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Joseph M. Siry

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Modern Architecture for Dramatic Art: Frank Lloyd Wright's "New Theatre," 1931–2009

Joseph M. Siry

In 1949 Frank Lloyd Wright declared to his friend the Chicago drama critic Lloyd Lewis: "the New Theatre is what the modern theatre must come to, unless the stage is to be done to death by the movies and television. It is one of the things I simply have to do before they put me in a box."[1] Wright was referring to an unbuilt design for what he called the New Theatre, on which he had been working since 1931 and which he realized as the Kalita Humphreys Theater for the Dallas Theater Center, which opened in December 1959, eight months after his death in April (Figs. 1, 2). This building and the projects on which it was based were among Wright's major efforts, yet they have been little studied.[2] His designs for a smaller theater for drama are for a building type distinct from his larger Baghdad Opera House (1957) and the Grady Gammage Auditorium (1959–64), which were mainly for opera and orchestra.[3] With his ideal "New Theatre," Wright imagined a setting for legitimate drama that would foster its renewal as a cultural medium. As he wrote of the Dallas Theater Center in 1955:

> This new facility seems to me to be the urgent need now if the theater is to survive alongside the more facile mechanical experiments like movies, television, radio, etc. This new facility is what I shall seek to provide. . . . In this case I am only interested in giving to fundamental drama a new sense of itself as profound soul-searching entertainment—perhaps a new sense of itself as profound poetry.[4]

When Wright began work on the New Theatre in 1931, there was a consensus that, with the onset of the Great Depression in 1929, which followed closely on the introduction of sound to motion pictures in 1927, legitimate drama was in decline and American theater architecture had failed to develop. Wright corresponded with and admired the stage designer Lee Simonson (1888–1967), who pointed out in 1930 that while fifty-five theaters had been built in New York City from 1905 to 1925, "they represented a succession of gaudily ornate auditoriums and stages inadequately equipped for shifting scenery or lighting a play."[5] Unlike in German cities, where modern theaters had long been considered civic monuments, "American architects have on the whole contributed nothing to the development of the modern playhouse." Architects could be partly forgiven, however, since "theater architecture has been debased because it has been in the service of the organized speculation on which the theater business is founded in this country."[6] With the Depression and talking pictures, large numbers of theaters were converted to movie houses, which could bring in great speculative returns. At the same time, Simonson saw that this situation had also bred a new type of theatrical management content with far more modest profits, producing year-round with a resident company of actors, and aiming to please a permanent local audience with a high standard in their material and production. These producers needed a technically efficient plant and a well-equipped stage, which, given a lack of union labor, had to be mechanically equipped for changing scenery. It was for this type of client that Wright initiated his New Theatre in the following year.[7]

If Wright invested the New Theatre with such cultural importance, then analysis of the Dallas building's origins in his earlier work should reveal what he valued in the drama, and how his art could enhance its presentation. Wright was responding partly to modern theater architecture that had originated in Europe in the late nineteenth century. European theatrical modernism had been assimilated by Wright and his American clients in a decades-long effort to rethink the spatial setting for live drama as a means of making performances as compelling and powerful for their audiences as possible. Yet although Wright's rhetoric focused on architectural modernity, his arguments for the importance of the drama were conservative relative to other entertainment media. In this spirit, while Wright's New Theatre was modern in its exterior form, its interior drew on historic, including ancient, theater architecture. His vision was realized when the Dallas Theater Center opened in 1959. Ultimately, for major productions, his building was succeeded by the Dee and Charles Wyly Theatre, designed by REX/OMA and opened in downtown Dallas's Arts District in 2009. Its major features were radically distant from Wright's theater in a sylvan setting. Nonetheless, Wright's midcentury playhouse still hosts productions requiring a more intimate facility, which was Wright's and his client's original vision.

Wright's Formative Concept of the Art Theater as a Temple for Dramatic Art

Wright's involvement with theater architecture to 1932 has recently been treated in my book on Wright's Beth Sholom Synagogue and his development of a modern sacred architecture.[8] There, I argued that Wright conceived of the theater and the room for worship as related spatial types, whose cultural purposes, though distinct, were both well served by auditoriums whose form heightened communal self-awareness. Wright's earliest major work to fulfill this ideal was his Unity Temple (1905–9), for the Universalist and Unitarian congregation in Oak Park, Illinois, and it was in this period—and, on one occasion, in this building—that he first advocated the importance of drama in modern culture. Wright was among local supporters of a theater company led by actor Donald Robertson to counter commercial theater

1 Frank Lloyd Wright, Kalita Humphreys Theater, Dallas Theater Center, 1955–59, aerial view near the end of construction. Frank Lloyd Wright Archives [hereafter FLWA], photograph no. 5514.0024 (artwork all rights reserved The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives [The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York]; photograph by Messina Studios)

2 Wright, Kalita Humphreys Theater, interior view looking toward the stage, 1960. FLWA, photograph no. 5514.0018 (artwork all rights reserved The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives [The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York])

imported from Broadway. His goal was a theater that would stage the best older and contemporary plays, regardless of profitability. He sought to provide through drama what an art gallery does through painting and what a symphony orchestra does through music: offer a permanent cultural resource for the city.[9] As Wright said in 1907, "There is no educational force today so potent as the drama, but we are seldom permitted the drama. We are told the drama doesn't pay. . . . The great dramatists are the great teachers of today, the great prophets of our time and yet they are unknown to most of us." Wright listed Robertson's repertoire:

> Molière's "L'Avare," Ibsen's "Rosmersholm," Browning's "A Blot on the Scutcheon," an early play of Hauptmann, one of the early comedies of M. Pailleron, and the names of Bjornson and Maeterlinck and Strindberg and Giacosa and Echegaray are there; all names of men dealing seriously, in terms of beauty, with the deepest problems of

> life. And in addition are the names of our own countrymen, who think clearly and feel deeply.[10]

Wright's sensitivity to the cultural value of theater in his Oak Park years likely predated his awareness of avant-garde stagecraft in Europe, which was known in New York by 1910 and in Chicago soon after. His later New Theatre synthesized ideas of the American art theater movement with this European modernist approach. In the English-speaking world, the leading innovative theorist was the English actor, playwright, stage designer, director, and producer Edward Gordon Craig (1872–1966), who wrote *The Art of the Theatre* (1905) and *Toward a New Theatre* (1913). He emphasized dramatic action in fully three-dimensional settings through the space of the stage. Craig was a prime influence on American art theater. His work was known in Chicago from 1912 and featured in an exhibition of modern stage designs at the Art Institute that opened in December 1914.[11] Following William Poel (1852–1934), the English actor, theatrical manager, and dramatist known for his presentations of Shakespeare, Craig was also among those who had advocated a revival of the Elizabethan idea of the forestage, or apron extended out or down toward the audience. On each side of this forestage were portals through which actors could move.[12] Wright considered such elements central to his New Theatre.

Among the most studied devices of modern theaters was the revolving stage, which had long been known in Japanese Kabuki theater, with whose traditions Wright became familiar during his extended stays in Japan to build the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo from 1913 to 1922. In 1896 the German technical director and theatrical engineer Carl Lautenschläger installed Europe's first modern revolving stage at Munich's Residenztheater. Producer, director, and designer Max Reinhardt also used the revolving stage in Berlin from 1905.[13] Harry Bishop introduced it to the United States at the Liberty Theatre, Oakland, California, first opened in 1904, and Winthrop Ames mounted a revolving stage in the New Theatre and at his Little Theatre in New York City, opened in 1912. On this freely turning platform, from two to six scenes occupy the segments of a circle, separated by radial walls. The revolving stage limits the visible stage to a section of the circular turntable. When one set is presented, the others may be changed out of view. Such a stage permitted swift change of scenes. Actors could move from one scene to the next, from room to room, or indoors to street, as the play's action demanded.[14]

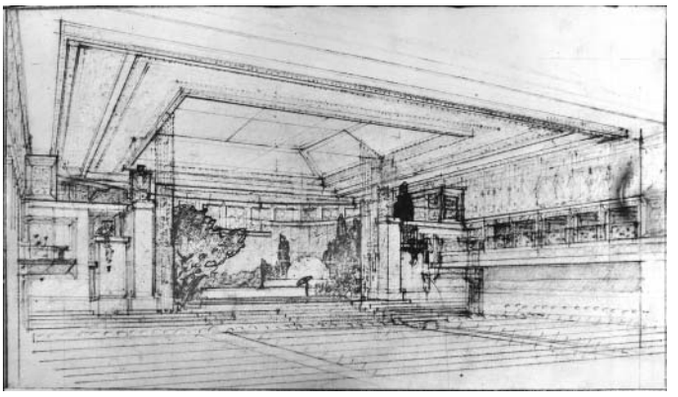
Wright used a revolving stage in his theater at the Imperial Hotel, opened in 1922. Like Unity Temple's auditorium, this theater's cubic space featured upper and lower balconies on three sides around a central parquet facing a frontal stage. Seating 669, the Imperial Hotel's theater, described as a "private theatre," was much smaller than nearby public theaters in Tokyo. The room was equipped with a film screen and rear projection booth. Hotel guests or other local groups could reserve the room for productions they sponsored for invited audiences. Publicly accessible performances were also produced there. The stage had a circular revolving turntable, or "Japanese revolving stage."[15] The theater also included a variation on what in traditional Kabuki was called a *hanamichi*, an ascending pathway about five feet wide running from the auditorium floor's rear up to the stage, usually on stage right. Such pathways were augmented by others through the nineteenth century that led across the stage's front and then back through the audience toward stage left. Their development, which allowed performers to move among the spectators, was intended to retain the intimacy between actors and audience as a principle of the Kabuki tradition. Wright's theater in the Imperial Hotel did not have *hanamichi* coming from the back. Instead, the lateral fronts served as *hanamichi*-like runways for actors entering from the sides. One observer wrote: "That it is a Japanese stage is shown by the Hana Michi, or Flowery Way, which leads off from each side of the stage and over which the actors will troup, although the arrangement [is] as practical here as it is new."[16] Wright adapted this idea in his New Theatre.

When Wright and Mamah Borthwick Cheney, his lover and companion until her murder in August 1914, traveled for a year through Europe (he for the first time) in 1909–10, although they saw the Folies-Bergère in Paris and the Passion Play at Oberammergau, they neither visited notable modernist theaters nor saw avant-garde drama, so far as is known. For example, they apparently did not go to Munich, where Max Littmann's Künstlertheater (1908) was renowned as a smaller building designed for novel productions.[17] Wright's awareness of modernist theater likely began after he returned to Chicago, where he was familiar with the Chicago Little Theatre, whose ninety-seat playhouse operated from 1912 to 1917 in the Fine Arts Building on Michigan Avenue, near where Wright maintained an office.[18] From 1916, he designed an unbuilt art theater for Aline Barnsdall, first for a site in Chicago, and then for her estate on Olive Hill in Los Angeles. This project, which ended in 1927, was his first effort to create an ideal theater. Although its form is outwardly different from his later New Theatre, developed from 1931, when Wright first discussed the design of the Dallas Theater Center with its director, Paul Baker, Baker recalled that Wright

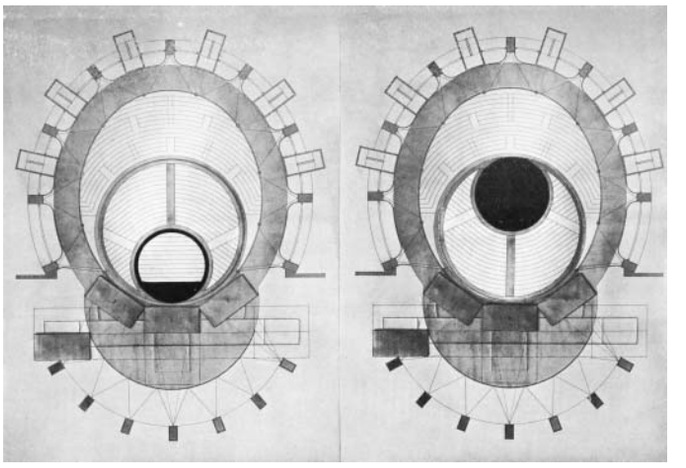
> said he would be glad to build a building for us but . . . we would have to use the plans he had drawn up in 1915—[this] was when he drew those plans up for a lady in California. It was never built. That if I—we wanted to use those plans, then he'd be glad to do it.[19]

This project's history has been studied, but it needs to be revisited for its influence on Wright's development of his ideal "New Theatre" and its ultimate realization in Dallas.

Wright's design for Barnsdall's theater is documented in a set of drawings that he initialed, titled, and dated March 1918. Among his related studies, an important one for understanding his aims is an interior perspective looking toward the stage (Fig. 3). The ceiling has concentric square moldings around the whole room's periphery to unite the theater's two halves, auditorium and stage. The central ceiling is the squared vault rising above the low peripheral ceiling planes. This vault is not a skylight (a rehearsal theater is located above); it accentuates the unity of audience and stage because the high ceiling's center falls at the curtain line. The curtain is shown as diaphanous and drawn aside at left and right, as if to reinforce the impression of the theater's spatial continuity across this traditional threshold between stage and audience. Piers supporting incense burners flank the



3 Wright, Barnsdall Theater, Olive Hill, Los Angeles, ca. 1918, interior perspective looking toward the stage, colored pencil on tracing paper, 11 × 27 in. (27.9 × 67.6 cm). Nederlands Architectuurinstitut, Rotterdam? FLWA, drawing no. 2005.064 (artwork all rights reserved The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives [The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York])



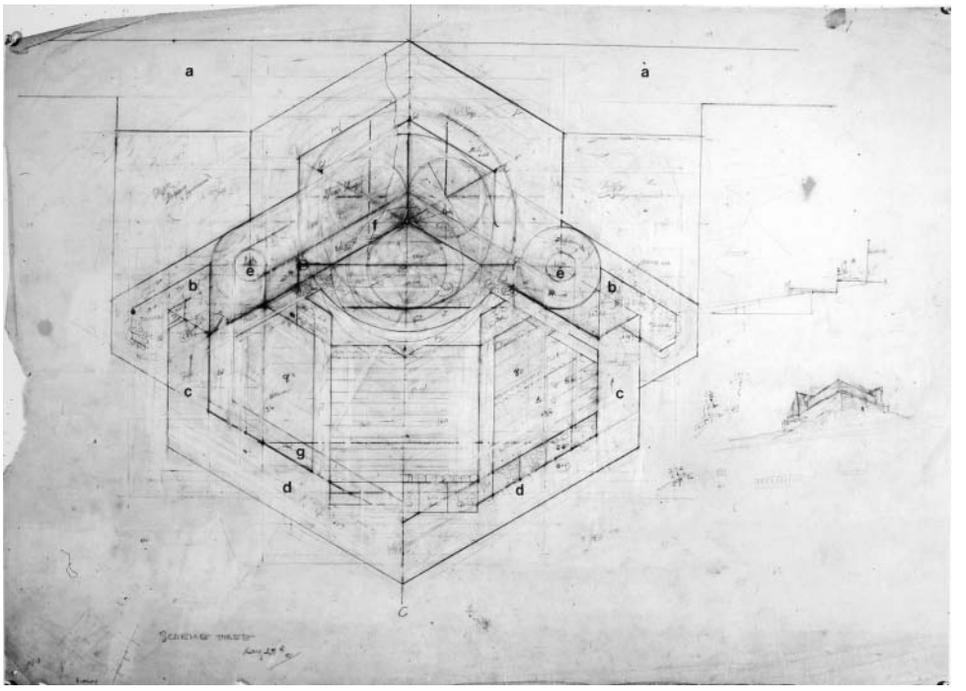
4 Walter Gropius, Total Theater Project, showing a circular stage on a larger revolving circular platform, configured as (left) a conventional box stage with three rectangular wings, and (right) a central circular stage, 1927, from *Architectural Record* 67 (May 1930): 492 (artwork © 2013 Artists Rights Society [ARS], New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn)

curtains, but the space flows around these piers. Most important, there is no proscenium, nor is there ample backstage space or a fly tower for handling sets. As Wright reportedly said to Barnsdall: "The true theater is an architectural structure. The simpler the stage is kept, the greater will be the things done upon it. The classic Greek stages were without equipment for lighting and scenery."[20] The space that Wright drew embodied Barnsdall's aim to create not a commercial house but, rather, "a small theater seating about 1,000. . . . In it I hope to combine what I feel are the three legitimate expressions of the theater: Music, drama, and the cinema, developing chamber music and using motion pictures that cannot possibly draw large audiences."[21]

Wright's Barnsdall theater was not in a historically derived style, which was then conventional for American theaters for film or drama.[22] Among American experiments in modernist theater architecture to 1930, Wright likely knew the designs of Norman Bel Geddes, who had worked with Barnsdall since 1916 and who had conferred with Wright about her theater. Bel Geddes was a leading American advocate for eliminating the proscenium and the related practice of flat painted backdrops, favoring instead a stage more surrounded by its audience and with three-dimensional stage sets. From 1929 Bel Geddes developed theater designs for Chicago's Century of Progress exhibition of 1933, for which Wright also proposed unbuilt skyscraper projects. In December 1929 he wrote to Bel Geddes: "My sympathy goes out to you in your endeavor and I should like to see more of you. It strikes me that what you are doing is well worth while."[23] Wright also lectured in and praised Joseph Urban's auditorium for the New School for Social Research, in Manhattan, of 1928–30.[24] Walter Gropius's famed unbuilt project for a Total Theater of 1927, developed with Erwin Piscator, was published in the *Architectural Record* in May 1930. Wright likely knew this design, since twenty articles either by Wright or on his work appeared in this journal from 1927 to 1930. Elliptically shaped, the Total Theater had amphitheater seating around a large circular frontal platform within which there was a smaller circular stage. The large circular platform could revolve to provide a frontal, conventional box stage with three rectangular wings (Fig. 4, left) or a central circular stage that could be used either separately or together with frontal stages (Fig. 4, right). This revolution could take place even in the course of a performance, with a section of the audience seated on the circular platform being carried around so that it faced the smaller circular stage across from the main audience. The goal was a complete unity between stage and auditorium. As the *Architectural Record* described the scheme: "The spectator is placed in the center of the action. The theatre becomes a flexible space-machine that easily can be changed to meet the varying demands of the stage directors. The audience becomes not only a witness but an active factor in the show."[25] Wright would adapt such a mechanistic premise centered on a circular stage in his New Theatre.

