

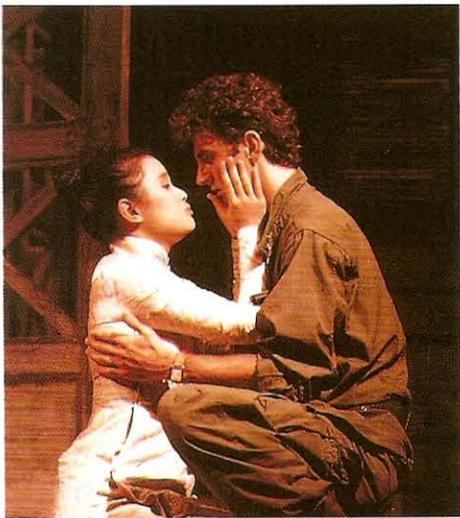
if it doesn't work out I go back and say, "Look, can we do this or not?" and then everything is judged on its merits. But I do try very hard to keep within the budget.'

'What was new about *Miss Saigon* was that we had these four banks of motorised light curtains, so you could have a light curtain anywhere you wanted on the stage, and any colour you wanted. The light curtain has now become a part of the vocabulary and I predict that it will soon become a basic part of the kit.'

Outside the theatre, David is currently working on a theatrical-style lighting design for a new hotel water feature for *The Golden Nugget* in Las Vegas, involving 3000 light fixtures, a steam boiler 'the size of a small bus', three separate dimmers a quarter of a mile apart and an eight-inch gas main.

His wife, Demetra, is currently designing a musical production of *Great Expectations*, for which he has designed the lighting, at Liverpool Playhouse.

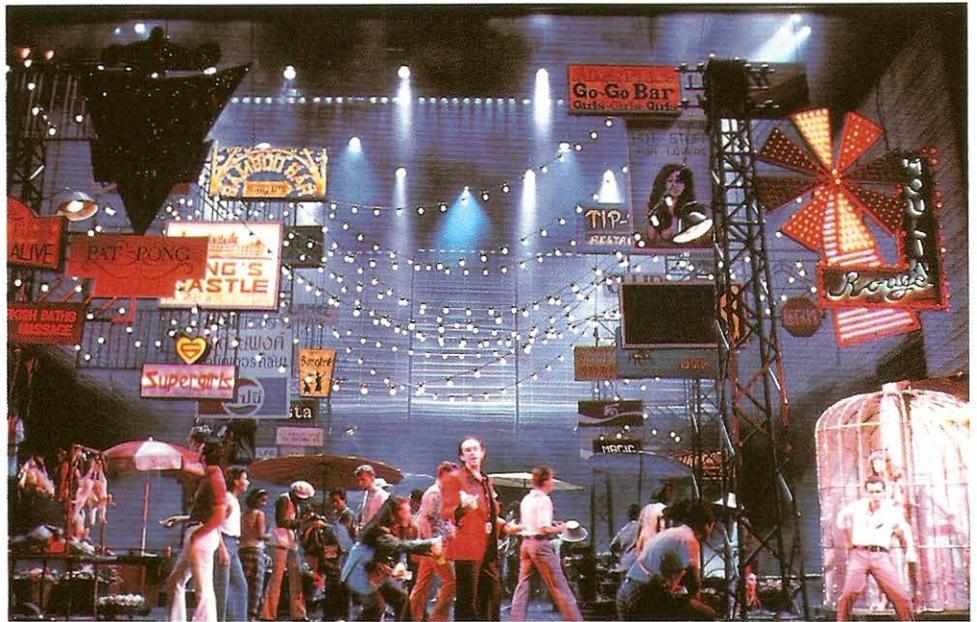
One of the penalties for being in great demand is that family life is cut to a bare minimum. He admitted, 'This year has been a bit of a disaster for that because it has been so hectic. It's a bit like just waving hello in airport lounges and not



seeing too much of the kids. Next year I'm going to take radical steps to improve matters and restore some balance to life.'

David is better placed than many to compare the differences between working in the United States and in Britain as a lighting designer. Apart from the hours (in the UK, from 9 until 11 — in the States from 8 until midnight during a production) there is a completely different way of setting up a theatre for lighting on either side of the Atlantic.

In the United States, theatres are empty when they are taken over for a pro-



duction. Every single item of lighting has to be hired-in for that particular show. One of the results is that lighting design in the States tends to be more rigid, with a designer having to decide prior to hiring the hardware exactly what he will need. In Britain, conversely, designers have more scope and flexibility for experimenting with lighting configurations.

David explained, 'The advantage in the States, because it is so well organised, with every lamp and cable being made up and numbered, is that they can put in a 1000-lamp rig within a couple of days. But the minute you say, "I would like that one moved over to there" — the system does not cope with that at all.'

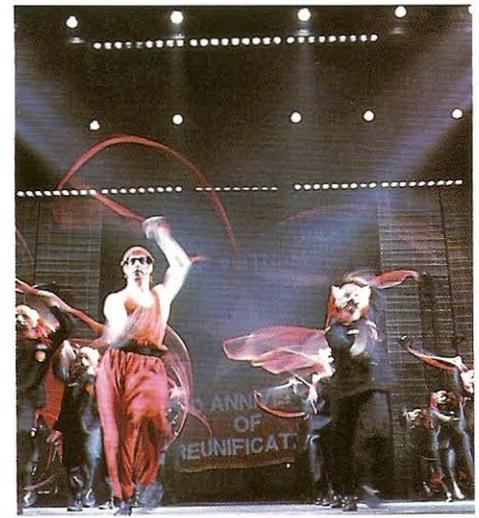
'It's also to do with the system itself. On Broadway it is such anarchy, with every man for himself, and inter-departmental rivalry, that it breeds a certain kind of approach. Often the only way to get things done is to go in and say, "I want this here, and that there, and this is the focus..." and so on, and "that it is so because I say so..." then you will get it done.

'One of the good things about working in Britain is that you do have the luxury of being able to experiment and say "let's try this." This is not because English lighting designers are lazy or don't do their homework but because lighting is a living, breathing thing that finds its life in the theatre in the process of being realised.

'That is why it is so important to have a combination of something which has shape and form, and which is still fluid enough to respond to ideas which are created on stage. To experiment in this way in the American system would be unbelievably expensive.'

He added, 'There is a kind of mystique about American technicians being very, very good and British ones being not so good. This is absolute rubbish. It may have been true once but I think it has changed a lot in the last few years.

'When I came to England in 1968, I wasn't quite sure about it, though. The first fit-up I went to at the 'Old Vic', I thought "everybody's walking in their sleep". Nobody shouted; nobody



rushed. They just carried on with it, and then stopped for tea — but it all happened and came together. There just wasn't a lot of hustle and bustle about it. You just can't get that sort of approach in America.'

Footnote: David's latest West End show is *The Baker's Wife*, by Joseph Stein (of 'Fiddler On The Roof' fame) directed by Trevor Nunn and playing at the Phoenix Theatre, Charing Cross Road.