

anyway though there are no balconies. The Sheffield form could, if necessary, have held half as much again with a balcony and would perhaps have felt even more compact as well. There can be no doubt, that Ontario shows with its 2,200 seats, that this is the form to bring actors to a large audience.



Sheffield Auditorium under working lights during rehearsal. The small balconies shown either side are somewhat remote from the stage and are said to be for orchestra and special production gimmicks.

The thrust form brings with it however the problem of that auditorium wall which inevitably forms the background to the stage. There have been various attempts to prevent this becoming too dominant and to provide, ever since the original permanent set at Ontario, some possibility of scene change. The Crucible allows considerable flexibility—even including a proper grid over the rear stage. Hinterbühne is a better term perhaps, since presumably it is more a preparation area for trucking and off-stage perspectives than an acting area. Heaven forbid that this area, whose downstage beam has already become known as the pros. beam, should become a proscenium stage. Yet the whole of the thrust stage itself is demountable.

It is obvious, however, that lessons have been learnt from the several, distinguished, thrust predecessors. All that ingenuity can provide, in the shape of structure and scenic flexibility within this form, is there at Sheffield. This theatre is just what we in

this country need further to explore the thrust form.

As is proper to the raised thrust idea, the stage is separated from the audience by a moat which also provides independent entrances for actors from the direction of the audience through covered ramps. (You all know what they are called but Sheffield doesn't like the term!) The seating is something of a visual problem, ragged edges to the blocks and even some single seats where the straight lines join on the angle, but curved lines form no part of this architectural concept.

The most remarkable part of both the new Birmingham Rep. and the Crucible is the technical installation, of which the stage lighting is not only the most important part but the one I used to understand. Quite honestly I feel out of my depth when I see the complexity of a modern installation. I yield to none my belief that I can still think control with the best of them; it is the other end I

shrink from. Positions everywhere mean a large number of circuits (Birmingham 265, Sheffield 200). Since the Q-File Control in both cases has 140 dimmers* this means patching which I do not like, and in any case I regard numerical call-up as a form of control patching on top of that. However, this is a personal thing and the vast expert knowledge of lighting requirements today enshrined in Theatre Projects Consultants Ltd. is almost beyond challenge. Nevertheless, much as I look forward to seeing Richard Pilbrow handle the lighting at The Crucible for that most lightable of plays, *Peer Gynt*, I cannot help feeling that it may not have been accidental that the lighting positions at Stratford Ontario were so few and so impossible of access or addition. That wily apostle of white light, Tyrone Guthrie, may have very well realised what he was about. In all fairness one ought to conclude with the remark that the Vivien Beaumont

*Desk capacity 160.