

FRANCIS REID GOES EAST AND UNDER

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Francis Reid (centre foreground), the catalyst to a sixteen strong team of dedicated lighting specialists during his New Zealand tour. *Iain Aitken & Simon Garrett (Mercury Theatre, Auckland), Piet Asplet (Theatre Corporate, Auckland), Stephan Fairweather (Maidment Arts Centre, Auckland), Shane O'Mahoney (Waitakere College, Auckland), Jenny Pullar (Limbs Dance Company, Auckland), Joe Hayes (Court Theatre, Christchurch), Robin Pentecost (Christchurch Town Hall), John Williams (Kaitia), Craig Jackson (Centrepont Theatre, Palmerston North), Craig Jamieson (Baycourt Arts Centre, Tauranga), Stephen Blackburn & Alan Edwards (Downstage Theatre, Wellington), Ian McMinn (Michael Fowler Centre, Wellington), Nigel Petrie (Circa Theatre Wellington), Peter Pearson (Forum North Theatre, Whangarei).*

Going to Australia for a day may seem a bit over the top, or just plain daft, but I wanted to see the recently completed Victorian Arts Centre which was but a flooded hole in the ground when I last visited Melbourne in 1976 and reported in *Tabs* 'my gut feeling is that this project has everything going for it'. That hole now houses a concert hall, three theatres and a performing arts museum.

The general technology is exemplary, with lighting positions that are a designer's dream, and a luminaire inventory that offers a splendidly lavish selection of all the goodies in the Strand Symphony. The only omission I can find in the otherwise comprehensive 'Schedules of Technical Facilities' for the three theatres is the absence of Par 64s. How quaint in 1984! What is particularly good is the standardisation of control (Galaxy, of course) not only throughout the Arts Centre complex but indeed throughout virtually the whole of Australia.

But one should be able to take the technology for granted. Theatre after all is for audiences! And the Victorian Arts Centre is an exciting audience experience (mine was a very enjoyable performance of Gounod's *Faust*). The welcoming foyers are lavishly and stunningly decorated by John Truscott and the auditoria painted with the texture of a scenic artist's brush. This is a new world standard for theatre interior finishes – there must be no more discreetly bland functional surfaces. Bring on the decorators, let the artist flourish, say I.

This building, which is so much about today and tomorrow, also acknowledges and cherishes Australia's theatrical heritage. The Performing Arts Museum, celebrating the 50th anniversary of Melbourne's Her Majesty's Theatre (or MAJ as all the great J.C. Williamson ladies are universally known throughout the antipodes)

demonstrates a delightful flair for exhibition design. It is a particular joy to enter by a stage door where a genuine 'beginners please' tape is playing over the tannoy and to proceed, via ephemera of all kinds, to a stage area with items from the Strand catalogues of yore.

Then on to New Zealand for a Lighting Design Workshop. I act as catalyst to a group of sixteen lighting specialists who make light together for eleven days in three Auckland theatres. New Zealand theatres (and their technicians association NZATT) are in a particularly exciting phase of development and we live, breathe, eat, sleep and dream lighting design. Inhibitions drop very quickly and the group quickly develops an open approach to self-critical appraisal of their own and each other's work. I only need to insert questions like 'eyes and teeth?' or exhortations like 'live dangerously', 'take a risk!' We laugh a lot and we make discoveries. So we develop.

But on September 1st my radio awakens me with 'Today is the first day of spring!' and so I must return to Tabland. An overnight in Sydney to enjoy the spring sunshine setting on the elegance of the Opera House sails. (Being Sunday, there is no show – once again I have arrived too late and am departing too early.) Apologies to Keith Yates and all other Sydney friends whom I had no time to call – but I did raise my glass to you while checking that Oz steaks and wines are still world beaters.

Like most theatric migrants I travel steerage (also known variously as 'the boot' and 'bucket class') and Thai International are my airline of the year – even at the very back of the plane they still maintain old style flying standards with a flow of Orchids, Campari, Smiles and Remy Martin that makes around the clock flying not just survivable but even rather enjoyable. ■

A JEWEL BOX ON LONG ISLAND

CONCERNED that the westward Colonies were getting short shrift in its pages, *TABS* editor Richard Harris asked yours truly to file something on a recent project. However, the hand stretched out to these Columbian shores appears to have a bit of a bent elbow since your author grew up, if not within the sound of Bow Bells then certainly beneath the aurora of Drury Lane. Perhaps there was some editorial concern that words like

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Recent work includes: the renovation and upgrading of the Brooklyn Academy of Music, the Paper Mill Playhouse, New Jersey and the Merkin Concert Hall at the Abraham Goodman House.

Mr. George, 40, began his acoustical career in London. He spent two years in Australia with an acoustical consultant coming to New York in

The Maguire Theater auditorium



'colours' and 'theatre' might otherwise get to be spelled incorrectly. Anyway so here goes with one of Strand Century's recent installation successes.

There are Procrastination Societies all round the world who will sing the praises (if they can ever get around to it) of putting off until tomorrow what need not be done today. Their attitudes are usually voluntary. Very occasionally, however, enforced procrastination can also have its benefits, as in this case. We laboured long and hard from 1975 to 1978 with architects Alexander Kouzmanoff and Associates in New York City on the design of the Maguire Theater only to find that funds were not available to build it. Two years later, the State University of New York (the Owner) dug a little deeper into its pockets and determined that the project could restart. We raised a cry that, during the hiatus, much of the lighting and sound electronics had become obsolete and that the earlier documents could no longer be bid (tendered). So we were commissioned to update them. As a result, the Maguire now has a dimmer-per-circuit (CD80, CCR600) mini-PALETTE control system versus the cord patch panel arrangement designed during the first go-round. (I should think so too! Ed.)

First let me 'walk you through' the theatre. It sits at the end of an interconnected campus located in rolling countryside on the north shore side of Long Island in what was once part of a large estate. The white picket

fences of adjacent horse-breeding estates are redolent of Kentucky. In fact, the campus seen from a distance has often reminded me of a large modern grandstand.

The theatre was developed as part of a complex that includes a library and an administration building, each being part of a three-pronged structure that stems from the central concourse of an earlier building. The latter includes a Recital Hall and music and dance rehearsal spaces (also designed by my firm) so the Theater was programmed primarily for drama and musical theatre. Although the house seats only 401, the stagehouse, proscenium and support spaces are adequately large and the equipment sufficiently comprehensive to suit a full-size theatre of 2000-3000 seats. As a teaching space, this will allow the students to go forth into professional theatres with a complete sense of performing and technical adequacy. The complex also includes dressing rooms and a large technically equipped rehearsal room of equal area to the stage that can double as a 'little theatre' for small productions separate from the main theatre. In designing this theatre, my first move was to draw a line that represented the proscenium, which was set at 39'6". From this datum line a small forestage was developed, followed by the opening for the orchestra pit (carefully selected to optimise the acoustical projection desired). Then the seating was laid out on stepped risers in a continental layout following a gentle curve with its radius at