



Greetings I T friends

As Wilbur said to Orville, "Well that was interesting!" I have always valued the work of backstage crews but after experiencing the whole stage manager /crew process on *Cry the Beloved Country* my admiration for these dedicated individuals has gone up several notches.

Since coming back to earth following the adrenalin surge of *Cry*, I have been reflecting on the great number of talented people who have performed, selflessly, the myriad tasks behind the scenes that are so essential to maintain the standard of presentation to which I T aspires.

Of course the hub of the whole enterprise is Rob as Artistic Director. From his fertile imagination comes the unique interpretation of the story to be presented. With perhaps some polishing by David Roach and our great friend and benefactor, John Logan, the design is complete. It is now that the team of actors and artisans come together to make an idea into, hopefully, a great work of art.

Overseeing the smooth running of the rehearsals is the Stage Manager. The Stage Manager is the one with the worried look. This is caused mainly by actors. First of all the S M has to make sure the actors are even present when the rehearsal is due to start. Actors are a vague lot and sometimes have to get a phone call from the S M to get them kick started

Sometimes an S M will have the assistance of a Production Manager. If they are lucky enough to have Jacqui Munn with her meticulous attention to detail, life will be easier.

Backstage folk make sure actors go through the right doors carrying the correct props. There are far too many who have worked in the eerie blue backstage light to list here. I'm sure they will forgive me if I mention a few to represent them. In earlier days Sarah Lawton and Diana Buratto were stalwarts. Lately Craig Neilson, Susan Subramaniam, Elizabeth and Helen Woods have crewed. They are all potential Stage Managers

I T actors have also been fortunate to be kitted out in some amazing costumes. Whether it is rags or riches, the creations of Pattie Atherton, Judy Chapman, Sandra Davis and Julie Dillon have stunned audiences. Many times they also work backstage helping actors with rapid changes of costume.



The transformation from the bland look of the play during rehearsals takes place in the theatre. Working with the rig of lights carefully set up by such operators as Laraine Wheeler and lately Matthew Marciniak, for whom nothing is too much trouble, Rob starts with a totally black stage and mixes the colours and intensity of various lights until the perfect blend is found to highlight any particular moment .

Music and effects add to the drama unfolding and again we have been fortunate to have Matthew Atherton, Nick Roach and in particular John Palfrey share their talent with us.

The magnificent sets are the result of the long time collaboration and friendship of David Roach and Adrian Shirley. On most Saturdays you will find them at the Lonsdale shed, talking in strange Irish and North Country English accents. With help from Chris Gilbert and Mal Corkhill, they construct magic places which leave both actors and audiences in total awe



The team prepares for a rehearsal of our next epic "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn."

The S M records on a special script the various moves the Director instructs the actors to make. Actors should mark these moves on their script but even if they have remembered to bring their script invariably they have forgotten to bring a pencil. Often still confused at the next rehearsal as to where they should be, the S M will help them avoid tripping over each other and the furniture.

Following the rehearsal period the S M then joins the Director and Lighting Operator on the day the lights are plotted. Each lighting cue is recorded to be called as particular lines are delivered by the actors. Sometimes during a performance some dopey actor (usually me) will jump half a page of dialogue in which four or five light cues are involved. This has an interesting effect on the S M !!!

I must say I never saw Margaret Rawlinson look worried. Margaret always seemed to be smiling. Probably bemused is a better description for the expression on the faces of those other great S M s who served I T so well. Adrian Shirley, Jayne Simpson, Kevin Martin, Debbie Law, Chris Parker and Penny Bissell are hard acts to follow but the serene countenance of Helka Manninem, who is S M for *Huckleberry Finn*, fills one with confidence.



There is nothing flimsy about their sets. If they weren't taken down at the end of run they would outlast the Pyramids. Both love C & W music. Unfortunately to Adrian that's country & western and to David, Carreras & Wagner.

To all of these devoted folk, I dips me lid.

Regards
Allen Munn