Wright referred to his own ideas on modern theater design in the Kahn Lectures that he gave at Princeton University in May 1930, published as *Modern Architecture* (1931). There he declared that he would rather solve the problem of the house of moderate cost to his satisfaction "than build anything I can think of at the moment except the modern theater now needed by the legitimate drama unless the stage is to be done to death by 'the movies.'"[26] Wright had designed unbuilt projects for a cinema (or theater) in Tokyo (ca. 1918) and a cinema for Barnsdall (1920), and was then working on a cinema project for Michigan City, Indiana, also unbuilt.[27] Stressing the need to equip theaters for rapid changes of scenery, in order to compete with film, he said of his New Theatre in 1932: "the building itself an automatic machine rivaling in plasticity the cinema, would be a sanctuary for emotion and aspiration, rivaling the church in the old city."[28]

Wright's vision of the New Theatre depended on two enabling factors: a noncommercial patron and a nonurban site. Barnsdall's project at Olive Hill had met these conditions, and removal from the insistent demands of urban commercial theater was at the root of his involvement with the Woodstock Playhouse, which commissioned him to design a new theater for the summer arts community in the Catskills to replace a barn theater that had been destroyed by fire on March 25, 1931. The old 350-seat playhouse was "a theatre where



5 Wright, New Theatre, Woodstock, New York, Scheme Three, showing a) the entrance drive, b) doorways atop a sloping pavement, c) audience ramps, d) a sloped promenade around the auditorium's rear, e) scenery ramps, f) a balcony above the stage, and g) a balcony around the auditorium's rear, August 25, 1931, pencil on tracing paper, 22⅛ × 37⅛ in. (56.2 × 94.3 cm). FLWA, drawing no. 3106.004; graphic additions by the author (artwork all rights reserved The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives [The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York])

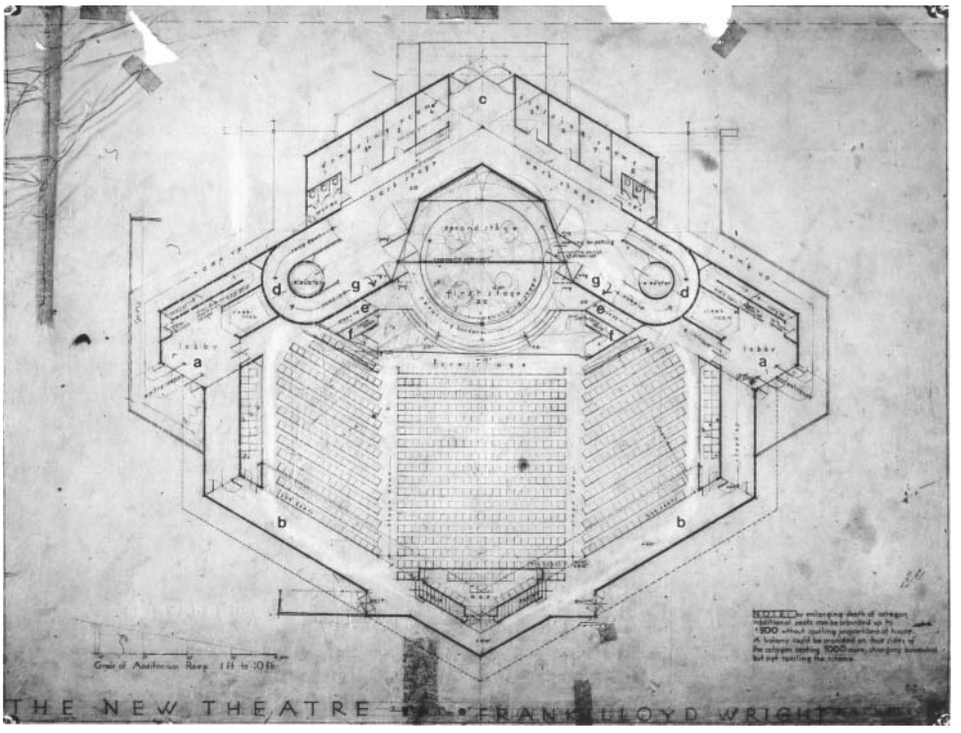
opportunities and cooperation will be in keeping with the genuine artistic work which is being accomplished by the artists, sculptors, painters, writers, and musicians of Woodstock and its vicinity."[29] By August, a group led by novelist, playwright, screenwriter, and columnist Joseph P. McEvoy, long an admirer of Wright's, was working with him on plans for a model summer theater that could also serve as a community center. After visiting McEvoy and his friends, Wright wrote that he had "several theatres inspired by our conference."[30] He developed his New Theatre in three versions during August 1931, and he would use its ideas in his later projects for theaters.

In his definitive "Scheme Three," which Wright dated to August 25, the theater's geometry was based on lines that met at thirty- or sixty-degree angles, or what he called reflex angles, forming a hexagonal polygon that encompasses the auditorium and the stage (Fig. 5). He had worked out this geometry for residential projects in the mid-1920s and applied it here in a public building to unify all elements of the plan.[31] The entrance would be from the drive a) behind the stage on the downhill side of the site. Wide areas of "slightly sloping pavement" would lead up to doorways b) on either side of the structure. Between these areas is the building's angled prow housing the backstage area. Inside the entrance doors, polygonal audience ramps c) facilitate movement from the entrance and upward-sloping promenade d) around the house's rear. Inside, the plan focuses on one central frontal revolving circular stage and two circular stages diagonally behind, all set on a larger revolving circular platform. Each circular stage is the same diameter as each of the circles of the scenery ramps e) that also contained circular lifts. Wright labeled an angled "balcony" f) just behind and above the central stage that would be continuous with the "balcony" noted around the sides and rear of the house g), where it would overhang the highest seats on the main floor. The lateral ramps are almost anthropomorphic, like arms reaching out to embrace the hall, so the plan's geometry integrated the varied spaces of stage and audience into a single figural shape. A sectional sketch at right shows the floor's slope and stepped levels from the stage to the house's rear. Below at the right is a small exterior sketch, from the upland side, showing the theater's rear promenade and terrace above as two levels flanked by ramp towers on the building's downhill side.

Wright described the scheme to McEvoy in terms of the speed with which sets could be changed, as if each circle represented a stage that could simultaneously hold three scenes in thirds of its area. The suggestion is that not only could each circular stage revolve individually but also they would all be on a larger circular platform that could itself revolve to present each of the three circular stages at front and center. Thus, Wright explained that the plan was

> continuous—3 complete change of sets—3 scene-changes in each set. Seven seconds between total change of sets [that is, rotating from one revolving stage to another]. Three seconds between the scene-changes [that is, moving from one scene to another on a single revolving stage]. 12 effects—all set before the show begins. The theatre itself is a simple machine. As one scene goes off another is coming on. Practically a "fade-out" of every scene.

Wright here seemed to be making an analogy to the fadeout technique of changing scenes in film. He stressed that "the performance takes place well out into the audience beneath the same ceiling. . . . The audience and the performance are one circumstance," meaning that, as advocated by a broad spectrum of theatrical modernists from Bel Geddes to Gropius, there would not be a proscenium that framed the audience's view of the stage as a space separate from the auditorium.[32] In this proposal, Wright appears to have adapted Gropius's central idea of a larger circular platform revolving to reposition smaller circular stages, though Wright did not envision sections of the audience seated on these revolving platforms, as Gropius did in the Total Theater.



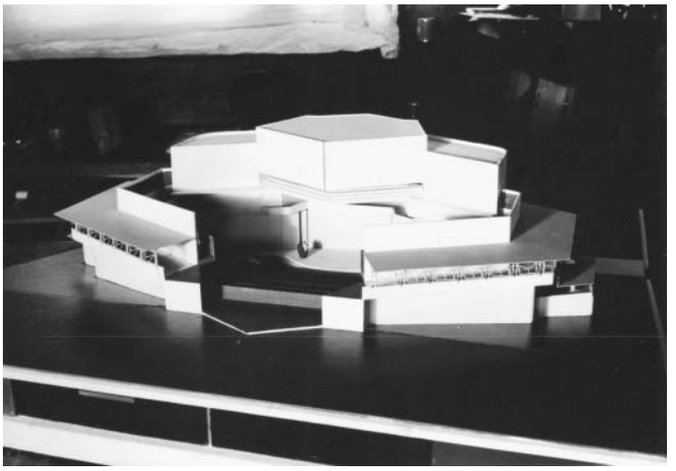
6 Wright, New Theatre, Woodstock, main floor plan, showing a) lobbies inside the entrance doors, b) a sloping foyer around the auditorium's rear, c) actors' entrance, d) ramps linking the backstage to a scenery shop below, e) ramps sloping up to the forestage, f) triangular ramps down to the musicians' pit, and g) side walls supporting the cantilever over the stage front, 1931? pencil on tracing paper, 20½ × 27¼ in. (52.1 × 69.2 cm). FLWA, drawing no. 3106.021; graphic additions by the author (artwork all rights reserved The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives [The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York])

In a later version of Wright's plan, made for presentation, the scheme is finished in detail (Fig. 6). Along the central axis, the auditorium's depth is eighty feet from the rearmost central point to the stage's center, while the greatest width is one hundred feet. On either side, ramps lead up from the drive to entrance doors at the sides leading into polygonal lobbies a) that provide access either directly into the lower levels of the amphitheater or to the sloping foyer b) around the rear. The main floor's three sections included 774 seats; side and rear elevated platforms held box seats. In place of a stage door facing an alley, the frontal entrance for actors c) leads to backstage dressing rooms on either side and to ramps d) to the scenery shop in the basement beneath the stage. The central stage, revolving clockwise, has a radius of just fourteen feet; this circle is divisible into a frontal or first stage and a rear or second stage behind a bisecting screen wall. The circular stage border (whose radius is four feet) revolves in the opposite counterclockwise direction, as in a Kabuki stage. Rather than a proscenium, the stage has a semicircular apron projecting toward the audience with three frontal steps. Lack of a framing proscenium ensured a full view of the stage's depth from even the sidemost seats. Ramps sloping up from a lower level to the forestages on either side e) recall the *hanamichi*-like runways that Wright likely adapted from Kabuki houses. In front of these up-ramps, there are smaller triangular ramps f) leading down to a possible musicians' pit. Wright later noted that

> sets are all prepared below stage and rise by way of tracks and dollies on the ramps to become scenery on the revolving stage. By dropping the dividing screen, a great depth may be added to the revolving stage. Scenes can succeed one another almost instantly. A set rises on one ramp and goes back down on the one opposite. If desired, a continuous performance may be staged.[33]

In conventional theaters, the proscenium concealed overhead lighting apparatus and the fly tower over the stage in which backdrops were hung. Having eliminated the proscenium, Wright set the lights in the gallery and ceiling, and he confined stage sets to the backstage, ramps, and basement workshop. The proscenium had divided the audience from the stage, while the related tall fly tower above the stage had constituted a distinct vertical appendage to older theater buildings. By eliminating both the proscenium and fly tower, Wright gave the New Theatre spatial unity inside and volumetric unity outside. He later wrote that the aim was to "free the so-called legitimate-stage from its present peep-show character and high stagehouse-overhead, establishing a simple, workable basis for presenting plays as a circumstance in the round. Now the show is more like a painting: a scene-drop behind a proscenium frame—audience in one room, performers in another. In The New Theatre audience and performers are under one ceiling—almost in one room—more like sculpture."[34] Just as people would move up the rear ramps from the lobbies, scenery would move on an incline along its ramps, lending the whole a conceptual consistency.

The reflex angle's flexibility orders the seating around the apronlike stage so that the audience not only is connected to the stage but also views itself around the sweep of seating. The design integrates a new reflex geometry with a quality of ancient and Elizabethan theaters that Wright praised. Thus, although he invoked a mechanistic analogy like Gropius and others, he sought the intimate relationship between actor and audience that recalled the Elizabethan courtyard stage. Since drama performed there had represented theater at its height of early modern cultural importance, to revive such proximity of stage to spectator in modern playhouses was to renew theater's social significance. Wright's stage similarly projects into the audience's space. As such, it recalled plans



7 Wright, New Theatre, Woodstock, model, showing the central rear (north) wall removed, giving a view into the auditorium below the cantilevered stage house, 1931? (artwork all rights reserved The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives [The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York]; photograph provided by the Wisconsin Historical Society, WHi–67967)

8 Wright, Hillside Playhouse, near Taliesin, Wisconsin, showing the theater as the remodeling, ca. 1933, of the gymnasium at Hillside Home School, 1902, from *Architectural Forum* 68 (January 1938) (artwork all rights reserved The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives [The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York]; photograph by Roy E. Petersen)

of European modernist theaters like Max Reinhardt's, yet Wright, asked later if he would call his an apron stage, replied:

> "No, I would not. There is no term for it yet. This sort of thing has not yet been done." The nearest thing he could think of comparable to his theater is the Elizabethan stage. This, at least, provides a precedent and a point of departure. "All current improvements in the theater," he summed up, "go back to Shakespeare."[35]

A model of the project was in preparation by October 1931 for possible inclusion in the exhibition on architecture of the International Style that opened at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in January 1932. Wright ultimately chose not to exhibit it, but it reveals what he valued as the scheme's organic unity (Fig. 7).[36] The design is among his first in his later life to work with nearly unornamented planar forms. A view shows the theater's central rear wall and auditorium roof removed. The upland side in the foreground has a glazed loggia at balcony height to afford views of the site for audiences at intermissions. Y-shaped mullions along the loggia repeat the reflex angle. Above the stage's open front half, the crowning hexagonal stage house became a cantilevered concrete mass whose prowlike front hangs out over the stage. The stage house's massive cantilevered walls are supported by the inner ends of the walls behind the side stages (Fig. 6: g).

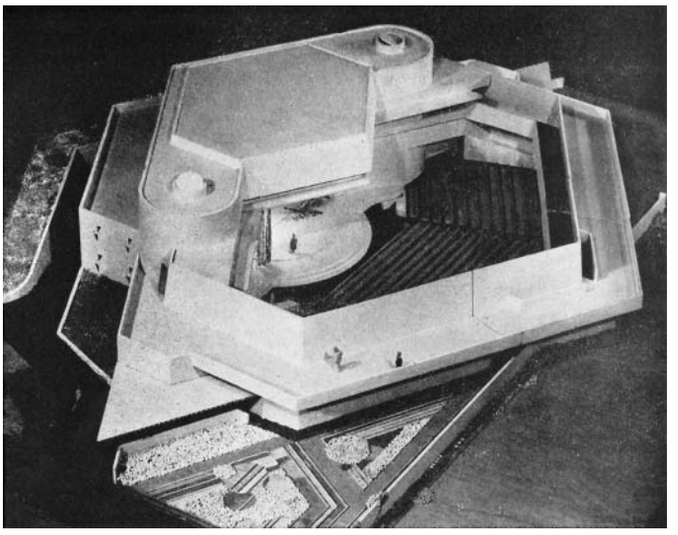
After Wright submitted his schemes, near the low point in the Great Depression, McEvoy responded that he had not been able to raise sufficient funds to build so ambitious a design, though he told Wright that "the theatre you project is a beautiful thing and I have no doubt that it will and should be built."[37] Soon after, Wright was able to build his first theater, the Hillside Playhouse at Taliesin in Wisconsin, which opened in August 1933 (Fig. 8). This theater, seating about 180, was a conversion of the former gymnasium of the Hillside Home School that Wright had designed in 1901–2.

