

previously situated in the proscenium tower stage-left, was moved to the end of the auditorium at dress circle level, offering the undisturbed view the operator had long been praying for.

The control is arranged in the shape of a horseshoe starting with a geographical push-button mimic for display and selection of channels at the left-hand side, the Lightboard Mark 2 (with colour monitors of course) at the centre of the window and all auxiliary controls on the right-hand side. The push-button mimic also carries a 3-colour fault indicator system which controls the functions of the dimmers and checks whether all lanterns are plugged in and working. This was requested by the customer as the distance from control room to dimmer room or stage was about a quarter of a mile, with a number of staircases in between!

The photograph alongside shows the neat installation of MCM dimmers of which 360 5 kW and 40 10 kW have been supplied. The racks are this time housing up to 30 dimmers each and the mains distribution is installed in racks of the same style.

Almost simultaneously with the Lightboard installations, DDM Number 12 was installed in the Deutsches Theater, Goettingen. This system has proved itself to be excellent for the German repertoire system. In particular in the size between 180 and 240 ways.

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*The new MCM (Modular Crate Mounted) dimming system at the Deutsche Oper.*

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# Technik Technik über alles

ALEX de JONGE.

**The Theatre of Erwin Piscator. Half a Century of Politics in the theatre.** John Willett. Eyre Methuen £9.95.

When Sergei Dhiagileff came to Berlin in the 1920's he was quite overwhelmed by the breadth and depth of its theatrical life. "Faced by Berlin I'm like a schoolboy in love with a *grande dame*" he said, "and I cannot find the key to her heart". Indeed to anyone unfamiliar with Soviet experimental theatre and Meyerhold, the impact of Berlin was utterly overwhelming; for the first time a visitor would encounter "modern" staging, theatre in the round, bare uncluttered formalistic sets, the repudiation of naturalism. The impact of Berlin theatre was as startlingly new to the English visitor as that of its traffic lights, another innovation.

Well some of it at least was new. It is true that Max Reinhardt, the doyen of German theatre, had, for many people, already done his best work, yet in the early twenties he had embarked upon his most ambitious project, the Grosses Schauspielhaus, an attempt to

convert a circus into a huge popular theatre in the round, which would mount classics for the people, 5000 at a time. Unfortunately, if predictably, the people stayed away from productions such as *The Oresteia* and in due course the master was compelled to sell his theatre of the five thousand to Eric Charell who filled it with more popular material such as *White Horse Inn*.

The very idea of a people's theatre, bringing the masses to the classics and expecting them to enjoy themselves, may bring a smile, albeit a sad one, to the lips of most people with any experience of such enterprises. In an ideal world there would doubtless be a lot of that kind of thing going on, but in this respect our own has a long way to go. Yet, funnily enough, there was much more people's theatre in Weimar Germany than the hardened cynic might expect. The nation had long known a tradition of committed working class theatre, which had its origins in the trade union movement; Friedrich Engels had written plays for trade union theatre in the

1840's. Considered in this light the attempt of Erwin Piscator to found a political proletarian theatre in the aftermath of the 1918 November revolution which had overthrown the Kaiser and established a republic - albeit a republic with a hole in its heart as one historian has termed it - must be considered as an enterprise which was not totally preposterous, even though it staged plays with lines such as.

*Voice of Russia:* Proletariat, Proletarians, into the struggle.

*World Capitalism:* Hell, devil, plague.

In fact the workers really did attend to Piscator's productions. He sold blocks of seats to trade unions and mounted extensive publicity campaigns in the factories themselves, and, Gerda Redlich, an actress who worked with him a lot at the time, assured me, the workers, indeed would come to the theatre. Where Reinhardt's audience used to be up-market, from Berlin West, Piscator actually had a working class audience, at least in part, caustic, vociferous, militant,