THE LINCOLN CENTER REPERTORY THEATRE, 1958-1965

DISSERTATION
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By
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* * * * * * *

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CHAPTER I

THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE LINCOLN CENTER COMPLEX

On May 14, 1959, the President of the United States, Dwight D. Eisenhower, visited the City of New York for the express purpose of removing the first spadeful of dirt from an eleven-acre construction site on Broadway between West Sixty-Second and West Sixty-Sixth Streets. This ground breaking ceremony, amid three blocks of condemned buildings awaiting demolition, was the beginning of the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts "a unique development in America's cultural character . . . a centralized housing for the arts such as no other country shall be able to boast." This ceremony was not only the culmination, but also the beginning of years of dedicated and imaginative service by a group of men devoted to the betterment of America's cultural climate. Said Howard Taubman of the New York Times about the undertakings of these men:

One cannot underestimate the daring and imagination that have gone into the conception of the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. Nor can one fail to applaud the tenacity and devotion that are transforming a bold dream into the reality of stone and electronic marvels.²

Such an undertaking was considered "daring" because until this time the United States, a country young in the world of nations, was unendowed with an indigenous cultural heritage. It was the fervent hope and inspiration of these men that on this 376,762 square feet of land that heritage would have its beginnings. The leader of this group of men, John D. Rockefeller III, felt:

So much of America's prestige abroad is based on accomplishments in industry and sciences . . . but our cultural side is often less well understood than we might wish. . . . It is certainly our hope and expectation that the center will have an international cultural influence.3

In London Kenneth Tynan referred to the center as "an enduring symbol of America's cultural maturity"4 and in New York Robert Whitehead, a Broadway producer slated to play an important part in this venture, stated:

The emergence of a performing arts center at this time might be regarded as "the evolution of a maturing nation." . . . we have reached a point in our development where we must find some expression that is our own, that has a stature, strength and style specifically our own.5

It was felt that the Lincoln Center would bring to New York and the United States "what the coming of the United Nations brought in the international field."6 An official of La Scala Opera in Milan, when visited by Rockefeller, made it quite clear what the center


4The Observer (London), March 1, 1959.


6Ibid.
would mean to New York and thus to the entire country:

You don't realize what an exciting project you are talking about! Here at La Scala we think of there being two world capitals of music: Milan and New York. If you go through with your plans for Lincoln Center, there will be only one: New York.7

Physically, the center would mean "air conditioned halls with a combined capacity of more than 10,000, operating every day of the year, presenting more, (sic) and more various performances than is possible anywhere." These performances would be in all areas of the performing arts, for the founders "early came to the conclusion that the center should include the dance and the drama as well as opera and symphony."9

Five Developments That Made Lincoln Center Possible

In a statement filed early in the center's inception with the City Planning Commission of New York the committee on Lincoln Center said that they felt the center was "a unique product of our age. It could not have been built a hundred, fifty or even ten years ago. Only the coincidence of five developments makes it possible today."10

The first of these developments was "America's growing audience of opera, music, drama and the dance." As examples of this growth they cited the eighty opera companies, the nearly 1,000 symphony

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7Tbid.


orchestras, and 5,000 community theatres with audiences that pay "about $5,000,000 more in admissions" every year to attend ... than to watch baseball." The second development was "the emergence of brilliant American talent." Also they felt the new stature achieved by the American drama merited "the establishment of repertory theatre on a plane with opera and symphony." Thirdly, the committee recognized that today "the arts are important if not essential to the human mind and spirit" and that the performing arts "are becoming a community responsibility along with libraries, museums, hospitals and schools." The committee's fourth development involved the need of organizations such as the Metropolitan Opera and the New York Philharmonic for "facilities worthy of their leadership." They further advised that "New York had never provided proper homes for ballet and repertory drama." The fifth, and in New York City the most acute development, was "the availability of an ideal site in the heart of Manhattan," the Lincoln Square Title I redevelopment. These five issues demanded action in the establishment of a performing arts complex that would be "the most striking affirmation to date of our national belief in the value of the arts to the people."11

The Beginning

A considerable history can be traced in the development of Lincoln Center preceding the ground breaking ceremony of May 14, 1959.

11 Ibid.
The first indication of what would become the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts can be found in "The Ten-Year Plan for the Met" published in the Saturday Review of March 29, 1952. There were two points in this plan which heralded the development of the center complex:

II. Completion of fund-raising for the $1,200,000 needed to secure an option on the Columbus Circle site offered at favorable terms by the New York Port of Authority.

III. Large-scale planning to raise the very considerable sum to build a modern and useable Music Center on the site. 12

The "Ten-Year Plan" had been drawn up by an exploratory committee composed of members of the Metropolitan Opera Association. The committee had been organized to find a new home for the Metropolitan to replace the out-moded opera house. When the Lincoln Square redevelopment project (referred to in the above quote as "the Columbus Circle site") was proposed by the City of New York, the committee's concept enlarged to include a Music Center. 13 Another contributing factor to this enlargement was the need of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra to also find a new home. Its problem was even more imminent than the Metropolitan's. By 1959 the Philharmonic's lease on Carnegie Hall was due to expire and this hall torn down during that same year. 14


13 Ibid.

On October 25, 1955, the man who was to become Lincoln Center's first president, John D. Rockefeller III, was invited by the Metropolitan Opera and the Philharmonic to join the exploratory committee. This committee, at first interested only in establishing a Music Center, soon "expanded its concept to embrace all of the performing arts." To magnify its point of view the committee talked with men and women operating in the arts and in education both here and abroad. It "commissioned studies on such problems as attendance, transportation, traffic, logistics, commissary, and technical advances in the theatre." What the members were contemplating was certainly an overwhelming task and they were attempting to be as well-informed as possible on every facet of the project.

Mr. Rockefeller, accompanied by Anthony A. Bliss, president of the Metropolitan Opera Association and Wallace K. Harrison, an architect engaged by the committee, went abroad on a tour of investigation to gain further knowledge concerning the intricacies involved in establishing the performing arts center envisioned. In England they talked with representatives of the Old Vic, the British Arts Council, and the Sadler's Wells Ballet Company. They visited Milan's La Scala, the new opera houses in Europe, and several recently completed municipal repertory theatres in Germany. In France they consulted with

16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
the Comedie Francaise. While they were visiting a regional repertory theatre in Strasbourg, France, they visited with Michel St. Denis. "They listened to M. St. Denis expound the philosophy . . . of a balanced relationship between education and the performing arts".\(^{18}\) -- a philosophy that was to become one of the guiding principles of the Lincoln Center. An interesting point to note is the predominance of repertory theatres visited during this tour of Europe. This predominance strongly indicates the possible continental influence that was to play a part in the committee's concept of the role of a repertory theatre as a constituent of the Lincoln Center.

The three men returned to New York convinced of the practicality of the rounded center. On June 22, 1956, the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts was incorporated, and named John D. Rockefeller III as its first president. The following gentlemen were elected to the original board of directors and other offices:

**Board of Directors**

John D. Rockefeller III, president.
Devereux C. Joseph (chairman of the board, New York Life Insurance Company), vice president.
Charles M. Spofford (Davis, Polk, Wardwell, Sunderlund & Kiendle), vice president.
Robert E. Blum (vice president, Abraham & Straus), treasurer.
John W. Dyre Jr. (Kelley, Dyre, Newhall & Maginnes).
David M. Keiser (chairman of the board, Cuban-American Sugar Company).
Lincoln Kirstein (managing director, New York City Ballet).
The Rev. L. J. McGinley (president, Fordham University).
Irving S. Olds (White & Case).
George D. Stoddard (Dean, School of Education, New York University).
Frank L. Weil (Weil, Gotshall & Manges).

\(^{18}\)Ibid.
Other Officers of the Corporation
But Not Members of the Board of Directors
Reginald Allen, executive director for operations.
Edgar R. Young, secretary.

The Constituents of Lincoln Center

The purpose of the Lincoln Center Corporation was to acquire the land, raise the necessary funds, and construct the theatres and concert halls that would make up the complex. It was never their intention to staff these buildings with the artists and directors necessary for a cultural program. The corporation's plan was that the Lincoln Center would be "a community of constituent institutions." The Lincoln Center Corporation would be guided by a board of directors which would include representatives of the . . . institutions. A statement in the Annual Report of 1961 clearly defines the function of the member institutions:

Each constituent will run their own affairs with the greatest possible independence—maintaining their individual autonomy in artistic, administrative, and financial matters—they are bound together by a common purpose to create a great and unique cultural center, architecturally worthy of its international role, which will stimulate and encourage the finest in music, drama, dance, opera and the teaching in these fields.

21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
On November 29, 1956, the Philharmonic-Symphony Society of New York became the first organization to associate itself formally with Lincoln Center as a constituent. The Philharmonic-Symphony Society was joined several months later on February 1, 1957, by the Juilliard School of Music. The prospectus of the Corporation, influenced greatly by the interview with Michel St. Denis called for Juilliard to be the educational wing of the center. Juilliard would enlarge its curriculum of music and the dance "to include a sister art, the drama." The school planned to devote itself exclusively to the training of advanced students. The desire of the Juilliard staff was to find "a distinguished theatre personality to head the department of theatre crafts." Three weeks after Juilliard's announcement the Metropolitan Opera Association on February 21, 1957, became the third constituent institution of the Lincoln Center of the Performing Arts.

Acquiring the Land and Relocation of Tenants

The Land

As previously stated one of the five factors which made the Lincoln Center a possibility was the availability of a suitable site. The acquisition of this land and the preparation of it for construction, however, proved to be no simple matters.

24Ibid.
26Ibid.
Lincoln Square—the area in which the Lincoln Center site was located—had been designated a redevelopment project proposed under Title I of the National Housing Act of 1949. This act authorized cities to purchase blighted properties and resell them at a markdown in price to private developers. The federal government would then pay two-thirds of the difference between the purchase and resale prices; the city would cover the remaining third.28

However, just what makes a fair resale price became a disputed issue. The Federal Housing and Home Finance Agency felt that the land should yield more than the City of New York wanted to sell it for. As a result a squabble arose between the two agencies.29

Behind the price squabble there was a deeper disagreement. According to the Title I statute the city which resells the property must also assume the responsibilities of razing the buildings and relocating the tenants. Robert Moses, who was at the time New York's slum clearance chairman and in charge of all Title I projects, felt it unwise for the City to assume such responsibilities. His procedure was to "negotiate with potential developers, sell them the property, and leave the rest to them."30 This method of administering the projects was objectionable to the Federal Agency. Due to these alleged infractions the agency refused to support the Lincoln Square


29Ibid.

30Ibid.
project. The impasse was finally broken with a compromise. The City was forced to increase the price of the land, but the responsibilities of razing the buildings and relocating the tenants continued to rest on the shoulders of the private developers of the site.\textsuperscript{31}

On December 10, 1957, an agreement was signed between the Lincoln Center Corporation and the City of New York. This agreement made formal the center's obligation to bid for the site in Lincoln Square at a public auction and to develop this property. The re-use price Lincoln Center was to pay for the eleven acres was $3,993,667.\textsuperscript{32}

On February 28, 1958, Lincoln Center acquired the three-block site within the Lincoln Square project and on October 1, 1958, purchased an additional half-block for a total cost of $4,848,171.\textsuperscript{33}

Relocation of Tenants

Although now in possession of the land the Lincoln Center Corporation still faced an additional delay in construction. Before the necessary demolition could be carried out the nearly 1,250 families occupying the present dwellings had to be relocated into new housing. This task offered several problems.\textsuperscript{34}

The difficulty stemmed from the fact that the entire Lincoln Square area was composed of low cost, tenement housing. It was the

\textsuperscript{31}Ibid.


center's obligation to find suitable locations for the occupants at comparable rentals. Low-income housing previously constructed by the City was able to take care of a large portion of the 1,250 families. For the remaining tenants other agreeable lodgments had to be located. The latter problem caused the greatest delay.\textsuperscript{35}

The center presented the families with two choices—their relocation could be handled exclusively by representatives of the Lincoln Center at no cost, or they were permitted to relocate independently and be subsidized by the corporation for their efforts. Many of the families chose the latter, and the center paid out gratuities ranging from $150 to $550 depending upon the hardships involved with the move. The entire relocation was supervised by the Bureau of Real Estate of the City of New York.\textsuperscript{36} By December 7, 1959, the difficult process was completed.\textsuperscript{37}

Demolition in the meantime had begun on July 28, 1959.\textsuperscript{38} By this date there was a sufficient number of empty buildings to make further delay unnecessary. The Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts was one more step closer to reality.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.
Raising the Funds

As it was conceived the Lincoln Center was the largest civic project ever undertaken on a private philanthropic basis and "in any other country would have required government sponsorship." But this project was endorsed by the "leaders in all fields of endeavor --industry, labor, arts, science and education." On September 23, 1957, the Lincoln Center Corporation inaugurated its first fund-raising campaign. The chairmanship of the campaign was assumed by Clarence Francis, director and former chairman of the General Foods Corporation.

The goal set at this time was for $75,000,000. The preliminary plans called for raising "about $60,000,000 of the total from 500 donors including foundations, corporations and wealthy persons, ... the $15,000,000 remaining, ... from a nation-wide public on many economic levels." The corporation placed special value on the final $15,000,000 because their intention was to present the center as a national as well as local project.

40 Ibid.
42 Beaufort, loc. cit.
44 Ibid.
The proposed budget allocated the funds in the following manner:

The center's principal cost, $55,000,000 would be for land and construction including, of course, demolition and relocation . . . In addition . . . [they would] need another $20,000,000 for the educational program, for the new and experimental, and for contingencies.45

The board was "hoping that of this $20,000,000 . . . would be able to use as much as $10,000,000 for the encouragement of new and experimental work."46 Their plans called for the sums available for this purpose to be used over a period of ten years.47 This fund later played a very important part in the development of the Repertory Theatre.

The $75,000,000 figure, however, proved to be a premature one. The proposed budget had been based on construction cost estimates received in 1957. The delays that resulted from relocation and demolition moved the date of construction ahead. The more delays the more the costs rose. On May 24, 1960, the campaign goal was increased to approximately $150,000,000.48 The corporation now sought $102,000,000 in contributions from private sources49—almost doubling the original figure.


46Ibid.

47Ibid.


The response to the campaign, however, was remarkable. By 1963 "$78,500,000 had been given or pledged. An additional $40,000,000 . . . had been authorized from City, State, and Federal sources, of which approximately $37,000,000 had been committed by formal governmental action . . . . Four-fifths of . . . the financial goal had been achieved."50 By this same date $30,615,125 had been invested in the land; relocation and site clearance; and architectural, construction, and other costs.51

In December of 1964 the fund-raising campaign was referred to as a "solid success . . . with nearly $150,000,000 already raised."52 A large portion of the praise went to "the efforts and leadership of John D. Rockefeller III."53 Contributions to the $10,000,000 fund for the encouragement of new and experimental work had also met with considerable success with $6,000,000 subscribed by 1963. The fund was named The Lincoln Center Fund and was placed under the executive direction of Mark Schubart, former dean of the Juilliard School of Music.54

50 Ibid. (of the $78,500,000 raised 7,994 individuals gave $35,600,000; 19 foundations contributed $33,200,000; 340 corporations allocated $7,100,000; and 98 "others" gave $2,600,000. There is no final breakdown available of the total monies raised by the center.)

51 Ibid.

52 Kupferburg, loc. cit.

53 Ibid.

The Presidents of Lincoln Center

Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts has been under the presidency of three men—John D. Rockefeller III, General Maxwell D. Taylor, and William Schuman. Each man held the post during a different phase in the development of the center, and each made individual contributions to its growth. Rockefeller and Schuman were, however, the most influential due to the brevity of Taylor's stay in office.

During its early development the center flourished under Rockefeller. It was under his guidance that the center was actually to take form. The difficult processes of adopting a philosophy, acquiring the land, raising the funds, gathering constituents, and establishing the architectural plans were under his capable leadership.

On January 4, 1961, General Maxwell D. Taylor assumed the presidency and Mr. Rockefeller became chairman of the board. General Taylor was the first to preside over some of the early phases of the center's construction. But General Taylor's presidency was short-lived. On June 26 of the same year Taylor was called back to Washington as military advisor to President Kennedy. Since the length of his duty was uncertain, the board decided not to select a new president of the center. However, on September 12, due to Taylor's continued national service, the board elected to replace him.

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56 *Kupferberg, loc. cit.*

The man selected by the board of directors was William Schuman, president of the Juilliard School of Music. He was also made a director of the center at the time of his election. Dr. Schuman was a composer and administrator who had won the first Pulitzer Prize awarded for music.

During the period of Taylor's absence, Edgar Young had been appointed acting president by the board. He occupied this office until January 1, 1962, the date on which Schuman assumed the post. At this time Young became the executive vice president of the center.

Dr. Schuman was known to be a controversial figure in the area of music education, and this air of controversy would later manifest itself in the destiny of Lincoln Center. During his tenure as president of Juilliard he had "revolutionized the teaching of musical theory, composition and history by rolling them into one program." He also added such courses as sociology and race relations in an attempt to make "responsible adults of musicians." At the time of his appointment one of the trustees of Juilliard was reported to have said: "This will either be the greatest thing that ever happened to Juilliard or the most colossal error of our collective lives."

Schuman's interpretation of the role Lincoln Center was to play in the arts was expressed in his letter to the Juilliard faculty.

58 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
announcing his decision to accept the presidency of the center.

Schuman wrote:

I believe the center can provide leadership in bringing large numbers of Americans to a new interest in music, drama, and the dance and in giving them new opportunities to enjoy an experience with these arts.

I believe it can lead the way in the development of new twentieth-century solutions to the problems of supporting and encouraging the creators, performers and institutions of the performing arts.

I want to do everything I can to help achieve such objectives. In short, it is my conviction that Lincoln Center can be and must be a dynamic force.

Perhaps it was his desire to generate this force that contributed to later controversies that literally shook the foundation of the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. These controversies will be fully discussed later.

**Early Criticisms of the Center**

Although this narrative may indicate that the center's origin and development was met only with good wishes, this was not the case. Even before the bulldozers began rolling through its site in the West Sixties of New York City, there were those who began to air doubts and criticisms of the project.

Some began to wonder whether a concentration of the performing arts—"a kind of supermarket of culture"—was preferable to having them scattered through the midtown area of the City. These critics

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63 Benjamin, loc. cit.

64 Kupferberg, loc. cit.
felt the traffic and parking problems would be insoluble. The critics further felt that the close proximity of all of the institutions would have a detrimental effect on their programming.

The main criticism of the center was based upon the belief that the center "must say something that has never been said before, since never before has there been anything even approaching a Lincoln Center." The problem for some of these critics was that the center was "saying" very little. Jay Harrison of the New York Herald Tribune summed up the criticism most adequately:

> They tell us we are taking an artistic step hitherto undreamed of in our history and described in detail the concrete-and-steel design that will make this step an actuality.

> It is not enough. The feeling begins to grow in some circles--this one included--that the statements of policy emanating from Lincoln Center have begged certain pertinent questions, overlooked crucial issues and been, essentially, of a loose-lipped, general character that is neither informative nor edifying. . . . There is, for instance, the lack of precise artistic policy--or, put another way, the matter of being told what the buildings are like to the exclusion of what exactly is going to be put into them.

A look at the press releases from the center shows that there was truth in the criticism, but perhaps the critics were asking for too much too early. It would seem that an artistic policy for such a monumental complex would have to be arrived at through a slow, trial and error process. One also wonders if the critics were bearing in mind the lengthy artistic histories of the major constituents, the

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66 Ibid.
Metropolitan and the Philharmonic. Why should the policy differ so greatly because they would be in new quarters?

Whether the criticisms were well-founded or not was not the main issue. The important thing was that the United States would have a "housing for the arts such as no other country shall be able to boast"; a center of the performing arts that would stand as a monument to the ingenuity and power of private enterprise. Its success would be a test of that philosophy of life. As Kenneth Tynan said:

It is the cultural maturity of enlightened capitalism, rather than of America, that will be on trial at Lincoln Center.67

67 Tynan, loc. cit.
CHAPTER II

ORIGIN AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF THE
LINCOLN CENTER REPERTORY THEATRE

The Past

The independent theatre movement in Europe during the last century is associated with the emergence of our contemporary drama. The movement—personified in such organizations as the Theatre Libre in France, the Freie Bühne in Berlin, England’s Independent Theatre Society, and the Moscow Art Theatre—gave the playwright an opportunity to undermine the view of the commercial theatre. Such a revolution never occurred in America, but there were rumblings.

Shortly before the turn of the century the New York Theatre entered the phase it has been in since that time—big business. The theatre was dominated by businessmen like Charles Frohman, Fred Zimmerman, Marc Klaw, Abraham Erlanger, and the Shuberts, and as a result, it became a purely commercial theatre. The rule of the dollar became paramount. Most of America’s efforts in every direction became imbued with the philosophy of the slogan that later became popular: "A chicken in every pot." Plays were presented for their economic value. Through the financial support of the theatre syndicates plays were opened and kept open as long as they made money at the box office. The practice was analogous to the running of a
prize race horse until it dropped dead. Such was the fate of the popular plays. This procedure affected the dramas that were written and presented, and the acting and the training of actors. Actors who had learned their art under the repertory system were frustrated by the long-run practice. The long-run turned actors to personality performers because of the emergence of the star system, thereby bringing about a lack of ensemble acting. Plays of novelty and originality were lost because they required viewers with a special cultivation and susceptibility, and such an audience had not been developed and, therefore, was small in number—too small to sustain such plays through a long-run.

The rumblings in America toward an independent theatre began in the 1890's with the New York Theatre of Arts and Letters, but this venture quickly failed due to its predominant use of dramatic works by novelists. In 1900, William Archer, who had promoted repertory in England, spoke in New York about the necessity for repertory in America. He spurred a great deal of interest in this direction. In 1904 an association was formed of New York playwrights and their friends to promote a national art theatre, but the association failed to secure financial backing.

However, in 1909 the chances of success in this direction seemed improved. Wealthy patrons had contributed the necessary money for the organization of a repertory theatre. This plan had been started by Heinrich Conrad who, for a decade, had been the director of a German repertory theatre in New York City and then director of the Metropolitan Opera. While director of the Opera, Conrad induced the
Metropolitan's supporters to promote a new theatre project, a project with which Conrad, as it happened, would not be associated. The New Theatre, as it was called, opened in 1909 under the direction of Winthrop Ames who had made a reputation at the Castle Square Theatre in Boston. The theatre was quickly nicknamed the Millionaires' Theatre because it was supported by such people as John Jacob Astor, Cornelius Vanderbilt, William Vanderbilt, Ames and Lee Shubert. This project, however, was not true repertory for it was devoted to planned productions of a series of plays. It also operated under the star system with names like E. H. Sothern, Julia Marlowe, Grace George, Louis Calvert, Annie Russell, and Frank Gillmore playing the major roles. The theatre lasted for only two seasons. Throughout this time there was confusion in the organization. The New Theatre was a theatre run by a committee of wealthy dilettantes who took no definite stand on policy, but rather, due to their lack of knowledge and experience, compromised. The physical plant moreover was too large and acoustically defective.¹

The drive for creating an independent theatre continued through organizations like the Provincetown Players, the Neighborhood Playhouse, and the Washington Square Players. These groups were subscription theatres, not repertory, but by catering to a subscribed audience were free of the long-run economics of Broadway. The name of Eugene O'Neill grew out of this movement.

The second attempt at repertory in the twentieth century was made in 1926. Eva LeGallienne, a young actress who had reached stardom on Broadway in Lilac and The Swan, became disillusioned with the established theatre. She gathered a group of actors of similar disposition and opened the Civic Repertory Theatre in the Fourteenth Street Theatre. This project was a more successful attempt at repertory than that of its predecessor, the New Theatre, but in the spring of 1933 it too was forced to suspend operations. During its six seasons (The theatre was closed during the 1931-32 season.) it presented 1,581 performances of 34 plays, mostly classics. The organization had been a victim of the Depression when it proved impossible to raise the $150,000 needed to subsidize its seventh season.

The Depression, however, spawned the first federally subsidized producing organization in the theatrical history of America—the Federal Theatre. It was organized by the government as an activity of the Works Progress Administration under the leadership of Hallie Flanagan of Vassar College. The Federal Theatre's purpose was to provide employment not to raise the level of theatre art, but to many in the theatre it appeared to be a step in the realization of a national theatre. Under its government subsidy, the Federal Theatre produced a staggering quantity of work including pageants, operas, puppet shows, classics, and experimental works such as the Living


3Taubman, loc. cit., p. 165.
Newspaper productions. But the end of the Depression signaled the end of this dim dream of a national theatre. In 1939, Congress abolished the Federal Theatre.

At this point, with clouds of World War II gathering, the New York Theatre slipped into the presentation of musical comedies and farces, and it appeared the desire for an independent theatre had disappeared. But at the closing of the war, discontent with the professional theatre manifested itself in Margaret Webster, Cheryl Crawford, and Eva LeGallienne. These three joined forces and established a permanent acting company which was to present a repertory of plays not ordinarily seen on Broadway. They sold $300,000 in subscriptions; rented the International Theatre; hired a company which included Miss LeGallienne, Miss Webster, Walter Hampden, and Ernest Truex; and opened in November, 1946. This venture, the American Repertory Theatre, lasted only one season. In order to survive that length of time, the theatre had to resort to a long-run of Alice in Wonderland. The American Repertory Theatre's greatest problem was with the theatrical unions--particularly the stagehands and musicians--and their refusal to give the organization any special consideration. The theatre dissolved, having lost a quarter of a million dollars.

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2. Taubman, loc. cit., p. 263.
The Lincoln Center Project

This was the heritage that faced the Lincoln Center Corporation and its attempt to establish a repertory theatre as a constituent institution. It has previously been established that such a drama group was an important facet in the thinking of the founders of Lincoln Center, the repertory's dubious background in American theatre made its inclusion in the project only a possibility, not a certainty. It was evidently this lack of success in America that led Rockefeller to investigate the European companies (Above, p. 6), some of which had been successful for centuries. Perhaps he was attempting to discover the secrets of success for such a project in America.

The basic precepts of repertory were outlined by Dr. Tyrone Guthrie, founder of the Shakespeare Repertory Theatre in Stratford, Ontario, and one of the guiding lights of the theatre bearing his name in Minneapolis, in the New York Times:

A repertory company produces a number of plays . . . based on their national classics, . . . and frequently produces translations from other languages or new plays. If these productions are good enough or successful enough they are absorbed into the repertory and are periodically revived. . . . Some of the great and old-established companies have fifty or more plays that can be quickly revived. . . . Actors have played the parts, . . . and scenery and properties have been kept in storage. Revival is not assured for every production. There are always the flops.

