



1 RALPH KOLTAI SELECTED DESIGNOLOGY

THEATRE

- 1962: *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, RSC
- 1967: *As You Like It*, National Theatre, Old Vic. Designer of the Year
- 1969: *Back to Methuselah*, National Theatre, Old Vic
- 1972: *Hullabaloo*, Criterion Theatre
- 1976: *Billy*, Theatre an der Wien, Vienna
- 1978: *Brand*, National Theatre. SWET Award
- 1978: *Happy Days*, Hong Kong Festival
- 1981: *The Love-Girl and the Innocent*, RSC. Plays and Players Award. Designer of the Year
- 1982: *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Moliere*, RSC
- 1983: *Cyrano de Bergerac*, RSC. SWET Award
- 1983: *Pack of Lies*, Lyric Theatre
- 1985: *Pack of Lies*, Broadway's Royale Theatre
- 1985: *Troilus and Cressida*, RSC
- 1987: *Othello*, Prague Quadriennale. Silver Medal
- 1988: *Carrie*, RSC, and Broadway's Virginia Theatre
- 1989: *Metropolis*, Piccadilly Theatre

DANCE

- 1954: *Junior Clerk*, Ballet Comique
- 1962: *Conflicts*, Ballet Rambert
- 1963: *The Travellers*, Ballet Rambert
- 1966: *Diversities*, Ballet Rambert

OPERA

- 1950: *Angelique*, Le Pauvre Matelot, London Opera Club
- 1955: *Tannhauser*, Royal Opera House
- 1965: *Boris Godunov*, Scottish Opera
- 1967: *The Rake's Progress*, Scottish Opera
- 1968: *Raymonda*, De Norske Opera
- 1971: *Gotterdammerung*, ENO
- 1973: *Siegfried*, ENO
- 1973: *Tannhaeuser*, Sydney Opera House
- 1974: *Ring cycle*, touring version, ENO
- 1978: *The Seven Deadly Sins*, ENO
- 1982: *Don Giovanni*, Welsh National Opera
- 1984: *The Rise and Fall of City Mahagonny*, Aalborg, Denmark
- 1986: *The Italian Girl in Algiers*, Geneva
- 1987: *The Flying Dutchman* (director & designer) Hong Kong Arts Festival
- 1988: *Pacific Overtures*, ENO



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designed and how it would work best on stage.”

Koltai had his chance to direct in January of 87, when he made his directorial debut at the Hong Kong Arts Festival, where he directed and designed *The Flying Dutchman*. “I enjoyed doing *Dutchman* enormously. And I’m very pleased to report I’ll be returning to Hong Kong, designing and directing *La Traviata* for their Arts Festival in February of 90.”

But it’s his stage designs that Koltai is known for. And his latest venture, the mega-musical *Metropolis*, provided Koltai with one of his most creative challenges.

With a budget of £2.5 million (US \$4.25 million), there is no denying that *Metropolis* is a big musical. So big, in fact, that the Piccadilly Theatre in the heart of the West End had to be completely stripped down and renovated to accommodate it.

But, despite its considerable teething problems, *Metropolis* eventually managed to open on schedule at the Piccadilly on 8 March 1989. And the man who has made the most spectacular contribution to *Metropolis* — and who also, in the light of the reviews, has emerged with the most credit — is the show’s designer, Ralph Koltai.

“Right from the start, it was clear that *Metropolis* had to be a highly visual production,” he said. “It’s the nature of the piece — it has to make a strong visual statement, and it’s my job to deal with images. When I was first approached about the project about two years ago, I thought that it would be a tremendously

exciting experience, not to mention a potential moneyspinner.”

Did he feel at all in the shadow of the Fritz Lang film? “Not at all — you should never feel in the shadow of anything, otherwise you would not be able to create anything original. You simply have to find your own way of interpreting something. Fritz Lang created a movie and I tried to find a way of paying homage to it without slavishly recreating it.

“You have to approach the design of any piece with your own ideas — that’s your job. But you’re always influenced by something, and I found Ridley Scott’s film *Blade Runner* quite an influence on the atmosphere I envisaged for *Metropolis*. But then, of course, Ridley Scott was heavily influenced by Lang’s *Metropolis*, and there are big chunks of that in *Blade Runner*. There are no big chunks of *Blade Runner* in our *Metropolis*, though. You digest an influence, but you don’t copy it.”

Critical reaction to the show was mixed, divided between dislike of the book (by playwright Dusty Hughes) and score, and unanimous praise for Koltai’s designs. “The music and lyrics have come in for a lot of criticism, but my sets have been appreciated in an extraordinary way, which is naturally very gratifying.”

Koltai’s breath-taking designs range from the massive machine room — all pipes, wheels, levers, and walkways — to the glittering glass module that houses the Master of *Metropolis*, and director Jerome Savary exploits their full potential to