

REMEMBERING the hours, literally hours, of detailed mostly subliminal acting area light balancing at the request of a voluble Italian director while Osbert waits to say, almost apologetically, 'could I be a frightful bore and ask to see the sky in a touch, just a touch, deeper blue' . . .

REMEMBERING throughout a man of wit, elegance and patience. . . .

THERE! You see, although I failed to get to the retrospective exhibition, the mere thought of the exhibits was enough to stimulate rosy recall!

Street Television

Montreal, in winter, is an underground city. There is an extensive sub-strata of interconnecting metro stations and shopping malls which ensure that any confrontation with chill-factor at street level need only be nominal. There is an absence of buskers and more formal street theatre in this underground society but amidst the hustle and bustle a daily TV magazine programme rehearses and transmits in a performance space hollowed out from a principal shopping concourse.

Postcard Opera

It was a short announcement in *Opera* magazine that first alerted me to the major publishing event of the architectural year. For months I eagerly and hopefully scanned the theatre bookshop bookshelves. I was not disappointed. The *Opera House Album* is a collection of turn-of-the-century postcards discovered in a Viennese bookshop by Charles Osborne and annotated by him for this lovely little book. They are, regretfully but predictably, all exterior photographs – archival material on theatre interiors is sadly scarce. Several of the pictured theatres recall fond memories for me: particularly *Hannover* which was one of my local opera houses (the other was Bielefeld) during an extended tour (by Royal Command) in the chorus of NATO. It was in Hannover that I saw my first asymmetric *Così*, discovered *Matrimonio Segreto* (but called, of course, *Heimliche Ehe*) and became a fan of the young Christa Ludwig. I recall a sparkling circular auditorium (new within the old shell) dominated by ceiling high tabs which opened wider than one's cone of vision from most of the stalls. But is distance lending enchantment . . . must go back!



Seeing the Music

Air Somebody's in-flight mag once made me feel quite inadequate by printing a claim by a media-favoured (and media-flavoured) journalist that any half-decent writer's travel tab could be covered by in-flight scribbles. I have never received the inspiration to cover as much as a tot of duty-free gin. Until today when I am inspired (curiously, while travelling in the complimentary liquor cabin) to report the following from *Air Somebody Else's* in-flight mag –

No one in his senses goes to a concert to hear music at its best. Live music cannot compete with recorded as to balance and finish. But nothing can compare with the thrill of experiencing music together with others. To say nothing of seeing and being seen. It was an architect what said it and he has just built a concert hall and I kid you not. So you agree with him, huh? Oh, dear.

Informeel

Concertgebouworkest

As a concertgoer I am always happiest when the band are dressed as casuals rather than as waiters. So I enjoyed a lovely wallow in Mozart at an informal sit-anywhere with Harnoncourt and the Concertgebouw. Harnoncourt's treatment of tempi and dynamics may be personal, even cavalier, but his approach to timbres and textures is sensually tingling. Although Amsterdam is East Anglia's gateway to the world and consequently a frequent Plinge stopover, I had never hitherto visited the Concertgebouw. As a child of the early Edinburgh Festivals, I have long been familiar with the orchestra but never their hall. I find that I have been a touch oversold in respect of the hall's ambience but considerably undersold as to its incredible clarity.