Repertory offers to the public . . . certain advantages. . . . The performances of an actor tend to be fresher if he is appearing in several different parts in a given week, rather than repeating the same part. . . . There is an optimum number of times a play can be repeated—about fifty or sixty. Then the creative element . . . diminishes and a performance becomes more and more stale. . . . Repertory
prolongs the life of a performance. This is proved by experience. . . . Another main advantage is for the public. There is the interest of seeing the same group of actors in a variety of roles in quick succession. . . . Type-casting takes half the fun out of acting, not just for the actor but for the audience, too. 7

A repertory theatre can be regarded "as a library of plays—a fountainhead for the preservation of a nation's dramatic classics, a constant source of stimulation and reinvigoration for the nation's playwrights." 8 A repertory theatre can mean even more. Through the existence of a permanent acting company, "an acting style indigenous to a theatre's needs may be developed." 9

The present American commercial theatre, still following the long-run practice established at the turn of the century, fills a need—a need for a popular theatre. But it has shortcomings that could be dealt with by a repertory theatre. Our popular theatre is concerned with economics and showing a profit, therefore play selection, casting, and all other phases of production are strongly based on this concern. Such a situation precludes, to a great extent, the production of classics, the artistic, experimental plays, many new works, and revivals of past plays of this country and of all world literature because of their inability to show profit under a long-run policy. Acting in America in the twentieth century has depreciated and this is due basically to the commercial practices. Most of America's famous actors of this country are personality performers, a factor brought about by the star system and the need to sustain a

9 Ibid.
performance through the run of a successful production. What is needed is a repertory theatre, a need that has been felt by many throughout the period since the theatre was commercialized and turned into a profit-making industry. A repertory theatre would serve the same purpose as a library, producing the plays that could not sustain a long-run, therefore losing out on production, and keeping the deserving ones in view. The classics, the artistic, the experimentations, the new works of novelty and originality would have a place in the theatre for they would no longer have to sustain themselves. They would have a place in the flexible program of the repertory theatre which would insure that each production would receive the number of performances to which its artistic merit and popular demand entitled it. Actors would again have the opportunity of working with the ensemble, of creating several roles per season rather than just one. In short, the American actor would have a chance to grow until he was no longer overshadowed by the European actor. It was these factors that made the inclusion of a repertory theatre in the Lincoln Center a necessity if the center was to achieve its goal of being an "expression of the nation's cultural maturity."

Unlike the other constituents of the center, a repertory theatre would be a new beginning—no financial structure and support, no leaders, and no tradition. It would be necessary to start at the bottom.

For this reason early press releases from the Lincoln Center Corporation made no mention of the inclusion of a repertory theatre in the complex, and when such a theatre was mentioned it was only as a future possibility. However, Mr. Rockefeller and his associates were
trying. For several years they "interviewed theatre people and sorted their ideas on repertory theatre." They were endeavoring to determine in an intelligent way how feasible it was to form a repertory theatre as a part of the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, and just how it could be run. The committee called one after another theatre-informed persons and asked them virtually the same question."

The first substantial indication that a repertory theatre might be a step closer to realization was an article that appeared in the New York Herald Tribune on November 20, 1956. The article stated that a smaller hall in the architectural plans with a seating capacity of 1,000, once talked of as a concert hall, was now being designed as a repertory theatre.

The Allen Gift

On May 4, 1958, Mrs. Vivian Beaumont Allen contributed $3,000,000, the first gift by an individual, to the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. The money had been earmarked by the donor for the formation of the repertory project, and thus made possible the construction of the physical plant.

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11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.


It...was now a credible assumption that like the Metropolitan and the Philharmonic, the repertory theatre...would be in the hands of civic and culturally minded citizens of substance who...would see to it that the theatre...had an uninterrupted life.15

In a formal announcement Mr. Rockefeller "hailed her Mrs. Allen's gift as assurance that the center would go ahead with its plans for a permanent drama company."16

Mrs. Allen, who inherited a fortune from a nation-wide chain of department stores, had been a patron of opera and theatre in New York for many years and vice president of the Greater New York Chapter of ANTA. Said Mrs. Allen: "It has long been my cherished hope that our country might one day have a national theatre comparable in distinction and achievement to the Comedie Francaise.17

An Advisory Council on Drama and a Theatre Consultant

Now that some financial support had been obtained, the board of directors of the center moved swiftly. On May 15, 1958, plans for the establishment of the repertory theatre were advanced still further with the naming of a consultant and an Advisory Council on Drama.18 The task of the council was to make general policy, to fix the design of the theatre, and to form a non-profit organization to assure "for drama at Lincoln Center the highest in artistic standards, continuity

15Funke, loc. cit.
16Freeman, loc. cit.
17Ibid.
of operation and financial stability."\textsuperscript{19} In order to found such an organization it would be necessary for the council to "set up a group--sort of a board of trustees--that . . . would devise plans for gaining necessary capitalization."\textsuperscript{20} Obviously Mrs. Allen's gift would not be sufficient to build the theatre plant and finance the entire organization.

A number of theatre figures were named as members of the Advisory Council: Cheryl Crawford, theatre producer; Robert W. Dowling of the American National Theatre and Academy and president of the City Investing Company; Elia Kazan, producer and director; Walter Kerr, drama critic of The New York Herald Tribune; Eva Le Gallienne, actress; Sanford Meisner of the Neighborhood Playhouse School of the Theatre; Jo Mielziner, designer and producer; Roger Stevens of the Producers Theatre and the Playwrights Company; George D. Stoddard, Dean of the New York University School of Education; William Schuman, president of the Juilliard School of Music; and Vivian Beaumont Allen. Named as ex officio members of the council were Reginald Allen, executive director of operations for Lincoln Center, and Edgar B. Young, the center's secretary.\textsuperscript{21}

At the time the Advisory Council was appointed, Robert Whitehead, the forty-two year old vice president in charge of production for the

\textsuperscript{19}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{20}Funke, loc. cit., May 18, 1958.

\textsuperscript{21}Funke, loc. cit., May 16, 1958.
Producers' Theatre, was "retained as a consultant to the center's board of directors." As a consultant, Mr. Whitehead provided liaison between the Advisory Council and the Board of Lincoln Center.

On October 21, 1959, Whitehead announced that "he had concluded arrangements with Elia Kazan to join him as his associate in the development and direction of the Repertory Theatre." Both men had been in the group of theatre people interviewed earlier by the board of directors concerning their views on repertory. Evidently their philosophies on the subject had been more impressive to the board than those of the other interviewees.

A New Constituent Is Added to Lincoln Center

On February 15, 1960, the Advisory Council for drama came to an end with the naming of a constituent for repertory drama by the Lincoln Center. The new organization was incorporated on that day "as a non-profit corporation to be known as Repertory Theatre Association, Inc." (A name that was to be changed in November, 1961, to the Lincoln Repertory Company). The organization was formed under the leadership of George

\[\text{Ibid.}\]
\[\text{Ibid.}\]
\[\text{Playbill, loc. cit.}\]
\[\text{Ibid.}\]
\[\text{Jesse Gross, "Play (Not Profit) Is the Thing for Lincoln Center's Theatre," Variety, November 15, 1961.}\]
D. Woods, chairman of the First Boston Corporation, who would serve as the first president of the constituent. At the same time, Woods was elected to the Lincoln Center board as the Association's representative. The other incorporators and initial directors of the Association were: Mrs. V. Beaumont Allen, whose contribution to Lincoln Center assured construction of the Repertory Drama Theatre there; Thomas J. Watson, Jr., president of the International Business Machines Corporation; Howard Cullman, U. S. Commissioner for the Brussels' World's Fair and honorary chairman of The Port of New York Authority; Dr. George Stoddard, chancellor and executive vice-president of New York University; and Mr. Charles Spofford, representing the Lincoln Center. This group was also to serve as the nucleus of a board of directors that was to be formed.

Lincoln Center announced that the Association, as a constituent, would "have artistic autonomy and independent financial stability." It would "rent its building and share in the management of the entire center." In becoming a constituent "the association accept[ed] a

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30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
responsibility for its own artistic integrity\textsuperscript{35} and self-sufficiency
and for the success of the Center as a whole.\textsuperscript{36}

Reactions to the inclusion of the Repertory Theatre Association
as a member of Lincoln Center were optimistic. Charles M. Spofford,
vice president of the center, said:

This addition to our city's cultural life indicates
that Lincoln Center represents far more than a physical re-
arrangement and a substitution of new performance halls for
old. Here is a new artistic organization, one we hope will
serve the people of our city and nation for generations to
come . . . We believe the Association . . . has an institu-
tional framework that will assure continuity and financial
stability, and its leaders have a commitment to public
service and a dedication to artistic advancement.\textsuperscript{37}

An editorial in the \textit{New York Times} said:

Formation of the Repertory Theatre Association as a
constituent organization of the Lincoln Center for the
Performing Arts marks another positive step toward the
realization of an American dream—a permanent professional
repertory theatre in New York City. . . . The Repertory
Theatre Association is bound to have its problems and hurdles.
But with the same patience and dedication as has been mani-
ifested by the other constituents in Lincoln Center, success
seems bound to be its reward.\textsuperscript{38}

At the same time the formation of the Repertory Theatre
Association was announced, it was also made known that Robert Whitehead

\textsuperscript{35} It is important to emphasize this statement by
the center in light of future actions that would be taken by a director
of the Lincoln Center, violations of this statement, that would cause
irreparable damage.

\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{38} Editorial, "Repertory Theatre," \textit{New York Times}, February 17,
1960.
and Elia Kazan, the consultants on drama to the center, had been named co-directors of the organization. The formation of the artistic policy and the productions of the theatre would be under their leadership. They would be in continual touch with the board of directors of the theatre on budget matters, but the artistic and creative control over the theatre would rest solely with them.

Mr. Whitehead would also represent the new company on the Lincoln Center Council which was composed of the chief professional officers of the center and of each constituent. At this time the Council's other members were: Reginald Allen, executive director for operation of the Center; Rudolf Bing, general manager of the Metropolitan Opera Company; George E. Judd, Jr., managing director of the New York Philharmonic; and William Schuman, president of the Juilliard School of Music.

The formation and association with the center of the Repertory Theatre moved Lincoln Center into a new phase of its development. The theatre would be "the Center's most searching test and most challenging opportunity." Its other artistic constituents, the Metropolitan Opera and the Philharmonic Orchestra, were "going concerns with


40 Ibid.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid.

established procedures and honored traditions, \(^44\) and "whether for good or ill, they were not likely to change their ways much. But the theatre was a new beginning." \(^45\)

In the early architectural plans of the center complex the building the Repertory Theatre would occupy was represented as a separate structure adjoining the Juilliard School of Music. \(^46\) But this plan of the center underwent considerable revisions and the repertory theatre building in the new scheme was "conceived as part of a single structure that would house . . . library and museum" as well. The financing of the construction of the library-museum was to come from the City of New York and the construction costs of the theatre portion were to be met by the Lincoln Center Corporation. \(^47\) In November, 1961, Rockefeller announced that the playhouse would be named the Vivian Beaumont Theatre in honor of Mrs. Vivian Beaumont Allen, who had contributed $3,000,000 toward its construction (Above, p. 29). The cost of the theatre was estimated at $8,200,000 . . . the other components of the library-museum . . . an extra $6,800,000. \(^48\)

\(^{44}\) Ibid.

\(^{45}\) Ibid.


Financing the Theatre's Beginning

One of the main factors against the establishment of a repertory theatre has always been financial. Repertory requires both an enormous aggregate investment and a far longer-term approach to this investment. This is exactly what the economics of Broadway do not permit. Specifically, the costs result from the expenses of scene-changing which are higher than if only one play were in the bill; some plays do not use the services of all actors, or necessitate the use of a highly paid actor in a part which, "had the play been cast in normal commercial circumstances, could have been adequately played by someone much cheaper"; repertory is more difficult and more costly to advertise and "can never be as profitable or as easy to manage . . . as to run a success till it drops dead"; and "the profits will not be spectacular." On the other hand, the losses should not be nearly so spectacular as the so-called "commercial" theatre if the company is managed properly. A successful production can act as insurance for the rest of the plays of a season.50

One important condition that existed with this project was that the non-profit and tax exempt status of Lincoln Center permitted "the repertory organization to operate the theatre at a minimum rental, a not inconsiderable factor in budgetary planning." Another condition was the wage scale considerations afforded the company by the theatrical  

49Guthrie, loc. cit.

50Ibid.

unions. The lack of such considerations had already caused the demise of one repertory theatre in New York City. The actors' performance scale remained the same as Broadway, but rehearsal and performance rules were negotiated to allow for the additional rehearsal periods necessary in repertory.

Although funds had been allocated for the construction of the theatre plant, financial support had to be found for the development of the organization itself and the program it would present in that theatre. Part of this support was offered by Lincoln Center itself through the Lincoln Center Fund (Above, p. 15). The center authorized funds for the "initial administrative expenses and later substantially expanded to finance the initial training of prospective members of the performing company as well as the Company's organizational and rehearsal expenses in preparation for its first season." This contribution by the center would guarantee the beginning of the project, but an organization "devoted to cultural repertory at moderate admission prices would have to be subsidized in part." This was a financial necessity realized early in the development of the Repertory Theatre.

In order to guarantee additional financial support of the repertory program, it was decided from the beginning that the theatre would

53 Ibid.
54 Freeman, loc. cit.
launch a subscription campaign each season. This would guarantee a partial house, at least, for most of the season, depending on the success or failure of the campaign.  

The Potential

To Eva LeGallienne the theatre of the twentieth century had failed as an industry. The attempts to industrialize it by placing it in the hands of corporations and syndicates of businessmen, totally ignorant of the art of the theatre, was ending in failure. Miss LeGallienne felt that the theatre needed "quality not quantity, integrity not compromise, and faith in the public. . . . The theatre should be an instrument for giving not a machinery for getting." For the first time in this century a project was underway with the potential to provide these elements. Miss LeGallienne's Civic Repertory Theatre was progressing toward this goal, but was forced to give up because of the lack of financial backing. Everything, at this point, indicated that this would not be a serious problem for the Lincoln Center Repertory Theatre. This project had the support of foundations, corporations, governments, and individuals to help it meet its financial obligations. The Repertory Theatre would have a new playhouse seating between 1,000 and 1,200 spectators. This building in turn would be part of a $150,000,000 complex embracing the

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Metropolitan Opera House and the New York Philharmonic Hall. The repertory project would also be imbued with an educational arm, the Juilliard School of Music and its upgraded drama department. Materially no other project, even the Millionaires Theatre of 1909, had been endowed with so much. However, these material advantages would be of little consequence without the proper guidance and, above all, the foresight to put these advantages to their proper use. There was also the potential to fail.

A strong parallel existed between the New Theatre of 1909 and the proposed Lincoln Center Repertory Theatre. The 1909 project had been strangled by the compromises of its bewildered though wealthy benefactors. The same end could come to the Repertory Theatre through the center's board of directors and the board of the repertory company, both consisting of wealthy bankers and businessmen with little experience in the arts. The same types that had industrialized the theatre and failed were in a position to repeat the process at Lincoln Center. But if the new directors, Kazan and Whitehead, were given by these men the freedom to develop the company, and if the co-directors possessed the necessary talents and foresight, the Repertory Theatre could be a power for growth not constriction. It could be a seminal force in the development of talent and ideas. It could be a help, not a menace, to Broadway. It could be an inspiration to the country.

In fact, it should be no less. Its work should be judged by the measure of its dedication to the drama as an expression of man's need to speculate fearlessly, laugh warmly and feel deeply.57

The state of the American theatre had been deplored by its critics for years. The shortage of good playwrights, of competent actors, and the concentration on musical comedies and "escape" theatre had made the theatre world ripe for this attempt at Lincoln Center. If it could live up to its expectations and make use of its advantages, it might be, as Kenneth Tynan said, "the nearest thing to a National Theatre in America,"^{58} or it could be the worst theatrical failure in history.

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^{58} Kenneth Tynan, *The Observer* (London), March 1, 1959.
CHAPTER III

THE DIRECTORS

A project of the magnitude of the Lincoln Center Repertory Theatre, if it were to be successful, would require, as its leaders, men of certain basic qualities. The logistics of such an organization would certainly demand an intelligent administrator, but in addition the theatre would need to find "an artistic director with fire, zeal and dedication enough to create a tradition of repertory drama in a country where nothing of this sort has ever existed."¹ Such requirements were even more acute in America because opportunities here in other areas of the entertainment field carried such enormous financial rewards and national approval, that regardless of the artistic objectives of the project, it would be extremely difficult to keep the most gifted people together as a company. "If the leadership were strong and united this problem could be solved."² Robert Whitehead, who had been appointed the theatre consultant to the Lincoln Center board, realized the qualities that were necessary when he said, "This sort of theatre possessing the necessary

¹Kenneth Tynan, The Observer (London), March 1, 1959.
continuity and purpose can only emerge through an almost fanatical dedication on the parts of its leaders."

The major problem for Lincoln Center was where to find such men. In London Kenneth Tynan suggested: "... a Frenchman, a German, a Swiss or a Scandinavian: and why not? Rudolf Bing came from Europe to run the Metropolitan, and until Leonard Bernstein was appointed ... all the conductors of the New York Philharmonic were foreign imports." The answer to Mr. Tynan's question was simple. This was a project to develop a cultural center in America for Americans. Naturally, native sons would be sought by the center to take command of an American repertory theatre.

There were several choices open to the center. Many professionals in the theatre felt Lee Strasberg, director and teacher of the Actors' Studio, was the man most qualified to serve as artistic director of the repertory organization. Others, including Kenneth Tynan, felt the position should be offered to Harold Clurman, one of the founders of the Group Theatre. Tynan said of Clurman: "It is hard to think of a better man for the job than this stubby, volcanic sage, whose knowledge of repertory drama is as wide as his belief in it is deep." The center, however, selected Elia Kazan, certainly America's foremost director of both theatre and film. Clurman was later appointed by the co-directors of the Repertory Theatre to the post of artistic consultant, and he

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3Ibid.
4Tynan, loc. cit.
5Ibid.
contribute[d] greatly to the theatre's early development. A capable administrator could certainly be found among several of Broadway's foremost producers--Roger Stevens, Robert Whitehead, Kermit Bloomgarden are three examples. The Corporation's choice to serve as co-director with Kazan was Robert Whitehead.

Robert Whitehead

"As a Broadway producer, Whitehead was probably the most discriminating member of the entrepreneurs' circle."6 He had "spent something like twenty-four years in the theatre,"7 and was at that time serving as a member of the Producers Theatre. As a producer he had a reputation for presenting the more intellectual, less commercial offerings in the established theatre. Some of Whitehead's outstanding productions were Medea, The Cold Wind and the Warm, Separate Tables, The Waltz of the Toreadors, The Member of the Wedding, Orpheus Descending, Bus Stop, The Time of the Cuckoo, A Touch of the Poet, and A Man for All Seasons. 8 He had definitely amassed an impressive record.

For some time Mr. Whitehead had been trying to establish a repertory theatre with a permanent acting company. When he joined the Producers Theatre in 1953, he immediately announced that such


8Ibid.
a project should be one of the goals of the new enterprise, but this
never worked out.9 In the early 1950's, Whitehead also tried to
start a repertory company under the suspicious of ANTA, but the
directors of the organization vetoed the idea on the grounds that
it would be too costly.10

Whitehead's Philosophies on Repertory

Whitehead's past actions toward the organization of a resident
repertory company underline the concern he felt toward the established
American theatre. In an article published in the Playbill in 1960,
Whitehead outlined this concern and offered his reasons why the com-
mercial theatre was in need of a repertory company:

At this stage in our development there is a strong
need for the things that only a repertory theatre can ful-
fill. . . . It [The American theatre] must now be fused
with a much fuller technique and consequently with a bolder
style and a more deeply expressive content. A repertory
theatre is, I think, the only way to achieve this.

. . . Trying to define this need made me want to
go to Europe. . . . A good deal of time was spent seeing
theatre last year [1959] in Germany and the Soviet Union.
. . . It was then, looking at their repertory groups and
state theatres, that I discovered the kind of growth we
had not yet acquired, but that we could acquire and were
ready to acquire. . . . The style in which they [the
German and Russian companies] played, the depth and magni-
itude of the reality they expressed through that style could
only have been achieved through the kind of continuity one
could get at a Lincoln Center. . . . The achievements of
the Berliner Ensemble came out of living and working to-
gether, out of a common goal, a common understanding and
an enormous technique through which to express the under-
standing.

9Don Ross, "Whitehead on Lincoln Square," New York Herald
Tribune, August 30, 1959.
10Ibid.
It was also apparent that this was the result of a unifying force; in the case of the Berliner Ensemble it had been Brecht himself. Such a focus America has yet to find. Related to this individual’s welding power was the actual hunger of the actors who wanted to use themselves on the uppermost level in the theatre, to be a part of a group that could make as near perfect theatre as possible. . . . They [The actors] were looking, as much as the director, for a place to work, for interesting things to do year after year, and to avoid the vagabondage even stars experience in our theatre.  

The new work being done by the Soviet theatre, Whitehead observed, was affected by the state policy of “Soviet realism” or their concerted effort to shut out anything that might contribute to the concept of an unhealthy state. The classics in Russia were also affected by this state policy. They were ably done and extremely professional, yet curiously hollow. These observations led Whitehead to the development of another philosophy:

What can be provoked by talented new works should be infused into the old, lending it fresh life; yet without the vitality of new creation, the old work has no life of its own. . . . In terms of Lincoln Center this brought the realization of how vital new works are. Our theatre, as yet, has no continuous or substantial tradition. The responsibility of a theatre such as proposed for Lincoln Center is to initiate that tradition, work toward it, try to build a style and a classicism that someday will be characteristically American, ours and only ours.  

In an attempt to try to achieve in our theatre what he admired in Europe, Whitehead envisioned an organizational set-up in which there would be a managing director who would have the final decision in all production matters. Working closely with him would be two production directors. The training and development of the acting

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^12^ Ibid.
company and the direction of the major productions would fall under their jurisdiction. However, he felt that outside directors would be brought in for some plays. One of the production directors would be in charge of a "professional studio group—an academy training ground—the group to be carefully selected from the most talented young professional." This training would be provided free. It was Whitehead's contention that such a staff would provide the impetus for achieving the fuller techniques and style he envisioned for the American theatre.

Philosophies on Lincoln Center
Reperatory Theatre

It is only natural that what Whitehead envisioned for repertory in general in America would be personified in his concepts concerning the Lincoln Center project. This theatre's "most important responsibility would be to develop an American theatre tradition and heritage," and since "the life of the theatre is in its new work," this repertory company would be vitally concerned with presenting new plays as well as American and foreign classics. If these philosophies could be carried out with a modicum of success, it would be a step toward curing the ills, as Whitehead saw them, of our present professional theatre.

An important ingredient in his formula was the public. If these concepts mentioned above could be expressed through the work that would

13Funke, loc. cit.
14Funke, loc. cit.
15Ross, loc. cit.
be produced by the theatre, "a common and lasting relationship with its audience could be built." To build this relationship Whitehead did not conceive the repertory as "a private endeavor inspired in solitude, ... but [as a project] engaging the public from the moment of this conception." Whitehead's conviction was that past American efforts in repertory had proved failures because "often they had not succeeded in exciting the public's enthusiasm." He had no intention of duplicating this mistake, and as a result Whitehead was the most vociferous of those engaged in establishing the constituents of Lincoln Center.

Nowhere . . . has either of the latter two [the Metropolitan and the Philharmonic] been as verbal say, as Robert Whitehead . . . in listing his beliefs as to the functions of the drama wing of the Center. We were told what . . . he felt should be performed, how and to what purpose. He even went so far as to name names, to list objectives and goals.

By being so outspoken on the project Whitehead felt that he was not only arousing the enthusiasm of his future audience but also making it aware of the goals and objectives of the Repertory Theatre.

Whitehead contended that the theatre needed an audience enlightened about the project's purpose in order for the company to be effective.

The Lincoln Center Repertory Theatre must be a theatre of relevance, a theatre that would deal directly with contemporary issues, whether it presented Shakespeare or Miller. In Whitehead's

16Ibid.


18Ibid., p. 49.

words: "The public will see plays that relate directly to the lives of the people who are the audience." Whitehead was seeking a total involvement of his audience, mind and soul.

In addition, Whitehead did not picture the Repertory Theatre as an isolated group existing in its own "ivory tower." He felt it would "be a part of the Broadway theatre . . . a part of the chaos and organized catastrophe of the Broadway theatre." Whitehead's concept of the organizational scheme also remained intact. Mr. Kazan would function as the Artistic Director whose main responsibility would be to establish a unity of style within the company. For this reason Whitehead felt Kazan should direct the entire first season of the company. The acting company envisioned by Whitehead would have twenty top actors. Stars would be signed to season contracts. In addition there would be apprentice actors selected from the free training program. This company would be paid considerably less than Broadway rates, but would have an advantage in the long-term guarantee of work. "An actor earning a thousand dollars a week on Broadway might be paid five or six hundred dollars a week at Lincoln Center." Including staff, actors, and technical

\[\text{References:}\]


22Ross, loc. cit.


crews Whitehead estimated a working group of approximately eighty persons.\textsuperscript{25}

Although Whitehead's philosophy on play selection will be discussed thoroughly later, it should be mentioned here that he felt the main emphasis by the company should be on American plays. At the same time "some of the ancient and contemporary classics--Euripides, Shakespeare, Ibsen, Shaw, Strindberg and so on--"\textsuperscript{26} would be presented.

Whitehead's first inclination was to schedule a season of five plays. (For the first season this would later be reduced to four, and then finally to three.) But instead of the traditional European pattern of repertory scheduling, Whitehead "favored the production of four or five plays during a season, each play to run a month or so with the more successful returning at the end of the season."\textsuperscript{27} If their popularity continued they would be carried over into the next season and become a part of that season's repertory.\textsuperscript{28}

Mr. Whitehead recognized the fact that the theatre could not subsist on its box office receipts. Additional funds would have to be forthcoming.

It seems to be pretty well agreed that Beethoven and Verdi have to be subsidized. \ldots But the theatre will have no such tradition behind it. \ldots One of our jobs will be to break tradition and create new traditions as we go along.\textsuperscript{29}

\textsuperscript{25}Ross, \textit{loc. cit.}


\textsuperscript{27}Ross, \textit{loc. cit.}

\textsuperscript{28}Funke, \textit{loc. cit.}, May 16, 1958.

