NEW YORK STATE THEATER / LINCOLN CENTER PLAZA:

The City Center of Music and Drama/New York City Ballet/New York City Opera

By 1959, the Metropolitan Opera Association, Philharmonic-Symphony Society and Juilliard School had been confirmed as constituents of Lincoln Center, while the dance, drama and library constituencies were still undecided. Despite the fact that Lincoln Kirstein had been involved in Rockefeller's exploratory committee—and had even endorsed Philip Johnson as the dance theater's architect—he had not yet committed his own organization, New York City Ballet, to the enterprise. However, Rockefeller not only believed that Kirstein's New York City Ballet would be an asset, but moreover, that its parent organization, the City Center of Music and Drama, would fulfill Lincoln Center's comprehensive mission of democratizing the arts to a mass audience. Furthermore, Rockefeller believed that including the City Center would strengthen relations with city government as well as generate broader interest in Lincoln Center.[1]

Since its founding in 1943, the City Center of Music and Drama had been a model organization for bringing the performing arts to the public-at-large.[2] Its resident theater, built for Shriners in 1924, had been the former Mecca Temple on West 55th Street and was confronted with imminent demolition after its owners faced foreclosure in 1941 due to tax liens on their property.[3] In 1943, Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia and producer Jean Dalrymple saved the building by purchasing it and transforming it into a multi-use theater. Incorporated as a non-profit organization under the State Board of Education, the New York City Center of Music and Drama presented a diversity of programs at a maximum ticket price of two dollars a seat. In addition, City Center promoted the works of American performers, choreographers and composers through its drama, music and dance offerings.

One of its most notable constituents, New York City Ballet was originally conceived by Kirstein, a balletomane who was also heir to the Filene department store fortune and an editor of *Hound & Horn*, an arts magazine.[4] Dissatisfied with the rigidly conventional European ballet techniques that had influenced performance and training in the United States, Kirstein envisioned a thoroughly American version in which native dancers would be taught by leading choreographers to perform an innovative, modern repertory.[5] In 1933, Kirstein met Russian choreographer George Balanchine and invited him to collaborate in this quest. Balanchine had been both a ballet student of the Imperial School of Ballet in St. Petersburg and a piano-composition student of the Petrograd Conservatory of Music. In 1924, he defected from the newly-formed Soviet Union in order to join Serge Diaghilev's famous Monte Carlo-based Ballet Russe. Accepting Kirstein's invitation, Balanchine moved to the United States in 1933 to initiate their dance school, called the "School of American Ballet," and company, called the "American Ballet." Between 1935 and 1941, the American Ballet performed in and around New York state and abroad, including a three-year residency at the old Metropolitan Opera House between 1935 and 1937. The company dissolved during World War II when Kirstein enlisted in the Army and Balanchine returned to the Ballet Russe to choreograph.

After the war, the two founders reunited and formed the Ballet Society and the Ballet Caravan. The former performed primarily at several Manhattan schools between 1946 and 1947, while the latter toured selected cities within the United States. By 1948, the two companies had earned such a favorable reputation that Morton Baum, the City Center's Chairman of the Executive Committee, invited the Ballet Society to be the resident company of his theater. Moreover, Baum asked Kirstein if he was interested in transforming his cultural entity into New York City's resident ballet company. Kirstein responded, "If you do that for us I will give you in three years the finest ballet company in America."[6] On October 11, 1948, New York City Ballet gave its first performance as the resident company of both the City Center of Music and Drama, and of New York City.[7] Over the next decade, the company further distinguished itself by performing choreographed works by Balanchine, Jerome Robbins (who also became co-artistic director in 1949), Todd Bolender, Anthony Tudor and Frederick Ashton, and introduced such legendary dancers as Maria Tallchief, Francisco Moncion, Tanaquil

LeClercq, Nora Kaye and André Eglevsky. The company was especially known for its forceful and athletic style—promulgated by Balanchine—which was in opposition to the more sweeping gestures of the European school. By 1954, *Time* magazine had proclaimed that New York City Ballet was "the most discussed ballet company in the world" and its accompanying school, "the best and the busiest."[8]

In contrast to New York City Ballet's prestigious history before becoming the resident ballet company of City Center, New York City Opera was an outgrowth of City Center's formation. A primary constituent of the center when it opened in 1944, the organization was touted by Mayor LaGuardia as "the people's opera company" because of its mission to bring opera to individuals of all economic incomes through its low ticket prices.[9] Also, like its dance counterpart, City Center Opera was committed to showcasing the talents of American composers and singers. During its first two decades at the City Center, the company introduced forty-eight contemporary operas, including several which were to become its signature pieces such as Carlisle Floyd's *Susannah* and Douglas Moore's *The Ballad of Baby Doe*. Among the illustrious talents who made their American debuts there during this time were Beverly Sills, Sherrill Milnes, Samuel Ramey, Norman Treigle, Placido Domingo and José Carreras.

The Dance Theater

Without a formal constituent in place, the funding of the dance theater presented a major challenge for the Lincoln Center board. Furthermore, it was apparent that its overall capital campaign would require additional government assistance beyond the original subsidies supplied by urban renewal. Since the City Center of Music and Drama was already largely subsidized by the city, Rockefeller surmised that this resource could potentially complement fund-raising activities for both Lincoln Center and its individual constituents. Yet, the City Center had neither the budget nor the donors to raise funds to build its own theater. Consequently, in spite of the fact that Morton Baum and his co-chairman, soon-to-be parks commissioner Newbold

Morris, became interested in a City Center constituency for Lincoln Center, they were stymied by these fund-raising issues.

