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USITT SIXTH ANNUAL THEATRE CONFERENCE

Spring was a little slow in arriving this year, and the weather was a bit cool. In Toronto it was downright chilly, but only the weather. The warm reception of the USITT Conference given by the Canadians was more than enough to offset the arctic air. Indeed, we were all made to feel quite at home.

The first day of the conference was spent touring some of the better known theatres in the area. Two busloads departed early in the morning for Stratford to look quickly at the Avon Theater, have lunch, and then glimpse the famous Festival Theatre. Demonstrations of lighting and sound equipment were held by representatives of the local companies, Strand Electric Ltd., and Experimental Electronics Ltd., then back on the bus to Toronto and the O'Keefe Center for the Performing Arts. Dinner break. At nine o'clock, York University's Burton Auditorium was viewed and there were more demonstrations. Finally, the tour ended at the Royal Alexander Theatre, an old legitimate house recently redecorated in the old manner, with gilt and crimson. Midnight found us heading back to the Park Plaza Hotel in Toronto for a late repast. It was a lovely day.

Saturday morning brought the membership to the Edward Johnson Building which contained the two auditoriums used by the Royal Conservatory of Music, and which would be the meeting place for the next two days of the conference. After coffee and registration, Dr. Boyd Neel, Dean of the Conservatory, welcomed the assembled membership to Toronto and to the campus. Then Donald Swinney, President of the Institute, finished the introductory remarks by complimenting the various people who made the conference possible, including Wally Russell, Russell Johnson, and the Program Committee.

The first panel of the conference, titled Subsidy and the Performing Arts, was moderated by Dr. Swinney and had as its first speaker Mr. Stanley Young, who commented that there would be increasing funds for the arts by the Federal Government as long as it felt that the funds were properly spent. Mrs. Ruth Mayleas followed this with a long list of current recipients of grants under the new Federal programs. Mr. Richard Grove of the U.S. Office of Education pointed out that most of the money was available for primary and secondary school projects involving the performing arts, and that this area is one in which research should be conducted. Miss Ann Coffin described the organization of the Canadian Arts Council, and called the Council unique in that it was not an agency of Her Majesty. The Council depended on the artists themselves to select or request their specific needs. Miss Coffin concluded with a story about Tyrone Guthrie who was looking for an architect for his Festival Theatre. After interviewing many prominent architects, Dr. Guthrie happened to have a meeting with the Business Manager's son-in-law, who was a young architect fresh out of school. After an hour of discussion, the young man commented that he couldn't understand why Guthrie was talking to him, as "I don't know anything about theatres". "You're hired!" replied Guthrie.

The second panel of the morning was Theatre Engineering, with Gary Gaiser moderating. The first speaker, Mr. Olaf Soot, felt that there was too much hit-and-miss design in theatre machinery and therefore many mechanical devices did not really satisfy the function for which they were designed, and that fail-safe standards needed to be clarified for such machinery when used in the theatre. He further noted that care must be taken not to over mechanize in the desire for maximum flexibility, because too often the mechanics add too much to the total cost of the building and tended to over influence the scenic design concepts. Mr. Charles Neenan discussed a simplified technique of testing the distribution characteristics of various luminaires used in the theatre and television. His system employed a stand on which the luminaire was mounted and which was connected to a turn meter. The light shown onto a light meter and the two meters were in turn fed to an oscilloscope which was photographed. The resultant picture was a graphic representation of the light distribution curve. Mert Cramer reported on a comparative analysis of six SCR dimmers. He established as his criterion for dimmers that they should "do what they were commanded, and not do anything else." According to the tests which were run in the laboratories of California Institute of Technology, most of the instruments did not live up to their own specifications. His main complaint was that there was too little variety in the designs by various manufacturers; there were only Fords and Chevrolets, but no Cadillacs, regardless of cost.

