

ANTA THEATER (originally Guild Theater, now Virginia Theater), 243-259 West 52nd Street, Manhattan. Built 1924-25; architects, Crane & Franzheim.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1024, Lot 7.

On June 14 and 15, 1982, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the ANTA Theater and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 5). The hearing was continued to October 19, 1982. Both hearings had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Eighty-three witnesses spoke in favor of designation. Two witnesses spoke in opposition to designation. The owner, with his representatives, appeared at the hearing, and indicated that he had not formulated an opinion regarding designation. The Commission has received many letters and other expressions of support in favor of this designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The ANTA Theater survives today as one of the historic theaters that symbolize American theater for both New York and the nation. Built in the 1924-25, the ANTA was constructed for the Theater Guild as a subscription playhouse, named the Guild Theater. The founding Guild members, including actors, playwrights, designers, attorneys and bankers, formed the Theater Guild to present high quality plays which they believed would be artistically superior to the current offerings of the commercial Broadway houses. More than just an auditorium, however, the Guild Theater was designed to be a theater resource center, with classrooms, studios, and a library. The theater also included the most up-to-date staging technology.

Besides its historical importance as Broadway's major repertory theater, the ANTA is an exceptionally handsome theater building. Its exterior, designed by prominent theater architect C. Howard Crane with Kenneth Franzheim, drew inspiration from 15th-century Tuscan villas. Differing markedly from the Beaux-Arts influenced neo-classical styles of the majority of other theaters of the period, the theater building provoked as much admiration as the company's planned operations.

For half a century the ANTA Theater has served as home to countless numbers of the plays through which the Broadway theater has come to personify American theater. During most of its life, the theater has housed two special repertory companies, unique to Broadway. As such, the ANTA continues to help define the Broadway theater district, the largest and most famous concentration of legitimate stage theaters in the world.

The development of the Broadway Theater District

The area of midtown Manhattan known today as the Broadway theater district encompasses the largest concentration of legitimate playhouses in

the world. The theaters located there, some dating from the turn of the century, are significant for their contributions to the history of the New York stage, for their influence upon American theater as a whole, and in many cases for their architectural design.

The development of the area around Times Square as New York's theater district at the end of the 19th century occurred as a result of two related factors: the northward movement of the population of Manhattan Island (abetted by the growth of several forms of mass transportation), and the expansion of New York's role in American theater. The northward movement of Manhattan's residential, commercial, and entertainment districts had been occurring at a steady rate throughout the 19th century. In the early 1800s, businesses, stores, hotels, and places of amusement had clustered together in the vicinity of lower Broadway. As New York's various businesses moved north, they began to isolate themselves in more or less separate areas: the financial institutions remained downtown; the major retail stores situated themselves on Broadway between 14th and 23rd Streets, eventually moving to Herald Square and Fifth Avenue at the turn of the century; the hotels, originally located near the stores and theaters, began to congregate around major transportation centers such as Grand Central Terminal or on the newly fashionable Fifth Avenue; while the mansions of the wealthy spread farther north on Fifth Avenue, as did such objects of their beneficence as the Metropolitan Museum of Art.¹

The theater district, which had existed in the midst of stores, hotels, and other businesses along lower Broadway for most of the 19th century, spread northward in stages, stopping for a time at Union Square, then Madison Square, then Herald Square. By the last two decades of the 19th century, far-sighted theater managers had begun to extend the theater district even farther north along Broadway, until they had reached the area that was then known as Long Acre Square and is today called Times Square.

A district of farmlands and rural summer homes in the early 1800s, Long Acre Square had by the turn of the century evolved into a hub of mass transportation. A horsecar line had run across 42nd Street as early as the 1860s, and in 1871, with the opening of Grand Central Depot and the completion of the Third and Sixth Avenue Elevated Railways, it was comparatively simple for both New Yorkers and out-of-towners to reach Long Acre Square. Transportation continued to play a large part in the development of the area; in 1904 New York's subway system was inaugurated, with a major station located at 42nd Street and Broadway. The area was then renamed Times Square in honor of the newly erected Times Building.² The evolution of the Times Square area as a center of Manhattan's various mass transit systems made it a natural choice for the location of legitimate playhouses, which needed to be easily accessible to their audiences.

The theater business that invaded Long Acre Square at the end of the 19th century consisted of far more than a few playhouses, for at that time New York was the starting-point for a vast, nationwide entertainment network known as "the road." This complex theater operation had its beginnings in the 1860s when the traditional method of running a theater, the stock system, was challenged by the growing popularity of touring "combination" shows. In contrast to the stock system, in which a theater manager engaged a company of actors for a season and presented them in a

variety of plays, the combination system consisted of a company of actors appearing in a single show which toured from city to city, providing its own scenery, costumes, and sometimes musical accompaniment. Helped by the expansion of the nation's railroads after the Civil War, the combination system soon killed off the majority of stock companies.³ By 1904 there were some 420 combination companies touring through thousands of theaters in cities and towns across the country.⁴

Of crucial importance to the operation of the combination system was a single location where combination shows could be cast, rehearsed, tried out, and then booked for a cross-country tour. Since New York was already regarded as the most important theater city in America, it is not surprising that it became the headquarters for the combination system. In addition to the many theaters needed for an initial Broadway production for the combinations before they went on tour, New York's theater district encompassed rehearsal halls, the headquarters of scenery, costume, lighting, and makeup companies, offices of theatrical agents and producers, theatrical printers and newspapers, and other auxiliary enterprises. Close to the theater district were boarding houses catering to the hundreds of performers who came to New York in the hope of being hired for a touring show or a Broadway production.

As theaters were built farther uptown, the auxiliary enterprises also began to move north. By the turn of the century,

the section of Broadway between 37th Street and 42nd Street was known as the Rialto. Theater people gathered or promenaded there. Producers could sometimes cast a play by looking over the actors loitering on the Rialto; and out-of-town managers, gazing out of office windows, could book tours by seeing who was available.⁵

The theater district that moved north to Long Acre Square in the 1890s was thus a vast array of business enterprises devoted to every facet of theatrical production.

The movement of the theater district north along Broadway had proceeded at a steady pace during the latter part of the 19th century. The Casino Theater was opened on the southeast corner of Broadway and 39th Street in 1882. A year later, it was joined by a most ambitious undertaking--the construction of the Metropolitan Opera House on Broadway between 39th and 40th Streets. In 1888, the Broadway Theater was erected on the southwest corner of Broadway and 41st Street. Five years later, the American Theater opened its doors at Eighth Avenue between 41st and 42nd Streets, as did Abbey's Theater at Broadway and 38th Street and the Empire Theater at Broadway and Fortieth Street.

It remained for Oscar Hammerstein I to make the move into Long Acre Square itself. At the close of the 19th century, Long Acre Square housed Manhattan's harness and carriage businesses, but was little used at night, when it seems to have become a "thieves' lair."⁶ In 1895 Hammerstein erected an enormous theater building on Broadway between 44th and 45th Streets. The original plan for the Olympia called for a "perfect palace of entertainment--which would have included three theaters, a bowling alley, a turkish bath, cafes and restaurants."⁷ Only part of this visionary plan

ever became a reality. On November 25, 1895, Hammerstein opened the Lyric Theater section of the building, and a little over three weeks later he inaugurated the Music Hall section. Never a financial success, the Olympia closed its doors two years after it opened. Nevertheless, it earned Hammerstein the title of "Father of Times Square."