\textsuperscript{29}Gaver, \textit{loc. cit.}
Whitehead believed that a style and technique of production, native to this company, must also be incorporated into the interior design of the theatre plant. Due to the importance placed on the audience in his repertory philosophy, it was deemed necessary that the physical plant be designed so as to draw the audience in as a part of the production. As a result, the ancient Roman theatre designs played an important part in Whitehead's thinking: "When I sit in a theatre like this ancient one [amphitheatre in Vaucluse, France] there is something exciting in the way the action spills out into the audience and the audience embraces it."30 As it will be seen later, this concept would effect the actual designs of the physical plant for the Repertory Theatre.

Whitehead had some future plans for the theatre which were never placed in operation. His hope had been that once the theatre was established to send out touring companies of their productions at the Beaumont Theatre around the United States.31 Such a policy would have made the company even more of a national project. For an international flavor, he favored turning over the theatre during a period of the summer months to visiting foreign repertory companies.32

Robert Whitehead was and is a man of strong convictions and opinions. The Repertory Theatre's history shows he attempted in every way to put his philosophies to the test while the company was under his leadership.

30Ross, loc. cit.
31Ibid.
32Gaver, loc. cit.
Elia Kazan

For Robert Whitehead's co-director the Lincoln Center Corporation had selected America's most distinguished and illustrious director, Elia Kazan. He had been born in Turkey of Greek parents on September 7, 1909. When he was four years old he was brought to the United States by his parents. He was graduated from Williams College where he earned the nickname "Gadget," later shortened to "Gadge."33

In 1932 he joined the Group Theatre as an assistant stage manager. Originally warned that he had no acting ability, "he eventually emerged as a success in Clifford Odets' Golden Boy, in the part of Eddie Fuselli, gambler and gunman." He continued to act successfully for several years, gaining recognition in the original production of Lillian with Burgess Meredith.34 However, it had always been his underlying desire to direct. In an interview after his success in Golden Boy, he confessed that his interest in acting stemmed from his basic desire to be a director. Toward the end of the Group Theatre's existence in 1938 he was given his first opportunity with Casey Jones. Several years later in 1942 he directed his first important play, Thornton Wilder's The Skin of Our Teeth. The play won the Pulitzer Prize and established its director's reputation. In addition to helping four authors win Pulitzer Prizes, he has won two Academy Awards for Hollywood films he directed.35

34Ibid.
35Ibid.
Some of the most famous plays directed by Kazan were: The Skin of Our Teeth, One Touch of Venus, Jacobowsky and the Colonel, All My Sons, A Streetcar Named Desire, Death of a Salesman, Camino Real, Tea and Sympathy, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, The Dark at the Top of the Stairs, J.B., and Sweet Bird of Youth. Some of his film credits are impressive: A Tree Grows in Brooklyn, Gentleman’s Agreement, A Streetcar Named Desire, On The Waterfront, East of Eden, Viva Zapata, Baby Doll, and America, America.

Philosophies on Lincoln Center

Repertory Theatre

Upon his appointment as co-director of the Lincoln Center project Kazan expressed his enthusiasm for repertory through his desire to devote the remainder of his career to the field. "I'm never going to work on Broadway again... It is this or something like it. What more do I want?" 36

He, like Whitehead, was intent on creating something new in the American theatre with the Lincoln Center company.

What we feel is important is the creation of a theatre not a building. A theatre of actors, directors, writers, scene designers who will learn to work together with a common taste and sense and feeling. We hope to create in a sense a new breed of actors fitted for new tasks. 37

36Tbid.

37Playbill, March 10, 1959.

38Gaver, loc. cit.
Kazan felt that the present commercial theatre had become unnecessary to people. "It's an expense account deduction or a benefit to help charity." In his estimation the theatre had become stagnant because of a "dearth of ideas about life, about morality..." and a dearth of theatricality, of emotionalism." To correct these factors he envisioned a theatre that was "interesting, exciting, vital to us in contemporary terms." He intended a theatre that was "to be more theatrical—not less—than the commercial theatre."

As Artistic Director, Kazan hoped the company would "aim for the highest artistic standards." In order to accomplish this from the very beginning he contemplated "at least six months of rehearsal and preparation before it would begin operation." Kazan pictured a theatre "of color and spectacle, of mobility in the use of stage dynamics, of a utilization of the arts of the painter, the singer, the choreographer, the pantomimist."

... he spoke of doing a sweeping production of The Days of Musa Dagh, Marco Millions, Dreiser's Sister Carrie in which we recreate the social background of

41Ibid.
42Ibid.
43Ibid.
45Ibid.
that era, we show how the characters were rooted in their environment, an environment out of which came the America of today.\textsuperscript{46}

To realize these dreams it would be necessary to have actors committed to the company for at least two years. In that way they would "get to know each other's problems, each other's weaknesses and strengths."\textsuperscript{47} The entire company would be dedicated to a common purpose and would be "under none of the pressures that hound the outside theatre."\textsuperscript{48}

The established production procedures would undergo startling changes under Kazan's ideas. The rehearsal process Kazan planned would be impossible in present commercial theatre practices. "We won't be hemmed in by short rehearsal periods . . . We'll rehearse as long as a play needs it--three months, six months, yes, even eight months."\textsuperscript{49} In this way they could experiment, be different, explore with the actors all the implications of a difficult play.\textsuperscript{50} Then when the play had been brought to the run-through stage the playwright, if there was one involved with the production, would be given two weeks, during which there would be no rehearsals, to think about the play and make changes which were needed. Then rehearsals would be picked up at the final stages incorporating the alterations

\textsuperscript{46}Zolotow, loc. cit.
\textsuperscript{47}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{49}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{50}Zolotow, loc. cit.
and be brought to opening night.\textsuperscript{51} Such plans were definitely revolutionary to modern practices in the American professional theatre.

Kazan seemed more concerned with the production of plays than with their selection. He did feel, however, that the theatre should refrain from producing Shakespeare until the actors had been sufficiently trained in the classic style.\textsuperscript{52}

Like Whitehead, Kazan did not feel the Repertory Theatre was a threat to Broadway. The contemplated box office scale, he felt, would be almost as high as the commercial theatre in New York. Under his artistic guidance the productions would not duplicate the "down-town" attractions. He felt the theatre could prove to be an energizing force for Broadway because it might "develop new writers, new acting talents, and new techniques of rehearsal and staging that could be integrated into the established theatre."\textsuperscript{53} However, it is extremely doubtful that his contemplated rehearsal procedure could ever become a part of the Broadway theatre because of the prohibitive cost.

Kazan, too, nurtured plans for a touring company as a part of the Lincoln Center Repertory Theatre. He envisioned "a time when the repertory company would be large enough . . . for one unit in

\textsuperscript{51}\textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{52}\textit{Gaver, loc. cit.}
\textsuperscript{53}\textit{Morning Telegraph} (N.Y.), October 19, 1964.
New York, . . . another on the road . . . [and a] company on a European tour."

Kazan was never naive enough to believe that such an undertaking could ever be self-supporting. "Do I think this theatre can succeed? No, not in the way success is recognized in the trade. It won't make money." "A repertory theatre never pays its way anywhere. It should be like a public library or park, for everyone to enjoy." 56

Perhaps the best statement of the philosophies of both Kazan and Whitehead on the Lincoln Center Repertory Theatre can be found in the final paragraphs of Mr. Kazan's speech to the company at its first meeting:

We have come together to make a theatre. We are organizing a group of human beings to try to make art, not to do business. We have not come together to sell entertainment. This new theatre will, first of all, respect its audience. It hopes to reveal to them their lives. At times it will arouse them to an awareness of what is happening around us, or what has happened. At other times, as a friend might, it will speak in dissonance in tones of argument. It will not always be pertinent, or so we hope. That is our goal. For we believe that the theatre is not an escape from life, but a part of the act of living, even a necessary part of it.

Since we are Americans this will be an American theatre. It will be centered in New York City, but it will not be aimed


at one section or group in our country. We hope it will be a world theatre, expressing the way we Americans see the world.

While it will not limit itself to our time and our period, it must inevitably see things from the platform of this day.

Finally, we hope it will speak for all men by expressing what is deepest and most enduring in the lives of all men. It will be an involved theatre. A committed theatre. It will speak for the fertile against the sterile, for inquiry and against dogma, for freedom against every enslavement, for beauty and against the frightful, for life and against death. It will not always speak with the same voice; but sometimes loud, and sometimes soft and gentle; sometimes stern and sometimes laughing. For while it will try to face the truth, it doesn't feel hopeless. It is not born out of resentment, bitterness, or hatred. It is here, finally, to exalt not to demean. We hope it will always speak lovingly and without fear.57

57Annual for the . . . , loc. cit., p. 77.
CHAPTER IV

PRE-SEASON

Mr. Whitehead and Mr. Kazan are assuming an enormous burden. Their task is... the building of a company and a repertory that will maintain the highest dramatic standards... to create a theatre that has coherence, contiguity and a commitment to the fine, gay and ennobling achievements of the past and to the spirited, adventurous, provocative work of our own day.

This, in Howard Taubman's words, was what lay ahead of the new co-directors of the Lincoln Center Repertory Theatre. Their challenge was that of a new theatre. They must now put their philosophies to the test in building "a viable institution where failure would be tolerated, success... protected and talent... incubated." 2 Specifically, they must apply their abilities to the burdens of establishing "an acting company of quality and... finding new dramatists and producing their work compellingly. Without either or both, the dramatic salvo of Lincoln Center's anticipated cultural explosion could seriously misfire." 3

But before any of these things could even be contemplated, there was one enormous project looming before them, the development

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3 Ibid.
of the physical plant the Repertory Theatre would call its home. The funds for its construction were available, but the question of what these funds would construct had to be answered. The leaders were determined to develop a production style identifiable with their particular theatre. The physical plant itself would play a vital role in this development of a style.

**Developing a Theatre Plant**

The Vivian Beaumont Theatre

The design of the new plant, the Vivian Beaumont Theatre, was to be executed by two men, Eero Saarinen and Jo Mielziner, as collaborative designers. The building, including the library-museum, was to be planned jointly by Eero Saarinen and Associates and Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill. Throughout the entire process of designing the theatre itself, Saarinen and Mielziner were to work in close cooperation with the repertory project's directors, Robert Whitehead and Elia Kazan.

In order to design the unique structure that was necessary if the designers were to achieve their purpose with the theatre, making it a contribution to the development of a style native to this company, they were forced "to find fresh approaches to the relationship between the audience seating and the stage facilities."

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The designers and directors decided that "intimacy and flexibility would be the keynote of this theatre building." The architects were told that "each member of the audience must be able to see the expression in the eyes of a face as small as Julie Harris's." Saarinen and Mielziner conducted a series of detailed studies.

They analyzed where the main action took place on the stage in more than 300 productions; they charted the heights of human beings and the variations in their eye levels when seated. They built full-size mock-ups in an abandoned Michigan movie theatre.

The collaborating designers "did not set out to design an open stage or a proscenium stage, a Greek amphitheatre, or an Elizabethan stage." The ultimate form the theatre took "was the result of many influences." "The effort to attain theatricality with greater strength was what eventually brought them to Model 0 [the final design for the theatre]. After two years of planning and "the scrapping of fourteen sets of blueprints, a final design featuring a vast mobile stage had at last evolved." In Kazan's words, the theatre would have "everything that modern technology would give a

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7 Ibid.
8 Christian Science Monitor, loc. cit.
9 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid. Italics mine.
13 Gelb, loc. cit.
stage and would be something that the United States could really be proud of.\textsuperscript{14}

Flexibility was the keyword for the playhouse. The main stage was to have a proscenium arch which could be opened to a width of sixty feet and which could accommodate a turn-table forty-eight feet in diameter. The average Broadway stage had, and still has, a depth of only twenty-eight feet. The proscenium arch of the new theatre could also be narrowed by sliding walls to any desired size. Its unusually adaptable apron could be supplemented by a thrust stage measuring fifteen by twenty-three feet, with the removal, mechanically, of seven rows of orchestra seats. With such facilities the playhouse could have either a proscenium stage, an apron stage, or various combinations of the two with the push of a few buttons. Unlike other thrust stages now in existence, this one would have no permanent shape, but could be altered by horizontal and vertical units slid forward from the main stage.\textsuperscript{15} The stage would contain 11,000 square feet (the largest Broadway stage, the Martin Beck Theatre, has 2,914 square feet of space).\textsuperscript{16}

The backstage, storage and mechanical areas would take up 75% of the building. . . . These would include motorized scenery facilities, . . . ample shop facilities, . . . /and/ nearly 10,000 additional square feet for scenery and costume storage.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid.


\textsuperscript{17}Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts Annual Report (New York: January, 1963), p. 11.
These backstage facilities were designed so the theatre could handle "a total of five productions without time-consuming and expensive breakdown of scenery." Twenty-one double dressing rooms, two production chorus dressing rooms, and two chorus-type dressing rooms were also to be located backstage.

The designers felt that lighting would play a vital role in the physical staging of productions in this theatre. Therefore, facilities providing saturation lighting would have to be incorporated into the plant. The Vivian Beaumont Theatre would have one of the first electronic lighting control systems installed in a professional New York theatre. The estimated cost of the system was more than $100,000. It had been developed by the Century Lighting Company and was to be the latest version of the one invented by George C. Izenour. This version of the system would operate in this manner:

At a show's rehearsals a card-punching machine would record each light cue (150 to 200 for the average show) automatically. During the regular performance, the cards would be fed into a card-reading machine. Sitting at a console, the electrician would push a lever to fade up or down.

With this electronic system, hours of rehearsal time formerly required for recording a given lighting cue could be reduced to seconds. This could prove invaluable to the repertory system and

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its need for a new lighting set-up each time a production was scheduled in the program. Now all that would be required would be a stack of cards, pre-punched, and a cue sheet. As Mielziner said, "Economically, we can't afford to use old switchboards and old methods."\textsuperscript{21}

The audience, as well as the technicians, were provided with the latest innovations. There were approximately 1,100 seats in the auditorium with 321 of them constituting the balcony. The floor was to be raked sharply, so that each row of seats would be guaranteed a clear view of the stage. The rows of seats were curved around the stage in a radical crescent and would provide perfect sight lines from any point in the house.\textsuperscript{22} No one would be seated more than sixty-five feet from the stage.\textsuperscript{23} There was to be a large and well-lighted lobby in the theatre, and, for the handicapped, an elevator to the auditorium would be available. Provisions were also included for the placement of wheel chairs in the last rows of the orchestra.

Once the designs for the theatre had been accepted, it seemed only a matter of form before the actual construction would commence, but this proved not to be the case. Since the City of New York was slated to pay the building costs of the library-museum, the work could not begin until the funds were allocated. New York City was

\textsuperscript{21}\textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{22}\textit{Galb, loc. cit., August 7, 1960.}

\textsuperscript{23}\textit{Christian Science Monitor, loc. cit.}
slow in honoring its end of the agreement. When the Board of Estimates and the New York City Council had not made available its share of the cost by mid-September, 1961, Rockefeller "decided to go ahead with the project, using funds previously earmarked for other parts of the over-all Center." The financing of the theatre building would be borrowed from other Lincoln Center budgets "with the idea of repaying it with ... the money the city was expected ultimately to appropriate."  

Excavation began in October of 1961. The Beaumont Theatre was then scheduled to be completed by the fall of 1963. With this news the co-directors, Whitehead and Kazan, selected an opening date for the Repertory Theatre's production program to coincide with this deadline.  

But the repertory company faced further postponements in acquiring its theatre. Due to the many delays, the construction costs began to increase until finally the Lincoln Center was "short $2,000,000 from its original goal." The center was forced to re-open contractor bids, thus causing another lengthy delay. (By the time the Beaumont Theatre was completed, the total cost had reached $25 million, almost $5 million over the initial budget.)  

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26 Ibid.  
28 Ibid.  
29 Ibid.  
30 Ibid.
Theatre was completed in 1965, the cost had risen from $8,200,000 to approximately $9,250,000.31)

With this last delay it was obvious that the building would not be completed by the target date in 1963. But by the time the postponement occurred, Whitehead and Kazan had committed the Repertory Theatre to a 1963-64 season. They were determined to adhere to this date. Several factors influenced this decision. The directors had a commitment with two distinguished playwrights to produce their works during that season, and felt that it was impossible to ask these playwrights to withhold their plays from production for another two or three years. In addition they had an obligation to forty-odd actors contracted to begin work for the repertory project at the same time.32 "They faced the threat of losing both plays and their investment in their acting company."33 Lastly, Whitehead and Kazan were determined "not to play second-fiddle to the New York World's Fair," also scheduled to open in 1963.34 Said Whitehead: "We felt rebellious about this, in fact, we told the center's board that being a subsidiary to the Fair imperiled our objective."35 This same view was endorsed by George D. Woods, chairman of the Repertory Company's

35Ibid.
governing board. Obviously a temporary home had to be found for the company if it were to meet its original target date.

**Interim Plan**

On May 28, 1962, the Lincoln Center Repertory Company announced that it would not await the completion of its permanent home, the Vivian Beaumont Theatre. "Anxious to plunge into production, they would open its first season at a rented playhouse in September, 1963." Whitehead and Kazan "first thought of setting up shop in the Colonial Theatre, a former movie house and television studio," located in the Lincoln Square neighborhood at Broadway and Sixty-third Street. This plan was soon abandoned and the company shifted its sights to Broadway.

The co-directors decided to find a playhouse on Broadway in which they could "give the stage some of the characteristics of the Vivian Beaumont, . . . that is they should like to turn it into a space stage having much more than conventional depth by adding a thrust platform." Both Kazan and Whitehead were determined "to incorporate into any temporary showcase, the major features designed for the Vivian Beaumont." They felt any temporary quarters would be useless to their purpose unless it conformed with their concept of production, the style they hoped to make their own. This plan

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36Ibid.
37Ibid.
38Keating, loc. cit.
41Ibid.
received the official blessings of Woods and the Repertory Theatre's board.⁴²

This scheme, however, was also abandoned by the company's co-directors. There were several reasons given for the change of mind. It was, at least partially, "a question of establishing a special character and identity for the new company."⁴³ Whitehead explained, "'The public would end up thinking of us as just another Broadway production.'⁴⁴ Neither Whitehead nor Kazan wished to begin with an artistic compromise, and they soon realized the cost would be prohibitive for converting a Broadway playhouse to their specifications. "Moreover, the high rental required by Broadway houses would have eaten into their operating fund."⁴⁵

With the agreement of Kazan, who was in Europe completing his film, America, America, Whitehead began to investigate another possibility, putting up a working copy of the Beaumont's stage and auditorium in a tent or other temporary structure. It was Whitehead's scheme to erect this tent on the area of the center cleared for the construction of the Juilliard School of Music, which was not to commence until 1965.⁴⁶ The two gentlemen felt that such a temporary playhouse would be artistically satisfactory, and cheaper to build and operate--

⁴³Keating, loc. cit.
⁴⁴Ibid.
⁴⁶Keating, loc. cit.
provided they could get the land free.\textsuperscript{47}

The most feasible plans Whitehead, Saarinen, and Mielziner examined were for a prefabricated steel structure produced by the Butler Steel Corporation. Such structures were used predominantly for warehouses. The three men decided that the plans could be readily adapted to house the kind of theatre Whitehead and his associates had in mind. The estimated cost of the prefabricated building was $400,000, which would not be appreciably higher than the yearly rental and operation of a Broadway house, and would be considerably lower if the cost of converting a Broadway theatre was included in the total price.\textsuperscript{48}

The Lincoln Center board had given a tentative approval to the producer's plans:

\ldots but when they saw what he had decided upon, some members of the board were appalled ('It would be an execrable eyesore,' one said). Arguments grew heated, tempers grew short and, for a time, it looked as though the entire repertory project was in danger—at the very least, of getting a complete change of management. The matter came to a vote on January 30 and the opponents of the plan to put up the steel prefab in Lincoln Center carried the day.\textsuperscript{49}

The AMTA-Washington Square Theatre

Both Whitehead and Kazan were still convinced that a temporary structure was necessary because it was essential that the company begin its operations, not only to carry out the specific commitments

\textsuperscript{47}Gelb, loc. cit., April 3, 1963.

\textsuperscript{48}Keating, loc. cit.

\textsuperscript{49}Ibid.
previously mentioned, but also because it was necessary "to assemble players, introduce them to one another, throw them into play after play until ensemble quality appears."  

The co-directors began exploring the city in an attempt to find another suitable location. Dr. George Stoddard, chancellor of New York University and a member of the Lincoln Center board initiated a proposal that resolved the situation. He offered the theatre the use of a plot of University land for two years at a rental of one dollar per year. The land was located in the Washington Square area of Greenwich Village. Hearing of the offer, Robert Dowling, the chairman of ANTA, offered, through the auspices of ANTA, to raise the money to construct the temporary structure which would be called the ANTA-Washington Square Theatre. The only thing needed now was the approval of the Repertory Theatre's board of directors.

To win this approval, acceptable rental terms had to be established. ANTA maintained that only an assurance that the Repertory Theatre would lease the building for two years would justify its investment, but the board "resisted this stipulation preferring to occupy the theatre on a week-to-week basis, with the right to withdraw in case the venture proved financially unstable." ANTA then modified its demands and an agreement was reached on April 22,

51Keating, loc. cit.
1963. Under the terms of the lease ANTA would receive one per cent of $400,000, the cost of the structure, from ticket sales each week. In addition it would receive $4,500 per week, the estimated cost of operating the theatre. The repertory company was to extract from the ticket sales its operating costs—$25,000 a week. Any box office receipts above these amounts would be shared by ANTA (ten per cent) and the Repertory Theatre (ninety per cent). An interesting feature was that if ANTA were repaid by the time the Repertory Theatre transferred to its permanent home, the structure would belong to Whitehead and Kazan. They would be able to dispose of it to New York University or someone else, or be able to operate it themselves.

The reaction toward the temporary structure was optimistic. Howard Taubman felt: "The idea of a temporary home in a steel tent ... is admirable ... the essence of the company is to reach an audience that cares about theatre as an art, as well as entertainment."

The major problem faced by Mielziner in designing the interior was time and budgetary limitations.

A year is precious little for designing a theatre, much less getting it built and opened. A good theatre should be on the drafting boards and in the minds of the ultimate users of the theatre literally for a couple of years. We

53 Ibid.
54 Ibid.
had to make these decisions in weeks.\textsuperscript{57}

Since it was to be a temporary structure, the materials would not be ideal. It was necessary to maintain the shape of the auditorium and stage of the previously designed Beaumont Theatre in order to establish the same relationship between the actor, the stage, and the audience. Scenic problems had to be reduced to the simplest terms. The fly-loft was to be eliminated. The backstage would be "uncomfortably and frighteningly small"—twenty-five times smaller than the Beaumont. Therefore, there would be little to no storage space for scenery. The thrust stage was to be very close in area and shape to the company's eventual home.\textsuperscript{58} Lobby space, toilet facilities, entrances, box office space, all were reduced drastically. The seats of the "steel tent" theatre were to be within sixty-five feet of the playing area, so audience comfort had to bow to this actor-audience relationship. Luxurious leg room was to be sacrificed.\textsuperscript{59}

The decor of the theatre was to be reduced to austerity. The stairs would be carpeted, the seats upholstered. It would be air-conditioned in summer and heated in the winter. There would be enough light to read a program, but the interior would be void of any decoration.\textsuperscript{60}

The construction of this theatre was as hectic as the past history of the Repertory Theatre. The troubles suffered by the

\textsuperscript{57}\textit{The Annual of the . . .}, op. cit., p. 53.
\textsuperscript{58}\textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{59}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 54.
\textsuperscript{60}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 55.
group were reflected in the newspaper headlines: "Repertory Theatre Is Delayed a Month" (May 17), "Ground-Breaking for Theatre Set" (June 17), "Ground-Breaking Postponed" (June 20), "Permit Granted" (July 3). The reason for the delays was centered in the Building Department of New York City. The department "held that the theatre was not fireproof." However, the interpretation was finally overruled when Robert Dowling, using his influence as Mayor Wagner's cultural deputy, interceded. The board did insist on some minor modifications such as the installation of water-sprinkler protection in certain areas. On July 2, 1963, a permit was granted by the Board of Standards and Appeals. The co-directors had hoped to open the first season in October, 1963, but the delays pushed the date back to November.

On July 10 ground was finally broken for the temporary structure. Workmen began laying the foundation for the sunken auditorium on August 27. But it would take five months to put up the building, and the opening was moved back again, for the last time, to January, 1964.

The financing of the theatre came entirely from the First National City Bank, guaranteed by ANTA, through "a mortgage agreement

61Keating, loc. cit.
63Ibid.
65Keating, loc. cit.
negotiated between Robert W. Dowling . . . and George Moore, president of the bank." 66 AMTA believed that even if "both seasons should prove to be financial disasters, the total loss on the theatre might come to no more than $125,000," 67 but the cost of the structure rose to $618,000. (By December of 1964, AMTA had been paid back only $213,750. 68 Later developments that erupted during December, 1964, placed AMTA's future in jeopardy because of this mortgage.)

By December of 1963, the theatre was near enough to completion to permit the company to hold rehearsals in the building. By January the construction was finished and the theatre was able to open finally after more than four months of delays.

"From the outside the new theatre looked like a low and uninteresting hangar or shed." 69 The audience entered the theatre through two tunnels at street level. These tunnels opened cut into a wide amphitheatre at a point three-fourths of the way to the top of the house. Standing in this location the eye of the spectator "plunged downward past the concentric rows of concrete to the focal point of the stage." 70 Playwright S.N. Behrman's description of the interior was most vivid:


69Little, loc. cit.

70Ibid.
When I walked into the ANTA-Washington Square Theatre I was staggered by what I saw. The austerity of the beams of the walls had a spare, Puritanic beauty. I welcomed the absence of frill. Everything seemed to be there for the purpose of sitting down and seeing a play. 71

The dark, exposed factory trusses Mr. Behrman mentions hung over the heads of the audience as well. They became the light pipes on which the instruments were hung sans any sort of masking. "We make no secret of what we need to light our productions," said Mielziner. 72 This lighting equipment was to be a vital element of scenic design. In this theatre, without space for large quantities of scenery, the designers would have to work with the most fluent element at their disposal, stage lighting. 73 Since it would also be impossible to hang scenery on stage, the designers of the first season's productions collaborated and created a simple set of screens made of fireproof, woven wood that could be hung on tracks and pushed on or off stage. The lighting and screens were to be the two basic elements of the scene designs in this theatre. 74

The first production of the company opened on January 23, 1964, and the theatre plant was an instant success. In one review of the play the theatre received the highest accolade of all: "The ANTA-Washington Square Theatre . . . is . . . a quite fabulous structure." 75 Harold Clurman said, "It's a good theatre because the moment you

71 The Annual of the . . . , loc. cit., p. 62.
72 Ibid., p. 55.
73 Ibid.
74 Ibid., p. 56.
enter it your attention is riveted on the stage," and Behrman again, "It is unadorned and beautiful with the spare beauty of the functional, ... [A theatre] which will add immeasurably to the cultural life of this city. ... [New York] should have theatres like this in every borough." 76

Gathering and Training a Company

In 1961, when conditions looked favorable for the completion of the Vivian Beaumont Theatre by the fall of 1964, Robert Whitehead and Elia Kazan began the slow process of finding and selecting the actors who would make up the first company of the Lincoln Center Repertory Theatre. They realized that it would "take some years to build the company. Time, trial, and error to achieve an ensemble whose members, wherever they might be, would be identified with the character of this repertory." 77 This was their goal and a beginning had to be made.