Just as he had done with the Metropolitan Opera Association, Robert Moses presented a solution to the problem. On March 1, 1960, Moses was appointed President of the World's Fair Corporation, an organization devoted expressly to the planning and execution of the New York World's Fair.[10] Scheduled for the summers of 1964 and 1965, the fair was to be located at Flushing Meadow Park in Queens. However, Moses proposed relocating the performing arts activities to Lincoln Center, and more specifically, to the proposed dance theater. In addition to drawing an estimated fifty million visitors to the site, this proposal would also facilitate funding from state and local governments to build the dance theater. Although this idea was endorsed by state and local authorities, and embraced by both the Lincoln Center board and the City Center officers, it also presented an unusual complication.

The City Center of Music and Drama relished its relationship with the city which funded its operations yet gave its artistic directors total creative freedom. However, the Lincoln Center board insisted that all constituents be autonomous yet bound by its parent organization's authority. The terms negotiated in accordance with the World's Fair subsidy enabled the state to control the dance theater during the first two years of its existence, with the city assuming ownership from then on. Unlike the other theaters which were to be owned by Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, the dance theater would be property of the state for its first two years, after which, it would be owned by the city. While this ownership in and of itself was not a problem to either the Lincoln Center board or the City Center, altering the latter's relationship with the city was. Despite Baum and Morris' attempts to preserve its direct relationship with the city as its parent entity, they finally relented to having Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts as the primary lessee of the state- and city- owned theater, with the City Center acting as the sub-lessee to Lincoln Center.[11] Even though this lease structure may have seemed trivial, it was essential to the Lincoln Center board, which believed that it could only fulfill its missions of arts education and innovation with a unified constituency. Finally, on January 11, 1965, nearly nine months after the New York State Theater opened, the City Center of Music and Drama became Lincoln Center's fourth constituent.[12]

New York State Theater

Philip Johnson had not only been Lincoln Kirstein's original choice for an architect, but had also been submitting preliminary sketches for the New York State Theater as early as October of 1957. Early design proposals changed considerably between this time and June 26, 1961, when his final drawing was released to the public. Johnson's 1958 proposal featured a semi-circular glass-curtain-wall design with thin, girder like pre-cast-concrete double columns fronting it. However, the Lincoln Center design team rejected this idea on the grounds that it would compromise the symmetry of the southern plaza, lack the rectilinear lines essential to the plaza's conception and ultimately upstage any of Wallace K. Harrison's proposals for the centrally-located Metropolitan Opera House.[13]

By 1960, Johnson had incorporated the rectilinear motif into his proposal with thin pre-cast-concrete columns forming an arcade on the façade and on the pilasters of the theater's east and west sides. Later, opting for a more classical model, Johnson's design for the New York State Theater, in association with Richard Foster at Philip Johnson Associates, mirrored the materials, scale and promenade height of Abramovitz's Philharmonic Hall. However, in contrast to Abramovitz's tapered arcade, Johnson chose a purer and more monumental design, incorporating four pairs of straight yet channeled travertine-clad columns, equally spaced on the building's nine-story façade, to frame his ground- and promenade- level porticoes. The four bays created by the repetition of these columned pairs gave the façade added weight and dimension. Of his inspiration, Johnson later said:

> I admit, as some critics have suggested, that the paired columns on my theater come from Perrault's façade at the back of the Louvre. I wanted to reduce the nine bays on the front of the Philharmonic Hall opposite, to three enormous bays divided by four double-

> clustered columns, all for the sake of clarity. I do not really object to the nine bays but I wanted my entrance to be so obvious—one door going only one way. The contrast with Philharmonic Hall is obvious.[14]

Counteracting the somberness of his neo-classically-inspired design, the architect hung enormous hyacinth-like stalks of faceted headlights within each quartet of columns. On the sides of the theater, the architect placed travertine-clad pilasters against blank walls of the same material, accompanied by smaller, cubed lighting fixtures that were similar to the clusters hanging within the façade.

Johnson's interior spaces for the State Theater were markedly more fluid in their conception than his other designs. In fact, renouncing the dictums of his beloved modern movement as "icy and flat," and citing the Bauhaus movement as the one in which "our generation had to revolt," the architect concentrated on what he deemed the "processionalism" of the theater; namely, "the relationships and effects of spaces as you move about in them." [15] Johnson was later quoted as saying, "Architecture is surely *not* the design of space, certainly not the massing or organizing of volumes. These are auxiliary to the main point which is the organization of procession."[16]

What evolved was a building which was effectively neo-classical on its exterior and neo-Baroque within. Entering from the plaza, the architect's low-ceilinged foyer was comprised of ticket counters set in panels of Rosso Merlino marble directly opposite the theater's glass entrance doors. To the right and to the left of the foyer, Johnson placed pairs of wide, shallow, light marble staircases that led up to large lobby areas on the east and west sides of the orchestra level. Continuing up from this level, the architect placed a single, wide staircase of the same material, which then split after the first landing and wrapped up and around into the Grand Promenade, an elaborate space measuring 60 feet wide by 195 feet long, and 45 feet high.

