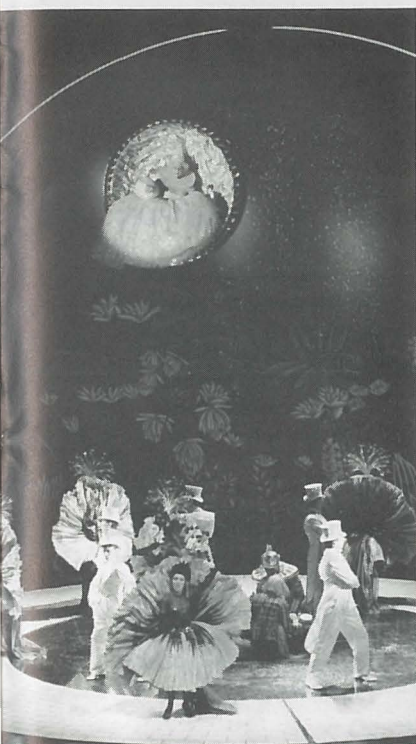


LE DÉCOR BRITANNIQUE



RICHARD H. SMITH

Rimsky-Korsakov's *Christmas Eve* (3) and Verdi's *Rigoletto* (costume sketch, 4) at the Royal Opera.

● A Noël 1988, le Royal Shakespeare Company a présenté le Magicien d'Oz adapté par John Kane, pour la deuxième année consécutive (1, 1987 version) au Théâtre Barbican; décors de Mark Thompson et éclairage de Nick Chelton.

Single Spies (2) au Théâtre Lyttelton, *Christmas Eve* (3) de Rimsky-Korsakov au English National Opera et *Rigoletto* (4) de Verdi au Royal Opera faisaient partie des productions londonniennes de la saison hivernale 1988.

▼ Zu Weihnachten 1988 führte die Royal Shakespeare Company John Kane's Fassung von *The Wizard of Oz* zum zweiten Mal hintereinander im Barbican Theatre auf (1, Aufführung von 1987), mit Bühnenbildern von Mark Thompson und Licht von Nick Chelton.

Unter den Londoner Produktionen in der Wintersaison 1988 gab es gleich zwei Stücke von Alan Bennett mit dem Titel *Single Spies* in Lyttelton Theatre (2, *A Question of Attribution*), die Produktion der English National Opera von Rimsky-Korsakovs *Christmas Eve* (3) und in der Royal Opera Verdis *Rigoletto* (Kostümskizze, 4).

For Christmas 1988, the Royal Shakespeare Company presented John Kane's adaption of *The Wizard of Oz* for the second consecutive year (1, 1987 version) at the Barbican Theatre, with sets by Mark Thompson and lighting by Nick Chelton.

Among the productions in London during the 1988 winter season was a double bill by Alan Bennett, entitled *Single Spies*, at the Lyttelton Theatre (2, *A Question of Attribution*), the English National Opera's production of

the kind of theatre magic that one looks for in a Christmas show.

John Kane's adaptation of the film version of *The Wizard of Oz*, in the Royal Shakespeare Company's superb production was presented at the Barbican Theatre for its second Christmas season. Here, director Ian Judge, and designer Mark Thompson, have done a magnificent job using the Barbican's larger, but often, problematic stage. Mark Thompson has adhered with considerable skill to the screen setting of nearly half a century ago, placing Dorothy in her Kansas surroundings in bleak black and white, introducing colour with the revolving yellow brick road, and colour with a vengeance once she arrives in Munchkinland. Even her hair changes from black to red. As in *Christmas Eve* at the Coliseum, there are any number of theatrical tricks, all magically achieved, and the costumes, both for the fantasy figures such as The Tin Man, Scarecrow, and Cowardly Lion, and for the ordinary folk in Kansas are impeccably conceived and executed. Nick Chelton's ambitious lighting is up to the high standard of everything else, and, given the quality of both drama and musical score, this production makes for an evening of rare theatrical magic.

Fine design is also currently to be found in the West End. Sir Peter Hall's new company, formed upon his departure from the National Theatre, has made its debut at Theatre Royal, Haymarket with a highly impressive production of Tennessee Williams' play, *Orpheus Descending*, starring Vanessa Redgrave in magisterial form and introducing a significantly promising young actor, Jean-Marc Barr. For his designer, Hall has used his erstwhile NT collaborator, Alison Chitty, who has successfully created the Deep South in the West End of London. Her setting of Lady's fly-brown dry-goods store in a small Southern town, with its disused confectionery at the rear, is immaculately drawn and constructed. Moreover, the placing of confectionery upstage and the street outside, to be seen through the shop door and windows, upstage

right, made for a remarkable degree of menace and claustrophobia. The galleried upper set, where dying Jabe Torrance had his bedroom, was designed with similar skill, as were the highly credible costumes and Paul Pyant's highly imaginative lighting, which took the starring role in the play's grueling final minutes. Equally commendable is Roger Glossop's ultra high-tech design for Alan Ayckbourn's staging of his own new play, *Henceforward*, at the Vaudeville Theatre. Taking place "sometime quite soon," the single set of the flat of a composer of electronic music rejoices in every conceivable gadget, including a hi-fi/synthesizer, video entry-phones and answering machines, and self-heating meals, plus a female robot in each act. Not only has Glossop succeeded in creating a post-Punk civilization on stage, he has also brilliantly evoked the desolate squalor of an abandoned husband who has been living and working at home, and almost out of control, for several years.

An attractive double bill of short plays by Alan Bennett entitled *Single Spies* opened at the National Theatre's Lyttelton Theatre in early December. The first of these, *An Englishman Aboard*, is directed by Bennett himself, and the second, *A Question of Attribution*, by Simon Callow, with same designer, Bruno Santini and highly effective lighting once again by Paul Pyant. The first play was originally seen on television, where I found Guy Burgess's Moscow apartment rather more convincing than that on the stage of the Lyttelton. On the other hand, Santini's evocation of Her Majesty The Queen's private picture gallery at Buckingham Palace, in the second play was masterly in its impressionistic simplicity, and was backed by convincing costumes and accessories for The Queen. It would come as no surprise to see this entertaining and acute double bill move from the South Bank to the West End in due course: it deserves to.

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