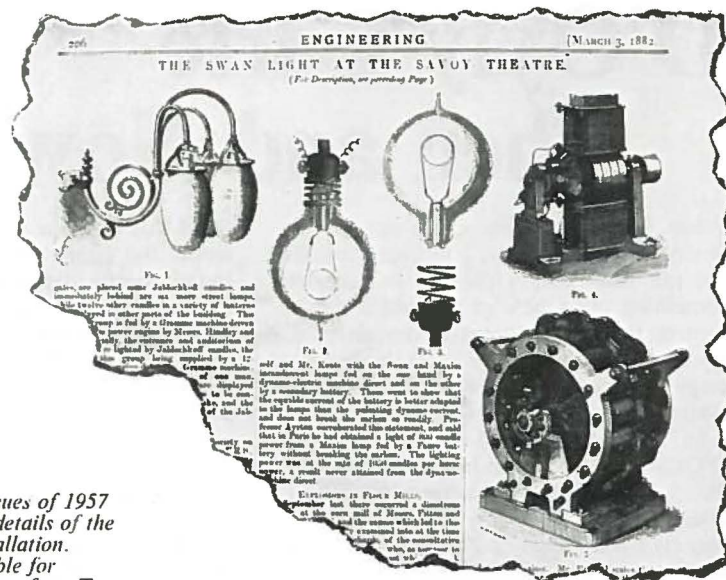


regard to the lighting, and as the equipment became more and more sophisticated, it needed people with more experience to use it, and to operate the lighting boards to the designer's wishes. As time moved on, most theatres had a more or less standard lighting rig—several front of house lights on either the balcony or circle front, a spot-bar just inside the proscenium arch, and a number of battens and foot-lights. There were also usually a few extra lamps that could be used elsewhere when specially required. In London, however, sophistication was greater, and extra lamps were installed specially for each new production. In time, as these shows went out on tour, the same lighting would be required in the provincial theatres, and the only way of doing that was to tour the equipment needed.

The D'Oyly Carte Opera Company have been in existence now for just over a hundred years. We have used gas and electric lighting, and have toured the provinces of Great Britain for over 90 years. We have done long North American tours from coast to coast, and short spells on the continent, in Denmark and Rome. One of the most common factors of all these places has been the stage lighting. It has always been of the same basic layout; dressing-rooms, scene-docks, storage areas, public areas all change, they are less consistent than the basic theatre lighting layout. Although Richard D'Oyly Carte was the pioneer in the use of electricity in the theatre, the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company's performances of the Gilbert & Sullivan operas have never called for a complicated lighting plot. Many of the operas are still based on Gilbert's original stage directions, and are of a simple, rather Victorian nature. Consequently, we tour the provinces to-day with perhaps the simplest lighting rig of any of the touring companies. Of course it would be very nice to have a tremendous amount of equipment, and to be able to decide on our particular requirements for each theatre, but we are an independent company, receiving no financial aid, from either the Arts Council or in any other form. In consequence, we operate on a limited budget, and simply cannot afford to tour our own complicated lighting rig. We also play eight shows a week, six evenings and two matinées, and change shows every day. We operate with a small staff, and under these conditions, there is not time to be changing lighting, and rigging extra bars and effects for each different opera.

On tour, the stage director is responsible for the lighting, we have no chief electrician of our own. We tour 12 x 243's, which are used for overhead spot bars, 16 x 223's which can be used as either side lighting on stands, or as extra spot-bars, 6 x 263's which are used as booms (1 per side with 3 lamps on each), and 4 sections of three-circuit ground-row. The late Peter Goffin, who designed the composite set, into which most of the operas fit, was responsible for the lighting of most of the operas, but since then, Michael Northen has been responsible for "Mikado", "Gondoliers" and "Sorcerer", and Joe

TABS September issues of 1957 and 1962 included details of the original Savoy installation. Xeroxes are available for enthusiasts on request from TABS.



Davis for "Utopia". One of the first essentials with such a system is to find a suitable combination of colour media that can be used for all the operas, but which is also suitable for a particular designer's effect or general lighting. This we have managed to do quite successfully, after consultation with the various designers. We use pastel shades for the warm colours, 52's, 54, 36, and 3 with occasionally 10, 47, 49. We have managed a compromise also, on the blues we use for our moonlight scenes, using mixtures of 18, 32, and 41. Consequently, once the lamps have been focused, almost all of them can be used all the time, for every opera. This means we don't have a lot of lamps hanging that we are not using, or only using for one or two operas. It also means that we are not continually re-focusing for each new opera, which saves a lot of time, and the whole system makes for speedier lighting, as it does not take long for whoever is lighting to become familiar with the rig, as it is quite simple.

It is amazing what good results can be achieved from such a small amount of lighting equipment, used only to augment the theatre's own supply. Some theatres to-day are so well equipped that we do not even use our own equipment. One other big advantage with our relatively simple system is that apart from generally saving money, and making touring easier, it is so simple when we go back to our regular dates. The plots can be kept year after year, and as long as we remember just how we focused everything last time, we can focus, and merely run the cues off the old plots, making minor alterations to levels where necessary. This saves the chief and his staff a good deal of writing in the case of theatres with older switchboards, and in the event of us being fortunate enough to play a theatre with one of the new computerised memory boards (MMS for example) it means that the chief or board operator can set-up all the cues in advance (perhaps whilst the stage are setting in the morning) and then simply run the cues in sequence when the stage is set. Any alterations can be made, and the cues

re-recorded. We are now operating what I call our O.P. (old plots) system in several theatres, among which are Manchester Opera House, Blackpool Opera House, Norwich Theatre Royal, Billingham Forum and the New Cardiff.

Wally Tomkins (Chief Electrician, Manchester Opera House) and myself, got so used to working the O.P. system, that he can now set most of his lamps prior to our arrival, and he knows precisely where ours go when they arrive. All that is required a month before our starting date is the letter, saying "Electrical requirements as per last season"; back comes the reply "Plots dusted and ready for action". It saves a tremendous amount of time, and makes everyone's job so much easier. Most of the chiefs up and down the country know precisely what to expect from us; they amaze me sometimes when they remember one particular cue, even though they have not seen us for two or three years. On the other hand, when we occasionally go into a theatre that is not particularly well-equipped, it is a simple matter to use Mini 2 boards, which can quite easily cope with the sort of cues and changes we are doing, and as we operate on very much the same rig everywhere, we know precisely what the Mini 2 board is going to have to do. In the past we have run the entire show off Mini 2's, and coped quite easily. We are even filing those plots now, because we know we shall be able to use them again.

Come to think of it, given the supply of electricity, the lamps, the colours, and the ideas, none of it would be possible without the chiefs and their staff. They take a lot of kicks, and rarely the credit for good results and smooth operation. I started on stage management with D'Oyly Carte at a very early age, knowing nothing about stage lighting whatsoever (no comments please) and over the years I have received a tremendous amount of help, advice and encouragement from the "chiefs" and their staff, and I have never been in a position to say "thank you" to them; until now.

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