By the turn of the century Hammerstein had built two more theaters in the Long Acre Square area, and in the years 1901-1920 a total of forty-three additional theaters appeared in midtown Manhattan, most of them in the side streets east and west of Broadway. Much of this theater-building activity was inspired by the competition between two major forces in the industry, the Theatrical Syndicate and the Shubert Brothers, for control of the road. As each side in the rivalry drew its net more tightly around the playhouses it owned or controlled, the other side was forced to build new theaters to house its attractions. The result was a dramatic increase in the number of playhouses, both in New York and across the country. After World War I, as the road declined and New York's theatrical activity increased, the general economic prosperity made possible the construction of thirty additional playhouses in the Times Square area, expanding the boundaries of the theater district so that it stretched from west of Eighth Avenue to Sixth Avenue, and from 39th Street to Columbus Circle.⁸

The stockmarket crash of 1929 and the resulting Depression caused a shrinkage in theater activity. Some playhouses were torn down, many were converted to motion picture houses, and later to radio and television studios. From the time of the Depression until the 1960s no new Broadway playhouses were constructed. Fortunately, the theaters that survive from the early part of the century represent a cross-section of types and styles, and share among them a good deal of New York's rich theatrical history.

(MMK)

Evolution of Theater Design

The frenzy of theater construction that occurred in New York during the first thirty years of this century brought with it an evolution in architecture and decoration.⁹ At the close of the 19th century American theaters were still being built in the style of traditional European opera houses, with high proscenium arches, narrow auditoriums, two or three balconies built in a horseshoe configuration, and dozens of boxes, some set into the front of the first balcony. Although contemporary notices of the theaters attributed specific (though often vague) styles or periods to them, their interiors were more often than not a melange of styles and colors.

With the increase of theater construction after the turn of the century came a new attitude toward theater architecture and decoration as firms such as Herts and Tallant, Thomas W. Lamb, and others, began to plan the playhouse's exterior and interior as a single, integrated design. The Art Nouveau style New Amsterdam Theater, which opened in 1903, signalled this new seriousness in theater design.

Perhaps influenced by such European experiments as Wagner's Festival Theater at Bayreuth, American theater architects after the turn of the century began to structure their playhouses along different lines.

Proscenium openings were made lower and wider, auditoriums were made shallower, seating was planned in a fan shape, and the number of balconies was usually reduced to one. Boxes were cut back to a minimum. The theaters that were built just before and after World War I for the most part shared this new configuration.

Because many of New York's extant playhouses were built during the period in which New York was serving as the starting-point for nationwide tours, they represent a style of theater architecture that is characteristic not only of New York but also of other cities across the United States, for a show which was originally produced in a New York theater would require similar conditions in the theaters in which it toured, and theater owners often hired the same architects to design and build theaters in several cities. Thus, New York's theaters set the standard for theater construction across the United States, as an inspection of designs for theaters in various cities will show.¹⁰

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The Broadway Theater in American Theatrical History

The playhouses still standing in the Broadway theater district share among them over eighty years of American theatrical history. In the early years of the century, when American theater was still heavily influenced by Europe, the theaters played host to such great international stars as Sarah Bernhardt, Eleonora Duse, and Mrs. Patrick Campbell, and to adaptations of such European successes as The Merry Widow and Floradora.

It was in the Broadway theaters that the beginnings of a distinctly American drama could be seen in the Western melodramas of David Belasco, the social comedies of Clyde Fitch and Langdon Mitchell, and the problem plays of Edward Sheldon and Eugene Walter. With the rise of the "little theater" movement in the second decade of the century, it seemed that theatrical leadership had passed from Broadway to such experimental "art" theaters as the Provincetown Playhouse and the Neighborhood Playhouse. Before long, however, the innovations of the little theaters infused Broadway with new life. Beginning with the production of Eugene O'Neill's first full-length play, Beyond the Horizon, on Broadway in 1920, the playhouses of Broadway presented the work of a new generation of playwrights, including, in addition to O'Neill, Maxwell Anderson, Philip Barry, S.N. Behrman, Rachel Crothers, Sidney Howard, George S. Kaufman, George Kelly and Elmer Rice.

The Depression of the 1930s brought with it a new concern with political and social issues, and the dramas presented in the Broadway playhouses reflected that concern. Commercial producers gave us plays by Lillian Hellman, Robert E. Sherwood, and Thornton Wilder, while the Group Theater and other new organizations introduced such writers as Clifford Odets and Sidney Kingsley. The Broadway theaters continued to house challenging plays during the 1940s and 1950s, when new talents such as Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, and William Inge first began writing for the theater.

Meanwhile, musical comedy had blossomed from the adaptations and imitations of European operetta popular at the turn of the century to a

uniquely American art form. By the 1940s and 1950s the works of Rodgers and Hammerstein, Cole Porter, Irving Berlin, Jerome Kern, and many others, were being exported from the stages of Broadway to theaters around the world.

The 1960s and 1970s were decades of ferment and change, both in and out of the theater. As in the 1920s, the impetus for theatrical experimentation came from outside of Broadway, and as in the 1920s, the experimentation helped to revitalize the Broadway theater. Today, the playhouses of Broadway are showcases for the best plays of the Off- and Off-Off Broadway theaters, as well as for exciting productions from theatrical workshops, regional theaters, and outstanding foreign companies.

Having moved gradually northward all during the 19th century, New York's theater district finally came to rest at Times Square, where it has remained for almost ninety years. The economic Depression of the 1930s discouraged speculative ventures such as the construction of new theaters, while after prosperity returned in the wake of World War II, the cost of renting land and constructing a theater was prohibitively high. The northward movement of the theater district may also have been discouraged for a number of years by the existence of the Sixth Avenue Elevated Railway, which crossed from Sixth to Ninth Avenues at 53rd Street, thereby providing a natural northern boundary for the theater district.¹¹

The ANTA Theater, as one of the Broadway theaters surviving today in the theater district, contributes to the totality of the district's history by virtue of its participation in that history.

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Notes

1. The discussion of the northward movement of Manhattan's business and theaters is based on Mary Henderson, The City and the Theatre (Clifton, N.J.: James T. White and Co., 1983), pp. 130-131, 168-170.
2. W.G. Rogers and Mildred Weston, Carnival Crossroads: the Story of Times Square (New York: Doubleday, 1960), pp. 39-78; Howard B. Furer, New York: A Chronological and Documentary History 1524-1970 (Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.: Oceana Publications, 1974), p. 34 ff.; The New York Subway (New York: Interborough Rapid Transit Co., 1904; reprint ed., New York: Arno Press, n.d.).
3. Alfred L. Bernheim, The Business of the Theatre (New York: Actors Equity Association, 1932; reprint ed., New York: Benjamin Blom, 1964), p. 26.
4. Jack Poggi, Theater in America: The Impact of Economic Forces, 1870-1967 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968), p. 6.
5. Brooks Atkinson, Broadway, rev. ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1974), p. 11.
6. Philip Paneth, Times Square, Crossroads of the World (New York:

- Living Books, 1965), p. 20.
7. Henderson, p. 263.
 8. Henderson, p. 195-196.
 9. The discussion of the developments in American theater architecture is based upon: Ned A. Bowman, "American Theatre Architecture: the Concrete Mirror Held Up to Yankee Nature," The American Theatre: The Sum of its Parts (New York: French, 1972), pp. 199-233; Burr C. Cook, "Twenty Years of Theatre Building," Theatre, 36 (August 1922), 98-99; Arthur S. Meloy, Theatres and Picture Houses (New York: Architects' Supply and Publishing Co., 1916), p. 29.
 10. See, for example, the discussion of various theaters in Randolph Williams Sexton and Ben Franklin Betts, eds., American Theaters of Today, 2 vols. (New York: Architectural Book Pubs., 1927, 1930; reprint ed., New York: Vestal, 1977).
 11. Stanley Buder, "Forty-Second Street at the Crossroads: A History of Broadway to Eighth Avenue," West 42nd Street: "The Bright Light Zone" (New York: Graduate School and University Center, CUNY, 1978), p. 62.