At the urging of Governor Nelson Rockefeller, Johnson had been encouraged to devise a room that would serve as New York's "parlor."[17] Johnson's response to the Governor's request was an impressively expansive room that he infused with opulent materials befitting royalty—

but within a modern minimalist context. Embellishing an American jail design that he "had seen and liked," Johnson used travertine and marble for the hall's flooring, beige fabric for its walls and purportedly "the biggest gold-leaf job in the world" for its ceiling.[18] Along the room's northern perimeter, the architect faced his glass curtain wall with beads of gold-anodized aluminum—evocative of Marie Nichols' design for the Four Seasons—that sparkled within while diffusing the natural light from outside. Following the undulating form of the auditorium's back wall on the Grand Promenade's southern perimeter, Johnson produced three tiers of gold-screened balconies "borrowed from Jackson Pollack's splashes" with individual diamond like lights along each floor's ribboned base.[19] Also along the northern wall on the floor-level was a long rosewood refreshment bar, complemented by extensive kitchen facilities underneath, capable of preparing meals for as many as six hundred guests.

Within the theater auditorium, Johnson chose a Baroque configuration of five shallow horseshoe-shaped balconies to give both intimacy to the performances and promote a shared experience among the spectators. However, unlike its European court theater counterparts that were largely characterized by private boxes, the architect's proposal adhered to City Center's democratic mission with more open seating arrangements on the balcony levels. Just as Max Abramovitz had striven to create a "pageant for the whole community" in his design for Philharmonic Hall, Johnson also stressed the integration of audience members, stating:

> It is good because it brings many people together in a festive room where everyone can see everyone, where the room will look relatively intimate because the walls are papered with people. It will look intimate, moreover, because more than half the audience will be behind the faces of the balconies which themselves create the psychological walls of the room.[20]

Furthermore, his employment of a continental seating plan within the orchestra eliminated center aisles in favor of continuous rows spaced 40 inches apart in order to maximize the theater's potential seating capacity of 2,801, while also allowing for expedient audience entrances and exits. With regard to the theater's décor, Johnson chose red garnet upholstery for the seats and walls, and more jewel-like headlights along the scalloped, gold-colored balcony fronts. Above, a clustered globe of sixteen lights designed by Richard Kelly provided the cynosure of a gold-colored, webbed ceiling.

Collaborating with the architect on the auditorium design was Danish acoustical consultant, Vilhelm L. Jordan, who shortly thereafter began working with Wallace K. Harrison and Cyril M. Harris in the same capacity on the Metropolitan Opera House. Jordan, who had also been chosen to consult on the acoustics for the Sydney Opera House, was a professor of architecture and electrical engineering at Columbia University.[21] In 1950, he wrote *Acoustical Designing in Architecture* in collaboration with Vern Knudsen, which established them as authorities on sound design.

Working closely with George Balanchine—with the oversight of noted stage designers Walther Unruh and Donald Oenslager—the architect and choreographer developed a stage design that was customized to the rigors of dance, while allowing for maximum audience visibility and perspective. Set within a 39-foot-high proscenium arch, the New York State Theater's mammoth 56 by 60 foot wooden stage was specially constructed to give the dancers extra buoyancy, featuring a front platform extension which could either facilitate additional areas for dancing or be removed to house the orchestra. Johnson was later quoted as saying, "I designed it for George," thereby confirming the fact that it was, according to *The New York Times*, the first theater in recorded history to have been designed expressly for a choreographer.[22]

Art Within New York State Theater

Despite any reservations Philip Johnson may have had about the integration of art into his building designs, he more than compensated for this reluctance by authorizing a diverse collection of modern works to be installed within the New York State Theater. Even after the theater had opened, Johnson had cautioned:

> Commissioning decorative works of art for monumental buildings is dangerous in any age. In ours it is well nigh impossible. Artists

> are interested in their own expression, not in helping out mine. I in turn am more interested in space modulation than in wall decoration. Sometimes we can get together in spite of the difficulties. The New York State Theater was such a time.[23]

In fact, contrary to his doubts, Johnson made bold commitments to artistic integration and interpretation.[24] Perhaps his most provocative commissions were the sculptures *Circus Women* and *Two Female Nudes* by Elie Nadelman, which Johnson not only bought and donated, but had also prominently displayed at opposite ends of his Grand Promenade. Commissioning nineteen-foot-high Carrara marble enlargements of Nelson A. Rockefeller's 1931 four-foot-high bronze originals, the massive, white sculptures were sensuously-curved works that stood in contrast to the minimalist yet richly-adorned hall. Furthermore, Johnson had his artisans obtain the marble from the same quarry as Michelangelo had used to create his renowned works.[25] Utilizing high-powered spotlights, the statues became luminescent objects that reflected light around the room.

Born in Warsaw in 1882, Elie Nadelman had immigrated to the United States at the outset of World War I, after living in Paris and establishing himself as one of that city's avant-garde artists.[26] Creating both busts and full-length nudes in plaster and bronze, as well as Cubist drawings, Nadelman's work was exhibited at the Galerie Druet, the Salon des Indépendants and the Salon d'Automne between 1905 and 1909. In the U.S., Nadelman further refined his style, based on classical antecedents, while experimenting with animal forms and other subject matter. Regarding his work, the artist said, "I employ no other line than the curve, which possesses freshness and force. I compose the curves so as to bring them in accord in opposition to each other."[27] Nadelman's wide acceptance by the modern art community was affirmed by his inclusion in New York's milestone Armory Show which had taken place in 1913. The following year he moved to New York, and in 1929, he retired with his wife, Viola M. Spiess, to Riverdale in the Bronx. Having been an avid collector of American folk art, the couple built a museum for their collection in 1924. Two years after Nadelman's death in 1946, Lincoln Kirstein reintroduced his work to the American public through a retrospective at the Modern Museum of Art.

