

2

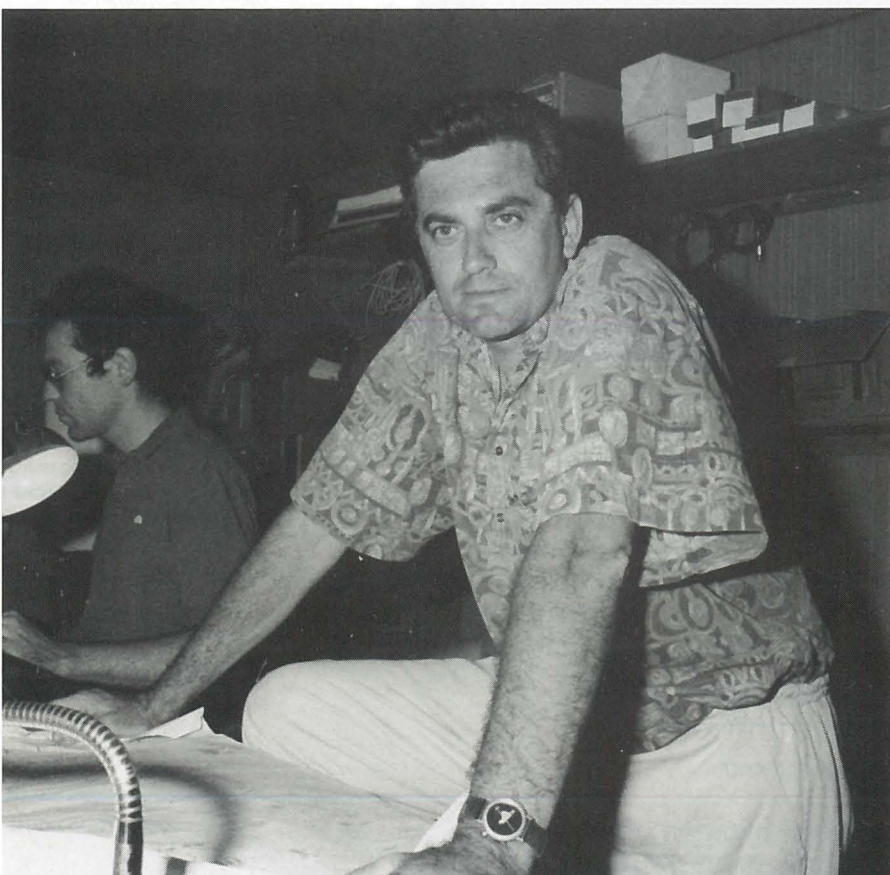
for which director Pierre Puech was awarded the Grand Prix of the Avignon Off Festival in 1984. Colomer describes this decor as “a floor of black and white sand with lunar-like craters, accented with brass plates. Here I used very little lights, maybe 50 at the most, many with gobos, but no direct light. Everything was reflected from the brass plates and from various coloured reflective metal panels, a technique borrowed from the cinema.” As the performance took place in another of Avignon’s many outdoor courtyards, this one the Cour de l’Archévêché, Colomer was able to hide all of the lights in the trees, or behind the set pieces, for what he

calls a “mysterious light — light with no apparent source.

“Only recently,” says Colomer, “has there been a real interest in lighting on the European stage, with the exception of directors like Giorgio Strehler and Robert Wilson, who exercise direct control of the lighting.” As for designers, he feels that the decor and the lighting are two separate entities, and that the set designer should not light his own work. “When the set designer lights the stage, the sets are usually overlit, and the decor becomes too present,” he feels, “whereas the lighting designer lights the ensemble, not just the decor.

“Today many of the good technicians come from professional training programs, such as the ones in Avignon and Strasbourg,” says Colomer, who feels that in addition to practical experience, a lighting designer needs to cultivate his intellect. “Painting, culture, and literature are essential.” In terms of student designers, he would advise them “to take any given situation. Is it night or day, winter or summer, sunny or raining? These elements determine the light. Now we have to be realistic — what means are available to us? What is the most efficient way to find the desired feeling — colours, angles, intensity?” For Colomer, this becomes a question of juggling the variables of situation X, lighting available Y, and the time allotted Z.

“Not everyone sees in the same manner,” he says, “so lighting is a subjective matter. One can be detail-oriented and look closely to see how things are made, or look at the ensemble from afar.” Colomer, who likes to look at the whole from afar, has often been criticized for lighting which is too sombre. “Take the cemetery scene in *Eh, Qu’est Ce Que Ca M’Fait a Moi!?* It is twilight so there are a lot of shadows to create the atmosphere. For someone who wants to see the dancer’s faces, the lighting is too dark. But I don’t think you need to see everything in the most minute detail all the time. For me, too much light means no magic — there’s nothing left to discover.”



THIERRY PETRONE

4

21