The Theater Guild, and the Guild Theater

The Theater Guild was founded in 1919 by a group of theater enthusiasts who believed New York audiences, and perhaps eventually national audiences, would support by subscription a series of high standard productions untainted by commercial considerations. The six founding members of the Guild included actress Helen Westley; Theresa Helburn, who served as executive director; Philip Moeller, a director; Lee Simonson, a scenic designer; Lawrence Langner, a patent attorney and playwright; and Maurice Wertheim, a prominent banker.

Four of the Guild's founding members, Westley, Moeller, Langner and Wertheim, had been previously associated with the Washington Square Players, a group of amateur performers who were committed to producing plays of artistic merit. Formed around 1914, the Washington Square Players had presented one-act plays, first at the Little Bandbox Theater on East 57th Street, and later at the larger Comedy Theater at 108 West 41st Street. The troupe's last production was held in March 1918, after which it disbanded; the Theater Guild was formed the following year.

The Theater Guild's first productions were staged at the Garrick Theater on West 35th Street, a small house seating only 537 (demolished). The productions were supported by a body of devoted theater enthusiasts who purchased seats in advance for an entire season of plays performed by the Guild repertory. By 1923, however, with a membership totalling over 6,000, the Guild had outgrown its quarters at the Garrick.¹ Its founders believed, moreover, that continual moving from theater to theater for each new production might strain the unity of the Guild and impede the development of ensemble acting.² The possibility of having to lease theater space and

share profits with the owner raised fears of compromising the Guild's artistic integrity.

In 1923, therefore, the Theater Guild formed a building committee to raise funds for the construction of a new theater building. The committee was headed by Walter Prichard Eaton, and included among its members such prominent New Yorkers as Mrs. August Belmont, Otto H. Kahn, Walter Lippman, and Louis Untermeyer. The new theater would be characterized not by "gilt decoration and gimcrack ornaments," but instead by the latest in advanced technological methods.³ The most eagerly awaited of these advances, "the real novelty in the matter of stage equipment,"⁴ was the cyclorama, a large piece of painted linen with backlighting which functioned as stage scenery to represent the day or night sky.

Completed in 1925, to the designs of C. Howard Crane and Kenneth Franzheim, the Theater Guild's new Guild Theater opened with a production of George Bernard Shaw's Caesar and Cleopatra. The Guild flourished for nearly twenty years with high caliber drama productions performed by a rotating repertory cast. In 1943, however, as the war years slowly drained the national economy, the Guild recognized that its own rising production costs prevented profitable operation of its theater. With few alternatives available, it leased the building for five years to the Mutual Broadcasting System. The Guild continued to produce plays through a nationwide subscription circuit, and also became involved in television and radio productions. The Theater Guild still has offices today in the Broadway theater district.

(FD, PD)

Notes

1. Guild Theater subscription brochure, "A Guild Theater for the Theater Guild," ANTA Theater, Clippings File, Billy Rose Theater Collection, Lincoln Center Branch, New York Public Library.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Claude Bragdon, "The New York Theater Guild's New Theater," Architectural Record, 56(December 1924), 511.

C. Howard Crane and Kenneth Franzheim

During a career that spanned almost fifty years, Charles Howard Crane designed more than two hundred theaters in the United States and some 125 more in Canada and Great Britain. Among the most widely publicized of these were his only two Broadway playhouses, the Music Box (1921) and the Guild (1924-25). Quite different from each other in appearance -- the Guild is modeled on a Tuscan villa while the Music Box is severely Palladian in style -- both theaters display Crane's academically correct eclecticism. Crane believed that theaters ought to exemplify architecture as an art of dramatization. Unlike many other theater architects of the

time, who blended various historical elements into a personal style, Crane never developed a "signature" in his work.

Born in Hartford, Connecticut in 1885, Crane began his career in that city in 1904.¹ He moved to Detroit in 1905 where he apprenticed himself to Albert Kahn. Only a year later he had become the chief draftsman for the firm of Field, Hynchman & Smith, and by 1909 he had established his own practice. His expertise in theater design and construction, and specifically in acoustics, gained him a solid reputation and kept his services in constant demand, particularly during the 1920s. At one time he employed fifty-three draftsmen who assisted him with projects in almost every major American city. In Detroit alone, he designed almost fifty theaters, the most heralded two being the Majestic (1917) and the Orchestra Hall (1919).

Crane employed two senior associates: Ben A. Dore, chief designer in the Detroit office, who collaborated on, or was in charge of many mid-western projects; and Kenneth Franzheim (1891-1959), who ran Crane's New York City office. Franzheim, born in Wheeling, West Virginia, graduated from M.I.T. in 1913.² He first opened an office in Chicago, then came to New York in 1921; his association with Crane probably began at that time.

Apart from his theater work with Crane, Franzheim is best known for his early airport designs. Beginning in 1929, various aviation companies commissioned him to design air terminals in fifteen cities, including Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, Cleveland, Baltimore, Houston, and the metropolitan New York area. Other commissions included a design for the City Auditorium in Houston, Texas, for the 1928 Democratic Convention; the American Insurance Union Citadel in Columbus, Ohio, a 44-story building housing a movie theater and hotel (1928); and Foley's Department Store in Houston (1950). In New York, Franzheim designed the Art Deco style Johns-Manville Corporation headquarters (1930) at Madison Avenue and 41st Street.

Two well publicized examples of Crane and Franzheim's collaboration were the twin Selwyn and Harris Theaters in Chicago. Archie and Edgar Selwyn, both prominent New York producers, commissioned one; and Sam Harris, impressed with his architect's 1921 Music Box design, commissioned Crane to build the other. The two separate but adjoining structures were roughly the same size and consisted of similarly fashioned Renaissance style facades.³

Another Crane and Franzheim collaboration was the Capitol Theater and Office Building in Boston in 1926. This elaborate design incorporated a two-story Ionic colonnaded facade into a standard fourteen-story office tower with an extremely plush and decorative interior. E. George Kiehler was also a collaborator on some of Crane's theater projects, including the Music Box, although his specific contributions are not known.

At the height of Crane's career, shortly before the Depression, many American film studios and theater corporations had attained their greatest financial and popular success. Individual theaters and theater chains became one part of an expanding entertainment empire. Beginning in 1925, for example, the Fox Theater Corporation embarked on a campaign to build or acquire what would amount to 800 theaters by the year 1929. Crane alone was commissioned by Fox to design twenty-five new theaters. Two of them,

the Detroit Fox and the St. Louis Fox, both completed in 1928, were among the largest theaters in the country. Typically for Crane, the style of the Detroit Fox blended East Indian, Byzantine and Baroque motifs.⁴ Another similar theater in the Fox chain, the Brooklyn Fox, also by Crane in 1928, had a seating capacity of 4,305, and became a famous showcase for first-run motion pictures.⁵

United Artists took advantage of Crane's talents too in 1927 when they commissioned him to design the Spanish Gothic style United Artists Theater in Los Angeles. With a lobby that resembled a Spanish cathedral, the theater also featured frescoes adorning the vaulting.⁶

In 1932, one of the worst years of the Depression, Crane moved to Europe, first to Milan where he designed Italy's first skyscraper, then to London where he settled permanently.⁷ Although his reasons for leaving the United States remain unclear, Crane continued to build theaters in England and maintained his office in Detroit. Perhaps his greatest architectural challenge, and certainly his finest engineering accomplishment, resulted in 1937 in his Earl's Court Exhibition Hall, sports and amusement center. Faced with a triangular twelve-acre site above a network of railway tracks, Crane created a modern curvilinear structure with a 118-foot high arena and five exhibition halls which could be opened into one vast amphitheater seating 30,000. It also featured an Olympic-sized swimming pool which could be raised, frozen for skating, or used as a stage or playing field. All this, it is said, was erected without stopping a single train below the construction.⁸

During and after World War II, Crane rechanneled his efforts into industrial design while working on the rebuilding of London factories and the modernization of other British plants. He continued to visit the United States frequently to lecture, but resided in London until his death there in 1952.

