

## The Metropolitan Opera Company and Original Metropolitan Opera House

Coinciding with the construction of its first opera house, the Metropolitan Opera Company was founded in 1883 and has since been regarded as the leading opera company in the United States, and “one of the most important” companies in the world.<sup>1</sup> Since its inception, the Metropolitan has featured an array of legendary singers from all over the world. Early highlights of the Metropolitan Opera’s rich and illustrious history include performances by Christine Nilsson in *Faust*, Lilli Lehman singing Wagner, Emma Calvé as *Carmen* and Enrico Caruso performing *I Pagliacci*. Other talents who performed for the Metropolitan Opera Company throughout the early- and mid- 20<sup>th</sup> century included Lucrezia Bori, Rosa Ponselle, Ezio Pinza, Lily Pons, Lawrence Tibbett, Grace Moore, Kirsten Flagstad, Lauritz Melchior, Jussi Björling, Rise Stevens, Richard Tucker and Robert Merrill. Under the general management of Rudolph Bing beginning in 1950, a new crop of talent was introduced through the Met such as Renata Tebaldi, Victoria de Los Angeles, Birgit Nilsson, Joan Sutherland, Renata Scottò, Montserrat Caballé and Marian Anderson.

Conductors at the opera house have been just as distinguished, numbering, among others, Richard Wagner’s disciple, Anton Seidl, Arturo Toscanini, Gustav Mahler, Artur Bodansky, Bruno Walter, Fritz Reiner, George Szell and Dimitri Mitropoulos. In terms of American premieres, like the New York Philharmonic, the Metropolitan Opera Company has had an equally impressive history. Responsible for presenting the first American productions of Wagner’s *Die Meistersinger*, *Das Rheingold*, *Götterdämmerung*, *Tristan und Isolde* and *Parsifal*, the company has also performed American premieres of Modest Mussorgsky’s *Boris Godunov*, Giacomo Puccini’s *Turandot*, Giuseppe Verdi’s *Simon Boccanegra*, Richard Strauss’ *Arabella* and Benjamin Britten’s *Peter Grimes*. World premieres have included Puccini’s *La Fanciulla del West* and *Il Trittico*, and Samuel Barber’s *Vanessa*.

The construction of the original Metropolitan Opera House, located between Broadway and Seventh Avenue, and between West 39<sup>th</sup> and 40<sup>th</sup> Streets, was initiated by Mrs. William Kissam Vanderbilt, who led a revolt against the Academy of Music and its subscribers for monopolizing its opera boxes.<sup>2</sup> In response, Vanderbilt, along with a group of wealthy businessmen, formed and funded their own opera association which would enable them to build a customized space and out-rival their competitor. Hosting a limited design competition, the consortium chose Josiah Cleaveland Cady, an architect primarily known for his Romanesque Revival-style college buildings and Protestant churches. Nicknamed “Cady’s Lyre,” after the architect and his lyre-shaped plan, the yellow brick and terra-cotta opera house was designed in the early Italian Renaissance style and opened on October 22, 1883.<sup>3</sup> Although its detractors—such as its rival impresario at the Academy of Music—deemed it the “yellow brick brewery,” the Metropolitan Opera House nevertheless became the most renowned operatic institution in the United States, and succeeded in driving the Academy of Music out of business.<sup>4</sup>

Although inspired by the great opera houses of Europe, the original Metropolitan Opera House was also a product of its patrons’ economic interests. Concerned about soaring construction and future operating costs, the nascent organization, called the Metropolitan Opera House Company, Ltd., proposed selling an inordinate number of opera boxes to its fashionable patrons, while having Cady incorporate commercial and retail storefront space into his plan. In addition, although the auditorium had originally been proposed for a rectangular parcel of land at East 43<sup>rd</sup> Street and Madison Avenue, a new site had to be found after an existing covenant was discovered which prohibited “amusements” from taking place on the prospective site. The alternate lot, located at West 39<sup>th</sup> Street and Broadway, had the peculiar advantage of additional square footage compromised by an odd, trapezoidal shape. Rather than modify his interior plan to create additional public space around the auditorium, Cady used his existing design, thereby sacrificing what could have been a more efficient plan. Furthermore, after a fire destroyed parts of the opera house in 1892, a revised fire code prohibited the owners from using the basement

area for set storage, thus eliminating any onsite storage space and relegating current-performance sets to the outdoor sidewalk areas bordering the building.<sup>5</sup>

Inside, the public spaces were extremely limited as its three-thousand-plus-patrons had to contend with nine-foot-wide-corridors in order to enter and exit the auditorium. Modeled after London's Covent Garden, the auditorium, as originally built, was comprised of 3,045 seats. This number included an unprecedented 122 opera boxes—a number that cinched Cady's victory in the design competition, and significantly outnumbered the 9 boxes offered at the Academy.<sup>6</sup> Of these, 73 were subscriber boxes that were dominated by a particular family. In addition, public areas that included individual salons, reception rooms, vestibules and foyers primarily catered to box-holders, thus reducing the circulation areas for the remaining seven hundred patrons in the balcony and gallery, who also suffered obstructed views of the stage, and those who sat in the orchestra section. Over the years, as economic considerations prevailed, opera boxes were continually eliminated to allow for individual expansion. By 1953, the house had been reduced to 35 boxes while increasing its seating capacity to 3,614.

Despite its functional imperfections, the old Metropolitan Opera House auditorium was revered for its opulence and theatricality. As Rudolph Bing noted, "It must be said that the auditorium was very beautiful, and somehow immensely theatrical: one could not step into that house without a feeling of excitement."<sup>7</sup> Yet, in spite of its elaborately gilded halls, walls and proscenium arch—reminiscent in size of the Paris Opéra and the Imperial Opera in St. Petersburg—its deep horseshoe shape not only limited audience sightlines, but also compromised public and backstage areas. While Bing praised the auditorium's opulent interior, he also criticized its inadequate facilities:

Everything backstage was cramped and dirty and poor. There were neither side stages nor a rear stage: every change of scene had to be done from scratch on the main stage itself, which meant that if an act had two scenes, the audience had just to sit and wait, wondering what the banging noises behind the curtain might mean. The lighting grid was decades behind European standards, and there was no revolving stage.<sup>8</sup>

In addition, dressing rooms for soloists, chorus, ballet and orchestra were deemed by one critic to be a “rabbit warren, with worse plumbing than most rabbits are willing to tolerate,” and other rooms used for rehearsals and coaching sessions were similarly criticized for their spatial shortcomings.<sup>9</sup>

### **The Relocation to Lincoln Center**

As noted, since 1918 the Metropolitan Opera Association had been considering either renovation or replacement of its opera house, or the commissioning of a new structure at a different location. In 1920, after the failure of a proposal by the opera company’s president to replace the existing building at West 39<sup>th</sup> Street, a wealthy businessman named Philip Berolzheimer suggested making it part of a performing arts center at West 57<sup>th</sup> and 59<sup>th</sup> Streets, between Sixth and Seventh Avenues. Although the idea of a performance complex was enthusiastically received by the mayor, the project could not get funding and was dropped by 1925. Another proposal for the site at West 57<sup>th</sup> Street west of Eighth Avenue emerged in 1926, when the opera company’s president, Otto Kahn, asked architect, Joseph Urban, to design a new opera house. Shortly thereafter, Kahn also asked architect, Benjamin Wistar Morris, III, to collaborate with Urban, which the two designers did before developing their own individual proposals.

