

romp and a riot that physically sweeps across the entire house, using the space and the building in every conceivable way. Other productions take what they need more quietly. The theatre's architecture may or may not become part of the "set". Something like *Little Malcolm and his struggle against the Eunuchs* (the sort of title to deter even an enthusiast)—blocks off the lateral part of the stage with the "wall" of a room and seemed in many ways a box-set production done on a thrust stage while a visiting *Iphigenia* seemed to keep the thrust part of the stage as the multiple heroine's ambience while the outer world and its forces were relegated to the upper reaches of the balcony and lateral stage.

It is possible to alter the form of the stage in large measure with rostrums and curtains—even to the point where it can be hard to pass from one side of the stage to the other without being seen—but no effort so far has been made to change the position of the seating itself by say filling in the centre with seats. The shape of the site and the single entrance to the auditorium pose problems here and also dictate the position of the almost adequate lighting and stage manager's control boxes on the left. The view is reasonable enough but there is a constant danger of noticeable sound and light spill into the auditorium so the windows are covered by woven matting for most of the time.

There are all the other normal facilities backstage, though strict budgeting is very evident. The dressing rooms may lack washbasins (and originally had neither mirrors nor lights) but they do have windows and there is a shower and toilets

further up the corridor. One of the dressing rooms has been appropriated for a wardrobe—the original scheme for sharing this facility with the National at the Old Vic presumably having proved impractical—and laundering is done at the Coin-Op across the road.

A small scene dock juts out at the back with even smaller doors. The Get in to the stage is separate and generally considered adequate. Above the foyer (which is actually a converted butcher's shop economically incorporated into the new building) a small "tower block" (once the butcher's home) provides general purpose offices.

Behind the coffee bar lies a large rehearsal room. As with larger theatres enthusiasts now plan to turn this into a tiny 110-seat studio theatre. The walls are being soundproofed so that activities will be independent of both the larger theatre and the coffee bar and rehearsals for the first show are already under way. By the time this goes to press the youngest of all the Vics will have staged its first performance—and it is typical of this theatre that any available money should be spent in such a cause and not on coats of paint for the concrete blocks or on screeds and floor finishes, which might keep down the dust.

To this company Theatre is a glorious adventure from start to finish. Peter James could even talk, sitting in the butcher's attic, of a scheme drawn up by a designer he knows for a flexible foyer where, by angling screens and moving flats, the mood and feel of the building could change with every play—new colours, new relationships and all at funfair prices—"Only think," he said dreamily, "of all the fun you could have just buying sweets."

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*Young Vic Theatre. Architects: HKPA
Howell, Killick, Partridge & Amis.*

Entrance via old butcher's shop centre; on the left rehearsal room doubling as studio theatre with coffee bar in front and dressing rooms around the sides. On the right main theatre showing thrust stage built up to high level; passage to cross under rear stage shown dotted.