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achieve striking fluidity of movement on all levels of the set.

"I was brought into the project a year before Jerome, and I had designed 75% of the sets before he arrived, so the designs in this case actually dictated the direction to some degree. The starting point was the machine room, which became the central concept, with everything planned around it, and Jerome's staging makes very striking use of this."

The set looks amazingly complex on stage, but it came together very quickly. "We had a frighteningly short space of time to get it all fitted into the theatre. In fact, I never believed that it could be done in time. But due to the commitment of a series of high-powered engineers, particularly our production engineer, Mike Barnett, we got it all done."

The fact that the set runs so smoothly can be attributed to some unique technology. "The machine room basically consists of two huge towers, which operate on air cushions like a hovercraft. This is the first time, to my knowledge, that such a device has been used on stage. We decided that it was the only possible way to move those towers because they weigh about eight tonnes each, and if you put them on wheels they would churn up the stage floor in no time at all. So they rest on a series of air cushions which are filled with compressed air to lift the towers off the ground. You could lift a hundred tonnes up if you wanted to, as there is no limit — it just depends on how much air pressure

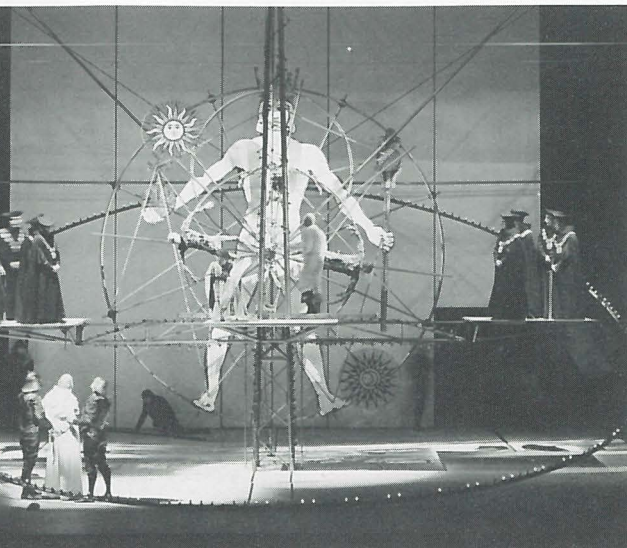
you put in. The towers are only lifted off the ground by a sixteenth of an inch, a minimal amount, but the moment they are off the floor they become frictionless and can be pushed by one person.

"The townscape of the Upper World — the domain of the Elitists — is based on Manhattan. The green lawn, the central set piece for the Elitists, is in four sections, positioned vertically against the back wall, and articulates forward like a snake.

When the Metropolis townscape at the back opens up, the lawn slides down the wall and comes out onto the stage. The front section is motor-driven, and is actually on the floor behind the townscape — it pulls the rest along with it down channels on the back wall, and reverses the same way. Technically, this lawn is the most complicated part of the show to handle, and demands great expertise on the part of its operator, as it tends to make a noise if it moves too fast.

"The glass module is also quite complex, because it doesn't come straight down from the flies. It starts off upstage and finishes 10.8 metres downstage from its original position, rather than simply descending in a straight line. That is also motor-driven, and hydraulically operated. The laboratory platform is much more straightforward. It works on the standard flying principle, suspended from four points in the flies on electronic winches, and the steps at the front are lowered electronically once it has landed onstage.

"The whole cast was actually rather



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Koltai (1) designed his first show in 1950. The recipient of two London Drama Critics Awards, two SWET Awards, and a CBE, his work spans theatre (2, National Theatre, *As You Like It*, 1969; 3, RSC, model, *Troilus and Cressida*, 1985) to opera (4, Royal Opera, *Taverner*, 1972; 5, ENO, *Das Rheingold*, 1972 [page 33]), to dance.

Gagnant de deux prix décernés par les "London Drama Critics" et de nombreux autres prix britanniques, Koltai a créé son premier décor en 1950. Il partage sa carrière entre le théâtre (2, Théâtre National, *As You Like It*, 1969; Maquette de Royal Shakespeare Company, *Troilus and Cressida*, 1985), l'opéra (4, Royal Opera, *Taverner*, 1972; 5, ENO, *Das Rheingold*, 1972 [page 33]) et la danse.

Koltai entwarf sein erstes Bühnenbild im Jahre 1950. Er wurde mit zwei London Drama Critics Award, zwei SWET Awards und einem CBE ausgezeichnet. Seine Arbeit umfasst Theatre (2, National Theatre, *As You Like It*, 1969; 3, RSC, model, *Troilus and Cressida*, 1955), Oper (4, Royal Opera, *Taverner*, 1972; 5, ENO, *Das Rheingold*, 1972 [page 33]) und alleit.