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hype of an Andrew Lloyd Webber musical was lived up to. *Aspects of Love*, which opened at London's Prince of Wales Theatre on 17 April, is a skillfully constructed, expertly written, absorbing, and even moving work. It also has the enormous advantage, in Trevor Nunn's incisive production and Maria Björnson's extremely skillful designs, of avoiding the blockbuster approach of previous Lloyd Webber musicals and relying instead on imagination and skill. Björnson's basic setting is no more elaborate than a set of large, slatted wooden doors on revolves. The purpose of these are twofold — they are used both as scenery and to mask scene changes. She achieves a wonderfully swift and varied series of settings, evoking maximum atmosphere with minimum scenery. Two examples will suffice — the façade of a French country house is achieved by suspending window frames in front of a painted flat, covering it with a sparse creeper, and flying in some twigs and branches from the proscenium. An attic is evoked by using one of those doors as a backdrop and poking up a ladder through a small center stage trap. Rather than expensive razzmatazz, this is what good stage design is all about.

Further power through simplicity is to be found at the Barbican Theatre in the Royal Shakespeare Company's latest

staging of *The Tempest*, which opened May of this year. Directed by the wonderfully intelligent Nicholas Hytner and admirably designed by David Fielding, with skillful lighting by Mark Henderson, the play was performed on a white oval disc, quite steeply raked, with a curved back gauze behind it. Towards the disc's centre was a sizeable trap, the entrance to Prospero's cell, and stage left of it was a large, egg-shaped rock that represented Caliban's abode. This simple scheme allowed for great variety and inventiveness, and the rear gauze could become transparent to allow images to appear behind it with stunning effect. Henderson's stark, white lighting added much to the atmosphere, and Fielding's costumes of nondescript period were of a similar inventiveness and intelligence.

Commercial Shakespeare in the West End also had much to offer. Peter Hall's production of *The Merchant of Venice*, opening in June, with Dustin Hoffman playing Shylock, did not disappoint. Chris Dyer's elegantly enclosed setting consisted of a Venetian colonnaded portico, which could remain enclosed for the interior and courtroom scenes, and then open to reveal blue sky and foliage for the charms of Belmont. Mark Henderson supplied a handsome lighting plan, and costumes were Venetian, of Shakespeare's own time.

Design highpoints in the spring 89 season included the May 1989 production of Janacek's *Jenufa* at the Glyndebourne Festival Opera (1), designed by Tobias Hoheisel and lit by Wolfgang Gobbel, and *Aspects of Love* (2), designed by Maria Björnson and lit by Andrew Bridge.

Parmi les décors les plus remarquables durant la saison du printemps 1989, on peut compter *Jenufa* de Janacek, présenté au festival de l'opéra à Glyndebourne (1), dont les décors étaient signés Tobias Hoheisel et l'éclairage Wolfgang Gobbel, et *Aspects of Love* (2), décors de Maria Björnson et éclairages de Andrew Bridge.

Unter den Design-Höhepunkten der Frühlingssaison 1989 waren Janacek's *Jenufa* in der Glyndebourne Festival Opera (1), Bühnenbild von Gunther Schneider-Siemssen und Beleuchtung von Wolfgang Goebel, und *Aspects of Love* (2), Bühnenbild von Maria Björnson und Beleuchtung von Andrew Bridge.