

comfortable chairs and a large table on which to set out plans if any. For the house-full grand opening by C.B. Cochran in March 1933 all sixty chairs, along with the buffet, were hired from J. Lyons at Cadby Hall.

Personal contact in the heart of London's theatreland was the rule and jolly well it worked too. Within weeks I was, as a one time enthusiastic amateur myself, able to make a case to the directors that keen amateurs would stay behind after their work in town or train it into Covent Garden for lecture-demonstrations; so four dozen very

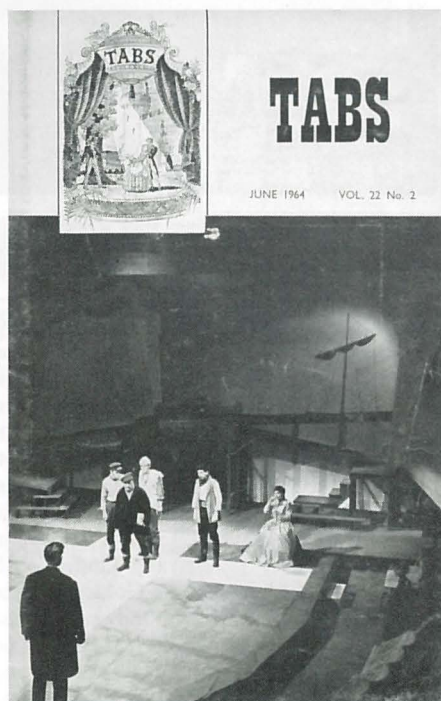


*The picture from Norway we couldn't resist.*

cheap bentwood chairs were purchased. This was to lead, about the time of that 8.5M TABS issue, to the building of the Colour Music Hall in King Street described & illustrated in CUE No.17. Lecture visits whether from or to amateurs became quite an 'industry' during the 1950s, as did writing for TABS and the 'trade' press. But post-war except for the theatre boy, more often than not a girl, this was not what anyone had been employed to do. Speaking for the members of my R & D department during the major part of the 1950s & 60s, we were literally amateurs doing it mainly out of hours. Perhaps our work in or for stage lighting was so interesting that it was natural to want to help our arcane world understand it. What is now called Marketing and Public Relations *happened* instead of, as nowadays, such activity forming a career in itself.

A good example of the way things evolved is provided by Paul Weston. When out in Caracas Venezuela in 1954 in order to install a Light Console and complete lighting installation in the new Aula Magna; he was attracted by a highly coloured mural in an otherwise drab and dusty city. In order to photograph it he bought his first 35mm camera. This simple action was the start of

what can best be referred to as the TABS slide archive. As with TABS itself it was not restricted to Strand's own work; but included that of other relevant firms plus architecture, the lighting of sets and so on. While we still employed a professional photographer for the black & whites, it was Paul who provided the majority of the slides with *his* camera. Of course he went on with his engineering job though quite how it could have been accurately described if we had had proper job descriptions in those years I don't know; but such precision did not materialize until we were 'organised' after the Rank takeover. Another of Paul's many technical interests – sound – was soon to become an asset to us. Not because Strand was about to go into that field but because the demand for daytime lectures had become such a nuisance. I had found my own work more and more frequently interrupted by the need to go downstairs during the day to give a lecture; nor could Brian Legge, who had developed a flair for this, be spared either. The answer was Paul Weston and a Ferrograph. A lecture would be taped as a commentary to slides interspersed with demonstrations. Someone could go down afterwards to answer questions.



*June 1964 saw the first cover change using photographs.*

For one hour our theatre 'staff' would rush around as directed by The Voice. Rush around was the operative word, because the staff was a certain Ann Harris. At the time I recorded the show, off the cuff of course, she was wearing a knee length pleated skirt and blouse. As she dashed from one role to another, including switchboard operator out-front, her skirt swung high. For some reason this tended to make me increase speed rather than slow down. She was fun to work with. From this it was but a step to record slide lectures to lend out. Thus TABS of September 1957 announced that

"an experiment is being made of offering a completely canned lecture in the form of miniature slides and tape for use by Societies and other interested groups who are normally unable to come to our demonstration theatre".

The aim of Recorded Lecture No.1, was "to show the steps that have to be taken to produce the naturalistic lighting for a box set production." Entitled "Lighting the



*The first Strand Demonstration Theatre was opened by C.B. Cochran in 1933.*

Scene" it consisted of forty 35mm colour slides based on a lecture/demonstration given by Bill Lorraine from time to time in our King street theatre. Variety of voice being important in the taped version, I joined in; and a later version included Percy Corry as well. As with others which were to follow it was all recorded extempore as the slides in their pre-arranged order came up on the screen. It was up to Paul to cut and put together the final version minus the *many* asides and the occasional big, big D. There were no carousels then and the operator of the projector had to do some slick work each time The Voice demanded "Next". All this was thirty years ago and for a long, long time now Audio Visual has been a commonplace method of putting a story over; but one cannot help wondering how far we amateurs rank among the pioneers. One thing is certain it arose in house, it seemed a sensible thing to do and did not require import of talent or ideas.

It is time to return to the printed word. The September 1957 issue of TABS was my first as editor; what might have been, but wasn't, called Publicity dept. was once again part of R & D. In a firm of Strand's size at the time there was a logic to this. After all we had always covered writing of instruction books, technical articles and so forth. The change of editorship produced no revolution. Under Hugh Cotterill its identity and the range of subjects covered was well established. If there was to be more on architecture in the later years of my reign, it was because that was when this country's civic theatre building boom had got going. It is a fascinating exercise to compare TABS of April 1955 with *The Arc* of one month earlier. The latter (Vol.17 No.3) was "Issued in the interests of better projection." by Charles H. Champion & Co. Ltd of Wardour Street, suppliers of "Ship"