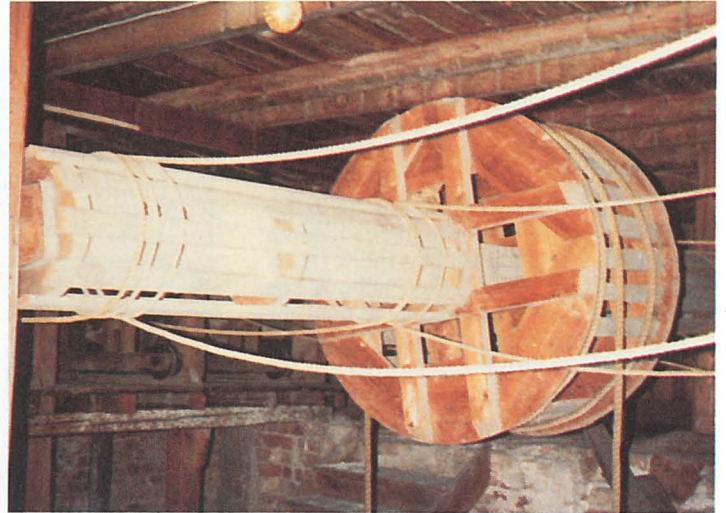




*Wing carriages in cellar.*



*Drum and shaft for instantaneous scene changing by substitution of wings moved by understage carriages.*



*The flys with rolled front curtain.*

Gripsholm was a winter palace and the lake outside freezes from autumn until spring. Castle life must have been cold, so the actors no doubt appreciated the two towering stoves at the back of the stage. There are seven sets of grooves for wing flats, each groove being a pair to allow for one change.

Lighting is by footlights and candlepoles

upstage of each groove set. The original reflectors have been fitted with electric candles, although these are still the traditional big candle lamp rather than the small wavering cima candle bulbs which are installed at Drottningholm. The candlepoles are fixed: they cannot be turned away from the stage to effect a fade. However the reflector holders run in a groove and are hoisted up

the pole by a rope. Presumably this was to light and trim them without requiring a ladder. But was the lowering device also used to fade? Even if this was not actually done, it certainly strikes this lighting designer as at least feasible.

The original flattage is packed at the rear of the stage, with rolled cloths and borders piled on the stage behind the backcloth. This makes the backstage area seem particularly genuine, even homely: the whole stage has a feeling of use rather than museum preservation. The scene painting is in near monochromatic style using strong line to respond to the low intensity warmth of a candlelight source.

The flys have drum and shaft for simultaneous instant changeover of borders, while backcloths have conventional sets of lines and cleats. To fly in the gods, there is a central cloud chariot with access bridge from the fly tower.

In the cellar below the stage, the original carriages are operated simultaneously from a central drum by means of a vertical pull on a rope loop.

Having influential friends among Swedish theatre technologists, I was privileged to strut the stage, explore the flys and descend to the cellar. However, the auditorium is open to all casual visitors and a viewing window has recently been cut to allow sight of the cellar machinery. This view is from an anteroom in which hang paintings of the actors, some showing a background of the theatre. The subject of one painting is a dancer with a lighted torch(!).

The Gripsholm Slottsteater is one of the great masterpieces of our international theatric heritage. Stockholm is indeed blessed to have such a pair of complete eighteenth-century theatres. Drottningholm is a joy in that it enables us to understand the nature of that century's theatrical experience. But the Gripsholm auditorium is surely an architectural masterpiece by the standards of any age.