

Key to all drawings:

- 1 Stage/auditorium
- 2 Scenery assembly
- 3 Restaurant
- 4 Band Room
- 5 Orchestra pit
- 6 Box Office
- 7 Dressing Rooms
- 8 Scene Dock
- 10 Foyer
- 11 Green Room

relationship, Leeds stipulated that The Promoter reserves the right to act as theatre consultant. It is accepted however that there may be certain specialist areas where a consultant's technical advice may be required over and above that available through the Promoter's own specialist staff.

Copies of Roget's Thesaurus were hastily consulted by the theatre consultancy profession and it was discovered that an advisory role was indeed compatible with the conceptualising basis of their angust calling. Readers of Cue may gain some entertainment from speculating which Leeds scheme bears the hallmark of which consultant's advice. And, at the risk of promoting another competition, it would be interesting to have readers' suggestions for a collective noun for theatre consultants (ie the equivalent of a brace of pheasants or a gobo of lighting designers).

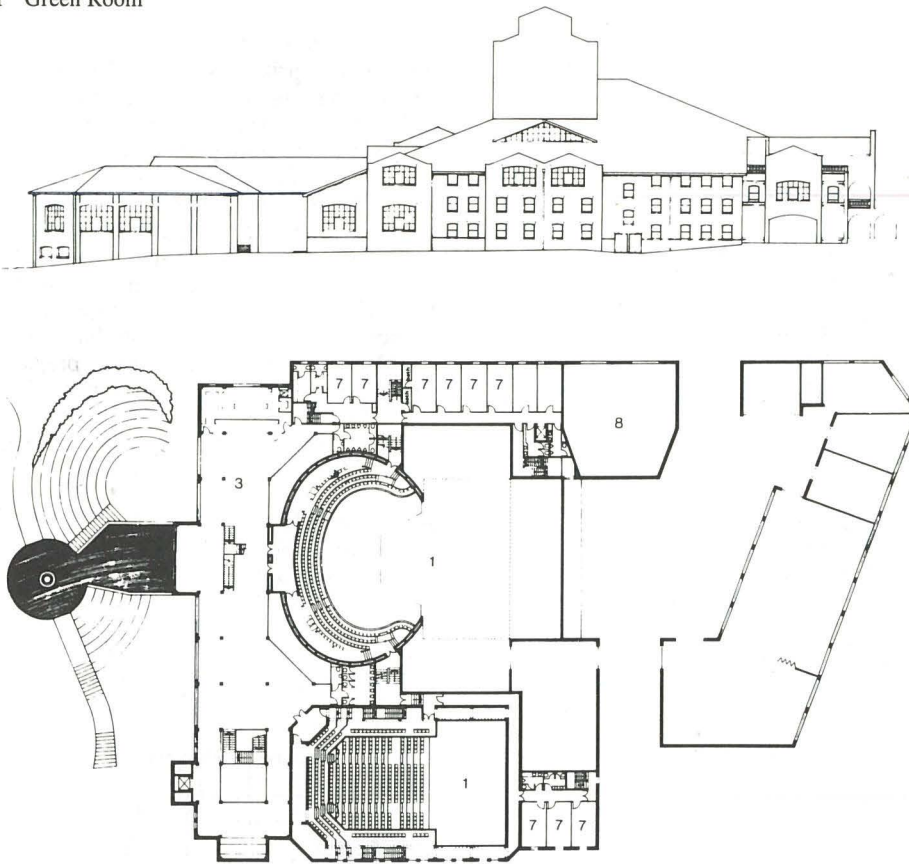
It is rather curious that Leeds should choose to promote a competition for their new Playhouse. Design through competition is a new development for British theatre architecture. Until now, mere response to a brief has been considered much too simplistic an approach to a problem whose complexities seem to be better served through a creative debate between architect and client increasingly with an independent theatre specialist (the 'Theatre Consultant') as catalyst.

Where past problems have arisen, these have frequently been caused by difficulties in identifying the potential user. Consequently the brief has been forced to speculate upon the theatre's intended programme policy and therefore the scale of accommodation provision. Where the user is known, the brief can be developed through dialogue between architect and user, with the theatre consultant ensuring that the resultant design does not reflect too many of the user's personal peccadilloes which might inhibit future development. Particularly as users frequently move to pastures new during the long gestation between brief and opening night!

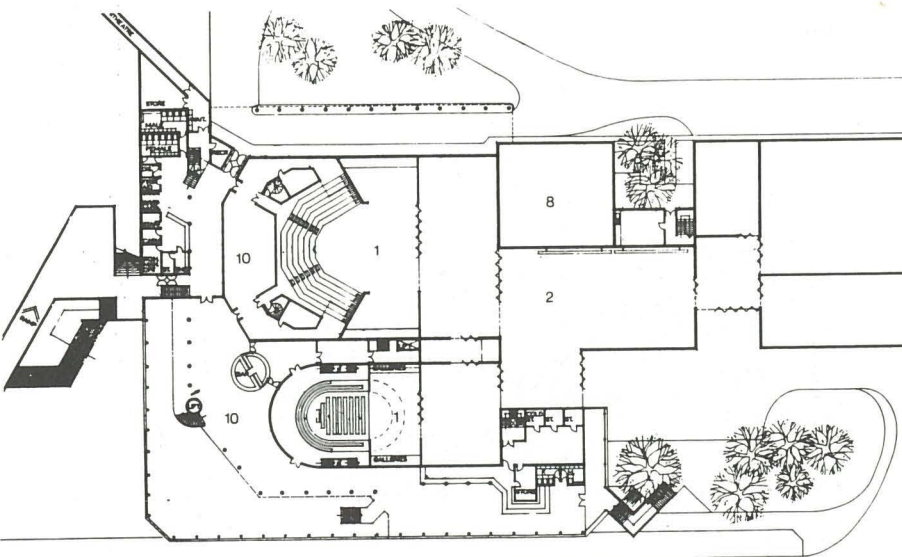
Leeds Playhouse, however, is a successful established theatre company under stable direction and therefore eminently ready to engage in a dialogue. Why they should choose to go to competition is therefore something of a mystery. I hope that the decision was not made out of consideration for public accountability. In this, as well as in creative aspects, they would surely have been better served by entering into deep interviews with half a dozen architects to discover a mutual compatibility for a collaborative approach. They could have approached practices of wide theatre experience (such as Rod Ham) and those whose tentative theatrical essays show understanding and excitement (such as Ted Cullinan) plus, of course, the author of their successful current house (Bill Houghton-Evans).

Nevertheless the preferred mode was competition and we must be grateful for the chance to study such an experiment.

Over 129 architectural practices expressed a desire to take part and 13 were shortlisted. One of these, Renton Howard Wood Levin Partnership, withdrew – presumably because they were too busy building theatres all over the place to spare resources for a mere speculative competition. This left 12 entrants: the Appleton Partnership, Edinburgh; Edward Cullinan Architects, London; Tim Foster Architect



Rod Ham's domestic exterior has echoes of nineteenth century warehousing. Like several other competitors he places his two auditoria (a thrust and a courtyard) alongside each other, allowing a logical sharing of common accommodation both for the audience and in the technical areas. His thrust theatre is curved, using an encircling balcony to bring more of the audience closer to the stage.



Bill Houghton-Evans, referring to his theatres as the *Guthrie* and the *Priestley*, developed the thrust of his existing Leeds Playhouse, adding seating slips to break up the side walls. He puts an eighteenth century curve back into the courtyard form, using a single row of seating in the side galleries, coupled with demountable walls to offer an option of opening up the enclosed intimacy for promenade performances. With air castored galleried units, an oval can be completed for arena staging.