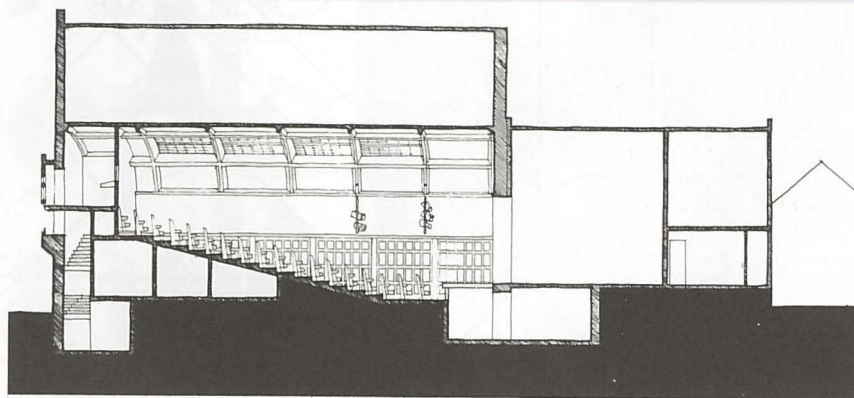
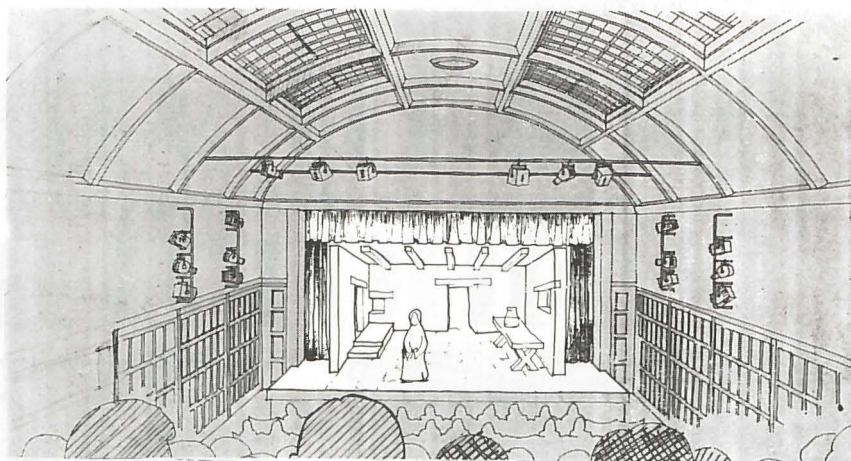


# Autolycus

## Ride a Cock-horse

Banbury, which used to be, before motorways and despite its cakes, its cross and its fine lady, the sort of town you couldn't help going through but never stopped at, is experiencing a spiritual and cultural awakening. Except remotely in the eighteenth century it seems never to have had a theatre as such, unless one counts the just-demolished Palace Cinema in the Market Square (which has *not*, praise conservation, been brutalised like that, say, of Northampton), where up to the last war 'fit-up' shows interchanged with films. But it has been trying to have one since the mid-seventies when an energetic and philanthropic businessman, the late Jimmy Black, bought up a run-down area down by the canal, and set about creating around a disused mill and its environs a community centre for all kinds of leisure activities. The area is known as Spiceball. It gets its name, it is said, from the sobriquet of a butcher renowned in those parts for the aromatic qualities of his faggots, and it has given its name to an ambitious local group, the Spiceball Arts and Community Association, committed to serve something like forty societies and clubs who use the centre, and, particularly, to get Banbury a theatre of its own. Heavily committed, inside the association, we find for example Martin Blinkhorn, whose firm, historically, supplies Banbury



with all things photographic and audio-visual, and whose father ran the aforementioned Palace Cinema: Oh small, small

world of show-business.

The original intention to build from scratch down by the mill (estimated costs

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