The Hillside Playhouse was the first built project of his newly formed Taliesin Fellowship, and Wright was quite proud of it. In the playhouse, as in the New Theatre, as he wrote, "the stage" was "part of the audience room."[38] Apprentice Curtis Besinger recalled that the original symmetry of the room as a gymnasium had been retained, "but it had been overlaid with an asymmetrical rotation of about thirty degrees formed by the arrangement of the seating. Mr. Wright called it a reflex arrangement. What had been a level wood floor was now a series of stepped terraces, some of wood, some of stone and concrete." One entered the playhouse on a diagonal, aligned with the reflex seating, and looked across to its tiers on the west side. In Besinger's description:

> From the high darkness of the wood-beamed ceiling hung huge cubical stalactites of plywood and oak boards. These concealed and reflected small light sources. The room seemed mysteriously dark, yet it was brilliantly accented with light. An enigmatic stone Buddhist figure stood at the left of the stage, bathed in a soft light from a hidden overhead source. What I assumed had been a rather simple room had been made richly complex. It had strong contrasts in height; it seemed both intimate and vast.[39]

Apprentice Kelly Oliver, who supervised the building of Wright's Kalita Humphreys Theater, recalled, "Frank Lloyd Wright loved the theater. Of all its many forms his first love was the small intimate theater that was more like a living room." The Dallas theater "was designed by Mr. Wright to create the same feeling of intimacy that is found in these small Taliesin Theaters," meaning not only the Hillside Playhouse (rebuilt after a fire of 1952 as the Hillside Theater) but also Wright's cabaret theater (1949) and music pavilion (1956) at Taliesin West in Arizona.[40]

That Wright built theaters as the main spaces for gathering at both his residential Taliesins prompts the question of what he valued in theater. Music, drama, and film were to be



9 Wright, New Theatre, Hartford, Connecticut, photograph of a 4 × 5 ft. plaster model with the roof removed, 1948–49, from *The New Theatre* (Hartford: New Theatre Corporation, 1949) (artwork all rights reserved The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives [The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York]; photograph provided by Special Collections, Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas Libraries)

central parts of life within the fellowship, whose prospectus of 1932 noted:

> In the Taliesin Playhouse there has been and will be seen a series of fine films. . . . Facilities exist in the Playhouse for amateur theatricals. The Playhouse has a flexible stage, dressing rooms, rooms for designing and making sets and is adapted to concerts, lectures, and fellowship gatherings as well as theater and cinema.[41]

Consistent with his early advocacy of serious modern drama in Oak Park, Wright saw the program of the Hillside Playhouse as culturally elevating. This was the aim whether the events were musical, cinematic, or the performances that distinguished life at Taliesin, the dance movements in the tradition of G. I. Gurdjieff, who had been the mentor of Olgivanna Lloyd Wright, Wright's third wife.[42] Works of music presented were by Ludwig van Beethoven, Johann Sebastian Bach, Johannes Brahms, Joseph Haydn, and others, performed by soloists, a trio, a quartet, and sometimes a quintet, with a concert grand piano, harp, strings, recorders, and harpsichord. A choir sang compositions by Palestrina, César Franck, and others, as well as English and American songs, spirituals, and folk songs. Floral decorations and evening dress were important visual elements of the festivities. Sometimes short plays were presented, and then 35-millimeter films from all over the world were screened.[43] It was this vision of theater architecture as the setting for significant cultural experience that Wright would re-create in the New Theatre as a public version of the Hillside Playhouse.

Wright's Unbuilt New Theatre for Hartford, Connecticut, 1948–49

Wright incorporated the New Theatre's hexagonal auditorium with balconies embracing a projecting frontal platform in two realized designs for churches: the Annie M. Pfeiffer Chapel at Florida Southern College in Lakeland (1938–41) and the Community Church in Kansas City, Missouri (1939–42).[44] In both cases, the design was to provide not only a room for worship but also an auditorium that could be used for other purposes. Pfeiffer Chapel served as its college's main meeting and ceremonial hall, and the Community Church was similarly planned for musical performances and films. Created for liberal Protestant clients (Methodists at Florida Southern and the Disciples of Christ at Kansas City), both buildings intentionally blurred the distinction between church and theater, in ways consistent with Wright's tendency to conflate them. Yet neither actually realized his vision of the New Theatre as a modern setting for drama.

It was only after both the Great Depression and World War II that such an opportunity arose. In November 1948, Wright was commissioned to design the New Theatre in West Hartford, Connecticut. If this had been built, it would have been his first public building in the East, as well as his first public theater in the United States. As one observer in Hartford commented, "Only where land is relatively cheap can the hard-pressed theater business afford space for the demands of good design. In the last fifteen or twenty years critics have sadly conceded that progress in the theater field can only come from less hampered college and community groups."[45] It was this vision that inspired Paton Price (1916–1982), who taught acting at the American Academy of Dramatic Art in New York City, to head a group of civic leaders and New York actors to form the New Theatre Corporation to purchase land and raise more than a quarter of a million dollars in stock subscriptions.[46]

The New Theatre for Hartford was to serve a resident company over a total of about twenty-five weeks in summer and winter, and other groups. Like the Woodstock Playhouse, it aimed to develop "new and exciting theatre" in Hartford as "an independent cultural center," while also being "sufficiently near New York to draw upon the unlimited personnel and equipment of the Broadway theatre."[47] In the winter of 1948–49, Wright and his apprentices at Taliesin West worked on a four-by-five-foot plaster model (Fig. 9) and color renderings, including a plan (Fig. 10), unveiled at a luncheon sponsored by the *Hartford Times* at the Hartford Club on January 25, 1949.[48] To help ensure profitability, the New York Theater Guild's executive secretary proposed that the house seat 1,200, yet Wright held that it should seat only 750, to create "an intimate theatre in which the drama can return to a true spiritual basis." The Hartford theater "must shun commercialism, must be more 'intimate in itself and more intimate to community life.' . . . it must be small, 'charming, and lined up with a new kind of reality, a new romance.'"[49]

Earlier in the project, Wright had listed three principles that he thought essential to reviving theater architecture, all designed to enable the stage to more effectively compete with film for cultural primacy. First, "there must be better acoustics. 'An actor should never have to raise his voice, to force, to do theater.'" Second, "'the performance must come out from behind . . . become one with the audience,' instead of hiding in back of the proscenium as it does now." Finally, as he had said in 1932, there was "'the nature of the performance itself, which is not to be regarded as a picture but as a

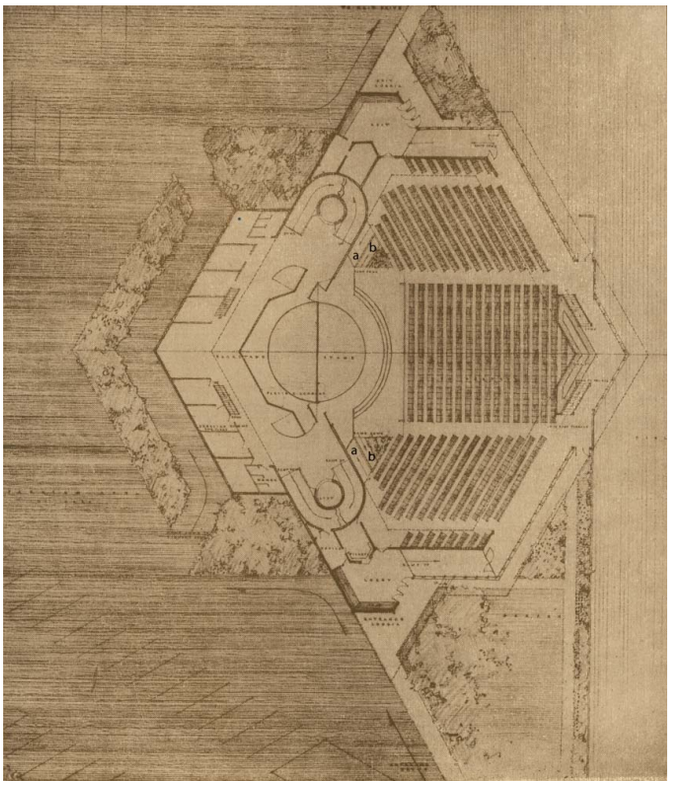
circumstance.' This calls for third-dimension production and setting." He held that

> the present stage trips and handicaps the theater. This will help it live again. This will give a new lease on life to the playwright. It will give theater the power to uplift and refresh which the movies do not provide. It will give a real instrument for the education of people in democracy.[50]

Wright sent Price photostats of the Woodstock design as the basis for the Hartford project, and Price replied that the Woodstock stage opening's width and stage depth and the turntable diameter would be "perfect—completely adequate in every instance."[51] Wright wrote that the Hartford design "makes a clean break with all past traditions in theatre building. . . . It achieves a radical solution of many of the physical problems that have inhibited legitimate theaters in the past."[52] As at Woodstock, the stage would be apronlike, with a revolving circular floor and no proscenium, hence "the proximity of the actor to his audience was calculated by Mr. Wright to increase the directness and impact of the performance by giving the spectator an increased feeling of participation." In a spatially compact house, Wright claimed that "the slightest nuance of tone or shade of expression will register with far greater effect than in the conventional theatre."[53] The plan shows frontal steps leading down from the semicircular stage into the audience. As at Woodstock, on each side a ramp sloped up to the stage's side aprons (Fig. 10: a), and another narrow ramp down to the basement from the parquet under the side seating rows (Fig. 10: b). Triangular planting boxes concealed these lower ramps from the audience. As one later critic observed, "these ramp entrances would no doubt be very useful for classical or Shakespearian productions. . . . The semicircular forestage, the side aprons, the portals, and balconies gave this stage almost as many varied acting areas as the Elizabethan theatre."[54] As at Woodstock, so at Hartford, the New Theatre's outward modernism contained references to historic theaters in order to enable "an all-professional acting company to present the best in dramatic literature from Euripides to Arthur Miller."[55]

Perhaps the most important idea Wright had to achieve unity between audience and actors was to eliminate any visible structural supports between the central parts of the stage and auditorium. At the stage's front, the ceiling steps up three levels and the floor steps down three levels, creating a graduated transition between stage and spectators, with no demarcated proscenium. Photographs of the model with the roof above the audience removed show that the stage's entire roof is cantilevered forward of its side supports in the ramps' frontal walls (Fig. 9). The V-shaped cantilevered stage roof projects forward into the auditorium above the semicircular projection of the stage floor toward the house. Thus, the architecture overhead conveys the key spatial idea below: stage and seating are unified. The New Theatre embodied what Wright said in a lecture of 1950: "Architecture is the scientific art of making structure express ideas."[56]

After considering two earlier possible locations, the theater corporation focused on a five-and-a-half-acre rectangular plot on the northwest corner of South Main Street and Sedgwick Road in West Hartford. Wright proposed to place the theater



10 Wright, New Theatre, Hartford, main floor plan, showing a) ramps sloping up to the stage's side aprons and b) narrow ramps down from the parquet, January 2, 1949, ink and colored pencil on tracing paper, 35¼ × 30⅜ in. (89.5 × 77.2 cm), from *The New Theatre*, based on FLWA drawing no. 4922.003; graphic additions by the author (artwork all rights reserved The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives [The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York]; photograph provided by Special Collections, Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas Libraries)

in this tract's southeast corner, nearest the intersection, so that parking could be screened behind.[57] His modern design drew criticism through the spring of 1950. Price reported: "Mr. Wright and the structure was attacked (after all, it was not colonial)."[58] While the local zoning commission approved the site plan, West Hartford's Town Council unanimously rejected it, and the project's supporters pushed for the issue to be decided in a referendum, which they were confident they would win. But opponents got a temporary court injunction to prevent the vote, and this effectively killed the project, although efforts to realize it continued for some time. Arriving in Hartford on the day the injunction was issued, Wright said it was "a disgrace to American culture. Isn't it a pity that you would-be champions of liberality can't even go to the polls and vote for what you think is right."[59] He argued: "We are fighting to save the theater which needs new tools if it is to come abreast of the medium of movies. We thought this was a good place to begin our crusade." Yet, having for a second time lost an opportunity to build his New Theatre in the northeastern part of the country, he concluded: "The East is finished. Its best material went west. In the East the old ladies sit around knitting and waiting for the young to grow up and when they do they won't let them do anything. . . . This is a disgrace and it will go on record as an indictment of this region of the United States."[60]

Wright's Design for the Dallas Theater Center

While Wright's New Theatre for Hartford was not built, his supporters in the theatrical world of Connecticut and New York continued to believe in the plan. A year after the decisive political battle, Price wrote of the design: "Those of us who have lived with it these several years are more devoted to it now than ever before. We realize its importance to us and to the theatre as an artform more clearly than we did even at the beginning."[61] Price saw the project as a model of its type and worked to get it built somewhere—in Oklahoma City, Arizona, Colorado, Las Vegas, or Stratford, Ontario—in addition to his continuing efforts in Hartford. Among his proposed contacts was John Rosenfield (1900–1966), the fine arts editor for the *Dallas Morning News* from 1925 to 1957, who had written to Wright of his envy on reading about the Hartford theater.[62] Rosenfield was for many years the leading drama critic in the Southwest. He had been Wright's earliest advocate in Dallas, having been instrumental in linking Wright to Rogers Lacy, who in 1946–47 commissioned Wright to design the city's first modern high-rise hotel. After Lacy's death in December 1947, this project went unrealized, but its publication had aroused considerable interest in bringing Wright's art to the city.[63]

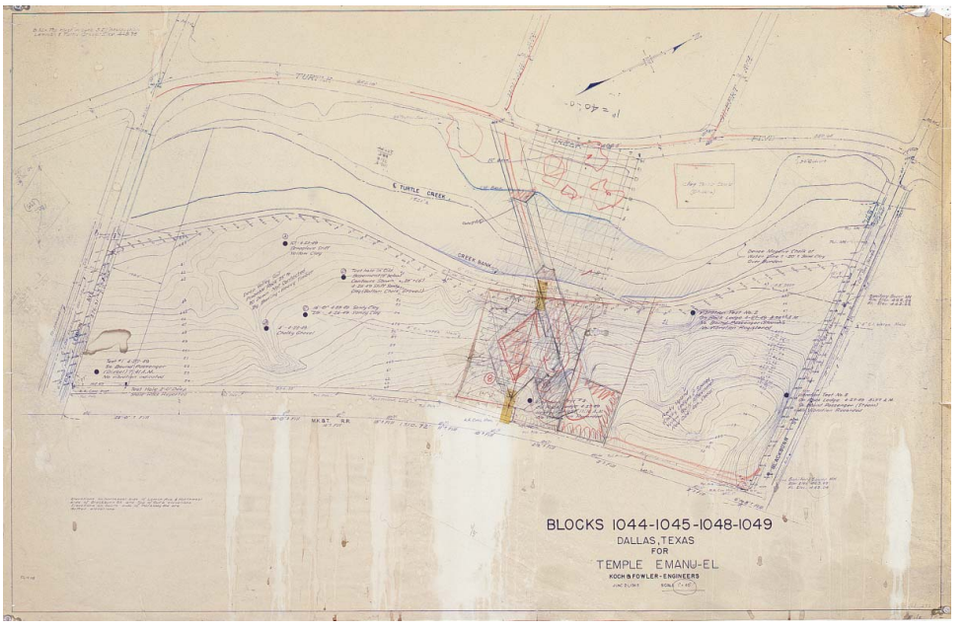
Price may not have known that Rosenfield had been supporting the idea of Wright building a theater in Dallas from 1947.[64] From 1920 to 1943 Dallas had been home to a leading little theater with its own building and sustained national recognition.[65] However, like Hartford, Dallas lacked a nontraditional moderately sized theater.[66] From 1900 to 1957, no local theater had been built "that was not a conventional arrangement of seats on a gently raked floor with the stage a platform behind an elevated picture frame."[67] By the early 1950s, there was a lively national debate about the architectural form of modern theaters. Among the most discussed innovative options was the arena stage with sections of raked seating rows surrounding the players on a central platform.[68] Since 1944 Rosenfield had encouraged Margo Jones (1911–1955) to establish a company in Dallas, and from 1945 he had tried to interest Wright in designing a new theater in Dallas's Civic Center at State Fair Park, about ten miles from the city's commercial center. As a playwright and a director, Jones advocated arena staging as an alternative to proscenium productions. In 1947 she led the effort to convert an existing building in State Fair Park into an arena theater seating 198 as a home for her professional nonprofit company. In 1950, Jones visited Wright at Taliesin and corresponded with him about the possibility of building a flexible theater to accommodate all major forms of staging: proscenium, thrust, and arena. Yet she wrote to Wright: "I know that you and I do not agree about arena theatre. You told me many, many times that you thought it was structurally impossible to build an arena theatre that could also be used with staging at one end and/or apron stage."[69] Wright's New Theatre reflected this conviction, which he brought to Dallas.

