

Directed by Edward Mangum

The Firebrand

by Edwin Justus Mayer
Directed by Zelda Fichandler

The Delectable Judge

by E.P. Conkle
Directed by Edward Mangum

Directed by Edward Mangum and
Zelda Fichandler

Alice In Wonderland

by Lewis Carroll
Arranged by Edward Mangum and
Zelda Fichandler
Directed by Edward Mangum

by Edwin Justus Mayer
Directed by Edward Mangum

The Adding Machine

by Elmer Rice
Directed by Zelda Fichandler

Directed by Zelda Fichandler

The Glass Menagerie

by Tennessee Williams
Directed by Alan Schneider

Mr. Arcularis by Conrad
Aiken and Diana Hamilton
Directed by Edward Mangum

Directed by Edward Mangum

**The Importance of
Being Earnest**

by Oscar Wilde
Directed by Zelda Fichandler

by Oliver G...
Directed by

THE 1950-51 SEASON



SPOTLIGHTS

She Stoops to Conquer

"Excuse me, sirs, I pray—I can't yet speak!" This opening line of Goldsmith's raucous Restoration comedy marked the first words ever uttered on the Arena stage. Garnering an appreciative roundelay of critical reviews, the play, after selling out its opening night, added an additional week to its scheduled two-and-a-half weeks to meet ticket demand. Richard L. Coe of the *Washington Post* wrote, "Washington now does have a resident acting group and its first effort is well worth your support." And so began an era.

The Importance of Being Earnest

Oscar Wilde's "Trivial Comedy for Serious People" proved to be anything but trivial at the box office, closing the season with record-breaking business in its extended four-week run. "In our eleven-month history," said the twenty-six-year-old Zelda Fichandler, "we've never had such a demand for tickets," instilling a sense of history to a less-than-one-year-old institution. A season finale of a comedy set a popular tradition for the upcoming seasons.

Co-founder Edward Mangum supports the single price of \$1.90 for all seats. Arena fliers explain, "With no seat more than seven rows away from the actors, that makes every seat a best seat."

Zelda directs her first production for Arena Stage, *The Firebrand*, which opens October 2, 1950. Three shows later, she plays Eliza Doolittle in *Pygmalion*.

Pernell Roberts and George Grizzard are among the resident company for the world premiere of *The Delectable Judge*. Arena also establishes the pattern of hiring guest artists, such as Michael Higgins and Anne Meacham, to augment a core resident company.

The Russian ambassador was observed "to chuckle heartily" during a performance of *The Inspector General*, running at the height of the early Kefauver corruption investigations.

Director Alan Schneider, on the faculty of Catholic University, makes his Arena debut with the final production of the subscription series, *The Glass Menagerie*, proving to the critics that virtually any play can be done in the round.

The seventeen-show season ends in the black by a slim margin, a triumph referred to in the local press as "a minor miracle." The budget is now \$800 a week.



Top: Lester Rawlins, Orville French, and Stuart Smith in *She Stoops to Conquer*. Bottom: Marim Karczmaz in *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

SPOTLIGHT

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CHRONOLOGY

THE 1951-52 SEASON

Julius Caesar

by William Shakespeare
Directed by Edward Mangum

She Stoops to Conquer

by Oliver Goldsmith
Directed by Edward Mangum

Ladder to the Moon

by Holmes Alexander
Directed by Zelda Fichandler

Burning Bright

by John Steinbeck
Directed by Edward Mangum

Twelfth Night

by William Shakespeare
Directed by Zelda Fichandler

School For Scandal

by Richard Brinsley Sheridan
Directed by Irl Mowery

Three Men on a Horse

by John Cecil Holm and George Abbott
Directed by Edward Mangum

Dark of the Moon

by Howard Richardson and William Berney
Directed by Edward Mangum

The Importance of Being Earnest

by Oscar Wilde
Directed by Zelda Fichandler

The Hasty Heart

by John Patrick
Directed by Alan Schneider

SPOTLIGHTS

The Hasty Heart

Alan Schneider firmly established himself as a Washington favorite with this 1945 Broadway comedy set in a World War II army hospital in Burma. "His admirable sense of timing, pacing, rhythm; and his excellent judgement in casting, reflect an achievement by one of our better directors," wrote the *Washington Spectator*. In addition to the ensemble acting, Stanley Pitts as the Scot and George Grizzard as the Yank distinguished themselves. Closing the season after twelve weeks of performances, it outran *Three Men on a Horse* by two weeks and hit the critical jackpot with four raves and no dissenters.

