

# CUE

## Technical Theatre Review

9.

January-February 1981

Our cover shows a photograph of the Drottningholm proscenium set within a sectional drawing from Agne Beijer's book published at the time of the 1921 rediscovery of the intact 1766 theatre. The photograph was taken before the recent adjustments to the lighting (The four chandeliers within the proscenium now hang from the four equidistant black rings).

Cue is an independent magazine published bi-monthly by Twynam Publishing Ltd.

Available on subscription  
£7.50 per annum (6 issues)  
Overseas subscription rates see page 19

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## Exit pursued by a bore

It would be churlish to allow Mr. Norman St. John Stevas to leave the stage in his rollicking role as Minister for the Arts without a ripple of applause. However much his own theatrical qualities might have jeopardised the gravitas of his other office in the Cabinet, at least he was *in* there proselytising, putting on the style, and in a nice position to sneer embarrassingly at the Philistine tendencies that appear to have been the pride of Treasury ministers since economics were invented.

The period of the Norman Conquest was not much more than a year long. Nevertheless, and whether coincidentally or not, in his short reign we seem to have experienced a lot more actual, rather than just promissory, changes for the better than have happened in previous administrations. The Arts Council cuts, after all, have not been swingeing ones, except on the outermost fringes of minimal art and fairly negligible theatre. Covent Garden hasn't closed, and another sort of Covent Garden has opened. London is still the world's darling in musical terms, and opera companies, we are told, are now having to queue up for theatres to tour to. The National Theatre has become, on the side, a positive centre of creative play, not least for children. And, 'though it puffs out warnings of the need for a greater accountability in marketing the arts, the ponderous machinery of commercial sponsorship does at last seem to be getting up a good head of steam.

It remains to be seen whether the return of the Arts, more as the fatted calf than as the prodigal son, to the chilly bosom of the Department of Education and Science will interfere with a growth that is an essential need, surely, in our utilisation of a leisure that we may have all too much of in the future. We note that the new Minister, Mr. Paul Channon, has complained rather waspishly that:- "to read some of the papers recently, it would seem that the arts had been banished to the bottom of some obscure cellar at Waterloo Station." Remembering, of course, that this cellar is probably closely connected with the Old Vic, and that another obscure cellar under *Charing Cross* Station housed the Players' Theatre from which the whole revival of Victorian show business seems to have sprung, we'll just have to soldier hopefully on—seeking the bubble reputation in the Channon's mouth.

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