



Hearing the Light 50 Years Backstage

Francis Reid

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Francis Reid's highly enjoyable memoir *Hearing the Light* delves deeply into the theatricality of the industry. The author's almost fanatical interest in opera, his formative period as lighting designer at Glyndebourne and his experiences as a theatre administrator, writer and teacher make for a broad and unique background and an equally wide-ranging story of the technical side of theatre across the second half of the twentieth century. At the core of the book is the story of the extensive post-1950 development in stage lighting as an art form supported by new technologies.

Hearing the Light is not just the story of one man's career; it is also packed full of stories and anecdotes familiar to anyone having worked in theatre, and it will certainly bring more than a few knowing chuckles to the reader. Francis Reid has an excellent archive, and the book includes many colour reproductions of original production playbills dating back to the '60s and '70s as well as production photos and images of the author at work. His story includes a sabbatical from the theatre whilst enjoying a boating break on the Norfolk Broads, although Francis the author was still at work and wrote a piece for *Practical Boat Owner* on low cost 'waste' pumps!

The second in ETP's biographical series, *Hearing the Light* is a fine accompaniment to Fred Bentham's *Sixty Years of Light Work*. Indeed there are many similarities as both authors have shared some similar experiences, including product development work for Strand Lighting.

This book is not a teaching tool in the way that Reid's *Stage Lighting Handbook* and similar titles are, although the reader will certainly pick up some useful tips; it is a very enjoyable adventure through the technological advances of theatre and gives an insight into the life of a dedicated 'theatric tourist'

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