Julius Caesar

Arena opened its second season by bringing Shakespeare's political classic to the nation's capital. The text was adapted to encompass arena staging, using the audience as the "crowd" for the Forum scenes. The version also highlighted the character of Brutus, played by Roy Poole, as the play's hero, and the production ran for four weeks, building on Arena's adventurousness and its continued success with Shakespeare.

THE 1951-52 SEASON



After a marathon first season, the production schedule is trimmed back to ten plays of scheduled four-week runs, including revivals of three first-season box office hits: *She Stoops to Conquer*, *Twelfth Night* and *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

Willard Swire of Actors' Equity has lunch with Zelda and persuades her and Mangum that the company should become members of Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors.

Edward Mangum, co-founder and director for fourteen of Arena's twenty-three productions to date, leaves Arena Stage April 22, 1951 to accept an invitation as director for the Theater of Honolulu.

Variety celebrates Arena's second anniversary, August 16, noting "Arena, modest in size, has caught on as a community institution and seems fast on the way towards a national rep for top-drawer repertory theatre."

Arena closes its second season with its ledgers firmly in the black, insuring another season, and Zelda is quoted in the *Christian Science Monitor*, "We believe if there is to be living theatre all over the country, people in cities will have to create it where they are. We wanted a community theatre and we've proved it's possible. The same could be done in cities all over the United States."

THE 1952-53 SEASON

Desire Under the Elms

by Eugene O'Neill
Directed by Alan Schneider

Tonight At 8:30

Fumed Oak

Ways And Means

Still Life

by Noel Coward
Directed by Zelda Fichandler

Lady Precious Stream

by S.I. Hsiung
Directed by Alan Schneider

All Summer Long

by Robert Anderson
Directed by Alan Schneider

The Country Wife

by William Wycherley
Directed by Zelda Fichandler

Our Town

by Thornton Wilder
Directed by Alan Schneider

Arms and the Man

by George Bernard Shaw
Directed by Basil Langton

The Country Girl

by Clifford Odets
Directed by Alan Schneider

Boy Meets Girl

by Bella and Sam Spewack
Setting from an idea by Ralph Alswang
Directed by Zelda Fichandler

My Heart's in the Highlands

by William Saroyan
Directed by Alan Schneider

THE 1952-53 SEASON



SPOTLIGHTS

Lady Precious Stream

Employing many stylized techniques of the Chinese theater, S. I. Hsiung's combination of several stories from the Chinese owed much of its success to the intimacy of arena staging which magically drew the audience into a world of Asian fantasy. The multicultural opening night audience included the entire staff of the Chinese Embassy, which sent a magnificent floral tribute backstage the next day in appreciation. The uniqueness of the production prompted the U.S. State Department to take pictures for publication in its Hong Kong magazine, "World Today."

All Summer Long

Arena won a salute from the *New York Times* and *Variety* for its brave efforts to introduce new plays with this world premiere about a young boy bracing his family against a flood. The company got a boost during rehearsals when Robert Anderson took time out from concurrent rehearsals in New York with Elia Kazan on his other manuscript, *Tea And Sympathy*, to spend a weekend with the company. Even before it closed, the play was optioned by Broadway producer Alexander Cohen for an October opening with Alan Schneider repeating his role as director.

After a summer of directing repertory in England, Alan Schneider joins the Arena staff in the newly-created position of production director.

A November issue of *Variety* differentiates Arena from the "little theatre" movement as a professional resident repertory theater under the headline banner, "See Resident Repertory, Only Means To Fill Legit Needs Outside New York." The national consciousness has been raised.

Frances Sternhagen comes across town from Catholic University to join the company as Margery Pinchwife in *The Country Wife*.

Zelda, Margo Jones (Dallas '53), Johanna Albas (Houston Playhouse), Nina Vance (Alley Theatre), and Dorothy Chernuck (Rochester Arena Theatre) assemble at the University of Miami conference on arena theater. It is noted that most of the major arena theaters in the U.S. are headed by women.

Marian Reardon becomes a Washington "star" with her performance of the wife in *The Country Girl*.

Arena technical director Walter Stilley pioneers a theater-in-the-round fly system for set changes in *Boy Meets Girl*, marking another first for Arena Stage.