After a very delicious luncheon in the Great Hall of Hart House, University of Toronto, the conference continued with a panel, moderated by James Nuckolls, concerned with Theatre Administration. The first to speak was T. Bruce Birkenhead who described the typical relative costs of typical theatre organizations, be they Summer or Broadway theatres. He commented that as costs go up so will ticket prices. Alvin H. Reiss described the future of the arts as very bright due to several factors: 1. wider representation of the middle classes on Arts Council boards, 2. better educated theatre administrators, 3. arts accepted to be for all the people, not just a select few, 4. many interdisciplinary programs, such as museums producing plays, 5. economic groups taking a greater interest in the arts, 6. government involvement. Mr. Reiss also enumerated several ways in which business organizations should support the arts, such as promoting programs as part of their advertising, defraying the costs of publications, purchasing bulk tickets for their employees, offering technical assistance in selling, volunteering administrative aid, as well as direct subsidies to specific groups.

The last panel of the day was on Theatre Architecture and was moderated by Mert Cramer. Colonel William F. Powers of Lincoln Center felt that the most important thing to be considered in theatre architecture is not only to know who is going to use the theatre but to be aware of their possible different viewpoints and to be adaptable to them. Col. Powers noted that new theatre buildings should not incorporate too much unique gadgetry in the beginning but allow for its eventual installation when and if proven, and that all equipment manufacturers should be required to supply a complete operation and maintenance manual. He made a final comment to the point that continental seating was not appreciated by the audiences. James C. Crang showed slides of the design and development of the new theatre and concert hall soon to be erected in Toronto across from the O'Keefe Center. Mr. D. F. Lebensold discussed the theatre design process with the initial statement that theatre buildings differ no more in architectural problems than any other structures for people's activities. He thinks there is too little understanding of audience relationships, and agrees with Col. Powers and Olaf Soot that there is too much emphasis on theatrical gadgetry. He called for uncluttered spaces that will allow for more mobility of use, otherwise theatres will become meaningless monuments to the past.

After the general panel discussions, the group broke up into small individual committee meetings which conducted the specific business of outlining the tasks to be handled the following year. That evening many of the conferees explored some of the cultural aspects of the city that Toronto had to offer.

Sunday morning discovered us all back in the lecture hall listening to the Theatre Presentation Panel moderated by Thomas DeGaetani. Jean Gascon stated a preference for directing in various types of stages rather than a single fixed type. John Hayes spoke of several improvements he would like to see in the Stratford Festival Theatre, such as a grid over the stage, total trapping of the floor and many more lighting circuits in the out front position. E. Sprote decried multipurpose theatres and permanent stage machinery. He felt the latter took up too much space and limited him as a designer, since he could only use that which was available. Marcel Savarin was concerned about the amount of money spent on buildings in relation to that spent on actors and the other people who use the building. He called for the establishment of a scenic design school which would recognize the psychological poetry of theatre as well as the plastic. He wanted to know how scenery affects the audience. In the following discussion Frederic Benthem questioned the current vogue of wrap-around seating and the thrust stage that brings the actor closer to the audience. He noted that the majority of the present audience in the hall predominantly sat in the rear center.

The final panel of the morning was moderated by David Weiss and tried to approach the broad problems of the Theatre Consultant. Miss Jean Rosenthal stated that the word "consultant" is used by too many various people who are not really consultants at all but merely "advisors". She called for an explicit definition of what a consultant should really be, and for an establishment of a set of professional ethics. David Peacock said that the theatre consultant was looked upon as a Delphic Oracle but was not treated honestly by the client who too often took the initial ideas and then rearranged them into an entirely different proposition. Gary Gaiser recounted several unfortunate relationships between consultant, client and architect with the expected poor results. He suggested that the owner should hire the general consultants to advise on the basic use of the building and that the architect should hire the technical consultants. Donald Swinney concluded that the consultant should be brought in at the conceptual stage and should be considered a part of the architectural team. He said that it was the consultant's duty to check up after the contractor to see if the plans were adhered to.

