



CLIVE BARDA

THE ENO PRODUCTION OF *THE PEARL FISHERS*.

## A SELECTED PHILIP PROWSE DESIGNOLOGY

### Citizens' Theatre:\*

1972: *The Relapse*; 1973: *Early Morning, Troilus and Cressida*; 1974: *Camino Real*; 1975: *The Duchess of Malfi*; 1976: *The Changeling*; 1977: *Semi-Monde*; 1978: *Painter's Palace of Pleasure, The Threepenny Opera, The Seagull*; 1979: *Chinchilla, The Country Wife, The Maid's Tragedy*; 1980: *A Waste of Time, Don Juan*; 1981: *The Massacre of Paris*; 1982: *The Roman Actor, Philosophy in the Boudoir, The Blacks*; 1983: *Sirocco, Webster, Rosenkavalier, Oroonoko*; 1984: *A Woman of No Importance, French Knickers*; 1985: *Mary Stuart, Heart-break House*; 1986: *The Spanish Bawd, An Ideal Husband*; 1987: *Anna Karenina*; 1988: *The Vortex, 'Tis Pity She's a Whore, Lady Windermere's Fan*;

### Welsh National Opera:

*Tamburlaine*\*

### The Lyric Theatre, Shaftesbury Avenue:

*Summit Conference*\*

### Greenwich Theatre:

*The White Devil, The Seagull, The Orphan*\*

### The National Theatre:

*The Duchess of Malfi*\*

### The Old Vic, Aldwych:

*Phedra*\*

### Opera North:

*Aida*\*, *The Threepenny Opera*\*, *Orpheo Ed Euridice*\*, *Daphne*\*

### English National Opera:

*The Pearl Fishers*\*

### Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet:

*Swan Lake, Sleeping Beauty, Gloriana*

### Royal Ballet:

*Diversions, Laurientia, Paquita, La Bayadere*

### Zurich Opera House:

*Swan Lake*

### The Scottish Ballet:

*The Nutcracker, The Scarlet Pastoral, Cheri*

### Dutch National Opera:

*The Sleeping Beauty*

### The Royal Opera at Covent Garden:

*Orpheo Ed Euridice, Ariadne Auf Naxos*

### Munich Opera House:

*Swan Lake*

### Scottish Opera:

*The Magic Flute*

### Festival Ballet:

*The Wooden Prince*

### English National Opera:

*Don Giovanni*

\* also directed

rather grand, sunlit, autumnal garden, focussed on a great golden rotunda, dappled with sunlight. But, as so often at Citizens, this same expensive feature reappeared, altered beyond recognition, in *French Knickers*, a satirical musical based on *La Vie Parisienne* and set in the Gare du Nord. Finally, smashed beyond redemption and piled up with sandbags, it served as background for another director's staging of *Blitbe Spirit*, set in the Second World War.

So it is possible to plan a season of perhaps three productions using the same basic set. Most recently, for *The Vortex*, by Noël Coward, and John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, Prowse made use of the same huge open space, painted black and filled with mirrors and lilies for the former. Painted white, with different, sparse but effective furnishings and props, the same space became the interior of a great baroque church for Ford's play in which Prowse's notable ability to make his characters appear and disappear as though by magic speeded up the action and kept the thing moving.

I suggested to Prowse that there must surely be times when he yearned for

## What Prowse does is "try to bend the space to suit the demands of the play."

unlimited funds to work with. The answer was an admittedly qualified negative. He has of course worked elsewhere than at Citizens — in opera; at the Old Vic (where he staged *Phedra* with Glenda Jackson in the title role); and in London's West End, with far more generous funding than the Glasgow playhouse can provide. But he certainly doesn't seem to envy the designers of shows like *Starlight Express* or *The Phantom of the Opera* (incidentally, Maria Björnson, designer of that smash hit, was a Citizens' trainee under Philip Prowse in her early days).

"Young designers seem to feel that they must have all the latest mechanical things to work with, but I still enjoy doing things with wood and paint. Of course, it might be nice to have a flat stage instead of always having to build it up. But with all the old machinery down there, I don't suppose we'd ever be allowed to dispose of that — quite rightly, I have to say."