

I had just eaten a very fine Schnitzel and thoroughly enjoyed the evening.

NEW FESTSPIELHAUS

This is the best lighting layout I have ever seen. The bridges, towers, galleries have the best possible relationship to the acting area for getting lanterns into ideal lighting positions. Some Reiche and Vogel, some Strand and a lot of Pani: Right proportion and disposition of soft and hard edge types. Upstage lighting bars have remote control of pan, tilt and focus, preset by polarised relays. Board is a 300way Siemens Mag Amp. The famous hole blasted into the rock face behind the stage to allow back projection is not used for projection which is all frontal: however it makes a good, if expensive, dock. Two rolling cycloramas (one large and one small). 8 Electricians in winter rising to 36 for the festival. Electricians storeroom for spare lanterns had nearly enough spots to completely equip Glyndebourne, but then the electricians workshop was nearly as big as the Glyndebourne stage. Auditorium not at all my taste. . .but then how does one build this size of theatre in a contemporary style?

STUTTART STAATSTHEATER

Comforting to be on an old stage after so many shining new buildings. . .pleasant to walk old well-worn boards. Although old, well equipped with wagons to left, right and rear. The board is an ancient AEG auto-transformer, built on the PS perch with tracker wires to an adjacent dimmer room which includes some splendid examples of the brass and mahogany age of switchboard and construction. Board normally worked by two men. Watched Eugene Onegin from the board. Grid was absolutely clear of all other shows so that three-dimensional pieces could be flown. Wonderful that these German theatres have such high fly towers that it is possible to light all the acting area from the first bridge position; and also possible to cover a cyc with projections from this bridge. Set changes very smooth with everyone knowing exactly what they were doing although this was a new production at the end of last season and has only had a few rep performances since. I was impressed by the sensitive operation of the board. Despite its age and inconvenience they were getting good results. . .limited perhaps, but well-executed within the limitations of the equipment. Whereas in some theatres with new equipment poor results are achieved because of the way that the operators handle their equipment.

MANNHEIM NATIONALTHEATER

Built 1957, two theatres in one building, sharing facilities, dressing rooms, technical staffs, workshops, storage etc. In the large house (1200 seats) the lighting bridge has 4 levels and carries 60 spots and the grid is so high that scenery can be flown sufficiently clear for all 4 levels to reach upstage. Control room at back of stalls with superb view of the stage. Standard 240-way Siemens but with 8 presets rather than just 4. Watched performance of 'Lohengrin' from here: quite an elaborate plot with a good deal of projection of swans and heavenly rays. Impressive to see such a complex plot so relaxedly handled by one operator. Was almost converted to a Siemens board tonight but logic prevailed and I still feel that it is just a large board made small, rather than the new control philosophy that must develop from the possibilities of all-

electric dimming. Offstage bridal chorus produced from tape and fade-away so excellent in quality that I am sure I would have been 'taken in'.

MANNHEIM KLEINES HAUS

The small theatre is an experimental space which can be converted into various shapes including complete in-the-round. No flying tower but system of lines and adaptable proscenium. Foyer is rear part of the auditorium, and motorised tabs shut off huge floor to ceiling windows during the performance. Watched Priestly's 'Ever Since Paradise' from the board: an episodic play which would have been operator torture on anything but a preset board. Here its operation was quite straightforward although much of the actual lighting was not to my taste.

AEG AT FRANKFURT

Lunch, rather superbly, at the top of the AEG skyscraper with Werner Schott of AEG who chose the parallel path to mag amps for dimmer development. Thyratrons (back to back pairs rather than Strand's trio of one per phase) now being phased out in favour of SCRs: a 6-way system on trial at Frankfurt opera for 6 months is the prototype for 60-ways planned for Frankfurt and then Koblenz. The standard desks will be 4-preset and 120 ways are likely to cost £30,000.

FRANKFURT SCHAUSPIELHAUS

An enormous revolve, only about one-quarter revealed in the proscenium arch. Board is motorised Bordoni with the speed controls and motor switches set in a tiny cabin within the orchestra rail so that the operator has a complete, if rather low and close, view of the stage. The 6-way experimental SCR unit replaces 6 Bordoni circuits with quick change-over switches in case of failure. I tried it with lamps of different loads and it seemed fine, although AEG confessed not yet fully happy about the waveform. Evening Ballet had some good lighting.

NEW TV STUDIOS

Not yet completed, but dimmers will be motorised ring transformers controlled from a 2 preset desk with each lever having 20 presettable levels selected mechanically by cams(!)

COLOGNE OPERNHAUS

Everywhere I go 'Fidelio' is announced for yesterday or tomorrow. And so its 'Pulcinella' and 'Miraculous Mandarin'. An evening which was a good example of German dance which is very interesting so long as it keeps to music-theatre: it seems to fail with tuttu-pretty pieces. Did not go backstage: I have seen the plans and it represents the sort of orthodoxy about which I am becoming quite blasé!

GELSENKIRCHEN STADTTHEATER

This is the centre of Germany's glass industry so this 1959 theater makes much use of glass in its exterior treatment. Auditorium is completely black except for grey-white boxes and charcoal seating. This makes a very un-festive house when the audience are coming in but is wonderful for lighting since there is no reflection from the auditorium walls. Two false proscenium sets of bridge and towers: the first is fixed but the second can travel up and downstage and can sink! Portable hydraulic lighting towers rise to 9(?) metres. Board is 120-way ASEA-Graham from Sweden with 6 presets controlling mag amp dimmers. Saw part of 'Carmen' and did some of the cues

myself. International beer and theatre technology conference until 2am.

MUNSTER STADTTHEATER

Came to see the 120-way version of the AEG thyatron board, watching it deal with 'Der Waffenschmeid' in a dire production. Three weeks ago I would have been amazed by the stage: now I take it for granted. And so only note direct passage from the control to the stage without going into any audience areas.

BRUSSELS NATIONAL THEATRE

Opened a month ago. Much closer to British practice. No great mechanics, although German style bridges and towers.

BRUSSELS MONNAIE

A Sonnambula by a scratch Italian ensemble with lighting as strange as some of the singing. Stage without wing space with bridge and towers contrived from scaffolding. ADB auto-transformers from tracker wires on the OP perch.

ADB FACTORY AND LABS

New factory, everything made on site. Impressive photometric lab. Experimental punch-card board with three transient memories to remember three complete cues which can be permanently recorded on punch cards. The engineers are wonderful in this organisation. They talk earnestly about their work and they refer it all back to the first principles of lighting all the time. All their research is geared in terms of control requirement rather than mere technical feasibility.

LIEGE OPERA

This theatre has of all the installations I have seen the system which approaches closest to the ideal control which I have been carrying in the back of my mind. It has mag amps and six presets without any motors. When I worried about how quickly the presets could be reset, the operators demonstrated how easy it was in practice.

DAY 22

Get on the plane feeling that unless Strand can do something at the dimmer end, ADB will be favourite for Glyndebourne.

POSTSCRIPT

Strand's SCR (now called thyristor) dimmer was a triumph and Fred Bentham, reversing the habit of a lifetime, agreed that this customer, while not actually being acknowledged as right, might be permitted to specify his own preferred form of control desk.