Although both building designs were rejected, it is worth noting that Morris’ plan, with its combination of opera house and office tower, served as the impetus for Rockefeller Center.<sup>10</sup> In 1930, Wallace K. Harrison, in collaboration with Harvey Wiley Corbett’s firm, submitted his first design for a Metropolitan opera house at Rockefeller Center. As the Metropolitan’s ticket sales and revenues plummeted during the Depression, the company’s shareholders reincorporated their enterprise as the Metropolitan Opera Association. In 1935, Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia introduced a scheme whereby the Metropolitan Opera Company would join the Philharmonic Symphony-Society as a part of a municipal arts center to be located at Columbus

Circle. Later in 1946, when this scheme did not materialize, William Zeckendorf suggested a monumentally-scaled extension to the United Nations which would house a performing arts complex, among other uses. But this proposal, like previous ones, could not get funding. In 1949, the Metropolitan Opera Association asked Harrison to investigate alternate sites, which he continued to do until Robert Moses approached him in 1955 with his plan for Lincoln Center.

### **The Metropolitan Opera House Design**

Finding the right location for the Metropolitan Opera House ended an almost fifty-year search, but it did not answer another question which had plagued the organization since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century; namely, what form the new opera house should take.<sup>11</sup> As Harrison diligently worked on a succession of schemes for the building, he also had to contend with his other responsibilities as the center's chief planner and architect, and the head of his own firm. Coupled with these duties was the fact that he was under the intense scrutiny of members of the Metropolitan Opera Building Committee, the Metropolitan Opera Association, the Lincoln Center design team and the center's parent organization. While each organization dictated its needs to its respective architect, perhaps none was as exacting, conservative or formidable as the Metropolitan Opera Association. In addition, the Lincoln Center architects had strong opinions as to how Harrison's opera house should fit within the context of their buildings, and urged him to make drastic modifications. Thus, in spite of Harrison's desire to design one of the most avant-garde opera houses of the postwar years, his work was severely compromised by many individuals who had their own ideas of how his building should take form.

The Metropolitan Opera was not the oldest of the Lincoln Center constituents, but it was inarguably the most famous and most heavily endowed. As previously noted, it had also been included in Moses' original plan for the Lincoln Square Urban Renewal Area Project, and had been highly sought after as an anchor tenant by both local developers and politicians alike since the turn of the previous century. Thus, given its authority and reputation, it was primed to be

Lincoln Center's premiere attraction from the moment the complex was conceived. Since it had had a longstanding reputation for taking a conservative approach with its decision-making and programming, it may seem somewhat surprising that it chose a modernist like Wallace K. Harrison for its commission. On the other hand, Harrison's longstanding relationship with both the opera organization and with corporate executives of the city would have allayed any concerns the organization might have had regarding his ability to deliver on time and within the allocated budget. In spite of any support Harrison may have had from his client going into the project, this relationship was sorely tested throughout the design process.

Between 1955 and 1957, Harrison began creating a series of dynamic schemes for the Metropolitan Opera House that clearly proclaimed its presence as the center's focal point. Early drawings of the complex featured a modern double-circular colonnade surrounding a fountain—evocative of Bernini's St. Peter's Square—which opened onto Columbus Avenue with a variety of imaginative opera house configurations attached to it. Included among these designs was a barrel-vaulted lobby attached lengthwise to a massive tile-domed structure—similar to his Caspary Auditorium dome at Rockefeller University; a wedge-shaped building connected to an enormous sphere; a mammoth, sloping, rectangular box with a curved façade abutting his aforementioned plaza colonnade; and a wide, obelisk-shaped building placed on its side that culminated in a colossal wall. During this period Harrison also made a sketch that was similar to Jörn Utzon's prize-winning design for the Sydney Opera House. Years later, he told biographer, Victoria Newhouse, "My sketches for the opera house started with a bird, like Sidney [sic]."<sup>12</sup> Other drawings completed in 1957 featured a pure, box-like structure with a louvered front and a floating slab roof; a glass box fronted by thin columns resting on inverted pyramid-like capitals; and an elevated colonnade surrounding an enormous fan-shaped building, with a huge rectangular void running through the top of its tower.

At the same time Harrison was producing his series of design proposals, he was also involved in ongoing discussions with Anthony Bliss and Herman E. Krawitz, two members of the opera association's building committee who presented him with detailed specifications related to the opera's programmatic and budgetary needs. Although Bliss, who was both the opera board's president and a lawyer, was focused primarily on economic issues, Krawitz was unrelenting in his attention to both financial and technical details. A production analyst and consultant, Krawitz had gone to Europe on a fellowship in 1955 to study opera houses and theaters. In 1956, he returned to Europe with Harrison, Bliss, Rockefeller, Walther Unruh, Herbert Graf and Allen I. Fowler of Day & Zimmerman, to further research auditoriums in Italy, Austria, Germany, France and England.

Concurrent with his designs for the Metropolitan Opera, in the fall of 1955 Harrison was commissioned by the building committee of Dartmouth College to design the Hopkins Center, a performing arts complex to be placed on campus. After the committee rejected Harrison's first proposal, based on its incompatibility with Dartmouth's neo-Georgian campus, the architect presented a more traditionally-inspired design which the committee later approved. Modeled after Florence's 14<sup>th</sup>-century Loggia dei Lanzi, Harrison's drawing featured a series of arches comprised of thin, concrete shells. By 1957, these arches resurfaced in Harrison's new designs for the Metropolitan Opera House. Later, when asked why he chose them, he said, "I like traditional arches...there's something human about them. I think an opera house should look like an opera house. And the soaring arches, I hope, help."<sup>13</sup> Although these later designs went through many modifications over the next several years, including the addition of screened walls; swooshing barrel-vaulted roof forms; and more arches on the building's north and south sides; the arched façade was retained.

Despite the approval that Harrison had received from the building committee and advisory team in May 1958, he still had to contend with a series of cuts that were imposed on his work. In November 1958, Rockefeller insisted that Harrison and the other architects reduce their

buildings' costs by at least twenty-five percent. Harrison responded by eliminating office space, rehearsal stages and rooms, a museum and exhibition area, an archival facility, two passenger elevators, and ten percent of the lobby and auditorium area. Yet, these reductions only decreased the opera house's costs by twelve percent. Finally, on October 28, 1959, the architect met with Rockefeller, his associates and the advisory team, and presented them with two designs: one, featuring five prominent arches comprising a barrel-vaulted structure, and the other, with the same arches enclosed in a rectangular frame. After four years and forty-three different proposals, the group chose the more conservative one enclosed by the rectangular frame. While this meeting determined the form of the façade, it did not determine the rest of the building's exterior or interior.

By April 1960, costs had risen to such an extent that Harrison was once again called upon to modify his design. However, in contrast to previous reductions which had affected the interiors, this time his advisory team urged him to reduce the height and width of the entire building. In exasperation, Harrison called Anthony Bliss to oppose this decision, but instead, the Metropolitan representative—who was on vacation and unable to consult other board members—took the advisory team's side. Consequently, what had formerly been a double shell encasing the auditorium now became a single shell, thereby drastically reducing the office and public areas. Furthermore, offices and private club rooms were now relocated between the auditorium and the exterior glass wall, while public areas immediately surrounding the auditorium were significantly decreased.

By the early part of 1961, Rockefeller and the Metropolitan Opera House were having serious misgivings about Harrison's ability to meet their demands. As a result, the architect was given six months to deliver a final design within the allotted budget. In June 1961, a twenty-story office tower that the architect had proposed for the back of the opera house was eliminated due to a lagging economy. Although this tower was to be principally used for office rentals, a portion of it was to accommodate service facilities, which subsequently had to be squeezed into

the main building. In July, Harrison eliminated stage elevators, a turntable and two workshops, reconfigured dressing rooms and rehearsal halls, and opted for less expensive stage machinery. Because these changes were not unanimously accepted, Harrison had to return the following December with yet another proposal. Later, as scheduled, the architect finally received an approval with one exception: Bliss insisted that he replace the side arches with masonry fins. Reluctantly, the architect complied.