(PD, FD)

Notes

1. Biographical summary from "Harris and Selwyn Theaters: Preliminary Summary of Information" (Chicago: Commission on Chicago Historical and Architectural Landmarks, June 1979; revised November 1982), 4-5.
2. Kenneth Franzheim, obituary, New York Times, March 18, 1959.
3. "Harris and Selwyn Theaters," 4-5.
4. Historic American Building Survey, Number 5554, the Fox Theater, Brooklyn, New York.
5. Ibid.
6. Paul Gleye, The Architecture of Los Angeles (Los Angeles: Rosebud, 1981), 107.
7. "Harris and Selwyn Theaters," p. 4.
8. Architecture and Building News, 151 (August 1937), 247-254.

The design of the Guild Theater

Crane and Franzheim created a most unusual theater for the Guild. When the theater opened its doors for the first time in April 1925, the New York Times declared that "the new building is regarded in many quarters as the finest theater in New York."¹ The Guild's design attracted a great deal of attention and praise because it was so different from what critics and theatergoers had been accustomed to on Broadway.

The Guild's facade was a very handsome version of a 15th-century Italian villa, specifically of the Tuscan variety. With stuccoed walls framed by rusticated stone quoins at the corners, a tiled roof overhanging the facade, a small arched loggia which "awakens vistas of Florence,"² and five second-story windows at the center framed by heavy rusticated blocks, the Guild suggests not so much a Broadway theater as a transplanted manor house. The architecture of the Guild Theater was designed to be as different from Broadway theaters as the productions of the Theater Guild were to be from Broadway theater.

When the theater opened, "people came to see the new house quite as much as the play."³ One enthusiastic critic wrote that the Guild's facade,

...spacious, wide and low, lavender and pink at dawn, a dazzling yellow and white at noon, a crystallization of green and lavender and ivory during dusk, and a soft, luminous pearl at night, is a very oasis among the paunched gray and brown lustreless facades of Broadway's bulky jocosities that serve, miserably, as theaters.⁴

Another critic called the facade, simply, "well composed" and "truthful."⁵

Besides its stylistic flourishes, the theater's facade carefully expressed the functions housed within. The smaller windows at various split levels of the second and third floors, and along portions of the fourth, revealed the smaller dressing rooms, studio rooms, offices and classrooms of the Guild. A clubroom for Guild stockholders -- complete with period furniture and decoration -- sat behind the three central windows of the fourth story; a library was behind the tall rusticated windows of the third story, while the triple-arched loggia at the right (which was repeated as a design element along the side walls of the auditorium) screened the fire escape.⁶

(FD, PD)

Notes

1. "Guild's Theater Ranks with Finest," New York Times, April 13, 1925.
2. Louis Kalonyme, "Italian Architecture for the New Guild Theater," Arts and Decoration, (July 1925), 30-31.

3. George Freedley, "Broadway Playhouses," bound typescript of articles published under the title "The Stage Today" in the Morning Telegraph, 1943-43. For the ANTA see pp.187-188. Billy Rose Theater Collection, Lincoln Center Branch, New York Public Library.
4. Kalonyme, 30-31.
5. Bragdon, p. 515.
6. Ibid.

The American National Theater and Academy (ANTA)

Although the Theater Guild was obliged to give up its theater in the 1930s, another similarly unique theatrical group was later able to move in.

Like the Theater Guild, the American National Theater and Academy was established to present theatrical productions of the highest dramatic quality and standards. Chartered in 1935, ANTA evolved from the Federal Theater Project, a completely subsidized performance program started during the Depression to stimulate public interest in drama. ANTA encouraged the sponsorship and development of theater and theater techniques through an academy supported by subscriptions and private and public donations. It acted as a service organization by providing information and career guidance, and also helped finance the plays of member organizations in other cities.

ANTA moved into the Guild Theater in 1950, renaming the building and establishing it as its home once the Mutual Broadcasting System's lease with the Theater Guild expired. In the late 1960s, ANTA leased the theater building to the National Council on the Arts while the Federal Government agreed to pay mortgages totalling \$1.1 million. In turn, ANTA eliminated its service programs and focused its resources on helping regional theater groups perform in the professional atmosphere of New York City.

The hope of fulfilling ANTA's original 1935 charter and establishing a national repertory company similar to those in European countries came one step closer to reality in October of 1983 when ANTA joined the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. ANTA's financial ability to establish such a partnership was largely the result of its sale of the theater in New York to the JuJamCyn Corporation in 1981. ¹

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Notes

1. "ANTA National Theater at Kennedy," New York Times, October 18, 1983, p.C14.

The ANTA as a playhouse

On December 2, 1924, the cornerstone was laid for the Guild Theater amid an elaborate ceremony presided over by Maurice Wertheim, Otto Kahn, New York Times editor Dr. John H. Finley, and the Governor of New York, Alfred E. Smith. Four months later, on April 13, 1925, George Bernard Shaw's Caesar and Cleopatra opened the Guild with an all-star cast including Helen Hayes, Lionel Atwell, Henry Travers, and Helen Westley.¹ The elaborate fanfare of opening night included President Calvin Coolidge, who threw a switch at the White House signalling the start of the production. The show, unfortunately, was unanimously panned by the critics. One called it "the nearest thing to an artistic failure that the Guild had yet produced... Unfortunately, the Guild has the theater--but not the company."²

Caesar and Cleopatra closed after forty-eight performances, but another Shaw play following it was more successful: Arms and the Man, starring Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne, ran for 180 performances. Other successes starring the Lunt-Fontanne team followed including At Mrs. Beam's (1926); Pygmalion (1926); The Brothers Karamazov (1927); Caprice (1928); Elizabeth the Queen (1930); and Shakespeare's Taming of the Shrew (1935), which also featured Sydney Greenstreet. One of the unusual aspects of early Guild Theater productions was the cast of performers who rotated on a fairly loose basis from play to play. In addition to the Lunt-Fontanne team, regulars included Claude Rains, Alla Nazimova, Frank Conroy, Dudley Digges, Leo G. Carroll, and Gale Sondergaard.

Eugene O'Neill's genius as a playwright impressed Guild audiences, first in 1931 with Mourning Becomes Electra, then again in 1933 with Ah, Wilderness! which starred George M. Cohan in an unusual dramatic performance for the musical showman and songwriter. 1933 also saw a young Humphrey Bogart grace the Guild stage with Shirley Booth in The Mask and the Face. The last play produced by the Guild in its theater was The Russian People in 1943. For the next six years the building was known as the WOR Mutual Theater, a radio studio run by the Mutual Broadcasting System.

Beginning in 1950, the theater reopened for experimental subscription performances under the new ownership of the American National Theater and Academy, better known as ANTA. ANTA opened at the theater with Robinson Jeffers' The Tower Beyond Tragedy. During the 1953-54 season, the ANTA theater underwent extensive interior renovation and remodeling. Two years later, in February 1956, Paddy Chayefsky's Middle of the Night with Edward G. Robinson, Gena Rowlands, Ann Jackson and Martin Balsam became one of the theater's most successful and longest running shows with 540 performances. Archibald MacLeish's "J. B." followed three years later and won the Pulitzer Prize in 1958; it starred Christopher Plummer and Raymond Massey. In the following decade, such illustrious writers as Jean Anouilh, James Thurber, Ira Levin, Larry Gelbart, James Baldwin, Anton Chekhov, Edward Albee and Peter Schaffer all staged plays at the ANTA Theater. ANTA's most successful production, however, opened in 1961 and ran for 637 performances, closing only in 1963: Robert Bolt's A Man for All Seasons.

