

# THREE AFTERPIECES

In last CUE, FRANCIS REID visited eighteenth-century masterpieces of theatre architecture in Bayreuth, Hvar and Munich. But there are other delights for the theatric tourist in these towns, including . . .

## Pastoral ruins in Bayreuth

Many theatres become ruins but very few are conceived and built as ruins. However, the open air theatre in the park of the Hermitage at Bayreuth has been a ruin since 1743 when it was built as such. The architect was Saint-Pierre and the theatre was commissioned by the Margravine Wilhelmine who was responsible a few years later for Bibiena's Bayreuth Opera House.

The Margravine wrote plays, composed operas and took part in amateur theatricals. Assuming a shepherdess costume allowed a romantic escape from the formality of court life. The roman ruin was a favourite seventeenth-century setting for pastoral poetics and heroic operas. In the eighteenth century the ruin became a pictorial form in its own right – an appropriate setting for courtly pastoral plays. The grass and plants that grew from the cracks were not the result of neglect: they were planted there.

The stage consists of a series of five stone portals and is used as a summer theatre. Productions in 1982 were 'Orpheus in the Underworld', 'Don Juan' and 'Dracula'. Not perhaps the sort of works that the theatre was conceived for! A daytime inspection of the scenery packs confirmed that there was no attempt to recreate the production style of any particular period in the theatre's own history. I need hardly add that I immediately wanted to get going with Handel, although I would happily settle for most composers, up to about Cimarosa.

There were spotlights tucked in every bay behind the stone wings, and the inevitable scaffold foh rig. I suppose you need it for that sort of repertoire. Now, for Handel, you could cut down the candle power . . .

It is all rather idyllic and while the more perfect Wagnerites were sleeping off their leitmotiv intoxication of the night before, I had it to myself in the warm August morning to muse romantically and mentally sing fragments from my extensive pastoral repertoire.

## Converted ruins in Hvar

Across the harbour from the 1612 Arsenal Theatre (see CUE 20), the Dalmatian Island of *Hvar* has an open-air theatre approached by winding hilly paths. This was established in 1953 but the site and its stones have known earlier drama. The theatre was formed within French fortifications of 1807 on the site of a former Greek orthodox monastery. In 1982 there was a general air of infrequent usage, although the lighting was in position – interesting man-basket fixed to telegraph pole boom with four spots on a T-piece. Sad to see a good orchestra pit overgrown, and is there any significance in the stone bollards which give the pit rail a distinct feeling of quayside.

## Preserved Puppets in Munich

Puppet Theatre is generally regarded in Britain as children's entertainment with a



*Open-air theatre built as a romantic ruin in 1743 in the park of the Hermitage at Bayreuth.*



*Open-air theatre built in 1953 within Napoleonic fortifications on the site of a Greek monastery on the Dalmatian Island of Hvar.*



*Marionettes by Ivo Puhonny for Wedekind's 'Death and the Devil' (Puppet Museum, Munich).*