Other works which Johnson proposed for the New York State theater included commissions and/or acquisitions such as *Numbers, 1964* (1964) by Jasper Johns, Untitled relief (1964) by Lee Bontecou, *Voyage to Crete* (1963) by Reuben Nakian, Sculpture (1963) by Edward Higgins, *Birth of the Muses* (1944-50) by Jacques Lipchitz and *Large Bleeding Martyr* (1960) by Francesco Somaini.[28] The Committee on Arts and Acquisitions endorsed all of these artists, and funding for their works came from the Albert A. List Foundation and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, III.

Hanging in the east wing of the Grand Promenade level, Jasper Johns' *Numbers, 1964* remains the artist's only publicly-commissioned work, and is the largest work in his "Numbers" series.[29] The rectangular painting, which measures seven-by-nine feet, was executed in Sculptmetal, and depicts the artist's signature flags, alphabets and numbers. In contrast to Johns' other works, the characters in the painting were affixed as individual units which were bolted to the panel. Furthermore, complementing his marriage of modern art with modern architecture, the artist added modern performance to the mix by using dance choreographer, Merce Cunningham's foot size as the standard measurement separating his panel's grid lines.

Reflecting Johns' intent of presenting the viewer with "things the mind already knows," *Numbers, 1964* focuses attention on the "ambiguities and contradictions" inherent in recognized symbols through unconventional representation.[30] Like much of the pop artist's work, *Numbers, 1964* was consistent with Johns' goals of creating beauty out of familiar subject matter by using a repetitive grid pattern to emphasize his symbols' monotony, while contrasting this repetition with a lustrous appearance.

Born in Augusta, Georgia in 1930, Johns was largely self-taught and heavily influenced by the writings of philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, and the work of Cézanne, Leonardo, Picasso and Duchamp.[31] In 1957, the artist's *Green Target* (1955) was exhibited at the Jewish Museum and inspired the successful art dealer, Leo Castelli, to give Johns his own one-man show in 1958. As a result of this exhibition, three of Johns works were acquired by Alfred Barr for the Museum of Modern Art. Having known and been mutually influenced by fellow artist, Robert Rauschenberg, during this same period, the two men were credited with re-introducing figurative subject matter into painting as well as facilitating the transition from Abstract Expressionism to Pop art. In addition to painting, Johns has also worked in sculpting and printmaking.

On December 14, 1998, the Lincoln Center Board of Directors voted to consider selling *Numbers, 1964* as a means of raising capital improvement funds. Calling it "the subtlest monument of our time," Philip Johnson adamantly defended the work, exclaiming, "The sale of this painting is a disservice to artists, to art, to architecture, to the architectural profession and to the public…It was commissioned for the building and is by the greatest American artist of our time."[32] Jasper Johns himself concluded, "I made the work based on the site. Since it's my only public commission, it is of great importance to me. I would like it to stay where it is."[33] *Times* art critic, Roberta Smith, argued that it "is the only public commission of an artist famous for turning public signs—targets, flags, the alphabet, numbers 0 through 9—into a private language."[34] After much outcry, the Lincoln Center Board relented and *Numbers, 1964* was retained in the east lobby of the New York State Theater.

Located west of the entrance foyer, Lee Bontecou's untitled relief is an amalgam of utilitarian supplies and artist materials. Composed of welded metal rods, an old fire hose and the Plexiglas turret of a World War II bomber, the horizontally-oriented hanging installation is covered with stretched canvas, charcoal, white paint and soot. Surrounding a black hole, Bontecou's shapes are a symmetrical ensemble of curved shapes emanating from a central void.

Born in Providence, Rhode Island in 1931, Lee Bontecou studied at the Art Students League between 1952 and 1955, and thereafter in Rome in 1956 and 1958 on two Fulbright scholarships.[35] Pre-dating her untitled relief for Lincoln Center, Bontecou's gained distinction in the modern art world in 1960 with another untitled work consisting of strips of canvas attached to a welded steel frame surrounding a central void. This was later included in the

Museum of Modern Art's *Art of Assemblage* exhibition in 1961. Refining her use of three-dimensional, ovoid forms, Bontecou later won first prize for her work submitted to the National Institute of Arts and Letters in 1966. Like Jasper Johns, she is also a notable printmaker.

Reuben Nakian's *Voyage to Crete* is displayed just to the east of the orchestra lobby and is based on classical mythology. Crafted of ornate bronze that has been twisted beyond figural recognition, Nakian's work is an abstraction of "the sensual lives and loves of the Greek gods."[36] When queried as to why he chose ancient Greek mythology on which to model his work, the artist replied, "The Greeks gave sculpture youth and love…and that's why I like them…"[37]

Reuben Nakian was born in College Point, New York in 1897 and apprenticed in the New York studio of Paul Manship in 1916.[38] Having created a diversity of works from stylized animal forms to busts of Franklin D. Roosevelt's cabinet members and Babe Ruth, the artist's work eventually rejected realism for Abstract Expressionism. Citing influences such as Gorky and Stuart Davis, Nakian's most significant work was produced after 1945. Following Willem de Kooning's example of improvisation and spontaneity, Nakian executed his abstract improvisations in wet plaster and clay, and maintained that each piece was "complete at the moment of inspiration."[39] The artist died in 1986.

Edward Higgins' Sculpture, located to the west of the Orchestra Lobby, is a combination of polished steel and white epoxy. In commissioning the piece, Johnson instructed Higgins to create a sculpture that would not exceed seven feet in height. Although stark and suggestive of a machine, Higgins' piece is representative of two human figures lying on their backs with their feet in the air.