The play captivated audiences with a superb cast that included Paul Scofield in the starring role, supported by George Rose, William Redfield, Keith Baxter and Leo McKern. More recently, Derek Jacobi starred in Nikolai Erdman's black comedy, The Suicide (1980).

The ANTA's career at the former Guild Theater ended in 1981, when ANTA moved to Washington and was rechristened the American National Theater Company. The ANTA theater was purchased by the JuJamCyn corporation, and has been renamed the Virginia Theater.

(FD, PD)

Notes

1. This production history of the ANTA Theater, condensed from the fuller version in the Appendix, is based on listings compiled by Actors Equity and submitted as testimony at the Landmarks Preservation Commission's public hearings of June and October, 1982. Their submission has been checked by Landmarks Commission staff against The Biographical Encyclopedia & Who's Who of the American Theater, Walter Rigdon, editor (New York: James H. Heineman, Inc., 1966).
2. Freedley, pp. 187-188.

Description¹

The ANTA Theater, now the Virginia, has a 15th-century Tuscan-style facade, which is wider than it is tall. It is designed somewhat in the manner of an overscaled residence and is faced in stucco with stone trim. Quoins flank the facade. At the ground floor are a series of doors, those of wood and glass in the narrower openings leading into the lobby, those metal ones in the wider openings functioning as exit doors. Three openings in the western section provide access to the stage. The arched opening with limestone voussoirs and is topped by a decorated cartouche with images of tragedy, music, and the arts. It contains wood and glass doors below a fanlight and is approached by two low steps with wrought-iron railings. Display boards flank the lobby doors. Two of these set in large frames carried on console brackets and surmounted by cornices are original. A modern marquee is suspended above the lobby doors and the exit doors. Above the ground floor base, the facade is punctuated by a series of window openings. At the second floor paired casement windows are flanked by louvered shutters. At the third floor five French windows are framed by stone blocks keyed to the wall surface and surmounted by pediments. Small balconies with wrought-iron railings project from the bases of these windows. A triple arcade to the right of these windows, shielded by a wrought-iron railing, marks the presence of a fire escape. Smaller stone-enframed windows at the western section of the third floor open onto dressing rooms. The fourth floor has regularly spaced window openings flanked by louvered shutters extending the width of the facade. The facade is crowned by a small tiled roof overhang carried on brackets. The stage housing encased in plain brick rises above the roof line at the west. A sign with the name of the theater and the current show is hung on the western section of the facade. (MP)

Notes

1. Significant architectural features are underlined.

Conclusion

The ANTA Theater survives today as one of the historic playhouses that symbolize American theater for both New York and the nation. Built for the Theater Guild, a special subscription repertory company, it was designed to house serious drama considered to be unavailable in the commercial Broadway houses. Although the Guild had to give up the theater in the Depression, an equally important and distinguished company, the ANTA, was able to use it for several decades more.

One of C. Howard Crane's two Broadway houses, the Guild was designed to be as unusual architecturally as its productions were programatically. Its exceptionally handsome facade was designed to resemble a 15th century Tuscan villa.

For half a century the ANTA Theater has served as home to countless numbers of the plays through which the Broadway theater has come to personify American theater. As such, it continues to help define the Broadway theater district, the largest and most famous concentration of legitimate stage theaters in the world.

The preparation of this report has involved the work of a number of consultants, supervised and edited by Anthony W. Robins (AR), Deputy Director of Research. Individual authors are noted by initials at the ends of their sections. The consultants were Margaret Knapp (MMK), Felicia Dryden (FD), and Peter Donhauser (PD). Marjorie Pearson (MP), Director of Research, wrote the description. Research Department staff who contributed to the report include Marion Cleaver, Gale Harris, and Jay Shockley.

The New York Landmarks Preservation Commission gratefully acknowledges the assistance rendered by many concerned citizens in studying the Broadway theaters. Special thanks are due the New York City Planning Commission; Community Planning Board 5, Manhattan; the New York Landmarks Conservancy; the Actors Equity Committee to Save the Theaters; and the individual theater owners.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATIONS

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the ANTA Theater has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the ANTA Theater survives today as one of the historic theaters that symbolize American theater for both New York and the nation; that it was designed to house the Theater Guild, a subscription repertory company with a special place in the history of Broadway theater; that it later housed the American National Theater Academy (ANTA), an equally distinguished, subsidized theater company; that its design by C. Howard Crane and Kenneth Franzheim matched the unusual program of the client with an unusual and exceptionally handsome design modeled on 15th-century Italian villas; that for over half a century the ANTA Theater has served as home to countless numbers of the plays through which the Broadway theater has come to personify American theater; and that as such it continues to help define the Broadway theater district, the largest and most famous concentration of legitimate stage theaters in the world.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 21, Section 534 of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 8-A of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the ANTA Theater, 243-259 West 52nd Street, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 1024, Lot 7, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.

APPENDIX

The following production history of the ANTA Theater is based on listings compiled by Actors Equity and submitted as testimony at the Landmarks Preservation Commission's public hearings of June and October, 1982. Their submission has been checked by Landmarks Commission staff against The Biographical Encyclopedia & Who's Who of the American Theater, Walter Rigdon, editor (New York: James H. Heineman, Inc., 1966).

1925

CAESAR AND CLEOPATRA 4/13/25 (128 perfs.) by George Bernard Shaw; with Helen Hayes, Lionel Atwill and Helen Westley.

GARRICK GAJETIES (14 perfs.); lyrics by Lorenz Hart; music by Richard Rodgers; with Sterling Holloway, Romney Brent, June Cochrane, Philip Loeb, House Jameson, Sanford Meiser, Edith Meisner, Peggy Conway and Betty Starbuck. (Originally opened at the Garrick Theater 6/8/25.)

ARMS AND THE MAN 9/14/25 (181 perfs.) by George Bernard Shaw; with Alfred Lunt, Lynn Fontanne and Jane Wheatley.

THE GLASS SLIPPER 10/19/25 (65 perfs.) by Ferenc Molnar; with June Walker, Helen Westley, Armina Marshall, George Baxter, John McGovern and Martin Wolfson.

MERCHANT OF GLORY 12/14/25 (41 perfs.) by Marcel Pagnol and Paul Nivoix; with Helen Westley, Armina Marshall, Lee Baker, Augustin Duncan and Philip Loeb.

1926

THE GOAT SONG 1/25/26 (58 perfs.) by Franz Werfel; with Alfred Lunt, Lynn Fontanne, Blanche Yurka, Judith Lowry, Helen Westley, Philip Loeb, Harold Clurman, Martin Wolfson and Erskine Sanford.

LITTLE EYOLF 2/2/26 (7 perfs.) by Henrik Ibsen; with Reginald Owen, Margalo Gilmore and Helen Menken.

THE CHIEF THING 3/22/26 (40 perfs.) by Nicholas Evreinoff; with Edith Meiser, Estelle Winwood, Edward G. Robinson, Harold Clurman, Romney Brent, Lee Strassberg and Helen Westley.

AT MRS. BEAM'S 4/26/26 (222 perfs.) by C.K. Munro; with Lynn Fontanne, Alfred Lunt and Daisy Belmore.

JUAREZ AND MAXIMILLIAN 10/11/26 (42 perfs.) by Franz Werfel; with Alfred Lunt, Philip Loeb, Harold Clurman, Edward G. Robinson, Morris Carnovsky, Cheryl Crawford, Earle Larimore, Dudley Digges and Margalo Gillmore.

1926 (cont'd.)

PYGMALION 11/15/26 (143 perfs.) by George Bernard Shaw; with Lynn Fontanne, Reginald Mason, Henry Travers, J.W. Austin and Charles Courtneidge.

1927

THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV 1/3/27 (56 perfs.) by Jacques Copeau and Jean Croue; with Alfred Lunt, Lynn Fontanne, Dudley Digges, Morris Carnovsky, Edward G. Robinson and Philip Loeb.

