yellowness usually present.

18 Top Cyclorama for daytime—or Moonlight if you want it to be spectacular.

19, 20 Heavy blues with a purplish tinge. 19 lets more light through. Avoid use in battens unless supplemented by double wattage lamps or two circuits in the same colour.

22, 23, 24 Follow spot for demon-king. Use the bluest green with the lower wattage lamps.

25, 26 Revue—with splashes of red and amber gives abstracts or effect of light from a stained glass window.

27 Use with 14 (q.v.) to produce the versatile "archivist red".

28 A funny colour that!

29 Frost—use as a diffuser to soften another colour and make it blend, e.g. when there isn't enough distance between groundrow and Cyclorama. N.B.: some loss of light as well as diffusion.

30 Clear—use as basis for Linnebach—stick rest of **design with acetone** (PVA adhesive). **Use as basis** for "slashed" colour in any lantern.

31 As 29 only less so.

32 As 18 only more so.

33 Good for fires—also a "kind" substitute for yellow.

34 Firelight on faces. Useful as general cover in 2-circuit battens with 41—revue.

35 Revue. Marvellous top Cyclorama, e.g. with 16 at bottom and a streak of 25/26 shot between the two. Also for sunsets and fires.

36 "Surprise pink" beloved of aged actresses and principal boys—especially effective on amber make-up. At check tends to pull out reds in face and costume. Can join either the pinks or the blues depending on general cover and tones in well. Plays havoc with green scenes in pantomimes.

38 Ghosts—actual or "imagined" (especially against rich warm general lighting) Gas lighting.

39 Primary Green.

40 Cold skies—(colder than 18) *can* be used as moonlight but rather green.

41 Sky—blends with 17 in other circuit of batten (see also 34).

42 Like 36 only more so.

45 17 only more so. Called daylight but used by some for moonlight! Turns very green on check.

46 Effect of sodium street lighting (approx.).

50 Sharp morning, winter sunlight. Contrasts well with a cold acting area (e.g. one lit in 17).

51, 52, 53, 54 These are straight play colours for standard general cover. All mix well with pinks subtractively. 53 and 54 are said to "boudoir" the light—whatever that may mean!

55, 56, 60 Murk lighting
- Dark Murk.
- Yellow, fog-like murk.
- Reduces intensity while preserving colour temperature.

61 Very kind moonlight—operatic and gentle—allows the reds to tell.

62 Spectacular use Night skies; in small quantities goes well with reds and ambers.

67 17 only less so—goes grey on check instead of green. Very cold—early morning and rather directionless light is this colour.

68 Somewhere between 40 and 61. Good on Cyclorama's for winter sky.

AND DON'T FORGET YOU CAN USE OPEN WHITE

Not all the Cinemoid colours appear above. Incidentally there is now one more—69 Ariel blue—very pale and dry devised for television colour temperature correction (Ed).

Peter Cheeseman talks around Lighting*

The next thing is to consider the lighting arrangements. Looking at the section, we've got to the side walls and the ceiling, which is after all where you're going to house the lighting; so if we first of all stick to what you have *here then we could perhaps muse on what you would* like *to have had—if it's not quite right in this case.*

Well, as we had to adapt an existing building very cheaply the concept was of two concentric rectangles—one outside the acting area, the other inside the acting area. In other words there were traps in the ceiling, and these provided apertures with catwalks. This meant that broadly speaking the outer rectangle was lighting the actors on the outside of the acting area as they faced outwards and the inner rectangle was lighting the actors from the inside. Now we couldn't have the outer rectangle in the roof; we had to make it a wall bar because the roof came down so low on the sides. I think Stephen agreed later that he'd made a mistake here; we could have just got it in, but it didn't seem so at the time.

The shape of the roof is a legacy from its cinema days.

Yes. What we could do with the building was only pretty superficial. We just didn't have the money to do what would have been ideally possible. The problem that we have inherited is that the angle across the acting area of lighting hung from a wall bar is too low; it's nearer 30° than 45°. The result is that we get a long shadow and, in order to light an actor who is facing outwards towards the lantern, we tend to splash behind him far too far. In fact we always say we will take it to thigh height on the front row of the other side, because there are often quite nice thighs in the audience as well.

Which raises a question. What about that front row, is it level with the stage or stepped up?

It's one step—about 7½ ins.—above it. There are times, however, when we put an audience on the stage level. We've had special bench seats made and, if we want to make the definition between the play and the audience as it were ragged, by the interposition of feet of varying lengths onto the acting area, we put these bench seats in and this gives an interestingly informal quality.

And of course with luck nice thighs also.

Even nearer, yes! One of the advantages of theatre-in-the-round.

In the new theatre what do you imagine your ceiling would be in order to give you the ideal lighting positions?

Well, it is very hard to know. I think if one works on the principle of two concentric ellipses this will be a starting point. I think we would probably interpose more concentric traps—as many as we could afford. The fact is that our scenic costs are very low because our main scenery is lighting and sound and up to a point the more complex our lighting is—and I don't think we'd ever end up as complex as some London set-ups or University set-ups—it is a saving. We've found lighting and sound to be our most exciting scenery, so that I think we would elaborate as much as we could afford in terms of lighting positions —just gearing them to the number of catwalks we could afford and so on.

