



First Year at the Fair

*It was an exciting
and highly anecdotal season*

By CHARLES E. PETTY

By the time the New York World's Fair goes into winter quarters next month, over 2¼ million people will have seen the Du Pont Pavilion's "Wonderful World of Chemistry" — a musical revue performed more times this summer than a Broadway show running nearly 20 years.

Forty-two times a day, live singers, dancers and actors have been giving audiences a breezy capsule history of Du Pont and its products. And scientists and showmen have collaborated in a dazzling demonstration of the magic of chemistry, with emphasis on entertainment.

This is a show that must go on. The singing and dancing of live actors is meshed with that of filmed performers on seven-foot-high projection screens that slide back and forth in front of the audience. Woe to the dancer who gets out of step with his filmed partner; stage settings move automatically, precisely timed and operated by programmed tapes.

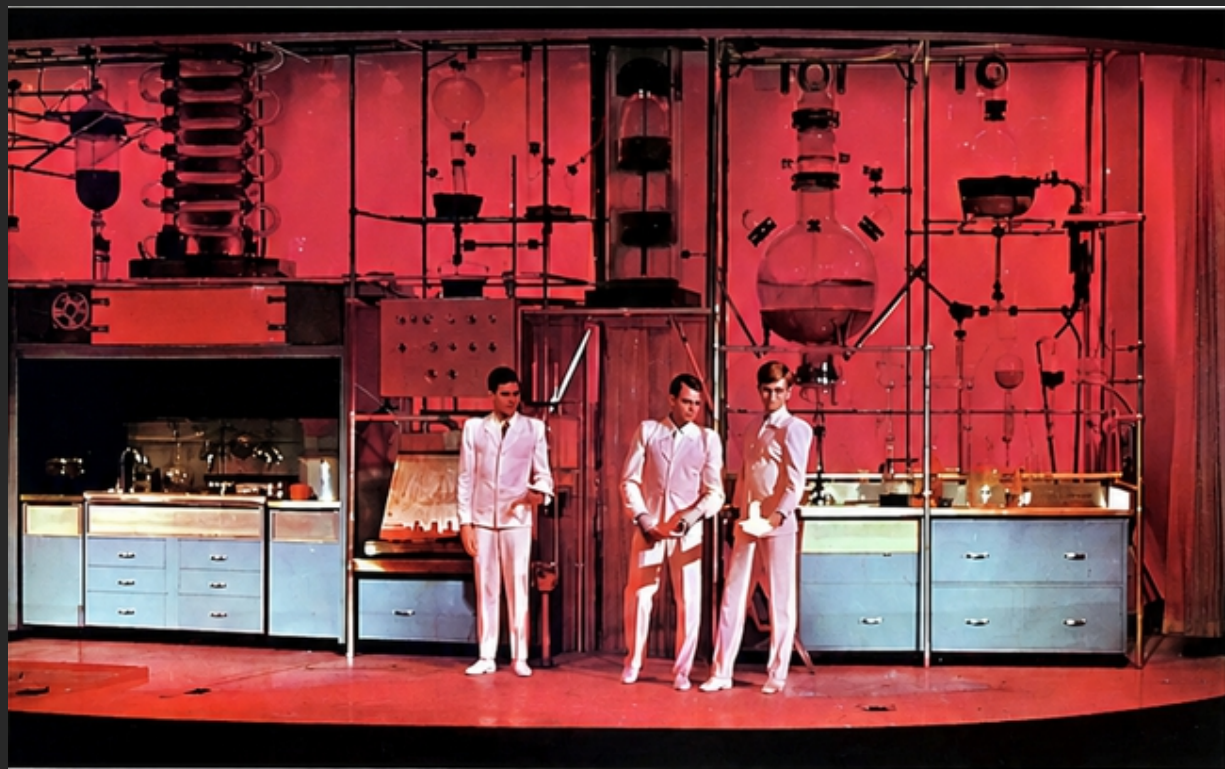
Forty-two shows a day—plus six casts of performers—make life backstage something of a scramble. Each dancer changes costumes seven times per 28-minute show, for a cast total of 1,176 changes per day.

Fairgoers apparently feel the result is worth waiting for. Over 12,000 people—maximum the two back-to-back, 300-seat theatres can accommodate — see the per-

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Outside Du Pont Pavilion, visitors line up to see musical revue, "Wonderful World of Chemistry." Inside the Pavilion, right, costumed dancers line up in one of 42 daily performances.





Showman's hand is shielded by "Tipersul" fibrous potassium titanate when he holds 1800°F. coupling.

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continued

formance each day. Some wait as long as two hours. However harassed when they arrive, the audiences are uniformly polite—so much so that they frequently startle performers. The show's pretty girl dancers, accustomed to being whistled at by theatre and TV studio audiences, waited day after day for that sign of approval. There was plenty of applause, but nary a whistle. Just as they had adjusted to the new conditions, the girls heard the familiar sound. Its source: an eight-year-old boy being stifled by an embarrassed mother.

Children delight in the animated story of chemistry's evolution from the caveman to "Corfam" poromeric material—a cartoon history lesson created by Academy Award winner Ernest Pintoff. Adults chuckle when a 1915 matron, in the days before cellophane, pays 80 cents for a bag of not-so-sanitary groceries. And everyone likes Mrs. Weston, the middle-aged lady who knows astonishingly little about chemistry. She chats fuzzily with the narrator, plays tunes on aerosol containers and gets a pie full in the face.