Such a company could mean much to the American actor, nurtured on the commercial system of our present professional theatre. "Repertory is the only true, happy way for an actor to work," said David Wayne, destined to be one of the company's most versatile performers, "if he isn't seeking instant stardom ... . If an actor recognizes how unrewarding these ends are, he can't help appreciating

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76 The Annual of the ... , loc. cit., p. ix.
77 Ibid., p. 52.
the advantages of repertory." Many of the actors would have to give up a great deal monetarily, others would gain by the long-term employment, but all would receive the advantages:

An actor can play two, three, possibly four roles in a continuing season, roles of an enormous variety, in plays where he is given a great deal of relief from playing a successful play for months on end. This keeps an actor alive, breathing.

Kazan and Whitehead planned to commence work with a company of thirty-five actors in March of 1963, and "continue for a seven-month period of training, preparation, and rehearsal, pointing to the fall opening with three plays in repertory." They planned for the institution, not individual actors, to be the star. The actors were to be chosen for their professional talent and artistry, for their adaptability to the needs of a repertory company doing a wide range of plays, and for their devotion to this kind of actor's life. The contracts were to be for the first two seasons plus the seven months of preparation. The co-directors hoped their company would be composed in equal parts of stars (glad to sacrifice stellar billing and salaries for principle), seasoned actors, and new talent.

79Ibid.
80Christian Science Monitor, loc. cit.
81Morgenstern, loc. cit.
82Christian Science Monitor, loc. cit.
83Morgenstern, loc. cit.
This new talent was to come from a group of young actors who were to be selected and trained before the company began its preparation stage. During the latter part of 1961 and the beginning of 1962, more than 500 applicants from all over the United States and Canada were auditioned. Forty young actors survived these intensive auditions and were selected to attend an eight-month training course for which they would receive no monetary reimbursement. 84

Someone had to be found to head this training course. Again, the name of Lee Strasberg was brought forward. Many of Strasberg's supporters (not Strasberg himself) had felt that Kazan had deserted him when he accepted the Lincoln Center position and Strasberg was passed over. There is evidence to the contrary. In a letter to Whitehead from Kazan, Kazan nominated Strasberg for the training position:

The question is not who knows a lot or who's done a lot somewhere else or, even, who'll give us the best advice. The question is who is going to do the job here. . . . Lee Strasberg will. He has been doing it for 15 years or 30 years, depending on how you look at it, and he will. You know he will. . . . His whole life has been a gruesome miscarriage and a great, great loss if because of some well-intentioned bungling by Edgar Young or John Rockefeller or whoeverthehell, Lee didn't get the job. 85

But he "didn't." Robert Lewis, a prominent Broadway director and teacher, was selected to head the program. The dancer Anna Sokolow was selected to teach body movement and control, and Arthur Lessac to instruct in voice projection and speech.66

The training program envisioned by Robert Lewis was to be a specialized course "dedicated to preparing carefully chosen people to be able to perform plays in any style and period, including contemporary, but definitely not limited to that." By style, Lewis meant "the theatrically truthful presentation of any given stage work according to its time and place, with whatever behavior pattern the author and director demanded." The basic procedure of the program was to relate the voice and movement work to the inner experience, to train the actor to use the most theatrical means of expression, vocal or physical, and have those means supported by truthful inner experience.

Lewis devised etudes designed to force the actor into patterns of behavior which would extend his expressive range to many periods . . . and to characters not usually encountered in contemporary plays. The actor would also work on songs and dances of all nations, all times, and all classes of society . . . to get a sense of how it feels . . . to live in another age . . . another country, as either a courtier or a fishmonger.87

These etudes on style were "to lead to work on poetic scenes and finally, to rehearsing plays utilizing all the elements studied."88

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88Ibid.
On September 28, 1962, the training group met for the first time in their Carnegie Hall studio headquarters. For eight months the classes would be held daily, excluding Saturday and Sunday, starting at 10:00 A.M. 89

The training program came to an end on May 25, 1963, when fourteen members of the group were selected to appear with the Lincoln Center Repertory Company. The selections were made by Whitehead and Kazan after they had seen the candidates in a half-hour private performance of scenes from Hamlet. The new members of the company were Faye Dunaway, Crystal Field, Lanna Saunders, Barbara Loden, Patricia Roe, Mariclare Costello, Diane Shalet, Stanley Beck, Clint Kimbrough, Scott Cunningham, Jack Waltzer, Austin Pendleton, Barry Primus, and John Law. 90

Despite the lack of stellar billing and a salary scale with a maximum wage of only $800 per week, Kazan and Whitehead were able to contract some actors with established reputations. The training group joined Jason Robards, Jr., Zohra Lambert, Salome Jens, Ralph Meeker, Hal Holbrook, David Wayne, Virginia Kaye, Joseph Wiseman, Michael Strong, Paul Mann, David Stewart, Harold Scott, and James Green, as members of the first acting company of the Repertory Theatre. Austin Pendleton of the training group left the company before it went into production, leaving a total of twenty-six under contract. The theatre


was beginning its career with a relatively small complement of actors when compared with the sixty actors signed for the first season of the British National Theatre.

In September of 1963, the company ranks were completed with the signing of Robert Downing and Frederic de Wilde as production stage managers. Both gentlemen departed immediately for a week's inspection tour of the Tyrone Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis and the Stratford (Connecticut) Shakespeare Festival. The tour was made to study the problems of the repertory system in preparation for their work at Lincoln Center.91

**Philosophies of Play Selection**

For the first season of the Repertory Theatre, Kazan and Whitehead at first settled on a thirty-three week season with a total of four plays, but the number of plays was later reduced to three. The company was to have two of the plays ready for the opening and to add the third a month later.92 The mission of the co-directors was to decide what plays would make up this season.

They began by considering the problem of the first two seasons. It was their desire to acquire two new plays by American writers; to select two contemporary classics, including an O'Neill revival; and

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to choose two historical classics, probably including a Greek tragedy.\textsuperscript{93}

The criteria used by Whitehead and Kazan to select plays was a result of their philosophies. Both felt that the theatre should devote itself to producing the best American plays, old and new.\textsuperscript{94} This was to be an American repertory theatre engaged in establishing an American theatre tradition, and the life of any theatre was in its new works and a revitalized approach to the past works. Whitehead and Kazan also felt that the establishment of a continuing American theatre tradition necessitated the production of new plays by American playwrights. The repertory project, they asserted, should try to reduce the limitations of American theatre literature. Whitehead was convinced that the lack of a sustained heritage was due to the fact that "most of the American plays produced since the first world war had proved ephemeral."\textsuperscript{95}

Both men let it be known that they were willing to talk to any playwright who felt that he had something that might interest the Repertory Theatre. Whitehead and Kazan were also ready to deal with any Broadway producer controlling a property the producer felt the repertory company was best-equipped to handle, but any producer would have to be willing to settle for the non-Broadway financial set-up.\textsuperscript{96}

\textsuperscript{93} Gelb, \textit{loc. cit.}, May 29, 1962.

\textsuperscript{94} Funke, \textit{loc. cit.}, November 16, 1958.

\textsuperscript{95} Ross, \textit{loc. cit.}

There were inherent dangers in producing new plays. They could be more risky than classics because the worth of the classic had already been proven. No one knew whether a new script, no matter how effective on paper, would play well. "No sensible newspaper critic would come right out and say Hamlet or The Three Sisters was a bad play. ... A new play would draw their fire." On the other hand, by doing new plays the Repertory Theatre would be guaranteeing "that a new and vital production would be spared from the constant peril of the commercial theatre--instant failure."

Both Whitehead and Kazan had always wished to have their "opening season composed entirely of American plays," and "that Eugene O'Neill be represented. This was ... of great importance to the theatre's purpose." Their final selections expressed this wish. English critic Kenneth Tynan agreed with Whitehead and Kazan that the theatre "concentrate ... on American plays."

But the American theatre did not have "the required native library of classics similar to those that existed abroad." Therefore, Whitehead and Kazan contemplated reviving the existing American

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97 The Annual of the ... , loc. cit., p. 91.
99 The Annual of the ... , loc. cit., p. 51.
100 Kenneth Tynan, The Observer (London), March 1, 1959.
The two men felt that these revivals combined with the theatre's major aim, the production of the best available new scripts, would give the theatre the desired American flavor.

They also intended to produce "the best contemporary work of all countries, as well as from the whole history of world dramatic literature." However, both Kazan and Whitehead shunned the idea of the dutifully dull repertory theatre reeking of the smell of the library "and the precious revivals of minor plays like King John." Kazan said: "If we do a classic, it has to have a meaning for us today and it's got to be exciting. Why should anyone go to our new theatre unless we're different? Why should anyone support us unless we're exciting?"

For the first production of the Repertory Theatre, Kazan and Whitehead hoped "to present a new work by a major American dramatist." They finally settled on Arthur Miller's newest play and Miller readily accepted the offer. Many were surprised and a number of Broadway producers were furious. Why, after an eight year hiatus from Broadway, had Miller consented to allow the Lincoln Center theatre to present it? Financially it would be a sacrifice. Here were Miller's reasons:

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103Christian Science Monitor, *loc. cit.*


105Ibid.

Lincoln Center Repertory is an attempt to create a public theatre. . . . We can rehearse for months if necessary. . . . We can now come face to face with the correct challenge . . . the challenge to speak openly to the people who have come not because they wish to be "in" on the latest critics' choice, for they have subscribed far in advance of the notices, nor to people whose idea of theatre is a place to put the world out of mind.107

With the acquisition of Miller's new play, the Repertory Theatre was approached by the British National Theatre concerning a trans-Atlantic exchange of plays, acting companies, and production ideas. Kenneth Tynan, representing the British theatre, was interested in the possibility of doing the Miller play at their theatre. Harold Cluman, executive consultant to the Lincoln Center company, sought from Tynan the requisition for Lincoln Center of Peter Shaffer's *The Royal Hunt of the Sun* which the British theatre had been considering for presentation. The exchange program, however, was not to begin until 1965.108

To complete the first season's schedule, Kazan and Whitehead were able to induce S.N. Behrman to trust them with his newest work, *But For Whom Charlie*. The season would consist of Miller's play, titled *After the Fall*, as the opener; the O'Neill revival they had contemplated, *Marco Millions*, as the second attraction; and the Behrman play as the third and final production.

The Subscription Plan

The Lincoln Center Repertory Theatre deliberately chose a subscription policy for several reasons:


(1) Economic stability for the project (2) Subscription will insure each contributing playwright a run for his play. The first season each will be given for fifty performances. (3) The theatre is anxious to establish audience identity with the theatre as an entity with its artistic policies and its company of players ... (4) The theatre seeks to avoid the 'is it a hit' psychology common to much Broadway theatre going. 109

Under this plan "75% of the tickets for the performances of each presentation would be allotted to subscribers with the remaining 25% open to the public." 110 The number of performances each production would finally play, and the length of time it would remain in the repertory would depend upon the public demand for it. 111 A weak play would be dropped after the scheduled run. 112

By subscribing to the theatre's plan, the public could save up to 20% from box office rates. For a week-day evening or matinee performance, a subscriber could purchase seats for the three productions for a price ranging from $15.00 to $7.50, depending upon the section of the house desired. If the same seats were purchased separately at box office rates, the price would range from $18 to $9. For Friday and Saturday evening performances the prices were slightly higher, ranging from $18 to $9. The box office rates for these performances would cost from $19.50 to $10.50. Subscribers would attend each play on the same night of the week or matinee, in the same seat location. 113

111 Christian Science Monitor, loc. cit.
112 Gross, loc. cit.
It was the company's intention to hold the subscriptions to 75% of the season's capacity. A total of 32,000 tickets were set aside for box office sale or mail orders. They reserved 20,000 for Miller's *After the Fall* and 6,000 each for *Marco Millions* and *But For Whom Charlie*. 114

The Repertory Theatre allotted funds from its budget to carry on the subscription drive. The estimated cost was between $45,000 and $50,000 for advertising, mailing, and personnel. 115

The company anticipated a response of between 30,000 and 35,000 sales for its first season. The first mailing sent out was a test of 15,000 names. The list was composed of 3,500 people who had written in to inquire about the subscription plan, the membership of ANTA, and those people who had contributed $25 or more to the Lincoln Center complex. Later mailings tested several other lists, such as the 72,000 names accumulated by the American Shakespeare Festival in Stratford, Connecticut; the mail order list of Whitehead's Broadway production, *A Man for All Seasons*; and the Phoenix Theatre list of 30,000 persons. The Repertory Theatre attempted to secure the permission of the New York City Center for the use of its list, but City Center policy forbade its use by any other performing organization. The repertory company felt that by using every available list it would avoid approaching economically designated areas, such as Park Avenue or


Fairfield County, Connecticut, both exclusive residential communities.\textsuperscript{116}

Through the use of the mailing lists and only two full-page ads, appearing on September 29 and October 6, 1963, the theatre's subscription plan was "a tremendous success." By December the schedule through March had been oversubscribed, and the 4,000 orders still unfulfilled were supplied with seats for April, May, and June. The sale, totaling 46,500 orders, was stopped at that time. A total of $725,000 had been collected, covering forty-nine performances of the three plays through July 2, 1964.\textsuperscript{117} For the first week of the season, the 1,158 seat amphitheatre was 95% filled with subscribers. During the season the percentage figures decreased to about 50% in the last weeks.\textsuperscript{118}

Analyzed geographically, the subscription response came from these areas:

(1) 45% from Manhattan; (2) about 30% almost evenly distributed, from the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens; (3) 25% from the borough of Richmond [Staten Island], Nassau and Suffolk Counties on Long Island, and New Jersey, New York state, and Connecticut within a fifty mile radius.\textsuperscript{119}

The success of this subscription drive can best be seen through a comparison with the Tyrone Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis, generally accepted as being a relatively successful venture. For the Guthrie company's first season sale, the total was approximately 22,000 season sales.

\textsuperscript{116}\textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{117}Zolotow, \textit{loc. cit.}, December 20, 1963.
\textsuperscript{119}\textit{Ibid.}
tickets for four plays, or 88,000 single admissions.\textsuperscript{120} The Lincoln Center company had sold 46,500 coupons, or 139,500 single admissions.

**Deficit Budget**

From the beginning of Whitehead's association with the Lincoln Center Repertory Theatre he emphasized that "the legit arm of the center should be expected to operate at a deficit." His reason for this contention was based on the fact that a "break-even on the budget would require steady capacity business for the repertory productions."\textsuperscript{121} Whitehead expected "Many of the productions \textsuperscript{120} to be money makers," but chances were slight for 100% capacity, and he felt the theatre would need a subsidy to continue its operations. He was worried about these money problems and felt the best solution would be "for some big foundation to set aside a fund from which the theatre could draw the income when necessary."\textsuperscript{122}

Whitehead estimated that it would cost $1,250,000 to open the doors of the Repertory Theatre for its first production. Half of this sum would be accounted for in the construction of the ANTA-Washington Square Theatre; and the remainder would be used for staging the three productions, for planning expenses, the training program, subscription drive, press work, and heavy rehearsal costs.\textsuperscript{123}

\textsuperscript{120}The Annual of the ..., loc. cit., p. 97.

\textsuperscript{121}Gross, loc. cit.

\textsuperscript{122}Ross, loc. cit.

\textsuperscript{123}Little, loc. cit., Jan. 23, 1964.
He further estimated that the yearly operating deficit could reach about $250,000.¹²⁴

Whitehead was faced with the lack of precedent in subsidizing the legitimate theatre in America. It was considered respectable and prestigious to assist the other performing arts, opera, ballet, and the symphony; but "to assist the legitimate theatre in the same way was considered an act of sentimental idiocy."¹²⁵ One of Mr. Whitehead's most difficult missions was to persuade "the public-spirited bankers--when he knew that even if the theatre was a sell-out, it would have a considerable deficit--not to raise the prices."¹²⁶ The weekly gross of the theatre at full capacity could bring in at the box office only $45,000, and the operating costs alone would exceed $25,000, which did not include all the pre-season expenses.¹²⁷ Whitehead was able to convince the board not to increase the admission price, but he still had to locate $750,000 which he estimated it would cost to operate the first season.

The financial crisis was finally averted when the Lincoln Center appropriated the needed financial support for the first season from the Lincoln Center Fund.¹²⁸ Hereafter, it would be the task of the theatre's board of directors to locate financial backing to subsidize the theatre's future seasons. One financial source was Mrs. Vivian Beaumont Allen,

¹²⁴Christian Science Monitor, loc. cit.
¹²⁵Tynan, loc. cit.
¹²⁶The Annual of the . . . , loc. cit., p. xiii.
¹²⁷Gaver, loc. cit.
who had already made the theatre a possibility through one sizeable contribution. 129

**Directors of the First Season**

Of the three productions of the Repertory Theatre's first season, it was finally decided by Kazan and Whitehead that Kazan would direct two. He was to assume the leadership of the first production, Arthur Miller's *After the Fall*, and the last production, Behrman's *But For Whom Charlie*. For the second play of the season, Marco *Millions*, Jose Quintero, a New York director who had built his reputation in the field directing O'Neill plays, was contracted.

On October 24, 1963, the acting company and Elia Kazan convened for the first time to begin rehearsals on the new Miller work. The rehearsals were held for eight weeks "on the taped floor of a Second Avenue hall." On December 18, slightly more than a month before the production was scheduled to open, the cast and director moved rehearsals into the partially finished theatre that would be their temporary home. 130 Finally, on January 23, 1964, the Lincoln Center Repertory Theatre, in the making since May, 1958, opened its doors to the public.

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129Ibid.

CHAPTER V

THE FIRST SEASON

When the company of the Lincoln Center Repertory Theatre met for the first time in the fall of 1963, Harold Clurman, executive consultant to the company, made this statement to the assembled group: "You've got everything handed to you: a lot of money, a lavish new theatre. . . . You're starting at the roof instead of the floor." 1 Clurman had stated the company's position most aptly. The company had been "handed" the ANTA-Washington Square Theatre to serve as a temporary home until the more lavish Vivian Beaumont Theatre was completed; an advance sale of $725,000; a guaranteed deficit of $750,000, including the pre-season expenses; membership in a $160,000,000 performing arts center that had no rival in the world; two of America's more astute theatre men, Elia Kazan and Robert Whitehead, as its leaders; and the first play in eight years by one of America's most celebrated playwrights, as its opening production. No other theatre in America's theatrical history had begun with so many advantages nor had been so publicized. An

editorial in the New York Herald Tribune proclaimed that "it was quite clear that a great creative force had burst upon the theatre." The big question with many was how creative would this force be?

For its first season the management had scheduled 147 subscription performances of three plays between January 23, 1964, to July 2. In addition the company would present, during the same period, twenty-two non-subscription performances and twenty-four preview performances. The first production, After the Fall, was scheduled to open on January 23; the second, Marco Millions, February 20; and the final play, But For Whom Charlie, on March 12. In less than two months all three productions, representing the fruits of labor of nearly six years of planning and dedicated service, would be open to the scrutiny of the public. It is true that the theatre's leaders had stressed that it would take several years to build the quality and style envisioned, but how long would this fact remain in the minds of their viewers? The future of this company would be determined by the quality and the style of their present efforts.

After the Fall

For the theatre's opening production the co-directors, Whitehead and Kazan, had settled on Arthur Miller's recent and unproduced play, After the Fall. It had been eight years since Miller had written for the theatre. This play had been an unfinished

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manuscript until Miller was approached by Whitehead and Kazan; then
the script was completed with the Repertory Theatre and its thrust
stage in mind.

The action of this play takes place in the mind, thought, and
memory of its central character, Quentin, a contemporary man. The
characters and scenes of the story appear on stage as they come into
the thoughts of Quentin. Miller's theme, personified in the thoughts
and actions of his central character, deals with the attempt "to find
a philosophy of living developed out of personal anguish." Miller's
conclusion is that "one must realize it is a lie to speak of in-
finite love in a world of confused relationships and ideas if any
rational and tolerable existence is to be maintained and made bear-
able." The narration of the plot is concerned with taking Quentin
through "two tortured and unhappy marital interludes and the trouble
with an investigating committee bent on seeking out subversives and
forcing them to turn in the names of friends associated with the move-
ment in their youth." At the outset of the play Quentin enters, moves
forward and seats himself on the edge of the stage and begins to talk.
He is like a man confiding in a friend—the audience being that friend.

4Norman Nadel, "Miller Play One of Inward Vision," New York
World-Telegram and Sun, January 24, 1964.

Post, January 24, 1964.

6Ibid.

7Ibid.

8Ibid.
"In the background are key figures in his life and they move in and out of his narrative. The narration shades into scenes,"² and Quentin moves in and out of these scenes as, in his mind, he takes part in the action. "The scenes are revelations and illuminations."³

Appearing in the lead role of Quentin at Lincoln Center was Jason Robards, Jr. His supporting cast was as follows:

Felice......................................................... Zohra Lambert
Holga ......................................................... Salome Jens
Mother......................................................... Virginia Kaye
Dan ............................................................. Michael Strong
Father......................................................... Paul Mann
Nurses......................................................... Faye Dunaway,
                                                Diane Shalet
Doctor......................................................... Scott Cunningham
Maggie......................................................... Barbara Loden
Kelsie......................................................... Patricia Roe
Louise......................................................... Mariclare Costello
Lou ............................................................. David J. Stewart
Mickey......................................................... Ralph Meeker
Man in the Park ............................................ Stanley Beck
Carrie......................................................... Ruth Attaway
Chairman..................................................... David Wayne
Rev. Harley Barnes........................................ Hal Holbrook
Porter .......................................................... Jack Walter
Secretary..................................................... Crystal Field
Lucas.......................................................... Harold Scott
Clergyman................................................... James Green

The staging of the play had been assigned to the co-director of the project, Elia Kazan. Costumes were designed by Anna Hill Johnstone. One of the designers of the physical plant, Jo Mielziner, executed the lighting and set.⁴

³Ibid.
⁴Watts, loc. cit.
⁵Ibid.
The task of Mr. Mielziner was to design a void out of which the settings for the various scenes could appear. In his final design the stage was bare except for levels and set properties that were moved on and off stage as needed. Much of the design of the production was in the lighting. As characters appeared in the mind and thoughts of Quentin, the lighting was faded up revealing them on stage as the scene began.

The play opened on January 23, 1964, to the public and the critics. On January 24, 1964, the evaluations of the theatre critics of the six major New York daily newspapers appeared. The verdict for this first production of the company was, on the whole, favorable. The production alone received favorable criticism from all of the six critics, but two, Walter Kerr of the New York Herald Tribune and John McClain of the New York Journal American, were unfavorable in their evaluation of the play.

McClain had felt "offended by its lack of taste," and "the play . . . seemed pretentious and intolerably long."\(^{13}\) Although he contended there was "much thoughtful writing and moments of dramatic impact," the script was "less a play than a series of episodes" with "little progression in the character of the central figure."\(^{14}\) McClain,

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\(^{14}\)Ibid.
as it would turn out, was one of several others offended by the close similarity between the character of Maggie and the deceased Marilyn Monroe. This feeling of "lack of taste" erupted into a controversy that will be discussed shortly. Walter Kerr reviewed the play unfavorably because to him it resembled "a confessional which Arthur Miller entered as a penitent and from which he emerged as the priest. . . . It constituted neither an especially attractive nor especially persuasive performance." Kerr found no argument with using the material, but did argue with the lack of "an imaginative hand, making something new, independent, complete and self-assertive," for, in his opinion, it was here that "the evening failed most seriously." To Kerr there was "nothing concrete, nothing carved out of bone. The search was verbal, pontifical, rhetorical." There was no Quentin, no other life than Arthur Miller. The main problem, as Kerr saw it, was that Miller had not stood off a little distance to imagine another man. Miller had "ended up seeming to discuss himself and in some measure, . . . to justify himself."\(^{15}\)

Richard Watts of the New York Post had some reservations in his judgment of the play. He felt that "many of the scenes were powerful and striking," and that the play was "impressive." Watts further maintained that Miller continued to write with power and passion, however, he also asserted that the "undeniably autobiographical drama

was also a disappointing and self-indulgent kind of personal apologia." Although, he contended, the play was "often strong and moving, . . . it was frequently lost in its own waywardness."16

An entirely different view was taken by the other half of the sextet of critics. John Chapman's title for his review--"After the Fall Overpowering"--indicated his impression. It was Chapman's main contention that the play "got the Repertory Theatre of Lincoln Square off to an impressive start."17 Norman Nadel referred to the Miller play as "a powerful and portentous drama--one to arouse an audience and enrich a season." He maintained it was "a somber, funny, tragic and terrifying triumph of purposeful introspection"--"a beautiful, remarkable play." It was Howard Taubman's declaration that "Arthur Miller was back with a play worthy of his mettle." He professed that "to sit in Mr. Miller's theatre was to be in an adult world concerned with a search that cuts to the bone." Taubman disagreed with Kerr on the character of Quentin. Whereas Kerr felt there was no character, just Miller; Taubman maintained that the character was "not simply the mouthpiece of an author" but represented "any and all courageous enough to hunt for order in the painful and joyous chaos of living."

The portion of the play that aroused the most comment was the episode dealing with the relationship between Quentin and Maggie.

16 Watts, loc. cit.

To most this represented the actual relationship between Miller and his former wife, Marilyn Monroe. McClain had been offended by the episode, but Watts had felt that it was "the spectacular part of the play," portraying Maggie (or Marilyn) as a "touchingly sad, lonely, bewildered and pathetic young woman of innate goodness of heart." To Chapman the episode was "absolutely overpowering in its emotional effect." As already noted, this episode incited a much-publicized controversy.