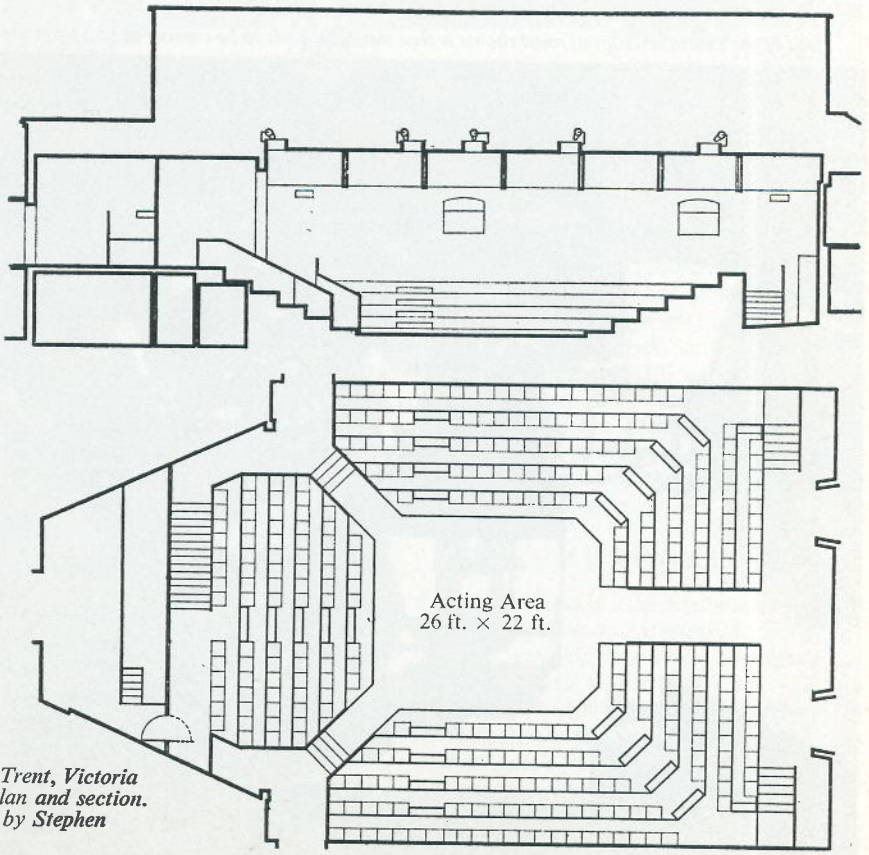
Of course as it works out here you've got quite an amount of ceiling, do you imagine that in your new theatre you'd make this open catwalks or would you try and provide some sort of concealment—at least for some of the lights?

I don't know. At the moment I am just beginning to discuss with the architect how we are going to do the whole thing. The walls behind the audience, the ceiling and the floor of the acting area are, in theatre-in-the-round, the most important scenic areas. I think there is a point which comes above the audience's normal eye-line, so that when they're watching the actor there is a kind of subliminal area above the actor's head where a shape or a colour will register and contribute to the actor's performance. Once you go beyond that it just needs to be blackable-out or so low key so that the audience doesn't see it—bearing in mind that sometimes the actor is going to be lifted up. This is normally to a maximum of about 3 ft. to 4 ft. except for instance in *Moby Dick* where we've got one or two people climbing up rigging; that's unusual so at that point the audience's eyes go up. These are the only considerations.

Of course human beings tend to prefer to look level or down rather than up; it is a real effort to bend the neck.

When I was here before, the thing I remember particularly was you talking about your use of lighting for atmosphere so I'd like to come to that eventually but I think just for the moment we should clear up this business of illumination, of lighting the actors to be seen. Then we can go on to atmosphere and effects afterwards. Taking that course we come to the famous question of how many areas you divide the stage into and how many spots you put on each area.

Well we found in practice we evolved a vocabulary for lighting our shows here, out of Stephen's original system and in our effort to overcome one of the illumination difficulties of the low-angle wall bars that I've described. In theory we should be able to cover the stage with four areas; in other words if you just divide the rectangle equally into four



*Stoke-on-Trent, **Victoria** Theatre plan **and section.** Designed by **Stephen** Joseph.*

This article is the second part of a transcript from an interview with the Director of the Victoria Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, recorded there by the Editor.

smaller constituent rectangles—bisect it twice, i.e. quarter it—we put a basic illumination of four lanterns onto each one of those areas. Now we find that in practice because the walls are so low it leaves us with a slightly deader patch in the centre so we make it five, Thus we have what we call areas 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, and 5 is centre, and in fact we normally patch our board so that channels 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 are always at those basic areas.

Taking shall we say just one area, how would the lights be situated therefore to light that area?

If you posit the centre of the area, you draw lines from the corners and stand an actor in the middle. He should then be lit from four sides though we would always favour him a little as he moved towards that lantern. We would try and cover him a bit more from that aspect but broadly speaking the aim would be to light him evenly throughout that whole area.

