

be translated into architectonic terms."

The intellectual problems took a long time to crack and the architects were all straining to the hilt to understand what all the discussion and experimenting meant architecturally. "Had we not had the confidence of what had been built up in our own past", Lasdun says, "I don't think we could have coped with it." The team were convinced that "work on the design of the auditorium and the stage (the action area) was fundamental and had to come into existence before any architectural consideration from the outside of the building came into it". The technological aspects of the design came later too. The early dialogues were uncluttered by the technology of the theatre.

Lasdun's office had "a really good working relationship" with the stage machinery and lighting consultants and the



mechanical, services and structural engineers who came in at a very early stage. Indeed, Lasdun sees the National Theatre as a very expressive building structurally: "The structure had to be considered very close to the architecture, and in fact when you move through the building you are primarily aware of the structure."

Referring to the contractors, McAlpines, Lasdun said that "they played an extraordinarily important role... they put really first class people on the concrete... in fact the men behind the mixer and the men doing the batching and the men handling the shuttering did it with enormous skill..." There were however, inevitably, many difficulties which had to be overcome jointly with the contractors.

In Lasdun's mind it is a traditional one-off building. "It's an extremely difficult building, both for the architects and for the builders, it's not repetitive in any way. It will be difficult in the future to build such a craftsmanlike building. Maybe a big shed with everything going on all over might be the new way of doing it. It doesn't produce the same architectural results. Here you're up against a very strong



This page
 Far left: The lighting control room overlooking the Lyttelton stage.
 Top left: The foyer area is used for a variety of small scale theatrical performances, and casual concerts.
 Top right: "The experience of moving through space which compresses and expands and directs and lights you as a complex arrangement is what we think of as architecture."
 Middle right: The Olivier ticket office.
 Above: The Lyttelton auditorium: "in the Lyttelton you confront the action."
 Left: Actor's eye view.
Opposite page: The Olivier auditorium. "In fact the Olivier theatre is the nucleus. The whole building is generated by the Olivier and by that particular room."

