

now has to be 'brought up' so that it reaches a healthy maturity. Whilst we, the staff, settle in and enjoy the beautiful views around us, Dr. Ireland has the continuing task of convincing 'powers that be' that the bills will continue to come in and that the 'birth' is only the beginning. A tricky task in this day and age.

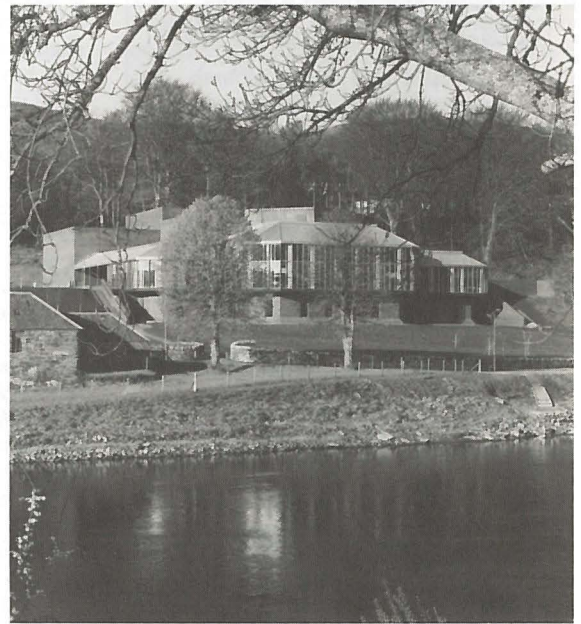
For those who like delving into such subjects, it is quite easy to find published figures which will explain to them how such a beautiful building could ever have been afforded in the first place – so I won't go into all that again. For me, the one fact that sticks out a mile in all those figures is not the big grants and huge donations from 'authorities' – very necessary though they were – but that the people who had supported the old tent and, later, the asbestos theatre for over 25 years, also shared the dream and wanted it to come true so much that they gave an enormous amount of money themselves towards its fulfilment. It is one of the very few theatres I know of where the 'team' includes the general public i.e.; the audience – the users of the FOH facilities, the people who put their bottoms on the seats in the auditorium. After only half a season there, I feel I know these people who made the dream come true. Indeed, one of them even sent a picture postcard from China where she went on holiday early in our season. It has pride of place on the ticket racks in the Box Office. She came to collect her tickets especially early after her return to this country so that we could have a chat about her journey and the people she'd met on her holiday. Most of our audience are 'old friends' of long standing who return season after season because they like the friendly atmosphere. They know their theatre and they know where they like to sit. I must just digress to tell you that my first introduction to this 'personal preference' style of booking had me quite worried. One gentleman who wrote to us in February to book his tickets for June this year ended his letter by hoping I would be able to oblige him as usual, as my predecessor always managed to give him what he wanted on the side! As I have always said, in theatre work nothing can replace the personal touch!

Working at The Festival Theatre has strengthened my belief that theatre is about people. Children on holiday with their parents and grandparents going to the theatre for the first time have a magic look on their faces that makes you want to keep it there for ever – for the rest of their lives as they continue to walk into all the other theatre foyers up and down this island. Regular theatregoers who know the ropes and are comfortably having a familiar night out. In Pitlochry we get the lot – the foreign students who are hitch-hiking their way to the Loch Ness Monster and the local lairds who are using the theatre, with its restaurant, to dine their house guests and see the play. The audience is a great cross-section of humanity, dressed in anything from jeans or shorts to full dress kilts and long evening gowns. Many Scots think nothing of driving from Glasgow, Edinburgh or Inverness to see a play or hear a concert. Senior citizens have a day-trip by

*Main Foyer and staircases leading to picture gallery and rear of auditorium.*



*Avon, Thames and River Tummel all have famous theatres on their banks.*



train from Perth, Stirling, Kirkcaldy or Dundee and see a matinee, have their tea and are home again in time for Coronation Street. As we have special party concessions and restaurant menus we get our fair share of coach outings. Indeed, having worked most often in London theatres, it is very evident to me that the audience comes to the Festival Theatre to enjoy itself not to keep up with those wretched Jones's that have so much to answer for.

Another splendid 'people' feature of the new theatre is that you don't have to go to see a play or hear a concert at all in order to have an excuse to come through the front doors. These front doors open every weekday at 10.00 a.m. and at 6.00 p.m. on Sunday concert days and anytime between then and 11.00 p.m. everyone is welcome to come in and just look round, have a drink – a wee refreshment or otherwise according to your taste – have lunch, a snack, dinner or just sit down. The view is the best I have seen from any theatre I have ever been in and the wholesome peace (between intervals) is an experience worth travelling here to enjoy. They say Piccadilly Circus is where you are bound to bump into a friend – I have bumped into quite a few of you in the foyer of the Pitlochry Festival Theatre. I hope it won't be long before you pop up to see us again. Indeed, the Theatre Con-

sultants were a firm not entirely unknown to me!

So, why Pitlochry? Because up here, your catchment area does not depend on the last bus or whether the Southern Region (Eastern Division) is once more cancelling trains at will. It depends much more on the true values. Do I like your village? Do I feel at home in your front of house? Am I remembered from last year? So often the first words through the Box Office window are, 'It's nice to be back again'. Yes, accessibility is important too, but Pitlochry is very accessible. We are on the A9 (which is fast becoming the M9); we have a splendid little railway station; there is a theatre bus which runs from and to the village for all performances – and it's a lovely walk. What more could a theatre ask for. Gentlemen much more qualified to do so than I ever will be have written and will continue to write about the architecture of the building itself but, as you may have gathered from my theatre work so far, I am a 'people' addict. Without the people there is no theatre. I know of no perfect formula for bringing people from all over the world into a British Theatre – but I do believe that this particular British Theatre, set in wonderful highland scenery, has found a good many of the answers.