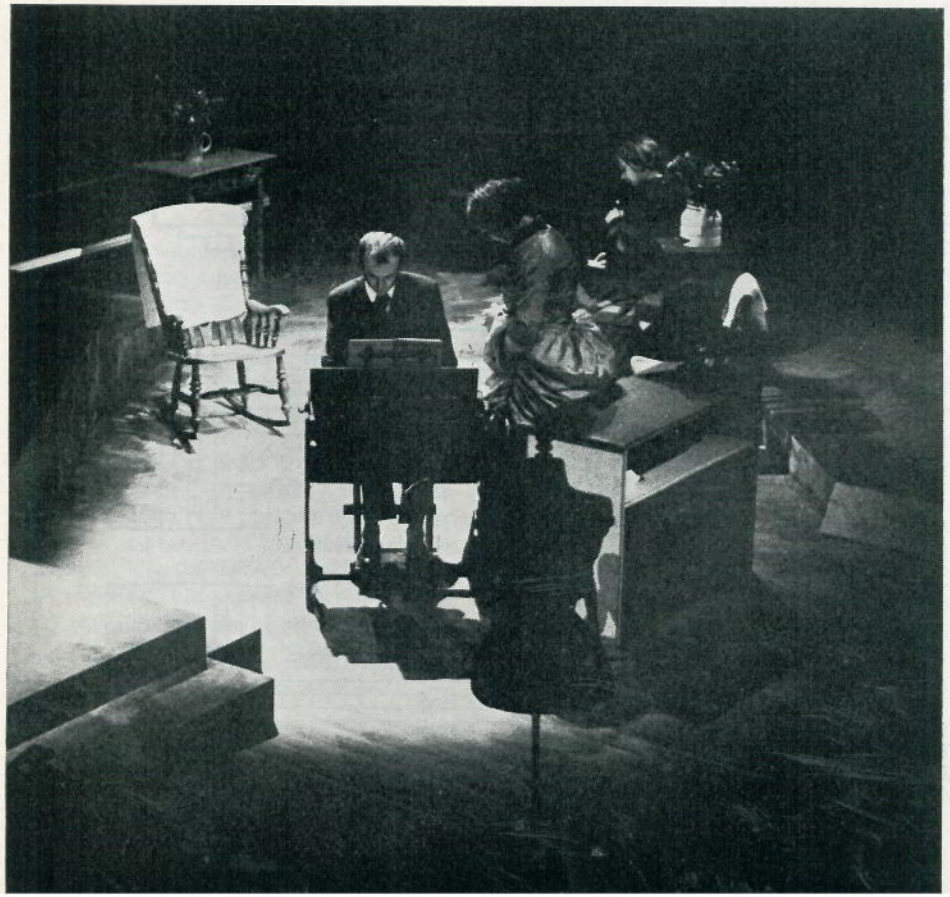
But how many lanterns have we now got? When you patch 1, 2, 3 . . .?

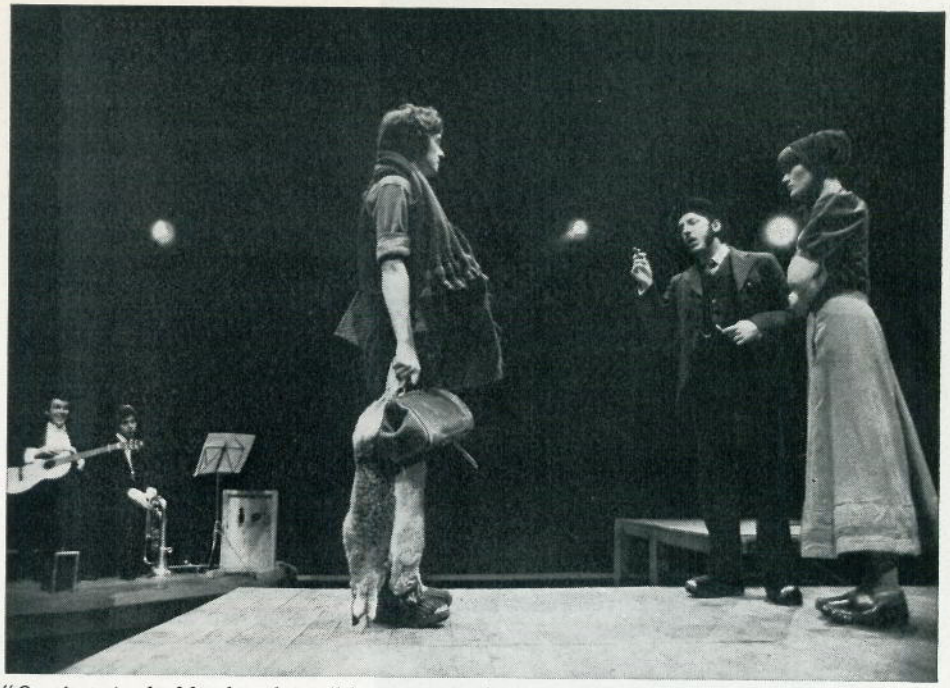
That's four to each area; the fifth area is really a supplementary in the centre and under normal circumstances we try and colour those up to give some kind of basic tone. Sometimes we find they are quite adequate illumination for a scene but as often as not they're the basic illumination.

Can you get at them to change colours during a show and, if you can, do you?

We can the ones in the roof, but we don't.

". . . one of the characteristics of most rooms is that the light tends to be coming at you from overhead."





"One just simply felt when the wall bars were on that one was in an exterior."

So we're using how many lamps just for the purpose of illumination?

Twenty lamps at 500W each and of those eight are Patt. 23 profiles and the other twelve are Patt. 123 Fresnels.

The 123s are they the on-stage lamps?

Well, we've found with the ones that are coming from the low wall bars, that if we used Patt. 123s we tend to get a bit too much scatter in the auditorium and so we use Patt. 23s because they scatter less. Those are the ones which are actually hung from bars in the auditorium. From the roof we find we don't get quite the same scatter problem, so there are just the eight on the walls—that's four on each side.

I should say that this grouping of the lamps is one of the things that characterises our lighting set-up. We have an SP20/2 and we've got ten 2kW channels and ten 1kW channels. Now for a theatre like ours it sounds fairly simple, but the fact is that if we patch in fours then for an awful lot of our lighting we are grouping. Because it's theatre-in-the-round we have usually got to light the actor from more than one aspect—certainly for the illumination we've just got to patch together. There is only a marginal advantage in having separate control through each lantern. Stephen's great motto—and I'll carry it with me to my grave—was, "Keep it simple!" In the end it's the actor who counts and elaboration of lighting beyond a certain point we found to be quite unnecessary, a snare and a delusion I would call it, though for us (if you keep it simple) lighting is of prodigious importance.

I remember having a discussion with Stephen Joseph on this because it really mucked me up. He told me this just after I designed the Junior 8 board which only gives you two circuits patched on each dimmer and there was his theatre-in-the-round needing a four circuit patch—which I am afraid I was unscrupulous enough to let go by.

Two further things arise. Are you playing repertoire or, if not repertoire, are you doing

". . . it is one of the things about theatre-in-the-round that people later tell you about things that were simply not there."

block seasons where presumably you might have rehearsal or a different show in the afternoon. How would you put such shows on?

