

The Lincoln Center Theater

Facilities include: *The Vivian Beaumont Theater* and *The Mitzi E. Newhouse Theater*

Cost: The Lincoln Center Theater-\$10.3 million

Seating Capacity: Vivian Beaumont Theater-1,089, Mitzi E. Newhouse Theater-297,

Owner: Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Inc.

Lessor and Operator: Vivian Beaumont Theater, Inc., d.b.a. Lincoln Center Theater

Total square feet: 38,800

First architectural schemes drawn: 1960

Groundbreaking: 1962

Opened: October 21, 1965

The Lincoln Center Theater, comprised of the Vivian Beaumont Theater and Mitzi E. Newhouse Theater, was designed by Eero Saarinen & Associates with theater designer Jo Mielziner. It is actually part of a larger building that includes the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, designed by Gordon Bunshaft of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill. The interior spaces of the New York Public Library are located adjacent to and over the theater spaces, effectively wrapping around the Lincoln Center Theater to form a complete structure.

Eero Saarinen (1910-1961) was the son of the celebrated Finnish architect Eliel Saarinen. Born in Helsinki, the younger Saarinen immigrated with his family to the United States in 1923. He studied sculpture at the Academie de la Grande Chaumiere in Paris in 1930 followed by architecture at Yale University. He is well known for his innovations in industrial construction methods. An excellent example of this work is the TWA terminal at John F. Kennedy Airport,

New York. Regrettably, Saarinen died unexpectedly as his final drawings were being approved and did not see the completion of his building.

The Lincoln Center Theater is located at the northwest corner of West 65th Street and Amsterdam Avenue and contains the two theaters as well as rehearsal and office spaces. Its facade looks onto the North Plaza reflecting pool, a shallow pool approximately 80 feet by 120 feet lined with black tile and edged in granite around the perimeter. In the center of the pool is the Henry Moore sculpture *Reclining Figure* which Moore designed specifically for Lincoln Center in 1964. The North Plaza, designed in by Dan Kiley in 1965, is nestled between the theater, the Metropolitan Opera House, the Avery Fisher Hall, and Juilliard School. The plaza contains rows of trees in travertine planters, approximately 8 feet square containing Bradford Pear trees.

The main facade of the Lincoln Center Theater is composed of two square concrete columns with exposed aggregate finish supporting a cantilevered roof on steel pins. The pins are sheathed in pyramidal bronze covers creating the dramatic effect of great weight supported on a single pyramid point. The columns form a peristyle surrounding the building's recessed glass walls. The exposed two-way structural grid, composed of 20-foot deep Vierendeel steel trusses, is actually an attic volume housing library facilities. Hanging from the concrete soffit are floating metal lighting pans painted a light color similar to the concrete. Light is projected downward and upward from recessed fixtures in the pans. This soffit system extends into the glass-enclosed lobby of the building.

The spare, yet elegant lobby of the Vivian Beaumont Theater rises two levels and is separated from the North Plaza by a wall of glass. From here, patrons can access all levels of the theater as well as the parking garage. The auditorium of the Vivian Beaumont Theater is minimally

decorated with wood paneling and red upholstery and best known for its technological innovations. All seats are arranged in a sweeping semicircle set at a steep rake and no seat is more than 65 feet from the stage. The large open-stage theater contains a modified thrust main-stage of 10,000 square feet, more than three times the size of the largest stage on Broadway. The adaptable stage can be transformed into a fully open apron thrust by lowering the first seven rows of seats into the basement. The proscenium arch is also adjustable, containing seven flexible panels that can be opened and closed. The Vivian Beaumont Theater was the first theater in the world to have a computerized lighting system.

The Mitzi E. Newhouse Theater, originally called The Forum, is a small, minimally decorated auditorium used for experimental productions and accessed from the parking garage.