

LIGHTING THE SCENE

by Frederick Bentham, William Lorraine and Percy Corry

Recorded Lecture No. 1

(Revised Edition)



The object of this lecture is to show the steps that have to be taken to produce the naturalistic stage lighting for a box set production. By professional standards the equipment used is limited in quantity but the same principles can be used by those with more modest resources.

Stage Dimension and Setting

The colour slides were taken of the effects used in mock lighting rehearsal staged in our Demonstration Theatre in London. The width between the red curtains at the front of the forestage is 18 ft. The forestage is 9 ft. deep to the line of the proscenium tabs and 9 ft. 6 in. from there to the central window in the setting. The window backing is only 2 ft. upstage of the window opening so as to present a common problem. The set is covered by a ceiling so hanging lighting can only be used immediately behind the proscenium and upstage of the window.

A more usual stage plan would reduce the forestage to 5 ft.; increase the total stage depth to 18 ft. and increase the width of the proscenium opening to 20 ft. or 24 ft. The same lighting equipment would still be suitable.

Stage Dimmerboard

Junior HA Slider type (HA24) for 24 circuits with six 500/1000-watt and six 250/500-watt slider dimmers. Two of the new Junior 8 dimmerboards providing a total of 16 circuits and eight 500/1000-watt slider dimmers would be suitable as these have plugs and sockets which allow circuit substitution.

In 1958 canned lectures were made available to Amateur Societies unable to come to our Demonstration Theatre.

carbons to cinemas etc. It was the same size page as TABS then; but of 22 pages to our 32. An article on "The Early Development of the Carbon Arc" was chosen by Cotterill for reprint in that very issue; but the rest of The Arc's content was certainly not *our* kind of thing. The peak is an article by a Major Partridge describing his recent tour of India. It was just over 1000 words long and has 17 photographs, all but one of which are groups of people meeting the Major one way and another. That exception shows him alone descending from a plane "at Dum Dum airport". It is a fact that, contrary to tradition, the last of the four editors of TABS Richard Harris could hardly be described as *anon* by his readers; but seventeen pictures of the Major in one short article and not a view of anything else — not even the Taj Mahal!

Prior to the war we authors on the staff were *anon*. Post war we were allowed our initials. Once I took over as editor, all articles were signed. Well not quite all; for the editor remained *anon* and could enjoy himself in the unsigned editorials up-front. And enjoy himself he certainly did; and those are the writings more than any other he would like to be remembered by. Writing in the third person can be very convenient and great fun. That other prolific author in Tabs, Percy Corry, used the nom de plume Busker to much the same effect. Indeed he was in this guise our only humorous writer for many years.

It is a nice discipline for an author as editor to have to see his own material in terms of a particular space on the page. I did however let myself go on much too long under "One Ten-millionth Part" in Autumn 1976. It was about metrication of which, unlike decimalisation, I did not approve. It should have been cut by at least a third.

Then there was the editorial entitled "Svoboda" written in a passion at the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia which, after much thought, I then spiked for ever. At this moment it is piquant to write about the unique one in Sept. 63 (Vol. 21 No. 3). It dealt with the strange award of the Sydney Opera House control contract to the *highest* tender. It only appeared in copies of TABS intended for Australia. Strand Electric's equivalent of Prime Minister at the time having wanted to keep this secret from the rest of the world. They had to read about "Adaptable England" instead, and wait 22 years before I got the chance to reveal all — in the Harris *Tabs* (Vol. 42 No. 1) complete with my photograph!

Except for some special reason, like sitting at a control to give it scale, it was rare indeed for staff, whether authors or not, to have their photos in the pages of TABS. In contrast the final nine issues have so identified forty or more members of Rank Strand U.K. alone, many of them several times. It wasn't British to show off in our day, I suppose! What the Rank takeover did bring to TABS was the money to spend on colour. But when in 1973 yet another managing director strode on stage to decide, after but six weeks, to discontinue TABS and get rid of our King Street theatre, it was time for me to go. I signed off therefore that December with our 101-th issue and the code 26M. at the bottom of its back page. Protests from within & without the firm followed and by April a lavish A4 version of TABS under Francis Reid as editor appeared. Uncertainty struck again at the end of 1978 and TABS made its exit for two whole years. When at last it did reappear it was a case of "Bless thee! thou art translated." Except for an occasional author the old gang and the old ways had gone. Readable it may have remained but its content and modern marketing were never far apart. Now TABS is no more — or is it some may wonder? There must have been something addictive about 'labouring' to produce TABS. Thus I went on to start *Sightline* for the ABTT; and James, on whose skills we three editors — Hugh, Fred and Francis — had depended to shape up each issue and get it to bed on time, launched CUE; now, after eight years, at No. 49.

Editorial P.S.

Peering into the past, now in very soft focus, I recall that Hugh Cotterill then a director of Major Equipment Ltd decided to appoint my company to handle the Major advertising account. Cotterill and I were then near neighbours in bachelor establishments in the Hovis Building and nearby St. George's Square respectively. Both overlooked the Thames except that my view was soon to be interrupted by the giant Dolphin Square then in course of erection. This was in January 1935 and my particular involvement at this time was in the production and

printing of Major's house magazine started by Hugh Cotterill the previous year and some three years before the advent of TABS.

The year 1936 saw Cotterill joining the board of Strand Electric by now a public company. It was only to be expected that his promotional ideas for Strand would include another house magazine. TABS was to be different however and its dedication on page one of number one says unequivocally "in the interests of the amateur theatre". Probably the main reason for this was the very fine Hire Department which Strand had built by this time, a service much in demand by Amateur Societies. Indeed the free mailing list for the early numbers was based on the NODA and Drama Society Membership almost entirely.

At the beginning my contribution was limited to christening the enterprise and supplying the cover drawing and typography. Strand having invested in a Rotaprint wanted for reasons of economy to print it themselves. A false economy I persuaded them after 4 issues so that Volume 2 No. 1 was printed professionally.

Alas, the bill was too high and Cotterill returned to what printers used to call 'winkle bag printing' for all the other pre-war numbers.

Came the peace and a call from Cotterill to pick up where we left off in 1938. Thus began a new era in which we worked amicably without having a microscope trained on our production costs. There were other difficulties of course.

Paper in 1946 was still rationed and what we did get was of very poor quality. This situation gradually improved so that by 1956 TABS had increased to a reasonable 28 pages with a mailing list of 9,000 requested copies.

The rest we know but the genius of its founder, Hugh Cotterill, in creating what was to become the most successful soft sell of all time must not be forgotten as we indulge our regrets at the passing of TABS.

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