Although Harrison's design was altered considerably according to both his client and advisory team's specifications, it was nevertheless a marvel in terms of its size and program. Measuring four hundred, fifty-one feet in length, one hundred, seventy-five feet in width at the façade and two hundred, thirty-four feet wide at the rear, the entire length is equivalent to a forty-five-story skyscraper laid on its side.<sup>14</sup> Referencing the balcony level, materials and massing of Philharmonic Hall and the New York State Theater, the Metropolitan Opera House stands ninety-six feet high and features travertine-clad double columns that culminate in five concrete-shelled arches along its façade, and travertine fins spaced three feet, four inches apart, along its north and south walls. Enclosed within this framework on the façade are one hundred, fifty-six enormous glass panels, divided by a Mondrianesque configuration of bronze window muntins.

Originally meant to complement an entrance hall that was cut from Harrison's previous design, the outer lobby is a contemporary version of Charles Garnier's Paris Opera House and features a grand, double staircase with bronze-hammered railings that curves up to the inner lobby.<sup>15</sup> Substituting for marble—which was found to be cost prohibitive—the steel-reinforced, pre-stressed concrete staircase was cast by master shipbuilders and made to mirror the center's Roman travertine cladding.<sup>16</sup> On the entrance level, a terrazzo floor with gold-colored metal-ring inlays blends appropriately with a similarly-ringed gate. On the orchestra level and above, the walls are covered with red velvet with occasional rhinestone-bejeweled sconces, while black

marble-topped bars line the public areas along the inner lobby areas. The floor areas on this, the upper levels and portions of the staircases, are covered in red carpeting. Overhead, suspended from a gold-leafed ceiling are “starburst form chandeliers, with a multitude of crystal clusters attached to spokes emanating from a central node” that were donated by the Austrian government in gratitude for American aid in helping to rebuild the Vienna State Opera after World War II.<sup>17</sup> These fixtures were designed by Hans Harald Rath and created by the firm of J. & L. Lobmeyer.

Harrison’s approach for the opera house’s interior was to use standard opera house measurements, and then alter them accordingly to fit the organization’s complex goals.<sup>18</sup> Although public and production areas were expanded to accommodate the opera’s patrons, performers and technicians, the stage size replicated Cady’s original so that existing sets from the old Met could be re-used. In terms of perfecting the acoustics, Harrison frankly admitted to the lessons learned from Philharmonic Hall:

In an opera house everything has to be designed in terms of sound. Because sound is the main reason to go to the opera. But after the Philharmonic experience the whole science of acoustics was washed away. Until then everyone thought that sound travels as light does, that it bounces off a wall at the same angle as it goes into the wall...But now we know, for example, that the lower frequencies don’t.<sup>19</sup>

Committed to a sound design which would be as least intrusive as possible, Harrison was frustrated by his associates, Richard Bolt, Leo Beranek and Robert Newman, who insisted on ceiling panels which would adjust accordingly during a performance.<sup>20</sup> The architect eventually replaced the team in 1961 with Vilhelm L. Jordan, who in turn asked Cyril M. Harris to assist him. Although Harris and Jordan became estranged during their collaboration, this did not deter Harrison from relying on Harris to advise him while Jordan was working elsewhere on his acoustical models.<sup>21</sup>

Harrison was confronted with an extraordinary task in having to design an opera house for almost 3,800 patrons. In contrast to the Paris Opera with its 2,156 seats, Covent Garden with

2,052, and the Bolshoi Theater with 2,000, the Metropolitan Opera House was to be the largest repertory opera house ever constructed, with an unprecedented 3,765 seats.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, unlike renowned opera houses such as Milan's La Scala and Vienna's state opera house, the architect resolved not to have electronic amplification. When asked what kind of plans he and his designers had considered, Harrison responded:

Round, square, wedge-shaped, and many others. But, invariably, as the study of possible alternates developed, we arrived back at the form that was built—that of the classic Renaissance opera house. Why? We arrived there by way of science and the advice of acoustical experts, and because of our determination to provide the greatest possible degree of comfort for the members of the audience, as well as the feeling of luxury and glamour one always associates with grand opera.<sup>23</sup>

Yet, the auditorium shape was ultimately a combination of a Renaissance-inspired horseshoe and a wedge—a form that George C. Izenouer had suggested to the architect early on in their discussions.<sup>24</sup>

Divided by two center aisles, the wide parquet is surrounded by five tiers of balconies. The walls of the house are covered in African Kewazinga wood, an irregularly-surfaced veneer that was selected for both its beauty and its acoustical properties. The enormous proscenium arch features a gold-leaf, waffle-patterned relief sculpted out of a copper-zinc alloy called Monel metal that frames a gold damask curtain, while balcony fronts are paneled in gold fluting. In spite of Harrison's objections, a decorating committee led by Mrs. John Barry Ryan and comprised of Francis Gibbs, Lucrezia Bori and Robert Lehman chose to have the auditorium chairs upholstered with red mohair fabric and the balconies adorned with gold satin swags.<sup>25</sup> Like the outer lobby, identical lighting fixtures surround a larger version—twenty-four in all—and hang on mechanized cables that ascend at curtain time. The gold-leafed ceiling panels are suspended by springs, and flooring is laid on a bed of cork and lead, all to enhance acoustics. Below the stage apron at the front of the house are two orchestra lifts, capable of moving up to 110 musicians.

The stage machinery of the Metropolitan Opera House was the most technologically-sophisticated of its time. Three huge stage wagons—one featuring its own fifty-seven-foot-diameter turntable—already pre-set for the next scene are capable of rolling onto the center stage from three different directions at ninety feet per minute. The stage itself consists of seven sixty-foot-wide by eight-feet-long hydraulic lifts, half of which are double-decked, capable of varying speeds up to forty feet per minute. Five fly galleries are located on each side of the stage for lighting and scenic effects, and 109 motorized battens hang overhead to hold backdrops in addition to three motorized stage curtains. The lighting panel, nicknamed by the original crew, “Cape Canaveral,” covers three walls.<sup>26</sup> The fifty-three-foot-wide area at the back of the house has room for four trucks to unload. Also located backstage are costume, wig-making, carpentry, electric, scenic and painting shops, as well as dressing rooms for the soloists. Each soloist dressing room features its own bathroom, and a sitting area with a piano. Other dressing rooms for chorus and dancers have multiple lockers and bathrooms, and are located beneath the auditorium. In addition to dressing rooms, twenty rehearsal halls are located throughout the building. Among them, List Hall, located on the orchestra level of the auditorium’s south side, doubles as a rehearsal space for the chorus and a lecture hall, with its tiered seating and capacity to accommodate one hundred, forty-four people. The below-grade area, in addition to housing some of the rehearsal halls, also has escalators and elevators for audience members arriving by car.

Other areas for dining and administration are located along the building’s perimeter.<sup>27</sup> The Top of the Met, no longer in operation, was a restaurant that was located along the curved, sixth-level balcony facing the central plaza and designed by Harrison himself. Consisting of crimson banquettes and carpeting, and silver-colored upholstered chairs, the restaurant was enclosed on three sides by teak-topped railings with bronze slats and meshed grills, and offered sweeping views of Lincoln Center plaza below. Also designed by Harrison, the light-filled Cornelius Bliss Room, along the building’s south side was designed primarily as a meeting room

for the Metropolitan Opera's board members, among other affiliated groups. Paneled in rift oak with a circular recessed ceiling for subdued lighting, the room housed five Macassar ebony tables with steel bases, complimented by tub chairs upholstered in emerald green velvet. Placed along the windows, quartets of green velvet tub chairs surround Peruvian onyx coffee tables. The entire room was carpeted in a brown wool with white wool draperies.

