Lighting at the Juilliard School

The cornerstone of the education offered by the Juilliard School is actual performance. Helping to nurture the talents of hundreds of musicians, singers, dancers and actors keeps the Juilliard Stage Department extraordinarily busy. During one week this winter, for instance, the department's 35 full-time members and 14 interns were working on seven projects simultaneously.

"We're unique in several ways," says Calvin Morgan, director of the Stage Department and resident scenic designer. "We're the only all-professional staff in the country that exists solely to serve students. We use no student labor. Even though we can't be measured by commercial standards of production, our professional standards attract well-known guest artists to work with us."

In recent years, these guest artists and teachers have included Josef Svoboda, Jennifer Tipton, George Izenour, Miroslaw Pflug, and Liviu Ciulei.

Each year the Stage Department is responsible for four operas, four dramas, several major dance productions, 10-12 workshop productions, a spring theater repertory and various student rehearsals, concerts and recitals. Under a program sponsored by Lincoln Center, the department also provides sets, props and costumes for four or five productions that tour New York City schools.

Since Mr. Morgan's appointment three years ago, by President Peter Mennin, Juilliard's technical facilities have been considerably enlarged and improved. Beneath the white placidity of the Lincoln Center facade, Juilliard has a highly-active basement which contains a fully-equipped scenery shop, electrics shop, properties shop, graphics and design studios, and a photographic darkroom.

Lighting Facilities

The impressive lighting facilities in Juilliard's three theaters, which opened in 1969, were designed by Jean Rosenthal. The Juilliard Theater seats 933, has a 60-foot wide proscenium and has the acoustical flexibility to showcase grand opera, orchestral concerts, occasional dramatic pieces and large dance concerts. The only theater in New York that can draw more power is the Metropolitan Opera. Not coincidentally, the Met is the only other theater in the country that has a light curtain.

This powerful 32-piece unit (160,000 watts) was purchased to help Svoboda design *Jenufa* two years ago.

"We haven't used the full curtain yet," says William Haviland, head of stage electrics. "With Svoboda we used it more as a general sort of backwash. During the show the dimmer room was really humming and the electric meter was spinning."

The Juilliard Theater has 50 50-amp circuits, 418 20-amp circuits, 304 dimmers (136 7-Kw dimmers and 168 3-Kw dimmers — for a total dimming capacity of 1,106,400 watts), and 108 control channels on a 10-scene pre-set board. "The circuiting and the circuitry layout allow for light positions anywhere without much crew effort," says Snowden Parlette, a visiting lighting designer who just lighted Virgil Thomson's *The Mother of Us All.*

"The theater's low voltage patching system," says Haviland, "gives us great flexibility. Each control channel can be matrixed into any combination of dimmers. There is also a patch panel."

The theater's versatility is enhanced by a movable first lighting cove and front half of the ceiling. It can be transformed into an intimate hall for chamber music by adjusting the ceiling.

The Drama Theater seats 206 and is used for classical and modern drama, small-scale operas and dance pieces, and large lecture demonstrations. Last September a two-scene pre-set board was discarded in favor of a new Kliegl Performer computer control board. The theater has 40 50-amp circuits and 260 20-amp circuits. There are 72 7-Kw dimmers.

