

UK/ARCHITECTURE

DARLINGTON CIVIC THEATRE CLOSES FOR EXPANSION

The 82-year-old Darlington Civic Theatre, County Durham, has, for the past several years, been plagued with the kind of problem most theatres pray for. With average attendance running at 98%, and the highest average attendance of any theatre outside the West End, the 600-seat touring house is simply too small for its needs. Every week around 1,600 people are turned away from the box office. So, with a motto of "900 seats for the Nineties," the Civic is doing something about it.

Beginning February 1990, the theatre will close for ten months for a £1.4 million (US \$2.4 million) expansion. "We are adding 315 seats, new bars and cloakrooms, improved facilities for the disabled, a computerised box office, revamping the circle seating, and reopening the gallery, which has been closed for 20

■ Turning away 1,600 people a week, the Darlington Civic Theatre will close for ten months beginning February 1990 for a £1.4 million expansion (US \$2.4 million), adding 315 seats. Artistic director Brian Goddard hopes this will attract larger productions.

years," says executive director Brian Goddard. "We're simply doing such good business we need the seats!

"In addition, we're building an expansion to the building, demolishing five adjacent houses. We'll put a theatre entrance, the cloak room, restrooms, and the bar in this new wing." The design was conceived by the Durham County Council, who is

financing the project, in cooperation with Goddard.

Besides the obvious financial rewards to be reaped by a larger auditorium and larger ticket sales, the improvement will "increase the possibility of larger, more expensive productions coming in," says Goddard. "I think what I should be doing is bringing the widest possible range of entertainment to the

theatre, and because of our present seating capacity, there are classical companies out of our reach."

The sound and lighting control box will move from the gallery to the rear of the stalls. Improvements to backstage, which were part of a £2.5 million (US \$4.2 million) plan rejected by the Council, are not included in the present plan.

APS



**INTERNATIONAL BRIEFS
INSTALLATIONS**

Lighting Technology Group has supplied the lighting and special effects for MD's, a new disco in Belgium. Included in the package is rigging by Trilite, 16 Colour Pros from High End Systems, four PAR 56 Scanners, 80 meters of neon, a Jem heavy fog machine, a laser system with a 360 degree scanning head...Arri Ltd will be supplying 1,500 dimmers, one 500 channel and two 250 channel Arri Imagine control systems, and two Celco boards, to the Birmingham Convention Centre...Bangkok's newest nightclub, the Inter-Theque, has installed 14,000 watts of Celestion SR sound systems, including eight Celestion SR1 enclosures and eight SR2's.

**INTERNATIONAL/1992
EUROPEAN OPERA ASSOCIATION BORN**

United technical standards and the training of technicians for the lyric theatre are among the goals of a new pan-European Opera organization, The European Association of Lyric Theatres, which has charter members in 13 different countries. To best face the new united Europe of 1992, this new organization looks to define the function of opera, considered to be a universal language, in the Europe of the future, while at the same time propose a unified system of legislation and technical standards for Europe. The members will also seek to find concrete solutions to the problems of training of artistic and technical personnel for opera,

and facilitate the touring of works to different theatres.

After two preliminary meetings in September 1988 and February 1989, the new organization was born in Montpellier, France on 3 June 1989, with Henri Maier, general manager of the Montpellier Opera, as president. Other members of the board, elected for a one-year term, include vice-presidents José Antonio Campos of the National Lyric Theatre in Madrid and Tobias Richter of the Freien Hansestadt Theatre in Bremen, Germany. The next meeting of the organization will be held on 4 and 5 November 1989 in Lisbon, and the general assembly and annual board

meeting will be held in Madrid in January 1990.

Charter members include: the Welsh National, English National, and Scottish Operas, along with the Dublin Grand Opera Society; the Montpellier, Nantes, Lyon, Nancy, Rhin, Nice, and Marseille Operas in France; the Freien Hansestadt Theatre, Buhen der Stadt, Hamburg State and Badisches State Operas in West Germany; the National Opera in Brussels; the Kongelige Theatre in Denmark; the Liceu Grand Theatre and the National Lyric Theatre in Spain; the Théâtre de la Scène in Greece; and the Opera Theatres in Italy.