In general the acting company had made a decided impression on the critics. In Taubman's view of the proceedings, "no performance was less than compelling," and to McClain "the cast of the Lincoln Center Repertory Theatre was overwhelming." Specifically, Jason Robards, Jr. received the highest singular honors for a role that demanded his presence on stage for the full three hours of the performance. Taubman felt that "his shading from intimate confidences to flashes of action through a delicately grained variety of emotions was beyond praise." McClain: "Jason Robards, Jr. . . . gives a magnificent and ceaseless performance." Nadel called his portrayal "magnificent," and Chapman, "monumental." In Watts' opinion "Robards gave one of his finest performances." The one dissenting vote was Walter Kerr who felt that Robards seemed "to be whirling a vast lasso of whirling words above his head, aching to rope real emotion and to bring it slapping down." The only other actor to be singled out by the critics was Barbara Loden, formerly a member of the training group, for her portrayal of Maggie. Five of the six, Kerr remaining silent, used such phrases as "stunning performance,"
"magnificent," "moving and appealing," to describe her acting. Overnight she was one of the most publicized members of the Repertory Theatre. As a general statement concerning the acting, Kerr said: "The actors are often driven to a steady, urgent, uninflected beat."

Kazan's direction received a majority of favorable comments. Taubman declared that Kazan's directing was "unfaltering in its perception and orchestration. . . . There was motion but no clutter, intensity but no shrillness." Chapman attributed the clarity of the drama not only to Miller, but also to Kazan and his handling of the play. McClain felt that it "was consistently authoritative." Nadel was convinced that there was "more than dramatic stature in Kazan's staging." Watts and Kerr declined to make any comment in this area. Kerr, however, was highly critical of the use of the open stage:

Its use of the Repertory Theatre's use of the surrounding void to draw shadows of the past into view is generally Gordon Craigish, as though Our Town had been written by Ernst Toller. . . .

Very little analysis of the stage shape and its potential value as a psychological force thrusting into the house can be made at the moment, for the simple reason that After the Fall does not truly require such a stage.\(^\text{18}\)

This is an interesting criticism in light of the fact that Miller wrote the play with the Lincoln Center's thrust stage in mind.

The reaction, on the whole, toward the Repertory Theatre was optimistic after this opening. All six critics felt the production indicated a bright future. Their feelings were best summed up by

\(^{18}\text{Kerr, loc. cit.}\)
Norman Nadel: "Director Elia Kazan and a company of bright distinction hold forth unlimited promise, with this drama as the first fulfillment."¹⁹

Norman Nadel, in his review of the play, seemed to serve as the voice of the prophet concerning the Maggie-Quentin episode: "Because the Miller-Monroe marriage is so fresh in people's memory, I'm afraid this segment of the play—certainly significant—will tend to obscure the importance and superb integration of the complete drama." Due to this episode in the play, After the Fall became "one of the most hotly discussed plays in recent years."²⁰ One side of the controversy felt that Miller was dealing with his marriage to Marilyn Monroe and so found the episode to be in bad taste because of her tragic death. Some even went so far as to express indignation "at what they considered an unfair characterization of the young lady."²¹ The dissenting side was represented by McClain (Above, p. 92) who stated that "it seemed regrettable that he [Miller] chose to consider at such lengths the tragic frustrations of a character, quite obviously fashioned after Marilyn Monroe. . . . [McClain] thought the girl . . . should have been permitted to rest in peace." It was McClain's contention that perhaps "it all should be told, . . . but . . . there should have been a respectful recess of silence." The other

¹⁹Nadel, loc. cit.


²¹Ibid.
side of the controversy praised the play as a major work. Along with
Nadel, Howard Taubman championed this faction: "Mr. Miller is prob-
ing into his own life and those near and dear to him and seeking
answers to the eternal riddles that confront human beings on this
earth."

Actually what was being debated was this: did the actors on
stage represent Monroe, Kazan, Miller, his parents, and other people
in Miller's life? Miller's reply was negative, that the play was a
work of fiction.

No one is reported in this play. The characters are created
as
they are in any other play in order to develop a coherent
theme which, in this case, concerns the nature of human
insight, of self-destructiveness and violence toward
others. . . . It may take some people a month, a year,
or ten years to see the play for what it is, but so be it.
. . . Others, obviously, are capable of doing just that
right now.22

The alleged poor taste on the part of Arthur Miller was the
basis for yet another critics reaction toward the production,
Robert Brustein of the New Republic. In addition to the subject
matter, Brustein felt that the play was "a wretched piece of
dramatic writing: shapeless, tedious, overwritten, and confused."
The writing was, in Brustein's opinion, the reason for the lack of
confidence, cliches, and emotional repetition in the acting. It
was a dishonest, self-conscious, and boring production due to the
existence of these same qualities in the script.23

22Esterow, loc. cit.
23Robert Brustein, Seasons of Discontent (New York: Simon &
Shuster, 1965), p. 244.
Brustein assigns a major fault to the writing of the character of Quentin. He is both hero and chorus, and as a result, the play is like a long monologue.\textsuperscript{24} The writing of this part is Henry Hewes' major criticism of the play for to Hewes the character is not definite enough. Quentin's conclusions are often subordinate to the reenacted episodes which led to them.\textsuperscript{25} Hewes also considered the controversial material a fault, but contended that its impact was lessened because Quentin (Miller) accepts much of the blame for what happens. Hewes said that the play was intensively searching "but was not yet a consistently dramatic play."\textsuperscript{26}

Regardless of whether the play concerned real or fictional characters, the controversy stirred great interest in the Lincoln Center Repertory Theatre. From this controversy it gained world-wide publicity it might never have received had the debate not arisen. It was publicity that could have an effect on the box office sales for the remainder of the season.

**Marco Millions**

For the second production of the Repertory Theatre, Kazan and Whitehead had selected for revival a seldom produced play by Eugene O'Neill, *Marco Millions*. The play had been introduced on Broadway

\textsuperscript{24}Ibid.


\textsuperscript{26}Ibid.
during the 1927-28 season. It proved to be unpopular and so had to close within a few short weeks. After this dismal Broadway venture the play was relegated to the library shelves and an occasional University theatre production. O'Neill had written this play in the mid-nineteen-twenties, "when the boom of that era had not yet reached its zenith." He "sativized the American tycoon in the form of a Venetian named Marco Polo, who went to the Far East and cleaned up." In the play O'Neill attempted to warn the populace of the "baneful effect mere accumulation of wealth could have." Apparently his warning was not popular in 1928, but Kazan and Whitehead felt this message had meaning for the present society. This was one reason they scheduled this particular O'Neill play.

In *Marco Millions* O'Neill attempted to "mock Marco Polo as a brash and insensitive business man, who was blind to the beauty and wisdom flourishing about him in the China of Kublai Khan." Polo "saw only the opportunities for making a fortune." A paradox exists here because the playwright must have been aware that it was the man he was mocking who had made known the wonders of this China by writing of them "with memorable understanding."

Jose Quintero had been contracted for a fee of $4,000 to direct this O'Neill play. This assignment was part of a contract to direct

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30 Ibid.
four plays for the Lincoln Center Theatre over a flexible period of
time. In all, he worked approximately seven months, including plan-
ning and rehearsal, in staging Marco Millions. Quintero had gained
his professional reputation with his staging of two other O’Neill pro-
ductions, a revival of The Iceman Cometh at the Circle in the Square
Theatre and A Long Day’s Journey Into Night on Broadway.

Appearing in the leading roles were Hal Holbrook as Marco Polo,
David Wayne as Kublai Khan, Zohra Lambert as Princess Kukachin, and
Joseph Wiseman as Chu-Yin. The supporting cast was as follows:

A Christian Merchant..............................James Green
A Magian Merchant....................................Jack Waltzer
A Buddhist Merchant..............................Graham Jarvis
A Mahometan Captain..............................John McCurry
A Corporal.............................................John Phillip Law
Donato..................................................Crystal Field
Nicolo Polo............................................Lou Frizzell
Maffeo Polo..........................................David Strong
Tedaldo..................................................David J. Stewart
A Dominican Monk..............................Barry Primus
A Papal Courier....................................Scott Cunningham
A Prostitute..........................................Virginia Kaye
A Dervish.............................................Jim Ray-James
Chayan................................................Harold Scott
General Bayan.....................................Stanley Beck

Designing the settings and lights was David Hays with Beni Montresor
providing the costumes.

The reviews of the opening performance, February 20, indicate
that the critics with the exception of one, John Chapman of the New
York Daily News, found little fault with the acting and staging of
Marco Millions. Five out of six of the major New York reviewers gave

high praise to the production. However, when the criticism of the play is included in the analysis, the final results are less enthusiastic: one was an unfavorable review, two were favorable with reservations, and three were favorable. Chapman, the dissenting reviewer, felt that *Marco Millions* was a bad play, and that the production was a stylized "bore." Watts and Kerr considered the production to be excellent, but declared that the play was bad O'Neill. McClain, Taubman, and Nadel all agreed that the play was not a good example of O'Neill, but that it was the job of the Repertory Theatre to produce such plays, a point with which Kerr was also in agreement. These three gentlemen contended that the production was excellent.

John Chapman, in his unfavorable review, considered the play to be "heavy-footed and almost juvenile satire about the materialistic civilization of the West." He felt that "Eugene O'Neill's lead-footed fantasy" was a "thudding bore."  

"The play is not and never has been one of O'Neill's more successful assaults upon the malleable clay of the theatre," said Walter Kerr. The play had "no internal momentum, comic or philosophical." Specifically, Kerr maintained that "the language . . . was boyishly contemporary," cutting through the atmosphere of fantastic storytelling. This hampered the play because "the moment he [O'Neill] . . . had made his initial thrust . . . he had undercut the exotic atmosphere upon which he would have liked to lean a little later."

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To Kerr, O'Neill had opened the play with a cartoon of the "babbity" Marco who misses everything of real value and who continues to miss it "for nine or ten scenes, without ever acquiring . . . broad comic buoyancy."\(^3\) It was Richard Watts' unfavorable contention that humor had never been a forte of Eugene O'Neill, and that *Marco Millions,* "a disappointing play," showed this vividly. He felt that the caricature of Marco Polo was "mean-spirited without being humorous or pointed" and was "a tedious and uninteresting cardboard figure." However, from Watts' view, the emperor, Kublai Khan, and his advisor, Chu-Yin, were more attractive characters and some of their scenes were "written with more eloquence than O'Neill could often muster." But no matter how much Watts admired O'Neill, he could not "believe *Marco Millions* worthy of him."

Taubman, on the other hand, asserted that even though *Marco Millions* did not belong with O'Neill's finest plays, it did have "a good deal to say to us." "If O'Neill's sarcasm was ponderous, his crystal ball was . . . unclouded." It was true, Taubman felt, that O'Neill's irony was "laid on heavy and savagely," but "not all of the irony was transparent" or "outdated." The strength of the play, to Taubman, was "its evocation of the atmosphere of history and pageantry to say pungent things about the values of the twenties."

In John McClain's favorable view, Eugene O'Neill "was incapable of writing an inconsequential play." The main problem was that "the

message . . . was somewhat tired and tarnished at this juncture." The lines of *Marco Millions*, in Norman Nadel's thinking, were "seldom subtle but always ruthlessly satirical." The problems were with the "intermittent eloquence" of the play, and the fact that the later scenes seemed to "drag because they were not as compactly written as the first act."35

Near the end of the first season, Richard Coe, the drama critic of the *Washington Post*, reviewed *Marco Millions* for his newspaper. He was highly critical of the reactions of the New York reviewers toward the play. For Coe, *Marco Millions* was gratifying and "spectacular and, for all its years, strikingly contemporary." He felt that it had been an evening filled with "a melange of color, high romance, sharp comment, and delicious ironies."36

On the whole, the acting of *Marco Millions* was favorably received, but here again Chapman cast a dissenting vote. He was biting in his censure of Hal Holbrook and Zohra Lambert: "Holbrook played Marco as if he were Douglas Fairbanks the Elder doing Robin Hood," and "about all Zohra Lambert could do with this role of the princess was to look sad and sound sadder."

John McClain also drew an analogy between Douglas Fairbanks and Hal Holbrook, but with a different connotation because McClain "thought

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he Holbrook] was excellent." McClain maintained the same view toward David Wayne, Joseph Wiseman, and Zohra Lambert. Watts, Kerr, Nadel, and Taubman were also favorable in their appraisals of the performances of these same actors, with David Wayne receiving the more laudatory comments.

In John Chapman's opinion, Jose Quintero's direction was "desperately stylized." He felt "it might have come off better on a proscenium stage." The remaining five critics were unanimous in their appraisal of Quintero's staging. All seemed smitten by the theatricality and inventiveness employed by Quintero. His use of the center stage as a canal in Venice, the actors ascending the rigging of a ship taking Polo and the princess to Persia, and other such attempts at spectacle did not, in their view, make Marco Millions an important play nor correct its faults. But the spectacle did provide "the explicit contrast of spiritual and materialistic values which the play required."38

Norman Nadel contended that the settings of David Hays and the costumes of Beni Montresor would "impress audiences more than anything else." All of the reviewers, with the exception of Chapman who neglected to make any comment, intoned high praise on Hays' settings which they declared were "rich in color . . . and often visually satisfying."39 The same basic views were expressed about Montresor's costumes which the critics felt were "the visual focal point, as

opulently beautiful as . . . [they were] functional.  

Other prominent critics had little to say concerning this production. Brustein contended that it was impossible to say anything. Had the play been produced on Broadway he would have deigned not to attend at all, but since it was at the Repertory Theatre, the work "ask to be treated as if it were really worthy of serious consideration." This he could not do. Henry Hewes contended that the leading roles were shockingly poor in their portrayal, and Otis Guernsey classified the production as "an interesting failure."

But For Whom Charlie

On March 12, 1964, the Lincoln Center Repertory Theatre presented the premier performance of S.N. Behrman's new comedy, But For Whom Charlie. It was the theatre's third and final production of the first season.

The plot of this play evolves around the struggles between a modest gentleman, the founder of a foundation for writers, "who is an easy touch for disreputable authors," and a former college friend who is managing the foundation and "who wants to be tough with the alcoholics and neurotics." Seymour, the modest founder, has

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established the foundation "out of a sense of guilt for his late father's artistic transgressions as a multi-millionaire movie producer." Charlie, his friend and the manager of the foundation, "is a full-time loud-mouth and a lecher on the side." He is sleeping with an actress named Faith who has a compulsion to help the writing career of her brother, Willard. Willard hates his step-mother, Gilian, and wants to sleep with her. Gilian is not sure whether she wants to sleep with him, Charlie, or Seymour. "Seymour loves Faith, who loves Seymour, Charlie, her brother, and a bassoon player named Harry." This synopsis gives some idea as to the complexities of the plot and sub-plot of this play.

Jason Robards, Jr. was again cast in a major role, that of Seymour. Ralph Meeker portrayed Charlie; Faye Dunaway, a former member of the training group, was Faith; Clinton Kimbrough, also a training group member, appeared as Willard; and Salome Jens was playing Gilian. The other cast members were:

- Naomi Saunders
- Anna
- Brock Dunnaway
- Harry Lorch
- Sheila Maloney
- Patricia Roe
- Diana Shalet
- David Wayne
- Michael Strong
- Barbara Loden

This play was Elia Kazan's second directorial assignment of the season with Jo Mielziner again providing the scenery and lighting. Theoni V. Aldredge designed the costumes.

Mielziner's design of the setting for But For Whom Charlie was based on this concept:

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Even though Charlie is a . . . conventional play it does not need the extreme naturalism of a box set. Behrman's play needs veracity rather than literal execution. Truth is not a matter of the number of square feet of wall. It is, rather, how true that piece is that symbolizes the wall; the quality of what is suggested by a real object or implied by an abstract element.\footnote{The Annual of the Repertory Theatre of Lincoln Center, Barry Hyams, ed. (New York: Hill & Wang, 1964), p. 72.}

Such a philosophy was necessary if the play, conceived for a proscenium stage, was to be mounted on the AFTA-Washington Square Theatre's thrust stage. However, a number of the reviewers did not agree with Mielziner.

An analysis of the six major reviews of this production reveals a hesitancy on the part of most of the six critics to make a definite judgment. Norman Nadel and John Chapman were the exceptions. Nadel was definitely unfavorable in his critique of the play and the production. Chapman believed the play was the type of play the company should be doing because it was not a "Broadway-type" play. He also felt the performances by the repertory company actors were good. The other reviewers tended to be reserved in their comments. Kerr, on the whole, was unfavorable in his appraisal, but he leaned toward favoring the play. In his opinion the production was poor, and therefore, tended to discredit the play. Taubman saw both good and bad in the two elements—the play and the production. Watts and McClain agreed that the production was well-acted, but felt the play was too cluttered and tended to ramble.

Nadel thought But For Whom Charlie was "incomprehensible." It was Nadel's impression that the characters, with the exception of...
Brook Dunnaway played by David Wayne, were "far-fetched, painfully postured and distastefully precious." "It . . . is almost impossible to believe in their relationships," said Mr. Nadel. There was one bright spot, however, and that was Mr. Wayne's role. Nadel was sorry that Behrman had not written the entire play as cleverly as he had written that role.

John Chapman felt that Behrman was "digging into the reasons why people are individuals instead of just people." However, Chapman did concede that the play would probably not survive on Broadway because it did not have "a bang-bang, laugh-laugh plot." But, to Chapman, this was why the play was the best offering of the season by the Repertory Theatre. For the Daily News critic, the play did not have "magnitude" or "profundity" as a dramatic exercise, but it did possess an "enormous amount of charm."47

Walter Kerr contended that there was a lack of full development of all the characters of the play and their relationships, but that it was better than it looked in this production.48 In Howard Taubman's opinion "the spine of the play was soft." Behrman had "neglected not only the skeleton of his play, but also a good deal of its flesh and blood." In Taubman's view the basic fault lay in "the slackness of the play's structure and the infirmities of its characterization."49


Richard Watts asserted that the play was "frequently much too scattered." Although written with "grace, urbanity, wit, and intelligence," Watts felt the play "rambled instead of concentrating its fire." On the other hand, McClain had complaints with the cluttered quality of the play, but contended that when everything was reduced to two or three people, it was "pure platinum."50

The acting honors of this production went to David Wayne. The critics were unanimous in their acclaim for his performance. Walter Kerr summed up the majority of opinion when he said: "If everybody isn't careful, they're soon going to be calling this the David Wayne Repertory Company." Next was Jason Robards, Jr. for his portrayal of Seymour. Ralph Meeker's notices were mixed with a predominance of unfavorable ones. An example of the latter was in Norman Nadel's review: "Ralph Meeker plays Charlie like a nervous trombonist blowing his brains out on a single, sustained note. No shading or shaping to the role." The other actors in the production received moderate comments from the critics.

Nadel blamed the direction of Kazan as much as the writing for the outcome of the production. Neither Kerr nor Taubman were complimentary about Kazan's direction. However, McClain felt that Kazan had "directed with exceptional shades of understanding."

The hesitancy on the part of the newspaper reviewers seemed to carry over to Henry Hewes of the Saturday Review. An analysis shows a

lack of definitive judgments about But For Whom Charlie. The resemblance of the sister, brother, and stepmother of the play to the family of Eugene O'Neill (a point not mentioned by the newspaper critics) tended to distract the focus of Hewes from the social comedy Behrman had "partly written." On the whole, Hewes wished Behrman had been more profound but contended that Behrman's wit and David Wayne's performance made a contribution to the 1963-64 New York theatre season.52

McCarten of The New Yorker blamed the "shapeless seriocomic work." The plot was confusing and the motivations of the characters of the play did not come through. Wayne and Mielziner's set and lighting were the best elements of the production. Brustein was caustic in his denial of the production. Behrman's work was "trivial maundering" and banal. Brustein also attacked the acting, direction, and policy of the Repertory Theatre concerning this play and the past two of the theatre's first season.

In all, the major portion of blame for the failure of the production was placed by the critics on the actors and Elia Kazan. As Nadel said: "He and the cast have robbed it [the play] of any subtleties and graces that normally might be expected to embellish a sophisticated and, in some respects, witty drawing-room comedy."

52 Ibid.
The more studied opinions of Hewes, Brustein, and McCarten, however, did little to exonerate Behrman for the failure of the production.

**Summer Plans**

In May, the Repertory Theatre announced that it would drop its productions of *Marco Millions* and *But For Whom Charlie* from its schedule after the last subscription week of June 23, and that *After the Fall* would carry on alone. The theatre's officials announced at the same time that the reason for the change from the original schedule was the negligible interest in these two productions. *After the Fall*, due to the publicity derived in part from the controversy over the play, commanded a high audience demand.55 *Marco Millions* and *But For Whom Charlie* each received a run of forty-nine performances. In addition to its forty-nine performances during the regular season, *After the Fall* received an additional 109 performances during the summer months. These latter performances were strictly for the general public.56

This scheduling change invoked by Whitehead and Kazan caused a great deal of criticism toward the company. Richard Coe felt that the theatre was turning commercial and that repertory was "out the window."57 This criticism was not entirely justified. According to Tyrone Guthrie, one of the advantages of repertory is that "a flop can be tactfully and inconspicuously eliminated from the program."58 This is exactly what the leaders of the company were

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56Morning Telegraph (N.Y.), April 18, 1964.
doing—eliminating the "flops" of the season and leaving the play the audiences had shown they wished to see. The Stage, published in London, stated that one benefit of repertory was the choice of the management to "give extra performances of those which attract the public and fewer of those which fail to find favour." 59

Reactions Toward the First Season

Now that the salutes to a brave new venture are over the Repertory Theatre has settled into the inevitable position of sitting duck. . . . Its critics now feel free to take over all swipes at policy, immediate results and all future prospects. 60

This was the position the Lincoln Center Repertory Theatre occupied just two short months after its doors were opened to the public. The main criticisms were leveled at play selection, too great an emphasis on playwrights, the use of American plays, and the acting and directing of the season.

The main criticism toward the selection of plays was based on a belief that the theatre should be concentrating on building up a backlog of classical works. These critics, championed by Robert Brustein, were upset with the selection of two new plays and what they considered an unimportant O'Neill script. 61 In general, it would seem

60 Morning Telegraph, loc. cit.
this criticism was unfounded. Why did the critics wait until after the productions had been mounted before making their positions known? The plans of Whitehead and Kazan had not been kept secret. Both men had been quite open in their discussion of plays. If there was disagreement with these plans, why were they not aired earlier? Secondly, it is the task of the directors of any repertory project to decide its goals. The production of new works had been one of the announced goals of this theatre's directors. It was not their intention to make the Repertory Theatre a classical theatre. It would seem that the critics were disturbed because their idea of a repertory theatre's goals had not been adopted. As for Marco Millions being a poor selection, nearly all of the six major critics supported its selection for the season. "It seems only reasonable that we should be able to survey his [O'Neill's] lesser works, like this one," said John McClain. Walter Kerr saw two reasons for its scheduling: (1) "It is time we saw O'Neill in our own perspective, and that means the whole range of O'Neill." (2) "What can the flexible new stage of the ... playhouse make us see in the play that we might have missed before?"  

In April, 1964, Harold Clurman announced that the theatre's first season had been atypical of its over-all plans. He stated that the next season the company would concentrate on classical repertory, and that this had been the original plan. For this first season, Clurman went on to say, a concentration on American plays had been adopted because the leaders had felt it was appropriate for the

inaugural season of an American repertory theatre. This statement by Clurman drew the fire of several critics. These critics felt the statement had been ambiguous. Their position was why begin the theatre with an exception? If classical repertory was the original plan, the first season should express that plan. The most serious problem they saw, however, was that Clurman's statement sounded apologetic and defensive. These critics felt that perhaps the leaders were "reluctant to run the critical gauntlet again," and therefore, felt it would be "easier going with the classical properties." This criticism would have had validity if Clurman's statement had announced a shift in objective, but it had not. Whitehead and Kazan had always maintained that the theatre would also deal with classics of other countries and the whole history of dramatic literature (Above, p. 80). Clurman's statement had not said the theatre would devote itself to the classics, but rather that the theatre would not devote itself to American plays.

Another important criticism directed at the theatre was on the over-emphasis placed by the theatre on playwrights. This, too, would have been a justified criticism, if such an emphasis had not been announced as a major portion of the leaders' philosophies. Whitehead, Kazan, and many other professionals in the theatre had felt that one of the major ills of the American theatre was the

64Martin Gootfried, Women's Wear Daily, April 15, 1964.
65Ibid.
shortage of good playwrights. Whitehead and Kazan, from the beginning, had announced their intention to do something about this problem through the facilities of the Repertory Theatre. (Above, pp. 79-80)

Kazan endured a healthy share of the criticism of the first season. The main point was that "his direction fell far short of his potential." He seemed "uncomfortable, insecure, imaginatively unresponsive in his present circumstances," said his critics. Perhaps the man was attempting to try something new, to broaden his horizons. Many of these critics earlier had praised the coming of the Repertory Theatre because it would allow such experimentation. Kerr, although critical, also felt that Kazan was attempting "to teach himself how to manage styles he had not dared before. One could only admire a man bent on extending his reach, above all a phenomenally successful man who had very little to gain and a great deal to lose in the daring." 

Robert Brustein had begun early to question the assignment of Kazan as director of the repertory project. Kazan had been nurtured in the commercial theatre, and this was all he knew. By the end of the first season of the company, Brustein contended that his position was completely correct. Kazan's objectives, he asserted, had narrowed. Kazan was mounting plays which would be more effective behind a proscenium. Brustein criticized both Whitehead and Kazan

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68 Ibid.

for their selection of plays and players and said that Kazan had taken away what professional competence the players had possessed. Broadway had lost a good director, and Lincoln Center had gained a bad one.70

The acting company also braved a share of the criticism, especially the female members of the group. The critics had decided that But For Whom Charlie had been "massacred by the playing."71 This was due, the critics said, to "the company's lack of humor. With the exception of Wayne, Robards, and Holbrook, all the players had a solemn portentousness about 'Acting.'"72 Both Edward Sothern Hipp and John Chapman felt that the most serious weaknesses were on the distaff side. Chapman said, "The women of the Repertory Theatre don't seem to fit repertory, although they are interesting individually."73 Hipp felt that the company needed "a few more experienced actresses."74 Brustein was vehement in his attack on the actors. In his estimation the actors of the repertory company were so limited in ability "that a stock actor like David Wayne could walk off with the honors."

The players, Brustein asserted, had "marbles in their mouths," "moved like sleepwalkers," and were "mannered and remote."75

The officials of the Repertory Theatre did not stand idly by

72 Coe, loc. cit.
74 Hipp, loc. cit.
while their first season was being criticized. Said Harold Clurman:

A repertory theatre, being a new thing with us, is expected to please everybody. A company ... which resolves to devote itself largely to plays of classic stamp displeases those who feel that what we most sorely need ... is more American dramatists. Others find concentration on contemporary American plays parochial and disheartening, ... and there are some who behave as if they cannot abide anything less than the first rate. (These are usually infrequent playgoers without much appetite for the theatre.) For some reason, a new repertory company, in New York particularly, is expected to satisfy both groups at the same time and, American fashion, right away.76

Tyrone Guthrie, although not speaking as a member or official of the Lincoln Center group, had something to say in support of a program of American plays.

