

faces are an essential feature of the inter-audience relationship of such theatres. However a comfortable lean brings the seats too close to the balustrade for comfortable leg room. The Swan has an elegant solution in a leaning shelf built within and slightly below the balustrade. The galleries have two rows with the second row raised and provided with a metal leaning and safety rail. The pit seating for the groundlings follows the contour of the gallery curves and the positioning of the access gangways is particularly happy in the way that it avoids any suggestion of dividing the audience.

The stage is a simple thrust of darkly stained boards. It can be trapped according to the needs of particular productions and suspensions can be provided from the darkness of the neutrally painted technical area in the ceiling. For the opening production of 'Two Noble Kinsmen' there were two motorised platforms, a flown hoist and an understage sink. These were in the right place because they were part of the production design (and its budget) rather than a consultant's advance speculation as to

where such devices might possibly be required.

The 'flys' has a wraparound gallery close to the ceiling. Lighting can be hung here and on two transverse lighting bridges. Further lighting positions are provided at middle gallery level on bars tucked into each box. It is a tribute to the design of these neat extruded black boxes from the Strand Symphonic range that they seem to belong naturally among the timber and brick.

The basic lighting rig includes:

- 40 Prelude 16/30
- 36 Harmony 15/28
- 20 Harmony PC
- 30 Prelude F
- 10 Cadenza
- 30 Parblazers

Control, from a high level box with full frontal view of the stage, is by a 288 channel 195 line Galaxy 2 Arena with the following units mounted in a two tier desk:

- 1 Channel Control
- 2 Playbacks
- 1 Memory/Output panel
- 1 Group Masters Unit

- 1 Preset Panel
- 1 Effects Panel
- 1 Special Panel fitted with Tempus 12-way desk

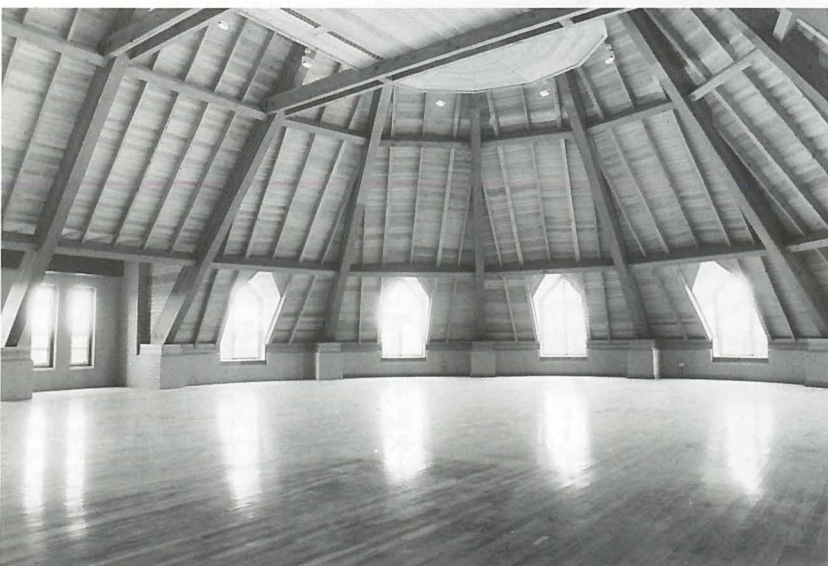
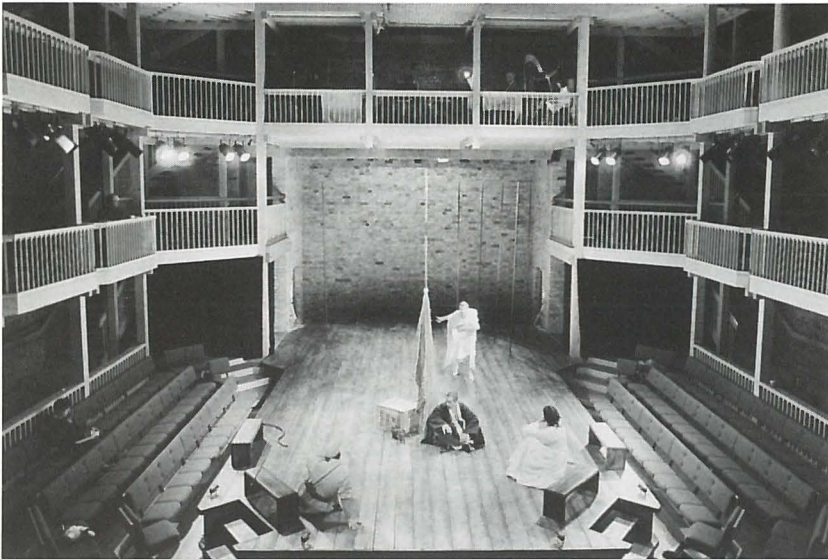
The dimmers are Permus racks (eleven 24 way 10 amp and one 12 way 20 amp).

The auditorium lighting is exemplary. It is nice and bright in the spirit that theatregoing should be a joy rather than a penance, but it falls gently on both the timber and brick surfaces. Admittedly these are sympathetic surfaces to light but whoever chose the fittings and their positions deserves the kind of congratulations that I have withheld from a number of theatres recently, from the new Wilde to the Old Vic.

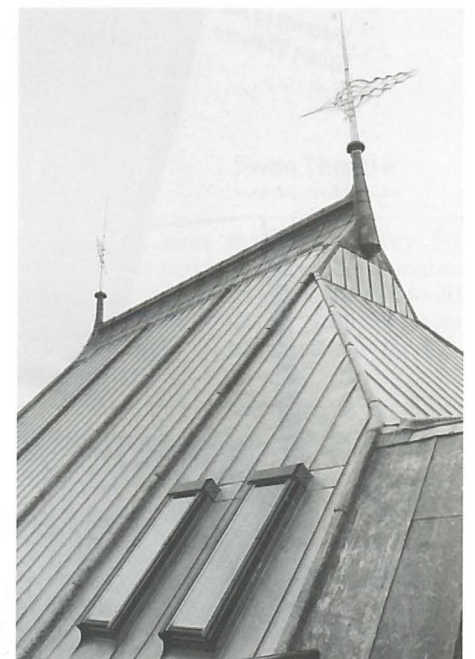
The wood contributes to a glorious sounding box and it is exciting to hear the musicians from where they were in the 17th century: in a gallery above the stage. (I now long to hear Purcell in this theatre). Voices are supported sympathetically whether in passionate declaim or conversational aside.

The Swan has not only sought inspiration from older theatre building forms, it has embraced the older building techniques whereby the carpenter fitted out the mason's shell. The proportions of the old theatre form a sympathetic shell, but a hero of its finishing, standing alongside architect and carpenters, must be the Fire Prevention Officer who allowed such extensive use of timber. He is to be congratulated on recognising the inherent safety of properly treated timber in a controlled environment and we must hope that his positive attitude heralds the dawn of a new enlightenment that will allow the use of materials more sympathetic than the inflexible concrete beloved by building regulations.

A new rehearsal room has been created above the Swan by adding a pitched roof to restore the spirit of the original Memorial Theatre. To place such an addition on top of a building which had been severely



The new rehearsal room. Photo by Nicholas Sargeant



The weather vanes of burnished steel, evoking the movement of a swan in water, are the work of sculptor Anthony Robinson. Photo by Nicholas Sargeant