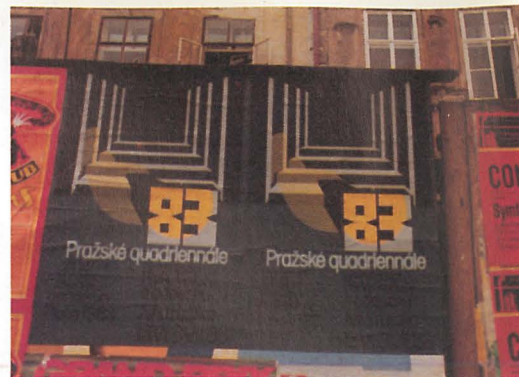


# A Gold and a Silver for Britain at Design Olympics

A Report from ROBIN DON, Prague June 1983



The Congress Hall in the Julius Fucik Park of Culture and Leisure is the location for this four-yearly event of Theatre Architecture and Stage Design from all over the world.

Last month in the Waldstein Palace, the Czech Minister of Culture presented one of Britain's young designers with the finest individual award. Our congratulations go to David Short from Liverpool. His exceptionally fine costume designs for productions at The Royal Exchange Theatre in Manchester received the Gold Medal. The Silver was won by Maria Bjornson for her witty design in the speciality section for Czech Opera, Janacek's *Cunning Little Vixen*. A joint production by Welsh National Opera and Scottish Opera.

## WEST GERMANY

West Germany well-deservedly won the major prize, The Golden Troika. This is awarded to the country with the finest overall quality of design. Four years ago the British team triumphantly brought home this trophy but this year the West German exhibit stole the show. Having crossed the threshold one entered a peaceful landscape moulded from sand dunes and parched grass. It was further enhanced by floor to ceiling mirrored panels which reflected the environment to infinity. Within this area nine models were beautifully displayed. The environment had obviously been inspired by one of the models, which showed the designs

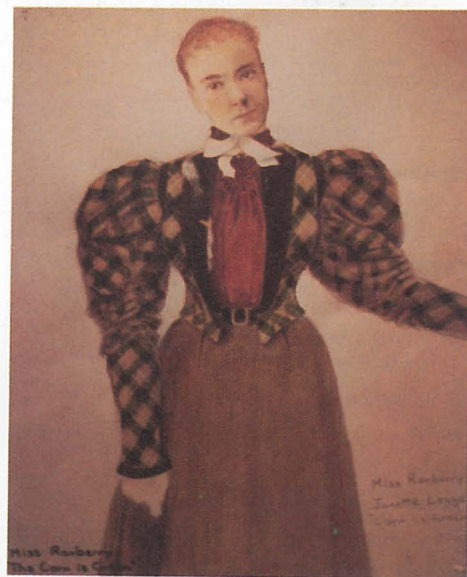
for the Czech opera *Katja Kabanowa*. It depicted an undulating landscape, covered with reeds and grasses. A crumbling jetty and a solitary bench was in silhouette against a sultry sky.

## CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Having decided not to include work of their youngest designers who are at the beginning of their careers, or the works of older generations who have already had many opportunities to present their designs to an international audience, the Czech committee made their selection between the two. This middle generation of Czech and Slovak designers who have already achieved a number of well-deserved successes in the last four years, are representative of that progressive design trend which V. Beryozkin of the USSR designates Action Stage Design. Rooted in the action of the actors on the stage, Action Stage Design is bound to the actors and forms a continuity with them. Hence it is an environmental design formed predominantly by scenic objects, props and costumes. It is anti-illusionist – the stage set is not only playing along with the actor but through him. This close link produces a new synthesis in a theatrical work where the design ceases to be an independent theatrical and visual discipline and becomes a component of the dramatic text.

The Czech Architecture Section concentrated mainly on the new extension to The

National Theatre in Prague. The exterior of this new auditorium is completely constructed from thousands of hand-blown glass bubbles, each approximately 75 cm<sup>2</sup>, squared off and flattened to a thickness of 30 cm. A visit to the site revealed how these bubbles were individually mounted on the exterior totally concealing the structural elements within. The new stage area is conceived as a multi-purpose theatrical auditorium (with the possibilities of a theatre



Gold medal for costume was won by UK designer David Short for *The Corn is Green*.



It was the turn of West Germany to take home the Golden Triga from this year's Quadrennial.



Jurgen Dreier's *Katja Kabanowa* was the inspiration for West Germany's successful exhibit.