SPECIAL ATTRIBUTES OF REGIONAL THEATER

Regional theater has attributes which makes it different from other types of theater. The single most important realization that has emerged from our work is that a regional theater is a community of people who come together to produce theatrical performances. This community, like other communities, is constantly changing. The sense of identity of the regional theater and the space and location it identifies remain constant, even though the people in this theatrical community may change from time to time. One might say that the stronger this sense of identity between people and place, the closer a regional theater comes to fulfilling the essential attributes which regional theater seeks to support. The physical form of this relatively new theater type is still emerging.

This document, which has resulted from a collaboration between architects and people dedicated to producing regional theater, presents a profile of the regional theater which is distinctly different from other theaters. In the literature of theater architecture one finds a great focus on the performing space. In regional theater performing space is only one of three very important categories of space needed by the theater company. These other kinds of space have, until now, not been clearly identified. Consideration of the design of these spaces, therefore has been mostly ad hoc. This section of our report has been divided into three parts to articulate as clearly as possible the three physical elements of regional theater. The three categories of space we will discuss are: Performance Space, Support Space and Communal Space.
PERFORMANCE SPACE

Traditionally, concern with theater design has focused on the performance space—the place where actors perform and the audience witnesses the performance. Performance space has evolved over time. Its genealogy extends at least as far back as classical Greece where a performance space was created with wooden bleachers set in an open area. Further development saw the wooden bleachers evolve to beautifully sited stone amphitheaters. Still later, these were to be covered by a velarium, - a canvas awning. As an architectural form, the theater disappeared with the decline of Rome and did not emerge again in Europe until the late 1500's. From the Renaissance to the present there has been a wide range of theaters. They have attempted to suit the needs of different cultures, widely differing artistic forms and architectural capabilities of the moment.

Regional theater can be viewed as a part of the general evolution of the theater. It is indeed possible to find every conceivable configuration of stage and seating, serving the performance of regional theater. As more regional theaters have an opportunity to build, the special characteristics of regional theater are gradually emerging.

PROGRAM AND PERFORMING SPACES

The kind of house or mix of houses, establishes the essential physical character of a theater. For that reason the critical question for a regional theater company to ask itself is whether or not performances are preferred in proscenium, thrust, or arena settings. The answer to that question obviously has answers in the history of the company, the expectations of the audience, and the artistic goals of the company. Some companies have created a complex which can accommodate all three types of stages with varying seating capacities. Then the question becomes which type of theater, if any, will be used as the "main" stage?
Obviously few regional theaters have had the luxury of asking that question. But an important issue does emerge from this. That is the need that most regional theaters feel to have both a major performing space and other space, which can be used for performances for smaller audiences even if it is ad hoc. This smaller performing space is where experiments occur - it is the regional theater's laboratory.

As the regional theater has become more complex with various performing options, there have appeared four distinct arrangements of the regional theater complex.

Clustered Stages  Multiple stages form a complex in one location. Most often two sometimes three stages are identified as the Theater. One stage may be regarded by the public as the primary stage and may be the setting for the largest number of performances. The stages ideally share a roof, a lobby, box office, etc. Most newly built regional theaters have aspired to this model.

Dispersed Stages  A main stage serves as the principal performing space which the audience and public identify as The Theater, and which, in fact, forms the major portion of the company's artistic program. There may be other performing spaces either within the theater or at other locations. They are regarded by the company and public as an adjunct to the Main Stage. Most regional theaters fit into this category.
Performance Center

The third model, is the theater which is within an Art Center. In this case the theater can identify with a larger segment of the arts-going public. Rarely in this situation does the theater own its facility and certain functions are often shared with other artistic endeavors. In many cases the theater has less independence, flexibility, and self destiny. Building a new regional theater in this context usually means the theater's objectives will have to come second to the larger concerns of the Center. This is not a model most regional theaters aspire to, but is often a marriage of convenience.

Flexible Theaters

The idea of a totally flexible theater seemed for a time to be an answer to resolving the variety of productions which became imaginable for contemporary theater. The flexible theater was one which would allow different arrangements of stage and auditorium as productions might demand. Most regional theaters which have tried flexible seating in houses over 200 seats have found it very expensive to build, to maintain and to operate. Even in smaller houses the cost of moving seating between productions is a formidable production cost. For that reason the much touted "flexible" theater remains a dream except for a few University based laboratory theaters.

Of the four models, most regional theaters fit the dispersed stages category. However, clustered stages offer the clearest advantages to regional theater companies. Much of the rest of what we have to say will serve to illustrate why.

THE QUESTION OF STYLE

The question of house style cannot be separated from company style, and it might be more accurate to say director's style. Although there are probably more, we know of only two theaters (other than some within Arts Centers) which are not the brainchild of a director or a group of directors within a company. Theaters get built because of the determination and energy of these people and invariably they have a very clear vision of the theater they want.
Obviously the basic stage type most affects what a company can perform. It would be an error to suggest that directors and other company personnel should not affect the style of the theater in this regard. Care should be taken, however, that style, in the best sense of the word, is not replaced by capriciousness, either on the part of the director(s) or the architect. Those concerned with theater design should be forewarned that the most fundamental issues of theater design, i.e., seating configuration, circulation, sightlines, acoustics, etc. should remain paramount. Those are the issues we will discuss.

A most irksome question which often pits directors against architects is the issue of whether the building is conceived in a passive or an active role. That is, does the building serve to affect the tone, character and style of a performance or is the building benign, simply a curtain against which the performance takes place? Both approaches have produced good theaters. The architect and director are in for a miserable experience, however, if a clear understanding is not reached regarding an approach upon which they mutually agree.

While many of the performance characteristics of regional theater apply to all other theater types, i.e., sight lines, acoustics, seating dimensions, entrance and exit requirements, etc., one attribute is commonly recognized as being most important and unique to the artistic goals of regional theater. That attribute is "intimacy", the special quality of space that binds the performer and the audience together.

**INTIMACY:**

The notion of intimacy is culturally based and also related to the psycho-physiological characteristics of the individual (Kuller, 1977). To achieve an intimate theater, one must be aware of both phenomena. The desire for intimacy in regional theater has many bases, ranging from the type of material to be performed, to the development of an atmosphere which is different from the more impersonal opera house, concert hall, movie/vaudeville palace or high school auditorium where so much theater is performed. In this regard, regional theater is a closer kin to off-Broadway theater than it is to the larger house, large production Broadway "show". But, sheer size of a house is not the lone determinant of intimacy. Two other characteristics stand out as more important subjective determinants. They are the focus of the audience on the stage and the distance of the actor from the audience.
The Greek theater remains the model for a centrally focused theater. The seats, arranged in a semicircle, focus on the central point which generates the arc of the circle. As Vitruvius noted, not only is this center a visual focus, it coincides with the nature of the transmission of the sounds made by the human voice.

