

used are usually different. Particular groups of people who habitually speak in these situations seem to have acquired their own norms for doing this. The clergyman giving a sermon uses quite recognizable inflections and gestures and pauses. The policeman delivering a statement to a press conference after a serious crime, or giving evidence in court, tends to use a formal method of address, nothing like the way he might speak in normal circumstances. The holiday tour representative welcoming a party of tourists uses another quite different range of emphasis and gesture, as does the person demonstrating cooking or some new gadget at an exhibition. All these and many more can conjure up in our minds ways of holding an audience at a public distance and telling them quite clearly what sort of event this is.

### **Multiple distances in a space**

Few spaces are designed exclusively for interaction at just one of the distances identified here. In most of the settings we might imagine, people move around, and in many cases different relationships might well exist between various people within the same space. In a hospital ward, for example, a patient may expect one set of behavioural distances with other patients, another with visitors such as family and friends, and yet another with the professional medical staff who attend them. The trick of good design in such situations is to facilitate all these kinds of relationships without putting any under stress. We cannot really examine that idea in any detail until the next chapter, since it is not just a matter of distance but also of spatial arrangement. However, the principle of multiple distances can still be illustrated by yet another of our scenarios.

A lecturer arrives to deliver a weekly lecture to her students at university. She finds the front row entirely empty and the back three rows completely full, with the intermediate rows each partly occupied (Fig. 5.12). The door to the theatre is at the front, and the theatre rakes up towards the rear so all can see the front clearly. So just why do the students climb more steps and give themselves less chance of seeing the slides she will project onto the screen at the front? There is a certain distance beyond which the lecturer will find it hard to establish recognizable eye contact with an individual student. This is public distance. Students in the back rows then achieve substantial public distance from the lecturer so they feel securely beyond personal contact. They reckon that they are unlikely to be asked questions by her, and in turn can make comments to each other without interrupting proceedings. I usually find this is the easiest scenario to describe in my lecture courses, since invariably the students have already demonstrated it! One year the students on my course sought to get their own back. As I entered the lecture theatre the following week I noticed that the front row was absolutely full and they were all wearing