Americans very naturally want to see plays by their native writers and about their own environment. Equally, naturally, they resent the notion that any imported article, be it a play, a carpet, a suit of clothes, or a grand piano, must necessarily be superior to its home-made equivalent. Such a notion is always insulting and frequently false. ... Between O'Neill and the present time there has come into being a considerable American drama.77

To answer the criticism of the announced plans to include classics in the second season program, Whitehead stated that the company "couldn't confine [itself] to American plays if [it] wished to" because there were not "enough of stature to keep a repertory company in business."78

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77Tyrone Guthrie, "Filling the Blank," Ibid., p. 90.

78Morning Telegraph, loc. cit., April 18, 1964.
future the theatre would consider itself fortunate if it could find one new script a year. 79

Kazan published his rebuttal in an article in the New York Times. In this article he stated that much of the dissension concerned what the theatre should be, but that all the dissenting critics differed in their conclusions. It was Kazan's belief that the company had not set out to imitate, but rather had set out, simply, to become itself. It was his further contention that the attacks had started long before the theatre had actually gone into production. It had become the thing to do. It was also his belief that the either/or—success or failure, right or wrong, Broadway or repertory—way of thinking was wrong and that much of the criticism stemmed from this. 80 Kazan asserted that the basis of the judgments against the company was a result of American's finding it "difficult to understand the concept of process. In the Arts, that is." He felt that the public and the critics recognized "that it sometimes took years in a lab before a solution could be found to an industrial problem. But in the arts [they thought] in terms of the overnight sensation and the sudden genius." 81

Kazan was certain that the critics had never measured After the Fall. "It had measured them." He felt that most had "overlooked its genuine accomplishments to point out its minor faults." He confessed that "certain mistakes in . . . production" had been

79 Ibid.
81 Ibid.
made in Maroo Millions and But For Whom Charlie. It was his belief that But For Whom Charlie was hurt by mounting it on a thrust stage. "It needed an intimate setting and the attention of specialists." Kazan also felt that he was not "the best possible director" for the Behrman play. Kazan was proud of the first season despite the criticism. To Kazan, the important thing was that the company was together and working. It had put up a beautiful new theatre and had "begun to assemble an acting company, one . . . full of promise." 83

The Deficit

The Lincoln Center Repertory Theatre had ended its first season with a deficit of $300,000. This amount had been used partly to defray the costs of a fifteen week rehearsal period which would no longer be required. 84 This deficit had been predicted in January by the theatre officials. At that time they were aware that the theatre would lose approximately that amount "even if every ticket were sold for every performance." 85

The theatre's first season had had a subscription sale of 46,500 and a box office total of $640,000 or 81% of the capacity. 86 This was

82 Ibid.
83 Ibid.
a successful and auspicious way for the Repertory Theatre to begin its career. For comparison, a look at the records of the Tyrone Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis shows that it ended its first season with an 84½% capacity. To cover the deficit the theatre was able to call upon various financial sources, such as foundation grants and individual contributions. These grants and contributions made up the Vivian Beaumont Allen Fund, named after the late Mrs. Allen.

One thing was certain, the Repertory Theatre had begun. The first step of what was hoped would be a long journey was completed. It could not be called an unconditional success. There had been much criticism leveled at the theatre's art and its policy, but as Whitehead said: "We have opened a door to a little room that is not entirely tidy as yet, but we did get the door open and we are doing our best." The question in the minds of the theatre's critics was: would the next year sweep away the remaining cobwebs or sweep away the present company?

87The Annual of the ..., loc. cit., I, p. 97.
88Zolotow, loc. cit.
89Morning Telegraph, loc. cit., April 18, 1964.
CHAPTER VI

THE SECOND SEASON

The first season of the Repertory Theatre of Lincoln Center had personified the two most important elements of the Whitehead-Kazan philosophy—the presentation of new works by American authors and a concentration on American plays. This had not proven as successful as its leaders had hoped. The disappointment was not in the box office sales, but rather in the reaction to their philosophy or policy. The schedule of the second season reflected this reaction. However, the co-directors were staying within their over-all philosophy. Instead of scheduling another season of American works for this second year, Kazan and Whitehead shifted to a secondary aspect of their policy and programmed two classics, a contemporary classic, and, still insistent on presenting new works despite the critical attacks on the first season, a second play by Arthur Miller. The second season was to open on October 29, 1964, with The Changeling, one of the classics. This was to be followed by Miller's new play, Incident at Vichy. On January 13, 1965, the second classic, Tartuffe, was to be opened to the critics and public, and on February 18, The Madwoman of Chaillot.\(^1\) After the

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opening schedules of all four productions, they were to be run in repertory being joined with the first season hold-over, *After the Fall*.

Several changes took place within the theatre before its second season was underway. George D. Woods, president of the repertory constituent, was forced to resign from this post. His duties as head of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development forced him to spend most of his time in Washington, D. C. As a result, Mr. Woods felt he could not devote the proper time to his post with the Repertory Theatre. He did agree to serve as chairman of the board and to remain as a member of Lincoln Center's board. Robert L. Hoguet, Jr. was elected by the theatre's board of directors to replace Woods. Hoguet was the executive vice president of the First National City Bank of New York, in charge of its trust and investment division. It was the First National City Bank that had loaned ANTA the funds to build the ANTA-Washington Square Theatre.

The acting company of the theatre remained the same, with the exception of Jason Robards, Jr. Robards had taken a leave of absence from the repertory company at the end of the scheduled performances of the first season. His role in *After the Fall* was taken over by Hal Holbrook, who played the character through the summer program and would continue in the part during the second season performances. Robards left the company with the understanding that he would return

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at a later date to fulfill the year still remaining on his contract. Robards left the company "because he could not manage on his income there."3

The Changeling

Many of the critics of the Repertory Theatre had been vehement in their protest against the lack of classics in the first season of plays. Perhaps to remedy this situation or perhaps to merely adhere to their philosophies, the repertory leaders selected the Jacobean play, The Changeling, to open the theatre's second season on October 29. The play had been written by two contemporaries of William Shakespeare, Thomas Middleton and William Rowley.

The plot of this play is so complicated and involved that it is not possible to detail it here. In the main it has to do with a young maiden betrothed to one man chosen by her father, but in love with another. The only way out of her dilemma, she decides, is to murder her proper fiancé. The servant of her father, smitten with the young woman, is willing to do the murder. She accepts his offer despite her feeling of loathing for him. Upon carrying out the deed, he expects the young maiden as a reward. She is a virgin and must remain so for her wedding night, but is forced to submit to the murderer. She marries her true love and on their bridalt night, afraid that her husband will discover she is not a virgin, forces her waiting-woman,

who is conveniently murdered thereafter, to take her place in the
bridal bed. The young maiden is discovered and before the play
concludes "the stage is knee-deep in bodies and gore;" there is an
explicit study of Bedlam, the ancient asylum for the deranged; and
the ghost of the murdered fiancee roaming throughout the play hold-
ing up the bloody stump of a forefinger his killer had chopped off
in order to get a ring. 4

Appearing in the role of the young maiden, Beatrice, was
Barbara Loden, the young lady who had succeeded so well the previous
season in After the Fall. The other major roles were also played by
past members of the training group—John Law, Barry Primus, Lanna
Saunders, and Harold Scott. The cast breakdown was as follows:

Lollio................................................................. David J. Stewart
Alsemero.......................................................... John Phillip Law
Beatrice............................................................. Barbara Loden
Diaphanta......................................................... Lanna Saunders
Jasperino.......................................................... James Green
De Flores.......................................................... Barry Primus
Vermandero....................................................... Paul Mann
Antonio.............................................................. Stanley Beck
Franciscus......................................................... Jack Waltzer
Pedro................................................................. Clinton Kimbrough
Albicus.............................................................. Michael Strong
Isabella.............................................................. Diane Shalet
Alonzo............................................................... Harold Scott
Tomayo............................................................. Scott Cunningham

The production was staged by Elia Kazan with David Hays providing the
scenery and lighting, and Ben Edwards designing the costumes. 5

4Norman Nadel, "'Changeling' Is Still Eye-Popper," New York
World-Telegram and Sun, October 30, 1964.

5Whitney Bolton, "'Changeling' Fiasco for All Concerned," Morning
To prepare for this production, Kazan and his company of players read "extensively in the Jacobean period." The actors took lessons in voice, speech, and fencing. For further preparation Kazan had the group discussing the play among themselves, "trying to look at the play, not as an English company might, but from their own point of view, as if it the play had never been produced before." Kazan was attempting to find a point of view, and one that would be unique with this production. There are indications that Kazan had planned to satirize the play; however, there is no definite evidence to support this. The final product, at any rate, was not what Kazan had envisioned for the production was devastated by the reviews of the major critics.

The six critics of the major New York daily newspapers were almost unanimous in their decisions. Four of the six published unfavorable reviews. Taubman, however, tended to be favorable with reservations. In his opinion it was a poor play; the direction, especially of the first act, was not good; and the acting only fair. The one saving grace for Taubman was the fact that the play should be done by the Repertory Theatre. Nadel published what appeared from the title to be a favorable review, but close scrutiny shows that he actually said little. For Nadel, the play was enjoyable. The beginning of the review indicates that he felt it was a case of poor production, but in the main body of his analysis he offers nothing

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but praise. All in all it definitely was not an auspicious beginning for the second season, a critical period for the company due to the reactions toward its first season.

With the exception of Norman Nadel, the critics were unanimous in their appraisal of the play itself. Walter Kerr called it "calculated claptrap;" John Chapman, "quaint melodrama with no literary style;" John McClain, "pretentious poppycock;" and Richard Watts, "more a ... curiosity than a living dramatic masterpiece." To be more explicit, Kerr considered it to be sick tragedy in somewhat the way we have sick comedy. "Its sickness was more nearly lowbrow-leering than sophisticated." The consensus of opinion was that the plot was ludicrous and disjointed, devoid of any literary style, a poor man's Shakespeare. Richard Watts, however, felt it had moments "of characteristic pseudo-Shakespearean eloquence," derived from the "serious probings into the ugly recesses of character." However, Nadel found the play to be "lusty, bold, and bawdy." The elements of the play that annoyed the other critics seemed to be the basis of Nadel's favorable opinion of the script.

They weren't subtle, they weren't refined, and they didn't give a royal hoot for realism, naturalism or any other dramatic niceties. But they knew the theatre should make people's eyes pop, and they wrote accordingly.10

10Nadel, loc. cit.
The selection of *The Changeling* as a part of the repertory season was a bone of contention. Kerr, McClain, and Chapman were completely against its inclusion in the program. To these gentlemen, its selection was "foolish," unimaginable, and "a thoroughly bad choice." Howard Taubman, alone, made a definitive statement in support of the decision. Taubman asserted that the play deserved to be done, "and a permanent repertory theatre that means to serve the drama as an art with a proud history is the place to do it." Taubman's main reservation was about the production.

No critic was laudatory in his appraisal of the acting by the repertory company in *The Changeling*. For the most part they were just the opposite. On the whole it was felt the style, verse, and demands of the play were beyond the capabilities of these younger members of the company. Kazan had cast the major roles of the production, to a great extent, from the former members of the training group. In several cases the critics were overwhelming in their censure. Miss Loden received the brunt of the critical wrath. Kerr likened her performance to "Glynis Johns doing a parody on *The Trojan Women* or looking at Mary Pickford spraying blood all over Sunnybrook Farm."

Chapman considered her performance to be "remarkably unexciting ... flat of voice, manner, and bosom." Both McClain and Watts felt that she was still playing "the Marilyn Monroe of *After the Fall,*" however,

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Watts did feel the portrayal was "competent without being brilliant."
Nadel, on the other hand, contended that Miss Loden was "just right for her part." Barry Primus survived the reviews rather well. There was unanimous agreement from the critics that Primus was the closest to the correct style and manner dictated by the play. As Kerr said, he was the only one leading "any sort of natural life beneath the flowering ruff at his neck." Four of the reviewers—Kerr, McClain, Chapman, and Watts—attacked the acting of the company, as a whole. Kerr felt that patience must be shown to "the poor players (most of whom are in fact poor, or at the most only moderately talented, players)." McClain and Chapman were deeply concerned with the lack of classical projection. Chapman, in fact, compared the performances to "high school students of what used to be called elocution when elocution was good and lousy." Obviously the acting of the production had been far from successful.

The critics were even less complimentary concerning Kazan's direction of the production. The consensus of opinion was that here was the source of the production's problems. It was in the evaluation of the staging that there seemed to be a complete unanimity among the reviewers. All seemed to say basically the same thing, but Walter Kerr expressed it more concisely in an article two weeks after the opening performance.

Kazan himself behaves in altogether uncharacteristic fashion, obviously he feels out of place in a world of metrical passion. If the play were ... contemporary ..., he would know exactly what to do with it. ... He would imagine a
heat for his players, and get heat from them. ... Here his natural instincts are put entirely to one side, as though they had no proper place in earlier drama, as though earlier drama were an artifice wholly divorced from the real. ... Even when he approaches the kind of earthy sensuality he has always done well, he artificializes it.\textsuperscript{12}

It is comments such as this one which seem to support the supposition that Kazan was groping for a different point of view that did not come together in all facets of the production. Kerr, in his review of the play, stated that "the basic mystery was the mystery of a director's intention."\textsuperscript{13} Kerr also pointed out what appeared to be Kazan's attempts to be funny in a socially satirical way. Had he been able to unite all of the production elements the final product might have been more pertinent and less ludicrous in the eyes of his critics. Richard Watts made an interesting comment: Kazan had taken a basically confusing play and had added to this confusion to the point of bewilderment. "A touch of simplicity might have been most helpful," but "he declined to leave anything to the imagination."\textsuperscript{14} Taubman was inclined to admire "Kazan's courage in tackling a drama of this order with predominantly youthful elements of the company." But Kerr showed less admiration, for in his opinion "a child was being taught to walk by someone who doesn't honestly see the sense in walking."\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{12}Kerr, loc. cit.


\textsuperscript{14}Taubman, loc. cit.

\textsuperscript{15}Kerr, loc. cit., November 15, 1964.
The scenery and lighting of David Hays and the costumes of Ben Edwards were the most praise-worthy elements of the repertory company's production, according to the majority of the critics. There was a concordance of opinion that the creations of both designers were "imaginative and wonderful, much too good for what happens within their scope." Walter Kerr was the one dissenting voice concerning the work of Mr. Hays. It was his contention that the acting areas were "cramped, fussy, and overdecorated with Gothic gimcracks. Seen together they did not make a unit." Once again Mr. Kerr argued with the use of the thrust stage. To him the theatre had once again offered "a visual image which could be accommodated just as well inside a proscenium," a criticism he had leveled throughout the first season.

Robert Brustein of The New Republic, enjoying the company of the majority of the six newspaper critics, again brought forth an impassioned attack upon the Repertory Theatre. Supporting the play and its writing, he laid the blame on Kazan and his actors. The production was a debacle in Brustein's view. Kazan had not discovered the meaning of the play nor had he indicated "the slightest interest of trying to find out." Kazan had been too busy introducing "his own interpolations." Brustein, along with Kerr, made a point of the blatant use of sex by Kazan. Brustein and Kerr contended that

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16 McClain, loc. cit.
Kazan had been overly concerned with "undressing his female characters and having them copulate" before the eyes of the audience. In his criticism of the acting of the play, let it suffice to say that Brustein contended that it would have "disgraced the theatre club of South Dakota Subnormal Junior High." 19

Henry Hewes was less passionate, but nevertheless unfavorable, in his reactions to *The Changeling*. Like his colleagues, he assigned the major portion of the blame to Kazan. Hewes' view was that Kazan was too concerned with finding a modern authenticity in the play's events. As a result, Kazan established a correlation between several minor points and today's society, but, in so doing, made a major part of the play meaningless. Hewes further attacked what appeared to be Kazan's insistence on a stilted delivery of lines by the actors. Although one can admire Kazan's stubborn defiance of convention, Hewes concluded, the production lacked "even the interest that might have been provided by the full development of a misguided notion." 20

McCarten of *The New Yorker* also placed the blame on Kazan and his indecision over whether to spoof the period of the play or to take it seriously. 21

Whereas the plurality of the reviewers considered the production to be "deeply embarrassing" and "disappointing," Nadel contended that it generated new respect for the Repertory Theatre because the


company and Kazan had divorced the play from the present and stylistically returned it to the past. One can only wonder if in the eyes of Kazan this was a compliment. It is possible that the point of view Kazan was attempting to reach would have given it more meaning for the present, since it had been his stated philosophy that every play of the theatre would attempt just this.

**Incident at Vichy**

Arthur Miller, a playwright who had divorced himself from the theatre for eight years until enticed to finish a play for the first season of the Repertory Theatre, was suddenly fired with enthusiasm for this company and completed a second play which opened at the ANTA-Washington Square Theatre on December 3, 1964. The title of the play was *Incident at Vichy*, and it dealt with a day's happenings in a Nazi police station in Vichy, France, during World War II. With this police station as a background the play has a dozen doomed Jews "as symbols of man's case against man." Each of these men has something to say before being led away to the Nazi horror, and what they say develops Miller's argument and prepares the viewer for the final confrontation. The two strongest characters, a Jewish doctor and a Gentile Austrian prince, are the last two to be questioned. Obviously the doctor seems doomed, but the prince will certainly be spared. The doctor is suspicious of the Austrian because he feels sure that all non-Jews have within them a strain of anti-Semitism, but the prince protests that he is not a superficial idealist. It seems that Miller is saying

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that all non-Jews bear a share of the guilt, but in the end it is the
Austrian who makes the sacrifice by switching papers with the Jewish
doctor, thus dooming himself but saving the doctor. Basically, Miller
is saying that, yes, we are our brother's keeper. "No matter the cir-
cumstances, the moment, the event, the hue, the race or religion, ... he
does not want your statement of guilt—but your responsibility." 23

Joseph Wiseman and David Wayne portrayed, respectively, the
Jewish doctor, Le Duc, and Von Berg, the Austrian prince. Appearing
also in the all-male cast were:

Le Beau.................................................. Michael Strong
Bavard.................................................. Stanley Beck
Marchand.............................................. Paul Mann
Police Guard......................................... C. Thomas Blackwell
Monceau............................................... David J. Stewart
Gypsy.................................................. Harold Scott
Waiter.................................................. Jack Walter
Boy...................................................... Ira Lewis
Major.................................................. Hal Holbrook
First Detective................................. Alex Primrose
Old Jew.............................................. Will Lee
Second Detective.............................. James Dukas
Police Captain................................. James Green
Professor Hoffman............................... Clinton Kimbrough
Ferrand.............................................. Graham Jarvis

Harold Clurman, the executive consultant to the theatre, was given
the directorial assignment. Boris Aronson designed the scenery, Jean
Rosenthal, the lighting, and Jane Greenwood, the costumes.

With Incident at Vichy the Repertory Theatre received the best

23 Whitney Bolton, "Miller's 'Incident at Vichy' A Play of Stature

24 Richard Watts, Jr., "Arthur Miller Looks at the Nazis," New
reviews of its first two seasons, thus far. Four of the six gentlemen of the press were highly complimentary in their reviews, the remaining two were unfavorable but with reservations. Taubman, Nadel, and McClain were most laudatory about all phases of the production—script, acting, directing, and the technical aspects. Watts gave high praise to the production, but considered the play to be good but not Miller's best. Kerr and Chapman, while praising the production, censured the play. This was a complete reversal from the theatre's last production, The Changeling.

Taubman's review was the most complimentary of all. He considered Mr. Miller's play to be one of the most important plays of our time. He considered it "a drama of towering moral passion" that returned "the theatre to greatness." Nadel, in his review, celebrated Miller primarily and the play secondarily. For this credit it was Miller's "towering idealism . . . strengthens" rather than undermined by his awareness of men's failings" that was the most moving element. McClain was somewhat disturbed by the static quality throughout the first half of the play and its staging. But in his estimation, once the play was underway it was "an example of Mr. Miller's best writing." Watts, however, did not consider the play to be one of Miller's major works, but declared that it indicated that he was "getting back into his stride as a playwright of ideas." Watts


contended that plays dealing with Nazi savagery, in danger of becoming hackneyed, needed to find a new angle of approach, but that Miller had failed to do so. It was the force of the writing and the rising intensity of the action which made the play "arresting if not of distinguished quality." Kerr asserted that the fault of the drama lay in the fact that an audience could not feel responsible for the dramatized event. It could only feel guilty. As a result, Kerr declared, Miller oppressed rather than informed, making the performance tedious. For Kerr, this left "the theatre, as theatre, nonexistent." John Chapman saw the evening as a waste. It was "an indulgence in philosophical claptrap" with "flurries of strong language and bits of contrived theatrics."

In two aspects the critics seemed to be in complete agreement, the acting and directing. It was their considered opinion that this was the best production to date and was probably "the sort of thing the young company should have done from the start." Joseph Wiseman, David Wayne, Hal Holbrook, and Will Lee were singled out for the excellence of their performances. The latter actor, Will Lee, was, in Kerr's view, "the most evocative of the lot." Mr. Lee never spoke

a word of dialogue throughout the entire play. Clurman received a unanimous vote of approval for what the critics felt to be a difficult chore considering the restricted action.

Robert Brustein, in his most caustic manner, compared *Incident at Vichy* to "an old dray horse about to be melted down for glue." The characters, Brustein contended, were not private men but rather "public speakers, each with a symbolic role." As for the message of the play, Miller was again riding an old horse at "Recrimination Downs." In Mr. Brustein's words, Miller's sermon was "tedious, glum, and badly written." One of the major faults of the play was that it was too obvious and uncomplicated. Brustein stated that Miller's play returned the theatre to the thirties and not to greatness as Howard Taubman had said in his review. Aside from Hal Holbrook, Brustein maintained that the actors spoke in the "slack New York tonalities that we have come to think of as the Lincoln Center style."  

Henry Hewes shared many of the views of Brustein. The play was more an illustrated essay and one could seldom believe the characters were real people facing imminent extermination. However, Hewes placed the blame for the character deficiency with the form of the play itself. There was provocative substance and a certain beauty in the play, said Hewes, but the dramatic interaction seemed arbitrary. "Instead of incident we get instances," stated Henry Hewes.  

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Although Brustein rejected the play's "sermon," there were many who praised the Repertory Theatre for presenting a play with such a message. The feeling that prevailed was that had the play been produced on Broadway it would have been done because of Miller's name and in spite of its message. The majority opinion was that the repertory company had presented Incident at Vichy because of what it had to say and because it needed to be said.

### Tartuffe

The third production of the second season of the Repertory Theatre brought several new elements to the company. One was the guest director of the play, William Ball. Mr. Ball was a New York director who had gathered some fame in the field for his staging of the off-Broadway productions, *Six Characters in Search of an Author* and *Under Milkwood.* (The year after this production of *Tartuffe* Mr. Ball organized and directed, in cooperation with Carnegie Institute of Technology and the Pittsburgh Playhouse, the American Conservatory Theatre, a repertory group in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.) In addition to Mr. Ball, the company was enlarged with the contracting for this production of six new actors, Michael O'Sullivan, Larry Gates, Sada Thompson, Laurence Luckinbill, Joyce Ebert, and Claud Woolman. Thirdly, this was a new translation of Molière's play by Richard Wilbur. Mr. Wilbur had received prominence for his translation of another Molière play, *The Misanthrope,* presented off-Broadway several seasons before.

*Tartuffe* presents one of the most fascinatingly evil men ever put on the stage. The action takes place in the home of the wealthy Orgon where Tartuffe—a fraud and a pious imposter—has insinuated
himself. He succeeds in winning the respect and devotion of the head of the house and then tries to marry his daughter, seduce his wife, and inveigle the deed to the property. He almost succeeds with his plans, but at the end an emissary from King Louis XIV arrives in time to save Orgon, his family and the property; and to take Tartuffe off to jail.

Appearing in the title role was Michael O’Sullivan, retained by the company for this express purpose. Larry Gates, another imported actor, played Orgon. The remaining roles were cast as follows:

Children.............................................. Deidre Moore, Brad Leigh
Mme. Pernelle................................. Patricia Roe
Dorine............................................... Sada Thompson
Mariane............................................. Joyce Ebert
Elmire............................................... Salome Jens
Damis............................................... Laurence Luckinbill
Cleante............................................. Claud Woolman
Valere.............................................. Paul Shenar
Flipote............................................ Diane Shalet
Midwife............................................ Mariclare Costello
Laurent............................................. Alek Primrose
M. Loyal........................................... Hal Holbrook
Officer............................................ John Phillip Law

The setting for this production was designed by Mr. Hays with lighting by James Gleason. Jane Greenwood repeated her role as costume designer.35

*Tartuffe*’s premiere performance was on January 13, 1965. With this production the company for the first time was able to present two plays in succession that met with the approval of a majority of the critics. In many respects the reviews for this play surpassed the reactions toward the preceding production. In the Repertory Theatre’s two year history this was the first time the company came close to receiving a unanimous vote of approval from the six major critics. In general the reviewers were substantially favorable in their analysis.

Mr. Kerr, however, had reservations. William Ball, Kerr contended, had directed the play with too great a concern for style and gimmickry and not enough concern for the comedy of the script. In Kerr's estimation Ball came close to destroying the production. This was a point of view shared by Nadel and Taubman to a lesser degree. Taubman's main criticism was with Mr. Ball's lack of trust in his author. The exaggerations, he felt, tended to make the performance uneven. The remaining three critics, however, asserted that it was Ball's direction of the script that made the production successful. Nadel's critique showed dissatisfaction with the script and its language and verse, as did McClain's review. Watts and Chapman found little to criticize. It was the consensus of their opinions that the Lincoln Center company and Tartuffe made splendid allies.

Tyrone Guthrie's theory that classics are safer because of the reticence of critics to say anything derogatory about them seems to prove itself in an analysis of the reviews of Tartuffe. Only one reviewer, John McClain, mentions the play at all. McClain's contention was that Tartuffe was "a silly play" full of "idiocies," in the plot. However, since this was a translation, Guthrie's theory was only partially accurate. Nadel felt that Wilbur's translation was "workable for the stage, but not always artful." The use of colloquial speech, not of Molière's time, made the proceedings sound out of key for Nadel. McClain too was not completely happy with the translation. The "sing-

36Tbid.

song rhyming of this translation," stated McClain, was one of the shortcomings Ball had to overcome. \(^{38}\) Strangely enough it was these very qualities, criticized by Nadel and McClain, that impressed the other reviewers. Their opinion was that Wilbur's rhymed couplets presented the play "on Molière's verse terms." \(^{39}\) Wilbur's use of colloquialisms, they said, made Molière's point concisely and cleverly without straining. These terms made the script graceful and effortless rather than labored and cute.

