



The Architecture of the National Theatre

Peer Medau

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Seminar paper from the year 2003 in the subject English Language and Literature Studies - Culture and Applied Geography, grade: 1,7 (A-), University of Paderborn (FB Anglistics), 5 entries in the bibliography, language: English, abstract: The National Theatre Company was founded in 1962 with Laurence Olivier as the director, with the intention to present British dramatic art in the domestic area and in foreign countries, as well as inviting other European theatres to England. Its original home was the Chichester theatre and the Old Vic theatre but soon the company decided to set up their own building in London. The Shakespeare Memorial National Theatre Committee with Olivier as a member formed a building committee to plan the creation of a building befitting the rank of the National Theatre Company.

The building committee faced the task to find an architect for the project. With the help of the Royal Institute of British Architects it organized a competition with three hundred participants and chose twenty in the end for the final round in which Denys Lasdun was unanimously chosen as the architect. He had never designed a theatre before. This very demanding task took him, his partner Peter Softley and his team over a decade to fulfil.

The National Theatre was opened in March 1976 with the first play. Together with the concert halls Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall and Purcell Room, the Museum of the Moving Image, the National Film Theatre and the Hayward Art Gallery for modern art it represents the center of cultural life around the south bank of the Thames.

The following paper deals with the architecture of the National Theatre, especially with the floor plan and the architect's design and intentions.

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