



Cloths tumble and wings slide: a 19th-century scene change at the Pantomime Theatre.

In 1863 a new and larger hall was erected: an octagonal *Glass Hall* with seating around the outer walls, but the centre left clear for promenaders who enjoyed an afternoon stroll with music. (The exhibition included the original plans and coloured elevations dated 1861). The glass hall was replaced in 1902 by a *Turkish Hall* by Knud Arne Petersen who had designed the famous Chinese Tower a couple of years previously. This hall was adorned with oriental minarets and an onion-shaped cupola. It was lit by gas until 1939 . . . however, with the occupation in 1940 all the lights went out although Tivoli remained open, achieving its highest ever number of visitors (112,802) on its 1943 centenary day. In 1944 there was a great blaze, visible as far as neutral Sweden: several of the Tivoli buildings had been fired as a reprisal against the Danish resistance movement.

However 12 days later Tivoli was again in action with temporary structures. The present concert hall has a rather functional interior – indeed one might say bleakly functional by Tivoli standards. But the facade fits the landscape and provides a splendid fascia for displaying light bulbs. The resident *Tivoli Symphonorkest* has 64 players and many of its concerts are free – and free concerts are a good way to introduce a goodly proportion of new music. The Concert Hall stage is also used for visiting international ballet companies and the world's star entertainment names.

Pantomime Theatre

For me the climax of Tivoli is the Pantomime Theatre. More – it is one of the world's great theatrical experiences. An opportunity, now probably the only opportunity, to experience something approaching genuine commedia dell'arte. This is the real thing: an experience far, oh far, removed from the balletic posturings of the residual Harlequin, Columbine and Pierrot who contribute some of the camper moments on our light entertainment stages and screens.

The commedia dell'arte in Tivoli is a living tradition handed down over some 300 years in a direct line from its 17th-century origins in Bergamo. Early in the eighteenth century several Italian travelling troupes reached Denmark and the names of Harlequin and Columbine appear for the first time on a Danish playbill at the 1723 opening of the Grønnegade Theatre in Copenhagen. This was the theatre of Holberg, revered as a Danish Molière. It was the first permanent theatre in Denmark open to the public and the commedia dell'arte was performed as interludes in the drama or as an epiologue.

However it was around 1800 that the real foundation of today's Tivoli pantomime was laid. Two troupes linked up for summer Sunday performances in the Royal Deer Park: the Italian family Casarti performed pantomimes with the English family Price who specialised in juggling, tightrope, horseback and other acrobatics. They moved in winter to the Court Theatre (now the Theatre Museum, see CUE 13) where Price became Pierrot and brought to Casarti's pantomime the theatrical machinery, illusionist effects and character concepts that were a feature of John Rich's productions at the Lincoln's Inns Fields Theatre in London.

The Price troupe became very much in demand, both nationally in Denmark and internationally with travels to Moscow and St Petersburg. From then until now, the name of Price has never been absent from the Danish stage. In the early days of Tivoli, three young men acquired the Price pantomime rights. One of these was an artist named Volkersen and he created for over 40 years a Pierrot so popular that when he died, he was immortalised in a statue in the Tivoli gardens – a statue which has watched all the performances ever since.

There have been some changes over the years. In 1911 the pantomimes were shortened to approximately half their previous length to accommodate ballet performances later in the evening. And Pierrot has become gradually more of an actor

rather than an acrobat. A man of humour and capriciousness rather than an exponent of acrobatic artistry.

The pantomime is performed in the Peacock Theatre built in 1874 by Vilhelm Dahlerup of the architectural partnership responsible for Copenhagen's Royal Theatre, finished in the same year. It is a Chinese fantasy and its most famous trademark is its curtain. The peacock's tail in the form of a fan parts centre and folds down, dropping into a slot by the footlights. Then the Peacock sinks. It is a magical moment. There can be no other word. The sets are lovely cloths and wings. There are frequent scene changes with the cloths flying on a half-way tumble while the flats substitute on sliders with the coordinated precision that can only be achieved with old transformation machinery of the type that has been working nightly in this theatre since 1874.

There is some modern technology. There is a forward bar with 8 Pattern 243s (6 with colour change) and there are Patt 223s to light the peacock curtain from each end of the pit. Lighting control is by thyristors with a Grossman punch card memory. But in the final tableaux – the apotheosis – there is a red bengal light manufactured by Tivoli's own master of fireworks. It is lit over water buckets. For smoke, the theatre owns an old blower worked by means of a spirit flame across which lycopodium (dried fungi) powder is blown by mouth.

The continuous music, assembled from the nineteenth and earlier centuries, is played by a classical chamber orchestra of about 15. The elegant stage business – sad and hilarious – is exquisitely timed to the pit.

At the end Pierrot appears before a drop curtain and the audience traditionally shout *Say something Pierrot*. The origin of this goes back to the Volkersen performance when a dancer's skirt caught fire. The curtain was lowered and Volkersen came out in front. The shout *Say something Pierrot* was heard for the first time and he replied *Her love for me is so strong, it caught fire*.

But the simplest pleasure of Tivoli is probably its greatest pleasure – to wander. Whether one saunters in sunshine by day or bulbshine by night, Tivoli makes the world seem a good place to be alive in. A stylish juxtaposition of simple pleasures like pantomime, food, colour, and MUSIC.

All the music is live: no gramophones and few microphones. Tivoli is an acoustic miracle. The various bands play away in the open air but the sounds do not interfere with each other. If you fancy the sort of songs that might be classified as eurovision, performed with all the feeling of a click track, you will be happy around tea time. But if, like me, you savour the kind of programme where a Bach siciliana is interpolated between a Waldeufel Waltz and a Lumbye galop, then you will be happy as the sun sets. Wander a few yards and there is a big band sound. Further along for jazz. Then folk. Its all there and its all live.

In Tivoli Arts & Entertainment are synonymous. I like Tivoli.