

Although it may appear that I have started this article in the middle, in point of fact it was not until I had studied thoroughly all possible positions for placing the electrical equipment that I was able to approach the production from an artistic viewpoint and decide just how I was going to "light" it.

May I digress briefly at this point to say that when lighting any theatrical production I consider there are two prime considerations. The first is to study the theatre switchboard and its method of control, and the second is to investigate thoroughly all practical positions for siting equipment. In point of fact there is a third consideration which no doubt my colleagues will consider of equal importance, and that is the depth of the management's pocket! However, that need not concern us at present.

The study of the switchboard is extremely important and I made several visits to the control desk at the back of the New Theatre stalls before deciding upon the type of cues which I would use in this particular case. And here I must pay tribute to the magnificent co-operation I received from the chief electrician, Bill Bruce, and his assistant, Paddy Lynch, during the production period and the enthusiastic way in which they endured our "all-night" lighting session. Their operation of the switchboard on the opening night was masterly and has remained so at each subsequent performance.

Thus, having studied the theatre and the lighting control, it was time to turn my attention to the production itself and to Sean Kenny's brilliant setting. The Dickensian feeling and atmosphere clearly had to be established and maintained, however freely the book of the show had been adapted from the original. Here, then, was my next big problem. How much gloom would the West End audience and critics take in what was to be essentially a musical comedy, and how much light would I have to use to light faces without losing the sombre atmosphere required in most of the scenes.

Several late nights were spent in my workshop at home with the scale model of the set until I had a complete plan of the exact position of the revolve and motorised trucks, together with the flying pieces, for each one of the twenty scenes in the show. I then worked out a rough layout for each of these scenes, trying to place the lanterns according to the mood of the scene, the time of day, the direction of the main light source, and the purely visual needs of that particular scene. At the end of this phase in the proceedings I had used, on paper, about 240 lanterns and would have required a control of about 190 dimmer ways.

For the next two nights I worked on a compromise layout, reducing the actual number of lanterns to 160 on 124 dimmer ways, and trying to decide which lantern could be made to cover two, three, or even four scenes. This was perhaps the most difficult part of the whole task. I feel sure that my colleagues will back me up when I say that "the correct lantern hung in the correct position will cut hours off the time of actual lighting rehearsals and plotting"; and if any advice was to be sought at this juncture, I would say "know your