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Nouveau Cinéma Etoile, Zurich (page 34)

Le cinéma est aménagé dans un nouvel hôtel construit dans le cadre du plan d'assainissement de la vieille ville. Afin de conserver le jardin de la cour attenante, la salle du cinéma fut reléguée au sous-sol. Le manque d'espace a restreint les dimensions du hall d'entrée qui s'ouvre de plain-pied, et où la caisse a dû être insérée dans le mur. Le foyer et le vestiaire sont situés en contrebas. L'aménagement intérieur de la salle obéit aux principes de la visibilité et de l'acoustique. L'écran est vraiment placé comme un „point de mire" et son bord inférieur parfaitement visible de toutes les places.

Nombre de places	450
Distance d'un rang à l'autre .	83 cm
Largeur des sièges	55 cm
Distance de projection . . .	24 m
Distance du siège le plus éloigné de l'écran	23 m
Ecran	4,40 × 3,30 m

Summary

Aspects of theatre construction (page 1)

Considered from various points of view, present-day theatre construction faces a variety of problems of acute importance. In a number of countries affected by the last war, above all in a typical theatre country such as Germany, numerous theatres have been destroyed and their reconstruction is either under way or planning. Elsewhere, for instance in the US, the majority of theatre buildings is superannuated in both technical and architectural respects so that there the problem of reconstruction will sooner or later arise as well. This situation obtains at a time when the theatre projecting work of the past twenty-five years has yielded a wealth of ideas and plans, but little achievement.

The variegated development of the theatre has occasioned great variety in the building programmes. The requirements of an opera house differ from those made of a chamber-play theatre, or of a variety and revue house or a festival play-house serving a specific purpose. In addition to these theatres proper, the present age tends to add architectural structures embodied in larger organisms such as school theatres, the theatre installations of public halls and actual multi-purpose premises which — usually as additions to hotels — must, besides their proper functions, serve for banquets, conventions or exhibitions. In all such cases it will prove of advantage to the architect to provide for theatre requirements in the first place.

Experiments recently made with so-called arena theatres are among the new features in theatre construction.

In brief, it may be said that things are in full swing from all directions. It is to be hoped that the realizations which the next decades will no doubt bring may produce new buildings adequate to the spirit of the 20th century in free co-operation with the theatre and those concerned with it, free from a misconception of tradition and just as free from attempts at mere tricks.

Frederick Kiesler's theatre projects (pages 2—4)

The Universal Theatre, as Kiesler termed it, planned for Woostock, which was never built, was to be an inexpensive structure for various purposes. It combines a forestage and central stage, and both stage and auditorium or, rather, auditoriums, are mechanically adjustable. The new architectural organism was not only determined by structural tricks but also by the requirements of the new theatrical style as created by dramatists, directors and actors. It is a double theatre just like the Brooklyn project, with a central stage in which the larger auditorium can be turned into a central arena by splitting the seating arrangement (a portion of the seats are pivoted), without vacating the seats. According to requirements, the small room can be used for intimate performances, the large one for more monumental productions. A special arrangement is provided for the opera and for revues and variety shows.

Walter Gropius' universal theatre Design for the Piscator stage 1926/27 (page 5)

Gropius says: — "My 'total theatre', by means of ingenious technical installations, enables the director to have the play acted on the closed stage, on the forestage or the circular arena or on any of them simultaneously. Acting may take place on the centre stage or on one of the lateral stages or on all three concomitantly.

"The house is changed completely when the large turnable is revolved on its centre by 180°. Then the inserted, lowering small centre is placed in the middle of the house and completely surrounded by rising rows of seats. This rotation can be effected by machines during the performance.

"In my 'total theatre' the complete auditorium — walls and ceilings — can be surrounded by film screens. Such screens are placed between the twelve supporting columns, and the film projected from twelve cabins simultaneously from behind, so that the audience may, at will, be placed in the middle of a tossing sea or a converging crowd of people.

"The theatre is the large space machine with which the director can, according to his creative force, build his personal work."

Open and peep-show stage combined (page 6)

In the spatial theatre, the lateral sections of the auditorium are projected on to the stage by rolling, sliding, or wheeled wall panels achieving connection with the cyclorama as the rear limit of the stage. The intermediate space between cyclorama and panels necessary for entrances and lighting appears as a shoulder in the wall and is repeated by the wall shoulders in the auditorium. If necessary, it can be obliterated by appropriate light effects.

Arena theatre (pages 7—8)

Recently a type of theatrical performance has made an appearance in the US which is called 'arena style' or 'theatre in the round' where it is becoming increasingly popular. The essence of this method lies in the fact that a stage of traditional form is dispensed with. The performance takes place in the centre of an auditorium of square, round or oblong configuration. A style attempting at a certain intimacy by direct contact between actors and audience presupposes maximum audibility, and this, too, limits the size of the room.

