

neither time, resources nor skills to heed his message no matter how ardently they may wish it. The only way for them to 'shape up', ironically, would be through increased funding.

Remember the fate of the Prospect Theatre Company, nearly ten years ago? Mr Luce would find its demise as curious as it was unfortunate. Their grant could only be justified for touring, since London's drama was already well provided for. Our top classical actors rallied round. The British Council sent them overseas. Yet despite their 'sensible', popular productions, they went under. Why? Because the stars, upon whom they relied heavily for their success could not take endless weeks on the road, in digs far from home, and lower rates of pay – without a stable 'home' in London to return to. Like a checkmate, there was nowhere for them to go on the Arts Council chess board. With the RSC and the National Theatre already providing large-scale drama in the capital, there were no regular funds for a third company. It was a complex and ironic fate.

Finally, let us sum up with Sir Peter Hall's words on the subject again, as a leading voice in the theatre industry.

'The Arts Minister's recent speech on his policy for the arts over the next five years must be the most alarming to come from a senior government official for many a long year. It is also the most ill-informed, misleading and, for want of a better word, nervous.

'It is alarming because it shows with devastating clarity that the man whose job it is to explain the support, the arts in public and in Parliament is not programmed to receive any arguments on behalf of the arts, however persuasive, if they do not chime with his leader's views on public expenditure as a whole.

'It is ill-informed because it does not seem to comprehend the outstanding success of the arts, and because it shows a fundamental misunderstanding of how they work and of their needs. It is misleading because in places it distorts or veils the truth. And it is nervous because it shows a man so stung by criticism that nearly half his speech is an attempt to silence, with threats, those who disagree with him.

'Sing my song, he is saying, or shut up – if you don't, you will suffer. But those who care for our culture, our language and our heritage must not shut up. Richard Luce's ludicrous speech has to be answered'. Sir Peter finally urges us all to write not once, but continually, to our local MPs, for selfish motives, if nothing else.

Suppose for a moment we were to apply Mr Luce's logic to his own situation. All MPs including the Prime Minister are paid out of taxpayers money. But apply 'challenge funding', with 25% coming from local constituents and businesses whom they represent, and we've started to ease the public purse.

ST PAUL'S SCHOOL THEATRE



The new theatre has been created within the volume of an original school hall, on the first floor of a lightweight prefabricated building (CLASP system) constructed in the 1960's. The remodelled auditorium forms the first phase of a two phase development, the second phase of which will involve the provision of improved dressing room and backstage facilities.

The theatre is primarily for school drama, but is also to be used for school assemblies and occasional dinners and dances requiring a large area of flat floor.

Early design proposals were made for a galleried courtyard space with a highly flexible central well. This approach was abandoned both from a structural point of view, in that the galleries imposed undue loads on the existing structure, and because the school felt that an over-flexible form, involving the frequent reorganisation of the seating layout, would divert resources away from the business of mounting productions.

The final design adopts a thrust stage form which has changed the axis of the room from that of the previous Hall, with an area of seating which can be cleared away to create a flat floor. This is achieved by the

combination of a pit formed in a new raised floor and three rows of rostra above the floor, which are enclosed by a permanent gallery and gangways. The pit allows the position of the stage edge to be varied or can be filled in completely when a flat floor is required. The rostra and seating above the floor can be removed into an adjacent store when they are not required.

The permanent gallery is constructed in steelwork, which transfers additional loads back to the existing structure and avoids the need to carry new columns through to the ground. The steeply raked seating brings the rear of the new gallery up to the level of the existing second floor, and allows a foyer area to be created beneath it.

A new ceiling and lighting bridge have been inserted, together with fixed lighting bars, two winched lighting bars and a grid to which suspension lines can be fixed as required. A complete new production lighting and sound system has been provided.

A new ventilation system has been installed. Air is introduced via grilles mounted in the back and bottom of the lighting bridge, and extracted through a plenum formed under the new gallery.

Design Team:

<i>Architect:</i>	Tim Foster Architect
<i>Project Management:</i>	Ian Kennard and Co
<i>Structural Engineers:</i>	Andrews, Kent and Stone
<i>Services Consultants:</i>	Pell Frischmann Consulting Engineers Ltd
<i>Theatre Consultant:</i>	Theatre Projects Consultants Ltd
<i>Acoustic Consultant:</i>	Paul Gillieron
<i>Main Contractor:</i>	French Kier London Ltd