Other rooms were designed by noted decorators. On the north side of the building's plaza level, the Opera Café was designed by L. Garth Huxtable and, like the Bliss room, featured a modern décor. Consisting of radiating spokes of small lights on its ceiling with gold- and bronze- striped carpeting on its floors, the long and narrow space was divided into a semi-circular dining area paneled in teak, and a rectangular bar area paneled in alternating teak- and mirror- strips with strands of small lights separating them. Square teak- and circular marble-topped tables with upholstered tub chairs comprised the furniture. Nearby elevator banks were adorned with photo murals of 17<sup>th</sup>-century opera set drawings by Bibiena.

Named after Eleanor Robson Belmont, the Belmont Room was designed by William Baldwin of Baldwin & Martin.<sup>28</sup> Spearheading the effort to save the Metropolitan Opera Company from financial ruin during the Depression, Eleanor Robson Belmont helped transform the private organization into a not-for-profit entity. She also founded the Opera Guild in 1933, an organization devoted to fund-raising activities for the company and to the production of a monthly magazine detailing opera stars and productions. In contrast to the more modern-inspired decors, Baldwin chose "a frankly historicist and residential style to convey a contemporary interpretation of a traditional drawing room" for this space that was to be devoted to receptions and conferences.<sup>29</sup> The decorator also incorporated colors from bird figurines in a Chinese Chippendale mirror which Belmont donated to the room that included blue, green and vermillion. Artifacts include a framed series of autographs by famous classical composers ranging from J.S. Bach to Alan Berg; a bronze of soprano, Lucrezia Bori's hands; and a death mask of ballerina, Anna Pavlova, ironically made during her lifetime by Malvina Hoffman.<sup>30</sup>

Also included in the room's collection is a life-like portrait of Mrs. Belmont herself, an 18<sup>th</sup>-century Russian chandelier, a gilt console and a mahogany Regency sofa table. The press lounge is located between the front of the house and the backstage, and features black-and-white carpeting designed by David Hicks with low-scale red banquettes. Founder's Hall, located on the parking level of the opera house, contains other portraiture and sculptures of the Metropolitan's legendary singers that were relocated from the former house. In this instance, Harrison had succeeded in convincing the decorating committee that these works would best be viewed on the white walls of the hall rather than on the curved, red-velveted lobby walls upstairs.<sup>31</sup>

Other up-and-coming designers were commissioned to decorate the Metropolitan Opera Club and executive offices. Angelo Donghia of Yale R. Burge/Donghia Inc. designed the Metropolitan Opera Club, located on the sixth floor of the building's north side. Working in silver and brown tones, Donghia's interior, somewhat evocative of an elegant speakeasy, featured a silver tea-papered ceiling accented by a gold-foiled rectangular soffit and dome with a Russian crystal chandelier over a circular, wooden bar. On the walls, Donghia alternated panels of dark brown leather and silver tea paper with occasional crystal sconces. Brown satin-covered Regency-style chairs with gold and black-lacquered Chinoiserie patterns on their backs faced brown velvet-upholstered banquettes with elegant, wooden tables in between.

Mario Buatta's executive lobby and offices on the north side of the opera house were the antithesis of Angelo Donghia's club room. Instead of dark and metallic colors, Buatta chose a light-filled ensemble of white with black-striped, open-weave Fiberglas draperies, offset by a bold pattern of black and white carpeting, composed of alternating circles and squares. For furniture, the designer created plush, patterned, citron velvet banquettes adorned with tassels along with potted trees and a leather table.

## Art Within the Metropolitan Opera House

Unlike Philip Johnson and Max Abramovitz, Wallace K. Harrison did not have as much influence as his colleagues in either the selection or the placement of art within his building. Instead, Rudolph Bing, the Metropolitan Opera Art Committee, chaired by Agnes Belmont and headed by art collector Robert Lehman, and the Committee on Arts and Acquisitions made most of the final decisions. The most significant disagreement surrounded the commissioning and location of Marc Chagall's paintings in the outer lobby.<sup>32</sup> In having to accommodate the need for more serviceable space while, at the same time, reducing the size of his building, Harrison had to insert additional walls into the northern and southern portions of the outer lobby area. Confronted with the prospect of four enormous blank walls, Rudolph Bing suggested to the Metropolitan Opera Art Committee that it cover the two walls facing Lincoln Center Plaza with a pair of paintings by Marc Chagall. Bing recalled:

My most important contribution to the looks of the building was probably my wife's lifelong friendship with Mrs. Marc Chagall...I proposed Chagall paintings of scenes from opera to cover these walls (they are not murals: they are on canvas and in theory could be removed), and having received approval for this proposal went to Chagall with a package suggestion of the two walls plus scenery and costumes for a new production of Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. As a result, the costs to the Metropolitan and to Lincoln Center were very much less than they might otherwise have been.<sup>33</sup>

The production of *The Magic Flute*, designed by Chagall, was mounted in 1967. Despite his insistence that a more avant-garde artist such as Fernand Léger should have been chosen for the commission, Harrison was overruled.

Since the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Marc Chagall had been known for his fantasy paintings which combined folkloric imagery with expressive and vivid coloration.<sup>34</sup> Born in Belarus' in 1887, Chagall briefly studied art in the local studio of Yehuda Pen, before moving to St. Petersburg in 1907 to continue his education under Nicholas Roerich, and further training at the Avantseva School. Between 1910 and 1914, Chagall earned distinction for painting a series of imaginative subjects which were exhibited at Salons des Indépendents in 1912, 1913 and

1914. In 1913, the artist won international attention with his exhibition at Herwarth Walden's Erste Deutsche Herbstsalon in Berlin, which was then followed by a joint retrospective in conjunction with the works of Alfred Kubin for Walden's Der Sturm gallery in 1914.

After the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, Chagall was appointed Commissar for the Arts in Vitebsk, and founded an art school and museum, as well as painted various stage designs. After a rival political appointment supplanted his position, the artist went to Moscow to design sets for the opening production of the new State Kamerny Theatre. In 1923, Chagall migrated with his wife and daughter to Paris, where he subsequently designed illustrations for a range of books and completed his painting, *The Dream* (1927). This work confirmed the artist's reputation for vivid fantasy, which had previously been deemed "supernatural" by the poet Apollinaire.<sup>35</sup> Although Chagall refused to join the Surrealist movement, his work was nonetheless associated with Surrealist motifs for its dreamlike representations. In 1937, the artist became a French citizen but then had to immigrate to the United States in 1941 after an imprisonment by the Vichy government. Relocating to New York, Chagall received a commission to design sets for the New York Ballet Theater production of *Aleko* in 1942, and in 1946 was the subject of a major retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art. These were followed by several well-publicized exhibits in Paris in 1947 and 1959.

In 1964, one year before he received the commission to paint *Le Triomphe de la Musique* and *Les Sources de la Musique* at the Metropolitan Opera House, the artist painted five sectional murals on the six-hundred-square-foot circular ceiling of the Paris Opera. When asked about his subject matter, the artist said it was to act "as a 'mirror' to reflect 'in a bouquet of dreams the creations of the performers and composers.'"<sup>36</sup> Similarly, Chagall's vivid commissions for the Metropolitan not only featured fantastical images of angels and musicians, but also Rudolph Bing and the ballerina Maya Plisetskaya. Having worked closely with the artist, assistant manager, Herman Krawitz, described *Le Triomphe de la Musique* as follows:

Chagall chose a vivid red as the dominant hue to celebrate “Le Triomphe de la Musique” on the south side. Ballerinas, singers, and musicians intermingle with images of St. Patrick’s Cathedral, Rockefeller Center and the New York skyline, as Chagall pays homage to American, French, and Russian music through jazz, folk and opera references. Humorous and affectionate accents are interposed by Rudolf Bing’s appearance in gypsy costume (the central figure in a group of three on the left), by portraits of the Chagalls and of Maya Plisetskaya of the Bolshoi Ballet, who posed for this likeness.