The practical problem of entrances and exits is solved by simply providing narrow passages at the four corners of the seat squares (or between the four sectors), through which the actors appear from behind a section of the audience.

The rooms hitherto used for arena theatres are generally very simple from the architect's point of view. That of the University of Seattle is a simple circle, that of Karamu theatre is oblong. The lighting installation is arranged on parallel beams and achieves strong, concentrating spatial effects despite its simplicity. As early as 1930, Norman Bel Geddes submitted a finished project for Chicago, and recently the plans for a multi-purpose stage basing on the principle of the arena theatre were published, which is destined for theatrical performances, television, fashion shows and radio broadcasts. In such a case, a complicated mechanical and technical machinery with movable platforms, light banks and so on replaces the simplicity, which was the spiritual force of the arena theatre.

Frank Lloyd Wright and the theatre (pages 9—11)

The Hartford theatre project, the predecessor of which is to be found in the plans for Florida Southern College, is a chamber-play house seating approx. 700. The stage and auditorium are under the same ceiling. The stage comprises a turntable by means of which the normal changes of scenery are effected. The front half of the turntable itself projects into the auditorium, and it is preceded by a forestage with lateral wings which can be entered by the actors from the sides.

The Hartford theatre is a kind of synthesis of peep-show and spatial stage whose conventional fixation by the proscenium arc is dispensed with.

The formal structure of the interior as well as of the unit as a whole, rests in imaginative stereometric members. The unit is thereby clearly subdivided and functionally determined. As shown by the section of the model, the interior embodies a strong concentrating tension increased by the symmetrically broken breadthwise disposition. The shape of the interior creates possibilities for colour arrangements and embodiment of applied and projected painting — an element which will be of great importance in future theatre constructions.

Art Center of the University of Arkansas Fayetteville / Arkansas (pages 12—14)

The "Center" comprises three building units: the three-storey school and studio wing, the experimental theatre to which

an open-air arena theatre is added, and a concert hall. The three units are connected by a covered gallery opening into a court for large sculptures.
It is the task of this University Center to train students in the different disciplines and to provide a permanent creative interplay between architecture and theatre, theatre and literature, music and painting with continual cross-currents.
The theatre is disposed as a typical pedagogical studio. The auditorium seats only 300, generally students collaborating in the production in some capacity. Sometimes, performances are open to the public.

Karamu Center, Cleveland, Ohio
(page 15)

On the area of a block, i. e. a building unit of approx. 120 metres square, in the Negro Quarter of Cleveland, the initiative of Russel and Rowena Jelliffe has created a Civic Center for Negroes, the progressive spirit and activity of which is characterized by its interior organization and architectural configuration.
Cleveland's Karamu bases on purely idealist principles and is not a profit-making concern. The theatre building is the heart of the entire complex, which is not yet fully completed. The principal auditorium, seating approx. 500, possesses an excellently appointed peep-show stage with all the standard technical equipment.
The court of the Karamu complex houses a very simple installation, free from any attempt at showiness, for open-air performances. The stage is a recessed part of the wall of the building to which entrances directly from the building are provided on either side.

Project for a municipal theatre (opera and plays) for Zurich
(page 16)

The project for the municipal theatre derives from stereometric formation. The auditorium, seating approx. 2000, is broad and contains a steep-gradient pit permitting the distance to the stage to be greatly reduced. The orchestra pit can be covered over so that the stage is directly connected with the auditorium, and the former can be used as a peep-show or spatial stage. Burckhardt dispenses with a conventional curtain and replaces it by the application of light and counter-light.

Stage with rotatable cyclorama
Project for a theatre in Berlin Zeughaus
(page 27)

The circular curtain is also an iron curtain, cyclorama and sound screen in combination with the lateral adjoining panels. The latter can be easily slid back to make room for the shifting of stage trolleys. If a second lateral stage were added, scenery could be changed without necessitating intervals since the stage trolleys could continually be loaded with new scenery.

Impington Village College Cambridgeshire England
(page 20)

Built as a multi-purpose theatre, it is used by the younger students during the afternoon, and by the older in the evening.
In daytime auditorium and stage are used for school meetings, dancing and gymnastic lessons, rehearsals and performances in connection with dramatic training. Public performances, community poetry readings, lectures, discussions, cinema and dancing performances are held there.

Theatre in Baden, Aargau
(page 21)

A small play and opera house destined to achieve an effect of intimacy, its stalls seating 400, circle 150. For congresses, for which the theatre is also designed, and concerts with larger attendance, the seating capacity can be raised to approx. 750. The lobby adjoining the rearmost row of stalls can be partitioned off by movable walls and used for exhibitions. Flat steps lead to the park direct from the lobby pavilion; the condition of the ground in this area permits open-air performances in which the steps represent the stage and the lobby pavilion, as it were, the backstage.

