



Has Washington Legs by Charles Wood. Director and Lighting Geoffrey Reeves. Designer William Dudley – Film studio Traverse Theatre arrangement. Plans by Tim Foster.

and cannot be matched by the reaction from the darkened auditorium of a proscenium house. Those observing from above, share as if by proxy the feelings of those below, and thus the whole experience is generated for the drama within the walls of the space, papered as they are with people.

The last ten years have seen a hundred or so productions, including 50 new plays, visiting companies from home and abroad, particularly four plays originating from the Market Theatre of Johannesburg as a result of a happy and developing relationship with Mannie Manim, and Athol Fugard. Fringe productions, Music Theatre, Childrens Theatre, Productions from ILEA schools (there will be a two day festival of ILEA drama on April 1st and 2nd), Theatre by Mentally Handicapped Children, Dance Theatre, Late Night performances (notably HUGHIE starring Stacey Keach) revivals, educational events have all found a place in what I often refer to the National's Church Hall. (I am often consulted about the design for Church Halls and hope that the many 'create what you want' features of the Cottesloe may slowly start to be BUILT OUT of specs for such buildings!) Happily, too, the Cottesloe has become the showcase for the NT's educational workshops devised by Kevin Cahil, and for one day showings of work in progress from the NT STUDIO under the direction of Peter Gill.

At the end of 1986, we achieved the fruits

of four years development work, and based on the experiments with environmental layouts and temporary seating we were able to realise Iain Mackintosh's and John Bury's expressed hopes for the space – moveable flexible seating. We now have reproduced the steep pit tier in a new system by AUDIENCE SYSTEMS a British Company specialising in Theatre and entertainment seating. The seats are no bigger than before (I felt strongly that our work should be seen by maximum audiences), but are slightly more comfortable. The terrace is carpetted, which has greatly reduced the noise of staff moving about during technical rehearsals, and of Latecomers and those needing to leave during the action (through ill health only you understand!) Seats may be turned down in pairs beneath the flooring of each row, which produces flexibility of aisle positions, and the four parts of the system may be positioned in several different parts of the theatre floor, with the aid of a screw jack elevator 32'6" x 18' installed at the same time by Peter Kemp and Bert Richman.

We are already combining a full tier and stage riser layout with a thrust from which seats start with stage riser, and in March we shall put the system to the test by adding an IN THE ROUND format for LORCA's YERMA, providing a rapid repertory change of plays and the layouts required by the several groups playing across the National's three playhouses.

As we begin to ring the changes again,

after several years of end stage work, we shall from time to time have the benefit of increased revenue – which will support some of the cost of the system – the opportunity of playing Promenade performances within a day to day repertoire by quickly striking the seats to their under gallery storage positions, and have the chance of clearing or moving seats for daytime use – pre-rehearsals of new work or daytime lettings, rehearsals or performances.

We face now the task of mobilising the sound, lighting and Stage Management controls. There is already a new Gemini lighting board, which has the benefit of a small flexible control cable through multiplexing, which makes mobility a possibility, and we have increased from 120 to 180 circuits. We now have to increase the number of luminaires to cope with the flexible position of the performance space day to day, whilst maintaining our ability to exchange one complete production with another in four hours flat! The disciplines of repertoire performances usually mean that a play that has not been performed for a week or more is given a full Dress Rehearsal for the benefit of Cast and Staff alike. The maintenance of standards at the NT has been held as paramount by us all for the last twenty five years.

We still face operational and financial challenges for the future, however the Cottesloe has been nothing if not challenging in the first ten years of my love affair with it – long may it continue to be so!