The stage of the early Renaissance developed by Serlio, Palladio and others was modeled after the Greek plan. As the fascination with scenic design and false perspective grew, and as productions became more and more elaborate and less dependent upon words for affect, the stage evolved into a frame for a "moving picture". Cinematography was to make the proscenium, developed during the Renaissance, a primary fixture of the multi-use movie palace/vaudeville theater. These developments certainly testify to the correlation that exists between the physical space of a theater and the character of its productions.

Yet, architectural space per se, i.e., walls, ceiling and floor, do not alone decide the degree of focus. There is a certain cumulative affect in a theater where every seat focuses on the same spot of the stage which makes that experience much more intense. Some people would argue that a central focus on the stage is indeed a handicap for the director, who might wish to move the action about, and that proper directing, staging, set design and lighting can produce a focus anywhere. But the same argument can be used for defending an arrangement with a central focus. A good director can move the focus about. Here again we have a fundamental basis for disagreement between architect and director if an early understanding is not reached (For further elaboration of both sides of the argument see Pierce 1968 and Hardy 1968).
We believe there is little doubt that if there is a desire for intimacy, then a central focus theater is most desirable. Every seat, whether occupied or not, is oriented to the same spot on the stage. Thus, every seat has not only a similar relationship to the stage, but a similar relationship to every other seat in the house, democratizing the audience. (A term we will elaborate upon further in later sections).

Another variable in establishing a sense of intimacy is distance. The perceptual abilities of the human being, especially visual and aural capabilities, are here most important. The human form can be detected as far away as 4,000 feet. But it is not until a person is 80 feet away that we can recognize them, and only at 45 feet can we see a person's face clearly.

Looking at the facial contortions and the mouthing of words of performers taken from the stage and filmed for silent movies, we become aware of how much acting has changed, especially the acting associated with intimate theater. Acting is much more subtle, and as Arthur Miller has said, "Drama has become more and more a first-person thing."

We inquired of those engaged in creating new theater what they considered to be the maximum distance between actor and audience. Invariably, their response fell around 45 or 50 feet, approximately fifteen rows of seats at optimum dimensions. While all these recommendations were based on intuition, 45 feet is the maximum distance at which a face can be seen clearly.

There is strong evidence that physical arousal is actually related to distance. Therefore the sense of intimacy between audience and actor, for those
sitting within the 45-foot range, is quite real. Empirical evidence is provided by Kuller:

"We are accustomed to observing the eyes and lips of a speaking person. As a rule, speech is emphasized on stage by gestures and movements of a gross motoric nature. Through this they are certainly magnified or amplified just as one through electric means can amplify the voice, but being able to see the actors' faces in detail nevertheless has its particular importance. Direct eye contact may then take place.

"Eye contact has been shown experimentally to be arousing. In one study where electric activity of the brain (EEG) was used to assess arousal, different gaze conditions were compared. When the experimenter looked into the eyes of the subject there was a distinct increase in arousal. If at the same time the experimenter smiled, arousal became even more accentuated. Thus, those who are sitting close enough to be able to distinguish the performer's face in detail have much greater possibilities of being aroused than those who are sitting farther back.

"Even the performers have a message to receive - the reactions of the audience. There should be no doubt that the performer - with hundreds of pairs of eyes facing him - attains an increased arousal. Applause and laughter naturally have a similar effect on the performers as well as on the audience itself. (Kuller, 1977)"

SEATING: There are long-standing traditions associated with theater seating which create several paradoxes for the regional theater. The first is the fact that all seats are not
equal, given their focus and distance relative to the stage. That fact was recognized during the earliest period of theater building. Even in democratic Greece, priests were given seats with greater girth and "in the best location". Seating has since been associated with hierarchical arrangements often associated with social position. This was taken to the extreme during the Italian Renaissance. Opera houses were outfitted with boxes, "where refreshments were served throughout the performance while its occupants socialized, flirted, made love, conducted business and affairs of state and, as they still do, slept from aria through recitative aria" (Izenour, 1977, p. 21). This tradition of a hierarchical arrangement of seats is, of course, still carried on, though not to the extreme. Richard Wagner was responsible for the "democratization of the theater" through his influence on the design of the Bayreuth Restspielhaus in 1876. "He insisted that every spectator in the auditorium should be able to see the stage in a manner unimpeded by the prevailing exigencies of court etiquette, auditorium design precedent or architectural tradition." (Izenour, 1977, p. 48)

The democratization of the theater which Wagner began is a primary goal of regional theater. The obvious goal in the design of seating for a theater, where people go to see the theater, not each other, is to make each seat equally good. The contradiction, of course, is that box office and audience demands are for seats with a price differential, even though every seat in the house should be a good seat. Since seating location is relative, every house will establish its own hierarchy. Sometimes these are not easily predicted, as at the Arena Stage in Washington D.C., where the farthest, most separate and seemingly most exclusive tier of seats were established as boxes, an exclusive connotation. In the end, these proved to be the least popular seats and they were priced accordingly.

Besides being able to see well, comfort is of utmost importance in seating. This is particularly true in regional theater, where it is expected that the audience will return again and again. For this reason, adequate seat dimensions are essential. Seat widths may vary from 20 to 23 inches: 22 inches is preferred. Back-to-back spacing for self-rising seats (all seats should be self-rising) is 36". Anything less than 36" is likely to be noticed by even people of average dimensions during an hour and a half performance where leg movement
is essential for comfort. Anything more than 36" is really not necessary unless the seating is continental (that is, with side aisles only), then seating back-to-back should be 39", using self-rising/retracting pushback seats.

Continental seating has become a very popular form of seating for concert halls and larger theaters, but it is not a good seating arrangement for regional theaters. Continental seating has the advantage of having all aisles located at the edges of the house, thus maximizing optimum seating locations. This also means putting each row of seats at least 3" further apart, giving a greater perceived separation between audience and actor. But a house 15 rows deep using continental seating will have the last row of seats nearly four feet further from the stage. More importantly, the seats will seem to be excessively far apart in a theater which is supposed to seem intimate.

