

Faders v Keyboards

Lighting Control in Germany

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Ever since, if not before the introduction of Rank Strand IDM/MSR and Brown Boveri Datalux systems to Germany in 1966–68, the design and layout of control systems have been discussed with much emotion. Fuelled by companies who in those days still believed the solution to all problems was to be found in the mechanics, one can now differentiate between enthusiasts for fader, push button or keyboard technologies! Surprisingly, the hardware itself was never a criterion in the theatre, and with TV only seldom if at all.

Naturally, the technique of lighting is the basis of all considerations and it seems that in Germany the individual circuit is generally of more importance than groups or combinations of channels forming a complete picture. Equally, light is often used rigidly as a straight change from cue to cue without fluid changes at different speeds. Amongst other reasons are the fixed arrangements of the luminaires, the inadequate number of spots, as well as the constraints of productions in repertoire.

The highly sophisticated and therefore most discussed system, Lightboard, has now been in operation since September 1978 at Deutsche Oper, Berlin and Deutsches Schauspielhaus, Hamburg—both with 400 ways.

This is the Mark 2 generation which is benefitting from experience gained with the earlier installations at the National Theatre, London and Burg Theater, Vienna. With deluxe colour monitors it can be regarded as being the “Rolls-Royce” in control techniques. It is perhaps too early to evaluate all its merits, but already the saving in time during rehearsals and the superb facilities provided are very apparent. Although at first glance the operators seemed to be slightly frightened by the amount of buttons and facilities provided and had their doubts as to whether they would need to use all of it, they now appreciate that the facilities are exactly what they require during both rehearsals and performances and are using the board in a very sophisticated manner, giving the designer the satisfaction of knowing that his ideas are really appreciated.

The transferring of the existing repertoire performance lighting designs went more smoothly and easily than had been expected—as had already been experienced with the DDM systems—since dimmer curves can be matched through the computer with those of the Bordoni or magnetic amplifier systems, allowing individual channels to be touch-typed into the machine.

As Lightboard facilities are known to TABS readers, the following is just a short description of the individual installations:



A 200 ways AEG control system from 1956 based on Thyatron tubes was replaced at Deutsches Schauspielhaus, Hamburg. This control was one of the most up-to-date systems in those days with four presets and motorised cross-fader. The reasons for changing were that these tubes are no longer manufactured or even available, and that

200 ways are simply not adequate for today's productions, quite apart from the manpower necessary to drive the board.

The control room, having been tailored for the old manual control, offered enough space to install the Lightboard Mark 2 system for 400 ways with colour monitors and auxiliary



Lightboard Mark 2 control for 400 ways at Deutsches Schauspielhaus, Hamburg.