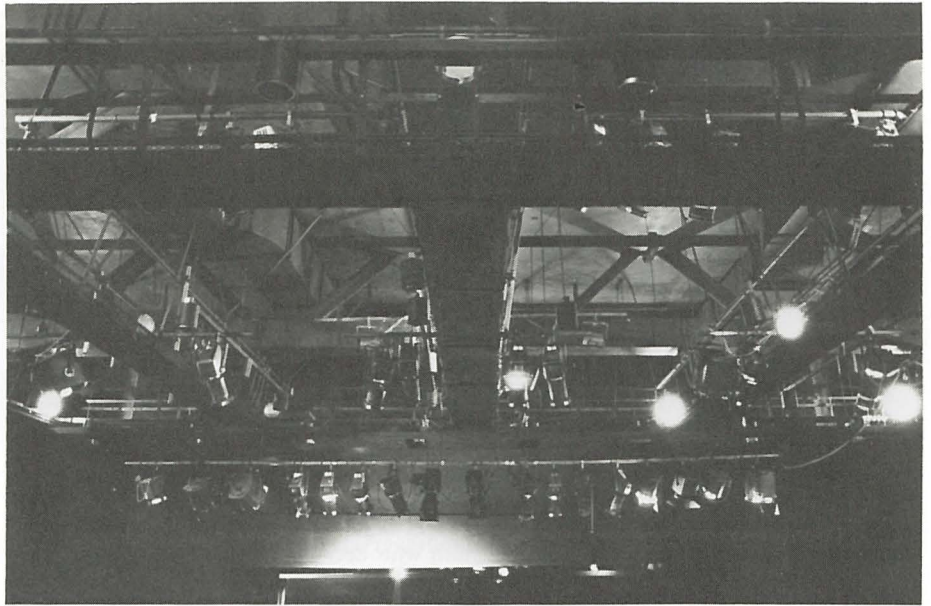


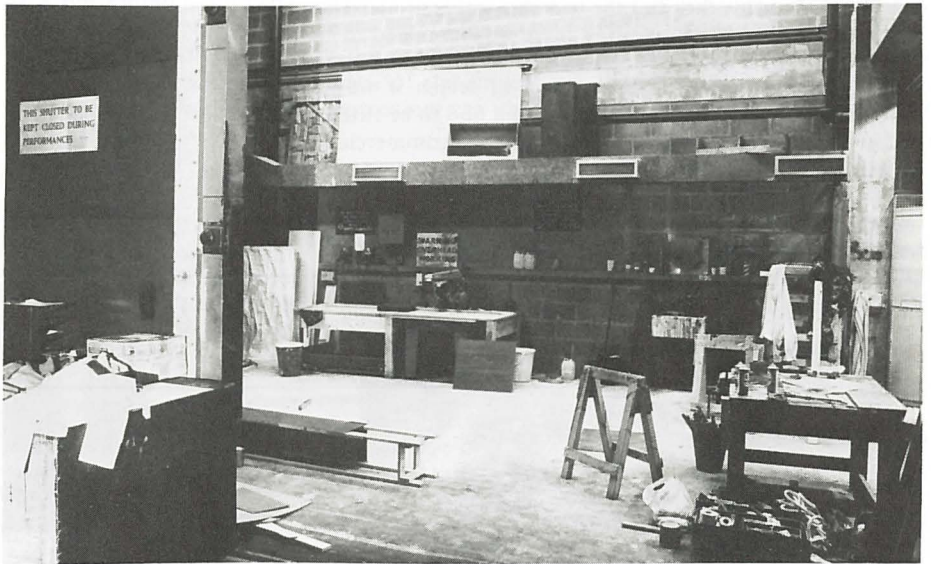
that the forestage is almost always left in place. The forestage can be removed to provide two extra rows of seats and an orchestra pit, should this facility be required. A surprising feature of this theatre, is that it has a fully operational fly tower, with a set of 24 double purchase counterweight lines, the fly gallery being stage left, with a reasonably unrestricted view of the stage. A single purchase set takes care of the house tabs, but it is unfortunate that the first three counterweight lines are permanently taken up with the inevitable massive cinema screen. Wing space is limited to around seven metres either side, but this would seem to be adequate for all but the most ambitious sets. The stage right wing houses the somewhat sparsely equipped prompt-corner, consisting of an elderly Strand Electric cue light panel, and an over-stretched Green Ginger intercom system, but I understand that this is to be changed in the near future, funds permitting. The stage right wing wall is, in fact, a large sliding door leading directly to the small workshop area and the aforementioned paint frame, which is of the moving bridge variety. This access is fine for the movement of scenery on and off stage, but totally precludes the using of the workshop during performances. I might add that a large number of theatre designers seem to share this particular blind spot, and the sooner this ludicrous practice of siting the workshop next to the stage is dropped, the happier a lot of actors, directors and technicians will be.