Aisle placement can affect both ease of access and the general ambiance of a theater simply by subdividing a theater into sections. Aisles can also have an effect on the natural division of ticket prices— an aisle being a clear subdivision of one part of the audience from another. Continental and radial seating contribute to the focusing quality of a theater; parallel aisles do not. Crossover aisles, i.e. connecting aisles parallel to the stage, are frequently used to further divide a space, giving access to the house at an intermediate level and helping to provide proper exiting required by fire codes. Crossover aisles, however, place an additional distance between part of the audience and the stage and should be avoided to maintain the greatest sense of intimacy.

Access to seating can be from the stage level, from the top, or somewhere in between. Opinion about which is best is mixed, though there is probably the most concern expressed about having an audience ascend from the stage area to their seating for two reasons. The first reason is the possibility that the stage, props, etc., might be tampered with (thefts of properties from the stage have actually been reported). Secondly, the audience develops a very keen awareness of the actual distance between the stage and their seats, as they must walk away from the stage. Arriving from the top, on the other hand, no matter where you sit you are moving towards the stage to get your seat.

Another consideration in the location of aisles is the evacuation of the house. Evacuation for fire is extremely important and regulated by codes. A fact often forgotten
in designing fire exits is that people's first tendency is to exit the way they came in. Dfispersd entries are likely to serve as the best form of fire exit. Thought should also be given to the simple convenience of people moving from their seats to the lobby during intermission. While intermissions are necessary disruptions, some directors feel they should be kept as short as possible and people queuing to get in and out of seating can add immeasurable time necessary for an intermission. An aisle arrangement where some aisles are continuous from stage to back of house and others are not, gives the greatest ease of access, at the same time minimizing the disruptive visual impact of aisles.

It goes without saying that everyone attending the theater expects an unobstructed view of the stage. But in addition, the audience can rightfully expect to see the entire area in which the performance is staged. Two sight lines are thus affected - the vertical and horizontal. There is a simple means for determining vertical sight lines established by John Scott Russell in 1938 and used almost exclusively since, except that computers now aid in the calculation. The principle of Russell's formulation is that the elevation of each seat is based on the height of the seat front "as it relates to a point on the stage". That point, as Russell saw it, was a fixed focus assumed to be a speaker at center stage standing upright (approximately 5 feet above the elevation of the stage). This formulation has the advantage that it works equally well for sound, and thus many of the conventional rules of thumb for auditorium design are based upon this relationship.

However, depending upon the distance of the speaker from the first row of seats and the relative height of the stage to the auditorium, it is possible to create a situation where the stage floor itself is not visible by the entire audience. What constitutes good auditorium viewing is not necessarily good theater viewing, and as a result we have many stages which have to be raked for practical as well as artistic reasons. For regional theater, where the floor of the stage may frequently be an important focus, the entire audience should have a view of the stage floor. The analogy can be carried further to include views of the entire stage area defined by width, height and depth. Thus, views of the top elevation of the stage area should not be cut off by protruding balconies or railings, and back stage areas should not be cut off by side walls. Russell's formula for sight lines needs to be enlarged to include all areas of the stage.
Balcony seating can be a very reasonable form of seating if Russell’s formula, as we have modified it, is used. Care should be taken not to cut off the sight lines to the top of the stage from underneath the balcony and from the balcony itself by overhanging lighting rigs, etc. When the top of the stage opening is below the horizontal sight line of a person sitting in the balcony, the sense of exaggerated elevation can be extremely disconcerting to the audience. There is the sense that one is looking at the stage in a pit.

The Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis uses both balcony and non-balcony seating and is an excellent place to see the application of Russell’s formula using both types of seating.

Balcony seating has the further advantage of being a convenient way of adding seating in relatively the same volume of space without sacrificing sight lines. This can add to the intimate nature of the theater and can further break down the apparent differences in seating for seat pricing purposes, without greatly sacrificing the quality of seats themselves. Another advantage of a balcony is the division of seats, so that in effect a smaller theater can be created using the lower level of seats only. A disadvantage of balcony seating, of course, is the fact that two lobbies are needed, additional stairs, etc. Some would argue that balcony seating provides greater intimacy because it puts more people closer to performers. Others would argue it inhibits a sense of intimacy because it divides the audience into two parts.

There is one other characteristic of seating which should be mentioned. That is the question of whether or not the stage and seating should be symmetrical or whether they should be asymmetrical, an issue raised earlier as one where director and architect will have to reach agreement. For those who believe the house should have a certain theatrical dynamic before the play begins, the asymmetrical house is a means for achieving this end. But others would argue it should be up to the director, performers, stage and lighting designers, etc., to determine the character of the performance and the house should be neutral. In that case, a symmetrical arrangement is to be desired. For those who cannot decide which is best, it is possible to have it both ways by installing moveable seats in the front and the back of the house. A slight adjustment of the seating can tip the house from being strictly symmetrical to being quite lopsided.
Finally it should be mentioned that capacity itself is an issue. Invariably a reason new theaters are built is to increase capacity. It surprised the research team that none of the theaters examined have been designed to expand in the event that audience numbers grow. The general philosophy we perceived from theaters was that further audience growth, if it occurred, would be in the form of extended programming in second and third stage settings.

To not build in capacity for expansion is to prophecy a static capacity. When growth, say from 200 to 500 seats, was the only means of creating a "proper" theater, there was terrific impetus to grow. But the stimulus to add another 100 seats if the audience grew to that extent is unlikely to stimulate the creation of a completely new theater.

Larger capacities are possible with the maintenance of intimacy if the guidelines already suggested are followed. Not to build in some flexibility for growth strikes us as being shortsighted especially given that the addition of close to a hundred seats can be accomplished with a row or two of seats at the back of the house.

The most important aspect of the stage is its relation to the audience. The extreme situations are the arena, where the audience surrounds the performing area, and the proscenium, where the audience is placed squarely in front of the stage. The thrust stage and its many variations represent the infinite varieties which lie in between these two possibilities. The thrust stage or modified thrust is clearly the type of stage preferred by most regional theaters as their main stage. Once the decision about type of stage is made, the basic character of the house is fairly well-determined.