Sunday lunch was held off-campus in the Empress Room of the Park Plaza Hotel and at the same time a special luncheon was attended by the Executive Committee in the Dominion Room. Announcements were made to this group concerning the various plans for the Theatre Design Colloquium to be held in Montreal during the summer of 1967. This colloquium, coinciding with the World's Fair - Expo 67, will be attended by international representatives of the theatre world meeting to discuss the problems of theatre architecture, its design, equipment and operation. Further announcements about this colloquium will be made in the fall.

After lunch the conference was held in the MacMillan Theatre where a collection of newly developed equipment was set up. Thomas M. Lemons presented a 2,000 Watt Quartz Iodide lamp now produced by Sylvania, and promised better, brighter and more specialized lamps in the near future. Century Lighting, and Kliegl Lighting, represented by James Nuckolls and Robert Benson respectively, showed off some luminaires designed for quartz lamps. Medium priced, solid state dimmers were demonstrated by Frederick Bentham of Strand Electric, and a solid state package board was shown by E. K. Becker of Superior Electric. Irwin Stewart of Theatre Sound, Inc. gave a further discussion of his intercommunication system for the theatre. Everybody then went on stage and poked his finger or nose into the various devices with knowing looks and arched eyebrows giving the whole show the aspect of a rather sophisticated county fair.

The conference was concluded by a general membership meeting during which many announcements were made including at least fifteen resolutions by the Resolutions Committee. These will be published at a later time. The collective membership also expressed the desire to increase student participation and membership by providing them with some form of economic assistance. A special round of applause was given to the several young ladies who kept very busy seeing to the particular needs of each and every member of the conference. They were indeed lovely and gracious hostesses. In fact, gracious organization might be the keywords used to describe this Sixth Annual Conference hosted by the Canadians, for seldom has such an efficiently run meeting been so pleasant in its operation. Even the electronic timers keeping the speakers brief and to the point had the schoolbell ring of gentle admonition. Long live our brothers to the North, and may all their springs be warm!

After the conclusion of the conference, The Board of Directors of the Institute gathered to hold its annual meeting. Dinner was served in what some wag described as the Frank Lloyd Wright-Gothic dining hall of Massey College, and after the meal the group toured the very charming miniature, catacomb-like chapel in the lower floor of the college. From there they assembled in the library and welcomed the newly elected members of the board. An election of new officers of the Institute resulted as follows:

President - Dr. Donald Swinney  
Vice President - Mr. C. Ray Smith  
Secretary-Treasurer - Mr. Richard D. Thompson  
Technical Secretary - Mr. Robert Wolff.

Committee Chairman and Vice-chairman were appointed and with some further ado, several resolutions were sent to committee for study. The meeting was adjourned and all present retired to the Park Plaza for one last toast to Canada. Cheers!

## BIOGRAPHIES

With this issue the USITT NEWSLETTER starts a series of biographies of the members of the Board of Directors and the Executive Committee in the hope that our rapidly expanding membership will get to know the leaders of the Institute a little better. This month we present the newly elected officers of the organization.

Donald H. Swinney, currently starting his second term as President, has been active in the Institute since its inception, serving for two years as Technical Secretary prior to his election as President. Doctor Swinney hails from Muskogee, Oklahoma, and spent the early part of his career in the West where he attended the University of Idaho as a drama student and Indiana University from which he earned his PhD. in Theatre. Following a few brief summers as Designer for the Tent Players in Moscow, Idaho, he spent three long years in the U.S. Army during W.W.II. After the war Don served as the Technical Director for the Indianapolis Civic Theatre and later moved to the University of Denver for a couple of years. In 1950 he joined Hofstra University's Drama Department and in 1958 assumed the additional responsibilities of his present position as Technical Director of the Hofstra Playhouse, where, as some will remember, the Izenour Synchronous Winch system was first installed. In addition to his duties of T.D. and Associate Professor of Drama, Dr. Swinney manages to find time to serve as consultant to theatre projects such as the East-West Theatre in Honolulu, as well as devote unlimited attention to the affairs of the Institute. For the past several years all the printed material of the Institute except the Journal has been produced at Hofstra under his supervision, and during this same period he was also Business Manager of the Educational Theatre Journal. Despite all this professional activity Professor Swinney manages to read, collect stamps and do woodworking in a shop in his home in Uniondale, N.Y., where he resides with his wife, the former Mary M. Smead, and their three children, David Allen, Barbara Lynn, and Suzannah Laurie. David, by the way, is following his father's footsteps by attending Indiana University.