Fortunately local circumstances help the crewing problem. We've found that we can get all the advantages of repertoire and can minimise the crewing disadvantages if we play repertoire in one week chunks. The huge advantage of repertoire is that an actor is playing his roles in the context of other roles. Our average run of a play now is four to five weeks but this is split up into four separate weeks, this is our normal programme pattern. Now we get the advantages of repertoire if we do that and yet we don't get the tremendous disadvantages of having to keep prodigious crews or of having the auditorium constantly in use for re-rigging and so on. Under normal circumstances Monday morning is spent on the rig for the show that's coming in that week with Monday afternoon as dress rehearsal and the new show comes in that evening.

I met a customer, so to speak, of yours, who looks after the boatyard and filling station on the canal just by a lock called Hoo Mill Lock, and he was saying he was surprised that you didn't put on more shows during the year. This sounds like a successful theatre that can run its shows rather long.

Well we put on between twelve and fourteen but I think there are very, very few people who come to all of them.

I remember sitting in the theatre when I was here before and you told me how you could light for atmosphere—how you conveyed, for instance, that the stage was an interior or an exterior largely by lighting "outside in" or "inside out". Would you like to dwell on that?

Sometimes, as in the best of worlds, accidents teach you extraordinary things and these low wall bars that we've got have the interesting effect that if you are sitting in any seat the light coming from the wall bars is fairly low. It's within what I call that subliminal zone at the top of the focus of the eye where you can sense it and so there is light coming at you at your level. Now I myself and the other directors I work with (mostly actors on my staff) discovered gradually that, to get the atmosphere of an interior, the wall lights are a nuisance. They often make you feel as if you're outside because the light is coming at you from low down, whereas one of the characteristics of most rooms is that the light tends to be coming at you from overhead. One just simply felt when the wall bars were on that one was in an exterior and it was almost a kind of symbolic thing. In fact we've invented a switch-over system on the board to cut the wall components of our basic areas by a switch throw when we want an interior and it does give a slight element of flexibility in our patching. It was invented by Richard Smerdon, one of our previous senior stage managers, as a mod when we put in the SP20. This switch panel isolates or cuts off two components of channels 1 to 4 and it means that without repatching you can put up say channel one and lose the wall components.

The whole period of naturalism in the theatre is going—thank goodness, because it's had many boring attributes, and I think that one can start to use design, if you like in an abstract way. For instance, I know that all you have to do is to have an actor on a stage and to associate some kind of visible quality with him, say a colour. You don't have to have him lying on a pile of sand to make you feel that he is on a beach. It perhaps needs the colour of beach or the sound of sea somewhere near him and as far as the audience is concerned, providing the actor talks or behaves like that, they imagine him totally at the seaside and it's not an effort. Now I think that thinking in terms of the stimulating quality of light and sound is in a sense a commonplace, but in theatre-in-the-round you're constantly confronted with this situation. You are forced very excitingly to consider design as an abstract thing so that you might say, "I will have an actor on a black—because I want the stage black but at points I will illuminate a huge yellow square on the walls". It sounds Chinese, you know; it sounds completely symbolic but it is infinitely more than a symbol because if you have enough yellow you are there. Or, for instance, we seem to end up—probably because we are an island race—doing a lot of plays taking place in or on the sea and we are doing one now, *Moby Dick*. I know jolly well that if I put a lot of blue in the wall bars so that you can see that from the audience and the actors are talking about being at sea, you'll see it, yet there's no waves painted on a back cloth.

No, and no Rank Strand ripples rippling on a back cloth!

No—but I'll add one thing here, it is one of the extraordinary things about theatre-in-the-round that people, after they have seen a show, several months later tell you about things that were simply not there.

Of course the one thing they must look at is the floor. How far do you change the floor cloth?

Oh, we do that for every show. The most important scenic component of the set is the floor. One of our biggest problems is reflection off it, especially with the low angle—I'm coming back to the wall bars again. Unless we use some kind of special, textured, floor surface like dyed hardboard (or we dye a canvas with Van Dyke crystals or something like that) you know that from a certain low angle obviously you get a tremendous shine off it. Nevertheless the floor is the most important piece of scenery we have and, as the auditorium is reasonably steeply raked, most of the audience are seeing the actor against quite a lot of floor for most of the time.

Presumably cutting off the outside lights was a broad effect but what about specific effects? You have talked generally about colour, but how far can you rig special effects? I don't mean moving effects, I mean single spots and so on for special purposes.

Well, I talked about the vocabulary we've evolved and one could generalise about all our shows because we try to keep the crewing situation simple. We have a total technical and design crew of nine and that includes a designer and assistant designer, a wardrobe mistress and assistant wardrobe mistress and a production secretary. There is a senior stage manager, one stage manager, who operates the lights and rigs them, one who looks after sound, and one for props. His colleagues will

help the lights man in the rigging (as will the Director) but there is only one man on the lights and he does all the maintenance of them. We're a very small crewed theatre.

This is the true Stephen tradition, isn't it!

Well it's pretty well necessitous. As everybody knows, if you are dealing with a re-rig, it can take you anything up to fifteen or twenty minutes to move a lantern but to re-colour and re-focus it takes about five. So ideally you want to put your lanterns in positions where they are most generally useful and have a basic vocabulary of lanterns which you never shift and reduce the number of specials to as few as you can. Moreover it's very common for us to do plays with more than 20 or 30 scenes in them; our house style is a narrative style. Unless we are doing a conventional classic like Ibsen's *Ghosts* most of our shows tend to be like the plots for Shakespeare with a hell of a lot of scenes in them, so we have had to evolve a vocabulary system—otherwise the lighting would become inordinately complex.