Another more detailed concern is the separation of the house from the stage and whether it should be or not. The orchestra in the traditional theater separates the house from the stage, as does the elevation of the stage to achieve better sight lines. But in the arena setting, and in the thrust stage, the orchestra is done away with. In several theaters a moat (or gutter) has been used to separate the first row of patrons from the stage so the audience does not get its feet trampled upon or find a performer sitting in their lap. Such separations of stage and audience also provide free space in front of the stage for circulation.
The design of the stage to seating relationship is a critical area where the architect and director(s) must come to agreement. In Cincinnati that relationship was essential to developing a particular character. In the words of the architect... "In the beginning Brooks was opposed to an asymmetrical stage, but we as architects disagreed. Our point was that once you put a performance into a room with an audience, the performance becomes a three-dimensional thing which depends on movement as much as speech. There should be the opportunity to move in all sorts of ways which an asymmetrical stage provides. This led to the decision to surround the stage with a pit giving access at any point on its perimeter, not just from the vomitories. In Brooks' style of production actors and audience do not intermix - he thinks this demeans the actor. He wants actors to be larger-than-life-sized people. This was further reason for cutting the stage off from the audience." (Hardy 19) The Cincinnati Playhouse under another director has recently had the front rows of seating modified to make the house more symmetrical.

In some theaters the moat has given stage designers and directors great anguish. It is often filled in with false staging if a strong sense of intimacy is attempted. A stage which has the fewest built-in architectural restrictions is the one which ultimately gives the director and the set designer an ability to fix the relation between actor and audience in ways they feel most appropriate to a particular production.

The size of the stage or stage area and its configuration is another consideration which greatly affects the character of the house. In a proscenium theater, the size of the opening itself may be changed, both horizontally and vertically affecting the form of the stage. In the arena configuration the stage area is least easily changed. Once in place it can only be expanded by removing seating, though if the first row of seats is removable a great deal of flexibility in stage size can be achieved - six feet in either direction. The same is true of thrust seating. It is quite obvious that the appropriate size stage for a one or two-person show is different from that for productions with a larger cast. A flexible stage configuration can greatly enhance the desired sense of intimacy.

Flexibility of the first row (or rows) gives greater assistance to the director and set designer in adjusting the production to "fit" the house. Asymmetrical relations between stage and house can be created in such cases.
The proscenium stage and the arena and thrust stages are obviously quite different in their ability to accommodate scenery and lighting. From a scenic aspect, the proscenium stage, because it is designed to be dependent upon frontal observation and can be closed by a curtain, can easily have sets which are changed by raising flats, sliding sets in and out from the side stages, revolving sets on a turntable, using traps and lifts and numerous other ingenious devices developed over several centuries of theater-making. Those attributes are still the factor which makes the proscenium stage favored by many where a "scene" (especially multiple scenes) is essential to creating a drama. The only comparable attribute that the arena and thrust stages share with the proscenium is their ability to be trapped. Arena and thrust stages with adequate height above them can also use flys, but certainly not the elaborate systems found in proscenium theaters. One must assume, therefore, that the arena and thrust stages are going to be much more demanding on the artistic director, set designer and lighting designer - a challenge that many involved in regional theater relish.

By giving a thrust stage adequate area directly behind that part of the stage which is thrust, it is possible to combine the scenery capability of thrust and proscenium, thus taking advantage of the potential that both types of stages inherently possess. The area usually thought of as backstage should be considered an integral part of the stage and capable of performance, rear projection, etc.

It seems to be an axiom of set designers that they will use as much space as is given them. In the interest of budget, it has also proven true that the best set designers are equally capable of using as little stage as is given them. The size of the stage, therefore, plays an important part in determining performance budgets. Controlling the size of the stage is both an artistic and managerial concern. Moveable or adjustable wings, even in a thrust stage as at Berkeley, provide an opportunity for creating a very flexible relationship between rear and thrust stages.

In both thrust and arena staging the entrance of performers to the stage must be thought of as a part of the staging, for as soon as a performer is seen by any of the audience they become a part of the theater. An advantage of both thrust and arena staging is that a performer has the potential of moving to the stage from many directions. In the extreme, this can be accomplished by a vomitory that totally surrounds the stage, as at the Mummers Theater in Oklahoma City. ( ) That ability is achieved, however, at
the expense of putting the stage in a pit with an accompanying sense of removal from the audience. The location of "voms" does become an extremely important factor in setting the motion, choreography if you would, of a play. A central vom creates very difficult, inflexible, and static movement patterns. More than one vom is needed from the front of the stage to give a director a variety of movement patterns to utilize. Obviously, the location of voms does much to set the character of the house and this is one other design decision where the architect and artistic director must be of one mind.

If there is a single issue about which performers have a right to complain, it would be concerning the gyrations they are expected to perform on entering and exiting from the stage. To avoid having the voms interrupt seating excessively, there is a temptation for architects to shorten the vom depth and decrease the headroom. Vomitories frequently provide little headroom for even average-sized performers, and most assuredly inadequate headroom for everyone with a hat. Voms are also very often too steeply ramped, anything more than 15% is like running uphill, and some vomitories even confront performers with stairs which they are expected to negotiate at great speed in total darkness.

There are two distinctly different strategies for providing vomitories. These are at least partly conditioned by the rake of the seating. The two options are:

Cross-over below stage level usually at or close to the elevation of the trap room and;
Cross-over at stage level below seating.
Cross-over below stage level usually requires that stairs occur within vomitories. Two things require attention. The first is actor safety. It is not easy to negotiate darkened stairs (which is necessary to avoid light leakage onstage). Headroom is frequently a concern. Luminous tape and foam padding help, but we have not interviewed any performers who like this form of vom. The other concern is artistic. The impression is often given that actors are descending into a pit with this type of vom, although that may not be the intent of the staging.

Cross-over at stage level most typically includes some ramping down to avoid the necessity of the vom cutting too deeply into the seating area. Unless the ramping is excessive, this form of vom is easier and safer for actors to negotiate.

Two vom arrangements of this type deserve particular attention. The vom at Arena Stage connect to a passageway which encircles the entire stage area under the seating. The multiple access points makes for great flexibility in entrance/exit to the stage, and the total floor area involved makes for an unusual amount of breathing space backstage.

Milwaukee's Todd Wehr Theater, by the same architect, although not an arena stage, has a similar below-seating circulation system. At Todd Wehr, which is within a severely restricted space envelope, the dressing rooms connect directly to this cross-over passageway. The arena stage arrangement is superior in this respect, in that there is a "lock" space separating dressing rooms from the cross-over space and noise in dressing room areas is not a problem.
Audience at Hartford Stage enters the house through the vom. There are doors into the cross-over space located in the vom side walls. The only apparent problem with this particular arrangement is that headroom is restricted within the cross-over space.

Traps are a common feature in proscenium, thrust and arena staging. Attitudes regarding their usefulness vary considerably. Whether or not they are practical or appropriate may depend upon how the trap space relates to other elements of the theater. Much can be said against traps which lead to crawl spaces so that the performer must first play the role of mouse before emerging as Lucifer. The use of this form of trap is so limited that they are best forgotten. On the other hand, a fully trapped stage with elevators or lifts and adequate storage areas to either side can be an invaluable device for accommodating set changes in true repertory. Mechanized traps are a major investment and their use is really only warranted where it is anticipated they will be used frequently for moving sets.

