

upgraded Dolby sound equipment will be put through its paces in style. It's the first UK film premiere for the Barbican Centre.

## The theatre – a huge, bubbling molten family

The *Sunday Times Magazine* talked to Terry Hands, Director of the RSC, a few weeks ago, in their 'A Day in the Life of' section. It afforded some interesting insights into Hands' lifestyle but in particular, some succinct thoughts about the theatre, which for my money are worth repeating.

"Most of my friends are in the theatre," he told the reporter. "I entertain very rarely. I don't think I have had a purely social evening for as long as I can remember. I recharge my batteries by working in different places, doing plays and operas in France and Vienna. But the theatre itself is highly gregarious, very nourishing. A huge, bubbling molten family. You can see its regenerative nature all around you," he explained. "Look at Peggy Ashcroft, in her eighties, yet she's like a woman in her fifties".

How true. Does this apply equally to all areas of the theatre world, like architects, engineers, theatre consultants and stage carpenters? Comments please, to Autolycus, or letters to the Editor

## Incentive funding assumes human form

Further to Cue's article in the last issue on the Arts Council's new incentive funding scheme, written by its project manager Dawn Austwick of Peat Marwick McLintock, I can now tell you who will be running the scheme. Howard Webber, its Director, starts in October 1988, joining the Council from the Home Office where he was a senior budget manager. Alice Ackrill, the Administrator, began in September. She was a management consultant with Strategic Planning Associates. They will be allocating a budget of £12.5 million over the next three years.

The director will set objectives, priorities and take overall responsibility for the scheme, and the administrator will handle day-to-day matters, offer advice to prospective applicants and organise business planning seminars, which form part of the overall scheme.

## It's those little things that matter

It is good to see various initiatives from the Society of West End Theatre becoming part of the regular London scene. I have noticed increasing numbers of people using SWET's theatre tokens scheme, for instance. They work on the same principle as book tokens, allowing people to choose for themselves which show they want to see and on what date. Tokens come in units of £1, £5 and £10 and their presentation wallet, which comes with a copy of the London Theatre Guide with details of all West End shows, leaves room for a personal message at the front. A theatre token

is a more fun, more social present than a book token, which has slight bookworm overtones about it. As a result, they are used as presents by theatregoers and people in the theatre industry and even as incentives to reward employees in business.

Another encouragement to visit London theatres is the joint SWET-British Rail collaboration to promote rail travel to the West End. The regularly updated 'Spotlight Your Late Train Home from the Theatre' leaflet, with details of last train times, is widely distributed throughout tourist and travel information points, like stations, theatres and concert halls.

I gather there are moves afoot to extend some of these London schemes into the regions in future. If they become as successful as the London initiatives they could prove a boon to the wider theatre industry. As a footnote, Penny Owens, SWET's marketing officer, tells me that their theatre tokens scheme was voted the best motivational scheme of the year no less by the magazine *Incentive Today* at their annual exhibition, Incentive 88.

Never say I don't keep you up with the news that matters.

## Maggie's view of art – a yuppie toy?

Remember our great leader, Margaret Thatcher, wooing Baron Thyssen's art collection earlier this summer with a colossal sum of at least £100m plus a site and perhaps a building with staff and maintenance thrown in? All this enthusiasm for a major new art collection when existing ones struggle to survive regular, deliberate cutbacks (especially in acquisitions). Then when the good baron took his art elsewhere, every tuppenny ha'penny arts commentator offered free advice as to where those sums could best be spent on the arts, rather than disappearing back into the Treasury's great maw.

But I liked the following view of Sir Michael Levey, on the Prime Minister's volte-face. "Not even the yuppiest child would treat its toys thus", he said, "on catching sight of potential new ones in a shop window. And the nation's museums and galleries are not playthings for the whims and competitive games indulged in by politicians."

Levey then stated that the "loadsamoney" waved at Thyssen should be distributed to the needy museums and galleries throughout Britain. "Anything less", he concluded, "can only reinforce the analogy of a government behaving like a group of incompetent and lazy gardeners, neglecting the flower beds they are employed to cultivate but dashing into the streets to try to grab a bouquet of orchids from a passing barrow".

## Technical training and standards move to centre stage

The AETTI as people refer to it, or the Arts and Entertainment Technical Training Initiative to give it its full name, is no longer

just a good idea. It is now a fully-fledged pressure group and central information point for all manner of technicians throughout the live entertainment and film industries.

Membership is made up of unions, employers, industry bodies (like the ABTT), institutes and trade associations. A list of 20 in all. In short, all parties involved in technical training, re-training and technical standards. Starting in October 1988, AETTI is embarking on a survey of the entire industry from rock to opera, with a brief to identify the exact occupations of all technicians and those who work with technology. The survey will cover venues of all kinds, manufacturers and the different branches of the film industry including video.

Alan Stevenson, AETTI's Secretary (tel: 061-626 0632 at home or 624 5214 ext 2010), and Graham Walne, the Chairman (tel: 01-628 1247), told me there is full co-operation now with industry standards bodies too, like the Sound and Communications Industries Federation; the British Kinematograph, Sound and Television Society; and the Association of Professional Recording Studios – to name a few. With luck the survey will be written up and ready for discussion at the end of January 1989.

Last April's conference at RADA seems a long time ago now. The AETTI shared a platform with the Arts Council, Manpower Services Commission and the National Council for Vocational Qualifications, marking the first time that so many organisations representing our industry had foregathered to discuss training issues. Graham Walne's concern, apparently shared by many in the business, for the "parlous" state of technician training and the "rapidly deteriorating technical standards" (I quote his conference remarks), has now become the catalyst for improving the situation and eventually for the introduction of the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) in 1990/91.



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