Now an average show would use channels 1–5 as basic areas with some kind of colour tone. We might have them open white or we might have a little of the 51 to 54 range, just to correct if you like the deficiencies of filaments. Then we will start to move on to other area specials. We may have two or three channels on what we call "area specials" but more often we have a set of what we call colour specials. We well may have three or four circuits which are one colour—like blues, ambers, yellows, greens—these are usually two lamps placed diametrically opposite to one another (sometimes four if the colour is very important). As we go up the numberings on the board, we try and preserve these colour groupings from show to show so that plots are easier to read as we go from one show to another. You know where to find a particular lantern; you haven't got the chaos of one director doing one thing and others the other. We try and base it from the left to the right and each show's patching plot gets more and more unusual the further you get towards number 20. Then we will start to go into complete specials. These may be double (two lamps on one area) or single. We use quite a lot of single specials—a punch spot that we only need for one particular scene, especially if the actor's moving to the outer edge of the acting area or to a corner—all kinds of

"*. . . the floor is the most important piece of scenery we have.*"

specials. Sometimes it may be a very hot special. For instance, all except four of our lanterns are half kilowatt units but we got ourselves two Patt. 223s and two Patt. 264s so that we can really blast some hot spot into a scene when we want it—if we want to have a specially hot day for instance. But you see you have to bear in mind that we are doing things like *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, following the story from beginning to end and including scenes like her coach ride with Alec or the four girls being carried across the river. We will do these scenes, it is one of the things that we do here—or *1861 Whitby Lifeboat Disaster* one scene of which takes place in the middle of the sea, or *Moby Dick* all of which takes place at sea—and we aren't even pretending we're a group of actors doing it, we're acting sailors. We will constantly do plays structured like Shakespeare, say *Anna of the Five Towns* in which there are scenes in a kitchen, scenes in a factory, scenes of a walk on a hill, scenes at a Sunday School treat, holiday at the Isle of Man and those are, if you like, twelve out of thirty-six scenes in a show.

When we did *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, however, we needed a whole lot of country effects. We quite often used a tree dapple effect, a simple mask cut out to show light shining through trees with a lot of green.

A Gobo.

There's one question I think a lot of people would like to ask. When you are talking about the famous 1–2–3–4–5, do you ever vary the general wash of light from those lanterns among itself? If you're going for a 52 so to speak, are the four lamps all 52?

It depends tremendously. Sometimes we feel we need to stop down the ones on the wall by putting a 52 in them otherwise they're too glaring. No—we'll vary that tremendously because for instance it's very easy to re-colour a rig. That means that there's 20 lanterns that you only need to do a very quick check of and you just need to slip in a new colour.

Yes, I was afraid that we might convey that there are 20 lanterns all in the one colour.

No, we will vary the colouring of those constantly.

So the range goes from the groups of four areas to fewer and fewer specials and through a set of colour specials. For one scene you might have say one of the basic areas at full, toned by one of the colour circuits and punched through by a couple of specials. Now if you mould it all round that, we find you've got an almost infinite variation.

When we did the documentary, we used this system of a vocabulary because if the play isn't written until three days before opening night you've got to have a vocabulary that can accommodate to anything. So what we did for that was to have our five basic areas and then we had two or three colour circuits available. Finally we covered the stage with specials so that we had about ten specials and broadly speaking we could get any combination of effects that we wanted. That documentary mostly took place either in the desert or in Italy, so that meant that we could do with a lot of blast light and a certain amount of ambers for the yellowness of sun and sand. . . .

What documentary was that then?

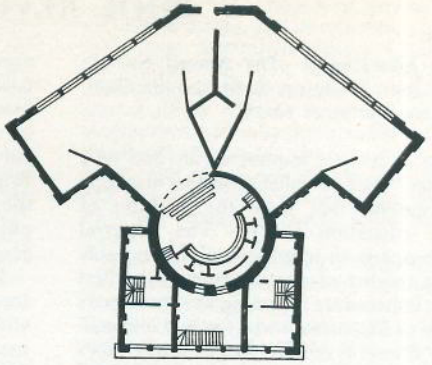
That was *Hands Up, For You the War is Ended*, which was about the capture by Rommel of our local newsagent and his escape.

I see, I always associate your documentaries with something local and I see this is!

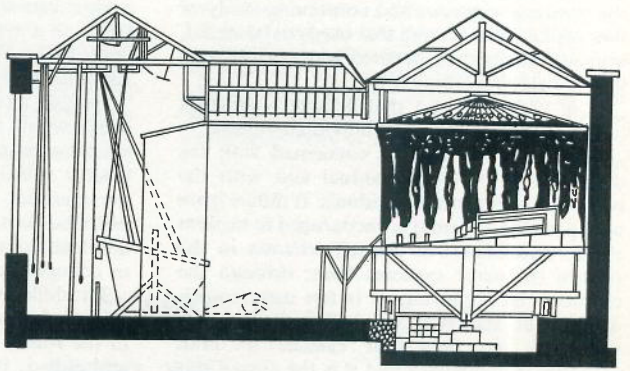
This was a local man at war.

