

**T**HE Victorian Arts Centre, right in the heart of Melbourne, contains a huge performing arts complex. It is a multi venue centre consisting of a concert hall, a lyric theatre (the State Theatre, seating 2000), a drama theatre (the Playhouse, seating 880) and an experimental theatre (the Studio, which seats anywhere from 200 to 400 in a variety of modes).

The Centre has been in the conception stage since the forties, designed through the sixties with the National Gallery of Victoria opening in 1968 and construction work on the Theatres and the Concert Hall starting in the seventies. Now, with the opening of the final stage in October 1984, it is finished and fully operational. Maybe it has taken longer than many buildings its size, but with its unique design and up to the minute facilities, it is fair to say that whatever time and effort that has been spent on its construction has been well spent. No effort has been spared in consultation with the major hirers and the large touring companies to ensure that the equipment installed would satisfy most needs.

Operationally, the Centre works to one common goal: to present our hirer's (and our own) productions to the public as efficiently and entertainingly as possible, ensuring that the patrons leave the theatre contented and satisfied, having received value for money.

From a lighting viewpoint, this requires both permanent staff and equipment to be as efficient and up to date as the best hire companies. How often has a production been delayed for the sake of one piece of the correct colour or 'another lantern on that bar' or 'we may need a smoke machine' and so on and so on? This is not to

say our stock of equipment is inexhaustible, but we are able to cater for almost anything that our major hirers may require. However, a one-off extravaganza could send us off to a hire company for supplementary equipment.

Galaxy lighting controls are used throughout the Centre with the exception of a Tempus M24 system for foyer events. It is obvious that the systems are tailored to suit the venues.

One of the most heavily used modules of these systems is the channel-to-dimmer allocation patch. Because it is used extensively, two shortcomings have appeared:

1. At the end of lighting for a production, it is difficult to find out what dimmers the lighting designer has not used, and;
2. It is possible to put more than one channel to a dimmer, but not more than one dimmer to a channel.

The second of these shortfalls is easily overcome with group memories, but the first shortfall presents a real problem when we have two companies in rep and this information is vital. To cover this deficiency, the operator has to get involved with long and boring manual comparisons from a patch print out and a channel's used print out. We could overcome this problem, however this would involve the construction of a buffered L.E.D. Mimic tied to the dimmer lines which also would double as a mimic in back-up mode.

The equipment for all venues shows a marked difference. It has all been installed to give maximum efficiency to, what we call, our preferred hirers. These are, naturally enough, the Melbourne Theatre Company, The Australian Ballet and

# THE VICTORIA ARTS CENTRE

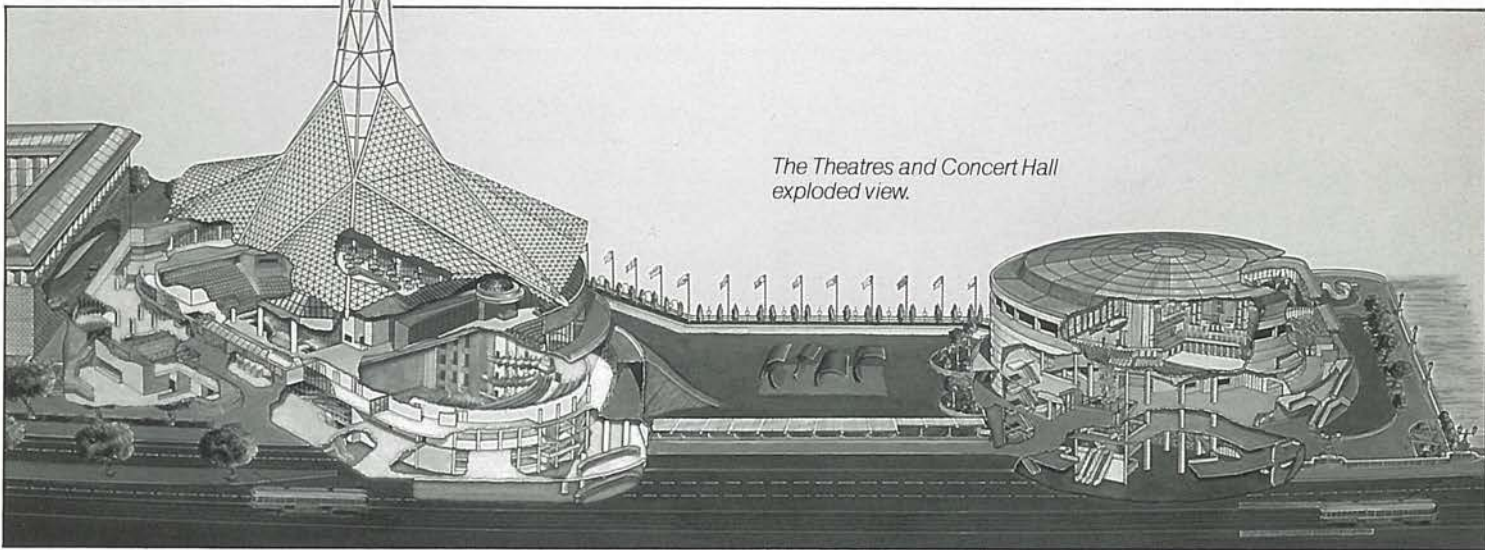
by Alan Siggers.

