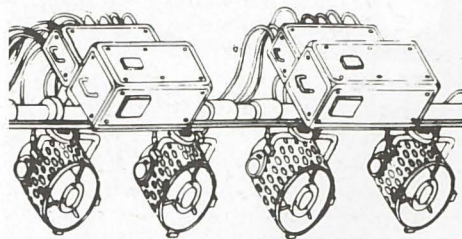


New remote control for lanterns

Light Works Ltd have unveiled their remotely controlled LIGHT SCAN and it looks a very interesting well devised system with obvious applications not only in the theatre but for discos, conventions and pop shows as well, to say nothing of military tattoos.



The Light Scan system can control up to twenty lanterns either at will or to pre-set positions. Although almost any lantern can be used Light Works have designed their own Par Can to go with the system.

Light Works Ltd was formed by Charlie Paton who managed to impress the NRDC enough to get their financial backing and also had the Light Scan exhibited at the Design Centre last month.

Another New Intercom

Theatre Projects are developing a new intercom system. The products so far announced are Power Supply PS 1 which serves up to 16 Outstations, Splitter Box SB 1 which distributes one communications circuit to four outlets, Master Station MS 1 with two circuits each with a call light and Outstation OS 1 which can be used free standing or on the belt. Other products planned are loudspeaking outstations, communication routing systems and multi-ring systems.

Harrogate Conference Complex Contract

CTL Control Technology Limited, started only 2½ years ago by Messrs. Bell and Owen, have won a contract believed to be worth in the region of £90,000. The contract is for the supply and installation of sound and communications equipment at the £20 million Harrogate Conference Complex. The specification was very precise and most of the major companies in the field were asked to tender.

The main sound consists of a 24 channel, 8 sub group 2 master group mixer routing via a multi-way patch to 6 × 500 w main power amplifiers. Three Revox B77 tape recorders, a cassette desk, digital delay line and graphic equalization are provided for effects and the system drives a total of 26 column loudspeakers and 9 ceiling mounted dual concentrics.

There are also concert sound and communications system included in the contract.

Peter Angier of Carr and Angier is the theatre consultant for the Harrogate Complex, and acoustic advice has been provided by Sound Research Laboratories.

REIDing SHELF

'Who would have dreamed that the closely-knit small town of Puritan Plymouth of over 150 years ago would conceive the building of a social project complete with hotel, assembly rooms and a majestic theatre, describing it as 'for the greater convenience, accommodation and amusements of persons resorting to this town' (not for the citizens, mind you) and, what is more, finance it from the proceeds of a lottery and the sale of religious benefices.'

Who indeed! But Foulston's 1811 Georgian Leisure Complex was surely the first English Civic Arts Centre – and when the 1937 demolition gang went into action, the whole idea of National and Civic responsibility for theatre was still awaiting general acceptance. Indeed Plymouth's replacement Civic Theatre Royal is currently building after a less than unanimous Council decision (36 to 25).

The fortunes of the Plymouth theatres, along with all the other playhouses in Devon and Cornwall are chronicled in *Playbill. A History of the Theatre in the West Country* by Harvey Crane, a local critic who writes with a stylish enthusiasm which conveys the joys of a lifetime's theatre going.

The book, of course, starts well before Mr. Crane's personal experiences. Did you know – for I certainly did not – that the Cornish *Ordinalia* pre-date the mystery cycles of York, Chester, Wakefield and Coventry? And my heart warms to a 19th century touring manager's account of theatre going in Redruth:

A spacious loft erected over an eight stalled stable, two of which were apportioned as dressing rooms for the company, and we had access to the stage by a step ladder through a trap door. The aroma made our ghost sneeze and one evening when Hamlet conjures Horatio and Marcellus to 'Swear by my sword' the ostler underneath roared to his horse 'Come up you booger, or I'll scat the brains out of tha!' This unexpected salutation acted like an electric shock on the nerves of Hamlet who rushed off the stage exclaiming 'Oh Day and Night, this is wondrous strange!'

To the Manager of Plymouth Royal in 1856, I extend my admiration for his honesty and guts in posting across the face of one week's playbills after the first night

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

Mr. J. R. Newcombe presents his respectful compliments to the patrons of the theatre, and earnestly entreats them *not* to come during the remainder of the above named artists; as, if they do, they will not only witness the crude efforts of two ladies who have everything to learn and have not yet attained even the most rudimentary knowledge of their profession.

Many of us will hear a familiar chord in another of Mr. Newcombe's poster announcements . . .

The apparatus for the lime light has not yet arrived, but will astonish everyone when positively installed.

Mr. Crane chronicles the twentieth century fall and rise of theatre in his region. Playbills record the last days of 1950s variety (with Morecambe and Wise at the bottom of the bill) and the opening of Exeter's *Northcott* in the 1960s. Amateur theatre is not forgotten: The *Minack* is unique and famously so. And there are performance pictures of David Owen and Angela Rippon in the days before they made and read news.

This book is a jolly good read even if, like me, your sole personal contact with the theatres of Devon and Cornwall has been appearing at the *Regal Barnstaple* and *Palace Bude* under conditions not unlike those of an earlier era when

. . . everything was conducted with the strictest regard to economy, and the duties of prompter, scene shifter, property man and candlesnuffer were performed by Mr. Dawson Sr. I have seen him speak the tag of a piece in the corner of the stage, whilst with one hand off stage he rang the bell and lowered the curtain when the play had ended.

From a book about an entire region's theatre history to a book about one single theatre – but about that plum theatre on the *prior-to-London* road, Brighton Royal.

The perhaps less readable part of Antony Dale's *The Theatre Royal Brighton* is that concerned with the chronology of the productions. Paragraphs summarising the most notable productions of the years inevitably include lots of repetitive phrases like 'The year ---- brought several other important plays, the first of these was. . .' or 'other notable productions during the year were . . .' or '---- saw as distinguished a programme as the year before' and so on.

This is a long unsolved problem of writing theatre history: it is not unique to this book. Would straight listing have been more effective? I honestly don't know. Certainly the productions that opened or played Brighton form a record of the successes of London's west end tradition (A record so starry that no space could be found in the 1970 entry to list such a blockbuster as the world premiere of *Sleuth*).

But as a former regular visitor, both in front and behind, I am delighted to have the book on my shelf for many reasons, not the least being the illustrations including three 19th century photographs showing the exterior before and after the 1866 rebuild plus an 1876 painting of the interior. Moreover the author is a solicitor and so we are given a clearer than usual insight into the arrangements under which the theatre has been owned, leased and managed across the years.

The adjoining theatre built in the 1870s as the New Oxford Theatre of Varieties and