CONTROL AND OPERATIONS:

Control and operations of the house extend to two areas, the stage and the audience. The control booth has become a sophisticated center, the brain center, for any production. In many respects, control booth technology and the mini-computer have brought a high level of technological capability within the reach of regional theater at relatively modest costs. This technological capability may continue to grow, allowing fewer people to do more. A central booth which is enclosed is essential to create the best communication between the technical crew with the least disturbance to the audience. An adjacent room which can be used as a viewing room by the director, staff, visitors, etc., and which has direct access to the control booth gives yet another dimension of flexibility. To allow maximum flexibility for the house, it is desirable that an area in the control booth be set aside at the center line of the stage for slide or film projection and a roving spot.
Lighting deserves more attention than we can give it here. It is a subject already given much time and expertise in theater literature. Suffice it to say that in the design of the house, thought needs to be given ahead of time to locations and access to lights. Without a doubt, the most successful approaches we have seen to lighting have considered the entire ceiling of the theater as a light grid with access by catwalks on which one can stand, and with direct access from the catwalk to an electrical workshop where lights can be taken to be repaired. Certainly from a functional point of view one can ask, "Why expect less?". But there are so many theaters where the lights need special scaffolding to be reached, where adjusting lights means interfering with stage sets, and where changes in lights requires a vast crew and shifting of heavy equipment. It would appear that lighting was a last-minute consideration in these theaters. A ceiling grid is not difficult to install. It can be easily hung from the roof structure and it can be exposed or hidden by baffles, as aesthetics dictate and cost may demand. It is an architectural consideration where long-term saving in production costs may very well justify greater construction expenditures.

Unfortunately, the edges of balconies tend to be used for hanging stage lights. In a proscenium theater they are not so bothersome, but where a balcony wraps around a stage, the audience ends up staring into the spotlights. Some theaters treat the stage lights as decorative elements and their visual presence adds to an ad hoc character. But invariably, lights that are visible to the audience cause visual distraction, especially as they go on or off or are dimmed. They become more important than the object lit. This is an obvious error in too many theaters.

Stage lighting so often becomes the overwhelming lighting concern in the theater that other lighting is often forgotten. Care needs to be given to help the audience adjust to the strong contrast of light and dark they will experience in viewing a performance. This doesn't mean keeping the audience in the dark. Many theaters don't give the audience enough light to read a program.

Another concern is providing appropriate lighting in aisles to help people move on stairs. Aisle lighting is an important necessity and safety device, as are exit lights. They are, however, the bane of architects and theater managers alike. If poorly located, they can light up the whole house and provide distractions during
blackouts. Since these light fixtures are required by safety codes, all that can be done is to carefully consider their location and the problems which they may cause during the initial phase of a theater's design.

Heating, ventilating and air conditioning a house successfully is extremely difficult, and a well qualified mechanical engineer should be engaged early in the project's development. Noise generated by heating and cooling equipment is a major concern. Noise transferred directly to the performance area by equipment can be eliminated by placing the equipment away from performing areas, mounting it on cushions, and providing all duct work with flexible connections. Acoustic baffles can also be used in the ducts themselves. It is tempting to use high velocity systems to move the amount of air necessary to adequately condition a house but too high a velocity can create noisy movement of air. There is a lack of sound dampening provisions in most systems because of their expense.

The temperature difference between an empty house and when the curtain rises with 500-700 persons all giving off heat, together with thousands of kilowatts of stage lights, presents a tremendous problem in designing a mechanical system which can adjust quickly enough to those rapid changes in condition. The quality of HVAC systems is typically one of the first things to be compromised when cutting budgets. Cutting the HVAC budget inevitably results in a less satisfactory HVAC system and the damage done by installing an inferior system is difficult and often impossible to rectify. As heating budgets rise, more sophisticated HVAC systems are likely to pay for themselves in reduced fuel bills. Mini-computers are aiding in the creation of more efficient HVAC systems.

The theater seat represents a final destination and the theater patron should arrive at that point with a sense of exhilaration and expectation for the performance. That cannot occur if the patron hasn't found a place to park, has had to stand in a long line in the cold, sun, rain, heat or wind to get into the theater, doesn't have a clue where one's seat might be, and can't find a place to hang one's coat. Those are simply accommodations. To add to the exhilaration of a performance, imagine that our patron has found convenient parking, waited a short time to enter the theater under protection from the weather, has a place to check a coat and find signs directing one to their seat. Patrons enter through a lobby which has a display
telling them something about the theater company and the play they are about to see. The lobby has a mood which seems to fit the performance. At intermission they can return to the lobby for refreshments and pleasant conversation with friends, and have a chance to view the rest of the exhibit.

All quite sensible, but lobbies seem to be either forgotten completely or designed to demonstrate only the architect's virtuosity. The lobby should be more than a vestibule. It adds an important dimension to theatergoing and should be thought of accordingly. Careful attention should be given to lighting and acoustics here as well. The designer should take into account that people tend to gather by doorways, or loiter there. They like walls or columns to lean against - low walls and sometimes even stairs tend to be used for seating.

Services related to the lobby, such as the box office, coat check and concessions, need to be located off the main paths of circulation with ample room for queuing patrons.

Handicapped access is not uniformly provided for in the building code. Careful consideration of the handicapped in wheelchairs can prevent embarrassing and difficult last-minute modifications to assure that they have access that is truly integrated in the design of the theater. Handicapped access should not be shoddy.

The theater lobby, besides providing access as previously mentioned, should be thought of as a rich resource for setting a mood where the theater company can be presented. The lobby can serve as a museum, a showroom, an educational gallery where scenes from "behind the scenes" can be displayed. For regional theater in particular, the lobby is a special opportunity to catch the audience in a receptive mood, to convey information and the spirit of the theater, to be the place where the audience and the company share space. The lobby can be a thing unto itself, as at the Indianapolis Rep where the lobby of an old movie palace has so much ambiance it is frequently rented out for parties; or the Cincinnati Playhouse, where the new lobby doubles as a restaurant before performances, and a cabaret theater at other times.

The importance of the front of the house is often overlooked as is the importance of the house manager. Entering a theater is not unlike entering a house, the house manager as host or hostess sees to it that coats are
taken and people are properly escorted to their seats, programs in hand. Adequate room needs to be provided so that this transition to the house can occur comfortably. There needs to be a place to store programs, a place for ushers to sit or stand out of the way, etc.