The 301 workshop, an alternate performance space, can seat up to 100 around its portable stage. This two-story space has modular masking and a unit light plot. It has 24 20-amp circuits and
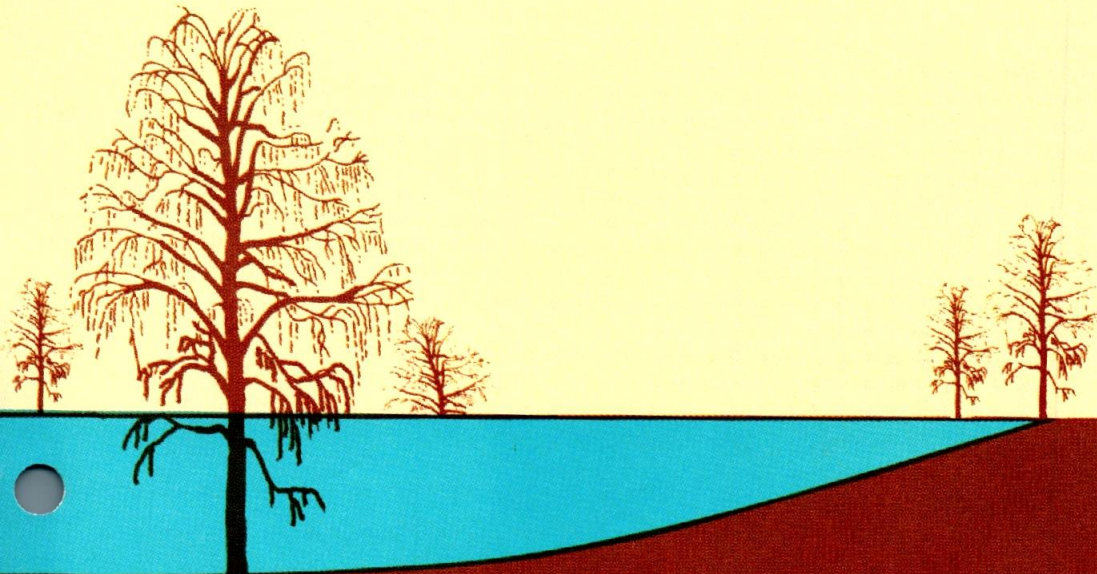
12 2-Kw dimmers.

"Our new memory board has worked perfectly so far," says Paul Gallo, resident lighting designer, "and it has been a big improvement over our old board. By saving us many man-hours, it's saved us a lot of money."

Gallo credits Michael Langham, former artistic director of Ontario's Stratford Shakespeare Festival and the Guthrie Theater and now director of the Juilliard Theater Center, with influencing lighting techniques at Juilliard.

"Langham believes in an 'actor's theater,' " says Gallo. "He believes in minimalism, but that doesn't put the designer in a lesser position. He forces a lighting designer to be very subtle, to use suggestive intensity changes instead of normal colored lights. We've been using more white lights and pale pastels since he came."

Spring Reperatory Season

Gallo has to make sure that all drama productions are designed so they can be revived effectively during the spring repertory period. Because of the students' heavy class and training programs, runs are limited to four performances, regardless of critical acclaim or audience demand. However, in May each of the three to four drama productions is performed numerous times. A rep lighting plot must be designed which can be used for all the performances without major change.

Among the recent successful productions mounted in the Drama Theater was Liviu Ciulei's version of Wedekind's *Spring Awakening.* *Time* magazine cited it as one of the 10 top theatrical events of 1978, and it moved to the Public Theater after its Juilliard triumph.

One of the most ambitious artistic productions at Juilliard was the world premiere in February of *Feathertop,* an opera by 22-year old Juilliard composer Edward Barnes. In just 11 days, the Stage Department created a sophisticated, multimedia production which caused The *New Yorker* critic, Andrew Porter to write:

"...the production, directed by H. Wesley Balk, designed by Peter Perina, and staged in the school's Drama Theatre, was one of the most accomplished that New York has seen, up on a level with the Met's *Lulu.* Mr. Perina, a Czech who lives and works in Canada, is a discovery. The designing style was 'school of Svoboda' at its most poetic, and apt for this adventurous, imaginative presentation of a contemporary opera..."

