



Dispatches adapted and directed by Bill Bryden. Designer William Dudley. Plans by Tim Foster. Photo: Michael Mayhew.

Assembly Hall in Edinburgh for the International Festival, where by covering the existing bench seating with a 50 foot by 50 foot Promenade 'Arena' for 400 standing participants, and a further 600 viewed from the existing gallery on three sides.

Presenting God above the crowd posed some design problems. A 20th Century solution was clearly acceptable in our approach: a scarlet fork-lift truck bearing a crow's nest radiating white shafts of light, like a salvatory lighthouse. The whole basket arrangement strapped to the forks of the truck provided an off-the-peg mobile 'deus ex machina'. The truck was manoeuvred among the crowd by the Theatre technicians wearing boiler suits suitably emblazoned with the name of ROLATRUC, the company who had kindly loaned the truck – industrial sponsorship after all, had been a feature of the Passion Plays for over 400 years!

The need to be able to lose the truck to the side of the space led to a decision on the production's return to the Cottesloe to fill in the previous sunken pit, and to level the whole floor of the theatre. This larger promenading space needed a little more control over the lighting of the actors' faces, and 100 Minuet spots were added discreetly among the flickering junk overhead.

Dance has always formed a significant part of traditional Drama, and Bill Dudley with Dance Director Dave Busby conceived a Maypole dance for the Creation play. God ascended slowly as silk streamers unrolled bearing images of birds, fishes and other creatures, as the company interwove in an

accelerating traditional dance until the radiating beams of light from the ascending crows nest flashed across the faces of the spectators on the surrounding galleries. A tremendous enclosure of excited faces had become a living environment in which we could share the very beginning of the creation of the world.

Certain conclusions can be derived from this experience of promenade work. The inclusion of a rectangular or circular dance form by performers, with perhaps spectators as well, needed a central area of about 30 feet diameter. On a flat floor the public were able to 'back off' under the galleries, to re-converge for the development of the next scene. Most plays need space away from the action for entrances and exits, and in the absence of approaches from outside the auditorium, one can create these entrances between or below upper seated areas.

In January 1986, a third and final part of the story DOOMSDAY, took us from the Crucifixion to the end of the world, and we embarked for the first time on what were christened EPIC DAYS, by our devoted Company executive Michael Hallifax. All three parts given in one day! The complete cycle opened to the press in January, and played what was to become the closing season of the Cottesloe at the time we ceased operations for six months, due to lack of Arts Council funds on April 20th 1985. Plans were already well advanced for the company and staff to record the whole cycle for Channel 4 Television, and for the second time, the Cottesloe became a TV studio.

The recordings were made with the Theatre thronged with invited audiences who had been unable to see the plays during the sell-out season, and were seen on British screen the following Christmas, and subsequently all over the world at Christmas 1987.

In the next few months however, performances continued, almost in defiance of the closure, at an eminently suitable venue only 2000 yards away – Iain Mackintosh and Richard Pilbrow, loyal supporters of our work in the space created by Theatre Projects nine years before – led the company, lock stock and God's crows nest across Waterloo Bridge to the Lyceum Theatre. The building had not seen regular play performances since 1945, but the presence of three award winning plays of such an unusual nature brought renewed interest in the building as a live theatre, and we eagerly wait news of the recent efforts to this end.

Bill Bryden's adaptation of Michael Herr's novel DISPATCHES about the Vietnam war called for a series of contrasting locations. Helicopters arrive bearing their cargo of weary soldiers and reporters, interiors for the recreation centre, news conference scenes, a dugout fortification and others.

By examination of the space's axis, parallel to its length, Bill Dudley provided a sunken 'bear pit' lined with sand bags (filled with 10 tons of sand!), access to which was gained by 4 vomitories under the surrounding seating. Sufficient head room was obtained by demounting sections of the lower auditorium floor and 'dipping' into the basement area. The construction of this area consists of bolted steel sections, with 4 foot by 8 foot three-quarter-inch plywood panels which are simply self-tapped to the steel; the economic pressures at the time of fitting out the Cottesloe lent a blessed flexibility which all Theatre Planners could do well to bear in mind. (The original intention was to fill the central well with a mosaic of elevators).

The Albion Band again featured musically, this time as a sixties rock band, to link and underscore the text. They were swathed in camouflage netting, which doubled as the