With regard to *Les Sources de la Musique*, Krawitz offered:

In the predominantly yellow painting on the north “Les Sources de la Musique,” cornerstone concerns of Chagall regarding love, hope and peace are pervasive themes, through the tree of life (floating on the Hudson against the Manhattan skyline), through the lyre shared by a combined King David and Orpheus, through nods to Beethoven’s FIDELIO, Mozart’s MAGIC FLUTE, Bach, Wagner and Verdi.<sup>37</sup>

Measuring thirty-feet-wide by sixty-feet-long apiece, and protected by gray fiberglass draperies, Chagall’s works were unveiled on September 8, 1966 and had been made possible through a donation by the Henry L. and Grace Doherty Charitable Foundation in April 1965.

In November 1965, also through a gift of the Henry L. and Grace Doherty Charitable Foundation, the Metropolitan Art Committee acquired two bronze sculptures by French sculptor Aristide Maillol, *Summer* (1910) and *Venus Without Arms* (1920); and a third, *Kneeling Woman: Monument to Debussy* (1930-33), through a gift from A. Conger Goodyear. Standing sixty-two inches high, *Summer* was originally a commission from Savva Morosoff, a Russian collector, and was placed within a niche on one of Harrison’s specially-designed curved marble walls on the Grand Tier. *Venus Without Arms* is sixty-nine inches high and was acquired by the Metropolitan Opera from the artist’s estate. This, too, was placed on a pedestal in another curved, marble-walled niche on the same floor. *Kneeling Woman: Monument to Debussy* is thirty-six inches high and was featured in an exhibition of the artist’s work at the Metropolitan Art Museum in 1933.

Commemorating West Germany’s generous monetary gift to the Metropolitan Opera House, the Gert von Gontard and the Myron and Anabel Taylor Foundation acquired and

donated a bronze cast of *Die Kniende*, or *Kneeling Woman* (1911) to the opera house in September 1966.<sup>38</sup> Created by Wilhelm Lehmbruck, the piece represented a turning point in the artist's career in which he veered away from a purely representational art to a more expressionistic one. Combining a purity of form with a Gothic-like spirit, *Kneeling Woman* was both sensational and controversial, having had its first showing in Paris, and then later at the infamous New York Armory show of 1913.<sup>39</sup>

In contrast to the other more established artists, Mary Callery was a contemporary sculptress who was awarded the prestigious commission to design an untitled piece for the opera house's proscenium arch in 1966. A native New Yorker, Callery was born in 1903, and later attended the Art Students League, where she trained under Edward McCarten.<sup>40</sup> In 1930, she moved to Paris and apprenticed in the atelier of the Russian sculptor, Jacques Loutchansky. Her work at the time was heavily influenced by Maillol. In 1940, Callery returned to New York and had her first one-woman show at the Buchholz Gallery. Other shows soon followed at New York's Curt Valentine and Knoedler Galleries, and in the Salon de Tuileries in Paris.

Departing dramatically from the formal training she received in France, Callery's works in the United States were characterized by "elongated figure studies with curious rubbery appendages which set up relations between the internal and external space of the work."<sup>41</sup> Throughout the 1950s, these forms began to get more angular until they became total abstractions that primarily stressed spatial relationships. Later, in the 1960s, the artist produced "curvilinear forms [that] became preponderant together with an enhanced interest in surface texture."<sup>42</sup> Among the galleries that own her work are the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of Art, the Toledo Museum of Art, the Cincinnati Art Museum, and the San Francisco Museum of Art. Mary Callery died in Paris in 1977.

In spite of the control that the Metropolitan Art Committee exerted over Wallace K. Harrison in selecting and placing most of the art within the opera house, the Top of the Met not only featured the architect's interior design, but also reflected his artistic tastes. In 1950, famed

French artist Raoul Dufy had painted scenic backdrops of historic and contemporary people engaging in leisurely activities for Gilbert Miller's Broadway production of Jean Anouilh's *Ring Around the Moon*. Upon Harrison's request, these scenic designs were subsequently donated to the Metropolitan Opera House by the show's producer.<sup>43</sup>

A later addition to the Metropolitan Opera House's art collection were a pair of identically-shaped sculptures by Japanese sculptor Masayuki Nagare of gray and black granite, respectively, entitled *Bachi 1972* and *Bachi 1973*, which were installed in the fall 1974. Acquired through a donation from the Louis and Bessie Adler Foundation, the pair was, according to *The New York Times*, "an abstraction of a pick used to play the samisen" and placed in the north and south porticoes of the opera house's outdoor promenade.<sup>44</sup>

### **The Metropolitan Opera House Opening and Critical Response**

Although the Metropolitan Opera House did not formally open until September 1966, there were two events which preceded it. On January 20, 1964, opera stars Leontyne Price and Robert Merrill marked the completion of the roof by participating in a "topping-out ceremony," in which they signed their names to a structural steel beam which was hoisted to the opera house's highest point.<sup>45</sup> Later, on April 11, 1966, the Metropolitan Opera Guild's company presented the first performance in the new house, Puccini's *La fanciulla del West*, to an audience of three thousand students. Accompanying them, Harrison and the acoustical designers sat and listened to the rehearsal in anticipation of what the architect deemed the "\$45 million aria."<sup>46</sup> Once the performance began, the designers were relieved and pleased to hear that the acoustics were not just serviceable, but exceptional.<sup>47</sup>

The formal opening that took place several months later on Friday night, September 16<sup>th</sup>, was one of the most auspicious events in the city's cultural life, and one that ushered in a new era for the Metropolitan Opera and its audiences. Weeks before, Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson had written the opera association's president, Anthony Bliss, brimming with anticipation: "The

gaiety, the splendor, the excitement of this evening are really overwhelming. One cannot help but feel that it is the beginning of another ‘Golden Age’ in the history of the Metropolitan Opera.”<sup>48</sup> Similarly enthralled, *The New York Times* ran a front-page headline the morning after the opening that proclaimed, “Metropolitan Opera House Opens in a Crescendo of Splendor” followed by photos and a full account of the event and its attendees, along with reviews of the opera house, its art pieces and the opera itself.<sup>49</sup>

Like the debuts of Philharmonic Hall and the New York State Theater, the opening of the Metropolitan Opera House was prominently attended by local, national and international dignitaries. In addition to the First Lady were Mayor John B. Lindsay; Governor Nelson B. Rockefeller; Rose, Robert, Ethel, Edward and Joan Kennedy; Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara; White House Cultural Advisor Robert L. Stevens; United States Delegate to the United Nations Arthur L. Goldberg; and President Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos of the Philippines. Representing New York society—and descendants of the Metropolitan Opera’s founding members—were Alfred G. Vanderbilt, Cornelius Vanderbilt Whitney and John Hay Whitney. Also in attendance was Mrs. John Ryan, whose father, Otto Kahn, had begun the search for a new opera house fifty-eight years before, and Wallace K. Harrison.<sup>50</sup>

As an estimated three thousand onlookers filled Lincoln Center Plaza, the opera’s patrons began arriving around 6:00 p.m., whereupon they dined at either the Top of the Met, the Grand Tier Restaurant or at Sherry’s, housed in Philharmonic Hall.<sup>51</sup> Simultaneously, the aforementioned dignitaries assembled in the Metropolitan Board Room where an exclusive dinner party was held in their honor.<sup>52</sup> Once inside the auditorium, the orchestra played the National Anthem, and then John D. Rockefeller, III, acting on behalf of Lincoln Center, Inc., formally presented the opera house to Metropolitan Opera president, Anthony Bliss.

