

to have some scenographers with us but that was the result of a lot of hard work trying to get money out of the British Council to get some of our colleagues from abroad here. We have achieved it thanks to everybody's efforts, but a broad church is vital; any help people can give who are keen to continue this sort of event with directors, designers and others will be appreciated.

Iain Mackintosh, Theatre Consultant and Historian, UK

I am standing up on the Maggie Smith principle which was that there was nothing wrong with the acoustics of the Olivier Theatre that a follow spot couldn't fix. *(Laughter)* We haven't spoken about seating capacity and there is a thread running through this. I remember taking some Americans around the 1,250 seat Glyndebourne Opera House at the end of which they said, "This is a wonderful opera house, really wonderful, but you must understand we could never build anything as small as this in America." Four weeks later the director of the third largest drama, opera and ballet company in the Czech Republic said, "It's a wonderful theatre, Iain, but you must understand we could never build anything as big as this." Now that tells us something about capacity! When I hear people talking about flexibility, about bringing things into theatres from non-theatre spaces, I put it to you that almost all our theatres, especially the modern ones that lack density, are too big.

Whatever size theatre you and your colleagues want to build, please take 25% off the capacity; that means if it's 500 seats build 300, if 900 seats, build only 750 (as we did in Calgary), if you want a total of 2,000, build only 1,500 and the spaces will be better! Everybody always wants theatres that are too big because the powers that be feel that we kids in the playground aren't really allowed to talk about capacity because it's something called 'the bottom line'. The bottom line is different in every country in the world. What is constant is the ability of an artist, other than the greatest in the world, to project energy in space! Technologists, please note, I want a machine in the next ten years that measures human energy!

Moderator: Richard Pilbrow

Almost every theatre is indeed too large and we have an appalling problem in America where they are not only 25% too big, they're usually 100% too big! But thanks for the wonderful comment earlier asking why



The 1,250-seat Glyndebourne Opera House in Sussex, England – too small for Americans and too large for theatre directors from the Czech Republic
Photo: Theatre Projects

artists aren't far more involved in driving these projects. The horrible truth of consulting, which I do for a living, is that artists are probably only involved in less than 10% of the projects and the projects which artists have driven, like the Royal Exchange in Manchester, were events of a lifetime. Most of the time these buildings are commissioned by politicians or people with far more money than sense; they don't really want a theatre, they want a monument or a building of civic pride and that is the horrible truth that so many of us in this room face. Would anyone like to argue that point?

Jean-Guy Lecat, Designer and Theatre Consultant, France

The first found space I worked on was 40 years ago. It was the Cartoucherie de Vincennes which we opened in 1970, in the beginning by two companies, and there are now five permanent companies. We have a tendency to make a new position, to collaborate, between the theatre people and the architect, but in most of the found spaces I have visited in America and in Europe, the theatre people themselves had transformed the beautiful found space into a rigid theatre. So it is not that simple because most of the theatre people had killed the beautiful space they had – that's not the fault of the architect!

"Build smaller and they will be better performance spaces"

"The beautiful found space had been killed by the theatre people who had themselves made it a rigid theatre"

The closing debate involved speakers and delegates and covered the future form of buildings, the productions and events that might go in them, their size, the relationship between performer and audience, and the teams that have to collaborate to build successful performing arts venues.