RIGHT YOU ARE IF YOU THINK YOU ARE 2/23/27 (58 perfs.) by Luigi Pirandello; with Edward G. Robinson, Armina Marshall, Morris Carnovsky, Helen Westley and Philip Loeb.

THE SECOND MAN 4/11/27 (178 perfs.) by S.N. Behrman; with Lynn Fontanne, Alfred Lunt, Earle Larimore, Margalo Gillmore and Edward Hartford.

PORGY 10/10/27 (367 perfs.) by Du Bose and Dorothy Heyward; with Frank Wilson, Evelyn Ellis and Percy Verwayne.

THE DOCTOR'S DILEMMA 11/21/27 (115 perfs.) by George Bernard Shaw; with Lynn Fontanne, Alfred Lunt, Helen Westley, Morris Carnovsky, Dudley Digges and Earle Larimore.

1928

MARCO MILLIONS 1/9/28 (102 perfs.) by Eugene O'Neill; with Alfred Lunt, Lynn Fontanne, Margalo Gillmore, Morris Carnovsky, Sanford Meisner and Dudley Digges.

VOLPONE 4/9/28 (160 perfs.) by Stefan Zweig; with Alfred Lunt, Dudley Digges, Helen Westley, Margalo Gillmore, Morris Carnovsky and Sanford Meisner.

FAUST 10/8/28 (48 perfs.) by Goethe; with Dudley Digges, Martin Wolfson, Gale Sondergaard, Helen Chandler and Helen Westley.

MAJOR BARBARA 11/19/28 (73 perfs.) by George Bernard Shaw; with Winifred Lenihan, Helen Westley, Gale Sondergaard, Dudley Digges and Percy Waram.

CAPRICE 12/31/28 (178 perfs.) by Sil-Vara; with Alfred Lunt, Lynn Fontanne and Douglass Montgomery.

1929

KARL AND ANNA 10/7/29 (49 perfs.); with Otto Kruger, Frank Conroy, Claude Rains, Philip Leigh, Ruth Hammond, Alice Brady and Gale Sondergaard.

1929 (cont'd.)

THE GAME OF LOVE AND DEATH 11/25/29 (48 perfs.) by Romain Rolland; with Otto Kruger, Alice Brady, Claude Rains and Frank Conroy.

METEOR 12/23/29 (92 perfs.) by S.N. Behrman; with Lynn Fontanne, Alfred Lunt and Douglass Montgomery.

1930

A MONTH IN THE COUNTRY 3/17/30 (72 perfs.) by Ivan Turgenev; with Alla Nazimova, Dudley Digges, Elliot Cabot and Eda Heinemann.

GARRICK GAJETIES 6/14/30 (155 perfs.) by H. Alexander, Carroll Carroll, Ruth Chorpensing, Leopoldine Damrosch, Gretchen Damrosch Finletter, Lardon Herrick, Sterling Holloway, Benjamin M. Kaye, Newman Levy, Dorian Otvos and Louis M. Simon; with Ruth Chorpensing, Imogene Coca, Ray Heatherton, Sterling Holloway, Philip Loeb and Edith Meiser.

GARRICK GAJETIES 10/16/30 (12 perfs.); with Sterling Holloway, Philip Loeb, Ruth Chorpensing, Rosalind Russell and Imogene Coca.

ELIZABETH THE QUEEN 11/31/30 (145 perfs.) by Maxwell Anderson; with Alfred Lunt, Lynn Fontanne, Arthur Hughes, Morris Carnovsky, Phoebe Brand and Royale Beal.

MIDNIGHT 12/29/30 (48 perfs.) by Claire and Paul Sifton; with Josephine Hull, Clifford Odets and Glenn Anders.

1931

GREEN GROW THE LILACS 1/26/31 (64 perfs.) by Lynn Riggs; with Franchot Tone, Helen Westley, June Walker, Richard Hale and Ruth Chorpensing.

GETTING MARRIED 3/30/31 (48 perfs.) by George Bernard Shaw; with Margaret Wycherly, Henry Trovers, Dorothy Gish, Romney Brent and Helen Westley.

THE WAY OF THE WORLD 6/1/31 (8 perfs.) by William Congreve; with Walter Hampden, Moffatt Johnston, Eugene Lockhart, Fay Bainter, Cora Witherspoon and Dorothy Stickney.

HE 9/21/31 (40 perfs.) by Alfred Savoir; with Tom Powers, Claude Rains and Edith Meiser.

MOURNING BECOMES ELECTRA 10/26/31 (158 perfs.) by Eugene O'Neill; with Alice Brady, Alla Nazimova, Arthur Hopkins, Philip Foster, Thomas Chalmers and Earle Larimore.

1932

THE MOON IN THE YELLOW RIVER 2/29/32 (40 perfs.) by Denis Johnston; with Egon Brecker, Claude Rains and Henry Hull.

TOO TRUE TO BE GOOD 4/4/32 (56 perfs.) by George Bernard Shaw; with Hope Williams, Beatrice Lillie, Leo G. Carroll and Claude Rains.

THE GOOD EARTH 10/17/32 (56 perfs.) by Owen and Donald Davis; with Claude Rains, Henry Travers, Alla Nazimova and Sydney Greenstreet.

BIOGRAPHY 12/12/32 (210 perfs.) by S.N. Behrman; with Ina Claire, Earle Larimore, Jay Fasset and Alexander Clark.

1933

AMERICAN DREAM 2/21/33 (39 perfs.) by George O'Neill; with Lee Baker, Josephine Hull, Douglass Montgomery, Gale Sondergaard, Helen Westley, Claude Rains and Sanford Meisner.

THE MASK AND THE FACE 5/8/33 (40 perfs.) by Luigi Chiarelli; with Shirley Booth, Leo G. Carroll, Judith Anderson and Humphrey Bogart.

BOTH YOUR HOUSES (48 perfs.) by Maxwell Anderson; with Morris Carnovsky, Shepperd Strudwick and Oscar Polk. (Originally opened at the Ethel Barrymore Theater 6/12/33.)

AH, WILDERNESS! 10/2/33 (285 perfs.) by Eugene O'Neill; with George M. Cohan, Marjorie Marquis, Elisha Cook, Jr., Gene Lockhart and Eda Heinemann.

1934

A SLEEPING CLERGYMAN 10/8/34 (40 perfs.) by James Bridie; with Glenn Anders, Helen Westley and Ruth Gordon.

VALLEY FORGE 12/10/34 (58 perfs.) by Maxwell Anderson; with Philip Merivale, Margalo Gillmore and Alan Bunce.

1935

THE SIMPLETON OF THE UNEXPECTED ISLES 2/18/35 (40 perfs.) by George Bernard Shaw; with Romney Brent, Nazimova and Lionel Pape.

PARADE 5/20/35 (40 perfs.) by Paul Peters, George Sklar, Frank Gabrielson, David Lesar and Kyle Chrichton; with Jimmy Savo, Eve Arden, Polly Rose and Leon Janney.

THE TAMING OF THE SHREW 9/30/35 (128 perfs.) by William Shakespeare; with Alfred Lunt, Lynn Fontanne, Bretaigne Windust, Sydney Greenstreet and Dorothy Mathews.

1936

END OF SUMMER 2/17/36 (152 perfs.) by S.N. Behrman; with Shepperd Strudwick, Mildred Natwick, Ina Claire, Osgood Perkins, Van Heflin and Tom Powers.

AND STARS REMAIN 10/12/36 (57 perfs.) by Julius J. and Philip Epstein; with Claudia Morgan, Clifton Webb, Mary Sargent, Helen Gahagan and Ben Smith.

PRELUDE TO EXILE 11/30/36 (48 perfs.) by William McNally; with Lucille Watson, Eva Le Gallienne, Leo G. Carroll and Evelyn Varden.

