



TABS

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Alas, Poor Tabulus



The Royal Festival Hall on London's South Bank becomes a theatre for the Christmas and summer seasons with the installation of a temporary proscenium arch and scenery grid pioneered by Festival Ballet. The cover shows rehearsals for the D'Oyly Carte Opera's centenary production of *Utopia Ltd.* with decor by Peter Rice and lighting by Joe Davis who has now been responsible for the lighting design of well over 500 major productions. The photograph above shows the Royal Festival Hall's new MMS lighting control; through the control room window the stage can be seen in its normal, designed, role as a concert platform. Photographs by Fox-Waterman

Editor: Francis Reid

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We know a rather disreputable fellow.

He works and plays in and around theatres, and his fundamental philosophy is that *if something is worth doing, then it is worth doing badly*. This despicable fellow actually believes that the quality of performance is not as important as the quality of the work being performed.

He has missed all the great definitive virtuoso performances of his lifetime. He has been drawn to Town Hall rather than National Opera, and with breathless anticipation he awaits a new production of Boris Godunov: not the Mussorgsky with yet another new set of expensive decors, but the Mattheson with just a handful of pattern 23s.

He does not own a HiFi and his gramophone is not stereo. He prefers two different cheap label interpretations of a work, rather than the alleged definitive performance by the international star of the moment.

He despairs of opera directors who pontificate against the da capo aria, and he positively enjoys the plot being held up for a ritornello—provided the director does not feel obliged to concoct a desperate mime.

He deplores the exponential growth of theatre bureaucracy where the administrative act can become a self-perpetuating cycle of corporate paper work, unrelated to author, actor, or audience.

He believes that the function of a critical pen is not to pronounce artistic assessment, but to inform on the nature of the work and record the ambience of a particular performance. He believes that conventional criticism has made audiences feel obliged to sit in judgement and devise conversationally acceptable responses. And he believes that this has spoiled the relationship between actor and audience much, much more than alleged shortcomings in theatre architecture.

As audience, he seeks a sensual theatre which strikes through to an emotional rather than intellectual response, free from all pre-conditioning by the decades of mental garbage filed away in his brain cells.

He believes that the answer lies in his favourite art form, *Rough Theatre*. Rough Theatre is fun. It has guts, gusto, and a short rehearsal period. It is cheap and cheerful. It is noisy without microphones, elegant without chandeliers. It comes from the heart and it strikes at the heart. It defies intellectual analysis.

He loves *Rough Lighting*. Not the roughness of a light that fades out across the actor's chin, projects a serrated shutter image across his knees, and makes his shadow walk the sunlit sky. But a rough lighting that is broad slashes of colour, stark downlighters, and wham-bam-slam cross-cuts.

He is rarely disappointed inside a theatre. He always enters in a spirit of hope but he knows that the writing, the designing, the discussing, the rehearsing and the performing can only ignite into theatre magic if an unidentifiable catalyst is present.

He can trace little correlation between this magic and the conventional resources of buildings, materials and people. The vital spark seems to be just a script or score which can stimulate the executants into an enthusiasm which is transmitted to their audience.

And so this awful chap has come to believe that *if something is worth doing, then it is worth doing badly*.

Who is he? Who is this despicable fellow? We thought that TABS readers ought to know just what sort of a bounder they are dealing with.

He is your Editor.