THE 1953-54 SEASON

Two Plays:

A Phoenix Too Frequent

by Christopher Fry
Directed by Zelda Fichandler

The Happy Journey

by Thornton Wilder
Directed by Alan Schneider

The Bad Angel

by Joel Hammil
Directed by Alan Schneider

Thieves' Carnival

by Jean Anouilh
Translated by Lucienne Hill
Directed by Lawrence Carra

Charley's Aunt

by Brandon Thomas
Directed by Carl Shain

Ah, Wilderness!

by Eugene O'Neill
Directed by Aaron Frankel

Summer And Smoke

by Tennessee Williams
Directed by Alan Schneider

Blithe Spirit

by Noel Coward
Directed by Zelda Fichandler

The Cretan Woman

by Robinson Jeffers
Directed by Basil Langton

All My Sons

by Arthur Miller
Directed by Basil Langton

Room Service

by John Murray and Allen Boretz
Directed by Zelda Fichandler

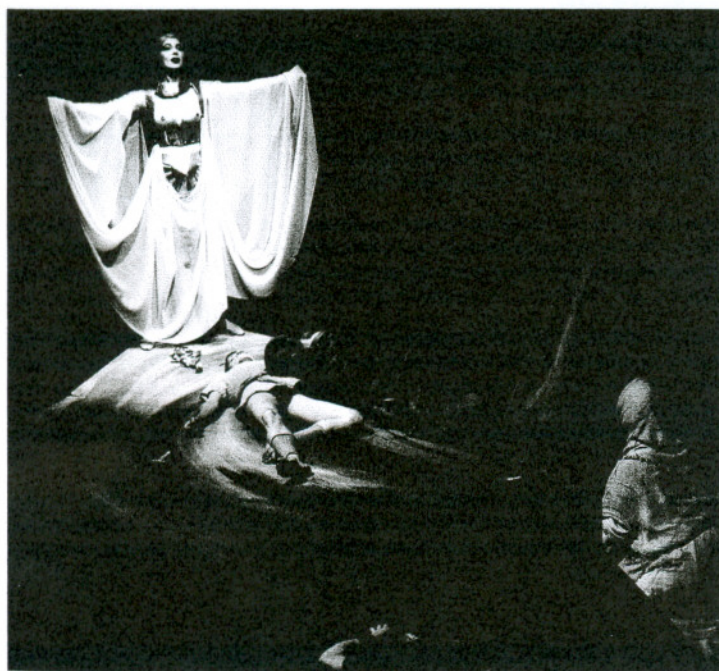
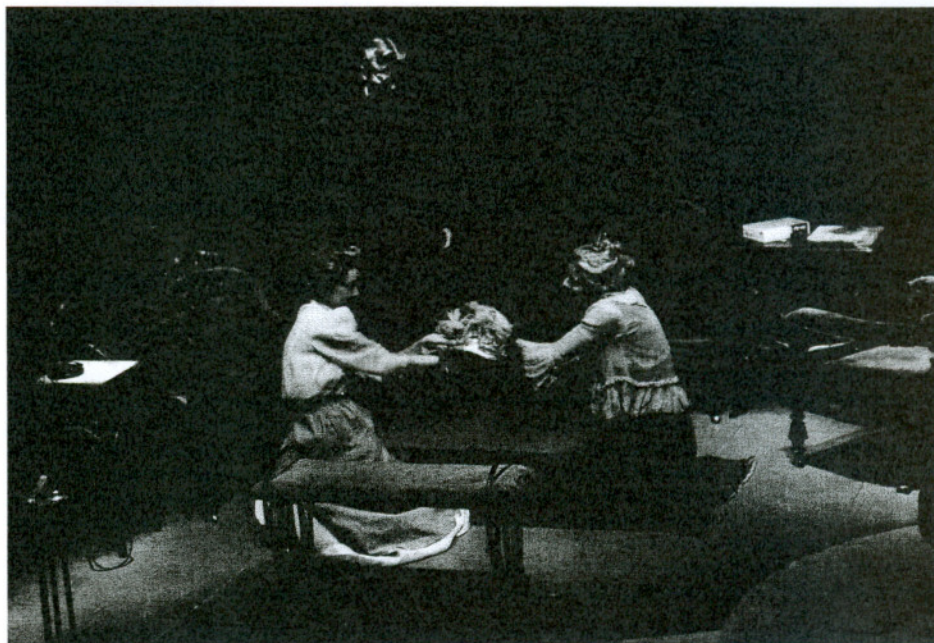
SPOTLIGHTS

Summer And Smoke

Alan Schneider returned for the first time since his Broadway success with *The Remarkable Mr. Penny-packer* to direct this second play in what was dubbed the "American Playwrights' Series"; its companion that season was O'Neill's *Ah, Wilderness!* Enjoying the longest run of the 1953-1954 season (seven weeks), it was a triumph for Schneider and company member Dorothea Jackson who was admired for her sensitive portrayal of Alma, Williams' fragile heroine.