Edward G. Higgins was born in Gaffney, South Carolina in 1930, and received his Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of North Carolina.[40] Higgins' work has been shown at the Museum of Modern Art, the Guggenheim Museum, the Whitney Museum of American Art and at the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, among others. In addition, his sculptures have been featured in special exhibits at the New York World's Fair (1964-65), the Whitney Museum for

American Art (1966) and in Kassel, Germany (1968). He has also had an extensive teaching career, having taught sculpture at Parsons School of Design, Philadelphia Music School, Cornell University, University of Wisconsin and the University of Kentucky.

Placed on indefinite loan to the New York State Theater and commissioned by Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, III, *Birth of the Muses* by Jacques Lipchitz is located south of Edward Higgins' sculpture on the west side of the orchestra lobby. Characterized by more restrained forms than what were typical of the artist's other works, Lipchitz's bronze relief incorporates the myth of Pegasus giving birth to the Muses after its hoof struck a rock on Mount Olympus.

Jacques Lipchitz was perhaps one of the most renowned sculptors to have his work displayed in the New York State Theater.[41] Born in Lithuania in 1891, the sculptor spent much of his life in France and America. Trained briefly at the the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in 1909 before transferring to Academie Julian in Paris, Lipchitz had many influences which included Greek, medieval, Egyptian and African art, and Cubist-Expressionist works by fellow artists Picasso, Brancusi and Modigliani. Producing art in a range of styles from Art Noveau to Cubism, the artist eventually developed a radical style that referenced figurative subjects in an abstract mode. Of his approach, Lipchitz said he was attempting to "play with space, with a kind of open, lyrical construction that was a revelation to me."[42] The results were dynamic, three-dimensional forms that explored a variety of subject matter from Greek mythology to the ravages of war. Jacques Lipchitz died in 1973.

Across the Promenade on southeastern side of the orchestra lobby is Francesco Somaini's *Large Bleeding Martyr*. A dramatic work of modern art, Somaini explores martyrdom through the use of contrasting materials and shapes. Designed in the shape of a cruciform with lacerations throughout, *Large Bleeding Martyr* is evocative of suffering with its "burnished, light-filled" areas interspersed with its "rough, scarred regions."[43]

Francesco Somaini was born in Lomazzo, Italy in 1926, and trained at Milan's Accademia di Brera.[44] Intrigued by the interaction of humans with the forces of nature, Somaini's work was a manifestation of biomorphism which predominated intellectual thought during the early 20th century. His work has been largely characterized by the use of natural materials combined and reconfigured in unorthodox ways. These techniques, along with the artist's body of work, gave him enthusiastic acceptance into the Art Informel movement of the 1950s. Later on, Somaini was involved in the design of more monumental objects that explored these thoughts and practices on an urban scale.

New York State Theater Opening and Critical Response

The New York State Theater officially opened on April 23, 1964, meeting its deadline as the performing arts headquarters of the New York World's Fair. Owing to the fact that the fair's programming for the theater would be divided between the ballet, half of the duration, and dramatic and musical productions, for the other half, the opening night performances featured representations of both. Earlier in the month, on April 6th, the south plaza had been inaugurated, thereby allowing for an opening night fanfare to be conducted from the State Theater's portico. Inside the $19.4 million theater, the evening's program was comprised of a scene from Rodgers and Hammerstein's "Carousel" and two ballets, "Allegro Brillante" and "Stars and Stripes," performed by New York City Ballet. In attendance were Governor Nelson Rockefeller; Robert Moses; John D. Rockefeller, III; Lincoln Center President William Schuman; members of the center's board; officials affiliated with the State Commission on the World's Fair; representatives of New York state and local governments; and various creative artists. At the conclusion of the performance, Governor Rockefeller praised Philip Johnson's efforts and those of the assembled guests, and adding, "It takes courage to vote for culture when you are in public life."[45] He then invited everyone to tour the building. The evening concluded with an elaborate dinner hosted by the governor in the Grand Promenade.

Although the New York State Theater received mixed reviews overall, Ada Louise Huxtable gave it an undiluted rave. Calling the Grand Promenade "one of the most impressive public spaces New York has ever seen," she then went on to state, "This is a design concept that doesn't give a hoot about structure, except to make things more sumptuous, elegant, sophisticated and sensuously beautiful."[46] Noting how Johnson had defied conventional architectural objectives that stressed external aesthetics, she lauded him for using "his structure only to create splendid social areas and theatrical interior magic."[47] Concluding her review, Huxtable wrote:

> Every detail is classic theater in its function, freshly devised in its design. There is no false note, no wrong texture, no misstep in the complex relationships of surfaces and shapes…The State Theater is just what it set out to be: social architecture. It may commit the sin of suppressing structure, but it looks like a smashing, soigné success.[48]

Critic, Allen Hughes, also writing for *The New York Times*, was equally effusive, exclaiming, "There is space everywhere for everything and everybody…space so skillfully shaped and proportioned that it seems sculpted."[49] Then, perhaps paying Johnson the supreme compliment, the critic wrote that "to stand in the magnificent Promenade" is "to be reminded anew of the dignity of man and of his best works."[50] A critic for *Time* magazine made glowing contrasts between Philharmonic Hall's "icy grandeur" and the new State Theater's "warm and elegant restatement of traditional splendor," which the journalist hailed as "reminiscent…of the old Maryinsky."[51]