To mark the occasion, Rudolph Bing had commissioned famed American composer, Samuel Barber, to write an opera.<sup>53</sup> Barber’s new work—in collaboration with Franco Zeffirelli as librettist, director and designer—was based on William Shakespeare’s *Anthony and*

*Cleopatra*, and starred Leontyne Price and Justino Diaz, with Thomas Schippers conducting. In addition to the debuts of a new opera house and a new opera, Bing announced after the second-act intermission that a labor strike involving the orchestra had finally been settled, thereby removing any uncertainty pertaining to the remainder of the season.<sup>54</sup>

Perhaps more attributable to the compromise imposed by committee than to the architect's inability, the reviews for the \$46.8 million Metropolitan Opera House were mixed. Calling it a "monument manqué," Ada Louise Huxtable criticized it as "a sterile throwback rather than creative 20<sup>th</sup>-century design," and stated that "Architecturally...in the sense of the exhilarating and beautiful synthesis of structure and style that produces the great buildings of our age, it is not a modern opera house at all."<sup>55</sup> Once inside the auditorium, Huxtable further observed, "There is a strong temptation to close the eyes."<sup>56</sup> Other critics concurred with Huxtable's assessment of the interiors. Shana Alexander, writing for *Life* magazine, called the rhinestone and gilt décor "sleazy," while Inez Robb of the *World Journal Tribune* decried that "the auditorium has about it a cheap look ...the tiers of boxes, far from giving the house a look of luxury, have the insubstantial look of shallow paper paste-ons, stuck to the walls with glue and Scotch tape."<sup>57</sup>

Yet, in spite of her general disappointment with the design, Huxtable did acknowledge some of the opera house's attributes. Assessing the public areas, she noted, "It's got a good plan that works well in terms of circulation, bars, restaurants and general social movement."<sup>58</sup> Olga Gueft, who had also been divided in her review, wrote:

The sculpture of the flowing promenade stairs is fractured by the variety of materials in which it is carried out. The cruciform pillars, marble screens, hammered bronze rails, and obese padded bars could be in a Miami hotel...[But] for all its ineptitudes the grand stairway and lobby *are* grand—and in their unity with Lincoln Center's Fountain Plaza—exhilarating.<sup>59</sup>

The authors of *New York 1960* heaped praise on Harrison's lobby, asserting, "More successfully than any of the other Lincoln Center architects, Harrison was able to follow in the tradition of

Garnier, using the staircase to gather together all classes of the audience—from those arriving in limousines to those entering from the subway via the underground concourse.”<sup>60</sup>

Of the house’s technical aspects, Huxtable reasoned, “Since the new opera promises to be an excellent performing house, with satisfactory acoustics, it may not matter that the architecture sets no high-water mark for the city...Performance, after all, was the primary objective.”<sup>61</sup>

Harold Schonberg, also reviewing for the *Times*, agreed with Huxtable, writing, “The new building seems to be disliked in direct ratio to one’s sophistication. But there are several things that cannot be taken away. The stage facilities are stupendous, and the auditorium is an acoustical success. Those are two not inconsiderable items in an opera house.”<sup>62</sup>

Yet, another critic, writing for *Architectural Record*, disagreed with Huxtable and Schonberg’s weighted assessments, maintaining:

The directors of the Metropolitan Opera Company...told the architect: We do not want just an opera house...we want a house for grand opera. And architect Wallace K. Harrison has given the new Met that quality. Like opera itself, it is more flamboyant and more colorful than life; an elegant setting of gold leaf, red plush, and crystal; latter-day Baroque architecture for the most Baroque of the arts—grand opera.<sup>63</sup>

Moreover, the same critic argued:

The architecture of the new Metropolitan mixes old and new; is modern Baroque that sets out to provide the great spaces, the flowing lines, the repeated curves, and the elaborate elegance of the European houses. Thus, the abundance of gold leaf and red plush, the crystal chandeliers, the rosewood paneling, the grand stair. What could be more appropriate for grand opera in a great metropolis?”<sup>64</sup>

The reviewer concluded by noting that the new Metropolitan was the “largest opera house yet built,” and the first to be air-conditioned.”<sup>65</sup> Edgar B. Young stressed the enormity of the stage and backstage areas in comparison to the auditorium, which surpassed the dimensions of the old house by more than three to one.<sup>66</sup>

Other critics also had accolades for Harrison’s design. Robert Kotlowitz, writing for *Harper’s Magazine*, waxed:

Wallace Harrison has designed the theater in an almost endless series of curves that first beckon the audience from the high thin arches at front, then lead them inside on their way up swirling staircases past gently rounded walls, past a bar that is shaped something like an S, into the huge auditorium finally with its own immense curve and small decorative variations on the front arches. The sightlines are perfect.<sup>67</sup>

Another reviewer, writing for *Newsweek*, hailed the exterior as “graceful and strong with its ranks of pearly travertine columns and 96-foot-high glass façade,” while Inez Robb deemed it “handsome.”<sup>68</sup> Regarding the stage mechanics, a journalist for the *New York Times Magazine* enthused about “the most modern and sophisticated stage equipment of any opera house in the world.”<sup>69</sup> Irving Kolodin, writing for *Saturday Review*, concluded:

The transformation of the backstage area has evolved into a wonderland of facilities and accessories hitherto unknown to opera in this country...It is all of these musical, mechanical, and material factors which, together with its spare lines and architectural proportions, characterize the new monumental Metropolitan as an opera house on the American plan. Behind as well as before the curtain it is projected as a prime instance of functional design that will take a place of pride among the famous examples, world-wide, of man-made solutions to a man-made problem.”<sup>70</sup>

Like the critic for the *Architectural Record*, Kolodin was one of the few critics who fully embraced the new Metropolitan Opera House. Comparing the Metropolitan to other 20<sup>th</sup>-century American opera houses, Kolodin deemed the auditorium a “one-seat” house that not only provided effective sightlines for its entire audience, but also universal entrances and exits that did not discriminate among its patrons.<sup>71</sup>

Like the architecture, the reviews pertaining to the art and their placement within the Metropolitan Opera House were also divided. John Canaday, offering his perspective in the *Times* the morning after the opening, declared, “Retardatory avant-gardism is the group character of the art in the Metropolitan Opera House.”<sup>72</sup> Calling the Chagalls “hardly daring,” the art critic noted that “any person with a nimble wrist and access to a set of color reproductions of Chagall’s recent work might have synthesized [them] as easily.”<sup>73</sup> However, just as he had questioned the merit of Chagall’s paintings, Canaday expressed similar reservations about their placement:

Strictly speaking, they are too high for the space; you crane your neck and then see them only in distortion, although the patterns have been elongated in the upper portions as if to take into consideration this curious angle. To see the compositions as a whole, you have to go onto the balcony outside or into the central court when, in either case, the flowing Chagall patterns are segmented by the chastely Mondrianesque patterns of the thick bronze partitions between panes of glass. But no matter. The familiar segments are easily recombined by association.<sup>74</sup>

Ervin Galantay, while praising the paintings themselves, saw their accoutrements more debilitating than their locations:

Their light dreamlike quality might have softened the maladroit design of the lounge, were it not for heavy box frames and huge draperies that entirely divorce the paintings from the architecture. They are degraded to 'lobby art,' a genre much in favor with New York's commercial architecture.<sup>75</sup>

Galantay considered most of the art work—including the commissioned works—at Lincoln Center to be “art appliqué,” alluding to the fact that most of it seemed to be more of an afterthought than an integrated component of the architecture.<sup>76</sup> However, Winthrop Sargeant heartily disagreed, maintaining, “Generally, the art on the inside of [the Met] has a great deal more dignity than the junk sculpture and other avant-garde stuff that clutter the State Theater and Philharmonic Hall.”<sup>77</sup>

Inez Robb, endorsing everything about the Chagalls, raved, “It is a glorious sight as one approaches it for a night performance. The two tremendous Chagall murals framed in that façade are a joy to the eye and to the heart.”<sup>78</sup> Robert Kotlowitz agreed, proclaiming:

The triumph of the theater are the two paintings by Chagall...One of the most beautiful sights in New York now is the new Met lighted up. At night it is all clear, light, beige travertine, with crimson floor-and-wall carpeting visible through its enormous vertical windows, while the two red and yellow Chagall murals, dedicated to music, dominate the entire plaza with their cheerful presence.<sup>79</sup>

Thus, perhaps more than any other individual work at Lincoln Center, the critics were harshly divided in their views of Chagall's paintings and their locations.

