

*Birmingham Hippodrome after its rejuvenation.*



*Photos: Martine Hamilton-Knight, courtesy Law & Dunbar-Naismith*

And we added lots of space. There is a building called The Nightingale which adds new accommodation to support the theatre, rooms for Birmingham Royal Ballet to practise in, and a new second space – a very simple but quite delightful room that I'm sure will be hugely valued. And all of this is in support of the very difficult two-tier, 2,000-seat auditorium. The upper tier will

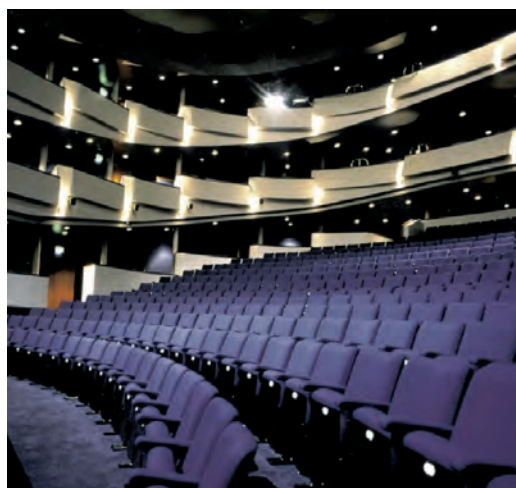
*Dealing with old theatres is not always easy and here two architects with experience of such work describe how they go about it, and are joined by an expert in sustainability.*

have to remain a big tier. And one wonder whether the brief for the ment at the beginning was truly g. The architecture certainly looks w than it did and it has a kind of ss to it, but it's not great by any

face up to such a change as a potential outcome, and this has got to do with all these notions of sentimentality in the context of theatre.

Not all of the country's theatre stock is old. Eden Court, which was designed by my former partner, Graham Law, is a super building, again a touring theatre in terms of its design. The theatre is quite flexible and it actually makes a good conference centre, a really good piece of modern design, in my view, which works very well also in terms of foyer spaces. It was wonderfully conceived as a building, and recognises the truth of all theatre architecture in that it's a place for something else to happen in, some other art form to happen in, and it has to make that work as best it can. For those reasons I would argue that this is an asset, something to be cared for, something to be cherished, maybe something to be listed, maybe something to be invested in further, in order to make sure that it continues to be used and succeed.

*Eden Court Theatre, Inverness, which opened in 1976.*



*Photo: Law and Dunbar-Naismith*

The fire curtain is a wonderful thing in its own right, incongruous in one way but perhaps stimulating because it's incongruous in the context of this building. But at the end of all this process I began to ask myself whether the next phase of this development should be the replacement of the auditorium. Is that really how the logic of this particular project works? Of course it won't be replaced, because we can't afford to do it. We did the refurbishment in the way we had to because the auditorium was there; all these things mitigate against that happening, but in an odd sense the thing that we thought, or were persuaded, was the key asset of this particular site has become its weakest link. There's a remaining concern as to whether we can persuade people to

I should say that I'm a conservation architect and, in some ways, I shouldn't be saying the things that I'm saying about valuing. Conservationists write conservation plans, and there's a hugely thick conservation plan about the Usher Hall in Edinburgh. Although the building is a cultural asset and full of significance in conservation terms, the conservation plan doesn't actually address the issue of whether the building is working well, and somehow or other this has the capacity to restrict one's thinking about how one might make the building work properly. One has to join a few more dots together when we come to assessing buildings of this kind. This is, for Edinburgh, a major cultural monument, and it really looks the