

Between Cues

The thoughts of
Walter Plinge

Plinge at a Showbinger

First night parties are getting bigger: soon the budget for the party will overtake the budget for the show itself. Already the cost of celebrating some West End openings must surely equal the annual subsidies of some of our regional theatres. To which there can only be one comment—*That's Showbiz*. But these binge's can provide opportunities for a shy retiring fellow like Walter Plinge. Now your Walter has often yearned to view the interior of the Lyceum Theatre. But could he of the leaden feet ever bring himself to enter a Palais de Danse? Correct! So how about a Lyceum party where the champagne flowed like a river in spate past mountains of cold cuts and feathery gateaux? Yes, an invitation definitely for acceptance. And an opportunity to observe that this theatre has not been despoiled. Apart from the careful removal of a couple of box fronts to accommodate stairs to the boarded-over stalls, the auditorium remains a theatre. The stage has a temporary ceiling to keep the ghosts at bay but otherwise the Lyceum graciously, if a touch reproachfully, awaits our eventual pleasure. But, having explored, Plinge did not linger. The party was in celebration of *Grease* and the sound (of a singer with the curious christian name of "Shakin" accompanied by a band with the courageous title of "Fumble" well this sound was amplified way above the thresholds of both pain and intelligibility. For the first time in the many weeks of our son et lumiere collaboration, the Musical Director and Sound Consultant were smiling in contentment. Was this the sound level that they had hoped to achieve in the theatre? If such was their ambition, then let us rejoice that it remained unfulfilled.

Balearic Horseshoes

Publishers of guide books and picture postcards do not, in general, regard old theatres as being part of an architectural heritage. The Balearic Islands are no exception, yet the traditional horse-shoe opera houses in Mahon and Palma are surely as interesting as some of the more obvious show-piece buildings. I did not succeed in penetrating the Mahon theatre—the film *Salon Kitty* was announced, but not until tomorrow. But the date (1824) and the British influence (sash windows) suggests that the interior might have some interest, even some clues, for the Georgian theatre buff—until one remembers that the British occupation of Menorca ended in 1802.

In Palma, the exterior of the Teatro Principal displayed scrubbed stonework and



Mahon without

fresh varnish. A ticket for a dancing school end-of-term one-night-stand revealed total restoration of a devastatingly beautiful Italianate Opera House. Five tiers of boxes. Everything red (seats, walls, partitions) except for the white tier fascias with their gold scroll-work, the painted ceiling and the centre clock crowning the proscenium arch. Oh, such a Teatro Principal should certainly be in the guide books and its picture postcard should be on sale—at least in the shop next door.



Palma within

Filtering for Posterity

We understand that candidates interviewed for a recent vacancy at the Theatre Museum were asked *If the museum were offered, say, the entire Visconti "Don Carlos"—sets, costumes, props, documents, everything—how would you advise the Curator?* We think that this just about sums up the basic problem of running a theatre museum and we offer no prizes for guessing which eminent mustachioed gentleman from the Victoria and Albert asked the question.

Something Else

The young are using a useful phrase capable of wider adoption by us elderly theatric diplomats. *Something else* can have completely opposite meanings dependent upon subtleties of intonation. When Plinge appeared in his holiday sun hat, he was met with *Oh dad, that hat is something else*. Plinge has not succeeded in identifying whether the intonation implied approval, but he has his suspicions.

Greasy Get In

Unorthodox theatres are great. Provided that the shows are designed specifically for them. London's Astoria is such a theatre and has a number of features—such as a grid over the forestage—that should give it an interesting future. But a conventional touring house it is not. Of course we got the show on but then we always do. (One of these days, however, we must surely fail.) However in this case, as the photograph shows, before the show could go on there was some trouble in getting it *in*.



Eau for a Perrier

July in Bristol was the time and place for the *World Wine Fair and Festival*. By coincidence, some Shakespearean matters happened to require my presence at that time and in that city. Rehearsal pressures kept me from the tastings, but I did slip into the Bristol New Vic Theatre for Michael