Daguerre et la Lumière

The Diorama is a delightful piece of artistical illusion, and of very recent origin; the authors are M. Daguerre, since so famous for his discovery of drawing by the agency of light, and M. Bouton. When the Diorama was first exhibited in the French capital, the Parisians were in an ecstasy, and in London its welcome was scarcely less enthusiastic. This took place in 1823, when the building in the Regent's Park, erected from the designs of Messrs. Morgan and Pugin, was first opened. The interior consists of a rotunda 40 ft. in diameter, for the spectators, with a single opening, like the proscenium of a stage on one side. Surrounding this is another rotunda with a similar opening, through which—as the inner rotunda revolves till the openings in the two rotundas correspond—the spectators behold the picture in the picture-room beyond. For convenience there are in fact two openings in the outer rotunda, revealing two different picture-rooms, in order that two paintings may be exhibited to the visitors, by merely turning the inner rotunda from one opening to the other. Those who have not beheld the extraordinary scenes that open, the eye, with each gyration of this platform, can hardly credit the extent to which illusion is here carried. The spectator stands in almost total darkness, till through the proscenium, the picture is revealed to his gaze, which is placed at such a distance, that light can be thrown upon it in front at a proper angle from the roof, which is here too, of course, hidden from him. He sees, therefore, nothing but the picture, which, under such circumstances, acquires an extraordinary beauty and reality of appearance. And as the glazed roof will admit a great deal of light, whilst but little is needed merely to show the work, the exhibitor may be said to have an almost unlimited store of light at his disposal, enabling him from time to time to subdue or increase it, and suddenly or gradually, at his pleasure, by means of folds or screens of different kinds attached to the glass roof; and which also enable him at the same time to imitate the most subtle and delicate atmospheric effects. But there is even yet another advantage possessed by the painter in this very beautiful exhibition. He can make parts of his picture transparent, and with different degrees of transparency, thus obtaining a brilliancy impossible to be obtained by the ordinary mode, whilst he possesses all the strength and solidity of that mode in the more opaque parts of his picture. With this preliminary explanation let us pay our two shillings in the vestibule of the exhibition, ascend the stairs, and submit ourselves to the guidance of the attendant waiting to receive and conduct us to a seat through the darkness-visible of the theatre, into which we enter; a precaution rendered necessary by the transition from light to gloom, which at first almost incapacitates us for the use of our own eyes. In front opens, receding apparently like the stage of a theatre, a view of the beautiful basilica or church of St. Paul, with its range of delicate pillars and small Moorish-like connecting arches at the top, over which again the entire flat surface of the wall appears covered with beautiful paintings, now lit up by the radiance of the moon streaming in through the windows on the opposite side. This is the church erected by Constantine the Great, over the supposed resting-place of St. Paul, and which was burnt down in 1823; since which period great efforts have been made for its restoration; the work, we may add, is still in progress. But as we gaze—the dark cedar roof disappears, and we see nothing but the pure blue Italian sky, whilst below, some of the pillars have fallen—the floor is covered with wrecks; the whole, in short, has almost instantaneously changed to a perfect and mournful picture of the church after the desolation wrought by the fire. A bell now rings, we find ourselves in motion; the whole theatre in which we sit, moves round till its wall closes the aperture or stage, and we are in perfect darkness; the bell rings again, a curtain rises, and we are looking on the time-worn towers, transepts, and buttresses of Notre Dame, its rose window on the left, and the water around its base reflecting back the last beams of the setting sun. Gradually these reflections disappear, the warm tints fade from the sky, and are succeeded by the cool grey hue of twilight, and that again by night—deepening by insensible degrees till the quay and the surrounding buildings and the water are no longer distinguishable, and Notre Dame itself scarcely reveals to us its outlines against the sky. Before we have long gazed on this scene the moon begins to emerge slowly—very slowly, from the opposite quarter of the heavens, its first faint rays tempering apparently rather than dispersing the gloom; presently a slight radiance touches the top of one of the pinnacles of the cathedral—and glances as it were athwart the dark breast of the stream; now growing more powerful, the projections of Notre Dame throw their light and fantastic shadows over the left side of the building, until at last, bursting forth in serene unclouded majesty, the whole scene is lit up, except where the vast Cathedral interrupts its beams, on the quay here to the left, and where through the darkness the lamps are now seen, each illumining its allotted space. Hark! the clock of Notre Dame strikes! and low and musical come the sounds—it is midnight—scarcely has the vibration of the last note ceased, before the organ is heard, and the solemn service of the Catholic church begins—beautiful, inexpressibly beautiful—one forgets creeds at such a time, and thinks only of prayer: we long to join them. And yet all this is illusion (the sounds of course excepted)—a flat piece of canvas, with some colours distributed upon it, is all that is before us; though where that canvas can be seen, it seems, to one's eyes at least, impossible to determine; *they* cannot by any mental processes be satisfied that buildings, distance, atmosphere are not before them—to such perfection has the Diorama been brought.



Plan of Diorama. Building showing circular auditorium and two stages.



Section showing one stage on left and auditorium on right.

Abstract from Knight's London, *Chapter CXLIII, Exhibitions of Art, by J. Saunders. Published 1844. Research by Brian Legge.*

BOOK REVIEWS

Drama in Education I—The Annual Survey. Edited by John Hodgson & Martin Banham. Published by Pitman at £2.25.

This book, as its title implies, is the first of a series. It has "tried to collect together the facts and information that state the position of drama in education today". The editorial advisory board is an international and notable one whilst the list of contributors to the first volume is impressive, including the Professors and Heads of Departments of the five universities where drama is read as well as many other eminent people from the theatre and from education.

The editors state that they have the first five volumes of the series planned and that the overall aim is to "serve as a central forum for the growing, vigorous and continuing study of everything and anything that needs to be stated, argued, exercised or debated wherever anyone in this field is working".

It is with this aim that I have misgivings rather than with this first individual volume.

Drama in education is concerned with the development of the individual and with the relationship between individuals. It differs from acting in that the child is encouraged to explore these relationships as himself whereas in the theatre the actor explores them through the character he is playing. It is not mere coincidence that the very word "play" has two meanings; an important essence in both activities is immediacy and it is the aim of this series to be immediate. This is surely the aim of a conference rather than a book for in a conference, debate and argument can flow back and forth immediately whereas in a series such as this, however controversial may be an idea that it put forward in one volume, by the time the next is published it will be stale, forgotten or even out-of-date.

