



THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission
Central Park – Delacorte Theatre Scenic Landmark
January 25, 2022**

LANDMARK WEST! is a not-for-profit community organization committed to the preservation of the architectural heritage of the Upper West Side.

The Certificate of Appropriateness Committee wishes to comment on Central Park Delacorte Theatre, an open-air theater, built at the southwest edge of the Great Lawn in 1962, within an English Romantic style public park, designed in 1857 by Frederick Law Olmsted and Clavert Vaux. Application is to modify the shell; replace cladding, infill, signage, lighting towers, seating, stairs, decking and fencing; install a canopy and banners; and construct a barrier free access ramp. This theatre is within the Central Park Scenic Landmark.

The LANDMARK WEST! Certificate of Appropriateness Committee would first like to take a moment to recognize extant, 1977 Delacorte Theatre's architect, Giorgio Cavaglieri. Cavaglieri was an architect, friend of Joe Papp, and one-time president of the Municipal Art Society. Up until now his name has been absent from all histories publically presented about this theatre in conjunction with this project, as if the 1962 original was still extant, and our Committee is curious as to why.

The history of the Delacorte began as a seasonal venue which has grown in prominence. Despite this success, the building, undoubtedly an intrusion into the Scenic Landmark paid respect to its context through its quiet existence as a background building. Without debating the significance of the productions, the quality of the artistry, the respected stature of the Public Theatre or the many laudable life safety, accessibility and visitor comfort improvements deftly designed and presented today, the sum of these alterations is to flip this background building to the foreground creating an immediate Instagrammable moment.

Our Committee feels this approach misreads the very place the Delacorte has held for decades, and its role in the park. One that was reinforced in 1998 when the Landmarks Commission voted to restore the existing structure rather than replace it. Arguably, the current proposal harkens to nature with its bark-like skin but flips the tree stump into a bowl with canted walls. Just because you cant, *should you?*

The Committee was also perplexed by other aspects.

While we agree that the light towers should be safer for stage crew, why must they all be at the same height? This argument defies the physics of lighting design.

While we agree new seats may be more comfortable, the Delacorte is consistently running full-house shows. Unlike the dappled seats of the attendance-restricted Tokyo Olympics to appear

occupied on NBC broadcasts, maintaining the current green would have less of a visual impact on the context when viewed from the Belvedere and elsewhere year-round.

And most importantly, while we don't want anyone lost in the park, this Times Square signage is excessive in scale, and quantity. While it doesn't add to the audience experience, it detracts from the passive experience of those in the park.

The LANDMARK WEST! Certificate of Appropriateness Committee requests that these concerns be addressed.

Thank You.