As any house manager will note, another audience-related issue is the accommodation of latecomers. Some would argue that if you accommodate latecomers you only encourage their tardiness. However, latecomers appear to be inevitable. The house should have a holding area for late arrivals which includes a vestibule to trap light which may enter the theater from the lobby. The way latecomers are treated depends on local etiquette, but never should the latecomer be allowed to interrupt a performance. Two of the most accommodating gestures are a holding room with a window to the stage and piped-in sound, or a row of seats or sometimes just standing area in a rear aisle. (A wider rear aisle can also serve many other functions; overflow seating, seating for persons with wheelchairs, etc.)

Architects are so used to thinking of the building code as over-providing for the needs of public safety, health, etc., that one presumes the toilet facilities required by code are adequate. They are not. A common complaint among theater groups is that public toilet facilities are inadequate. To reduce audience discomfort, if not panic, intermissions have to be extended to make sure that everyone who needs to can use the toilets. Women's toilets are notoriously inadequate. There is of course the catch for architects that few people will praise them for putting in too many toilets, since they are indeed expensive. But careful consideration should be given to the adequacy of these facilities as required by the code. A safe rule of thumb might be half again as many fixtures in the women's toilet as required by code.

SECOND STAGES
AND OTHER
PERFORMING AREAS:

Second stage does not mean secondary. An especially important characteristic of regional theater is the diversity of the program it performs, and its ability and willingness to venture into new theater productions. A smaller stage facilitates such activity, and many theaters are capable of supporting more than one such performing area, as they continually look for imaginative ways to stage performances. The comments that have preceded can generally be used to apply to these other performing areas as well. Since the second stage is most often intended to be a smaller theater of 200 or so seats, sight lines are not as critical an issue. In most circumstances, however, raised seating will still be required to give everyone adequate views of the performance area.
If there has been one persistent dream of twentieth-century inventors, be they architects, directors or playwrights, it is to have a totally flexible theater. Degrees of flexibility have been achieved in various designs, but each theater has emerged with its own limitations. We are left with the concept of a black box, that is, a theater in which we can put anything we want and conversely take out anything we don't want.

The proportions of the black box are most crucial, as is its location to other activities. Like the mainstage, it must serve as a link between back stage activity and the front of the theater. A neutral plan, such as a square, provides the best opportunity to change the seating arrangements from proscenium, to thrust, to arena, as might be desired. A single entrance, for the audience, and access around the entire perimeter for the performers, is preferred. A control room and light grid are equally necessary for this space to function well.

Flexible seating is the single most difficult goal to achieve. To set up and change seating arrangements takes time. This is not often budgeted in the lower-cost productions associated with second stages. However, rather than very costly mechanical devices and modular seating arrangements which allow flexibility within rather narrow limits, the most flexible theater would be the one which starts from scratch each time, provided a production budget exists which can reconstruct the seating arrangement as necessary. Flexibility seems better left to solutions by ad hoc means. Permanent investments in mechanical solutions in the end seem not to be all that flexible. We have no flexible theater schemes to recommend. After nearly a century of experimentation the "total theater mechanique" is yet to be realized.

The many opportunities for creating ad hoc performance spaces should not be ignored. Rehearsal space carefully located to allow convenient public access can be tuned into a performance area on occasion. Lobbies have been turned into cabaret theater with the addition of tables. Our proposal for a "Public Place," which follows later, suggests the creation of another kind of performance space which is ad hoc in character.

We have come to believe that a regional theater company can benefit greatly by having this wide a range of performance opportunity in one concentrated area, not only for the convenience it provides the company, but for the exposure it gives audiences to all the ambitions and programs of the company.
NON-AVERAGE AUDIENCES

The handicapped have received some much-deserved recognition with the passage of legislation mandating equal access to public facilities. Consideration of the needs of the handicapped can extend well beyond that which has already been legislated, however.

In designing facilities, code standards and the architect's rules of thumb tend to serve best the average person, that is, the person of average height, build, agility, hearing, sight, endurance, etc. Anyone who is not average in any of the above categories finds oneself handicapped in most theaters. The person of above-average height finds his legs cramped, the shorter person and children find themselves trying to peer at the stage between the heads of those in front of them. The elderly person may have trouble seeing in dim light, has difficulty on carpeted stairs, and feels their life at risk in going down the aisle to their seat. The person of extra girth is held captive in his seat for an hour and a half, the circulation of his legs cut off and his legs and feet falling asleep. We can all identify many others who at times, feel as handicapped in dealing with the exigencies of the buildings as those who fit the more accepted definitions of handicapped. It is important for us to draw attention to the non-average persons who may frequently be theater patrons so that architects and designers are more sensitive to designing for a broad range of audiences.

Wheelchair access requires the most careful consideration in the layout of the facility, both in the performing area and theater where handicapped may be patrons. It is also important in the shops, box office and other areas where the wheelchair handicapped may be employed. Wheelchair handicapped can be provided access and dignity by means of access which is also an obvious convenience for the non-handicapped person. We highly recommend that local organizations representing the handicapped be contacted to help devise appropriate planning strategies.
Support space, the shops, offices, dressing rooms, rehearsal space etc. which support the production of theater performances are the most neglected elements in the design of regional theaters. A most unique and important aspect of regional theater is that it is the home and workplace for a wide variety of people performing myriad tasks away from the stage and the house. What about the quality of those spaces? It is perhaps indicative of the plight of people who must work in the theater that nothing is written about their needs, individually or collectively. The Performing Arts Information Guide Series, which contains eleven volumes, has no work devoted to theater support facilities. The one volume which might, Theater and Cinema Architecture, has no references in its subject index, to shop space, dressing facilities or even rehearsal space.

The standard references on scene construction and design provide only obscure notes on the layout of shops and the kinds of equipment needed. References on costume are much the same. No wonder, then, that architects choose to put these places in windowless basements, attics or warehouses, removed from the theater itself. When theater budgets are cut, it is the support space which is the first to be reduced in size, lessened in quality, or removed altogether.

Perhaps the real irony is that theater people are working under conditions of extreme stress, working long and irregular hours and constantly working to meet deadlines. In many other work situations, much attention would be devoted to making their working environment as efficient and supportive as possible. Needless to say, that has not yet become one of the traditions of the theater.

