

# HOW I LIT PART OF THE SHOW



by Joy Bryant

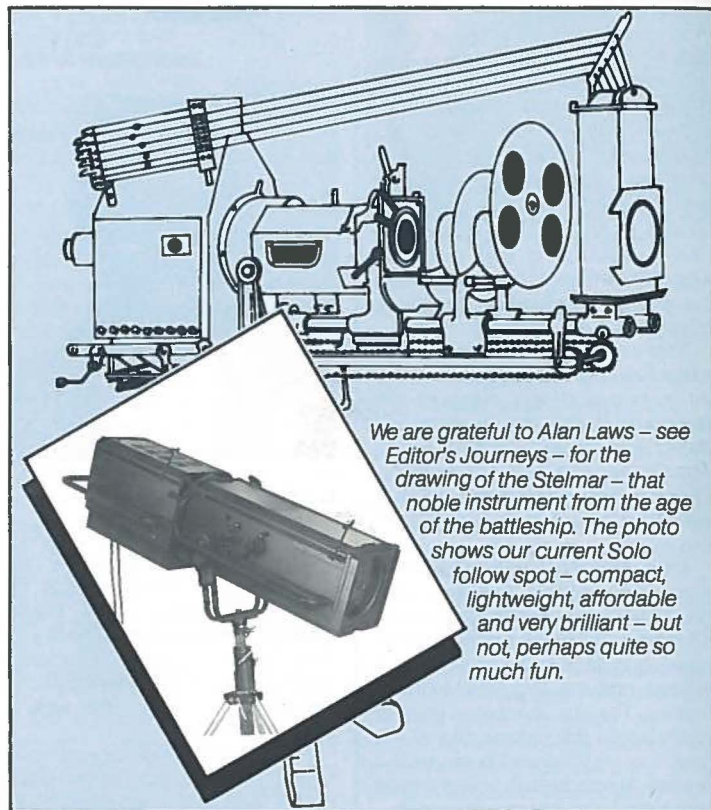
**B**eing in need of employment during the Christmas of 1984 I applied to the local theatre for work in the Pantomime season. The front of house manager could not help but told me to contact the back stage manager – Guv – as he was called. I duly telephoned him, explained I was a drama student looking for work in the Christmas period. He said they needed a Limes operator and to go and see him the following Friday. This I did and although I had never worked on lights I opened with the Pantomime on 26th December operating one of the two spotlights housed in the theatre. Lois, the other operator, though only 18 years old was more experienced than I and she was very helpful. So

began my first experience with lighting.

I soon increased my vocabulary and learnt not to react to anything that was said however pornographic. I discovered that it required concentration, dedication and an ability to sit in one position for a long time with at least one hand clutching the lamp and guiding it where necessary to keep on the performer no matter what. I also learnt how to light an entertainer to the best possible advantage, having spent hours at a lighting rehearsal just getting the right intensity, at the instructions of one particular male performer, who made it known what he thought about female Limes operators.

Girls could not manage Limes, indeed they were worse than useless. I met this person near the end of the run and he admitted that Lois and I had done a good job, and when I said that I knew it was important for an artist to be lit correctly he replied quite seriously that he was glad I had enough intelligence to realise this!

When the Pantomime season was over The Guv asked me if I would care to stay. I therefore worked with Lois on the follow spots for The Three Degrees, The Commodors, Des O'Connor, The Royal Festival Ballet,



We are grateful to Alan Laws – see Editor's Journeys – for the drawing of the Stelmar – that noble instrument from the age of the battleship. The photo shows our current Solo follow spot – compact, lightweight, affordable and very brilliant – but not, perhaps quite so much fun.



by Mike Rump

*Mike Rump joined the Post Office Engineering section straight from school, serving a three year apprenticeship to emerge as an electrical technician.*

*He is now responsible for a small power installations team equipping buildings within the Post Office. Apart from his technical interest in the theatre he also helps to run a Scout Group. Nick is also a qualified Radio Amateur.*

## Ali-Din and the Dirty Dixie

**H**aving been involved with Brighton Scouting for a few years and involved with a few Gang Shows on lighting (being suitably trained by one of your esteemed employees – *The Editor can reveal that this is Alan Luxford whose bearded image has sometimes graced the pages of Tabs*) when our local Troop decided to put on a show, I was asked if I could 'light it'. 'Naturally' I said, wondering what I had let myself in for. Having 'lit' both pantomimes and straight plays with the Rottingdean Drama Society my knowledge and experience was slowly building up and I was sure I could cope.

The Scout Hut where the show was to be performed is a fairly modern brick building but with one big disadvantage, it only has a ceiling height of 8 foot (2.75m) and bearing in mind once the stage had been erected there was only 7 foot (2.1m) between stage and ceiling, the lack of height would cause problems, also it meant that no luminaires could be hung above the acting area.

I set about a layout giving a basic warm and cold stage with FoH

lighting that would somehow give emphasis on countless appearances of either a good fairy, a good genie or a bad genie, all with suitable colour of course.

One thing I find with amateur productions is that you never have enough of one particular item, in this case I had access to sufficient luminaires but not to an equal amount of cabling or overall current capacity, so this had to be borne in mind when planning.

The cyclorama, had sufficient space behind it, was back lit with 6 Patt 137 paralleled up to give a wash of either red or blue (or judicious mixing, purple). When back cloths were dropped just in front of the cyc. two Minims were hidden within the roof joists (I am sure that's what they were designed for, the Minims, not the roof joists) to give an open white wash on the cloths when required. About mid-way on the stage I rigged two pairs of patt 123's, one pair with blue filters focused on the rear half of the stage, the second pair were to have a red filter focused on a similar area, however, on the dress rehearsal something a bit brighter was

required, so in practise some orange filter was installed.

Because the front section had a set of second tabs, after the house tabs two more patt 123's were used to give a lit area in front of the second tabs. No colour was used at first, however, open white seemed too harsh so the old standard 36 (lavender) was added to give a little more subtle light.

On the front of house bar two patt 743's were used open white and in practice were only used to about 75% full brilliance so as not to swamp the other sub-kilowatt luminaires. Also on the FoH bar was a strobe for the 'cops and robbers' style chases. At the back of the hall was a follow spot, a patt 764 with a lens tube assembly which gave a very tight spot of light and with the addition of an iris made a very good follow spot. Adding colour to the follow spot got over the problem of highlighting fairies and genies and with an operator who had a vague knowledge of lighting, a little practise with the iris and colours, soon gave the desired effect.

The control was two mini 2 packs and a twelve way desk all situated on actors left of the stage, this was