C. Ray Smith, who has been an active participant of the Executive meetings as Chairman of the Theatre Architecture Committee, now takes on new duties as the Vice-President of the Institute. Born in Birmingham, Alabama, Mr. Smith soon migrated north to attend The Choate School in Connecticut, Kenyon College, Yale University, and finally the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, London, England. In between Yale and RADA there was a period of time spent with the Army stationed in Upper Bavaria and Paris, where his many touring opportunities produced a greater appreciation of architecture and interior design. Returning to the States, Mr. Smith joined the staff of Interior Design magazine and for the past five years has been an Associate Editor of Progressive Architecture magazine. Theatre will out, however, so in addition to his regular features on Interior Design, Mr. Smith is

usually preparing special PA articles concerning theatre architecture, most recently: "A Thrust Forward for the Theater", a critique of the Beaumont Allen Theater at Lincoln Center, and "The Changing Practice: Theatre", the special October issue devoted to the complex practice of theatre designing and consulting. Further publishing efforts appear in Arts in America and Theatre Design and Technology. For the past two years Mr. Smith has been active not only as Chairman of the Architecture Committee, but also the special USITT Advisory Committee for the revision of the N.Y.C. Building Code. C. Ray, who lives in the East 50's, states as his hobby the "counting of myopic complaints by consultants about theatre architecture". When asked for a statement on The Theatre, his only comment was "I like it!"

Richard D. Thompson returns to his former position for two years of Secretary-Treasurer after a year of being Technical Secretary this past year. Mr. Thompson was born in Ann Arbor, Michigan, but soon moved to Austin, Texas, where he attended high school and the University of Texas, and where his father is currently the Chairman of the Aero-space Engineering Department of the University. After receiving his Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree in Technical Theatre Production, Dick went farther west to Hollywood and briefly pursued a career as Stage Electrician with the Beverly Hilton Hotel and later KNXT-TV, the CBS station in Hollywood. The Army interrupted and sent him to Ansonia, Connecticut, trained as a Missile Mechanic. Something about the Connecticut climate agreed with him, since after his discharge he stayed on to attend the Yale School of Drama to achieve the MFA in Technical Theatre, Design, and Lighting. After graduation he joined the staff of Ward Leonard Electric Co. as Sales Engineer and continued with them until recently. Mr. Thompson is currently the manager of the Theatre Division, Lighting and Electronics, Inc., a new position created by the company to serve the growing number of school and community theatres throughout the country. Dick has an apartment on the west side of Manhattan where he relaxes by listening to the Hi-Fi. He also enjoys swimming and photography, always ready with the 35 millimeter on the tours the USITT has sponsored. It should be noted that he is often the person who instigates these excursions, being somewhat of a history-of-old-theatres buff. In addition to the USITT, Mr. Thompson is also a member of AETA, ANTA, IATSE, IES, and SMPTE.

Robert W. Wolff, from Glen Ridge, New Jersey, assumes the office of Technical Secretary of the Institute this year after several years of activity in arts council work in Tampa, Florida. Mr. Wolff was educated at the Carnegie Tech Drama Department and later received his MA in Theatre from Pennsylvania State University. During this time he held various technical positions with PSU's Mateer Playhouse and Pavilion Theatre, the Cape Cod Melody Tent and the Kennebunkport Playhouse. For the past three years Mr. Wolff has been Assistant Professor at the Department of Theatre Arts of the University of Southern Florida in Tampa, where he served as Designer/Technical Director. This spring he

joined the New York office of Theatre Consulting Services, Bolt Beranak and Newman as one of their Consultants. Bob is currently living on the West side and enjoys swimming and driving. Living in New York might change his mind about the latter.