1937

BUT FOR THE GRACE OF GOD 1/12/37 (42 perfs.) by Leopold L. Atlas; with James Bell, Melbourne Ford, Anthony Ross and James McCallion.

STORM OVER PATSY 3/8/37 (48 perfs.) by Bruno Frank; with Claudia Morgan, Sara Allgood, Brenda Forbes, Jan McLean and Leo G. Carroll.

TO QUITO AND BACK 10/6/37 (46 perfs.) by Ben Hecht; with Francis Compton, Leslie Banks, Joseph Buloff and Eugenia Rawls.

THE GHOST OF YANKEE DOODLE 11/22/37 (48 perfs.) by Sidney Howard; with Ethel Barrymore, Frank Conroy and Dudley Digges.

1938

THE WINE OF CHOICE 2/21/38 (43 perfs.) by S.N. Behrman; with Alexander Woollcott, Claudia Morgan, Donald Cook and Leslie Banks.

WASHINGTON JITTERS 5/2/38 (24 perfs.) by John Boruff and Walter Hart; with Anthony Ross, Will Geer and Fred Stewart.

I HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE 10/13/38 (20 perfs.) by J.B. Priestley; with Eric Portman and Lydia Sherwood.

RINGSIDE SEAT 11/22/38 (7 perfs.) by Leonard Ide; with Grant Mitchell and Mary Rolfe.

THE MERCHANT OF YONKERS 12/28/38 (39 perfs.) by Thornton Wilder; with Percy Waram, Tom Ewell, Jane Cowl and June Walker.

1939

JEREMIAH 2/3/39 (35 perfs.) by Stefan Zweig; with Kent Smith, Cameron Mitchell, Vincent J. Donahue and Cornell Wilde.

1939 (cont'd.)

MY HEARTS IN THE HIGHLANDS 4/13/39 (44 perfs.) by William Saroyan; with Philip Loeb, Sidney Lumet, Art Smith and Hester Sondergaard.

THE WORLD WE MAKE 11/20/39 (80 perfs.) by Sidney Kingsley; with Rudolph Forster.

1940

THE TIME OF YOUR LIFE 9/23/40 (32 perfs.) by William Saroyan; with Eddie Dowling, Julie Haydon, Henry Jones, Celeste Holm and William Bendix.

QUIET PLEASE 11/8/40 (16 perfs.) by F. Hugh Herbert and Hans Kraly; with Jane Wyatt, Donald Woods and Gordon Jones.

EVERY MAN FOR HIMSELF 12/9/40 (3 perfs.) by Milton Lazarus; with Lee Tracy.

FLIGHT TO THE WEST 12/30/40 (136 perfs.) by Elmer Rice; with Kevin McCarthy, Betty Field and Karl Malden.

1941

AH, WILDERNESS! 10/2/41 (29 perfs.) by Eugene O'Neill; with Harry Carey, Ann Shoemaker, William Prince, Tom Tully, Enid Markey and Zachary Scott.

HOPE FOR A HARVEST 11/26/41 (38 perfs.) by Sophie Treadwell; with Helen Carew, Frederic March and Edith King.

1942

PAPA IS ALL 1/6/42 (63 perfs.) by Patterson Greene; with Jessie Royce Landis, Royal Beal, Celeste Holm and Carl Benton Reid.

YESTERDAY'S MAGIC 4/14/42 (55 perfs.) by Emlyn Williams; with Brenda Forbes, Paul Muni, Jessica Tandy and Alfred Drake.

MR. SYCAMORE 11/13/42 (19 perfs.) by Ketti Frings; with Stuart Erwin, Leona Powers, Enid Markey, Lillian Gish and Otto Hulett.

THE RUSSIAN PEOPLE 12/29/42 (39 perfs.) by Konstanin Simonov; with Leon Ames, Herbert Berghof and Luther Adler.

(THEATER USED AS A RADIO & T.V. PLAYHOUSE)
(1943-44 thru 1949-50)

ANTA THEATER
(1950-51 thru 12/81)

1950

THE TOWER BEYOND TRAGEDY 11/26/50 (32 perfs.) by Robinson
Jeffers; with Judith Anderson.

TWENTIETH CENTURY 12/24/50 (218 perfs.) by Ben Hecht and
Charles MacArthur.

1951

THE HOUSE OF BERNARDA ALBA 1/7/51 (16 perfs.) by Garcia Lorca.

PEER GYNT 1/28/51 (32 perfs.) by Henrik Ibsen.

L'ECOLE DES FEMMES 3/18/51 (22 perfs.) by Moliere.

NIGHT MUSIC 4/8/51 (9 perfs.) by Clifford Odets.

THE LITTLE BLUE LIGHT 4/29/51 (16 perfs.) by Edmund Wilson.

MARY ROSE 5/4/51 (16 perfs.) by James M. Barrie.

GETTING MARRIED 5/7/51 (16 perfs.) by George Bernard Shaw.

THE CELLAR AND THE WELL 12/10/51 (9 perfs.) by Philip Pruneau.

1952

DESIRE UNDER THE ELMS 1/16/52 (48 perfs.) by Eugene O'Neill;
with Douglas Watson, Karl Malden, Carol Stone and Charles
Aidman.

GOLDEN BOY 3/12/52 (55 perfs.) by Clifford Odets; with Art
Smith, John Garfield, Martin Greene, Lee J. Cobb, Jack
Klugman, Rudy Bond, Arthur O'Connell, Jack Warden, Gerald
S. O'Loughlin and Bert Conway.

1952-53

THEATER MIGHT HAVE BEEN DARK FOR ENTIRE SEASON OR USED AS A
TELEVISION STUDIO.

1953-54

THEATER MIGHT HAVE BEEN DARK FOR ENTIRE SEASON OR USED AS A
TELEVISION STUDIO.

1954

PORTRAIT OF A LADY 12/21/54 (7 perfs.) by William Archibald.

1955

THE DARK IS LIGHT ENOUGH 2/23/55 (69 perfs.) by Christopher Fry.

SEVENTH HEAVEN 5/26/55 (44 perfs.) by Victor Wolfson and Stella Unger.

THE SKIN OF OUR TEETH 8/17/55 (22 perfs.) by Thornton Wilder; with Mary Martin, Helen Hayes, George Abbott, Heller Halliday, Don Murray, Frank Silvera, Frances Sternhagen and Florence Reed.

A DAY BY THE SEA 9/26/55 (24 perfs.) by N.C. Hunter; with Aline MacMahon, Hume Cronyn, Dennis King and Jessica Tandy.

THE YOUNG AND BEAUTIFUL opened at the Anta on 11/7/55 (65 perfs.) by Sally Benson; with Douglas Watson, Lois Smith, Barry McGuire, James Hickman and James Olson. (Originally opened at the Longacre Theater on 10/1/55.)

1956

THE GREAT SEBASTIANS 1/4/56 (171 perfs.) by Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse; with Alfred Lunt, Lynn Fontanne, Arny Freeman, Anne Francine and Peg Murray (moved to the Coronet Theater on 2/6/56).

MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT 2/8/56 (477 perfs.) by Paddy Chayefsky; with Edward G. Robinson, Gena Rowlands, June Walker, Nancy R. Pollock, Betty Walker, Anne Jackson and Martin Balsam.

1957

DANCERS OF INDIA 9/29/57 (17 perfs.)

A SHADOW OF MY ENEMY 12/11/57 (5 perfs.) by Sol Stein; with Leon Janney, Ed Begley, William Harrigan, John McGovern and Tom Gorman.

1958

INTERLOCK 2/6/58 (4 perfs.) by Ira Levin; with Rosemary Harris, Maximilian Schell, Georgia Burke, John Marriott and Celeste Holm.