The acting, on the whole, was received quite well. Mr. O'Sullivan as Tartuffe won most of the honors. Nadel, Kerr, and Taubman bestowed a great deal of the credit for the success of the production on Mr. O'Sullivan. In fact every critique was definitely influenced by O'Sullivan's performance, as evidenced by the attention placed in their reviews on his first entrance. All seemed entranced by the exaggerated quality of his performance and by the rightness of this exaggeration. Mr. Kerr was most vivid in his description of this quality: "He surrendered himself to the lustful tremble inside his man, surrendered himself until his ankles splayed and he was getting about the stage with the uncontrollable speed and unknown destination of an ice-skater whose straps have gone." \(^{40}\) Ball's direction, several contended, contributed to O'Sullivan's success because it made Tartuffe the comic and everyone else on stage his straight man. This was a reversal from the

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40 Ibid.
usual productions of the play. However, no actor's performance was viewed with disfavor by any of the critics. Larry Gates and Sada Thompson, also newcomers to the company, were second in favor with the men of the press.

William Ball's direction generated the most controversy among the critics. They tended to be either totally for it or totally against it. Ball's approach to the play was unorthodox. He staged the play broadly, keeping everybody in motion to the point of slapstick, moving the characters in groups and fixing them occasionally in brief tableaux which mimicked the paintings of the Moliere era. In the original play, Tartuffe does not appear on stage until the third of five acts, but here Ball attempted his most striking innovation. He interjected an interlude, largely in pantomime, which established the character of Tartuffe. The audience saw him in this pious office leading Orgon and his family in prayer, and as the family leaves, anointing each with water. During the latter business he reveals himself to the audience through his reaction to each member of Orgon's family. The critics seemed divided in half toward these innovations. To McClain, Watts, and Chapman, Ball's direction provided the necessary freshness and style. The spirit, zest, and sense of rebellion took the creak out of the farcical conventions and mechanics. These critics contended that the success of the production was a tribute to Ball's imagination and inventiveness. For Kerr, Nadel, and Taubman, the inventions tended to confuse the proceedings,

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to add too much exaggeration, and to pull the style and performance out of focus. Instead of revealing the vast and stubborn idiocy of Organ and his family, Ball presented "charming groupings in the half-light." His preoccupation with mannerisms placed comedy in a secondary position.

For the first time since the Repertory Theatre opened Robert Brustein was favorably impressed with one of its productions. Brustein placed the credit for the play's success with William Ball and the outside actors contracted for this particular play by Ball. It was the combined efforts of this group that showed New York that drama of the past was not "beyond the reach of American performers." Brustein classified Wilbur's translation as an "artwork in itself: crisp, idiomatic, fresh, and funny." The acting was strongly defined with O'Sullivan, Thompson, and Gates again coming in for the major share of the praise. Brustein was also concerned with Ball's interpolations and the distracting and sometime irrelevant elements they introduced. But Ball had kept the stage alive and delightful. For Brustein this production awakened a sense of possibility for the health of the theatre.

Despite what may have been specific weaknesses, this production of Tartuffe from all indications was the most artistic and inventive production performed by the Repertory Theatre under the leadership of Kazan and Whitehead, but the production also proved something. It proved that the co-directors were admitting that their own company

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was incapable of performing Tartuffe. Contrasted with its earlier production, The Changeling, this production emphasized the inadequacies of the permanent company that had been selected by Whitehead and Kazan. It had been necessary for the Repertory Theatre to cover up its weaknesses by hiring outside actors, thereby destroying the repertory ideal of an ensemble.

Reactions Toward the Second Season

Criticism toward the selection of plays for the second season of the Repertory Theatre began as soon as the program was announced. There were those who had felt that the company should concentrate on building up a backlog of classical plays, but when a season dominated by such works was announced the critics merely changed the direction of their attack. It was now their contention that the theatre was concentrating on the wrong type of classics. For these critics there was only one correct type of classic—Shakespeare. However, Kazan had announced during the planning stages of the theatre that the company would not attempt Shakespeare until it had been sufficiently trained to handle the diverse style. If The Changeling production was any indication Kazan was correct in his decision. Others felt that the scheduling of the classics in the second season was because the theatre was reluctant to run the critical gauntlet. They contended that the company felt it would "have easier going with the classical properties

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... [Because] the plays would be relatively critic-proof. Again a perusal of the reviews of The Changeling would indicate the fallacy of that conclusion.

The production of The Changeling became the thorn in the side of the Repertory Theatre. It brought an almost universal critical response--the drama was a near disaster, was a poor choice of play, was poorly directed, and showed to the public the acting weaknesses of this company. As a result, the theatre suffered financial losses. The diminished audience response forced them to withdraw the production prematurely on December 23, less than two months after it opened.47 This same production was also felt to be a contributing factor in the dispute that brought about the demise of the Whitehead-Kazan leadership. This will be fully discussed in the next chapter.

If one desires to apply Broadway standards as a criteria for judging repertory, it would seem the second season was one of which the Repertory Theatre could be proud, despite the reactions toward The Changeling. The remaining two productions, Incident at Vichy and Tartuffe, on the whole, were enthusiastically received by the reviewers. This was a record, two out of three, to be envied by any producer in the commercial theatre. But it did not seem to satisfy many of the critics of the theatre and its policy. The enthusiastic reviews did not say the theatre was perfect.

The most pronounced criticism was toward the acting of the

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company, and insisted that actors who had been together for two years should have developed a semblance of ensemble if such a quality was ever to be established. This was definitely a legitimate criticism. Throughout the season the permanent members of the company showed "a lack of cohesion and the ability to fire an audience with its performance."

When such qualities were present it was the result of two things: the cohesion and fire displayed by one or two of the more experienced members of the group, as in Incident at Vichy, or by the actors contracted by the company for one play, as in Tartuffe and the performances of Michael O'Sullivan, Larry Gates, and Sada Thompson.

The one production cast strictly from the company without the support of either of the above was considered a thorough failure.

Kazan and Clurman, however, defended their acting company. Kazan asserted that "the actors . . . were developing well," and Clurman contended that the "company was in the making." Hal Holbrook advanced an interesting answer to the critique of the actors. It was his belief that much of the trouble was due to the low morale of the company brought on by the critical reactions toward their first season. When they had begun to re-form their morale, he said, the company had been enmeshed in the managerial dispute that erupted in early December, 1964.

It was not Holbrook's contention that the actors should not be

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48 Hipp, loc. cit.


criticized, but rather that the misconception that anything better
could have been done in one year was not justified. The theatre had
presented six substantial productions, Holbrook declared, and "not
one bit of fluff." He felt the reason for the misconception was
based in the commercial idea that you have to "produce every single
time--click or you're out."\(^1\) Martin Gottfried tended to agree with
Holbrook when he said, "The Lincoln Center Repertory Theatre must be
completely free of outside pressures. . . . Repertory is whatever its
directors wish to make it."\(^2\) One of the theatre's critics, John
Chapman, admitted that the Repertory Theatre was "attaining a sense
of its own identity" and that by the end of its second season it had
"produced six plays and three of them . . . well-received--a batting
average that the commercial theatre could not match."\(^3\)

The Repertory Theatre was forced to cancel its fourth production
of the second season, *The Madwoman of Chaillot*, scheduled to open on
February 18. When the dispute between Robert Whitehead and the
theatre's board of directors erupted and Whitehead resigned, Maureen
Stapleton, who was contracted to play the leading role, resigned from
the company as a demonstration against the board of directors. The
company was unable to find a replacement for Miss Stapleton in time
to continue with the production.\(^4\)

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\(^1\) Leonard Harris, "A Critic of Repertory Critics," *New York

\(^2\) Gottfried, *loc. cit.*


Subscriptions and Budget

The Repertory Theatre operated its second season on a reported budget of $171,000. However, there must be some discrepancy in this reported figure. The theatre has never operated an entire season, before or after this one, on such a small budget. There is no way to check this matter because the final tabulations of the cost of the season in respect to this budget have never been released. This figure probably represents the budgeted deficit. The wealth of publicity that resulted from the dispute brought about this reluctance toward publicity on the part of the repertory company.

A general figure is known, however, in regard to the subscription sales. They were down nearly 20,000 from the previous season. Each production had been scheduled for forty-eight subscription performances, one fewer than the first season. By the time The Changeling opened the sale reportedly had reached between 28,000 and 29,000 subscriptions for a total of approximately $500,000. In addition to the subscription performances the theatre offered three sets of previews for each of the productions beginning October 20, November 17, and January 5. As was customary, bargain prices were offered for these performances—evenings, $5 to $2.50, and matinees, $4.50 to $2.00.

To close the second season of the Repertory Theatre and to

57Ibid.
terminate its tenure in the ANTA-Washington Square Theatre, the company scheduled for its last week of the season, May 23-29, After the Fall. 58

CHAPTER VII

THE DISPUTE

In December of 1964, less than one year after the Lincoln Center Repertory Theatre began its career in its temporary home, a dispute erupted within the upper echelon of the repertory company. Before it was settled much damage was done to this constituent of the center and to repertory in America in general. A number of factors are attributed as reasons for this dispute. Although it may be years before all of the vital statistics are known, an analysis of the known facts can lead to some general, and in some instances specific, conclusions.

A History of the Dispute

The first indication that something was happening behind the scenes at the Lincoln Center Repertory Theatre was the report in the daily newspapers of December 3, 1964, that affairs at the theatre had reached a crisis.¹ There was no official statement from the center, but reports had persisted over the past week that a reorganization of the company was imminent. These same reports had also suggested that Lincoln Center officials were investigating alternative ways of managing a repertory theatre. There had further been intimations

that the replacement of Robert Whitehead and Elia Kazan as co-directors
was under consideration. Two days after these reports were published
the newspapers followed with the story that Herman Krawitz, the business
manager of the Metropolitan Opera, had been approached by Robert
Hoguet, president of the Repertory Theatre, and William Schuman, presi-
dent of Lincoln Center, about assuming the assignment of artistic
director of the repertory project. When this offer became public,
Rudolf Bing, general manager of the Metropolitan, was infuriated by
the attempt of Hoguet and Schuman to hire his assistant away from him.
Bing berated the two men and the center for this attempted raid on
personnel and further stated that he planned to offer his resigna-
tion from the Lincoln Center Council. Robert Whitehead learned of
this offer through the published news accounts. Whitehead then
announced "that he considered recent activities of center and theatre
officials a breach of contract constituting a wrongful discharge."

Elaborating on this charge, Whitehead said:

If they were dissatisfied with the financial handling, then
how can they say they can respect my contract because
financially we've lived well beneath the contract. The con-
tract stipulates that the first year's operation would render

\(^2\)Ibid.

\(^3\)Norman Nadel, "Lincoln Center: Behind the Power Struggle,"

\(^4\)Milton Esterow, "Lincoln Center Loses Whitehead," New York
Times, December 8, 1964.


\(^6\)Joseph Gelmis, "Repertory Troupe Backs Whitehead," Newsday,
December 9, 1964.

\(^7\)Esterow, loc. cit., December 8, 1964.
up to a certain deficit. Our first year's operation will be considerably less. If I went above that figure in the contract, I would have broken the terms of my contract.8

Whitehead, who had not been informed of the reasons for the board's dissatisfaction, went on to discuss the situation from the viewpoint of the creativity of the past season. He admitted that if this was where the dissatisfaction lay he could understand for he also felt dissatisfied with the creative work. But as Whitehead said, "why do they seek a business manager?" Whitehead further stated that he had never been officially notified of any dissatisfaction with the budget or that the board was seeking the services of others.9 He then announced that, effective immediately, he was relinquishing his post with the theatre.

Whitehead's action placed the theatre in a difficult situation. Elia Kazan had already relinquished daily operational control in July of 1964. Kazan asserted at that time that he had taken this course of action because of the enormity of the demands of sharing the administrative task with Whitehead. In addition he had directed three plays in eleven months, also an enormous workload. Kazan said that he realized he would either have to give up his film company and writing, or the Repertory Theatre. His compromise was to relinquish administrative duties, for which he felt unsuited, but remain with the company as administrative advisor and occasional director. He contended

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.
that in April and again in August he attempted to formally withdraw from the executive post, but then agreed to remain until the company's Christmas vacation. In October, before the opening of The Changeling, he wrote to William Schuman and John Rockefeller suggesting that Whitehead be made sole administrator and that he, Clurman, and Arthur Miller be made artistic advisors, but received no response other than a statement that they understood. In actuality his suggestion had been in operation since July when the four men had quietly reorganized the theatre's artistic and business administration without formal sanction. Therefore, Whitehead's action in December left the Repertory Theatre without business or artistic leadership.

On December 8, the Repertory Theatre's board announced that Krawitz was unwilling to ask the Metropolitan for his release, thus compounding the problem of leadership for the theatre. With Whitehead and Kazan gone, and Krawitz refusing the post, the board of directors had no one to take over the control of the company. With this announcement by the board, the members of the repertory company attempted to pressure the board to reinstate Whitehead. In a telegram to Hoguet, sent on December 8, the members said they were

shocked and distressed to learn of the discharge of Robert Whitehead. Our purpose in being has been shattered. The vision of a vital American repertory theatre without Robert Whitehead to guide it . . . makes a mockery of the best to which we feel responsible as artists and citizens. . . . The passionate aim of this wire is to urge that Mr. Whitehead's discharge be rescinded. . . . Renew our faith in this theatre. Return Robert Whitehead to us.11


11 Gelmis, loc. cit.
This telegram brought no response from the Repertory Theatre's board of directors.

Pressure for the reinstatement of Robert Whitehead was then added from another quarter. Joseph Verner Reed, a member of the theatre's board of directors, resigned on December 13. Reed had been appointed to the board of the theatre undoubtedly because of his diverse background. The son of a wealthy financier, he followed his father's footsteps until 1930 when he left Wall Street and embarked on a career in the theatre. In partnership with Kenneth MacGowan, he produced *Children of Darkness*, *Twelfth Night*, Maurice Evans' *Hamlet*, and several other productions between 1930-34. In December of 1934 he announced his retirement from the theatre in a scathing attack on the commercial theatre in the *New York Times* and the next year in a book entitled *The Curtain Falls*. Reed's contention in his article and book was that the theatre had failed him and not vice versa. The theatre was a "crazy con-game" infected by the selfishness of the unions. Reed confessed that he had never been able to comprehend the "crack-brained logic of show business." From the theatre he went into the real estate business, but kept an interest in the theatre through periodic investments in productions. However, in 1954 the lure of the theatre pulled him back into the fold as the president of the board of the American Shakespeare Festival and Academy, Stratford, Connecticut. He remained at that post for three years. The period of 1957-61 saw him in Paris as the assistant to the United States Ambassador to France. Upon his return from France, Reed became the executive producer of the Shakespeare Festival (a
post from which he resigned in the spring of 1966). Reed had long been a supporter of the repertory program for he believed that this plan offered the independent form of theatre he had expected to find on Broadway in 1930. It was evidently for this reason that he broke his retirement and returned to the professional theatre in Stratford, Connecticut, and later at Lincoln Center. In his letter of resignation from the Repertory Theatre's board Reed said that he hoped his absence would have some effect on the return of Whitehead to the Repertory Theatre. Reed said in a statement to the press that perhaps his known support of Whitehead had caused "behind-the-scenes machinations" and that perhaps his action would clear the way and have some constructive effect. With Reed's resignation this left Eugene Black, Michael Burke, Howard Cullman, Mrs. Arthur Wallace Pope (daughter of the late Vivian Beaumont Allen), Samuel Rosenman, Charles Spofford, George Stoddard, George Woods, and Robert Hoguet as the remaining members of the board.

Evidently as a result of these outside pressures, the board instigated further talks with Robert Whitehead. Michael Burke represented the board of directors. The point of these meetings, it was later learned, was to initiate reconciliation efforts with Whitehead to entice him to return, but only for the remainder of the second season. Obviously the board was concerned over the lack of leadership

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for the theatre for the remainder of that season. It was their intention to find a replacement for Whitehead before the theatre began its third season in the Vivian Beaumont Theatre.\(^{15}\) The final meeting between Whitehead and Burke was on December 15.\(^{16}\) The result of that meeting was a statement by Whitehead that "it became clear that any reconciliation was out of the question."\(^{17}\) The breakdown of these sessions resulted in the departure of Whitehead as administrator, the announcement by Elia Kazan that "if he's Whitehead's not there, I'm not there," and the disclosure by Arthur Miller that he would write no more plays for the company and that he would, at the end of that season, withdraw both of his works from the program of the Repertory Theatre.\(^{18}\) The board of directors announced their regret in being unable to deter Whitehead from leaving immediately:

> He [Michael Burke] has tried to persuade Mr. Whitehead to continue to guide the company for the present season [Italics Mine]. However, Mr. Whitehead has indicated he is not interested in continuing his association on any basis.\(^{19}\)

The day after Whitehead's severance as administrator became final and declarations by Miller and Kazan that they would leave

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\(^{19}\)Ibid.
him, seven members of the repertory company—David Wayne, Joseph
Wiseman, Hal Holbrook, David Stewart, Michael Strong, Robert
Downing, and Frederic de Wilde—sent the following telegram to
Robert Hoguet:

Inasmuch as communications to you from the acting
company of the Repertory Theatre of Lincoln Center have
not been acknowledged and in view of the fact that many
of us hold long-term contracts with you until 1966 for
the purpose of building an American repertory company,
may we inquire into your plans for our future?

If we are to be deprived of the leaders who
attracted us to this organization, does it follow that
this city may be deprived of the repertory program,
which also brought us into this company and for which
many of us abandoned substantial professional activities?20

The next day a telegram in reply was sent to the seven members in-
viting them to a luncheon meeting with Hoguet and other representa-
tives of the board. The telegram also informed them that Stanley
Gilkey would assume the duties of acting administrator until a new
director could be found. 21 At the luncheon, Hoguet announced the
board's intentions to fulfill all contractual obligations to the
company and also stated that the board was in the process of seek-
ing a new artistic director. 22 Presumably the fate of the actors
after January, 1966, the terminal date of their contracts, would
rest with the new artistic director.

20Richard F. Shepard, "Seven at Center Ask Future Plans," New

Times, December 18, 1964.

22Ibid.
Criticisms of the Whitehead-Kazan Leadership

The major question to be answered is why did Hoguet and Schuman go looking for a replacement for Robert Whitehead? (I mention only Whitehead because these gentlemen had been informed some weeks earlier of Kazan's intentions to withdraw from the administrative functions of the theatre.) Why did they wish to replace a man who was, as Howard Taubman put it, "the bluest of blue chips"? For some time in theatre circles and the press, the inference had been made that perhaps what the Repertory Theatre needed was a change of command. A number of criticisms were leveled against the Whitehead-Kazan administration. The point of discussion now will be what these criticisms were and upon what they were based, not upon the justification.

One major criticism was based on Whitehead's insistence, reportedly spurred on by Kazan, to rush into production three years before the Vivian Beaumont Theatre was completed. To many this was a rash move for several reasons. The critics felt that Whitehead and Kazan had begun production before the acting company could be properly selected and trained. This was multiplied by their insistence on constructing the $618,000 ANTA-Washington Square Theatre. The construction of this theatre placed ANTA in debt to the same bankers who were already managing the funds to run the theatre, bankers who were on the board of directors. It was true that the

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bankers were prepared for a deficit. This point had been emphasized since the preparatory stages of the project, but they were not prepared for such a large deficit—the production deficit compounded by the cost of an additional theatre. Whitehead's success in obtaining the Greenwich Village theatre was his first fall from favor with the men who controlled the purse strings. One board member was quoted as saying about the reactions of the bankers on the board, "They know you need seed money, that you may need a year or more of trial and error, that the invention may not work out at first. A workable deficit is one thing; this was catastrophic." Edward Sothern Hipp of the Newark Evening News contended that Whitehead, always the "hard-headed Broadway showman," had been overcome by the argument that repertory must be a deficit operation when it was revealed to him that "Lincoln Square's rolling pasture was carpeted, not by grass, but by folding money."

The antipathetic reviews of the Repertory Theatre's productions were cited by its critics as the reason for the drop-off in the subscription renewals for the second season. It has already been mentioned that there was a drop of nearly 20,000 subscriptions. These reviews had also brought about widespread comment concerning what was called a "star system" of playwrights due to the

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25 Ibid.


27 Tallmer, loc. cit.
predominance of prominent playwrights like Arthur Miller, Eugene O'Neill, and S.N. Behrman in the schedule of the first two seasons. The general conclusion was that, instead, there should be a reliance on "youth, adventure, experiment, and—the indispensable counterbalance—painstaking preparation." ²⁸

What was felt to be the unannounced but actual abandonment of the project by Kazan stirred up a great deal of resentment toward the leadership of the theatre. This was a criticism that even generated from the acting company of the Repertory Theatre. ²⁹ The actors felt that Kazan's withdrawal had placed Whitehead in an awkward position, but Whitehead disavowed this. ³⁰ From London the charge came that both men should never have been appointed to the posts in the first place. They were men with minds shaped by the experiences of the 1930's, and therefore, "lacked the imaginative range that a repertory theatre required." ³¹ In this country the same charge was made, but for different reasons. It was charged that Kazan was no administrator—a point agreed to by Kazan himself (Above, p. 156)—and even though Whitehead was, "his impatience and ambition had

²⁸ Ibid.
³⁰ Ibid.
often outrun the realities of the moment,\(^3\) and more importantly, Whitehead did not "have the capacity for checking the even stronger ambitions and impatience of Kazan."\(^3\)

Finally, the production of *The Changeling* emphasized the "ludicrously bad casting and direction" that had been going on within the Repertory Theatre.\(^3\) The contention was that the situation was even further emphasized when it was necessary to withdraw the play, leaving a gap in the schedule that could not be filled by another property in the company's repertoire.\(^3\) This circumstance should never have developed because weaknesses and imbalances in the permanent company had become more pronounced with each production. Whitehead and Kazan, the critics believed, should have made some changes and shifts within the company. Walter Kerr, however, asserted that the main problem did not rest with the actors. It was a company, he said, that needed to be taught but was being guided by a man who needed to be taught. This man was Elia Kazan. It was Kerr's further contention that Kazan had not mastered the specialized materials he and his charges had been required to work on.\(^3\) Kerr had a strong and severe ally in Robert Brustein who echoed the same contentions but in stronger language.

\(^{32}\)Tailmer, *loc. cit.*

\(^{33}\)Ibid.

\(^{34}\)Ibid.

\(^{35}\)Ibid.

In Support of the Whitehead-Kazan Leadership

As with any controversy, there are two sides to every criticism. There were many who made charges against the Whitehead-Kazan administration, but at the same time there were many who supported their leadership and felt these charges were ill-founded. To begin with the charges brought against Whitehead and Kazan concerning the deficit are not reasonable. The Repertory Theatre's board was justified in demanding a tight budget and worrying about the size of the deficit, but it should have been prepared for setbacks—if there were any. There is no way of knowing whether Kazan and Whitehead were right or wrong in rushing into production because they were never allowed the time to see if this apprentice period at the ANTA-Washington Square Theatre would be beneficial. Both Kazan and Whitehead, from the beginning, insisted that the reason for these two years was to better prepare the company for the time when it moved into the Vivian Beaumont Theatre. Their plans for the company, once they were settled in this theatre, held exciting possibilities. The decision was fully supported by George Woods and his board of directors. Perhaps it was a mistake to bring further debts against the company with an additional theatre, but the final decision on this matter never rested with Whitehead or Kazan, but rather rested with the board of directors (Above, pp. 70-71). It was the board's final decision which made the construction of this theatre possible. It has already been pointed out that the construction costs of the ANTA-Washington Square Theatre were considerably less than any other alternate plan.
brought forth. As for the total deficit, there is no room for criticism. The board of directors approved the amount of $750,000 for the pre-season and the first season. Staying within this amount was a stipulation of Whitehead's contract. The final accounting of the period shows that the company was approximately $175,000 under that figure. With the Repertory Theatre's $90,000 share of the film sale of After the Fall and the income the theatre would derive from the national touring company of the play, the deficit totaled approximately $500,000—$250,000 under the original budget. This certainly does not indicate poor management nor a lack of caution in the handling of the financial affairs of the theatre. The criticism was based on the fear of the board over such an enormous budget, yet the British National Theatre operated on a government subsidy of $364,000, plus a deficit of approximately $140,000 for its first season, not including its pre-season expenses.  

It is undeniably true that the subscription renewals dropped sharply the second season, but this could have been the result of other things besides production quality of the first season. There was a drop the second season of the Tyrone Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis, but this was blamed on the discovery by patrons that the price reduction of the season tickets was more than counterbalanced by the inconvenience of having to plan their theatre-going

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37 Talmor, loc. cit.

far in advance.\textsuperscript{39} Undoubtedly the same discovery was made by a portion of the Lincoln Center patrons. It is quite possible also that the shift from a season of contemporary works to one basically of a classical nature may have resulted in a lower subscription. It is an accepted fact also that some people are attracted by the newness of an enterprise and thus purchase season tickets, but by the second season the newness has gone and they are content to attend only occasionally. Certainly all of these factors must be taken into consideration when analyzing the subscription sales of the second season. The subscribed audience has remained in the 29,000 range since the second season, thereby reinforcing the above contentions.

To criticize the leadership of the Repertory Theatre because of the first three or four reviews seems basically wrong. Such an action indicates that the board was measuring the success of the repertory project by box office standards—the "hit-flop" judgments that have plagued the professional American theatre in the twentieth century. This was not Broadway, it was repertory. This attitude was bringing, to what for this country was new territory, "the same sort of spirit and thinking as had become threadbare in the old."\textsuperscript{40} The building of something entirely new of the magnitude of the Repertory Theatre necessitated the establishment of a new, more progressive way of judging. But even if the Broadway standards were maintained, the


\textsuperscript{40}Harold Clurman, "The Subject Is Not Roses, or The Grandeur and Misery of Repertory," \textit{Ibid.}, p. 115.
theatre under Whitehead and Kazan could not be called antipathetic. One out of three productions was considered successful the first season, and two out of three the second season. This is a total of three successes out of six attempts. Even under Broadway measurements this is considered an accomplishment. The main problem seemed to stem from the desire of the theatre's board and a number of the theatre's critics for overnight success. A statement by Harold Clurman attacks this desire:

The making of a theatre is no overnight job, no smug matter of issuing a manifesto and of collecting several thousand subscribers. To approximate the best work that has been in this field takes time and money. The money required for such an endeavor is never an investment but a gift. Those who give must share the temper, the need, and to a considerable extent, the understanding plus the information of those who receive. . . . A true theatre is not an object d'art; it is a world.41

A majority of the major New York critics agreed that it was too early for any sort of judgment. In theory, repertory is appraised on artistic terms—"not only the quality of its productions, but the range and variety of its selection of plays."42 Therefore, a true appraisal could not be made in two seasons. Such a judgment would have to be several years in the making.43 Such quick judgments may be possible in a country with a repertory history because that which has gone before has established the criteria, but no such

41 Ibid., pp. 120-121.
heritage exists in America in this century. Even in a country like Great Britain where repertory has a tradition, the establishment of a company takes time. The Royal Shakespeare Theatre took a number of years to establish an identity. The great European companies have been decades in the making.