#### THE CAROL HOOVER CAPER

It was four o'clock in the ANTA Theatre that 25th of April when it all happened. Carol was busy working on the USITT files. Flora Martell, of ANTA, had just left to return to her office below, after commenting on the number of odd characters who lately appeared on the premises. Then it was quiet. Too quiet...

A slight footstep made Carol look up in time to notice a dapper young man in a trench coat pass the open doorway on his way toward the other end of the hall. She heard him stop, turn around and slowly come back down the corridor. Apprehensively she wondered how she could shut the door and lock it without raising attention. Maybe he was just an actor looking at the tryout room. The lock on the door didn't work too well; it took two hands to operate. Perhaps he is going away and should be ignored.

Standing, Carol removed some correspondence from the shelf with her back to the door. And then she knew. He crouched nervously in the doorway, service 45 drawn, cocked, and held low.

"What do you want", she said.

"I want your money."

"Take it--- it's there on the chair."

"First lie down on the floor."

"No! Just take the money and get." She gestured for emphasis...

BHAM! The sound filled the room and seemed to swallow her as she crumpled to the floor. The copper jacketed bullet drilled clear through her thigh, ricocheted off a chair, and spent itself in the plaster wall. The assailant, frantic now, dumped out the contents of the purse, took the four dollars and change and fled. He was never seen again.

Carol, lying there, the pain absorbing her body, knew she had to keep conscious long enough to call for help. At that moment the phone rang. It was her roommate.

"Get help, I've been shot!"

Soon everybody arrived: Flora, the roommate, many squadrons of police, and the ambulance. As Carol was taken down the stairs to be driven to the Emergency room, she called out faintly but firmly to Flora, "Please make sure those twenty-seven brown envelopes on the desk are mailed."

After a month in the hospital, Carol Hoover returned to the world of the well by making an appearance, wheelchair and all, at the Spring Convocation at the Yale Drama School. Welcome back, Carol, may you live to be a hundred and four.

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#### YALE DRAMA ALUMNI CONVOCATION

The Yale Drama Alumni held a convocation upon the occasion of the closing of the fortieth anniversary year of the School of Drama at Yale University on Saturday, May 21, 1966. A morning Colloquium was held, titled The Artist in the Changing Theatre with a panel consisting of Everett T. Gammon, Moderator, Will Steven Armstrong, Fred Coe, Tad Mosel, Madeleine Sherwood, Paul Baker and Herbert Brodtkin. Spearheaded by Tad Mosel who felt that all playwrights today seem to have the same point of view or none at all, and finished off by Mr. Brodtkin, who bemoans the fact that all the good TV talents have quit the business, the morning's discussion seemed to center on the notion that the theatre is always changing at an ever increasing pace, usually for the worse, and that the artist had to accept this if he was going to survive. The irony of the day was that most of the discussion centered on television, which now seems to have taken over the role of being the "fabulous invalid". Live theatre is dead.

A luncheon followed by a performance of an original script concerning local African affairs made up the program for the afternoon. The day was terminated with a reception in the Yale Art Gallery to open an exhibit of Designs for the Stage by Yale Drama Alumni. This group of sketches is an impressive collection for the beginning archives of original designs for the stage, and it is hoped that many more designers will add their works to the collection.

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#### DIVISIBLE AUDITORIUMS

Ever since the Greeks combined religion and entertainment people have been trying to make use of multipurpose theatre buildings. With the ever accelerating expansion of school systems which would like to have performance areas meeting head on with an ever increasing paucity of eager taxpayers, the need for such a building approach becomes apparent. According to the non-profit Educational Facilities Laboratories, the school auditorium "gained a new image of practicality and fiscal respectability in September, 1961, with the opening of a new auditorium at the Boulder City High School in Nevada. This hall designed with research assistance from EFL, demonstrated that auditoriums and theatres could be divided successfully by operable, sound retarding partitions to create space usable for purposes other than drama or assembly."

