

he said "that it should read *Delicious Hot Meals always available until 7 p.m.*" I was reminded of this on two recent consecutive ferry trips. As I approached the bar on St. Pondlink, the shutter crashed down, most of the lights went out and the steward, looking at his watch, declared triumphantly "well we've run out of draught anyway." A couple of weeks later aboard the King Hamburger, on the stroke of 21.00 the *Geschlossen* signs appeared but the tannoys purred with a sexy frau reminding us that breakfast would be served from 7 a.m. I don't know whether this is what is called *marketing* but it is certainly positive, polite, and probably profitable.



Alternative Bullring

With my usual genius for miss-timing, I arranged for the annual family fortnight of sun, swim and wine to end the day before Denia's Fiesta week. Denia is too small to have a Teatro Principal or a Plaza de Toros but with a bit of carpentry the church square becomes a theatre and the quayside acquires a temporary arena for the appreciation of bull heroism. Actually Denia has a rather unique version of the bullfight where the bull appears (from the postcards) to have the upper hand. Definitely not a case of *last one in is a cissy*.



Willkommen

I am all for a bit of theatrical camp, and so I am not averse to my ship being welcomed to the River Elbe by the raising of her national flag to an accompaniment of a few decibels of her national anthem. Particularly as this welcome point is an

enterprising house of public refreshment—even if it was deserted in a misty dawn and the ceremony lacked anything so human as a waving hand. When, a few miles later, the ship moved into her home port with a blast of Rule Britannia from her own loudspeakers, I felt that there might be more subtle ways of telling the Hamburgers where we had come from. And when this segued into an orchestration of Greensleeves so soupy that James Last himself would have been embarrassed, I really did feel that we had gone over the top.



Acoustic Courtyard

The life of an acoustician is hard—forever condemned to work with unsympathetic building materials in 'an age when the architect's aesthetic search for functional purity so often seems to end up in brutalism. Most theatre people have acquired a cynical approach to the science of acoustics and most can remember the day when they crossed the threshold of that cynicism. In my case it was during the remodelling of a theatre of cinematic vintage. A lighting bridge was to be incorporated in a new ceiling. For months I corresponded, through the architect, with the acoustic consultant. Then the crunch. If I insisted on any change, however minimal, in the ceiling configuration, then future audiences would forever clap their hands over their ears in horror. Now I am a reasonable chappie as well as a coward: so I withdrew my objections with all that grace and dignity for which we lighting designers are renowned. A year or so later I stood on stage and admired my lighting bridge now swung into place. "And when" I asked the architect "shall we see the ceiling?" "Oh that's been cut" came the reply, "No money!" A dozen years later, the bridge still hangs in limbo. No cases of acoustic suicide have been reported. Against myself, it is only honest to record that despite the less than theoretically ideal position, the lighting angle is rather good. All this acoustic reminiscence has been prompted by news that the Lincoln Centre is to spend

eight million dollars on alterations aimed at correcting the acoustics of the New York State Theatre (opera/ballet house) and the Vivien Beaumont (drama house). It is reported (with relief) that no adjustments are required at the Met, but the Avery Fisher Hall (home of the Philharmonic) has already been given a totally new auditorium since its original opening in 1962. Which brings me back to acoustic cynicism: it has ended up with that shallow tiered courtyard form which was standard in an age when acoustics were part of a master builder's instinct.

Performing Words

Street Theatre takes many forms. In a Hamburg square I came across an event which I can only describe as performance literature. On one improvised stage they were singing that kind of song where the words are obviously more important than the music. Elsewhere, prose was being offered into a microphone with sincerity rather than feeling. Children were being guided through a programme of structured creativity with basic materials. The site was criss-crossed with alleys of bookstalls. Pamphleteers had been prolific. The beer looked clear, the bread wholesome and the sausages marched elegantly and obscene. So I stopped to lunch and let the words roll over me. Like music.

A Speciality Dream

Had I but been born with a smoother countenance (and no whiskers), I often think that it would have been fun to be a conjuror's assistant. Making heroic arm gestures while posturing elegantly in black fishnets, my face displaying anticipatory horror—then beaming relief (tinged with just a little disbelief) that *he* had actually made it. The band, of course, playing away like crazy at their speciality music. But not the Star Wars selection that I recently found a conjuror working to. Something cheerfully rhythmic: preferably arranged by Marcus Trundleberry, Mus.Bac., in his heyday at the Hockley Hippodrome.