Teatro Carlo Felice, Genoa
(pages 22—23)

The new theatre consists of three individual units: the auditorium, the new public passage and the underground cinema.
The auditorium is bounded by the outer walls, the roof and the artificial floor (3 metres above road level). Freely suspended in this room, like huge sculptures, are the slightly inclined flat circular stalls, the ring of boxes the oblique fan of the circle, delimited by the polygonal side walls which define the space.
Beyond the stage opening is the stage with an area of 46 metres width and 37 metres depth; it is equipped with excellent technical installations such as lowering and rotatable floor elements, a turntable. lateral sliding platforms which can be placed on the stage when built up with new scenery. In addition, scenery can be built up 8 metres below the stage, on a previously lowered platform, which is then mechanically lifted to stage level.

Country theatres in Upper Italy
(pages 24—26)

The point of interest peculiar to North Italian rural theatres is the practical conditions that have led to their existence. There are small communes of 2—4000 inhabitants which deem it important to have such buildings and which give such buildings an active function. The idea that the working-man too, develops an activity besides his daily toil, is a fundamental factor in the structural realization (in the first place, the buildings are used — apart from sporadic cinema performances — for the inhabitants' own performances). The funds for the buildings, whose costs varied between 6.5 and 12 million lire (45 000—80 000 Swiss francs) — a remarkably low figure — were collectively raised by contributions of the commune, the church and private persons. The execution was entrusted to young, progressive architects. The results are positive and may be termed exemplary.

Music tent in Aspen, Colorado
(page 29)

The fundamental principle of the structure rests in the fact that the ground was first hollowed out in the shape of an amphitheatre. Thus the possibility was created of keeping the platform (stage) on a normal level, of obtaining optimum vision and of achieving a natural acoustic screen against the outside. The rear wall of the platform was formed by a kind of folding plywood panel acoustically modulating sound in its small units, this being associated with an oblique sound screen above the platform which serves as a sound-directing medium.

Park theatre in Grenchen
(page 17)

This is a standard task set by the situation of smaller towns in Europe for which a theatre serving exclusively for that purpose is not feasible for financial reasons. Here the requirements were: hotel, large restaurant premises and hall for a multitude of purposes. This latter must be used as a whole as well as in various subdivisions. Many events require a fluctuating connection to the restaurant premises and the hotel, others are confined to the auditorium proper and its annexes. The theatre auditorium is the heart of the structure, and the primary requirements for a theatre are fulfilled: the stage section with lateral space, stage-machinery loft, technical installations permitting production of modern works of all types; a sunken and coverable orchestra pit, excellent visibility in the auditorium with circle by means of which the number of seats can, together with the lateral annexes, be brought near a thousand.

Project for a multi-purpose theatre
(pages 18—19)

The building is composed of two sections: a wing measuring approx. 23×23 metres housing auditorium, lobby, vestibule, office and so on, and a wing of approx. 14×14 metres housing the stage and ancillary rooms.
The building serves a variety of events — theatre performances, concerts, meetings, social events and banquets. The plan is determined by the subdivision of the room into different segments so that the size of the room always corresponds to the number of participants. The maximum of 630 seats is achieved by lowering the wall between pit and lobby. Lobby, vestibule and hall are connected direct to the garden by means of large windows.

New Astoria Cinema and Dance-Hall, Zurich
(pages 32—33)

The task of the architect was to accommodate a cinema seating 500 and a dance hall in the existing „Astoria" office building in Zurich. Primarily, acoustic and optical requirements determined the form of the cinema audience. The ground-floor was given a curved shape, and successive rows of seats are raised by 12 cm; the curve of the ceiling is parallel with the floor and made of a row of segments. Two loudspeaker sets were arranged below and over the screen consisting of a brickwork

Schluß s. S. 54

wall with plaster covering. Between performances, a chequer pattern is projected on the screen, which replaces the usual curtain.
Lighting of cinema: Invisible, indirect, behind the round plates connected with the wire structure on the side-walls at a distance of approx. 15 cm therefrom. Thus the wall is lighted within the area of the wire structure, which appears as a dark system of lines and planes. The dancing hall and bar are a spatial unit without subdivision. A lighted case for beverages with two lateral glass mosaic panes dominates the entrance. Above the dancefloor the double ceiling, which is there somewhat lowered, is provided with circular multi-coloured sources of light.

New Etoile Cinema, Zurich (page 34)

The cinema is accommodated in a new hotel building projected within the old city assanation scheme. In order to keep clear of the green area in the adjoining court, the cinema auditorium was placed underground. The entrance rooms facing Marktgasse, which had to be kept within narrow limits, are placed on the ground-floor, together with the box office, which, in order to save space, was built into a wall, while the lobby with the cloak-room are on a somewhat lower level.
The interior lay-out of the auditorium was determined by optical and acoustic principles. The screen is the central point. The lower edge of the screen is freely visible from every seat.

Number of seats	450
Space between rows	83 cm
Width of seats	55 cm
Projection distance	24 m
Screen distance	23 m
Projection area	4,4 × 3,30 m

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