SAY, DARLING 4/3/58 (332 perfs.) by George Abbott, Richard and Martin Bissell; with Vivian Blaine, Johnny Desmond and David Wayne.

1958 (cont'd.)

J.B. 12/11/58 (364 perfs.) by Archibald MacLeish; with Pat Hingle, Christopher Plummer, Raymond Massey, Nan Martin and Clifton James.

1959

THE FIGHTING COCK 12/8/59 (87 perfs.) by Jean Anouilh; with Rex Harrison, Roddy McDowall, Arthur Treacher and Gerald Hiken.

1960

A THURBER CARNIVAL 2/26/60 (127 perfs.) by James Thurber; with Tom Ewell, Peggy Cass, Paul Ford, Alice Ghostley, John McGiver, Peter Turgeon, Wynne Miller and Charles Braswell.

1961

THE CONQUERING HERO 1/16/61 (8 perfs.) by Larry Gelbart; with Tom Poston, Jane Mason, John McMartin and Fred Stewart.

BIG FISH, LITTLE FISH 3/15/61 (101 perfs.) by Hugh Wheeler, with Jason Robards Jr., Ruth White, Hume Cronyn, George Grizzard, Elizabeth Wilson and Martin Gable.

THE GARDEN OF SWEETS 10/31/61 (1 perf.) by Waldemar Hansen; with Katina Paxinou, Lou Antonio, Madeleine Sherwood and Boris Tumarin.

A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS 11/22/61 (640 perfs.) by Robert Bolt; with Paul Scofield, George Rose, William Redfield, Leo McKern, Albert Dekker, Thomas Gomez and Keith Baxter.

1963

THE ADVOCATE 10/14/63 (8 perfs.) by Robert Noah; with James Daly, Tresa Hughes, Dolph Sweet and Barnard Hughes.

MARATHON '33 12/22/63 (48 perfs.) by June Havoc; with Julie Harris, Peter Masterson, Conrad Janis, Olive Deering, Logan Ramsey, Doris Roberts, Gabriel Dell, Tim Everett, Lane Bradbury, Iggie Wolfington, Lucille Patton, Lonny Chapman, Will Hare and Janice Mars.

1964

BLUES FOR MR. CHARLIE 4/23/64 (148 perfs.) by James Baldwin; with Rip Torn, Al Freeman, Jr., Rosett Le Noire, Diana Sands, Pat Hingle and Ann Wedgeworth.

1964 (cont'd.)

TRAVELLER WITHOUT LUGGAGE 9/17/64 (44 perfs.) by Jean Anouilh;
with Margaret Braidwood, Boris Tumarin, Ben Gazzara, Mildred
Dunnock, Nancy Wickwire and Rae Allen.

THE OWL AND THE PUSSYCAT 11/18/64 (222 perfs.) by Bill Manhoff;
with Diana Sands and Alan Alda.

1965

THE ROYAL HUNT OF THE SUN 10/26/65; by Peter Schaffer; with
Christopher Plummer, George Rose, Gregory Rozakis and
David Carradine.

1966

THOSE THAT PLAY THE CLOWNS 11/24/66 (4 perfs.) by Michael Stewart.

1967

OF LOVE REMEMBERED 2/18/67 (9 perfs.) by Arnold Sundgaard.

SONG OF THE GRASSHOPPER 9/28/67 (4 perfs.) by Alfonso Paso;
with Alfred Drake and Ben Piazza.

THE TRIAL OF LEE HARVEY OSWALD 11/5/67 (9 perfs.) by Amram
Ducovay and Leon Friedman; with Clifton James and Peter
Masterson.

SPOFFORD 12/14/67; by Herman Shumlin; with Melvyn Douglas,
Tresa Hughes, Pert Kelton and Barbara Britton.

1968

MAGGIE FLYNN 10/23/68 (81 perfs.) by Morton DaCosta; with
Jack Cassidy and Shirley Jones.

1969

A TEASPOON EVERY FOUR HOURS 6/14/69 (1 perf.) by Jackie Mason
and Mike Mortman; with Jackie Mason, Lee Wallace, Lee
Meredith, Marilyn Cooper, Bernie West and Vera Moore.

AMERICAN CONSERVATORY THEATER a revival of three plays in
repertory:

TINY ALICE 9/29/69 (10 perfs.) by Edward Albee.

A FLEA IN HER EAR 10/3/69 (11 perfs.) by Georges Feydeau;
translated by Barnett Shaw.

THE THREE SISTERS 10/9/69 (11 perfs.) by Anton Chekhov.

with Philip Kerr, DeAnn Mears, Paul Shenan and Angela Paton.

1969 (cont'd.)

HENRY V 11/10/69 (16 perfs.) by William Shakespeare; with Wyman Pendleton, Len Cariou, Philip Bruns, Mary Doyle, Roberta Maxwell and Patricia Elliott.

1970

OTHELLO 9/14/70 (16 perfs.) by William Shakespeare; with Moses Gunn, Lee Richardson, Roberta Maxwell and Jan Miner.

1971

PURLIE opened at the ANTA 3/15/71 (689 perfs.) by Ossie Davis, Philip Rose, Peter Udell; with Melba Moore, Cleavon Little, John Heffernan, Linda Hopkins and Helen Martin. (Originally opened at the Broadway Theater 3/15/70.)

1972

THE LOVE SUICIDE AT SHOEFIELD BARRACKS 2/9/72 (5 perfs.) by Romulus Linney; with Mercedes McCambridge, William Redfield, Robert Burr and Alan Nixon.

DIFFERENT TIMES 5/1/72 (24 perfs.) by Michael Brown; with Joe Masiell, Mary Jo Catlett and Patti Karr.

THE LAST OF MRS. LINCOLN 12/12/72 (63 perfs.) by James Prideaux; with Julie Harris, Maureen Anderman, David Rounds and Leora Dana.

1973

FULL CIRCLE 11/7/73 (18 perfs.) by Erich Maria Remarque; with Bibi Anderson, Leonard Nimoy, David Ackroyd and Josef Sommer.

1974

CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF 9/24/74 (160 perfs.) by Tennessee Williams; with Elizabeth Ashley, Keir Dullea, Fred Gwynne, Kate Reid and Joan Pape.

1975

A LETTER FOR QUEEN VICTORIA 3/22/75 (18 perfs.) by Robert Wilson.

SUMMER BRAVE 10/16/75 (16 perfs.) by William Inge; with Jill Eickenberry, Peter Weller, Nan Martin, Sheila K. Adams, Ernest Thompson and Alice Crummond.

1976

BUBBLING BROWN SUGAR 3/2/76 (766 perfs.) by Rosetta LeNoire.

1978

A HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN FILM 3/30/78 (21 perfs.) by Christopher Durang; with Maureen Anderman, Gary Bayer, Jeff Brooks and April Shawhan.

1979

WHOOPIE 2/14/79 (204 perfs.) by William Anthony McGuire; with Charles Repole, Peter Boydon and Catherine Cox.

NIGHT AND DAY 11/27/79 (95 perfs.) by Tom Stoppard; with Maggie Smith, Joseph Maher, Peter Evans, Paul Hecht and Clarence Williams III.

1980

HEARTACHES OF A PUSSYCAT 3/19/80 (5 perfs.) by Genevieve Serrau and James Lord.

THE SUICIDE 10/9/80 (60 perfs.) by Nilolai Erdman; with Derek Jacobi, Grayson Hall, John Heffernan and Mary Lou Rosato.

1981

COPPERFIELD 4/13/81 (13 perfs.) by Al Kasha and Joel Hirschhorn; with Brian Matthews, Mary Stout, Carmen Matthews, Evan Richards, Michael Connolly, George S. Irving and Barrie Ingham.

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ANTA Theater
243-259 West 52nd Street
Manhattan

Built: 1924-25
Architect: Crane & Franzheim

Photo: Shockley, LPC