The Australian Opera, whose combined usage of the venues makes for a large percentage of its occupancy.

A generally accepted shortfall in the lighting installation of the building is the lack of centralised patching for three of the four venues (the concert hall being the only one with central patching). In the State Theatre and the Playhouse this has left us with the problem of too many circuits in the front and too few in the rear for most productions. This is an area currently under review that may incorporate a dimmer expansion programme. Whilst the Studio does not have these problems, due to the nature of its design, it does have a heavy complement of dimmers allocated to its

gallery and floor, which only leaves 64 in its grid. It would be an obvious advantage to be able to patch the floor and gallery circuits from the grid.

The decades it has taken to bring the arts centre to this stage has been time well spent. If this had been 50 years instead of 20 years it would still not have been perfect. The legacy that has been handed over into the care of its now resident technicians from the Building Committee, consultants and builders is one of the best examples worldwide of a modern working theatre complex designed with the aid of theatre people for the presentation of theatrical works.



The Theatres and Concert Hall exploded view.

## CONCERT HALL

90 x Par Cans  
60 x Harmony 15° - 28°  
20 x Harmony 12°  
30 x Castors  
20 x Pollux  
4 x Iris 1  
10 x Floor Stands  
30 x Spot Bar Sections  
3 x 2kW Xenon Follow Spots  
Galaxy Memory Lighting Control System, 120 channels.

## PLAYHOUSE

27 x Harmony Fresnels  
30 x Castors  
12 x Palas '4'  
12 x Iris '4'  
5 x Floor Stands  
6 x Ladders  
6 x Booms  
15 x Spot Bar Sections  
Galaxy Memory Lighting Control System, 180 channels.

## STATE THEATRE

20 x 12° - 22° Cadenzas  
36 x 19° - 32° Cadenzas  
194 x 15° - 28° Harmonys  
40 x 22° - 40° Harmonys  
23 x Fresnel Harmonys  
60 x 16° - 30° Prelude  
20 x 28° - 40° Prelude  
75 x Castors  
9 x Pollux  
84 x Coda '4'  
12 x Pallas '4'  
12 x Iris '4'  
30 x Colour Wheels  
20 x Semaphore Colour Change Units

## 15 x Floor Stands

8 x Ladders  
14 x Booms  
4 x 2kW Xenon Follow Spots  
24 x Spot Bar Sections  
Galaxy Memory Lighting Control System, 240 channels.

## STUDIO

10 x Harmony 22° - 40°  
30 x Prelude 16° - 30°  
40 x Prelude 28° - 40°  
20 x Harmony Fresnels  
10 x Prelude Fresnels  
10 x Coda '4'  
Galaxy Memory Lighting Control System, 100 channels.