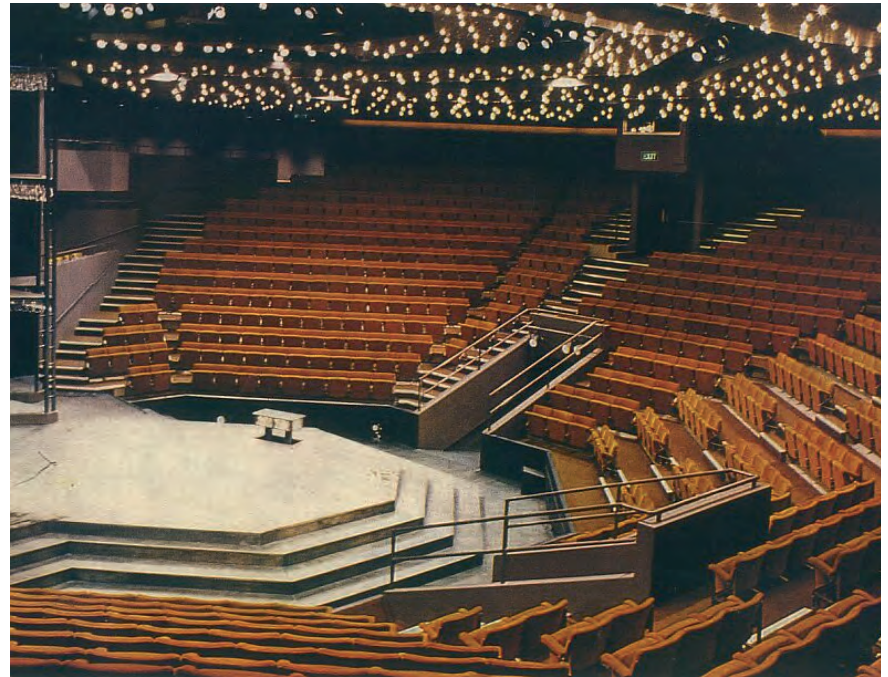


This is stuff of legend and I'm sure the whole process was much more complicated. What I've always relished though, going into these buildings, is that the act of folly has created some really extraordinary spaces – extraordinary both for the audiences and for the people working in them. The challenges in somewhere like Birmingham, which has a cavernous stage, relatively poor acoustics, and one bank of seats like section of a Greek amphitheatre that appealed to the megalomaniac in the actors, is that it is very difficult for them to deal with. This is very different from the Crucible in Sheffield which is a very sympathetic space for performers; although it contains as many seats, it has a very different response. I've always liked, as a director, going into these very different spaces and deciding how we best make a piece of work suit the space. The flipside to that is sometimes you have to accept that the piece of work that you want to do doesn't suit that space.

Inevitably, in the time that I've been working in theatres, there have been productions where I've said, "What I need to do is change the environment in this space." And we have done that, particularly in Salisbury where we literally ripped seats out with the help of the architect who redesigned the theatre with us. So I've always relished those challenges. I think there is the desire not to do productions in a conventional way but perhaps to take them out of theatres and into other spaces. I like doing this and I'm very excited about it, but I think it's linked to something else. It's not linked to whether the spaces have been good or bad; it's linked to trying to redefine what



*Sheffield Crucible Theatre as it was at its opening in 1971. Architects: RHWL. Theatre consultants: Theatre Projects.*

*Photo: John Donat*

theatre is, in an artistic sense, and how you make an audience interested in it. We all get very used to something, whether it's a sound system in a cinema or a particular lighting effect. Everybody working in the profession wants to change the response that an audience has, and to use any tool they have to do that, whether it's architectural or whether it's a new lighting effect. I think all of us working in the profession try and achieve something in this way. So I believe moving out of these theatres into found spaces is a response to trying to regenerate interest in the theatre as a medium – not a response to any failure of those spaces.

*A producer, two artistic directors and a designer give their views on a number of different venues and how they react to them, themes picked up by an extensive discussion session with the delegates.*



*Birmingham Repertory Theatre after its remodelling by Keith Williams Architects in 1999. Theatre consultants, Theatre Projects.*

*Photo: Keith Williams Architects*