



The Vic – one of a wide variety of restaurants & bars available.

The sound mixer is 12 input into 4 submaster and 2 main outputs plus one foldback send. There is a fixed loudspeaker system under the catwalks and on the walls; and the studio is provided with microphone and speaker sockets at appropriate positions throughout.

Off-stage technical facilities are designed to cope with storage and handling of current repertoire, with provision for rapid changeover of productions in all theatres. Workshop facilities for the manufacture of scenery are not included but there is a set assembly area, with 9m clear headroom, for final assembly, modification and general refurbishments. Rehearsal rooms, wardrobes, dressing rooms, green rooms, offices, maintenance workshops and all

ancillary accommodation are on a scale, and to a standard, that should ensure efficient working in conditions that provide a much greater degree of amenity than could have ever been thought possible in a complex whose accommodations are so largely subterranean.

In all its technical planning and equipment, the Victorian Arts Centre must be a fancied candidate for any *Theatre Technology of the Century* award. Backstage provision hits a happy optimum. It is big but balanced. The scale is human. It feels like a theatre rather than a factory.

So, if I were an Antipodean, I would be happy to toil technically in the V.A.C. And I would be happy to live in any city which honoured its citizens with such a house to enjoy the arts. Three theatres, concert hall, art gallery, performing arts museum and a college of arts. All combining to offer a programme so full of choices and quality that I would nightly cross the River Yarra, enjoying the delicious agonies of indecision, but knowing that my soul would be pleased – either soothed or stimulated according to the needs of the moment. And, for the maintenance of the physical frame that supports the soul, a suitable diversity of rooms dedicated to eating and drinking.

My only reservations, already expressed, relate to the form of the theatres – even if they represent the peak of their philosophy's format.

However the unique joy of the Victorian Arts Centre is the way in which the decorative arts are embraced. Functional

purity and visual restraint are the natural consequences of the logical thinking generated in an age dominated by scientific progress; art does not respond to analysis and visual images resist verbal translation. Consequently the idea that decoration should be added to a building, rather than grow organically from its form, has found little favour with recent generations of theatre builders.

In Melbourne, John Truscott was invited to decorate the surfaces of a building which had been conceived and built as a statement of the materials of its construction. Although individuals will respond in different ways to certain details of Truscott's distinctive approach, I believe the results to be a stunningly appropriate environment for the performing arts.

His approach, quite correctly for today's theatre, is a reversal of that of the baroque artists who often used very simple neutral foyers as a prelude to the complex decorative splendours of the auditorium. The auditorium of the State Theatre is restrained, visual excitement being given full opportunity in the foyers. The auditorium painting, however, has just the right degree of pre-performance richness yet is neutralised as the houselights lower. It is a rich red – a bluish-red – and drawn out with the brush in the technique that scenic artists use to impart a vibrant texture. It is a paint technique that has also been used for centuries in Central European buildings, both spiritual and temporal.

At the main St Kilda Road entrance, the