By 1954, civic leaders, many of whom had served on the directorate of the old Dallas Little Theater, first met to create the Dallas Theater Center, chartered in February 1955 as a nonprofit corporation in order to establish an educational theater that would offer graduate programs in drama and sustain a residential repertory company. The new institution was to involve citizens of all ages in theater. The goal was to set up "the first permanent repertory theater in the nation." The name "center" signified that the institution would not be a "stop" for touring shows but rather a company that was built into its community and would become a regional source of cultural innovation.[70]

In March 1955, the center invited Paul Baker (1911–2009), a drama professor at Baylor University in Waco, to become the director.[71] Known as an innovator, Baker adapted a European modernist view of theater as less a literary narrative than a spatial and temporal relationship between the audience and the actors.[72] His starting point was the stage as empty space. For him, the original model in the Western tradition had been the ancient Greek outdoor theater as a round stone floor set in a hill with optimal acoustics for a large audience. Early Japanese Noh theater, from which Kabuki had developed, had a similar arrangement of the audience surrounding the actors. Baker saw these early unroofed theaters, including the later Elizabethan courtyard, as a natural norm. The roofing of performances in a permanent building to house stage and seating had led to what he saw as the Italian Renaissance's nonnatural introduction of the proscenium. To have brought the theater indoors was to have radically changed the spatial relationship between actors and audience by setting between them a wall with a framed opening.[73] Baker considered this architectural convention an artificiality, and he equated it with dramatic narrative as a literary convention. As if echoing Wright, he wrote:

> The majority of theaters have endeavored to make their statements by having a vertical actor on a horizontal plane within a picture frame, the proscenium. This basic philosophy and statement in space is corresponding in nearly all of its manifestations of conventionality, restricted form, glorification of tradition, and utter lifelessness, to the conventional, hide-bound architecture prevalent in most home building and planning.[74]

Removing the proscenium was the spatial parallel to remaking the performance temporally. Baker advocated the modernist principle that audience and actors together occupy a unified space, in which all would participate in a dramatic experience that deemphasized narrative logic. Like Wright, he saw the interdependence of modern drama and modern architecture realized in steel that enabled broad-spanning roofs to encompass both stage and seating in a single interior space. This would help to restore a natural condition of performance believed universal in both Western and Eastern traditions. Following contemporaneous dramaturgical theory, Baker embraced the flexible rather than the fixed stage, since as Rosenfield put it, "the spectacle seen through the old stage arch is rarely convincing in these days of [Cecil B.] DeMille, Cinemascope and Cinerama."[75] Rosenfield reported that Wright's unique playhouse and Baker's program for the Dallas Theater Center were to be "psychologically liberated from Broadway."[76] The flexible stage also reduced the cost of scenery, since it held so little. Baker's ideas crystallized in his design for a new Baylor Theater in 1941, which could be either arranged with the audience in banked seats around a central stage on four sides or inverted

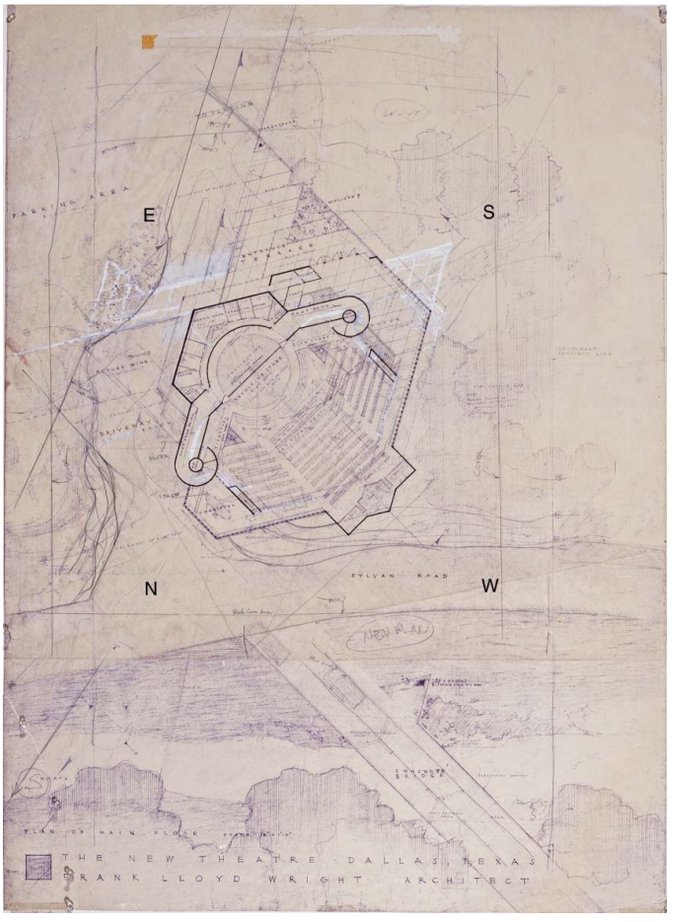


11 Wright, Dallas Theater Center, preliminary site plan, showing the theater on the slope southeast of the creek, between Lemmon Avenue on the south (left) and Blackburn Street on the north (right), with an automobile bridge and causeway connecting to Turtle Creek Boulevard along the west side (above). The site's east edge (below) was an embankment for the tracks of the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas Railroad, 1955? blueline print on paper, 30 × 48 in. (76.2 × 121.9 cm). FLWA, drawing no. 5514.008 (artwork all rights reserved The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives [The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York])

so that the audience was centrally seated and the play unfolded around them.[77]

In July 1955, after the center's board had asked Rosenfield to suggest an architect, he first called Wright, who accepted the invitation to visit Dallas. One of the organizers recalled that, when telephoned, Wright said: "If the people on your board are worried about me not coming they need not for I wanted to be an actor when I was young and I became busy in other things. I do not have a theater in the world which I have designed. Yes, indeed I will be there."[78] Wright insisted on examining the site before he would agree to design the building. In July 1955, the local businessman and artist Sylvan T. Baer had agreed to donate a one-and-a-half-acre rugged, wooded slope on the southeast side of Turtle Creek Boulevard between Lemmon Avenue on the south and Blackburn Street on the north. The site was surrounded by a high-income residential district three miles north of the old downtown. Although the plot of land is less than a third the size of that at Hartford, the property is set within the wooded, linear Turtle Creek Park with its boulevard following the stream, so the visitor perceives the larger park as the setting for Wright's building.[79] Baer also gave access to curving Sylvan Drive along the creek's south side, which linked the two straight avenues and provided direct access to the theater from Turtle Creek Boulevard.[80] In an early site plan (drawn on a topographic survey made for Baer's synagogue, Temple Emanu-El, later built elsewhere), the theater's outline appears on the slope southeast of the creek, with an automobile bridge to the boulevard on the west (Fig. 11). Contour lines show the site rising sharply about thirty feet from Sylvan Drive to an embankment for the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas Railroad along the site's southeast edge (Fig. 11, below). Baer's wooded hillside, with its visible layers of shale above a creek, likely reminded Wright of earlier inspirational sites, like that of Fallingwater. Wright "said the dramatic elements of the site itself projected the idea of Theater in the rough out-croppings of rock and the modular forms of the trees."[81] Baker recalled that Wright "loved that hillside because it was a white rock hillside and it tapered down, from the top to the road must have been about fifty yards I guess. But it was pretty steep, quite steep. So he built the building to fit into that contour of the land."[82] With no other buildings nearby, the theater would be a sculptural object in its own natural environment, as Wright had imagined it at Woodstock and Hartford.

After the Dallas center's leadership accepted the Baer site in September, Wright was instructed to prepare preliminary plans.[83] From the start he had envisioned the stage as "revolving and circular," with a central platform that "can descend by hydraulic device into the basement for scenic changes." The stage's allusion to Kabuki signaled the Dallas center's aim of becoming a resident repertory company as a permanent local cultural resource, like the celebrated homes of Japanese and European companies. As its board's head said before the theater opened in December 1959: "We are aiming at the formation of a playing ensemble of the caliber of the Kabuki, the Comédie Française, or the Old Vic [in London]," all of which Baker had become directly familiar with on his worldwide travels of 1935.[84] By 1955 few directors used the revolving stage, but it held its advantages for Baker, who stressed experimental staging. He recalled that in three years of working with Wright on the theater, "We never touched the basic stage-audience relationship. That, I think, is what makes the theater great. . . . Actually, there is seventy feet of stage plus a turntable, all beautifully proportioned. It is a three-dimensional stage. You can play any period or any type of theatre, can enlarge or narrow the space."[85] An early plan (Fig. 12) shows circular elevators eight feet wide for moving scenery in the circular cores of the ramps on either side of the stage.[86] A central screen split the stage on the diameter. One early section (Fig. 13), annotated by Wright, depicts the revolving stage divided into halves, "raised or lowered on two pneumatic pistons." The screen wall dividing the halves could be "raised and lowered by motor." A "loft" or "plenum" above the stage was not used to hold scenery. Baker wanted no more than five hundred seats, and Wright

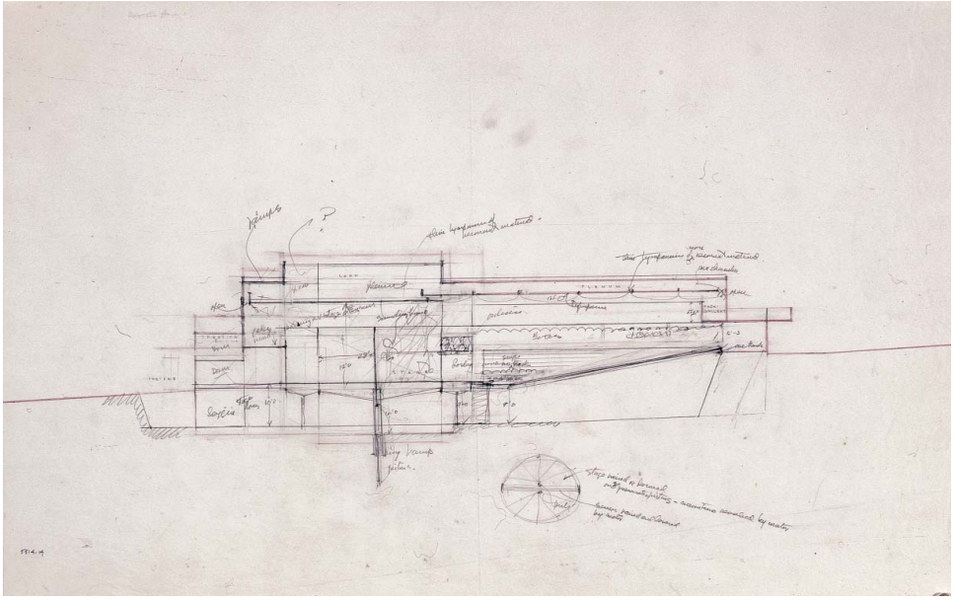


12 Wright, Dallas Theater Center, preliminary plan, showing the spiral-like scheme of movement from the driveway to the entrance terrace, foyer, and theater to the stage, October 20, 1955, blueline print on paper, 49 × 36 in. (124.4 × 91.4 cm). FLWA, drawing no. 5514.007; graphic additions by the author (artwork all rights reserved The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives [The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York])

set them on a gently rising floor, so that "the spectators will look downward at the actors and not upward as for performance on the conventional stage."[87]

After visiting Taliesin in October 1955 to review Wright's initial plans, Baker accepted them, subject to a list of reservations that he wanted considered. Among his concerns, Baker objected that "ramps up and down (stage right and stage left) used for carrying scenery and props from workshop are not practical, and they utilize a great deal of space on workshop level and stage level. A better solution would be an electric lift (not smaller than 6′ × 6′) off-stage right."[88] He felt "the ramps left and right as envisioned at the present are valuable only as scenery feeders for the stage. The ramps are too narrow and being on a slant would be almost useless for anything except passageways for scenery."[89] If widened five feet, each ramp could serve as storage space for large rolling scenery units and properties, and, if needed, a ramp could be cleared for additional rehearsal space. Yet, as Baker noted, to keep the ratio of the plan's parts to the whole, this ramp widening would have meant a costly increase in the theater's size.[90]

When the building committee received Wright's penultimate design in January 1958, they worked with his assistant Kelly Oliver to incorporate changes that Baker wanted, and revised plans showed the ramps replaced with lifts between the basement and stage. Nonetheless, when Wright received these revised plans for his approval, he at once responded to the committee: "A Comedy of Errors! We have all believed you came to Taliesin to approve the plans for the New Theater as designed. The theater itself shaped to *fluently unite stagery and staging*. The ramps employed to do this shaped the structure and anything to improve this idea I will willingly consider. But to now go back to a broken two-floor mechanical operation means a different building entirely if form and function are one. . . . I imagine what you really want is an arena-theater—really a circus. And original simplicity putting the building itself into service of theater can wait."[91]



13 Wright, Dallas Theater Center, preliminary section, showing the front and rear halves of the revolving stage to be "raised or lowered on two pneumatic pistons," n.d., colored pencil on tracing paper, 18 × 27 in. (45.7 × 68.6 cm). FLWA, drawing no. 5514.014 (artwork all rights reserved The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives [The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York])

In Wright's mind, the ramps' logic was rooted in his theory that spaces related in function should be fluidly joined. For Wright, this principle was at the heart of his ideal of plasticity in architecture, meaning continuity of form. In his Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, whose construction was advancing as the Dallas Theater Center's working drawings were prepared, Wright had emphasized the interior's spatial unity enabled by the continuous spiral ramp, rather than discrete superimposed floors. There, as he said, all elements were to serve this aim, "the total impression being one of smooth continuous space."[92] As applied to the theater, this principle meant not only that stage and audience should be unified, but that workshop and stage should be as well. Hence the importance to Wright of both the stage's ceiling that cantilevered out over the frontal seating and the ramps that linked basement shop to stage in curving bands of space. As a proscenium would disrupt continuity between actors and audience, so an elevator in place of ramps would disunite stage and substage. If joined by spiral ramps, they were one continuous interior space.

Evidently, Wright's insistence on the ramps was due to his concept of what appropriate modern theater should be. For him, dramatic action was what was important, whereas scenery conveyed the spectacular, identified with commercial rather than spiritual values. As Baker recalled, Wright would consider extending the area backstage and widening the ramps, but he refused to substitute elevators:

> This time he was really adamant about the fact that the ramps would really work in getting scenery up and down. He did not want space offstage right and left, and he told me—and this is very important—"I do not want my temple filled up with old dirty scenery stage left and right." He felt that if we had ramps going down and very little offstage area that we would keep the temple clean and beautiful and there would be no place to put scenery and junk of that kind.[93]

In Wright's view, if the theater did not accommodate conventional scenery and stage effects, then so much the better for the cultural value of its productions. Of Baker's unauthorized elevators, he commented: "The spacious ramp (widened for you) is intended for easy-going inexpensive flexible foot and trolley work and would be exactly that. . . . The theater was designed *to eliminate the carpenter* and substitute *artistry*. No grandomania in scenery-making longer necessary." He ended: "The easy ramp is a simple means of moving any scenery appropriate to the New Theater itself. One of the key features of the whole scheme that gives the building its present shape. If this is insisted upon you may consider the episode closed, as in fact it is."[94] Wright held that

> the ramps are organically adequate—the slope of 1 to 7 (or even less). They will accommodate anything that should appear on the stage. There is easy going down (of course) and small difficulty going up on proper trolleys, so designed. The movement was thus fluent, silent, continuous, cheap. Not spasmodic and mechanical. There is no open connection between auditorium and workrooms. Scene shifting becomes a simple matter of designed, *sculptural*, imaginative constructions.[95]

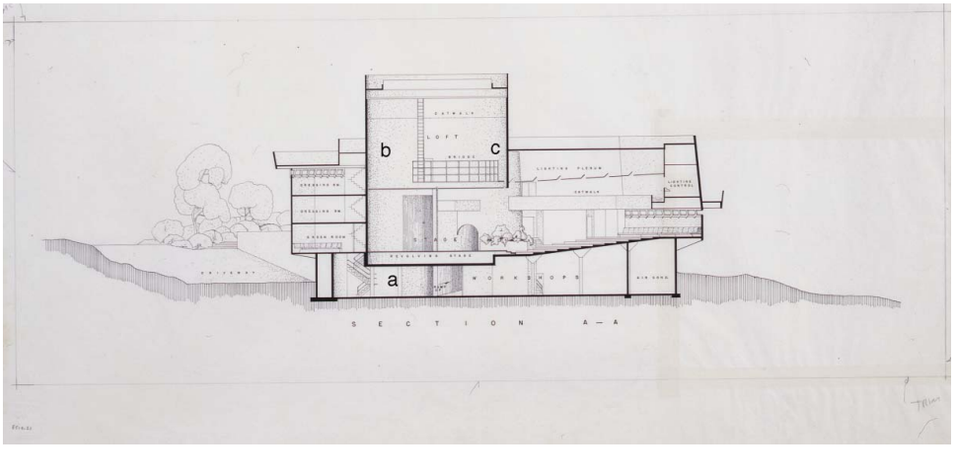
As he made drawings and notes for curators on how paintings should be displayed along the Guggenheim's ramps, so Wright told the Dallas theater's artists that his architecture would shape their work:

> Directors come and go. The Building stays. Instead of painted back-drops and carpenter-work is the theater itself. A simplified sense of staging a show is made easy—but *organic simplicity* is needed there too for the best effects! I am no stickler for classification but I believe there is a definite line between the drama and the circus. Nothing can ever equal the *dramatic effects of organic simplicity*—in Architecture or in Theater.[96]