Theater management, in the broadest terms, is directed at "getting the job done". Actual theater management runs the gamut of individual personality, from anarchy to autocracy. No matter what the managerial form, communication remains a key factor in good theater management. Whether highly-structured or ad hoc, spatial relationships can have a primary impact on communication.

Spatial proximity between administration and staff is a key element in good communication and good management. The worst situation is to have the administrative staff separated from other staff. That is not an unusual situation. Frequently even new theaters have the administrative offices removed from support activities.
More will be said about this later. Successful design of administrative offices is highly dependent upon a clear understanding of their relationship to the rest of the theater complex.

Regional theater tends to be pluralistic and open. Administrative offices are frequently the center of volunteer activity, promotional efforts, and both planned and ad hoc activity. It is appropriate that administrative space be made up of a combination of fixed and flexible spaces. The various directors of a theater company need to be able to achieve privacy when they may need it. Conventional office space is most suitable for them. Their office space will be most efficient if it is large enough to hold small conferences of 4 to 6 people.

The rest of the office space needs enough flexibility to be able to accommodate changes in staffing needs, volunteer assistance during ticket campaigns, etc. A conference room which can double as a work area often can be used to supplement the space needed to accommodate sporadic volunteer assistance. A separate space is needed for duplicating equipment, dead storage, etc.

Not to be overlooked is the gathering point, the place where notices are posted, mail collected, and where anyone can grab a cup of coffee. This spot is often the most important location in the entire theater for facilitating the ad hoc communication which differentiates bureaucratic information flow from real communication.

Administrative offices serve as the reception area for the public. The image of the administrative offices is important. A comfortable reception area and information about the theater in this location can do much to present the image of professionalism which should be associated with regional theater.

**PRODUCTION STAFF:** A special attribute of regional theater is the continuity which exists in production management. For that reason, the production personnel need to have an identifiable home within the theater complex, a place to "hang their hat", where the telephone can be located, where references and files can be kept, where special tools and supplies can be stored. It should be kept in mind that these people are artisans in the best tradition. Their office needs are therefore quite unique and perhaps would be better thought of as studios than offices. Above all, the offices for production staff need to be adjacent to the activity which they must supervise and close enough to the administrative offices to allow easy communication.
These spaces may at times be occupied by several people—assistants, interns and others—and in many circumstances the office will serve as a meeting place for conferences. Care should be taken to make these areas large enough to function in several capacities.

**ARTISTIC STAFF:**

Space for artistic staff—set designers, costume designers, lighting designers, playwrights, etc.—is important to round out the total sense of a creative community. Indeed, many people with these skills who enjoy working within the regional theater context do so because of the collaborative opportunities which exist. The ideal setting for these people would be a flexible environment that would provide complete privacy when desired, or be completely open to group interaction when wanted. This staff is likely to be fairly mobile and visiting staff might be a common occurrence. Under ideal conditions they would have "a place of their own" for the time they spend with the company. Their space should be consolidated as much as possible to allow easy communication, and it should also be convenient to the administrative offices for communication reasons.

**PERFORMERS' SPACE:**

Performers seem to be given both too much attention and not enough. To the audience, the performer personifies the theater and often overshadows other contributions being made by company members. It is the performer in regional theater, however, who is least likely to have a home they can call their own. At best they probably have a locker in a hallway, and may get their name placed temporarily on a dressing room door if they have a big part.

There is a lot of space that performers use besides the stage, and that space deserves attention. For the actor the dressing room, rehearsal space and green room serve as an important complex. Associated with those spaces should be places where performers can nap, rehearse lines, study scripts, visit, have a snack, etc. While individual dressing rooms for performers are unheard of, such a proposal is certainly not uncalled-for in a regional theater, especially where performers are likely to be rehearsing one play as they perform in another and their use of the theater is quite intense. The green room perhaps has the most demands placed upon it. It is living room, dining room, sometimes guest room, reception hall, library and gymnasium (when it gets used for combat rehearsal). The green room, because it has so many identities, most often has none. It is usually a sunless room with an old carpet, equally old refrigerator, hot plate with frayed cord, and is furnished with leftovers from a play which featured smashed, overstuffed chairs and couches. The green room deserves more attention. It should be a place where one wants to go, not a place where one has to go.
Dressing rooms need to be convenient to all performance areas. Hanging space for costumes in dressing rooms is essential, as are full-length and make-up mirrors. Make-up mirrors should have lights which replicate the direction of lighting the performer will confront on stage.

The scene and paint shops are a closely related set of activities, and if designed and located properly, they can save time, hassle and money. Ironically, many theater companies find it most difficult to locate these facilities as part of the theater complex and they end up in warehouses away from the theater, requiring time and money for setup and production, and isolating the production crew from the company. The relationship of the shops to the stages must allow for easy movement of materials from construction shop to the paint shop and from there to each performing area. Since the mainstage will use the largest sets, it is important that it have the optimum relation to the shops if a choice must be made.

The nature of the shops should be similar to a production line, requiring continuity in the flow of material. Besides this very basic consideration, several other important considerations need to be made. Different shop foremen are likely to have their own preferred way of organizing the shop, so an ample supply of outlets for power equipment is most desirable. In addition, there should be an area adjacent to the scene shop for metal working, including welding. There should also be a separate space for working with plastics and toxic materials, and this should be separately vented mechanically. The floors should be wooden to provide greater comfort and to allow for nailing and stapling. The walls should allow for easy methods of fastening storage units, equipment, etc.

The paint shop should be large enough to accommodate the assembly of a fully erected set. It should be large enough to lay out a drop cloth which could cover the entire performance area of the largest stage. It is important to maintain control over the space’s heating and ventilating system which should be separate from the rest of the building to facilitate humidity control for drying and to avoid abnoxious smells for permeating the buildings.

A trial set-up space could separate the paint shop from the stage. This could also be associated with storage of standard scenic devices, stairs, flats, etc. It is most important to maintain a complete sound separation between
shops and the stage. At the same time, connections have to be provided between the two to provide easy movement of scenery. This can be accommodated by a hallway or air lock separating the two spaces with gasketed doors. Care can also be taken to mount noisy equipment on sound cushions and to isolate the structure of the shops from the performing spaces so that sound cannot be transferred through the structure itself. The same care must be given to locating and isolating mechanical equipment which might serve these separate areas, for sound travels easily through ducts.

As in the scene and paint shop, proper location and layout of the properties shop can save much grief and expensive inefficiencies in operation if done correctly. The properties shop is composed of three areas: the construction shop, live storage, and stock storage. The properties shop should be located close to the scene shop so that equipment, especially the metal-working and plastics areas, can be shared. Walls and floors should have the same characteristics as the scene shop. Power supply, mechanical ventilating, and lighting requirements should be the same as those for the scene and paint shop.

