

## Usher

*by Elizabeth Mann*

I watch. Not the stage  
but the audience  
who want to be lost,  
who leave everything  
as the lights go down  
and follow their eyes  
into a world  
of suspended  
disbelief,  
who forget  
only an armrest  
separates them  
from a stranger:  
that the dark does not  
keep secrets.  
I read the shifting  
of shoulders,  
the rise  
and set  
of silhouettes  
as heads turn  
to whisper  
or kiss,  
the moment  
intimate and odd  
as a dream.

## Imagine it

*by Katie Hale*

She takes the strain of a rope.  
With a full-muscled heave  
she changes the scene  
to night, a storm-tossed fell  
with a full sky, heaped  
rocks, a pinhole of light  
in the distance. At a word,  
the lighting dims and mottles  
the ground with heather, moss,  
lumps of turf, and a thick  
gripping mud. With a cue,  
a skitter of rain begins  
and swells to a flood. The wind  
bellows from the speakers  
and fans, whipping at coats  
and faces, howling in the dark  
beyond the sight-lines. This  
is how all voyages are made,  
and how all thoughts and places begin.

## Theatre Eyes

by Fiona Money

Do you see the backdrop creeping up as someone pulls the ropes  
Or the light above the desktop lamp to brighten up its glow  
Do you see the lighting change to every different kind of sky  
Do you see the care in every cue  
Do you see with theatre eyes?

An out-of-focus gobo                      *Clouds across the sky*  
A cue up to the sound box            *A horse goes riding by*  
Wooden planks and plaster            *The old ancestral home*  
There's life beyond the stage front  
When you see with theatre eyes

"Sound cue twenty four"            *Thunder starts to rise*  
"LX cue thirty nine"                *Evening fireside lights*  
Standing waiting in the wings    *A cane flung into a lake*  
To catch the prop thrown carefully off  
- Seeing with theatre eyes

When you watch a dead man standing in the darkness of the wings  
Cheerfully conducting as the people onstage sing  
As they stand and see his funeral go slowly passing by  
And so he beats his own requiem  
Seen only by theatre eyes

Do you see the transformation from paint to barricades  
And the clouds carefully crafted as though viewed from aeroplanes  
Can you hear the care in picking out the perfect owl's cry?  
It's another kind of magic  
When you see with theatre eyes

## 'the ice in my glass slowly...'

by John North

The ice in my glass slowly  
melting. We talk.

The design of the theatre;  
the snow on the slope of Crow Park;  
the slate; the theatre's  
boiler room groaning into life.

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Backstage. Panel pins,  
wriggle pins, pot rivets,  
round wire.

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The snow on the slope  
brings to mind for  
some reason wool.

## The Drama of the Lakes

*by Phoebe Power*

water chimes	crumpled dress
breaks off cloud	lace cuffs
black rock bobs	boot stubs
tangly pine	a nest of hair
winter light	stage lights
rubbed clouds	a purpled eye
shiny lake	bright fingernails
painted angel	image enhanced
blue & black & white	
& whites and blacks & blues	
endless unfolding evening	
reaching folded hurting	

## The Theatre Machine

*by Jenny Walker*

Beneath the bricks embellished by famous hands;  
the puffa-jackets of insulation; the giddy fans;  
are pipes and valves and dials all quietly working.

Always oiled and polished, the truth is that the rest  
envy their bright copper-glimmer, their spruced up best.  
(Even the glamorous velvet curtain is inspired.)

Every department has its own nomenclature:  
canned sound; the flies; on duty; and metaphors:  
Quality Street wrappers colouring the lights.

Take a seat. Even the air you gulp and gasp at,  
like the interval sweets, is a part of the act.  
Play copy-cat: get ready to be told a story.

The entire mechanics of the spun contraption,  
suited head-to-toe in shimmering illusion,  
steps out slowly from stage left and takes a bow.