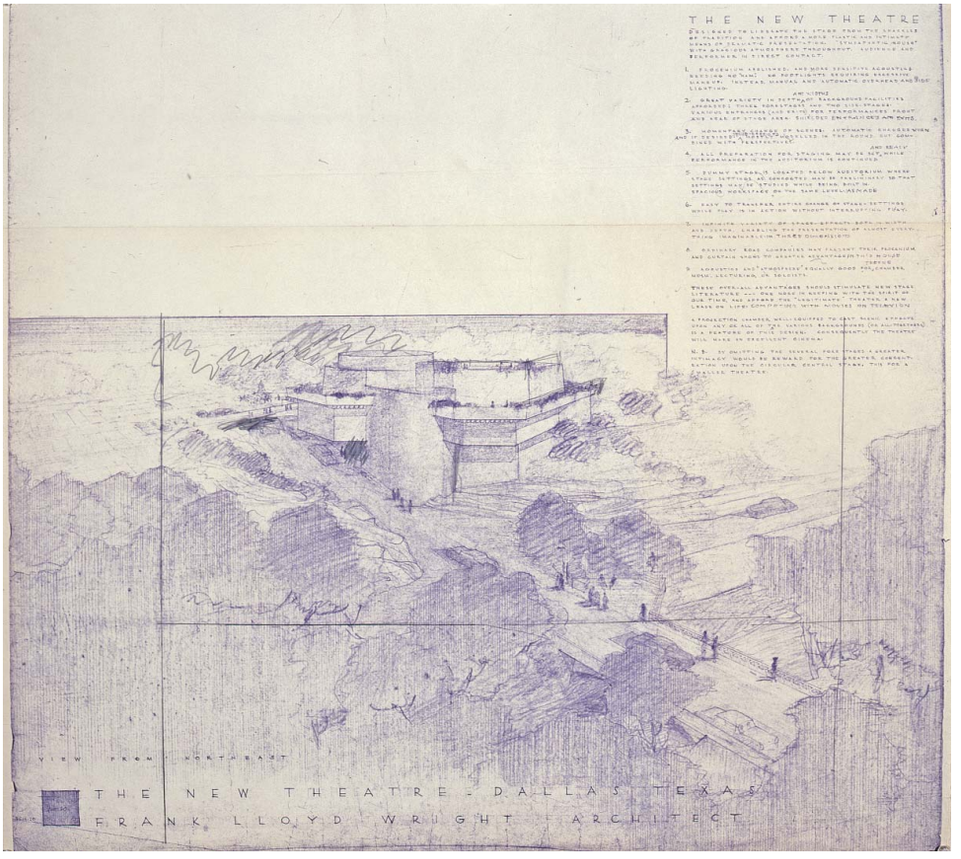
Wright envisioned a style of drama different from that which Baker developed in his theater at Baylor. In May 1956, he had invited Wright to Waco to see his staging of *Hamlet*, which received national recognition. Its premise was to present "a clinical study in psychology" by having Hamlet's lines read by four different actors, each representing a different side of his personality.[97] Wright's reaction was mixed. After Baker sought to change the Theater Center plans in December 1957, Wright wrote to him:

> You never asked me what I thought of the Waco production. The one I went to see. I have never told you what I really felt about it. To me it was a red light. A warning to us both. I had never seen great drama so chopped into little pieces—the pieces sometimes very good—the whole lacking the character of *organic-simplicity* but nevertheless showing marked talent. Now that "chopping up" is the weakness in you that I fear now. I am afraid that the *organic-simplicity* of the *new* theater . . . will be cut up into small pieces before it gets a fair chance to live at all. In fact, Paul, I am losing faith in its ever living at all.[98]

Baker and Wright also clashed over the lobby, which Wright had planned as spatially minimal, anticipating that the roof terrace overlooking Turtle Creek would be the main gathering place for the audience during intermissions. In his list of concerns about the preliminary plans, Baker mentioned that in several ways the lobby was too small for the house, noting that "the theater undoubtedly will need space where coffee can be prepared for the audiences and space for dispensing machines of various kinds."[99] Wright shot back with a biblical allusion: "Paul! Do you really visualize the cheapening effect of a food and drink bar at the very threshold of the temple? It would reduce the atmosphere of the whole edifice to the level of a hot-dog stand? All that milling for drinks, etc., just where you enter the edifice will make the theater like a hot-dog stand in the portico of a church."[100] Wright intentionally omitted areas for concessions, just as his backstage facilities militated against the use of larger scenery. The architecture would work against typical theater behaviors, in order to make the institution more like a sacred space than a commercial establishment. This, in Wright's eyes, would make his building a culturally *new* theater. He wrote in conveying his design to Baker and the board: "No matter what you expect to put into this theatre, the theatre will take possession. Then the drama will be what it should be—like nothing else the world has seen."[101]



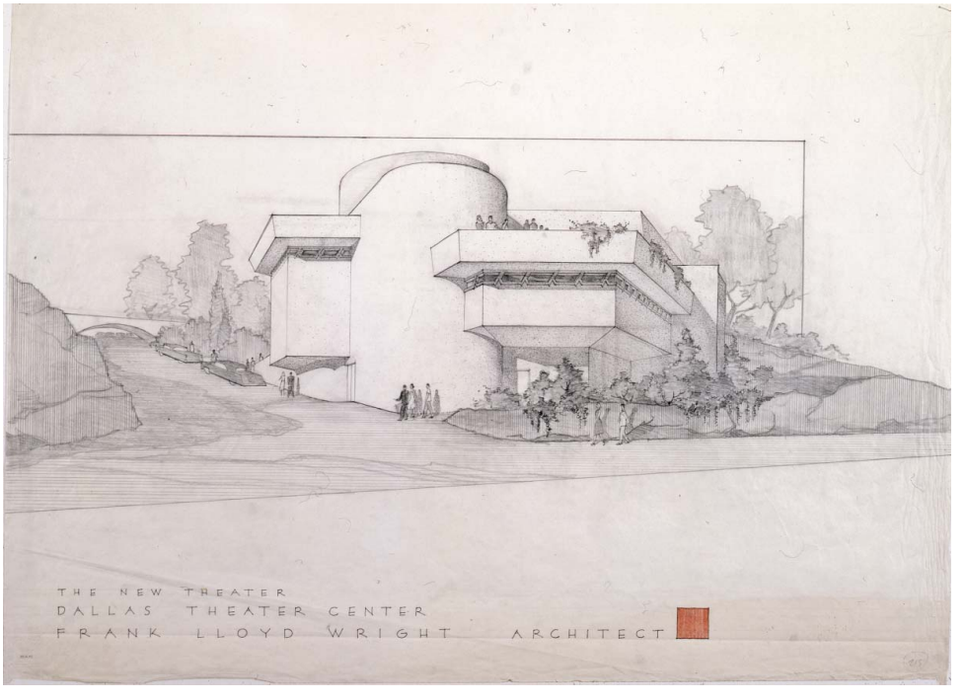
14 Wright, Kalita Humphreys Theater, section, showing a) basement columns supporting the auditorium floor, b) a semicircular cyclorama as the rear half of the cylindrical rigging loft, and c) the semicircular upper frontal half of the cylindrical rigging loft cantilevered over the stage, 1958? ink on tracing paper, 13 × 33½ in. (33 × 85.1 cm) to frame drawn around image. FLWA, drawing no. 5514.021; graphic additions by the author (artwork all rights reserved The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives [The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York])



15 Wright, Dallas Theater Center, preliminary aerial perspective, showing the bridge across Turtle Creek from Turtle Creek Boulevard, November 20, 1955, blueline print on paper, 36 × 38 in. (91.4 × 96.5 cm). FLWA, drawing no. 5514.026 (artwork all rights reserved The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives [The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York])

Wright's persistence in opposing Baker on certain key points in the theater's design was not uncharacteristic of his relations with clients for public buildings. For example, study of the extensive correspondence between Wright and his client contacts for the S. C. Johnson Company buildings in Racine, Wisconsin, from 1936, or for the Guggenheim Museum, from 1943, among other projects, reveals a pattern of Wright accepting certain, often small, pragmatic changes that he did not feel affected the essential intended character of his buildings. But in each case he vigorously opposed those changes that he felt threatened the integrity of his architectural scheme. In these situations, Wright's tenacity could be unyielding. Yet, while his exchanges with Baker fit a pattern, they reflect Wright's specific convictions about theater architecture that he had developed over forty years since he began his work with Aline Barnsdall. By the time of his difficulties with Baker, forty-plus years his junior, Wright was ninety years old, and finally on the verge of seeing his long-held ideas for the New Theatre realized.

After these exchanges, Wright prepared the working drawings, dated February 20, 1958. Comparison of the early undated section (Fig. 13) with the section of the theater as built (Fig. 14) illustrates how Wright rethought the interior around the stage, presumably in response to Baker's concerns about issues other than the ramps. The plenum between the ceiling and roof above the audience became a full-height space (spanned by steel trusses) for working with the lighting equipment, and a lighting catwalk was added inside the cantilevered semicircular cylinder above the stage, so that playing areas could be lighted from many angles to



16 Wright, Dallas Theater Center, perspective of the near-final design looking from Sylvan Drive, showing the high stage tower, 1958? pencil on tracing paper, 30⅜ × 42¼ in. (77.2 × 107.3 cm). FLWA, drawing no. 5514.002 (artwork all rights reserved The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives [The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York])

create spatial depth. In the section of the theater as built (Fig. 14), the stage has no hydraulic plunger beneath the floor, although it retains its revolving mechanism. The roof plenum over the stage has become a tall fly tower with enough space to raise and lower scenery. Backstage there are now three levels of rooms for actors, with a green room below two floors of dressing rooms. In sum, the logistical demands of changing scenery on the stage and the technical needs for controlling lighting over the house had raised the building's overall volume and profile considerably.

The exterior consequences of these changes are clear in comparing Wright's aerial perspective dated November 20, 1955 (Fig. 15), with an undated perspective of the near-final design from Sylvan Drive (Fig. 16). In the earlier view, the theater's overall form is more horizontal, with the stage loft only modestly higher than the other roof planes, which Wright imagined as garden terraces. In the later perspective, which shows the theater almost as built, the tall cylinder of the stage tower combined with the higher roofs over both the auditorium and dressing rooms have transformed the building into a vertical mass. Wright had wanted a low building whose horizontally extended planes would set the theater into its hillside site, as conveyed in the early aerial view (Fig. 15). The perspective of the near-final design from below reveals that the high stage tower for internal operations has altered the relative visual weight of horizontal and vertical elements (Fig. 16). In the foreground, the northern ramp tower rises from the earth and is flanked by the cantilevered depth of the dressing rooms on the left and the auditorium's rear on the right. The plan's reflex geometry shapes the overall massing, though the central stage tower and ramp towers signal their distinct internal functions for a theater.

The Kalita Humphreys Theater as Built

After the working drawings were completed in February 1958, Dallas contractor Henry Beck proposed to work with Wright on the plans to reduce costs, which totaled nearly $1 million. By September pressures eased with a gift of $100,000 in memory of Kalita Humphreys, the Texas-born actress for whom the building was named.[102] Beck donated processes and materials that required no machine-shop fabrication by subcontractors, including the site excavation, poured concrete, formwork lumber, and steel reinforcing. Unprecedented in Wright's oeuvre, this was an extraordinarily generous offer because the lack of right angles throughout the building required crafting expensive, variably shaped, curving wood formwork in which to pour the concrete. Wright wanted his theater to have the rich sculptural presence that he was realizing in the Guggenheim. Beck met Wright's exacting standards for the formwork's precision to ensure near-seamless curvatures for poured-in-place concrete. Then Beck was to "smooth exposed concrete surfaces throughout, removing excessive form marks."[103] Surface imperfections were mortar-filled or smoothed down, likely with a carborundum grinder. The outside was painted a warm light yellow buff and sealed with a vinyl elastic coating. The exterior was spray-painted and the sealant spray-glazed, to avoid any marks of brush or roller (Fig. 17). The aim was a "monolithic finish" of "smooth uniform flat plane surfaces of concrete."[104] Such surfaces would evoke the idea of the New Theatre as a machine, as Wright had envisioned it from the 1930s.

The Dallas Theater is approached from below as a sculptural form of curved walls and non-right-angled planes (Fig. 18). To access the building, one ascends along its north or left side, then turns right, up steps and to the doors (later modified) on the uphill side away from the drive (Fig. 17). Once inside, one continues to turn to the right around the windowed foyer before entering the auditorium, where the right-turning motion carries one into the seating. As Ann Abernathy has observed, in first ascending the slope to the doors and then descending into the theater, the visitor's motion describes a continuous spiral that culminates in the

17 Wright, Kalita Humphreys Theater, view from southeast, after imperfections and formwork marks were removed and the surface was painted, late 1959 or early 1960. FLWA, photograph no. 5514.0023 (artwork all rights reserved The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives [The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York]; photograph by Messina Studios)

18 Wright, Kalita Humphreys Theater, view from northwest along Sylvan Drive, 2005 (photograph by the author)

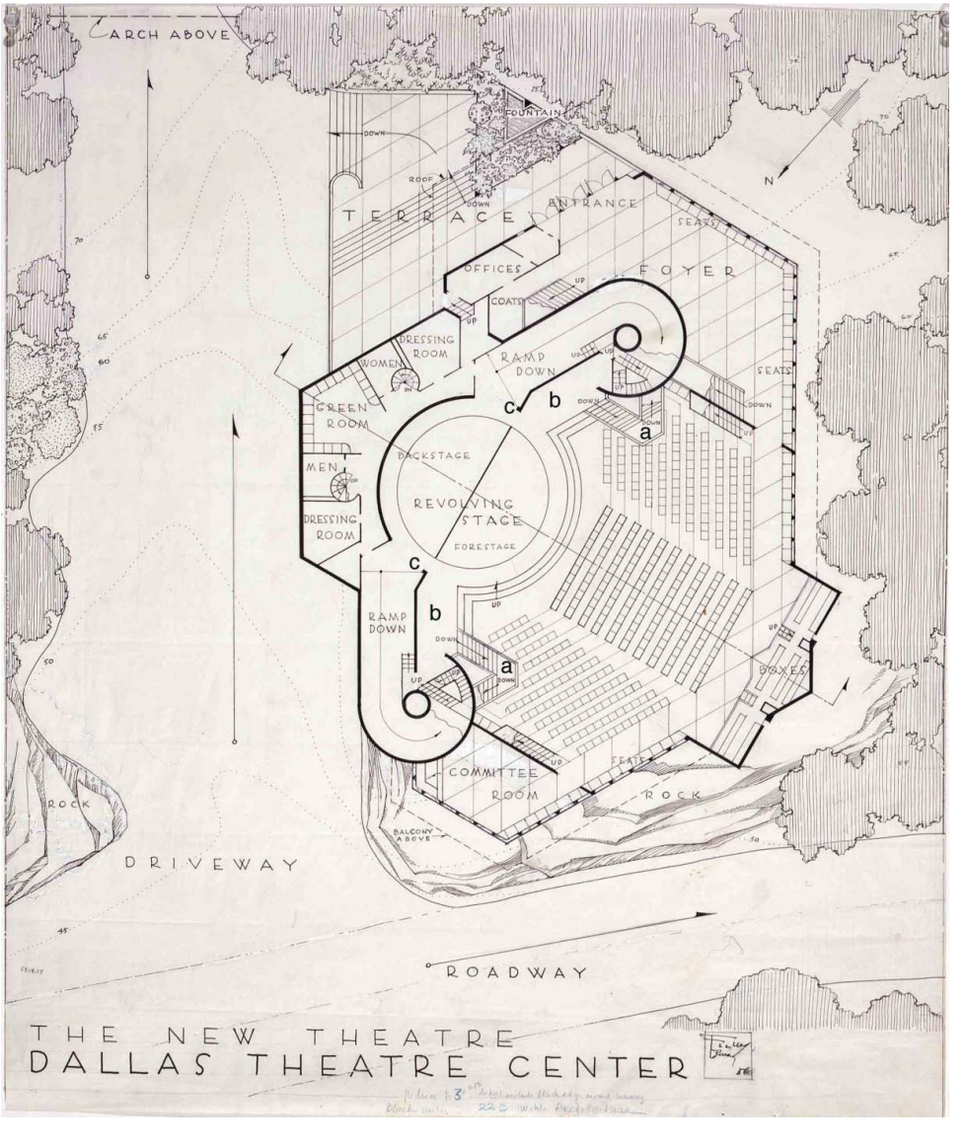
19 Wright, Kalita Humphreys Theater, view of the rigging loft above the stage, ca. 1960. FLWA, photograph no. 5514.0020 (artwork all rights reserved The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives [The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York]; photograph by Messina Studios)

circular stage, as suggested in the site plan (Fig. 12).[105] By planning access to his theater via a spiral to its center, Wright made an experiential virtue out of the contextual limitation of having to approach the theater from far below. In this way, as his on-site assistant Kelly Oliver said, "the audience will be prepared for 'the drama in which it is about to participate.'"[106]

In the built theater, the mechanistic ideal focused on the revolving stage, whose central circle (thirty-two feet in diameter) had the potential for one-third of its area facing the audience and the other two-thirds set with two different scenes.[107] However, because the hydraulic mechanism for raising and lowering the stage to the basement was omitted, sets had to be changed by raising and lowering backdrops from the cylindrical tower directly overhead, giving rise to an open loft above the stage instead of a low ceiling aligned with that of the house. In this tower, winches mounted on an open steel-mesh grid can lift and lower scenery attached to steel cables (Fig. 19).