This first volume is divided into five main sections—Views and Opinions, From the Past to the Present, Drama in Further Education, Drama inroads into Education, and Ideas, Projects, Materials. In the 241 pages there are no less than forty-eight separate contributions, some as short as a single sentence (Example: "Improvisation is the curse visited upon education"—a sentence that means absolutely nothing in isolation) as well as photographs and drawings. Some articles are directly contradictory (no bad thing) whilst others are much too short to mean anything on their own. For a book which is concerned with the position of drama in education *today*, it is surely an odd balance for an article by Dorothy Heathcote—in which she queries the present drama training in colleges of education and proposes a new curriculum—to take two and a half pages when Brian Wilks' "Joyful Game" where he traces the growth of the teaching of drama over the past 50 years via official reports should take seventeen pages.

The drawings and photographs in the book seem to bear no relation with the text and, as with so many illustrations of dramatic activity, mean little to anyone other than the participants. The quality of some of the photographs leaves much to be desired and, whilst one appreciates the speed of printing the book (probably quicker than TABS as the typesetting is unregistered) and its relatively low cost, it was surely not necessary to reduce the index to a type size which almost warrants a microscope. Why an index, anyway—the list of contents is surely adequate?

I would like to think that this book, and the series, would be read by those who are using or teaching drama, but I fear that the average teacher will only dip vaguely into it. Much of the material is covered in greater depth by other books (of which a mere eight are listed) and many of these will already be on the school or college bookshelf.

It is difficult to see where Drama in Education I fits in, but to those with £2.25 to spare, some of the Ideas, Projects, Materials will be useful and already it has appeared on one College of Education lecturer's coffee table!

PETER HUSBANDS

Theatre Buildings in Australia to 1905, by Ross Thorne. Architectural Research Foundation, University of Sydney, NSW.

Some of our readers at any rate will be aware that the business of building theatres in Australia at the present time is not without some political or personal difficulty, unless one is particularly fortunate.

It came as a surprise, in fact almost as a relief to me to discover that even in the tail end of the eighteenth century this was also the case. Ross Thorne, a senior lecturer at the University of Sydney, has compiled a remarkable collection of drawings, photographs and relevant detailed information on the planning, construction and history of Australia's early theatres and with a detailed bibliography this results in a two volume, 370 page, A4 size work of more general interest than would at first be imagined.

Broken Hill, home of the famous mining Company, boasted a dozen or so theatres in the early nineteen hundreds—admittedly not all to ABTT approved standards, but they were there. Compare this to Sydney at present where the only live theatre is in temporarily converted cinemas, except for some small drama centres and the inevitable poker machine subsidised clubs.

Apart from comments on the buildings themselves, Mr. Thorne describes various aspects and incidents concerning the people within "where in 1840 all kinds of unseemly behaviour, drunkenness and prostitution existed among the audience" to the point where actors almost required "protection from the audiences' tendencies to depravity"—which reminds me in reverse of comments about some present day stage offerings.

Few of the architectural wonders (in every sense) described still survive—fewer still in their original form—as witness the one time Sydney Hippodrome, originally an almost complete theatre-in-the-round with a 40 ft. diameter ring (arena) which could be lowered 12 feet for what must have been a form of water follies. At a capacity of 2000 seats it would hardly conform to current thinking on this theatre form, and after 12 years it was converted into a super cinema with atmospheric roof, indoor turrets and the lot. It has now been partly re-converted and houses the Sydney production of *Jesus Christ Superstar*!

The book has a wealth of general comment on theatre design, and its references cover much more than Australian theatre. Certainly food for thought by our present day Statutory Authorities in remarks such as "Building regulations which resulted from the enquiry (into theatre fires) virtually petrified the design of any theatre of reasonable size into the proscenium form, and these regulations still stand over half a century later"—a comment which I am sure will arouse sympathy from other countries.

Lighting warrants some attention, albeit that early references were not to lighting "by the electricity". Sunburners were used (cf. "Tabs" how long ago?) and gas installations were common—including some with their own gas production and storage. However, the Sydney Lyceum in 1891 had "one of the most complete electric light installations in Sydney" with "sufficient power to drive over 500 lights".

All in all a fascinating publication, and it seems, likely to attract a readership greater than the limited edition of 500 copies would imply.

I sincerely hope that Mr. Thorne will be able to continue his chronicle to the present day—an informed survey of Australian theatres to date would be an asset to those concerned with our future theatre homes, and would we hope avoid recurrence of some ghastly mistakes.

DENIS IRVING

Synopses

Running in—please pass!

La première soirée dans un nouveau théâtre semble particulièrement appartenir au bâtiment, car ce dernier dépend de ce qui se passe dans ses murs pour gagner la faveur du public. Avec cela en vue, l'Editeur conseille de présenter une pièce éprouvée le premier soir. La réussite est trop importante pour prendre des risques.

Die Premiere in einem neuen Theater scheint irgendwie zu dem Gebäude zu gehören, denn das Gebäude ist auf das Wohlgefallen des Publikums angewiesen welches wiederum von der Vorführung abhängt. Daher ist der Redakteur dafür, in solchem Falle ein gutbewährtes Stück zu wählen. Zu viel hängt von dessen Erfolg ab um anderen Gründen Vorzug zu gewähren.

Glistering Attack

Excité par sa note de gaz, l'Editeur se lance dans une attaque contre l'expert en marketing et met en garde ses lecteurs contre de belles paroles peut-être trompeuses et cachant une nouvelle inflation des prix.

Die Gasrechnung kommt und erregt in dem Redakteur einen Angriff gegen den Marktexpert. Er warnt den geneigten Leser vor schönen Worten, hinter denen sich falsche Gemüter und erhöhte Preise verstecken.

Orbi et Urbi

Cette année, deux collaborateurs de longue date de Strand Electric prendront leur retraite. L'un est le manager pour l'exportation, de réputation internationale; l'autre a été le premier à nous saluer dans le West End au cours des cinquante dernières années.