One highlight of the show is a "Four Seasons" fashion sequence featuring gowns specially designed by Donald Brooks of Townley, Oleg Cassini, Cecil Chapman, and David Kidd of Arthur Jablow in five Du Pont fibers: nylon, "Orlon" acrylic fiber, "Dacron" polyester fiber, "Lycra" spandex fiber and "Antron" nylon.

Overheard appraisal from a middle-aged couple:

He: "There's too much on fashions."

She: "There's not nearly enough."

Following the theatre show, the audience moves to a laboratory set where demonstrators perform chemical magic. Before a massive background of materials by Corning Glass Works and Metalab Equipment Co., a fresh flower is dipped into—100°F. "Freon" refrigerant; the petals freeze and the flower is smashed like glass.

"It's a fake," called a teen-age boy. "That's not a real rose you smashed."

"That's right, son," said the narrator. "It wasn't a real rose. It was a real carnation."

A rubber-gloved chemical demonstrator proceeds to pull a continuous cord of "instant" nylon from a beaker containing two liquids—one liquid floating on top of the other. Where the two liquids meet, explains the narrator, polymerization occurs to produce pure nylon.

An early visitor to this year's Fair was Mrs. Amos Brubaker, who as Miss Chemistry introduced nylon stockings at the 1939 New York World's Fair. Grins the trim lady about Du Pont's new products: "I'm glad I haven't expanded as much as Du Pont in the past 25 years."

Sometimes the audience rewrites the script. To demonstrate the water- and oil-repellent qualities of "Zepel" fabric fluoridizer, for example, assistants at opposite sides of the stage stain white cloths with ink, salad oil, tomato and orange juice. The treated—and therefore unstained—parts of the cloths spell out the letters "Zepel". On opening night, one assistant inadvertently reversed his cloth and "Zepel" came up

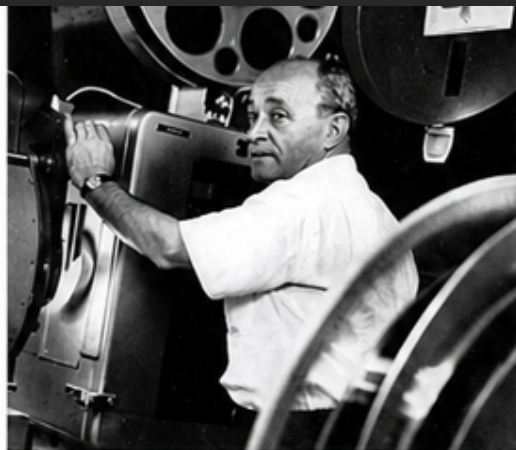
spelled backwards. The blunder so delighted the audience that the mistake was retained for the season.

Visitors find the Pavilion's 70 youthful hosts and hostesses among the most knowledgeable people at the Fair. Ask a girl what she's wearing and she'll tell you that her stockings are of nylon, her blouse, skirt and blazer are of "Dacron" polyester fiber and cotton, and that her shoes are made of "Corfam" poromeric material. And on her way home at night, she carries a lipstick-size aerosol spray tube of "Rebuff"—which does just that to would-be molesters.

Seven of the Pavilion guides come from Germany, Russia, Holland, Hungary and Scotland. Combined, they speak 30 languages, all of which have been useful in assisting non-English-speaking visitors.

Other youngsters, working only for the summer, are compiling a reservoir of tales to carry back to school in the fall. Says one girl: "I hung up Ed Sullivan's coat." Blushes another: "I spilled Richard Nixon's coffee." Grins a third: "One woman left a three-foot-diameter hat in the theatre." And a fourth, weary from calming an impatient crowd outside the Pavilion: "My favorite audience was a group of military school cadets who simply marched into the theatre, eyes front, and marched out after the show."

One host tells of a departing guest who was disappointed that he hadn't seen displays of Du Pont products. "But you did, sir," said the host. "Forty-eight products, to be exact." Referring to his playbill, he explained that the Pavilion's sign, lighting



Filmed sequences mesh with live performers.



Laugh-getter: aerosol whistles play



Dyes change liquid's color each time it's poured.



Dancers primp for shows 42 times a

fixtures and railings are made of "Lucite" acrylic resins and monomer; the low conical roof and exterior of the second floor are covered with "Tedlar" polyvinyl fluoride film, and remaining exterior surfaces with "Lucite" acrylic house paint and other Du Pont finishes; carpets in the theatres and the Red Room are of nylon with urethane foam underlays made from "Hylene" organic isocyanates; Blue Theatre seats are covered with "Fabrilit" vinyl material and Gold Theatre seats with "Antron" nylon treated with "Zepel" fabric fluoridizer; flame-proofed stage curtains are of metallic "Mylar" polyester film and "Orlon" acrylic fiber; doors feature knobs of "Delrin" acetal resin and hinges of "Zytel" nylon resin.

The smooth-running operation of the Pavilion is heavy on logistics, say the managers. Mounting paper work, supervision of 203 employees and over 200 daily phone calls set a lively pace for the Pavilion's office workers. "I've seen the show only once," says a secretary. "I hope I'll have time to catch it again before the Fair closes."

Even as the Du Pont show goes on, producer Michael Brown is honing the script for next spring's opening. Prime goal is to tighten the performance by several minutes so that more people can see it each day.

The show's style, however, won't change, but one patron suggested that Du Pont copy another pavilion's soft sell. "Why, they didn't mention their company's name once."

"That's not unusual," said a Du Pont manager with a grin. "We didn't mention their name either."

Departing audience, below, is treated to piped-light fireworks display spelling out product names