The central tower over the stage necessitated by the rigging loft generated the building's most dramatic structural solution. As shown in a section (Fig. 14), the whole building stood on a foundation that had to be cut into the bedrock just below the slope's surface. On the basement level, in order to free space for the theater workshop, the rear curvature of the stage cylinder is supported not by a continuous wall but by a semicircle of cylindrical columns (Fig. 14: a). Above the basement, on the stage floor, the tower's rear wall took the form of the semicircular cyclorama, which rose up into the rigging loft (Fig. 14: b). The tower's rear wall is anchored in the structural mass of the three levels of dressing rooms and green room behind the stage. Above the stage's open front half, the tower is a concrete drum or semicylindrical wall, eight inches thick, cantilevered over the void of the stage opening (Fig. 14: c). Extended upward to form the theater's crowning exterior mass, this rounded tower weighs 127 tons and rises over forty feet above the circular stage, creating a tall cylindrical volume. This enormous mass of reinforced concrete is supported below by square columns that double as the inner ends of the walls that define the side stages, as shown in the floor plan (Fig. 20: c).

As one observer wrote: "It takes a bit of study to figure out how Frank Lloyd Wright intends to support the wall above the front of the stage in the theater" because "it has no conventional proscenium arch." The low frontal semicircular edge of the cantilevered half-drum descends below the ceiling over the audience, above the stage's semicircular front (Fig. 2). When viewed from the auditorium, "a concrete wall will seem to hang over the front of the stage without apparent support. Mr. Wright designed the wall as a curved concrete beam." Thus, "a proscenium arch is not needed because the part of the cylinder above the stage is designed to act as a cantilever."[108] Wright here devised a solution based on his lifelong critique of the proscenium, replacing



20 Wright, Dallas Theater Center, plan of the auditorium level, showing a) "quick stairs" on either side of the frontal stage, b) side stages, and c) square columns on either side of the cylindrical rigging loft, June 1, 1956? ink on tracing paper, 29¼ × 36 in. (74.3 × 91.4 cm). FLWA, drawing no. 5514.017; graphic additions by the author (artwork all rights reserved The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives [The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York])

its framed opening with a horizontal cantilever enabled by steel. This key structural act reinforced his ideal of spatial unity between actors and audience, which Wright equated with noncommercial art theater. What he had proposed for Woodstock and Hartford, he finally realized in Dallas. Another observer concluded: "There is a subtle separation between audience and performer formed by the slightly raised stage and the front line at the eight-inch thick cantilevered drum. The audience then has a sense of being involved intimately in the performance and yet remains separate enough to contemplate it."[109]

To reach the auditorium, once inside the building's original northeast doors, one takes a gently curving path through the lobby, lit with a ring of clerestory windows that follow the plan's reflex geometry. The lobby's low eight-foot ceiling height over its area of 1,350 square feet accentuates the impression of horizontality (Fig. 21). From the ever-narrower lobby, one moves in a spiral curve to enter the contrasting expanse of the 8,000-square foot auditorium with its twelve rows of seats (Fig. 22). After passing through the walnut-framed doors at the house's rear to one side, one sees the whole theater, stage and audience together (Fig. 2). Baker

21 Wright, Kalita Humphreys Theater, view of the lobby looking southwest toward the doors to the theater, after the removal of the original banquettes along the outer wall and the refinishing of the ceiling, 2005 (photograph by the author)

22 Wright, Kalita Humphreys Theater, view looking diagonally southeast across the house, 1960 (photograph by Bob Kornegay, Photography, Dallas, provided by the Dallas Theater Center)

recalled: "You came in on the same level, of course, as the lobby and then you look down and all of that kind of—sort of nice, gradual sink down to the stage, beautiful, beautiful stage."[110] Within the stage's area of 1,600 square feet, the thirty-two-foot diameter revolving stage focuses the implied spiraling movement one makes to arrive at and enter the building.[111] There is no central aisle, so views are more diagonal, from the audience across the stage or from stage to house.[112] Seating rows originally stepped down just five inches from one to the next, ending at the first row at the stage, its floor level set three four-inch steps or one foot above the house floor. These steps at the stage's base were removable, so that the stage's edge could rise straight off the floor. Yet whether the steps are in place or removed, actors and audience do not share the same floor plane. This reflected Wright's opposition to the arena stage, wherein the acting platform is often on the same level as the frontal rows of seats all around. As one observer wrote: "Both the stages and the seating seem to enfold each other, though Wright maintained that a fine line must always exist between audience and actors."[113]

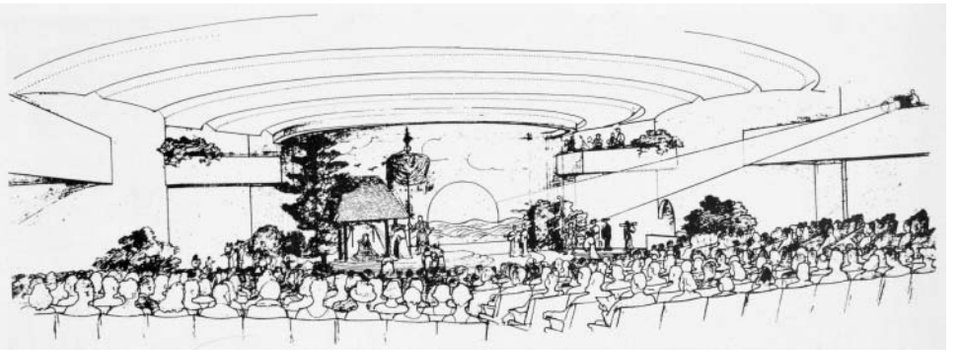
Other than drawing that fine line, Wright did everything to unify the room, in contrast to the division of stage and house in a proscenium theater. He "explained to the backers of the theater project that [his design] would force the viewer to see the whole rather than the parts. The essence of his design was a unity which he carried into every possible detail, even to the color."[114] To maintain the impression of spatial unity, Wright set the frontal emergency exits almost invisibly as staircases down to the basement from the side stages, screened from the audience by low parapet walls. Actors could also use these "quick stairs" as nearly hidden entrances to the side stages (Fig. 20: a).[115] In plan, the side stages (Fig. 20: b), together with the circular ramps, appear almost like arms reaching out to embrace the audience on either side of the central stage.

At Dallas, the stage as originally built appears almost as a composite of references to earlier traditions of theater. Its working height is eighteen feet, slightly less than in traditional Kabuki theaters, which Wright knew from his time in Japan. Ramped lateral forestages to either side recall the *hanamichi* in Kabuki houses, which Wright earlier had adapted in his Imperial Hotel's theater in Tokyo. Dallas's side forestages are ten by eighteen feet and could originally be accessed from the "quick stairs" to either side near the house's front, or through the side arched doorways. Around the house's rear ran the lighting balcony, reappearing above on either side of the stage as two twelve-foot-long balconies that Wright designed for musicians, though they could be used by actors or for lighting (Fig. 22). Baker had wanted the solid concrete balcony rails above the side stages to be removable so that an actor could be seen at full height rather than only above the waistline. Wright refused, however, because this change would detract from the room's overall horizontal architectural unity.[116] He "would also give to the audience, by means of seating, acoustical and ceiling arrangements, a sense not only of identity with the play, but with each other—'a sense of being in an audience.'"[117] As in Taliesin's theater, rebuilt in 1952 as the Hillside Theater with all seating above the stage, "the audience should see each other with the same intimacy of the family circle."[118]

Though mechanically state-of-the-art, Dallas's round stage recalls ancient Greek theaters, to which Wright referred.[119] As Baker said: "It's really a classic Greek form with an intimate audience, excellent acoustics and sight lines. It can be called semi-thrust, but not pure thrust."[120] Also, like the apron stage invoked as the norm in Elizabethan playhouses, the stage's semicircular projection into the house contrasts with a traditional proscenium's framing effect. When one stands at the base of the stage and looks outward, the bowl-like sweep of the seating is like that of a miniature Greek theater, though the slope of the seating is much shallower. As Baker said, "you're holding the audience in your arms like that. Yes, it's a wonderful kind of intimate thing. The furthest seat was only fifty-five feet from the stage."[121] Oliver observed that the theater was

> to create the same feeling of intimacy that is found in [the] small Taliesin Theaters. Only twelve rows in depth the auditorium floor flows into the stage with only a small line of demarcation. Human scale is not forgotten. A solitary figure on the bare stage is not dwarfed by a monumental proscenium but rather finds himself in scale with the low-hanging balconies above the side stages and the arched openings at either side.[122]

One drawing of the Dallas Theater Center's auditorium, in the style of others by Wright's associates in this period and first published at the time of the theater's opening in December 1959, depicts it as an open stage, where scenery visually joins the overall architecture, not as a box stage wherein flat backdrops could adequately serve as scenery (Fig. 23). In the tradition of modernist scenic designers such as Robert Edmond Jones and Lee Simonson (whom Wright praised), the open stage's properties yield a three-dimensional evocation of the drama's environment.[123] Four steps rise from the stage's main platform to a three-dimensional hut within which action takes place, and whose roof is near level with the balconies' base, so that the scenery is shown nested into the architecture. Next to the hut, a banner pole rises to the height of the ceiling, tying the setting back to the building, just as the sun over the hills in the background echoes the portal arches to the sides. Small



23 Wright, Kalita Humphreys Theater, stage set for a production, ca. 1959, from *Werk* 47 (September 1960): 303

24 Wright, Kalita Humphreys Theater, curtain call for the opening production, *Of Time and the River*, December 1959 (photograph by Eliot Elisofon, Time & Life Pictures Collection, provided by Getty Images, no. 50566658)

trees onstage rhyme with decorative greenery in the balconies above and at the far ends of the side stages below. Actors move across the full breadth of the side stages between the arched portals and on the balcony at right, while stage lighting slants from one side of the balcony above the audience. In the theater, the angle of throw is about thirty degrees, corresponding to the plan's geometry. This is less than the desirable forty-five-degree angle, but high-angled lighting was mounted inside the stage tower's cylindrical front and in the ceiling plenum's semicircular slots (Fig. 19).

The effect of Wright's auditorium is evident in a view of a curtain call for its inaugural drama, an adaptation of Thomas Wolfe's autobiographical novel *Of Time and the River* (Fig. 24). Players line the stage from portal to portal as if completing a circle, with the audience applauding them. Behind them is the act curtain on a semicircular track, designed so that it could be opened side to side or flown up. The play, in which more than one hundred actors performed on five different sections of the stage, had as many as six actors representing Wolfe talking to himself at different times.[124] *Of Time and the River* had also been staged at Baylor. Since that theater's large open center stage flanked by two smaller side stages was similar to Wright's theater, the transposition did not require changes in the script, scenery, design, stage effects, or direction. Nonetheless, Wright's revolving stage was used for scene changes and to add movement and action to crown scenes.[125]

Actors on Wright's stage felt especially exposed, with the audience curving nearly 270 degrees around the forestage. The cyclorama's rear curve close behind made actors feel that they were projected into the house. Constant awareness of the surrounding audience shaped the style of acting, so that players worked to convey their performances to audience members whose gaze they could see and who were looking at them from different directions. Actors thus felt more compelled to turn in space and to be more mobile on the stage. They and their directors had to work without a demarcating proscenium line. The actors tended to project their speech to other actors out through the audience, which felt itself to be part of the interaction rather than merely observing it.[126] The lead actor for *Of Time and the River* recalled: "You go along with Mr. Wright's statement, or you fight it—or you ignore it. To go along is the only successful way to use the space because Mr. Wright's statement is so strong that if you fight him, he will overpower you, and if you ignore his statement, you will be ineffective."[127]

This response recalls Wright's claim that his New Theatre would reshape drama. In addition to a new approach to

acting and directing, he envisioned that his design's "over-all advantages should stimulate a new stage literature—one more in keeping with the spirit of our time, and afford the 'legitimate' theater a new lease on life."[128] The revolving stage, what Baker termed "the other actor," had such an effect. The center's first season (1959–60) featured eight plays, including Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*, and one new play, *The Cross-Eyed Bear*, by Baker's associate Eugene McKinney, who had assisted with the adaptation of Wolfe's *Of Time and the River*. This and subsequent original scripts "were written with the playwright's foreknowledge of the turntable stage, and each has incorporated its use into the action."[129] According to one participant, the stage design for *Our Town* marked a key step in adapting to Wright's building, because the plans of the sets showing streets, houses, furniture, and gardens were made to conform with the theater's reflex geometry. The diagonal grid's lines and angles were drawn on the stage, so that the resulting sets had a scale and depth that felt proper to the building. Such an effect was consistent with Wright's ideal of integrating all elements of design.[130] Another of Baker's colleagues recalled that his fascination with Pablo Picasso and the Cubist method of fracturing objects into many facets and arranging them together in one painting moved Baker to place several facets of a dramatic character at once and side by side onstage. This had been the logic behind both his *Hamlet* and *Of Time and the River*. For the production of *Hamlet* in Wright's theater, the design thus featured a large sculptural set on the revolving stage, with a ramped area, acting niches, and caves as different positions for the multiple actors playing Hamlet to present the character to the audience.[131]

The unity of action and space, or function and form, exemplified Wright's general ideal for modern architecture. Echoing Wright's rhetoric that architecture should be of the land and not on it, or that ornament should be of the surface rather than on it, Oliver wrote,

> Both seats and stage seem to wrap around each other . . . walls and ceilings pass from auditorium to stage . . . space is created that has constant movement. The actor is no longer forced to project himself in the Theater Center but finds himself a part of this moving space. And, for the first time in the history of theater becomes *of* this space rather than *in* it.[132]

Oliver's account calls to mind Wright's description of the intended link of spatial form to human function in the contemporaneous Guggenheim Museum as "a giant spiral for a well defined purpose: a new unity between beholder, painting, and architecture. . . . A great memorial building should thus prove to be matchless in complete unity between human nature, picture and environment."[133] As in the Dallas theater, there was a conceptual continuity between the behavior within the museum and its built form.

Initial response to the newly completed Dallas Theater Center when it opened on December 27–30, 1959, was overwhelmingly positive, with extensive national press and broadcast coverage. Before the first night, more than eight thousand visitors had toured the structure, representing at least thirty-six states and eight foreign countries. On seeing it, the actor Charlton Heston said: "This is the most fabulous theater in the world."[134] He concluded: "You will be spoiled to every other stage in America after working on this one."[135] Observers compared the Dallas theater to the Guggenheim, which had opened in October and had prompted a wide range of praise and criticism. As with the Guggenheim, Wright in his Dallas Theater Center adhered to a design that intentionally did not accommodate the conventions of its type. As it was at first difficult to imagine hanging paintings or displaying other art on the Guggenheim's ramps, so it was hard to stage typical plays with elaborate scenery in Wright's Dallas theater. The Guggenheim had challenged expectations for displaying art, just as the Dallas theater's stage was shaped to resist a traditional logic of producing drama. In both cases, Wright as architect was creating a setting that pushed artists in other media to rethink their ways of conceiving, crafting, and presenting their work to its audiences. Although different in many ways, the Dallas Theater Center and the Guggenheim Museum also shared an aspiration to monumentality. As noted, Wright described his museum as a "memorial" to its founder, Solomon R. Guggenheim, his original patron for the project. Thus, though the Guggenheim's spiral walls of gunite were technically modern, Wright compared its rotunda to "the simple curved surfaces of the Pantheon" in Rome.[136] He told the building committee, "this museum is a memorial like St. Paul's—London."[137] In other words, the Guggenheim, like the Dallas Theater Center, was templelike, just as public museums and theaters had been compared to temples since early in the nineteenth century.

Rooted in Wright's unbuilt projects, the Dallas theater resisted expectations for staging in order to redirect the kind of drama produced, meaning plays whose cultural value for their audiences would be enhanced by their relative lack of visual trappings around the actors. Wright's goal was to make a stage and auditorium whose spatial form would inspire experimentation in playwriting, acting, directing, and design, always with a view to engaging the audience with the performance. This had been the ideal imagined to have flourished in those premodern traditions of theater—the Greek, Elizabethan, and Japanese—that theatrical modernists admired and sought to recall. As in his other public projects, like the Guggenheim, Wright in his New Theatre sought to transform a building type in order to reshape the experience housed therein. His solution was functionally challenging, even while it resonated with older ideals of monumentality. The New Theatre, like his new museum, advanced his agenda to transcend the conventional. What he essentially proposed—the unity of stage and audience—was not an original aim, having been voiced by many modernists, but he made a novel structure express this idea.

The Dallas Theater Center, 1959–2009

For twenty-three years, Wright's building served as home to the Dallas Theater Center under Baker, who each season produced many new plays, most written by company members. However, in 1982 the center's board, seeking a more conventional organization, forced Baker's resignation, and virtually his whole company was soon gone.[138] His successor as artistic

25 REX/OMA (Joshua Prince-Ramus, partner in charge, and Rem Koolhaas), Dee and Charles Wyly Theatre, AT&T Performing Arts Center, Dallas, 2004–9 (photograph by Iwan Baan, provided by the AT&T Performing Arts Center)

26 REX/OMA, Wyly Theatre, Potter Rose Performance Hall (photograph by Iwan Baan, provided by the AT&T Performing Arts Center)

director, Adrian Hall, sought a second, more flexible space for experimental staging of plays, and in February 1984, the center opened its Arts District Theater, in downtown Dallas, designed by local architect Arthur Rogers as a temporary facility. The relocation away from the sylvan Turtle Creek Park was part of a larger effort to concentrate the city's major cultural facilities in Dallas's center as a means of urban renewal. For the next twenty years, depending on their productions' goals, different artistic directors chose to stage plays either in the new facility or in Wright's theater. Following Baker's departure, under Rogers's supervision, the most significant change to Wright's auditorium came in 1983–84, when the rake of the floor was increased by 18 inches overall, the original seats were replaced, and the interior was repainted a dark green, to coordinate with a new lighting system in order to darken the room sufficiently for contemporary productions.[139] Nonetheless, even today, the intimate scale and core spatial relationship of actor and audience that Wright and Baker saw as essential are vividly apparent, whether one is seated in the auditorium or standing on the stage.

