

'ANXIOUS FOR TO SHINE IN THE HIGH AESTHETIC LINE'

Mention the names 'Gilbert and Sullivan' to most people and they can immediately recall a snatch or two of operetta. This is due in no small part to the likes of the D'oyly Carte Opera Company, who have recently finished a successful run of *The Mikado* at their home base, the Savoy Theatre.

But how many people know, one wonders, just how important the D'oyly Carte Company has been to the theatre lighting industry in general, and Strand Lighting in particular?

The 60th anniversary has just been celebrated of our installation of a new lighting system at the Savoy Theatre, during reconstruction of the building.

Last month marked the 108th an-

niversary — also at the Savoy Theatre — of the first time in history when a theatre was fully lit by electric light. The main strand (pun intended) linking these events was the D'oyly Carte Company who took the honour of being the first to perform in such modern surroundings on December 28th 1881 with a performance of Gilbert and Sullivan's *Patience*.

The trade journal 'The Electrician' reported at that time, 'The thanks of playgoers must be given to R D'oyly Carte for the enterprise he has shown in adopting this cool and wholesome luminant to light his new Savoy Theatre.'

This was all made possible by Joseph Swan's 'incandescent lamp', patented by Edison and popularly attributed to him.

Altogether, 1158 lamps were used to light the Savoy Theatre and Swan was later hailed as 'the real father of electric stage lighting.'

Incidentally, dimming control at that time was said to have been by way of 'a resistance of open spiral coils of iron wire' to obtain graduations of light.

During the 1929 reconstruction, the Strand board included some liquid pots for variable load circuits and Dutch resistance dimmers to most circuits.

Continuing our association with the Savoy, by 1960 we were back at the theatre to replace the 52 dimmer ways of 1929 with 120 resistances and transformers remotely controlled from a standard Strand CD console. Today the Savoy uses a Duet 2 console.

THESE ARE YOUR STRAND LIGHTING CONTACTS WORLD-WIDE

UNITED KINGDOM

Camilla Aitchison
Strand Lighting Limited
Grant Way
Syon Lane
Isleworth
Middlesex TW7 5QD
United Kingdom
Telephone: 01-560 3171
Telex: 27976
Fax: 01-568 2103

AUSTRALIA

Rod Gilbert
Strand Lighting
264-270 Normanby Road
South Melbourne
Victoria 3205
Australia
Telephone: (03) 646 4522
Fax: (03) 646 5020

CANADA

Peter Rogers
Strand Lighting
6490 Viscount Road,
Mississauga
Ontario L4V 1H3
Canada
Telephone: (416) 677 7130
1-800-387-3403
Telex: 06-968645
Fax: (416) 677 6859

FRANCE

Bernard Bouchet
Strand Lighting France S.A.
26 Villa des Fleurs,
92400 Courbevoie
Paris
France
Telephone: (1) 47 88 66 66
Telex: 611921 F/Strand F.
Fax: (1) 43 3371 75

HONG KONG

Phil O'Donnell
Strand Lighting Asia Limited
802-4 Houston Centre,
63 Mody Road
Kowloon
Hong Kong
Telephone: 3-685161
Telex: 44953
Fax: (852) 3-694890

ITALY

Andrea Molinari
Strand Lighting SpA
Divisione Trading
Via Paola Albera 82
00181 Roma
Italy
Telephone: 06-785 3544
Telex: 620178 Luxian
Fax: 06 780 9018

USA

Bill Groener
Strand Lighting
18111 South Santa Fe Avenue
PO Box 9004, Rancho Dominguez
California 90224, USA
Telephone: (213) 637-7500
Telex: 664 741. Fax: 213-632-5519

USA

Rick White
Strand Electro Controls
2975 South 300 West
Salt Lake City, Utah 84115, USA
Telephone: (801) 487 6111
Fax: (801) 466 1003

WEST GERMANY

Heinz Fritz
Strand Lighting GmbH
Salzbergstrasse 2
3340 Wolfenbittel-Salzdahlum
West Germany
Telephone: (05331) 7951
Telex: 95641. Fax: (05331) 78883

To obtain a copy of *The Strandbook* send a cheque for £4.00, made payable to 'Strand Lighting Limited', to: Strand Lighting Limited, Grant Way (Off Syon Lane), Isleworth, Middlesex, TW7 5QD. England.



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