Edwin Denby, a critic for *Dance Magazine*, while enthusiastic about the overall effort, was contradictory in his assessment of the auditorium. Initially insisting to his readers that "you can see everything and you can hear everything" and "[A]coustics are perfect everywhere," the critic also wrote, "No seats way at the side are good. Very bad are the second row seats in all side rings." [52] Nevertheless, the critic deemed Johnson's overall work "a beauty," writing, "Space is normally a tunnel in New York. At the Philharmonic you are still in some sort of tunnel—it doesn't have enough shape for its size. At the New York State Theatre the height of the house and of the lobby relate to the room."[53]

Architectural publications, such as the *Architectural Record*, *Interiors* and *Progressive Architecture*, on the other hand, were mixed in their reviews. A critic for the *Architectural Record* called it "glamorous, romantic…nostalgic …and deliberately so," and "one of the most elegant spaces in New York City," owing to Johnson's creative use of materials and color. [54] *Interiors*' editor, Olga Gueft, had a more measured tone, calling the auditorium "magnificent, baroque [and] a bit vulgar" while hailing the progression of spaces and the theater's acoustics and sight lines.[55]

Three critics for *Progressive Architecture* were divided in their critiques: James T. Burns thought that "The concept of a large-scale 'court theater' for the democratic crowds…is a dubious one, at best," while Ilse M. Reese cautioned that the ballet theater, concert hall and Harrison's proposal for the Metropolitan Opera came "dangerously close to the pretentious Italian monumentality of the Mussolini era."[56] Completing the critical trio, John M. Dixon found the exterior colonnade "monumental but not overbearing…symbolically appropriate to the materials used…" yet was less enthusiastic about the theater's Grand Promenade. [57] Both Reese and Dixon lauded the architect for his "progression of spaces," facilitated by "two magnificently modeled travertine staircases," yet diverged in their response to the architect's piano nobile.[58] While Reese proclaimed the Grand Promenade as being "dramatic," Dixon deemed it "the first big let-down," alleging that "Johnson ran out of both steam and travertine," since nothing above the Promenade's floor "sustains the character established in the exterior and lobby."[59]

Summing up the Grand Promenade, Dixon asserted, "All is subdued tinsel and blunted glitter" while Burns was more specific in his assessment:

> This dichotomy of strong against weak, travertine against candy box frou-frou, is where Johnson's attempt to *épater le bourgeois* backfires. Had he carried it to the ultimate in one direction, the theater could have been a successful jab at a never-never land bit of fluff; emphasized strongly in an opposite vein, it might have achieved a significant monumentality. As it is, it falls between stools and becomes neither one nor the other.[60]

Yet, in spite of their pointed commentary, all three of the reviewers had positive things to say about specifics of Johnson's design, and were especially laudatory about the architect's "ingenious and highly effective" spatial organization.[61]

With regard to the selection, installation and content of art, critics were also mixed in their appraisals. Having previously leveled criticism at Johnson for his theater's exterior design, Ilse M. Reese praised his "impeccable" choice of art pieces whose "scale and placement [were] in perfect union with the architecture." [62] Hilton Kramer, writing for *The New York Times*, called the Nadelman sculptures "superb"[63] while another critic for *The Nation* called the marble pair "witty."[64] Similarly, Edwin Denby called the sculptures "sweetly comic in their enormity," and lauded their ability to "add to the fantasy of a sociable city square."[65] Winthrop Sargeant of the *New Yorker*, though reserved about their value as works of art, nonetheless deemed that they were "good substitutes for it, having substantial mass and weight, and reminding one that one is in a place where human beings are still important, namely a theater."[66]

Like Ilse M. Reese, *New York Times* critic John Canaday applauded Johnson's overall choice of art, calling the entire selection, "bang-up."[67] Of the pieces by Jasper Johns and Francesco Somaini, which had not been installed at the time of his review, Canaday praised the artists themselves, describing Johns as "the most sumptuous designer at his best," and Somaini as "a wonderfully dramatic sculptor even at his worst."[68] On the other hand, although a fan of Lipchitz's work, Canaday thought *Birth of the Muses* was ill-suited to its location while praising the locations of Nakian's *Voyage to Crete* and Higgins' Untitled Sculpture but not the works themselves.

Canaday, however, was particularly enthralled with the Nadelman sculptures for their "high style, sly levity and swelling monumentality that unifies them with the scale and elegance of the architecture and, at the same time, involves them in a kind of amorous badinage with its angularities."[69] He further noted that, "As pure sculpture, these superb confections are not much more than deft and devilishly clever, but as architectural adjuncts they are brought to fulfillment," equating their appropriateness with Carpeaux's sculptures on the façade of the Paris Opera.[70] With regard to Lee Bountecou's untitled relief, Canaday stated that Bountecou "has risen above every connotative hazard to produce a vigorous and superbly balanced design perfectly adapted to the allotted space."[71] Thus, like Max Abramovitz, Johnson had successfully integrated art into his architecture as a means of not only complementing it, but also enhancing it.

By the beginning of the 1960s, Philip Johnson had become so successful that he was highly sought after to design a range of residential and institutional buildings across the country. Moreover, he and his associate, Richard Foster, had won prestigious commissions to build the New York State Pavilion and Theaterama for the New York World's Fair (1964). These, along with his New York State Theater commission, caused *New York Times* critic Ada Louise Huxtable to proclaim 1964 as "the year of Philip Johnson."[72] Although critics were somewhat divided in their assessments of the New York State Theater, Johnson's work was ultimately praised for its interconnection of spaces that made the theater-going experience an event. As the authors of *New York 1960* noted, "The critics' concern for the overall 'look' and meaning of an architect's entire oeuvre contrasted strongly with the general public's lack of interest in such issues, a difference that was clearly reflected in the varied public and professional responses."[73] Hence, although there was much division, derision and delight among critics toward Johnson's design, the New York State Theater nevertheless succeeded brilliantly in meeting the needs of dance performance, thereby enhancing the theater-going experience.