The workshop is small enough to prevent the building and storage of large stage pieces, but is nonetheless a useful addition to this theatre's amenities. A short walk through the pass door down under the stage gives access to the dressing room area, which consists of two small rooms that will hold 4 persons each, and two slightly larger areas that hold 9 and 14 people. I did not see a stage manager's area, although this may well exist. I hope it does, and that it is not too far from the stage. One thing that became apparent as we progressed around the building, was that the air conditioning system was very much of an afterthought. There are ducts everywhere, that restrict head height, and I spent a good deal of my time under the stage trying to avoid walking into them. The same is true of the ceiling of the house, and the profusion of ducts in the roof make negotiating the lighting catwalks over the auditorium a singularly unpleasant, not to say unsafe experience.

The F.O.H. lighting and sound position is to the right of the auditorium back wall, pride of place being given to the brand new Thorn Q Master 2000 lighting control that has been recently installed. The desk looked very imposing in its somewhat spartan surroundings, and I am sure it will prove invaluable in the forthcoming festival arrangements. Sound is somewhat less well served, there being only one Revox A77, a Garrard record deck, and a Chilton 10-2 mixing desk. Amplification is via an Amcron D60, and there are a pair of Bose 801 speakers mounted either side of the pros. It was good to see that there is a



*The Collegiate is adequately equipped with fully operational fly tower and lighting gallery.*



*The workshop area boasts one of the few paint frames available for hire in central London.*

multicore connection system, allowing the mixing desk to be taken in to the auditorium if required. I was told that additional sound equipment can be 'provided' if necessary and there is a comprehensive G.P.O. type jack patching-bay available for routing and inter-equipment connection.

As previously mentioned, there is a lighting gallery above the auditorium, this being accessible from the control room, but its usefulness is impaired by the air conditioning ducts, and extra lighting barrels are frequently hung beneath it, to obtain better lighting conditions.

At the centre back auditorium position is the fully equipped 35mm and 16mm projection room; again not as palatial as some I have seen, but perfectly adequate for the needs of the theatre. The room was well laid out, and spotlessly clean and tidy, once again a tribute to the technical running of the theatre. Equipment comprises 2 Phillips 35mm F.P. 20 projectors, recently converted to 2Kw, Xenon lamps, and a rather splendid Zeiss Favourit 16B 16mm projec-

tor. I was rather surprised to see that a Dolby A cinema sound system is fitted, as there are few commercial cinemas that have taken this commendable step.

The auditorium can seat over 500, and is arranged as a two level system, with the stall seating 445 maximum, and the gallery 154. Apart from the colour scheme, which is a little drab, the overall effect is very pleasing, and provided that proper use is made of the forestage, I imagine that the theatre could be a very pleasant venue for the multiplicity of uses to which it is put.

All in all then, a useful deviation from the normal type of university theatre, largely, I suspect because of the people who run it; well equipped and, apart from a certain sparseness about the decor, and the dreadfully offputting shabbiness of the coffee-bar, a pleasant space to be in. I wish the Drama Festival the very best of luck in their venture, and I don't think that they could be better served by their theatre. Oh, and by the way, they won't have any trouble banging nails into the floor!