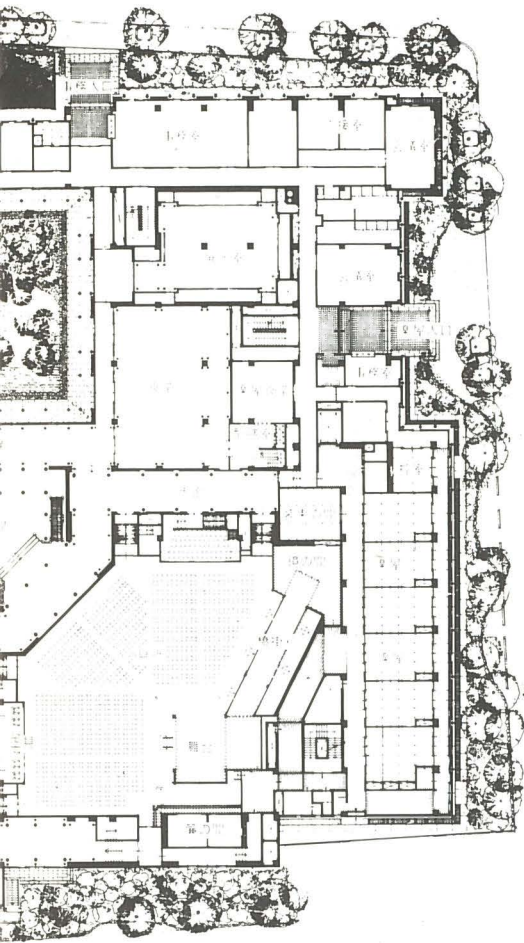


The Leeds Playhouse Competition

FRANCIS REID



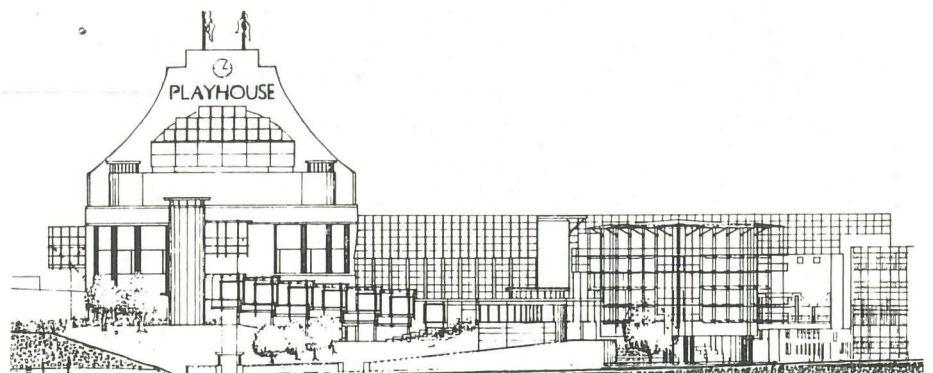
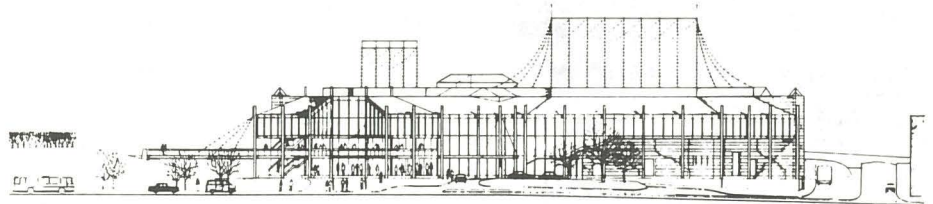
I lack competitive spirit. I am allergic to balls and to all scoring games played with them – although I am prepared to throw one for the entertainment of a friendly dog. I admit to weekly participation in the football pools but my numbers were selected fifteen years ago and I have forgotten them: the computer will tell me if I win. I have, of course, never been to a soccer match and, being a truly ethnic Scot, never know whose playing who in a test match. I was educated at a rugby dominated school and captained their nineteenth team (there were twenty). We regularly won our matches without my ever getting mud on my knees and rarely even handling the ball – so I got the ‘leading from the rear’ syndrome out of my system at an early age. My favourite marketing strategy is the fairground’s prizes in all classes.

So my participation in the Leeds Playhouse Architectural Competition may

seem a trifle surprising. But I am happy to cast all prejudices aside when invited to join a team who are civilised and talented. Having thus declared my interest as an adviser to architect Bill Houghton-Evans, let me hope that my inability to comment with absolute objectivity on the Leeds Competition will be some extent compensated by my intimate knowledge of the brief, gained from debating it and responding to it over some three months.

In a recent moment of cynicism I suggested that there were three main periods of theatre building: Georgian (when one sent for the carpenter), Turn-of-the-Century (when one sent for Matcham) and Post-war (when one sent for a pundit). In an effort to break this mould which has produced every kind of flavour of the month from ‘juliet balconies’ to ‘point-of-command’ and has ignored the actor-talent factor in endless debate about the actor/audience

Plan showing entrance, Garden Courtyard and walkway through to main auditorium. Designer Hiroshi Ohe Architect and Associates.



Most schemes were rather routinely serviceable buildings, using their fly towers to make an honest proclamation of their theatrical function. However there were appropriate hints of frivolity in Howell, Killick, Partridge & Amis suggestion of a circus ‘big top’ (above); while Ted Cullinan’s facade (below) is bold and likely to provoke that love and hate which are at the heart of any audience response to theatre experiment.