

detective series for Routledge & Kegan Paul continues reconstructing what it was like to go to the theatre at certain moments in time past.

JACOBEAN PRIVATE THEATRES is the latest title (the eighth and all of them reviewed in CUE). In it Keith Sturgess examines the performance style and methods of the indoor theatres which ran parallel with the rather more rumbustious productions of the popular stages in the bear pits of the south bank. It was the performance activity at Blackfriars and Whitehall which provided the womb for our mainstream theatre tradition – even if the embryo had to lie dormant from 1642 until the restoration.

Information on production techniques of all past periods is scant (I am even beginning to disbelieve my own memory of how we did it in the 1950s) and the evidence from the 17th century is particularly thin. Nevertheless with scholarly detectives like John Orrell and Keith Sturgess searching and researching constructively, an impressionistic picture is appearing with a slow but sure decline in the number of jigsaw gaps.

The approach of the *Theatre Production Studies* series is to consider the available evidence on the production of specific plays in specific theatres and, with the aid of what might be termed 'circumstantial evidence' about likely standard practice gleaned from other sources, try to establish what actually happened on stage during performance. Thus Keith Sturgess presents, as case studies, 'The Tempest', 'The Duchess of Malfi' and 'The Broken Heart' at the Blackfriars Theatre; and 'Bartholomew Fair' and *Coelum Britannicum* at the Banqueting House. These studies account for about half the book and are well integrated into the general discussion, presented in a readable way which has certainly increased my access to 'what it was probably like'.

For lovers of opera or of theatre architecture (and I am both), **THE OPERA GAZETTEER** is a must. Robert Turnbull lists more than a hundred of the world's opera theatres, giving basic information on current policy, seasons, capacity and box office procedures including price ranges, opening times, addresses and telephones.

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There is a brief history of each house illustrated by a photograph of the theatre or one of its productions. Space requires that the history be slickly compressed: it is a bit gossipy and therefore of variable value, although this armchair traveller found it compulsive reading. The architectural photographs tend to show exteriors rather than insides, but are a pleasing selection. The factual information is not so readily assembled anywhere else. The opera houses in this gazetteer are mostly the great ones: I look forward to a second volume devoted to the lesser ones which are often more rewarding, probably because one's expectations of both architecture and performance are less.

The *Macmillan Modern Dramatists* series marches on with Frances Gray on **NOEL COWARD** and Dennis Carroll on **DAVID MAMET**, analysing the texts and relating them to the context of their writer's lives and philosophy and to productions received. Any book written primarily for an educational market should sow seeds for debate and I for one would certainly wish to disagree with Frances Gray's contention that the London theatre of the 1950s was moribund. I would be prepared to swop for it today's.

I wonder what Noel Coward or the west end actors of 1950 would have made of Christine Poulter's **PLAYING THE GAME?** These are games and exercises designed to develop observation, imagination, presentation and self-confidence. A supplement or an alternate to the Master's 'talent to amuse'? Perhaps it is a sign of the times in both theatrical and civilian life that these (and I quote the marketing blurb) are the same skills needed for job interviews, committee meetings and other everyday performances.

ADOLPHE APPIA. Theatre Artist. Richard C. Beacham. Cambridge University Press (*Directors in Perspective* series). £27.50 (UK).

JACOBEAN PRIVATE THEATRES. Keith Sturgess. Routledge & Kegan Paul (*Theatre Production Studies* series). £30 (UK).

THE OPERA GAZETTEER. Robert Turnbull. Trefoil. £14.95 (UK).

NOEL COWARD. Frances Gay. **DAVID MAMET.** Dennis Carroll. Macmillan (*Modern Dramatists* series). £18 (UK). £5.95 (paperback) (UK).

PLAYING THE GAME. Christine Poulter. Macmillan. £20 (UK). £6.95 (paperback) (UK).

PRODUCT NEWS

CCT's New Products Review

CCT and Donmar's recent *new products party* attracted much interest.

On show was CCT's complete luminaire range including the new "Silhouette" 1200, which can take the latest T29 1200W lamp as well as the T19 1000W. Also to be seen were the completely new 2000W "Silhouette" for those who need a particularly powerful profile spot, and the new "Minuette" 650W condenser optics follow spot, a winner for clubs, disco's and the small theatre.

For CCT, an important object of this 4-day event was to solicit from the many technicians and designers who came along, views and opinions on several experimental ideas which CCT have been looking at. CCT are well known for actively seeking this user feed-back, and there was some lively discussion during the week which will obviously colour some of CCT's development activities.

Portables and Permanents from Arri (GB) Ltd

First a high quality portable dimmer pack, which ARRI claim offers a full broadcast TV specification, without costing more than many traditional theatre dimmers.

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