The Arts District Theater was a huge corrugated-steel shed, like a prefabricated barn. Its stage, with no prosceniumlike features, had great depth and flexibility, unlike Wright's small projecting curved platform. Hall recalled that at first the center's board "found it uncomfortable to have spaces not defined by a proscenium."[140] His goal was to create a black-box theater in which carpenters constructed a completely new interior for each show. Wright's fixed sloped sweep of individual chairs on their tiered concrete floor contrasted with the Arts District Theater's wooden bleacher seating. These bleachers could be arranged in various configurations, such as divided down the middle, with the action taking place between two flanking sets of risers, as on a tennis court. As one critic noted: "Because the audience watched almost every show from a unique angle, it felt as if you were in a different building every time you saw something new there."[141] Wright would not have approved of this type of theater. For example, in 1950, on being asked his opinion of Margo Jones's plans for a flexible modern theater with different options for configuring the stage, he had responded that "by the interchange of panorama, arena, and proscenium-theatre none of them are really good. All are makeshifts and dreadfully expensive. I think the name for it should be 'The Makeshift Theatre.'"[142]

Though there were changes in Wright's Kalita Humphreys Theater, his critique of flexible interiors was prescient, as labor costs for building and/or moving seating for each new show eventually forced the Arts District Theater to adopt a fixed U-shaped set of bleachers with minimal changes for successive productions. The theater's large size (about half the area of a football field) also made it difficult to hear actors, a problem that Wright's theater had solved through its smaller volume. This and its other virtues led artistic directors to return to it in the 1990s. They sought the tighter visual control that its more conventional stage offered, with the audience facing the players frontally, rather than sets arranged like pieces of sculpture crafted to be viewed from every side.[143] Ironically, while Wright had presented his New Theatre from the 1930s as radically three-dimensional, because of its revolving stage and lack of a proscenium, by the 1990s, the Kalita Humphreys Theater was valued anew for its relative conventionality.

By 1997, when the Dallas Theater Center's new permanent home was discussed, the first preference was to return to a relatively traditional stage arrangement.[144] By that time, though, new technologies, the successors to Wright's revolving stage, would make it possible to change configurations quickly and inexpensively. Subsequently, the Dallas Theater Center pushed for a more flexible space along the lines of the Arts District Theater. Such an approach informed the solution for the Dee and Charles Wyly Theatre (2004–9) by the architectural team of REX/OMA, a collaboration of Joshua Prince-Ramus's then new firm (REX) with that of his former employer (OMA), Rem Koolhaas (Figs. 25, 26). Wright placed the modernity of revolving stage sets in a historically informed amphitheater with fixed seating. The Wyly Theatre's mechanically powered flexibility enabled both stage and seating to be continually reconfigured, superseding the traditional references in Wright's design.

A monumental and sophisticated successor to the Arts District Theater, the Wyly Theatre is a nine-story, vertically organized cubic structure. Where Wright's playhouse was

monolithic concrete, the Wyly is a steel frame clad in a rain screen of extruded vertical aluminum tubes whose varied sizes make the exterior look like a pleated theater curtain. The entrance ramp leads from the street level down to the basement-level foyer, so the path from the foyer back up to the auditorium on the street level signifies spiritual elevation through the art of the theater. The support facilities (rehearsal studio, costume shop, offices, and classrooms) are all on upper floors. Freeing the ground plane was the precondition for creating a truly flexible stage and audience hall, which is visually open to the city with glass walls on three sides. Street-level glass panels can also literally open to allow patrons or performers to move outdoors. In this way, performances can become catalysts for public life in the district. The ideal of a performance machine is realized with an elaborate system of winches, pulleys, lifts, tracks, and catwalks that offer several stage configurations from a proscenium stage to thrust stage or flat-floor room arranged by a small crew of stagehands in hours rather than days. The technology makes possible the dramatic reduction in labor costs that neither the Kalita Humphreys Theater nor the Arts District Theater could have achieved. With the touch of a button, seating balconies rise up into the fly tower, aisles can be rearranged between acts, and the audience can sit on the floor at the beginning of a performance and onstage at the end.[145]

Comparing the Kalita Humphreys Theater with its permanent successor highlights by contrast the conservative character of Wright's New Theatre. The Wyly Theatre is the realization of the earlier modernist ideal of the machine for drama. However, while Wright's theater had a mechanistic core in its revolving stage, its overall spatial conception was modeled on ancient Greek and Elizabethan theaters. The New Theatre's departure from the proscenium stage had represented its modernity, but Wright nonetheless designed it to sustain legitimate drama in an intimate setting whose cultural function he understood in traditional, even religious, terms. As realized in Dallas, his ideal playhouse, while partly compromised in its built form and later altered over time, still serves its original function for productions scaled to its circular stage. For Wright, the New Theatre was a "temple" for high cultural purposes, yet one that he wrought in the spatial and structural language of modern architecture.

Joseph M. Siry's books are Carson Pirie Scott: Louis Sullivan and the Chicago Department Store *(1988);* Unity Temple: Frank Lloyd Wright and Architecture for Liberal Religion *(1996);* The Chicago Auditorium Building: Adler and Sullivan's Architecture and the City *(2002); and* Beth Sholom Synagogue: Frank Lloyd Wright and Modern Religious Architecture *(2012) [Department of Art and Art History, Wesleyan University, Middletown, Conn. 06459, jsiry@wesleyan.edu].*

Notes

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1. Frank Lloyd Wright, quoted in Lloyd Lewis, "The New Theatre," *Theatre Arts* 33 (July 1949): 34.
2. On Wright's theater designs, see Wendell Cole, "The Theatre Projects of Frank Lloyd Wright," *Educational Theatre Journal* 12 (March 1960): 86–93; Frieda Estes Bridgeman, "The Development of a Theatre Concept as Reflected in the Theatrical Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, 1971); and Richard Joncas, "Buildings for the Arts," in *Frank Lloyd Wright and the Living City*, ed. David De Long (Milan: Vitra Design Museum and Skira Editore, 1998), chap. 5, 131–35.
3. See Joseph M. Siry, "Wright's Baghdad Opera House and Gammage Auditorium: In Search of Regional Modernity," *Art Bulletin* 87 (June 2005): 265–311.
4. Frank Lloyd Wright to John Rosenfield and Paul Baker, October 5, 1955, fiche id. no. D104E08, the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives (The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York) (hereafter FLWA).
5. Lee Simonson, "Some A, B, C's of Theatre Architecture," *Architectural Record* 67 (May 1930): 447. See also idem, "Basic Theater Planning," *Architectural Forum* 57 (September 1932): 185–93. Wright noted "the able Lee Simonson" among his supporters at a New York meeting in January 1931 to protest Wright's exclusion from designing for Chicago's upcoming Century of Progress exhibition of 1933. Frank Lloyd Wright, *An Autobiography* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1932), in *Frank Lloyd Wright: Collected Writings*, ed. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, 5 vols. (New York: Rizzoli, 1992–95), vol. 2, *1930–1932* (1992), 358.
6. Simonson, "Some A, B, C's of Theatre Architecture," 447.
7. On this movement toward regional playhouses, see Kenneth Macgowan, *Footlights across America: Towards a National Theater* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1929). On the conversion of urban theaters to movie houses, see Robert A. M. Stern, Gregory Gilmartin, and Thomas Mellins, *New York 1930: Architecture and Urbanism between the Two World Wars* (New York: Rizzoli, 1987), 259–62.
8. Joseph M. Siry, *Beth Sholom Synagogue: Frank Lloyd Wright and Modern Religious Architecture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), chap. 3, 105–54.
9. See James L. Highlander, "An Historical Study of the New Theatre and the Robertson Players of Chicago, 1906–8" (master's thesis, University of Illinois, 1952). Wright invited artists in many fields, including Robertson, to "A Symposium on Art," a special meeting of Unity Church's Fellowship Club, the first major event held in Unity Temple's social hall, Unity House. See "Fellowship Club," *Oak Leaves* (Oak Park, Ill.), February 29, 1908, 3, 6–7; and Joseph M. Siry, *Unity Temple: Frank Lloyd Wright and Architecture for Liberal Religion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 168–69.
10. "Tribute by Frank Lloyd Wright," *Oak Leaves*, December 14, 1907, 3, 18. Among the less remembered playwrights that Wright mentioned, Gerhart Hauptmann of Germany (1862–1946), known primarily for his naturalistic plays, won the 1912 Nobel Prize. His internationally best-known play, *The Weavers* (1892), depicts a proletarian uprising. Édouard Jules Henri Pailleron (1834–1899) was a French poet and dramatist known for his comedies about social customs. Björnstjerne Björnson (1832–1910), a Norwegian novelist, poet, and playwright who sought to revive the literary language and character of Norway, received the 1903 Nobel Prize. The Italian poet, playwright, and librettist Giuseppe Giacosa (1847–1906) wrote dramas, set in Piedmont, that addressed contemporary bourgeois values. José de Echegaray y Eizaguirre of Spain (1832–1916), who was also a mathematician, civil engineer, and politician, shared the 1904 Nobel Prize. His plays were known for their focus on dilemmas of morality and duty.
11. Anita de Campi, "Chicago to See First Stage Craft Exhibit," *Chicago Tribune*, December 21, 1914, 17. The exhibit had been planned for the previous summer but had been delayed due to the start of World War I in August. By December 1911 Wright had an office in Orchestra Hall across Michigan Avenue, and he exhibited work with the Chicago Architectural Club at the Art Institute in April 1914. In these months Wright was mainly occupied with the completion of Midway Gardens in Chicago, which opened on June 27, before the murders of Wright's lover and companion Mamah Borthwick (as she was known by her maiden name after her divorce from Edwin Cheney in 1911) and six others at Taliesin on August 15. See Anthony Alofsin, *Frank Lloyd Wright: The Lost Years 1910–1922: A Study in Influence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), app. A, chronology, 308–9. On Craig, see Christopher Innes, *Edward Gordon Craig: A Vision of Theatre* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1998).
12. Robert Speaight, *William Poel and the Elizabethan Revival* (London: William Heineman, 1954).

13. George C. Izenour, *Theater Design*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 51, 69.
14. Kenneth Macgowan, *The Theater of Tomorrow* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1921), 38–42.
15. "New Imperial Hotel Is a Dream—a Sermon in Brick and Stone," *Japan Advertiser*, April 12, 1922, 8.
16. Ibid. See Earle Ernst, *The Kabuki Theatre* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), 60–61; and Suwa Haruo, "The Birth of Hanamichi," trans. Samuel L. Leiter, *Theatre Research International* (London) 24, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 24–41.
17. On Wright in Europe, see Alofsin, *Wright: The Lost Years*, 29–62.
18. On Chicago's Little Theatre, see Maurice Browne, *Too Late to Lament: An Autobiography* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1956).
19. Oral Memoirs of Paul Baker and Kitty Baker, July 25, 1990, Baker Interview no. 3, p. 47, the Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, available online at http://digitalcollections.baylor.edu/cdm/ref/collection/buioh/id/6736. On the Barnsdall theater, see Kathryn Smith, *Frank Lloyd Wright, Hollyhock House, and Olive Hill: Buildings and Projects for Aline Barnsdall* (New York: Rizzoli, 1992), 24–37, 205–10; Alofsin, *Wright: The Lost Years*, 241–49; Norman M. Karasick and Dorothy K. Karasick, *The Oilman's Daughter: A Biography of Aline Barnsdall* (Encino, Calif.: Carleston, 1993), 69–86; Alice Friedman, "No Ordinary House: Frank Lloyd Wright, Aline Barnsdall, and Hollyhock House," in *Women and the Making of the Modern House: A Social and Architectural History* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1998), 32–63; and Siry, *Beth Sholom Synagogue*, 115–34.
20. Wright, quoted in Norman Bel Geddes, *Miracle in the Evening*, ed. William Kelley (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1960), 162.
21. "Miss Barnsdall Reveals Conception of the Theater," *Los Angeles Times*, January 27, 1927, A13.
22. See R. W. Sexton and B .F. Betts, *American Theatres of Today* (New York: Architectural Book Publishing, 1927).
23. Wright to Norman Bel Geddes, December 14, 1929, fiche id. no. G005E08, FLWA. See most recently Laura McGuire, "Theaters," in *Norman Bel Geddes Designs America*, ed. Donald Albrecht (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2012), 172–83.
24. On Urban's theater, see Randolph Carter and Robert Cole, *Joseph Urban* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1992), 200–210.
25. "The 'Totaltheater,' Proposed by Walter Gropius, Architect (1927)," *Architectural Record* 67 (May 1930): 494. See Izenour, *Theater Design*, 95–96.
26. Frank Lloyd Wright, *Autobiography* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pierce, 1943), bk. 5, "Form," in *Frank Lloyd Wright: Collected Writings*, vol. 4, *1939–1949* (1994), 192.
27. On cinema projects for Tokyo and Barnsdall, see Masami Tanigawa, *Measured Drawing: Frank Lloyd Wright in Japan* (Tokyo: Graphic Co., 1980), 66–75; Alofsin, *Wright: The Lost Years*, 256–59; and Smith, *Wright, Hollyhock House*, 112, 116–17. On the Michigan City project, see Yukio Futagawa and Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, eds., *Frank Lloyd Wright*, vol. 5, *Monograph 1924–1936* (Tokyo: A.D.A. Edita, 1985), 104–5; and Richard Joncas, "'Pure Form': The Origins and Development of Frank Lloyd Wright's Non-Rectilinear Geometry" (PhD diss., Stanford University, 1992), 318–21.
28. Frank Lloyd Wright, *The Disappearing City* (New York: William Farquar Payson, 1932), in *Frank Lloyd Wright: Collected Writings*, vol. 2, 106.
29. "Woodstock Playhouse Plans Early Opening: West Point Players, First Attraction," *Woodstock Press*, May 23, 1930; "Playhouse Is Destroyed by Fire Wednesday Night," ibid., March 27, 1931; and "Woodstock Playhouse May Be Possible This Summer," ibid., June 5, 1931. See Siry, *Beth Sholom Synagogue*, 138–54.
30. Wright to J. P. McEvoy, August 31, 1931, fiche id. no. M024C02, FLWA. See "Frank Lloyd Wright J. P. McEvoy Guest," *Woodstock Press*, August 7, 1931. On McEvoy (b. 1895), see "J. P. McEvoy Dead; Author-Humorist," *New York Times*, August 9, 1958, 13. McEvoy later wrote to Wright about designs of three dwellings for himself: "I have known and admired your genius for thirty years and I have always promised myself the supreme satisfaction of living in one of your houses." McEvoy to Wright, May 8, 1946, fiche id. no. M150A05, FLWA. In 1932–33, McEvoy's group asked architect Frederick Kiesler (1890–1965) for plans for a summer theater and community center, known as the Universal Theater. See "Les projets de théâtre de Frederick J. Kiesler," *Aujourd'hui, Art et Architecture* 3 (May 1958): 84–85; Harold Clurman, "Eight Ideal Theaters," *Industrial Design* 9 (April 1962): 40–47; and *Fifty Years of Theater: Woodstock Playhouse, 1975* (Woodstock, N.Y.: Woodstock Playhouse, 1975), 4.
31. Joncas, "'Pure Form,'" 211–12, notes that Wright first used the thirty–sixty degree or reflex angle for an entire structure in his unbuilt project for a "Fir Tree" cabin in Lake Tahoe, of 1922. On diagonality in this project, see Neil A. Levine, *The Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 166–72.
32. Wright to McEvoy, August 27, 1931, fiche id. no. M024C02, FLWA.
33. Frank Lloyd Wright, "Concerning the Design for the New Theatre," Taliesin West, January 19, 1949, in *The New Theatre* (Hartford: [New Theatre Corporation?], 1949), n.p.
34. Ibid.
35. Wright, quoted in Eugene Lewis, "Theaters' 'Picture' Stage Obsolete, Architect Says," *Dallas Times Herald*, August 9, 1955.
36. Wright's decision was noted in Philip Johnson to Heinrich Klumb, October 5, 1931, fiche id. no. J013D03, FLWA, quoted in Terence Riley, *The International Style: Exhibition 15 and the Museum of Modern Art* (New York: Rizzoli, 1989), 207.
37. McEvoy to Wright, September 21, 1931, fiche id. no. M024D07, FLWA.
38. Wright, "Form," in *Frank Lloyd Wright: Collected Writings*, vol. 4, 161.
39. Curtis M. Besinger, *Working with Mr. Wright: What It Was Like* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 12.
40. W. Kelly Oliver, "The Wright Taliesin Theatres," in *Dallas Theater Center*, ed. Leonard E. B. Andrews (Dallas: [Dallas Theater Center?], 1960), n.p.
41. Frank Lloyd Wright, "The Taliesin Fellowship" (1933), in *Frank Lloyd Wright: Collected Writings*, vol. 3, *1931–1939* (1994), 165.
42. On the Wrights and Gurdjieff, whose influence at Taliesin predated his first visit in 1934 and continued after his death in 1949, see Roger Friedland and Harold Zellman, *The Fellowship: The Untold Story of Frank Lloyd Wright and the Taliesin Fellowship* (New York: Regan/Harper Collins, 2006), esp. 58, 70. Taliesin apprentice Kamal Amin, *Reflections from the Shining Brow: My Years with Frank Lloyd Wright and Olgivanna Lazovich* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Fithian Press, 2004), 89–90, 109–12, notes that the pavilion at Taliesin West was for demonstrations of Gurdjieff movements, which a Taliesin group performed at the Dallas Theater Center in 1961. Critic John Rosenfield reviewed the event.
43. Wright, "Form," in *Frank Lloyd Wright: Collected Writings*, vol. 4, 146–47.
44. Siry, *Beth Sholom Synagogue*, chaps. 4, 5.
45. "Wright's Hartford Theater Shown in a New York City Museum Exhibit," *Architectural Forum* 90 (May 1949): 162–63.
46. "Corporation to Be Formed to Build and Operate the New Theatre near Hartford, Connecticut," n.d., fiche id. no. N054B06, FLWA. Price's correspondence about the Hartford project, which is largely duplicated in the Frank Lloyd Wright Archives, is now in Avery Library, Columbia University, New York.
47. *The New Theatre*, n.p.
48. The featured speaker was architectural historian Henry-Russell Hitchcock, who had prepared the first complete scholarly survey of Wright's life's work, *In the Nature of Materials* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1942), wherein the Woodstock project was first noted.
49. "'New Theatre' Model Shown at Luncheon," *Hartford Times*, January 28, 1949, quoted in Bridgeman, "Development of a Theatre Concept," 92.
50. Wright, quoted in T. H. Parker, "'New Theatre' Described by Architect," *Hartford Times*, November 19, 1948, quoted in Bridgeman, "Development of a Theatre Concept," 94.
51. Paton Price to Wright, March 17, 1950, 3, fiche id. no. N060A03, FLWA.
52. "Museum Exhibits Model and Four Original Color Renderings by Frank Lloyd Wright of His Design for a New Theatre for Hartford," press release, Museum of Modern Art, New York, April 1, 1949, fiche id. no. M197A10, FLWA.
53. Frank Lloyd Wright, "Concerning the Design for the New Theatre," quoted in L. Lewis, "The New Theatre," 34.
54. Cole, "Theatre Projects of Frank Lloyd Wright," 91.
55. *The New Theatre*, n.p.
56. Frank Lloyd Wright (lecture, School of Design, North Carolina State College [later University], Raleigh, May 16, 1950), fiche id. no. N060D10, FLWA.
57. Price to Wright, January 11, 1950, a plan of the site, 601 feet east-west and 420 feet north-south, fiche id. no. N059A07–N059A10, FLWA.
58. Paton Price to Eugene Masselink, May 6, 1950, fiche id. no. N060D07, FLWA.
59. Wright, quoted in "Court Bars Referendum," *Hartford Courant*, September 13, 1950, quoted in Bridgeman, "Development of a Theatre Concept," 103.
60. Wright, quoted in "Down with the East," *Time* 56 (September 25, 1950): 77.
61. Price to Wright, August 28, 1951, fiche id. no. P117E03, FLWA.