Zwei altbewährte Charaktere der Firma Strand Electric lassen sich pensionieren–der Eine, Vorstand der Exportabteilung, international beliebt und bekannt, der Andere, der uns in den vergangenen 50 Jahren im West End empfangen hat.

Change Ringing in Bristol

Un nouveau studio s'ouvre à Bristol dans le bâtiment qui abrite une des plus belles salles du 18e siècle en Angleterre. L'auteur y voit une occasion unique d'unir l'élégance du vieux style avec la vigueur du nouveau.

Ein neues Studiotheater wird in Bristol eröffnet. In demselben Gebäude befindet sich auch einer der schönsten, aus dem 18. Jahrhundert stammenden Zuschauersäle Grossbritanniens. Der Verfasser hofft, dass sich hier eine einmalige Gelegenheit bietet, Eleganz im alten Stil mit Energie im neuen Stil zu vereinigen.

A Relay Race for Voices

John Barber se demande si le fait pour un théâtre vivant de dépendre toujours davantage des moyens techniques n'en étouffe pas finalement la vie. Cet article a paru dans le Daily Telegraph.

John Barber fragt, ob sich das lebendige Theater in zunehmenden Masse zu sehr auf technische Mittel verlässt und so das Leben in diesen Theater ersticken lässt. Der Originalartikel ist im londoner Daily Telegraph erschienen.

Harrogate's Old New Theatre

Percy Corry décrit les grandes transformations et adjonctions réalisées au vieil Opera House d'Harrogate. Sans trop en altérer le style, le confort et les commodités de ce théâtre ont été grandement améliorés.

Percy Corry beschreibt den weitgreifenden Umbau des alten Harrogate Opernhauses, der nur ein Minimum von Störung dessen Stils und ein Maximum von extra Comfort und Nebengelass erreicht hat.

Who's Who and What's What

L'Editeur accueille avec joie la parution de deux bons ouvrages sur le théâtre: l'un sur les gens du théâtre, la 15e édition du "Who's Who in the Theatre" de Parker, l'autre relatif au théâtre en tant que bâtiment. Ce livre "Theatre Planning Book" de l'Association of British Theatre Technicians, est le premier à décrire de façon adéquate comment construire un théâtre. Comme ce sujet est davantage dans le cadre de TABS, il est traité plus en détail.

Der Redakteur begrüsst 2 Spezialwerke für Theater, das eine über Theaterpersönlichkeiten, die 15. Auflage von Parker's "Who's Who in The Theatre", das andere über Theatergebäude. Da das Letztere dem Inhalt von Tabs in grösseren Masse entspricht, wird diesem ersten wahren Lehrbuch über Theaterentwurf mehr Platz gewidmet. Es ist das von der Association of British Theatre Technicians herausgegebene "Theatre Planning Book".

Southern Cross

En Australie, Denis Irving a aidé à mettre sur pied la représentation de "Jésus-Christ Superstar" dans l'ancien cinéma Capitol à Sydney. Une modification appropriée de la scène, alliée à une ingénieuse mise en scène moderne, et un bon éclairage suggèrent sans autre la raison du succès de cette pièce jouée dans un cinéma de 2000 places et pourquoi elle pourrait être présentée ailleurs.

Denis Irving schreibt aus Australien über die Inszenierung von "Jesus Christ Superstar" in dem früheren Capitol Kino in Sydney. Die Beschreibung des für diesen Zweck extra ausgestatteten Theaters, der sinnvollen Kombination des modern ausgedrückten Bühnenbildes und der Beleuchtung macht klar, warum solch eine Inscenierung in einem Kino mit 2000 Plätzen als erfolgreich und für Tournee geeignet betrachtet werden kann.

Operation Opera

Frederick Bentham est enchanté du théâtre d'Usti en Tchécoslovaquie. Modeste dans son architecture et aménagement, son atmosphère est propice au drame, à l'opéra et au ballet, l'idéal pour cette ville.

Frederick Bentham gefällt das Theater in Usti in der Tschechoslovakei besonders gut. Es ist nicht zu gross und auch nicht zu üppig ausgestattet und die Atmosphäre fühlt sich gerade richtig für Dramen, Opern und Ballett. Das Ganze ist gerade richtig für die Stadt Usti.

Colour Muse

Opinion de deux hommes en particulier sur les filtres Cinémoïde de couleur et leur emploi.

Meinungen zweier Menschen über Cinemoid Farbfilter und zu welchen Zwecken sie sie benutzt haben.

Peter Cheeseman talks around Lighting

Second article sur l'interview avec Peter Cheeseman. Il y décrit en détail comment le problème de l'éclairage est traité dans son théâtre en rond, après dix ans d'expérience dans un tel cadre.

Der 2. Teil eines Interviews mit Peter Cheeseman, in welchem er genau beschreibt, wie sein Theater die Beleuchtung von Zentralbühnenvorstellungen vornimmt, worin seine in 10 jähriger Praxis erworbene Erfahrung zugelten kommt.

Daguerre et la Lumière

Un autre voyage dans le passé. Brian Legge a découvert une description du Diorama, écrite par J. Saunders en 1844.

Noch einen Ausflug in die Geschichte: Brian Legge hat eine Beschreibung des Diorama entdeckt, von J. Saunders in 1844 geschrieben.

Book Reviews

Peter Husbands examine le premier livre d'une nouvelle série. Il se demande si le meilleur forum pour examiner la capacité de communication du drame n'est pas tant la page imprimée que la salle de conférence.

Peter Husbands behandelt den ersten Band einer neuen Serie und fragt sich, ob der Konferenzsaal und nicht das gedrückte Wort das beste Podium für Auseinandersetzungen über die Unmittelbarkeit des Drama sei.

Denis Irving a lu le livre de Ross Thorne sur les théâtres australiens avant 1905.

Denis Irving's Kritik von Ross Thorne's Buch über das australische Theater vor 1905.

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