

CONTROL BOARD ALPHABET

Continuing Francis Reid's ABC for 1987



D is for the **Dimmers** which **distribute** and **ration** each light's electricity in accordance with commands from the operator's fingers — or their hands, knees and boomsadaisys when dimmers of water or wire were under direct manual



DDM (Drama Theatre, Adelaide Festival Centre)

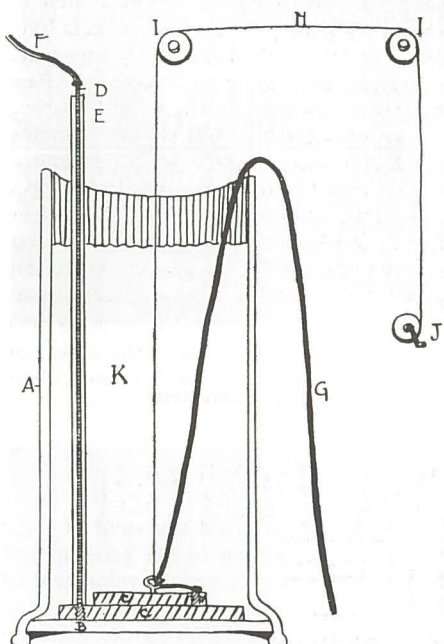
control. Today's dimmers are solid state (qv) devices usually based on thyristors (qv) and receiving their instructions remotely by small currents through multicores (qv) or increasingly by digital information conveyed through a single wire. This is the age of **digital** logic and the first major computer control (ie with operational logic derived from a software programme rather than hard-wired circuitry) was **DDM** named in the Bentham tradition from the initials of an



Duet

unpublicised fuller title — in this case 'Digital Dimmer Memory'. Such systems required a separate computer rack but, within a decade, microprocessor chips could be mounted within the desks of systems like **Duet** which made memory a universal facility available to all but the very smallest stages.

Some of the earliest electric dimmers (but see 'pole dimmers') were constructed from **drainpipes** and daily maintenance was performed with a watering can to replace fluid which evaporated at each performance in proportion to the length of time that each dimmer had been held on check.



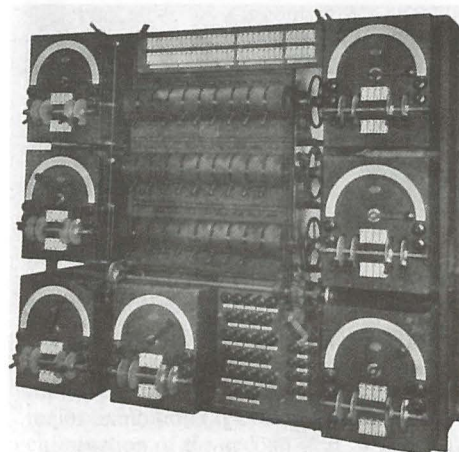
Home-made Dimmer.

A. Drain pipe. B. Tile cemented in.
C. Iron plates. D. Iron rod. E. Rubber tubing.
F. Positive and G Negative cables. H. Cord.
I. Pulleys. J. Winch. K. Electrolyte.

Do-it-yourself Drainpipe Dimmer (from Harold Ridge's Stage Lighting, 1930)

Delicoulor was an early form of pre-setting whereby four dimmers for a 4-colour (3 primaries plus white) batten could be moved by operation of a single lever to take up the appropriate positions to mix the colour corresponding to a pointer selection of any one of some fifty gel numbers. Invented by Rollo Gillespie Williams (qv).

D is also for the **Diodes** that simplified circuitry generally but, initially and most obviously, eliminated flicker from grouping switches. Another commonplace of the newer technology is the **dipless** crossfade, once a prime measure of an operator's **dexterity**.



Delicoulor Board (W. J. Furse Ltd)

And **D** most finally is for **DBO** the dead blackout which returns all stages to the stage from which controlled light brought them hence.



E is for **Electricity** which has very little to do with lighting — it was just the means by which we process energy today. There was controlled lighting before electricity and the future hopefully holds more sophisticated ways of generating and handling waveforms. Meanwhile the relatively young science of **electronics** has been as big an influence in lighting as in most other areas of our lives. The word 'electronic' made its initial major impact on stage lighting in 1950 with J. T. Wood's Thyatron (qv).