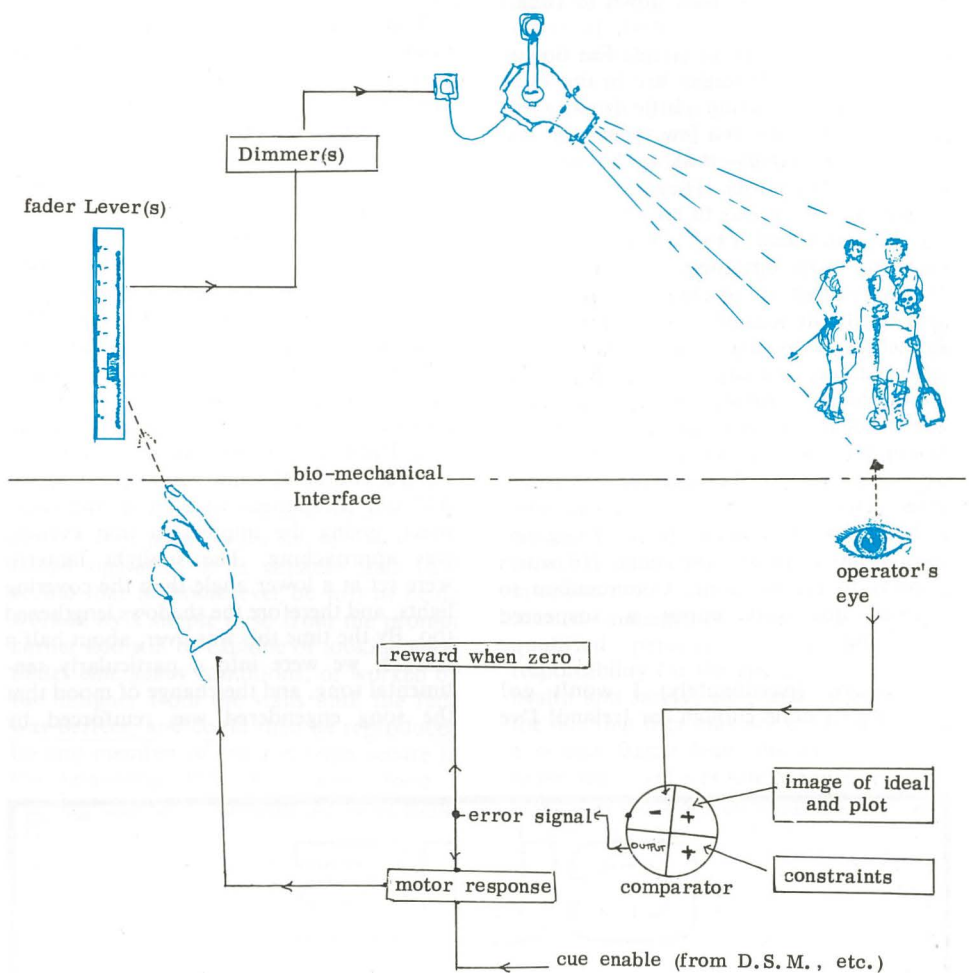


impracticable due to external factors, then start to use your professional expertise to make the fade as subtle and as near to the designer's ideal as possible.

There are a number of tricks we can employ to make an awkward fade work well. Sometimes it is possible to reduce the intensity of parts of the stage faster than others to create time and 'elbow room' to allow the final part of the fade (which is often the bit that shows most) to proceed in an unobtrusive manner. Properly handled, this can enable quite massive moves to have all the subtlety of a much longer fade. There are all sorts of cunning ways of getting a lantern out without the audience being aware of the change, and most of these rely on orchestrating the move to something external, taking for example a lantern down or out as the artiste steps out of the beam, which can be totally undetectable provided that it is done with care, and provided the beam does not hit anything else like the wall or a chair where its sudden absence would be noticed. Under this circumstance there must be *some* light left behind, perhaps from other sources, or, again it would be too obvious. Another way of cheating utilises the principle of distraction. An artiste screaming and jumping up and down stage left can be an opportunity to smoothly subtract light stage right, or the ubiquitous revolver shot, offstage crash, etc. can catch an audience napping. A third way is the use of mutual contrast. This is useful if an actor is standing in front of a window or open backlit door. As the actor arrives in position, some light can be removed from the backing and the human eye will interpret this as a dark adaptation effect, provided the amount of light on the face does not decrease.

Always remember that an audience is never supposed to see a lighting effect in operation, and indeed, will resolutely refuse to do so unless forced by you to see it. So look out of the window. You may think that that is an unnecessary thing to say, but you may be amazed by the number of people that don't. While your right hand is working the masters, or minding the ratefader speed control, your left hand should be constantly chipping away at the individual circuits, leading here, perhaps lagging there, taking the edge off any of the hotspots or shutter shadows that may appear during intermediate levels during the fade. And always learn the rig, as you have not the time to consult the plan during the fades, especially in the degree of darkness that you really ought to be working in.

I must stress, however, that following this advice needs care, and can lead to precisely the opposite effect from that intended! A noted director has defined operators as 'People Who Spoil Plays'. As a board operator myself (and not one, I hasten to add, who feels able to exclude himself from that description), I tend to agree with him to the extent that I feel it to be so ludicrously easy *not* to do the perfect fade. So very few people have any very high expectation of the operator's ability to do one, that when an operator is encountered that has any feel for the dynamics of a fade without having it spelled out to him, sur-



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prise is often expressed. In fact there must be lots of first class 'feeling' board operators in the regions where the pressures tend to encourage the right sort of thinking, but certainly in town they all seem to have moved to television or have been promoted on the 'Peter Principle' to chief penpusher and formfiller, and who then may well have taken to drink after failing to convince their replacements that a fade can consist of something more than a smooth transition from one state to another.

Well, what can a fade consist of? If you were to ask a musician what playing a scale is you would probably get a definition that was straightforward and educational, but would be saying nothing of the wealth of emotional associations that could be con-

tained in combinations of those few notes when played by an expert who knows how to bring them out. There is an exact parallel between the dynamic of a fade and the dynamic range of a piece of music. 'The Emperor Concerto', adjusted so that each individual note was given equal weight would be efficient, yet boring. The perfectly adjusted proportional dipless cross-fade, whilst generally unobjectional, is a sad misuse of the power that an operator has to make a real contribution to the performance by the artistes, and the craft of the other technicians by reinforcing, orchestrating and occasionally counterpointing what they are doing.

Sean O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock* is a good example that I can use to illustrate