The Cretan Woman

Robinson Jeffers chose Arena Stage for the world premiere of his foray into Greek drama. Freely adapted from Euripides' *Hippolytus*, Jeffers' play used the poetic power of verse to re-create the violent tension of the classic passion between Phaedra and Hippolytus. The combination of Basil Langton's knowing direction and Walter Stilley's simple stage design with Leo Gallenstein's lighting brought the whole play into focus. Brooks Atkinson of the *New York Times* said, "Arena Stage has enterprise and taste. And courage, too." However, *The Cretan Woman* remains Arena's only production of a Greek play.



Top, l to r: Dorothea Jackson, Lester Rawlins, and Frances Sternhagen in *Summer And Smoke*.
Bottom: Marian Reardon in *The Cretan Woman*.

THE 1953-54 SEASON

A Phoenix Too Frequent and *The Happy Journey* open in September to bridge the summer gap as a pre-subscription double bill, creating Arena's first year-round producing schedule.

The production staff constructs special arena marionettes to be operated from a flying bridge above the stage area for an unusual Saturday morning children's theater series.

Arena Stage hosts the Campbell Music Company Steinway centennial celebration, a series of in-the-round concerts by Steinway artists and chamber ensembles performing for the first time in the medium of central staging.

Arena is the first resident company to schedule regular Monday evening readings of unusual scripts not yet ready for full-scale productions. The company's first reading is Jules Romain's *Dr. Knock*, while the company's designer, Walter Stilley, shows sketches of projected scene designs for the plays to the invited audience.

The season closes September 5 after a standing-room-only twelve-week run of *Room Service*, ensuring the theater's record for being the first year-round arena theater ever to pay its backers a dividend.

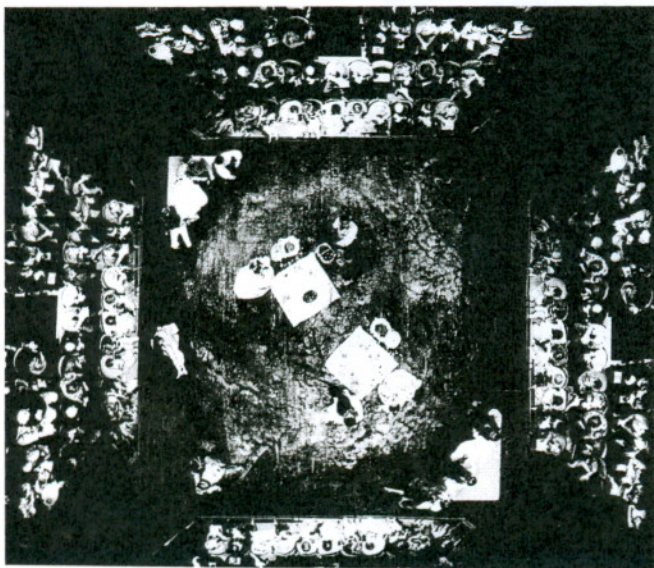
CHRONOLOGY

ARENA STAGING

“Arena Stage” identifies much more than the institution—arena staging is the theater’s aesthetic identity. It defines its unique artistic vocabulary and emotional architecture. The idea of arena staging was hardly a new one when the theater began in 1950; although the Greek and Elizabethan stages were not fully in the round, their proximity to the audience, which almost entirely surrounded the playing space, gave their performances energy and power. From the eighteenth century on through the twentieth century, the norm in playgoing has been the proscenium stage, with the audience sitting respectfully in front of the stage picture, sealed off from the action by an imaginary “fourth wall.” But as social walls were broken down in the twentieth century, so were theatrical ones. Legendary designer Norman Bel Geddes proposed a theater-in-the-round for the 1933 World’s Fair, and after World War II there were proposals for similar arrangements in cities and universities across the country. The most famous of these was Margo Jones’ treatise on the form, *Theatre-in-the-Round*, for her theater in Dallas. This was to have a profound effect on Zelda.