Contrasted with the mixed reviews that Chagall's works received, Mary Callery's untitled sculpture was uniformly panned. Referring to Hilton Kramer's review the previous week in which the critic blasted the work as "not only a strikingly unlovely work in itself, but the kind of work that immediately identifies itself as an artistic nullity," John Canaday equated it with "a piece of junk jewelry."<sup>80</sup> Ervin Galantay also dismissed the Callery installation, describing it as "an enigmatic bundle of perforated strips and gilded noodles," while Robert Kotlowitz deemed it "meager as both art and decoration."<sup>81</sup>

The Maillol and Lehmbruck sculptures received more favorable notices. Robb called the Maillols "lovely," while Canaday referred to the pair and to the Lehmbruck sculptures as the Metropolitan Opera House's "best work."<sup>82</sup> On the other hand, Canaday reiterated Galantay's complaint about the misplacement of art, criticizing the three works as well as the Callery sculpture as having "been acquired as an afterthought; much as one acquires mantel ornaments to dress up the living room, while the commissioned work is so slight as to suggest that it is only part of a temporary décor."<sup>83</sup>

Although Canaday was tepid in his appreciation of the majority of the Metropolitan Opera House's artworks, he was undilutedly enthusiastic about the Raoul Dufy paintings, which he remarked, "come off very well."<sup>84</sup> Moreover, he specified as to why he believed these works in particular were successful:

The Dufys have a gaiety entirely appropriate to their location. They are not asked to meet any great demand other than the one they meet perfectly, which is to please, visually with a flair and style that is its own complete, if inconsequential, reason for being. They are murals in a restaurant, and they are very pleasant paintings to eat by. The Dufy murals may in the long run, prove to be the most successful decorations in the place, simply because they are the least assuming of a complex that over-all, suffers from gassy inflation.<sup>85</sup>

As previously noted, unlike most of the art within the opera house, it was Wallace K. Harrison—not Rudolph Bing, nor any decorating committee—who had chosen these paintings.<sup>86</sup>

Furthermore, despite Ada Louise Huxtable's severe critique of Harrison's opera house, she defended the architect himself. Recounting Harrison's longstanding commitment to the project, she praised his previous ideas:

The architect's concept for the new house was for structurally independent stage and seating enclosed within an arcaded shell, the two separated by an insulating cushion of space...The possibilities existed for logic, clarity, exciting contemporaneity and strong visual drama. Reams of drawings testify to the effort put into seating design and imaginative interior treatment."<sup>87</sup>

Huxtable also acknowledged the compromise that often results when potentially good design must adhere to budgetary constraints, which she called "the dirge like refrain to which design quality and architectural excellence are being buried all over the United States."<sup>88</sup> Finally, she not only let the architect identify those who had made the choices which she deemed unfavorable, but also allowed him to defend himself. Harrison was quoted in her review as saying, "We couldn't have a modern house. I finally got hammered down by the opera people. I personally would have liked to have found some way around it, but my client wouldn't have liked that at all."<sup>89</sup> Thus, in spite of any aspirations the architect may have had to produce an architecturally innovative work, he was inhibited by a design process that subjugated his creativity.

### **Alterations to the Metropolitan Opera House**

With the exception of the plaza area directly in front of the Metropolitan Opera House, whose low-rise pink marble granite stairs were deemed a liability and later replaced with a less hazardous ramp of the same material, alterations within the opera house itself have been minimal. Due to a lack of business, the Opera Café was discontinued in 1979 and a gift shop was opened in its place. In addition, the Top of the Met ceased operations shortly after it opened and now houses ticketing computers.<sup>90</sup>

In 1995, the opera association introduced "Met Titles" as a means of offering simultaneous translations of its performances to each audience member.<sup>91</sup> Attaching individual,

computerized screens to railings that were subsequently mounted on the backs of the auditorium's chairs and standing room corrals, the organization was able to make the opera-going experience more accessible through the least obtrusive means. Several features of "Met Titles" include the option of having them on or off during a performance, and a uni-directional visibility which does not interfere with other patrons' enjoyment of the performance.

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- <sup>1</sup> John W. Freeman, "Metropolitan Opera," in Jackson, ed., p.758. For a detailed history of the Metropolitan Opera, see *ibid.*, pp.757-758.
  - <sup>2</sup> For general background on the original Metropolitan Opera House, see Newhouse, "The Metropolitan Opera House: beginnings," p.198, and Kathleen Randall, "Eliminating Alternatives: Existing Houses and Early Art Center Proposals," pp.22-26.
  - <sup>3</sup> According to Quaintance Eaton, "lyre" was the name of J.C. Cady's winning architectural entry for the Metropolitan Opera House. Quaintance Eaton, "Cady's Lyre," *The Miracle of the Met: An Informal History of the Metropolitan Opera: 1883-1967*, (New York: Meredith Press, 1968.) p. 45.
  - <sup>4</sup> Freeman, "Metropolitan Opera," in Jackson, ed., p.758.
  - <sup>5</sup> Randall, "Eliminating Alternatives: Existing Houses and Early Art Center Proposals," p.24.
  - <sup>6</sup> Newhouse, "The Metropolitan Opera House: beginnings," p.198.
  - <sup>7</sup> Rudolph Bing, *5000 Nights at the Opera*, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1972) p.138.
  - <sup>8</sup> Bing, *5000 Nights at the Opera*, pp.138-9.
  - <sup>9</sup> Cecil Smith, as quoted in Bing, p.139.
  - <sup>10</sup> Newhouse, "The Metropolitan Opera House: beginnings," p.200.
  - <sup>11</sup> For detailed information on the design phase of the Metropolitan Opera House, see Newhouse, "The Metropolitan Opera House: beginnings," pp.198-221, and "The Metropolitan Opera House: completion," pp.222-235.
  - <sup>12</sup> Quoted in Newhouse, "The Metropolitan Opera House: beginnings," p.210.
  - <sup>13</sup> Quoted in Greenfield, "Curtain Going Up For Wallace Harrison," p.84.
  - <sup>14</sup> Francis Robinson, *Celebration: The Metropolitan Opera*, (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1979) p.30.
  - <sup>15</sup> Newhouse, "The Metropolitan Opera House: completion," p.228.
  - <sup>16</sup> Author's notes from Lincoln Center Tour, June 25, 2001.
  - <sup>17</sup> Stern, Mellins, and Fishman, "Lincoln Square: Metropolitan Opera House," p.704.
  - <sup>18</sup> Greenfield, "Curtain Going Up For Wallace Harrison," p.84.
  - <sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, p.84.
  - <sup>20</sup> Newhouse, "The Metropolitan Opera House: completion," p.223.
  - <sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, p.224.
  - <sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, p.233.
  - <sup>23</sup> Quoted in "A House for Grand Opera," *Architectural Record*, September 1966, v.140, p.150.
  - <sup>24</sup> Newhouse, "The Metropolitan Opera house: beginnings," p.209.
  - <sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, p.225-6.
  - <sup>26</sup> "The World's Most Mechanized Opera House: The Met's Amazing Stage," *Architectural Record*, September 1966, v.140, p.156.
  - <sup>27</sup> For descriptions regarding the Metropolitan Opera House restaurants and private meeting rooms, see Newhouse, "The Metropolitan Opera House: completion," p.230, and "MORE OF THE MET: Restaurants and clubs," *Interiors*, December 1966, v.126, no.5, pp.124-127.
  - <sup>28</sup> For information on the Belmont Room, see Robinson, *Celebration*, p.37.
  - <sup>29</sup> Stern, Mellins, and Fishman, "Lincoln Square: Metropolitan Opera House," p.710.
  - <sup>30</sup> Robinson, *Celebration: The Metropolitan Opera*, p.37. In March 1966, Lincoln Kirstein, upon receiving an Anna Pavlova death mask in bronze from ballerina, Nadia Nerina, donated the artifact to the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts for its permanent collection. "Pavlova Death Mask," *The New York Times*, March 24, 1966, p.48.
  - <sup>31</sup> Robinson, *Celebration: The Metropolitan Opera*, p.37.
  - <sup>32</sup> Newhouse, "The Metropolitan Opera House: completion," p.228.

