

Oscar Israilev is the Consultant Engineer for the Ukrainian State Project-Production Association "Dipromisto". Here he explains his ideas of "stage lightography".

A VIEW OF LIGHTING FROM THE UKRAINE

The concept of stage design is changing. The organisation of the theatrical space, the creation of the environment involving scenery, costumes, props, sound, lighting and stage equipment is acquiring a broader meaning, and a new name - scenography.

Stage lighting plays its part, and is one element of the overall 'scenography' in a theatrical performance. It is so closely linked with the whole, that problems of lighting are related to general problems of other elements of the scenography.

The effect of the theatrical environment and the performances of the actors both combine to influence the spectator. Thus the concept of scenography has evolved - no longer limited to dressing the scene, but expressing it; no longer creating the image of the scene but revealing the action itself through fluid movements which arouse the consciousness of the audience.

When you look at the wider implications of performance scenography, the design of the whole building, including the auditorium, foyer and circulation areas are also vitally important. However, a director may decide not to use stage machinery, costumes, scenery or sound, but he could never create a performance without light. Thus special attention has to be paid to lighting the performance, particularly the psychological effect of light on the audience.

The lighting environment is not static. As the performance progresses, so does the lighting. If you consider music, even at its most dramatic, it is not an illustration of a series of separate episodes, but musical themes connected together by a common factor - the image of the performance. In the same way, the lighting states and progressions should be closely connected by the concept of lighting the performance. Only then will the lighting be perceived by the audience as a homogeneous entity, expressing the image and essence of the performance.

DYNAMICS OF LIGHTING VARIABLES

The dynamics of the lighting environment can be considered to consist of three variable parameters: quantity, brightness and colour. Generally, the lighting environment spreads throughout the entire theatre building, inside and out, and anywhere there is light, colour and brightness are important factors.

When the lighting environment is created, many possibilities should be considered, from the

practicalities of visibility to the psychological influences on the audience. To summarise, the factors are: lighting the scenery to reveal its texture and to create an illusion; special lighting to imitate natural phenomena (dawn, sunset, fire) including dynamics, colour

transitions; the use of colour to identify and characterise the principal performers.

In the Kiev National Opera's production of Tchaikovsky's ballet *The Sleeping Beauty*, Viktor Gozchenko's lighting design changes continuously, blending

marvellously with the music. The wide variation in the colour theme follows the music and performance. The lighting leit-motives - lighting icons - are particularly effective. The appearance of a character, or an action, is accompanied by an emphasis of the light. Colour is often used to accentuate the ideas and notions and as a symbol of war, peace, threat etc.

Light is used to accentuate the dramatic development of the performance by emphasising areas of the scene and high-lighting characters to draw the attention of the audience to them. Light helps to influence the mood of the audience, and to create visual illusion. The development of the concept of light, to include the creation of the lighting atmosphere is the art that I call *Lightography*.

LIGHTOGRAPHY EXPLAINED

Stage lightography is an art form of equal importance to scenography. It has to follow the general rules of the theatre, and it has its own specific rules, some which are only recently being formulated and others are still not fully understood. The fact that it has developed now is due to the work of several prominent lighting designers. Nevertheless, there is a tendency to analyse practical experience in detail; discussions of the benefits and disadvantages of one lighting solution over another based on the physical laws of light and colour, and theorising about related arts and psychology.

In Musorgsky's opera *Khovanschina*, the Kiev National Opera's production, again lit by Viktor Gozchenko, includes scenes of bloody rebellion in the reign of *Peter the Great*. The symphonic introduction *Dawn over the Moscow River* accompanies a long slow lighting transition, gradually changing from night to day, prophesying the gloomy day of horrible events to come. The lighting plays an essential role in revealing the tragic fates of the characters, as seen in the photograph.

The available lighting equipment has a direct bearing on the creation of the lighting environment. Recent ideas in scenography have demanded more from the stage lightography, and this results in the search for better facilities and equipment.

By introducing stage lightography into the performance, the lighting designer will be able to use the lighting system most effectively without betraying the art.



Kiev National Opera's production of Tchaikovsky's ballet "The Sleeping Beauty". Lighting by Viktor Gozchenko.



Musorgsky's Opera "Khovanschina". Showing a rebellion in the reign of Peter the Great. Lit by Viktor Gozchenko.

