



serting a rake in the gutted building, which gave enough space underneath for a foyer, box office, coffee bar and the required public WCs. On one side of the auditorium there was a space for a small exhibition gallery, on the other side a new public stair was built outside the main plan of the building, and enclosed in a glass 'box'. This successfully manages to leave the listed exterior much as it was, but at the same time makes clear to people passing that the use has changed, particularly at night when the lights show the audience inside.

In the auditorium the rake is uniform and steep. The lancet windows have been blocked, but their shape can be seen. The roof structure forms the main unifying element, running the length of the auditorium to the back of the stage, leaving one in no doubt visually that stage and seating are in one space. Two lighting bridges have been inserted with trusses spanning the auditorium, made from large square section steel tube. This gives them a massive appearance, and it was a worry that they might be dominant. In fact, finished in the same brown as the roof timbers, they fit in very well without appearing too heavy. Most people visiting the theatre have not immediately realised that they are new work.

Two things have been done in this auditorium which might cause some disagreement. At each side of the stage, a triangular structure has been built in the conventional 'assembly' position, creating wing space, forestage entrances, Juliet balconies and lighting positions. These triangles stop at eaves level, and are finished in dark stained timber in direct contrast to the walls, so appear obviously inserted within the original building. It could be argued that they destroy the purity of the end stage concept (if there is

such a thing!), but I think that the wing space requirement is paramount. The other decision which goes against theatre conventions, was to paint the side walls and roof a warm, but quite light cream colour, including the stage end. The intention was to emphasize again the unity of the space, and also to recapture some of the church atmosphere. We did compromise a bit by using a darker shade round the stage, and the walls the audience cannot see are brown to cut down reflections, but I think it is worth it, and the gain in atmosphere outweighs the loss from a slightly light auditorium. Oddly enough, the blackout on stage is good, it is in the auditorium that one never loses a sense of the presence of the audience. I think even that has some advantages, and certainly we were glad to avoid the theatre vogue for slapping black paint everywhere.

The school had asked in their brief to be able to stage simple productions with the minimum of scenery, and this requirement was met by keeping the apse in the stage back wall. It has two original gothic doors which can be used for upstage entrances, and forms a shell-like shape which can be made to disappear or stand out with careful lighting and give a simple but very attractive and dramatic setting without scenery at all. There is provision for scenery, of course, and a large new extension at the back of the site is used as a scenic workshop and wardrobe store. There is direct and easy access between store, workshop, get-in and stage, all with clear height of 4.3m.(14'). There is no full flying, but hemp and winch suspensions over the stage can hang up to a height of 8m.(26'). Sections of the stage at the front can be fitted in three positions, to give the conventional forestage, additional seating, or orchestra pit for about ten players.

The seating rake has been fitted with padded bench seats, which allow boys to be accommodated at rather closer centres than adults. Maximum adult capacity is about 280, depending on the stage arrangement, and size of adult! At the back of the auditorium there was enough height over the seating for a control room to be built, which contains the usual lighting and sound equipment. There are follow spot and lighting platforms at each side of this room.

The particular pleasure of this job for me has been that the building contains all the facilities that one expects to find in much larger and more expensive theatres, but they are scaled down, almost in miniature, but still thoroughly workable. The other pleasure is that it has got atmosphere, whether created new or inherited I am not sure. Which reminds me that it certainly ought to have that other theatre necessity, a ghost. When the nave floor was being dug out at the beginning of the contract for the foyer lavatories, several coffins were immediately exposed, virtually on the surface. I was intrigued to watch one of the builders casually pointing out what they had found with a thigh bone taken from a broken coffin. It turned out that the mediaeval church used to stand further back from the road, and one of the vicars, his wife and several children had been buried in front of it. When the Victorian church was built it extended over the grave, and it looks as if the excavations for the nave stopped when they hit coffins. Visitors to the theatre may be reassured that all remains were removed, after meticulous official investigations to determine their age. In the course of several late evenings spent working alone in the building I decided that whatever presence there may be is entirely friendly.

<i>Seating Capacity</i>	Without Orchestra Pit 288 With orchestra pit 262
<i>Dressing Rooms</i>	3-4 person Additional changing for 20 Separate showers and WCs.
<i>Stage Lighting (CCT Theatre Lighting)</i>	40-way Electrosonic 3 group 3 preset manual board, controlling 38-2.5kw. and 2-5kw. dimmers.
<i>Sound (CTL Ltd.)</i>	6 channel 2 group mixer, 10 mic. lines in, 13 speaker lines out. 2-50w. amplifiers. 1-Revox B77 tape deck with space for second 1-Pioneer gram. deck Portable S.M. Desk with socket point stage right. 10 - red & green cue lights. Intercom Dressing room calls and show relay Auditorium calls Foyer calls and bell
<i>Communications (CTL Ltd.)</i>	Robert Weighton RIBA Cambridge.
<i>Architects:</i>	Carr and Angier
<i>Theatre Consultants:</i>	