"We used a full scrim for the entire show," says Gallo. "We put many different projections on it — representing several rooms, a forest, etc. — to show you how the scarecrow (the opera's main character) perceived the world."
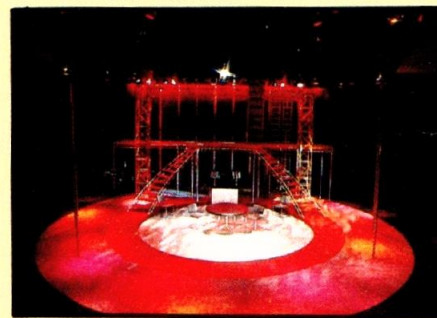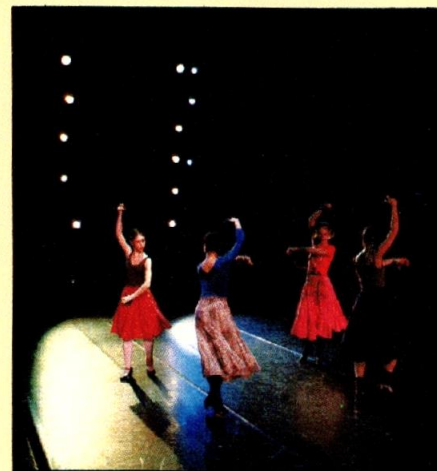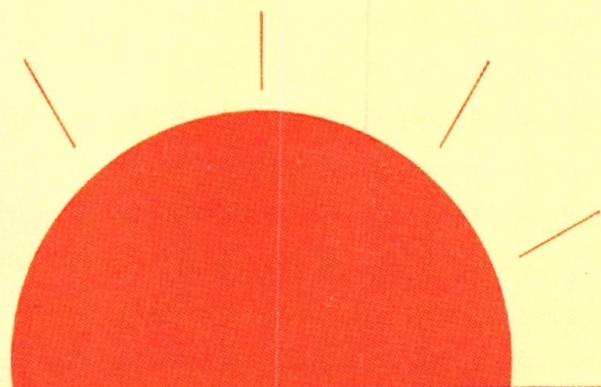

Above: *Production design for* Firebugs *produced in the Juilliard Theater, Spring 1978. Set design by Calvin Morgan; lighting design by Paul Gallo.*
**Below:** *Dance workshop performance of "Sevillanas" in January 1980. Lighting design by Paul Gallo.*

Normally Juilliard takes one to three interns in lighting and stage electrics each year. These interns do some lighting design, but most of their work is technical.

"So far my experience has been very worthwhile," says Joe Benn Gallegos II, this semester's only electrics intern. "I just finished designing *Under Milkwood* for the Drama Theater. I think I'm now in love with the memory board."

"If a person has some lighting experience at school and in summer stock," says George Schneider, a staff electrician, "and wants to be an electrician or technician, this is a good place to be. Because interns work on every show, they do have a chance to work with some of the top designers who visit."

Calvin Morgan, in reflecting on the work of the Juilliard Stage Department, pointed out that "Production design and execution is only one of the arts of the theater and not the most important, but the theater as the greatest and most complex of all the arts, is so near the center of human thought and experience that even
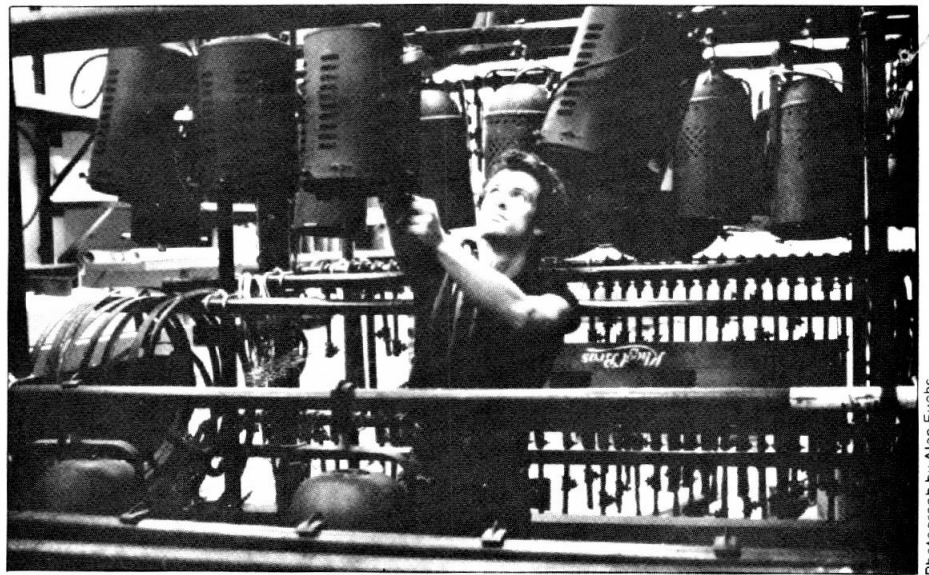
Lighting storage adjacent to the Juilliard Theatre.

this single aspect of it is at least potentially a great and significant art. We hope that our program at Juilliard makes an important contribution toward clarifying and facilitating the practice of that art

for the designers and builders of the future."

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