As to the charge that the theatre was maintaining a "star system" of playwrights, this criticism seems ridiculous. One purpose of repertory is to present plays native to the country where it exists. It is a generally held belief that there was little in the way of good American drama before Eugene O'Neill. This leaves a relatively small group of playwrights from which to choose. Aside from this fact, how can such a charge be made after two seasons totaling six plays when only the work of one playwright was repeated? True, Miller's *After the Fall* was carried into the second season making two of Miller's plays in one season, but one precept of repertory is to repeat successful productions. It must also be considered that both of Mr. Miller's plays were new works, and one of the major objectives of this theatre was to present such plays. It would seem that the most important criteria for the selection of a repertory season is the staging of plays of serious purpose and high integrity. If major criticism of the play selection is to be leveled, it should be in this direction.

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In answer to the charge that Whitehead and Kazan were not the best men for the job of running the Repertory Theatre, one can only agree. But in a country long divorced from repertory such men are virtually impossible to find. This was the first attempt on this scale at such a theatre in this country in this century. There were, and still are, uncertainties about the success of such a project. Obviously the theatre's board felt they were the best choice or would never have chosen them. Kazan admitted that perhaps he was not the perfect person to run the theatre, but he said he wanted to do it, and he was willing to do it.\footnote{Nadel, \textit{loc. cit.}, Dec. 21, 1964.} It is possible Whitehead's "milieu was Broadway, where his tastes and standards were most welcome. Certainly no natural law entitled him to run the Repertory Theatre."\footnote{Taubman, \textit{loc. cit.}, Feb. 7, 1965.}

But one question will always remain: was he allowed sufficient time to prove himself? Whitehead and Kazan acknowledged separately that they had made mistakes. For one, they questioned their dangerous decision to float the initial season on two new American plays and a lesser O'Neill.\footnote{Ibid.} With hindsight one can see the decision was ill-judged, but one fact remains--no program and no director will ever please everyone. Several stepped forward after the dispute in support of the co-directors. Norman Nadel was one. In an article he stated that it was both ironic and sad that the Repertory Theatre "should be losing two gifted and dedicated men at the very moment
their concept was beginning to prove itself so well." The proof he was referring to was "the quality and purpose of Incident at Vichy." Nadel's further conviction was that the mistakes made had been outweighed by the achievements, for the leadership had been strong and creative, and the rejection of it courted artistic disaster. The actors of the theatre were fully behind Whitehead and doubted the chances of the theatre without him because they felt that Whitehead was the repertory theatre. There is yet another element that must be considered as a possible contributory factor to what appears to be poor leadership of a repertory company. To be effective a theatre's directors must be allowed artistic freedom—the opportunity to make mistakes—because beyond the mistakes looms a style. Whitehead and Kazan were not given the opportunity to make mistakes, at least not for long. Part of this freedom is the right to make artistic and executive decisions. No one is better qualified than individuals of proven professional competence. Indications are that the Repertory Theatre was guided by a committee—the board of directors. The board was searching secretly for a new leader for the theatre because, as they stated, they were unhappy with the reactions toward the productions. It seems more accurate to say that they were unhappy with two men who would not take orders. A repertory theatre run by a

50Ibid.
51Ibid.
52Binder, loc. cit.
committee is bound to have poor leadership. A committee generally "agrees to what nobody very much minds rather than what anybody very much wants." Such decisions may work in politics, insurance, or banking, but not in creative affairs. Repertory should be whatever its directors make it, and they should not be cornered into a popularity contest to appease a committee.\textsuperscript{55}

The reviews of \textit{The Changeling} indicate that the criticism of the acting company was a valid one. This was the complaint of many people toward the company. But a number of these critics also admitted that it was "a condition that time and experience might well have improved."\textsuperscript{56} Nadel contended that the \textit{Incident at Vichy} production indicated a development in individual and ensemble acting techniques.\textsuperscript{57} As for the calibre of performance shown in \textit{The Changeling}, Walter Kerr admitted that it was to be expected. He reminded that Whitehead and Kazan had often warned that the initial efforts toward the classics would be experimental, groping, unfinished, and preparatory. It was then Kerr's conviction that mistakes had to be made now or success could not be had later. He advised walking with the company as it inched forward, "taking . . . satisfaction in the knowledge that they were on their way."\textsuperscript{58} There is one final support for the Repertory Theatre actors' case that must be mentioned. The Lincoln Center


\textsuperscript{56}George Oppenheimer, "Oppenheimer On Stage," \textit{Newsday}, February 6, 1965.

\textsuperscript{57}Nadel, \textit{loc. cit.}, Dec. 19, 1964.

\textsuperscript{58}Kerr, \textit{loc. cit.}, Nov. 15, 1964.
group was understaffed, and as a result, the actors were overworked.
Harold Clurman maintained that the minimum number of actors for a
company with the program of the Lincoln Center Repertory Theatre was
forty, if the company was to deal satisfactorily with every play
chosen. In addition to eight performances per week, several plays
would have to be in the process of preparation at all times. The
Lincoln Center company was in operation for more than thirty weeks
a season. This was certainly an enormous workload when you consider
that the Repertory Theatre had only twenty-five actors from which to
draw who were under two-year contracts. The British National Theatre
listed sixty actors for its inaugural season and most continental
theatres list an even greater number. 59

Probable Causes of the Dispute

It is doubtful that the cause of the controversy of December, 1964, will ever be assigned to any one element, but rather was
brought about by a multiplicity of factors that had been building
up for several years.

William Schuman, President of Lincoln Center, no doubt was one
important factor in what developed. There is every indication that
Mr. Schuman was attempting to influence the course of American art
at Lincoln Center by creating for himself an indispensable position
of control within each of the center's constituents which were
supposed to be, according to Lincoln Center's precepts, autonomous. 60

59 Clurman, loc. cit., p. 117.
For evidence of these attempts by Schuman one need only investigate
the pressure exerted by him in the conflict with the New York City
Ballet Company. The ballet group wished to be given authority in
determining the center's ballet policy, but Schuman preferred to
let this authority rest with himself and the Lincoln Center's board
of directors. Schuman wanted to control the bookings and the ticket
prices of the ballet at the New York State Theatre. This struggle
was also in progress during the fall and winter of 1964. Add to this
the controversy with the City Center of Music and Drama over artistic
control of programming for the New York State Theatre--Schuman again
wished the control to remain in his bailiwick.

Finally, we arrive at Schuman's machinations to influence the
drama component. There were repeated efforts on his part to con­
trol the program and policy of the Repertory Theatre, thus bringing
about clashes with Whitehead and Kazan. The first of these clashes
was over the ANTA-Washington Square Theatre. Schuman had been in
direct opposition to its construction as a temporary home; he lost
that argument, but was able to force the directors to look for a
new location in Greenwich Village instead of constructing the theatre
on Center property. Schuman again tried to exert influence over
theatre's programming when he attempted to have a production of

64 Nadel, loc. cit., Dec. 21, 1964.
Caesar and Cleopatra starring Rex Harrison scheduled as the opening production of the Vivian Beaumont Theatre. This would have been a glamour production having nothing to do with the Repertory Theatre or the concepts behind it. Whitehead and Kazan won this clash as well. Joseph Verner Reed informed the press that the board had known nothing about the production until Schuman had told them. These losses did not seem to influence Schuman's actions. In July of 1964, he extended invitations by telegram to the Tyrone Guthrie Theatre, the Arena Stage of Washington, San Francisco's Actor's Workshop, the Association of Producing Artists, the Theatre Group of UCLA, and the Alley Theatre in Houston to come to New York during the spring of 1965 and perform at the new Vivian Beaumont Theatre as the first attractions scheduled there. Whitehead and Kazan fought this proposal on the grounds that the opening should be reserved for the company for which the theatre was being built. Mr. Schuman lost the battle, and rightly he should have. Schuman had no authority in the scheduling of the Repertory Theatre. This should have been exclusively in the hands of its directors. Schuman, however, was destined to win sooner or later, and his opportunity arrived in November of 1964. He met with Anthony A. Bliss of the Metropolitan Opera Association on November 27, 1964, and informed him that he had recommended Herman Krawitz to Robert Boget, although fully aware of Krawitz's involvement with the Metropolitan. On December 3, he telephoned Krawitz and


offered him undisputed control of the Lincoln Center Repertory Theatre. Schuman had now assumed control of the hiring and the firing of the Repertory Theatre.

Schuman's involvement in the Krawitz affair brought him into conflict with Rudolf Bing, the general manager of the Metropolitan. Bing was furious over Schuman's move and accused him of trying to steal his valued assistant. Bing announced to the press that "the center was apparently deteriorating to a free-for-all jungle whose constituents could raid each other at will." As a result, Bing resigned from the Lincoln Center Council which he accused of being of no importance to Lincoln Center because, in his opinion, nothing of any value had resulted from it.

Because of his involvement with all of the conflicts at Lincoln Center, William Schuman and his actions became the brunt of criticism from a variety of sources. The current remark became "to err is Schuman." The one major attack was leveled at his qualifications to mix into the affairs of the ballet and the drama. He was considered to be an expert in neither, yet he was attempting to control both. Kazan asserted that he was perfectly willing to make decisions with Whitehead because he was equipped by training and skill to make these decisions, but that he would not make any decisions with Schuman.

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Joseph Verner Reed said, "I strongly protest the dealings of William Schuman with our board." Reed attributed this as one of the reasons for his resignation from the theatre's board of directors. Hal Holbrook contended that Schuman's meddling was making repertory at Lincoln Center into a bastard form—it was not real, but rather a "sell-out." When Schuman was approached by the press after the dispute became known, a Lincoln Center press officer informed the reporters that Schuman felt that it was "a Repertory Theatre matter, and he had not been involved in the negotiations." But statements from a number of other quarters already mentioned, indicated the direct opposite. Variety asserted: "As trade whisper has it, William Schuman envisioned himself as the artistic guidelines fellow for the Repertory Company, with Herman Krawitz as deal-maker and administrator." This same point of view was presented by Whitehead in his resignation statement; it was Schuman, in his estimation, who was maneuvering him out of the picture. Whitehead further contended that no one could "function efficiently while Mr. Schuman was negotiating behind his back." Whitehead placed little blame on Hoguet for what happened, but instead said that he believed that it was "unfortunate

71Gardner, loc. cit.
74McClain, loc. cit.
That Hoguets had been led so completely by Mr. Schuman. Kazan, on the other hand, did not feel that Schuman was totally responsible, and it is quite possible that Mr. Kazan was correct. Under the bureaucratic system of Lincoln Center, to carry off such actions would be difficult, if not impossible, without the full sanction of the Lincoln Center's board and a majority of the Repertory Theatre's board. This brings up another possible cause for the dispute—greater control over the theatre and its policies by the theatre's board, and a desire for a strong central government by the Lincoln Center board and Mr. Schuman.

A history of disagreement between Whitehead and the theatre's board existed. One of the first of these disagreements was over the ANTA-Washington Square Theatre. The board had vetoed its construction at first, and when Whitehead and Kazan independently sought outside capitalization, a hostility toward the co-directors developed. Further disagreements developed over money matters. Whitehead accused the board of being slow to meet his requests for money, despite the fact that the theatre was under its projected budget. This contention by Whitehead was supported by the members of the acting company. Whitehead asserted that it had been a month to

76 Ibid.
78 Variety, loc. cit.
81 Gelmis, loc. cit.
month struggle with the board to have the money to pay the bills, and each time that he had approached the board "it had created a greater uneasiness on the part of the board, though the expenditures were less than the budget."\textsuperscript{82} This situation, the criticisms leveled at the Whitehead-Kazan administration which were discussed earlier, and the intervention of Schuman led to the Krawitz affair in December of 1964. There is an improbability in the actions of the board and the reasons its members put forth for these actions. The board declared that it was unhappy with the administrators on artistic grounds. Yet when its members began to look for a replacement, it picked Herman Krawitz, a business manager. This action would tend to support the other reason presented--concern over money. Yet the deficit budget had been approved by the board and the theatre was operating under this budget. Obviously the reasons must be found elsewhere. Kazan asserted that the board wanted a servant to run the theatre at its bidding. He and Whitehead had had absolute authority and "they were not comfortable in that."\textsuperscript{84}

There were those who rallied to the support of Whitehead and Kazan. Martin Gottfried declared that "if bankers and administrators were going to continue to control the creative aspects . . . it \textit{Lincoln Center} would become an artistic joke."\textsuperscript{85} Arthur Miller was

\textsuperscript{82}Esterow, \textit{loc. cit.}, Dec. 8, 1964.
\textsuperscript{83}Bender, \textit{loc. cit.}, Dec. 17, 1964.
\textsuperscript{84}Nadel, \textit{loc. cit.}, Dec. 21, 1964.
convinced that no "artistic enterprise could be run if there was so narrow a freedom as the board had demonstrated." An anonymous member of the board made this statement: "This is an ideological battle between bookkeeping and art, but whichever side you're on there is no excuse for the way Mr. Whitehead was treated." Joseph Verner Reed stated that in his opinion "Bob Whitehead was never given a chance by the board." 

As previously mentioned, the desire of the Lincoln Center's board and William Schuman for a strong central government should be considered in a discussion of the causes for the dispute. Their actions against the New York City Ballet and City Center are strong indicators of this desire. If Krawitz, controlled by Schuman, had been placed in charge of the repertory constituent, they would have canceled out the major block in achieving this desire. Whitehead and Kazan, throughout, had exercised the authority granted in Whitehead's contract. (Kazan, for some unknown reason, had never signed a contract with Lincoln Center or the repertory corporation.) When Lincoln Center had voted against the location of the temporary theatre at Lincoln Center, the co-directors had found, on their own, another area in which to construct it. Whitehead and Kazan had vetoed the ideas put forward concerning the opening of the Vivian Beaumont Theatre. Losing these

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88 Gardner, loc. cit.
89 Morrison, loc. cit.
encounters to the repertory directors had caused Lincoln Center's board to lose face, not to mention authority. The basic agreement between the constituents of Lincoln Center and the center itself allowed for autonomy for these constituents. The center's actions do not support that agreement.

A consideration of all of the factors in this dispute leads one to the over-all contention that one major conflict of idea led to this dispute--art versus big business. The forces of art were represented by the Repertory Theatre under Whitehead and Kazan; and the forces of big business, by Schuman, the center's board of directors, and the Repertory Theatre's ten-man board. Certainly Lincoln Center must be considered as big business. It is a complex costing $160,000,000 that was raised "through a high-pressure, high-prestige publicity and advertising campaign" from millionaires, corporations, foundations, nations, municipalities, and common taxpayers. The center is an organization well-manned in the upper echelon by lawyers and bankers; and bankers worry about money, as well they should. Therefore, they exercised a heavy control over what was to be done by the theatre. Remember, Hoguet is an investment banker who attempted to hire for a replacement a man who was a consultant on labor and management problems. This is not the type of person to run a theatre and establish its artistic policy. This is the type to control a business. The Repertory Theatre "was conceived as subsidy-dependent, [but] . . . was treated as a cost-accounting situation." Expenses were checked,

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90Prideaux, loc. cit.
funds budgeted as if it were a tidy corporation rather than an institution devoted to a creative art. 91 One of the major battles in this conflict of idea dealt with the selection of plays and the determination of policy and with whom lay the responsibility for these decisions—the bankers or the company's directors. The theatre had become a project developed for the sake of institutional dilettantism. It was being considered as a blue chip investment or a Park Avenue exercise. 92

Both sides were supporting what they considered to be right, and both sides felt betrayed by the other side. What generally happens with such a conflict is what happened at the Lincoln Center Repertory Theatre. Big Business controls the purse, therefore there can be only one loser—the arts. Harold Clurman summed it all up when he said, "America needs a repertory theatre, but it won't be given to us by businessmen." 93

The Effects of the Dispute

The Lincoln Center Repertory Theatre, in New York, only yesterday born in glittering splendour, has just suffered the fate of infant strangulation in the middle of its second season. The United States theatrical world is shocked and outraged and a public alarm has been sounded. 94

This was the effect of the dispute as envisioned by Irving Kristol of London's The Observer. The "strangulation" entailed the loss of the company's directors, leaving the theatre without a leader; and the

91 Ibid.
92 Ibid.
94 Kristol, loc. cit.
loss of Arthur Miller and his two plays, the most successful attractions of the first two seasons. Miller had stipulated in his agreement with the repertory company that both plays would remain with the theatre only so long as Whitehead remained at the helm.95

The Lincoln Center officials refused to release any information as to the reasons for their disenchantment with Whitehead and Kazan. At the time of the dispute the refusal on the part of the leaders resulted in a flood of gossip and innuendo. Then when Whitehead left the company, he requested that the remainder of the salary due him, on a contract which did not expire until January, 1966, he turned over to ANTA to help them redeem their bank loan. Whitehead contended that the board's actions with Krawitz constituted his discharge, and therefore, the contractual settlement was due him. The repertory board, however, termed his request unsatisfactory because, in their opinion, he had resigned. As of now this conflict is still unsettled for Whitehead implied that litigation might ensue.96 In the meantime, ANTA leased the theatre for a Broadway production, under rental terms similar to those with Lincoln Center, in an effort to meet its loan.

For the actors of the Repertory Theatre, it was an additional blow to their morale. They considered Whitehead "the only man in America equipped to do the job" of administering a repertory project. David Wayne inferred that many would have liked to have quit, but


were unable, being under contract until January, 1966.\textsuperscript{97} As it turned out, the more experienced members--Wayne, Holbrook, Wiseman, Strong, Stewart, Lambert, and Jens--were not around when the theatre began its third season, and by the end of that season only two of the original company, Paul Mann and Stanley Beck, remained.

The effects of the dispute on Robert Whitehead, who received the brunt of the attack, was the destruction of his hopes in the future of repertory in America. He stated that it was impossible unless those who financed it had "the artistic drive necessary for the long-range pull."\textsuperscript{98} He refused, and still does, to talk in specifics about the controversy. His reluctance grows out of his feelings after the dispute: "It's like a love affair that's deep inside you and it's suddenly over."\textsuperscript{99}

\textsuperscript{97}Al Cohn, "Lincoln Center Tries to Ride Out Storm," Newsday, December 17, 1964.

\textsuperscript{98}Funke, loc. cit.

CHAPTER VII

THE FUTURE

With the demise of the Whitehead-Kazan leadership, the board of the Lincoln Center Repertory Theatre was in the difficult situation of locating someone to take over the direction of a project that had run the gauntlet of critical reaction, that had brought about apparently the final downfall of two of America's most respected theatre professionals as repertory directors, and that had generated a great deal of skepticism concerning the future of repertory at Lincoln Center. One seasoned theatre man outside New York felt that the theatre's company should be liquidated, the theatre closed for a year, and then after this year's hiatus, rebuilt from "top to bottom."

To carry out the search, a subcommittee of board members was named. It was headed by Samuel Rosenman, former special counsel to Presidents Roosevelt and Truman and a former Justice of the New York Supreme Court. Joseph Papp, founder and producer of the New York Shakespeare Festival, was one of the first men approached as a possible prospect by the subcommittee. Papp, however, indicated

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that he would refuse the possible offer unless the Festival company
could move into the Vivian Beaumont Theatre with its own board of
directors, producing company, and programming.\(^2\) Papp's terms, how­
ever, did not appeal to the theatre's board. The next approach by
the subcommittee was to turn to America's regional theatres and its
directors. Oliver Rea of the Tyrone Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis
was approached, as was Ellis Raab of the Association of Producing
Artists, based at the University of Michigan and in New York under
the auspices of the Phoenix Theatre. But the ultimate choice of
the board was found in San Francisco. Herbert Blau and Jules Irving,
founders and directors of the Actor's Workshop, were approached by
the theatre and finally offered the positions vacated by Whitehead
and Kazan. They were to assume these duties on March 1, 1965.

**Blau and Irving**

As the *[Morning Telegraph]* stated it, "The history of Blau and
Irving was a story of togetherness."\(^5\) They had met at New York
University as students, did graduate work at Stanford University
together, and both joined the faculty of San Francisco State College
after graduation from Stanford. In 1952 they established the San

\(^3\)Joseph Gelmis, "Lincoln Center Tries to Muddle Through," *News­
day*, January 13, 1965.

\(^4\)This was not an offer to Raab but only an inquiry, and the in­
quiry concerned only Mr. Raab and not his company. Many critics have
long felt that the APA should be installed at Lincoln Center. The
strong favorable reaction toward the APA may be due in part to the
freedom they enjoy under their present arrangement, a freedom they
might lose at the center.

\(^5\)"San Francisco Theatre Men Head Lincoln Center Outfit," *Morn­
Francisco Actor's Workshop in a loft over a judo academy with $36 capital. This organization grew into one of the leading professional non-profit theatrical companies in America, and attracted a $197,000 Ford Foundation grant in 1962. Its fame was based on its accent of avant-garde writers. But its public remained limited, due perhaps to this accentuation.

After accepting the Lincoln Center posts, the two men announced the philosophy that would govern the Repertory Theatre under their leadership. First, they wanted to develop "a company of specific character." They believed, they said, in the idea of ensemble acting. Secondly, they planned to do a wide range of plays, both classical and contemporary. Both statements were precisely what had been said by Whitehead and Kazan upon their appointment. The Repertory Theatre's board announced that "the new directors would be in continual touch on budget matters, but would have complete artistic and creative control," another statement with a familiar ring. Hoguet also announced that the theatre's board was prepared to make up losses up to $400,000 annually, if need be. This would seem to be high considering the board's criticism of Whitehead over less. The important consideration now was if they would be permitted sufficient time and

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6 Ibid.


8 Tautman, loc. cit.

9 Ibid.
the confidence of the Lincoln Center's board to implement their plans, or if their leadership would be judged by the number of "hits" they recorded.\textsuperscript{10}

At this writing the first season under Blau and Irving and the third season of the Repertory Theatre has been completed. It has not been considered an auspicious season. The directors have been soundly criticized for bringing more than a dozen actors with them from San Francisco. Some have called Lincoln Center the Actor's Workshop in exile. The productions have been considered as "spotty . . . \textit{as} most of the less-celebrated resident companies" across the country.\textsuperscript{11} The direction has been considered to be on a lower level than these other theatres, with unreliable casting. The acting company has made little impression on the critics with the women again being rated lower than their male counterparts. Stanley Kauffmann of the New York Times has considered the first two productions, Buchner's Danton's \textit{Death} and Wycherley's \textit{The Country Wife}, lamentable; the third production, Sartre's \textit{The Condemned of Altona}, unsatisfactory; and the fourth, Brecht's \textit{The Caucasian Chalk Circle}, enjoyable.\textsuperscript{12} Several critics consider the latter production as an indication of improvement in the company. Kauffmann maintains that such a contention is fallacious; it is a matter of scheduling. The Brecht play, Kauffmann asserts, is easier: it is made up mostly of small parts, it calls for


\textsuperscript{12}Ibid.
no deep emotion or style, and it contains a great deal of action and
pageantry. On the whole, one could say that the reactions toward
this company and its efforts have been far more caustic than the
criticisms of its predecessor (with the exception of Robert Brustein).
The selection of plays by Blau and Irving was heartily supported, but
the productions have brought on impassioned denials. The acting and
directing have been considered to be well below the level expected in
New York. The actors have been judged inexperienced and the direc-
tion, embarrassing. Some critics have advised the Repertory Theatre
to replace a large majority of the actors and to confine Blau and
Irving to managerial duties because their "intellectual" approach
to the direction of plays has proven far too shortsighted and void
of any knowledge of theatrics. A final criticism has been aimed
at the abandonment of the repertory system of scheduling the produc-
tions. Lincoln Center's Repertory Theatre has become another regional
stock company. The time factor has also arisen again. Kauffmann
maintains that the company should not be given more time because it
has had thirteen years. His contention is that the directors and
the majority of the basic company have been working together in San
Francisco for that length of time, and therefore, additional time
would bring no further improvements. Financially the theatre has
been far from successful. The Whitehead-Kazan leadership was charged
with financial indiscretion, yet neither of the two seasons under
their control ended with the deficit accrued by Blau and Irving--

\[13]Ibid.
However, it must be remembered that the Blau and Irving season consisted of four plays compared to three plays the first two seasons. One can only wonder as to the reactions of the theatre's board which stated it would be prepared to make up losses up to $400,000.

**Conclusion**

In one year's time the Repertory Theatre has again, it appears, traveled a full circle. Rumors and some members of the press have begun to intimate that the leadership of the Repertory Theatre is due for another change. Names are being bantered about as possible replacements for Blau and Irving, even though they have been contracted by the repertory board for at least one more season.

Concern should be voiced over the possible reoccurrence of the happenings of December, 1964. The same situation could develop unless some changes are forthcoming in our thinking and our judgment of repertory in America, and more particularly, New York City. Theatre critics have justifiably seen fit to caustically denounce the two regimes that have attempted to install a serious, non-commercial, and at one time, repertory-type theatre at Lincoln Center. But not enough of these critics have assailed the problem at its source—the conflict of art and business. The Whitehead-Kazan experience should have taught a valuable lesson, but the lesson has not been learned. Just as we neglected to learn from

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the failures of the New Theatre of 1909, the Civic Repertory Theatre, and the American Repertory Theatre; we have failed again. What developed during the period from January 23, 1964, to December of that year indicates that the problem will continue to exist until we have established new ideas about the leadership, the financial structure, and the artistic control of repertory in America. The past at Lincoln Center has shown us that control should not be in the hands of the dilettante but rather in the hands of the individual of proven professional competence. If such a leader is found he should be allowed the freedom to do his job as he sees it. The Lincoln Center fiasco has further shown us that our old criteria for judging theatrical success, criteria which grew from our theatre heritage -- Broadway -- is not adequate. Repertory is something new in the twentieth century American theatre. If it is to succeed we must learn to adjust our thinking to a new way. We must develop new criteria especially suited to repertory and hereafter apply them unflinchingly. If not, repertory will continue to follow the pattern of the Whitehead-Kazan catastrophe, the New Theatre, the Civic Repertory Theatre, and the American Repertory Theatre. Hal Holbrook summed it up most accurately when he said:

The Lincoln Center Repertory could die. It could go down the drain. The destroyers don't seem to realize that. If the company should live, it could start an unparalleled renaissance in the American theatre. But if this fails, who's going to try again?\(^{15}\)

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