



HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE, HAYMARKET.—MESSRS. C. LEE, SONS, & PAIN, ARCHITECTS.

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We have on several occasions referred to the rebuilding of the burnt-down Opera-house, in the Haymarket, and in our last volume gave comparative plans of the old and the new house.* We now add a view of the Interior looking towards the stage, and will give a section in an early issue. From the illustrations, and our previous notices, all the dimensions are obtainable. It will be seen that there are now four tiers of boxes in front of the stage, and four tiers and an additional half-tier at either side. The space between the upper half-rows of boxes is thus gained for amphitheatre stalls, and a wide lofty amphitheatre behind them. Above these, again, is a back gallery, with the usual narrow side gallery running above the boxes. The boxes are larger than of old. They have about 6 ft. frontage, with heights according to the line of 7½ ft. and 9 ft., with depths varying from 7 ft. to 12 ft. The Queen's box, seen in the view, has a private entrance and a public State entrance, both of stone stairs between walls. Behind the royal box are waiting-rooms. All the tiers of boxes are so built that there is no need of columns for the support of any part, and the partitions between them are so arranged that during the winter season they can be removed in the course of a day or so, and almost the whole of the curve formed into the unbroken balcony of a dress-circle. Thus it will be used, like Covent Garden, for winter performances. From the outer walls a series of wrought-iron brackets have been built out, radiating towards the centre. These midway from the wall are supported by a series of cast-iron columns, which extend from the basement to the roof. The broad passages between these iron columns and the walls are filled up on the inner theatre side with walls, and arched roofs overhead. Then there is a distinct fireproof passage round every tier of boxes from top to bottom. The weight of the boxes themselves is carried on that part of the cantilevers which projects beyond the columns.

A trophied achievement in gilt carving, representing Apollo supported by Tragedy and Comedy, the work of M. Prodât, occupies the centre at the top of the proscenium. The ceiling, which is circular, is tinted in blue and gilt, and in each of its radial compartments is an oval panel, painted in imitation of a cameo, and containing the portrait of some famous composer. The names are,—Beethoven, Handel, Mozart, Rossini, Meyerbeer, Verdi, Bellini, Donizetti, Weber, Auber, and Cherubini. The prevailing hue of the decoration is a pale salmon, picked out in cornices and panels with a variety of tints, and with enrichments of gold. The panels on the grand tier are divided by modelled trophies representing musical instruments, and other symbols have been executed in relief on the various tiers. The chandelier is 12 ft. in diameter and 18 ft. high.

Twelve feet below the stage is a mezzanine floor, and the total depth below the stage extends to nearly 30 ft., where the drums are placed for hoisting the scenery. It is not intended to have the usual sliding scenes on the stage. They are nearly all, if not entirely, to be what are technically called "cloths"—that is, scenes not painted on framework, but on loose canvas, with heavy rollers at the ends to keep them firm and stiff in their places when lowered. The advantage of this plan is, that it avoids the noise, and bustle, and labour of scene-shifting, the scene being merely raised up or lowered beneath the stage like an ordinary curtain. The side scenes, too, are not intended to be run in the ordinary wooden grooves, which constantly occasion embarrassment and delay. These scenes will simply be taken down 12 ft. below the stage into the mezzanine floor, and then run in grooves without requiring support from above. The house is built in a horse-shoe curve, 70 ft. deep from the curtain, by 56 ft. wide in the middle.

Mr. Drummond had charge of the stage arrangements. One of the principal improvements claimed is the increased facility with which almost any extent of the stage floor can be let down or raised as occasion may require. A space of as much as 46 ft. by 19 ft. can thus be raised or let down at once to the height or depth of 8 ft. The painting-room and carpenter's shop have been removed from their former position above the auditorium to one side of the part behind the scenes—to a space formerly occupied by the old Bijou Theatre—where the scenes are no longer painted in a horizontal but in a perpendicular position.

The footlights, as in some other recent theatres, instead of burning up, burn down into iron flues, under an artificial pressure of air, which also does duty in carrying off the smoke.

On a level with the grand tier of boxes is a chief saloon, answering to the *foyer* in a foreign opera-house. The size of this is 58 ft. by 20 ft. Each tier of boxes, as well as the amphitheatre stalls, has a ladies' saloon.

Mr. William Telbin, sen., has painted a very beautiful act-drop—an architectural composition of columns and white satin drapery, in the centre of which is an adaptation of Raffaele's "Mount Parnassus," in the *Stanza* of the Vatican. The figures in this work have been painted by Mr. John Absolon, and the effect is very good. For the purpose of ventilation there are two of Gurney's stoves, an air-chamber of 25 ft. area, and an opening in the ceiling of 12 ft. diameter. The roof of the theatre over the auditorium is carried by four wrought-iron girders, 90 ft. in span; whilst the roof over the stage is supported by five wrought-iron girders, 56 ft. span. The number of persons Her Majesty's Theatre will accommodate is said to be about 1,800 for opera, and 2,500 for dramatic representations.

The architects are Messrs. Lee, Sons, & Pain. Messrs. Strode & Co. had charge of the gas-fittings. The whole of the work has been carried out under the superintendence of Messrs. Trollope, the contractors. The contract between the Messrs. Trollope and the Earl of Dudley was signed on the 28th of May, last year, and the house was completed in ten months, at a cost of about 50,000l.

How the theatre will be utilized remains to be seen. The lessee under the Crown, to whom the freehold belongs, is the Earl of Dudley, who has an unexpired term of, we believe, twenty-four years. Mr. Mapleson is the lessee in possession under the earl, with a very short term unexpired.