62. Price to Wright, December 5, 1950, fiche id. no. N063B03, and April 11, 1955, fiche id. no. P141B09, FLWA. After Wright presented the Hartford design in New York, John Rosenfield had written: "Naturally I drooled when I read of your Hartford Theater. Are there any other details not reported from your New York talk to architects and showmen? Would there be a chance for me to run a sketch in color? We are planning a big special edition on theaters of the future and your ideas should dominate." Rosenfield to Wright, November 26, 1948, fiche id. no. D070E07, FLWA.

63. John Rosenfield's articles include "47-Story, Windowless Dallas Hotel Designed by Celebrated Architect," *Dallas Morning News*, July 28, 1946, 1, 3; "Dallas' Dream Hotel Soon Coming to Life," ibid., August 11, 1946, 1; and "Wright Bares Lacy Hotel Plans," ibid., June 22, 1947, sec. 5, p. 1. Of the project, Rosenfield wrote after Lacy's death: "My interest was only in what appeared to be the long overdue arrival of Frank Lloyd Wright's genius on the face of our not so fair city." Rosenfield to Wright, October 19, 1948, fiche id. no. R063C09, FLWA.

64. Rosenfield to Wright, June 2, 1947, fiche id. no. R055D09, FLWA.

65. John Rosenfield, "City Cultural Pivot Came about 1920," *Dallas Morning News*, February 5, 1956, pt. 7, p. 38.

66. John Rosenfield, "Not Shows to See but Halls to Play," *Dallas Morning News*, March 6, 1956, pt. 1, p. 4.

67. John Rosenfield, "Modern Playhouses and the New Drama," *Dallas Morning News*, May 22, 1957, pt. 2, p. 6.

68. An exhibition of drawings and models issuing from the Ford Foundation Program for Theater Design, published as *The Ideal Theater: Eight Concepts* (New York: American Federation of Arts, 1962), included projects for arena stage theaters.

69. Margo Jones to Frank Lloyd Wright, December 21, 1950, fiche id. no. J134D08, FLWA. See Jones, *Theatre-in-the-Round* (New York: Rinehart, 1951); Don B. Wilmeth, "The Margo Jones Theatre," *Southern Speech Journal* 32 (1967): 188–95; and June B. Larsen, "Margo Jones: A Life in the Theatre" (PhD diss., City University of New York, 1982).

70. "Wynne, Stewart Named Co-chairmen of Fund Drive," *Dallas Morning News*, April 13, 1959. On the Dallas theater, see John Rosenfield, "Theatre, Dallas," *Theatre Arts* 43 (December 1959): 71–74; Andrews, *Dallas Theater Center*; "FLLW's Dallas Theater," *Architectural Forum* 112 (March 1960): 130–35; "A Theater by Wright: Kalita Humphreys Theater of the Dallas Theater Center," *Architectural Record* 127 (March 1960): 161–66; Bernard S. Rosenblatt, "The Kalita Humphreys Theater of the Dallas Theater Center: A Frank Lloyd Wright Theater in Theory and Practice" (master's thesis, Stanford University, 1962); *Dallas Theater Center* (Dallas: Dallas Theater Center, 1969); Joyce B. Cory, *The Dallas Theater Center: An Idea That Was Big Enough* (Dallas: Dallas Theater Center, 1980); Robert Eason, *Dallas Theater Center: The Early Years, 1955–1982* (Dallas: Dallas Public Library, 1996); and Ann Abernathy et al., "Kalita Humphreys Theater Designation Report," Landmarks Commission, City of Dallas, 2005.

71. See "Big D, Little A, Double L-A-S Spells Dallas," *Theatre Arts* 42 (December 1958): 44; Eason, *Dallas Theater Center*, 4–5; and John Rosenfield, "The Theater Center and Baylor's Baker," *Dallas Morning News*, March 6, 1955, pt. 7, p. 7.

72. See recently Robert Flynn and Eugene McKinney, *Paul Baker and the Integration of Abilities* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 2003).

73. See Arthur Jensen Rogers, "The Actor-Audience Space Relationship in Theatres" (master's thesis, Rice Institute, Houston, 1960); and idem, "Paul Baker and Theater Architecture," in Flynn and McKinney, *Paul Baker*, 28–41.

74. Paul Baker, "Dallas Theater Center: Statement of Planning," n.d., box 171, folder 13, Dallas Theater Center Archives, Dallas Public Library (hereafter DTCA).

75. John Rosenfield, "New Theater Center Has Dream Doodle," *Dallas Morning News*, April 14, 1955, pt. 2, p. 12.

76. Rosenfield, "City Cultural Pivot Came about 1920," pt. 7, p. 38.

77. "Studio Theatre—Baylor University," *Theatre Arts* 25 (July 1941): 547; and Rogers, "Baker and Theater Architecture," 30–31.

78. Bea Handel to Waldo Stewart, November 6, 1959, box 177, folder 2, DTCA.

79. On the park's origins, see George E. Kessler, *A City Plan for Dallas: Report of Park Board* (Dallas: Southwestern, 1911), 31.

80. John Rosenfield, "New Theater Center Gets Handsome Site," *Dallas Morning News*, July 28, 1955, pt. 2, p. 8. In 1951 Eric Mendelsohn had prepared an unbuilt design on this slope for Temple Emanu-El. See Mendelsohn, "My Approach to Building a Modern Synagogue," *Architectural Forum* 98 (April 1953): 119–22.

81. Undated document, box 177, folder 5: DTC Souvenir Books Drafts, DTCA.

82. Oral Memoirs of Paul Baker and Kitty Baker, Baker Interview no. 3, p. 48.

83. Minutes of Meeting of Executive Committee, Dallas Theater Center, September 22, 1955, box 163, folder 22, DTCA.

84. Robert Stecker, quoted in Alva Senzek, "Dallas Theater Center," n.d., box 175, folder 3, DTCA. A manager of Sanger's department store in Dallas, Stecker was elected first president of the theater center's board; he died twelve days before the theater opened in December 1959. See "R. D. Stecker, Manager of Sanger's," *Dallas Morning News*, May 6, 1955, pt. 3, p. 18; "R. D. Stecker Re-Elected Theater Head," ibid., March 28, 1957, pt. 1, p. 20; "Center President to Push Work on Theater Project," ibid., March 3, 1959, sec. 3, p. 11; "Robert D. Stecker," ibid., December 18, 1959, sec. 4, p. 2; and "Theater Center Will Continue Plans for Opening First Play," ibid., December 18, 1959, sec. 2, p. 11.

85. Paul Baker, interview by Richard Schechner, "Flexible Theatrical Space: An Interview with Paul Baker," *Architecture/Environment* 12 (1968): 102.

86. See also, for example, drawing no. 5514.031, FLWA.

87. John Rosenfield, "The Passing Show: Wright Gives Hint of Theater Concept," *Dallas Morning News*, October 18, 1955, pt. 1, p. 18.

88. "Paul Baker's List," appended to Robert Stecker to Wright, December 16, 1955, box 163, folder 11, DTCA.

89. "Dallas Theater Center," September 25, 1957, box 167, folder 5, DTCA.

90. Paul Baker, interview by Bernard Rosenblatt, June 14, 1962, in Rosenblatt, "The Kalita Humphreys Theater," 10.

91. Wright to Paul M. Raigorodsky, chairman, Building Committee of the Dallas Theater Center, January 29, 1958, box 169, folder 8, DTCA.

92. William Short, Memorandum, October 3, 1957, box 101082, folder: General Correspondence: Wright, Frank Lloyd; December 1956–March 1959, Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation Archives, New York, cited in Angela Starita, "Keeping Faith with an Idea: A Time Line of the Guggenheim Museum, 1943–59," in *The Guggenheim: Frank Lloyd Wright and the Making of the Modern Museum* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 2009), 204.

93. Baker, interview by Joyce Cory, summer 1966, in Cory, *Dallas Theater Center*, 43.

94. Wright to Paul Baker, January 29, 1958, box 169, folder 6, DTCA.

95. Frank Lloyd Wright, "Regarding the New Theater," January 30, 1958, box 169, folder 8, DTCA.

96. Ibid. The elevator on stage left was installed in November 1959, and Baker contended that Wright, who had died the previous April, never knew of it. Baker, interview by Cory, in Cory, *Dallas Theater Center*, 45.

97. John Rosenfield, "Sakini Would Also Be Hamlet," *Dallas Morning News*, March 4, 1956, pt. 7, p. 1.

98. Wright to Baker, January 29, 1958, box 169, folder 6, DTCA.

99. Baker? "Dallas Theater Center," September 25, 1957, box 167, folder 5, DTCA.

100. Wright to Baker, January 29, 1958, DTCA. Wright here likely alludes to Jesus turning the money changers out of the Temple in Jerusalem, as recounted in Matthew 21:12–13 and John 2:13–16.

101. Wright, quoted in John Rosenfield, "Theatre, Dallas," *Theatre Arts* 43 (December 1959): 74.

102. Henry C. Beck to Paul M. Raigorodsky, August 15, 1958, box 169, folder 6; and Wright to Robert D. Stecker, September 16, 1958, box 169, folder 8, DTCA.

103. Frank Lloyd Wright, "The New Theater for the Dallas Theater Center, Specifications," 36, 41–42, 44, box 167, folder 10, DTCA.

104. Ibid.

105. Abernathy et al., "Kalita Humphreys Theater Designation Report," 12–13.

106. Kelly Oliver, quoted in Senzek, "Dallas Theater Center," DTCA.

107. Theater engineer George C. Izenour to Paul Baker, February 16, 1959, box 174, folder 5, DTCA.

108. "What Holds Up the Proscenium?" *Engineering News-Record* 161 (September 11, 1958): 23.

109. Rosenblatt, "The Kalita Humphreys Theater," 26.

110. Oral Memoirs of Paul Baker and Kitty Baker, Baker Interview no. 3, p. 47.

111. "Wheels Literally Turn Now at Theater Center," *Dallas Morning News*, December 24, 1959, sec. 3, p. 4.

112. Harwell H. Harris, "The Architecture," in Andrews, *Dallas Theater Center*.

113. Rual Askew, "Creative Goal within Reach," *Dallas Morning News*, August 2, 1959, sec. 5, p. 4.

114. "Dallas Theater Twin Arts," *Christian Science Monitor*, December 28, 1959, Pacific edition, 13, col. 4.

115. Likely in the 1980s, these "quick stairs" were decked over to create platforms for additional loge seating. Abernathy et al., "Kalita Humphreys Theater Designation Report," 3, 17.

116. Baker, interview by Rosenblatt, in Rosenblatt, "The Kalita Humphreys Theater," 13.

117. Wright, quoted in E. Lewis, "Theaters' 'Picture' Stage Obsolete."

118. Wright, quoted in Rual Askew, "Theater Center's Officials and Mr. Wright Get Down to Cases," *Dallas Morning News*, August 9, 1955.

119. Bel Geddes, *Miracle in the Evening*, 164.

120. Paul Baker, quoted in Schechner, "Flexible Theatrical Space," 102.

121. Oral Memoirs of Paul Baker and Kitty Baker, Baker Interview no. 3, p. 47.

122. Oliver, "The Wright Taliesin Theaters."

123. Rosenblatt, "The Kalita Humphreys Theater," 51. The drawing (Fig. 23), datable to 1959, is in the style of such interior perspectives as that of the Gammage Auditorium (dated to 1960, after Wright's death), made by his successors, the Frank Lloyd Wright Associated Architects, later Taliesin Associated Architects. See Siry, "Wright's Baghdad Opera House," 287, fig. 26.

124. John Rosenfield, "Play Still the Thing When Judging," *Dallas Morning News*, January 3, 1960, sec. 5, p. 1. Use of the stage's sections was noted in "Center Opens Doors Sunday with 'Time,'" *Dallas Times Herald*, December 27, 1959.

125. Kenneth Latimer, e-mail to author, January 12, 2013. A member of Baker's company, Latimer was the stage manager for the opening production.

126. Rosenblatt, "The Kalita Humphreys Theater," 55–56.

127. Ron Wilcox, interview by Joyce Cory, June 27, 1967, quoted in Cory, *Dallas Theater Center*, 85, 87.

128. Frank Lloyd Wright, notations on drawing (Fig. 15) labeled "View from Northeast. The New Theatre—Dallas Texas," dated November 20, 1955, FLWA, drawing no. 5514.026.

129. "Wheels Literally Turn Now at Theater Center," *Dallas Morning News*, December 24, 1959, sec. 3, p. 4.

130. Mary Sue Jones, interview by Joyce Cory, July 31, 1967, and Paul Baker, interview by Cory, June 29, 1967, quoted in Cory, *Dallas Theater Center*, 87.

131. Latimer to author, January 12, 2013.

132. Oliver, "The Wright Taliesin Theaters."

133. Frank Lloyd Wright, "The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum," dated June 1958, in *The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum* (New York: Horizon Press, 1960), in *Frank Lloyd Wright: Collected Writings*, vol. 5, *1949–1959* (1995), 245, 247.

134. Charlton Heston, quoted in "New Dallas Theatre Center Praised for Design, Ideas," *San Angelo Standard Times*, December 27, 1959.

135. Charlton Heston, quoted in "Center Opens Doors Sunday with 'Time.'"

136. Wright to George Cohen, January 21, 1957, fiche id. no. G173A02, FLWA.

137. Wright to Medley Whelpley, February 2, 1956, fiche id. no. G160E03, FLWA.

138. Lawson Taite, "Paul Baker 1911–2009: Maverick Had a Big Role in Local Arts," *Dallas Morning News*, October 27, 2009.

139. Abernathy et al., "Kalita Humphreys Theater Designation Report," 3.

140. Lawson Taite, "Enduring, Flexible Theater Is Leaving Stage," *Dallas Morning News*, April 10, 2005.

141. Lawson Taite, "Old Flame Returns to Arts District Theater," *Dallas Morning News*, September 20, 1998.

142. Wright to Margo Jones, December 28, 1950, fiche id. no. J135A01, FLWA.

143. Taite, "Old Flame Returns to Arts District Theater."

144. Ibid.

145. David Dillon, "Vertical Theatrics," *Architectural Record* 198 (February 2010): 61–62.