Thus DIVISIBLE AUDITORIUMS, case study #11 of Educational Facilities Laboratories, begins its report. It continues for fifty pages, taking the idea of auditorium divisibility step by step through a series of ever increasing sophistications of design which climax with the Multi-purpose Learning Center, South Mountain High School of Phoenix, Arizona, an immense complex containing a main central hall and four satellite halls, each on its own turntable and revolvable to face either the main stage or a private teaching platform at the rear.

Each of the sixteen auditoriums is illustrated with a small scale groundplan printed in three colors to show the seating areas, and the position of the dividing partition, and a listing of data and credits including the participating architects, acoustical consultants and manufacturers of the partitions. The text describes the facilities along with the intended programming and how they were planned, built and operated. There is also some data on costs, although it is rather incomplete to be really meaningful. An appendix gives a discussion of the acoustics of divisibility, which while brief is informative.

It is recommended that anyone involved in the planning, designing or building an auditorium space should have a copy of this EFL report, as it represents a handy collection of ideas that might be the beginning of a solution for some future program in theatre planning. To obtain your free copy write to: Educational Facilities Laboratories, 477 Madison Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10022.

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#### SKIRPAN DEMONSTRATES SCR DIMMERS

The final meeting of the Engineering Committee for the winter was held at Skirpan Electronics, Long Island City, New York in early June. Robin Lacy opened the meeting by introducing Mr. Stephen Skirpan, President of the company. For the meeting various parts of an SCR dimmer were laid out breadboard fashion to allow for rapid change of circuits for demonstration purposes.

To start the program, Mr. Skirpan demonstrated the two most objectionable characteristics of the SCR dimmer: Radio Frequency Interference, and lamp-sing. By switching in an inductive core both of these were eliminated. To further illustrate the why and how of filtering, the circuits were connected to a scope to visualize the different sine wave patterns. The noisy circuit had a rise time of 25 microseconds and when expanded on the scope it showed very erratic harmonic patterns. The filtered wave on the other hand was smooth and had a rise time of 600 microseconds. Mr. Skirpan noted that a properly constructed filter was expensive, and that its inclusion in the circuit caused a voltage drop of 4 to 8 volts. For theatre it was felt that this drop was good as it lengthened the lamp life, but to assuage the engineers of TV studios who insisted on full voltage at the lamp, it was suggested that a transformer voltage boost could be incorporated. In the later answer session, Sonny Sonnenfeld suggested that lower voltage lamps would achieve the same results.

Mr. Skirpan then gave a short lecture-demonstration on lamp-intensity control, noting that there were two basic types: amplitude control, and time control. Resistance and autotransformer dimmers demonstrated a change of the amplitude or height of the sine wave, while magnetic amplifiers, thyatron and silicon controlled rectifiers (SCR) acted as pulsating switches which could be varied in terms of the relative time they were open or shut. Therefore the intensity of the lamp was determined by the total time the circuit was on for a given sine wave period, with thermal inertia of the filament eliminating any evidence of flicker.

Although the SCR device by itself is very small, it was noted that it produced a lot of heat to be dissipated, which was accomplished by a heat sink, a fin-like structure surrounding the plug. Mr. Skirpan believes that heat sinks are better than fans which can break down. He further stated that a truly solid state dimmer should have no moving parts of any sort.

In concluding, Mr. Skirpan stated that in addition to good filtering and heat control, a dimmer must have a suitable curve. It was his opinion that the light linear curve was not useful for practical theatre application since it allowed the lights to get too bright in the first few steps of the scale, leaving little room for noticeable change at the top. He suggested that the square law curve, being a smoother visual curve, should be adopted by the Institute or some other authoritative body as a standard for the industry. Mr. Skirpan also expressed his appreciation of not being tested by Mr. Mert Cramer. A brief question period by Mr. Thompson followed and the meeting was then terminated.

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