The properties shop needs to have particular attention paid to good ventilation of large areas which can rapidly exhaust toxic fumes. The chemical industry has contributed much to the manufacture of convincing properties, but at the same time these exotic materials demand that a great deal of attention be given to proper ventilation and storage.

Live storage for props in construction, and storage of properties which have been borrowed, is important. Equally important is storage space for props near the stage entrances and a mini-shop near the stage and/or dressing rooms for quick prop repair if necessary.

Stock storage sometimes can be economically acquired away from the theater, and as long as this is properly inventoried it need not be in the theater complex proper.

The costume shop has the potential for duplicating the meanest of medieval or contemporary sweat shops if not properly designed. Costumes requires three basic areas: a place for construction, a laundry/dye room, and costume storage.
The costume construction space should be a well-lighted and pleasant place to work, for this is a place of very close and intense work. The space should have some flexibility, for the staff required to produce costumes may vary from production to production. Natural light is essential, both to reduce eye-strain and to provide faithfulness to color.

Proximity to rehearsal space and dressing rooms is important. The location of the costume shop must allow for costumes to be moved on racks from the shop to dressing rooms, and to the laundry area and back to the dressing rooms. Horizontal and vertical circulation must be planned accordingly.

Separate areas are often established in the construction area for fitting rooms, and for work with smaller materials, wigs, and millinery, etc.

Costume storage can take up a large quantity of space, and like property storage, this storage could occur off the premises if properly inventoried. Automatic racks similar to those used by dry cleaners have been employed to use difficult-to-reach spaces for such storage.

The rehearsal space has an important relation to dressing rooms, green room, costume shop and spaces which can be used for ad hoc rehearsal, such as voice, combat, etc. Rehearsal space must be able to replicate the performing areas with enough space around the perimeter to allow the easy movement of actors, directors and other personnel. The room should be large enough to accommodate sets of mock-ups. Access to the space should allow people outside the space to look in without disturbing the activities in rehearsal. The room should be entered through a vestibule which connects to a waiting room with bulletin boards, coffee machines, casual seating, etc.

The rehearsal space itself should be soundproof. Natural light is desirable, but not at the cost of introducing outside disturbances. A ceiling grid accommodating temporary lighting is also desirable.

In some cases, rehearsal space is made to function as meeting rooms for large groups, as an additional performing space, or is sometimes even rented to other groups for their use. If this is desired, then easy access to the front of the house is also necessary.
COMMUNAL SPACE

Regional theater presents some unique theater opportunities for both the theater company and the audience which have just barely been explored. Thus far we have focused on those characteristics of theater design which should be of particular concern to regional theaters, though not necessarily unique to those theaters. Any theater that has the means and energy to construct an "ideal" theater, we think, should consider the possibilities we are about to present.

Regional theater is still young. It would seem that many of the theaters which are being built now are coming close to realizing a new set of ambitions. It is perhaps easiest to see those new ambitions in the light of past regional theater development. First generation regional theaters were housed in ad hoc space, buildings that could easily be used for performances without much modification. Second generation regional theaters moved from ad hoc facilities to new or remodeled facilities which began to pay more attention to the support activities which were now commonly associated with regional theater. The third generation regional theaters which are beginning to emerge have as their goal the creation of a theater which is a center of theater life.

The question arises, "How is the third generation regional theater different from other theaters"? Space for COMMUNICATION is the answer we have arrived at in working with the Milwaukee Repertory Theater Company and observing recently planned theaters.

Communication, in this sense, is not just the dialogue one expects from performers in a theater. It is the interaction which occurs in the production of a performance by all members of the company. It is also the sense of community which the audience and the company seek to establish.

Many theaters have achieved a sense of this community in the theaters they have built. Our proposal is to help this sense of community develop further by making its presence manifest in the design of the theater. For this purpose we have proposed two new spaces for incorporation in the design of a regional theater, the Hub and the Public Place.
HUB:
The idea of a Hub can be about from our attempts to get each of the separate support areas of the theater complex to relate to each other. The place which would be needed for such a union could not be a hallway, the green room or other rooms which already have appropriate functions. It would have to be a "center of activity", a Hub, a place where people could gather informally, where people would have to pass in their daily routines, a place where people would like to be, a place which encourages exchanges. The analogy is that of a village square. In the sense that the theater is a very special community of people dependent upon each other, sharing work, pleasure and creative efforts, then the need for the village square (Hub) becomes even more evident. The Hub therefore must have very strong characteristics as a place. It must have an identity, a character unique from any other place. What exactly that place might be will vary from company to company, from architect to architect. The characteristics of location of the Hub, however, are the same even though other characteristics may change.

The consideration of location for the Hub is quite simple - all support space must relate to it; that includes offices, production shops, rehearsal space and dressing rooms. It is the backstage "crossroads". What will make it an exciting place to be? We think sunlight, comfortable places to sit, pleasant colors, comfortable furnishings, a coffee maker, refrigerator, hot plate, books and magazines and whatever else imaginable.

PUBLIC PLACE:
The Public Place can be thought of as the theatergoer's equivalent of the Hub. It, like the Hub, is not like any other place. It is not a lobby, entrance, gallery or vestibule. It has its own character, and like the Hub, it is a nice place to be.

It is a place where people will come to see what is going on. If the Hub analogy is a village square, then the Public Place is the market, a place for exchange, where the unexpected might happen, where one goes to see the action.

Theater has elements of spectacle to it. People go to the theater to have their lives transformed. Theater involves the senses and the intellect as no other part of the city does. The Public Place is a link between the theater and the city. It is a place where even people who don't go to the theater might go.
It is "open" all the time. It is a place to bring out-of-town guests. It is active day and night. It is the impromptu stage for would-be actors as well as those who are accomplished. It is where tuxedos and jeans can share the same space, drink coffee, sip wine, be entertained, and for a few minutes a day have their workaday world transformed by live entertainment.

The Public Place should accommodate ad hoc cabaret theater, at the same time that it brings together people attending different performances in the theater.

The Public Place should connect to the lobbies of all performance areas, to the box office, to the street (entrance) and to preferably a bar, cafe or restaurant. The space itself could be shaped to provide many ad hoc performing areas: a stair landing, a balcony, a raised podium or fountain, tables placed together to form a stage. In this space the act of gathering should be paramount, the street should be recreated, and performance should be added as "spice to the salad" - intimate performance where actor and audience may merge as one.