Lincoln Center Plaza

Lincoln Center's plazas and park, comprised of Lincoln Center Plaza, Lincoln Center Plaza North and Lincoln Center Plaza South and Damrosch Park, were as much a part of the center's overall planning and aesthetic as its buildings. Hence, their placement within the Lincoln Center campus had to be determined by a consensus of Wallace K. Harrison's advisory team. As previously noted, although Robert Moses had delegated Harrison and Abramovitz to the task of planning the plazas, parks and below-grade parking infrastructure, it was actually Sven Markelius who had conceived of an elevated plane and the framing of Lincoln Center Plaza (later rededicated, Josie Robertson Plaza) within the trio of buildings: New York State Theater, Metropolitan Opera House and Philharmonic Hall, as early as 1956. Augmenting the work of Markelius, Philip Johnson was subsequently asked to devise a design for the south plaza area in conjunction with his proposals for the State Theater. Injecting a modern interpretation into a plan that was evocative of Michelangelo's Piazza del Campidoglio in Rome, Johnson created an urban space for Lincoln Center that was monumental in scale and theatrical in content.

Contrasted with diverse preliminary drawings by Harrison and his advisory team that featured a double circular colonnade reminiscent of Bernini's St. Peter's Square; a reflecting pool in conjunction with several different landscape designs; or an austere uninterrupted plane, Johnson's final drawing incorporated a state-of-the-art fountain as the main plaza's centerpiece. Supported by a low, thirty-eight-foot-diameter circular wall composed of polished Canadian black granite, Johnson's fountain was surrounded by paving, consisting of rays and concentric circles of travertine alternating with red-brown granite aggregate.

The fountain was built in honor of Charles Revson, Chairman of Revlon, Inc., and engineered by J.S. Hamel of Hamel and Lancer. Johnson explained, "We conceived it as a lighted, glowing, moving feature for the plaza and gave it the focal point a fireplace gives a home."[74] A technological marvel of its time, the Revson Fountain can spurt 9,000 gallons of water a minute through 577 jets that are lit by 26,000 watts of illumination.[75] Controlled by a computer console which can configure the water into a multiplicity of patterns, the fountain features a six-foot ring of 40 two-inch controller jets surrounded by a bank of 16 vertical lights. Praising the plaza's role as an integral aspect of the cultural experience, a critic for *Time* magazine wrote, "With audiences arriving at each [Philharmonic Hall and New York State

Theater] and the fountain splashing between, both buildings acquire an air of excitement that is beyond the reach of either alone."[76]

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[1] Young, "The Growing Federation: 1959-1962," p.118. For more information on City Center of Music and Drama's preliminary discussions with Lincoln Center, Inc., see Young, "Development of the Institution," pp.58-61, and "The Growing Federation: 1959-1962," pp.118-121.

[2] For a brief history of the City Center of Music and Drama, see Barbara L. Tischler, "City Center of Music and Drama," in Jackson, ed., p.228.

[3] ibid.

[4] For a history of New York City Ballet, see Anatole Chujoy, *New York City Ballet*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953); Nancy Reynolds, "New York City Ballet," in Jackson, ed., p.826; "Ballet's Fundamentalist," *Time*, January 25, 1954, v.63, pp.63+; and www.nycballet.com/about/aboutnycb.html, pp.1-2.

[5] www.nycballet.com/about/aboutnycb.html, p.1.

[6] Quoted in Chujoy, *New York City Ballet*, p.203.

[7] George Balanchine, "Chronology," in Francis Mason, ed., *Balanchine's Complete Stories of the Great Ballets*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1954) p.481.

[8] "Ballet's Fundamentalist," pp.66-72.

[9] Quoted in www.nycopera.com/about/history.cfm, p.2. For a brief history of New York City Opera, its productions and performers, see James M. Keller, "New York City Opera," in Jackson, ed., p.827, and www.nycopera.com/about/history.cfm, pp.1-3.

[10] Young, "Evolution of the Organization," p.108.

[11] For complications regarding City Center's lease agreement with Lincoln Center, Inc., see Ýoung, "The Growing Federation: 1959-1962," pp.118-121.

[12] Young, "Vexations of Federation," p.242.

[13] Stern, Mellins, and Fishman, "New York State Theater," p.691.

[14] Quoted in Stern, Mellins, and Fishman, "New York State Theater," p.691.

[15] "icy and flat,": Hunter-Gault, p.2; "our generation had…,": Forrest Wilson, "Philip Johnson's Modern…," *Interiors*, July 1964, v.CXXIII, no.12, p.86; "processionalism" and "the relationships and effects…,": Huxtable, "He Adds Elegance To Modern Architecture," p.101.

[16] Quoted in Stern, Robert A.M, "Philip Johnson," *New Dimensions in American Architecture,* (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1977) p.42.

[17] Governor Nelson Rockefeller, as quote in Russell Lynes, "A Parlor for New York," *Harper's Magazine,* May 1964, v.228, p.30.

[18] Quoted in Stern, Mellins, and Fishman, "New York State Theater," p.692.

[19] ibid.

[20] Quoted in "Theater Glamour Again," *Architectural Record*, May 1964, v.135, p.138.

[21] For Vilhelm L. Jordan, see Newhouse, "The Metropolitan Opera House: completion," pp.223-224.