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- <sup>33</sup> Bing, *5000 Nights at the Opera*, p.302.
- <sup>34</sup> For Chagall, see Susan Compton, "Chagall, Marc," in Turner, ed., v.6, pp.383-386.
- <sup>35</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, p.384.
- <sup>36</sup> Quoted in "Chagall to Do 2 Murals for Met Opera," *The New York Times*, April 27, 1965, p.39.
- <sup>37</sup> Quoted in Young, "Visual Arts in Lincoln Center," p.219.
- <sup>38</sup> "West Germany's Gift To Met Is Dedicated," *The New York Times*, September 7, 1966, p.51.
- <sup>39</sup> For Wilhelm Lehbruck, see Dietrich Schubert, "Lehbruck, Wilhelm," in Turner, ed., v.19, pp.94-95.
- <sup>40</sup> For Mary Callery, see "Callery, Mary," in Harold Osborne, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Twentieth-Century Art*, (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1981) p.93, and Fielding, "Callery, Mary," in Optiz, ed., p.127.
- <sup>41</sup> *ibid.*, p.93.
- <sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, p.93.
- <sup>43</sup> Newhouse, "The Metropolitan Opera House: completion," p.230.
- <sup>44</sup> "New Sculpture at Metropolitan Opera," *The New York Times*, September 17, 1974, p.39.
- <sup>45</sup> Robinson, *Celebration: The Metropolitan Opera*, p.29.
- <sup>46</sup> Quoted in Newhouse, "The Metropolitan Opera House: completion," p.228.
- <sup>47</sup> Newhouse, "The Metropolitan Opera House: completion," p.228.
- <sup>48</sup> Quoted in Charlotte Curtis, "First Lady Adds to Glitter; Musicians' Strike is Settled," *The New York Times*, September 17, 1966, p.1. For the opening of the Metropolitan Opera House, see Young, "The Opening of the Metropolitan Opera House: September 16, 1966," pp.251-259; Charlotte Curtis, "First Lady Adds to Glitter; Musicians' Strike is Settled," *The New York Times*, September 17, 1966, pp.1,16-17; and "New Metropolitan Opera House Opens in a Crescendo of Splendor," *The New York Times*, September 17, 1966, p.1.
- <sup>49</sup> "New Metropolitan Opera House Opens in a Crescendo of Splendor," p.1.
- <sup>50</sup> Curtis, "First Lady Adds to Glitter; Musicians' Strike is Settled," p.16.
- <sup>51</sup> *ibid.*, p.16.
- <sup>52</sup> Young, "The Opening of the Metropolitan Opera House: September 16, 1966," p.252.
- <sup>53</sup> Curtis, "First Lady Adds to Glitter; Musicians' Strike is Settled," p.1.
- <sup>54</sup> Young, "The Opening of the Metropolitan Opera House: September 16, 1966," p.254.
- <sup>55</sup> Ada Louise Huxtable, "Met as Architecture: New House, Although Technically Fine, Muddles a Dramatic Design Concept," *The New York Times*, September 17, 1966, p.17.
- <sup>56</sup> *ibid.*, p.17.
- <sup>57</sup> Shana Alexander, "Culture's big super-event," *Life*, September 30, 1966; Inez Robb, "The New Met: All Front, No Center," *World Journal Tribune*, April 26, 1967.
- <sup>58</sup> Huxtable, "Met as Architecture: New House, Although Technically Fine, Muddles a Dramatic Design Concept," p.17.
- <sup>59</sup> Olga Gueft, "Lincoln Center Realized," *Interiors*, September 1966, v.126, p.96, 98.
- <sup>60</sup> Stern, Mellins, and Fishman, "Lincoln Square: Metropolitan Opera House," p.706.
- <sup>61</sup> Huxtable, "Met as Architecture: New House, Although Technically Fine, Muddles a Dramatic Design Concept," p.17.
- <sup>62</sup> Harold Schonberg, "After It Was All Over," *The New York Times*, September 25, 1966, II, p.17.
- <sup>63</sup> "A House for Grand Opera," p.149.
- <sup>64</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>65</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>66</sup> Young, "The Opening of the Metropolitan Opera House: September 16, 1966," pp.255-6.
- <sup>67</sup> Robert Kotlowitz, "On the Midway at Lincoln Center," *Harper's Magazine*, December 1966, v.233, p.136.
- <sup>68</sup> "graceful and strong": "The New Met," *Newsweek*, November 8, 1965, v.66, p.98; "handsome": Robb, "The New Met: All Front, No Center."
- <sup>69</sup> "Met Backstage—A Bigger Show," *The New York Times*, September 11, 1966, p.14.
- <sup>70</sup> Irving Kolodin, "Opera House on the American Plan," *Saturday Review*, September 17, 1966, v.49, p.48.
- <sup>71</sup> *ibid.*, p.47.
- <sup>72</sup> John Canaday, "The List of Art: Of the 8 Works Decorating the Met, Dufy's May Prove the Most Successful," *The New York Times*, September 17, 1966, p.17.
- <sup>73</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>74</sup> *ibid.*, p.40.
- <sup>75</sup> Galantay, "Architecture," p.474.
- <sup>76</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>77</sup> Quoted in Robert A.M. Stern, Thomas Mellins, David Fishman, "Lincoln Square: Metropolitan Opera House," p.708.
- <sup>78</sup> Robb, "The New Met: All Front, No Center."
- <sup>79</sup> Kotlowitz, "On the Midway at Lincoln Center," p.137.

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- <sup>80</sup> “not only a...”: Kramer, “Another Sculptural Nullity for New York’s Lincoln Center, p.17; “a piece of...”: Canaday, “The List of Art: Of the 8 Works Decorating the Met, Dufy’s May Prove the Most Successful,” p.17.
- <sup>81</sup> “an enigmatic bundle...”: Ervin Galantay, “Architecture,” *The Nation*, April 10, 1967, v.204, p.474; “meager as both...”: Kotlowitz, “On the Midway at Lincoln Center,” p.136.
- <sup>82</sup> “lovely”: Robb, “The New Met: All Front, No Center”; “best work”: Canaday, “The List of Art: Of the 8 Works Decorating the Met, Dufy’s May Prove the Most Successful,” p.17.
- <sup>83</sup> Canaday, “The List of Art: Of the 8 Works Decorating the Met, Dufy’s May Prove the Most Successful,” p.17.
- <sup>84</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>85</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>86</sup> Newhouse, “The Metropolitan Opera House: completion,” p.228.
- <sup>87</sup> Huxtable, “Met as Architecture: New House, Although Technically Fine, Muddles a Dramatic Design Concept,” p.17.
- <sup>88</sup> *ibid.*, p.17.
- <sup>89</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, p.17.
- <sup>90</sup> For alterations to the Metropolitan Opera House, see Newhouse, “The Metropolitan Opera House: completion,” p.230.
- <sup>91</sup> [www.metopera.org/history/intro.html](http://www.metopera.org/history/intro.html).