[22] Quoted in Hubert Saal, "Caution: Choreographer At Work," *The New York Times Magazine*, VI, Part II, p.18.

[23] Quoted in Stern, Mellins, and Fishman, "New York State Theater," p.691.

[24] For a survey of art within the New York State Theater, see www.nycballet.com/about/artofnyst.html, pp.1-2.

[25] Young, "Visual Arts at Lincoln Center," pp.206-207.

[26] For Elie Nadelman, see Francine Koslow Miller, "Nadelman, Elie," in Turner, ed., v.22, pp.425-426.

[27] Quoted in ibid., p.425.

[28] A later addition to the New York State Theater collection was *Ancient Song* and *Ancient Dance* (1972) by Yasuhide Kobashi. Having designed sets for New York City Ballet, Kobashi was commissioned by Lincoln Kirstein to design two gilt reliefs incorporating the themes of ancient song and dance for the eastern and western staircases. www.nycballet.com/about/artofnyst.html, p.2.

[29] For an analysis of *Numbers*, see www.nycballet.com/about/artofnyst.html, p.1; Carol Vogel, "Outcry at Talk of Selling Lincoln Center Art," *The New York Times*, January 11, 1999, p.A1; "'Numbers' at Lincoln Center," *The New York Times*, January 13, 1999, p.A18.

[30] "things the mind…," Jasper Johns, as quoted in Michael Crichton, "Johns, Jasper," in Turner, ed., v.17, p.613; "ambiguities and contradictions, " Michael Crichton, ibid.

[31] For Jasper Johns, see Crichton, "Johns, Jasper," in Turner, ed., v.17, pp.613-615.

[32] "the subtlest monument…,": quoted in Roberta Smith, "Art Worth More Than Money at Lincoln Center," *The New York Times*, January 25, 1999, E8; "The sale of this painting…,": quoted in Carol Vogel, "Outcry at Talk of Selling Lincoln Center Art," *The New York Times*, January 11, 1999, p.A1,B7.

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[33] Quoted in Vogel, "Outcry at Talk of Selling Lincoln Center Art," p.B7.
[34] Smith, "Art Worth More Than Money at Lincoln Center," E8.
[35] For Lee Bontecou, see Alberto Cernuschi, "Bontecou, Lee," in Turner, ed., v.4, p.337.
[36] http://www.nycballet.com/about/artofnyst.html, p.1.
[37] ibid.
[38] For Reuben Nakian, see Burt Chernow, "Nakian, Reuben," in Turner, ed., v.22, p.446.
[39] ibid.
[40] For Edward Higgins, see Patricia A. Flinsch-Rodriguez, sr. ed., "Higgins, (George) Edward," in *Who's Who in American Art: 1999-2000*, 23rd Edition, (New Providence, NJ: Marquis Who's Who, 1999) p.547.
[41] For Jacques Lipchitz, see Alan G. Wilkinson, "Lipchitz, Jacques," in Turner, ed., v.19, pp.437-439.
[42] Quoted in ibid., p.438.
[43] http://www.nycballet.com/about/artofnyst.html, p.1.
[44] For Francesco Somaini, see Renato Barilli, "Somaini, Francesco," in Turner, ed., v.29, p.55.
[45] Quoted in Young, "Building Progress: 1962-1966," p.184.
[46] Ada Louise Huxtable, "Promenade Will Be One of State Theater's Bright Stars," *The New York Times*, March 23, 1964, p.26.
[47] ibid.
[48] ibid.
[49] Allen Hughes, "Beautiful Setting: New State Theater Enhances Ballet," *The New York Times*, May 3, 1964, II, p.7.
[50] ibid., p.7
[51] "Dance: Jewel in Its Proper Setting," *Time*, May 1, 1964, v.83, p.58.
[52] Edwin Denby, "'Dear Dance Fan,'" *Dance Magazine*, June 1964, v.38, p.34.
[53] ibid.
[54] "Theater Glamour Again," *Architectural Record*, May 1964, v.135, p.137.
[55] Quoted in Wilson, "Philip Johnson's Modern…," p.86.
[56] Ilse M. Reese and James T. Burns, as quoted in "Critical Trialogue on Johnson's Lincoln Center Theater," *Progressive Architecture*, May 1964, v.XLV, p.58.
[57] Quoted in ibid., p.58.
[58] Quoted in ibid., p.58.
[59] Quoted in ibid., p.58.
[60] Quoted in ibid., p.58.
[61] Quoted in ibid., p.59.
[62] Quoted in ibid., p.58.
[63] Hilton Kramer, "Another Sculptural Nullity for New York's Lincoln Center," *The New York Times*, July 31, 1966, II, p.17.
[64] "Lincoln Center," *The Nation*, March 29, 1965, v.200, p.206.
[65] Denby, "'Dear Dance Fan,'" p.34.
[66] Winthrop Sargeant, "Housewarming," *The New Yorker*, May 9, 1964, v.XL, n.12, p.146.
[67] John Canaday, *The New York Times*, March 23, 1964, p.26.
[68] ibid.
[69] ibid.
[70] ibid.
[71] ibid.
[72] Huxtable, "He Adds Elegance To Modern Architecture," *The New York Times*, May 24, 1964, XI, p.18.
[73] Stern, Mellins, and Fishman, "New York State Theater," p.695.
[74] Quoted in Robert C. Doty, "Lincoln Plaza Fountain to Dance to Computer Tune," *The New York Times*, March 7, 1964, p. 25. For information on Lincoln Center Plaza, see ibid.
[75] ibid.
[76] "Dance: Jewel in Its Proper Setting,"p.58.