Financial concerns made the arena form practical for Zelda and Edward Mangum when they converted the Hippodrome movie theater into a 247-seat arena. It saved money on flats and drops and even became a selling point; one early flyer stated, “With no seat more than seven rows from the actors, that makes every seat a best seat.” In the early years, the theater was exploring an aesthetic for its work; critics in the fifties seemed more impressed that the plays could work at all in the round, rather than by the space’s revelations. The Arena aesthetic did not come fully into being until 1960, when a building was specifically constructed to exploit the uniqueness of the space. About this new theater, Zelda observed:

It is a high vaulted room with a ribbed ceiling, pierced by infinite sources of lighting. The stage cube is not small: 30 feet by 36 and 24 feet to the bottom of a large catwalk . . . Not intimacy. Involvement. Not being “a part of the action” but being a witness to it. Not eavesdropping, but attending the event and really looking at it. Not gawking, but watching. Aroused, alert, emotionally involved, but watching. And learning.



Indeed, the challenges of staging a play for the Arena transcend the problems of where to put the door frame (although that is a real concern). A play has to be reinvented so that its dramatic focus can be perceived from all four sides, but also so that its emotional energy expands upwards and outwards for each member of the audience in what has been called “a highly democratic space.”

There are many different conjectures about what works best in the Arena. Serious drama and epic plays seem to have an edge over other forms; the “operating theater” nature of the audience/stage relationship gives strong focus to dramatic moments, and the free form of the space allows for fluid changes of place and time. Shakespeare’s plays are helped enormously by this free form, but in order for the verse to be properly heard and felt, the actors have to be properly trained and the clarity of intention must be particularly specific. Musicals also work well, but one has to consider where to place the orchestra (in *Candide* it was split into four groups and placed partially below stage level; in *On The Town*, it was underneath the stage) and how to deal with the basic “front-cloth” proscenium structure of most musicals.

Two-character scenes are said to be difficult, but *Waiting For Godot* and the final act of *A Doll House* achieved enormous clarity and power. “The arena is a space comprising numberless points of primary focus—wherever you want to put it. Combined with total control of light, the possibilities [for focus] become literally infinite,” said Zelda. The combination of lighting focus, intensity of acting (in a space which allows performers to interact naturally, rather than for a proscenium picture), and the observation vantage point of the audience can make a small scene amazingly potent.

Farces are said to be difficult to manage, because of their propensity for slamming doors, hiding places, and sight gags, but “the dynamics of movement and relationship in the arena form seem to be based on the principle of collision and withdrawal, attraction and repulsion. . . . This gives to the dramatic event an enormous sense of aliveness, of irresistible pulls, of spontaneity—of reality in the fullest sense of the word,” according to Zelda. A director who is gifted at orchestrating comic hilarity, the way Douglas C. Wager did with, for



example, *The Man Who Came to Dinner* and *On The Razzle*, can achieve a dynamism which fuels the farcical machine in an astonishing way. In addition to Zelda and Wager, Arena has had many gifted directors, such as Edwin Sherin, Alan Schneider, and Liviu Ciulei, all of whom can make the space live in any number of ways.

Of course, their greatest collaborators in this art are the set designers. The space presents problems in several dimensions. Designer Tom Lynch said, "Designing here takes more thought: you have to be clear about what's important because you're not going to have so much on stage. You can't say 'maybe we'll have a drop.' There are no maybes." The designer's primary canvas becomes the floor: Lynch painted a withered Fragonard portrait on the floor for *As You Like It*; Andrew Jackness designed a graffiti-and-steel-mesh deck for *Stand-Up Tragedy*; Douglas Stein built *A Doll House's* floor out of an enormous stencilled light box.

But perhaps the major force of the Arena space is to turn painters into architects, forcing designers to sculpt the space in three dimensions, to descend into its six-foot-nine depth, to ascend into its twenty-four-foot height. Robin Wagner was a designer who had a major influence on how the space could be exploited sculpturally. In the mid-sixties, he filled the space with bridges, ramps, and trenches. "The Arena wasn't very old at the time," said Wagner, "and I think every show I did there was a major learning experience because we weren't doing anything that anyone had any experience with—including us." The space above the deck was fully inhabited by David R. Ballou's set for *Pueblo*, which used catwalks and conning towers to create a battleship. Heidi Landesman created a skeletal dome over the stage as a playground for the fairy kingdom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. She also gave the space its very own swimming pool for that production. Other designers created whole worlds under the stage. Ming Cho Lee placed *Don Juan's* apartment under a plexiglass deck. F. Hallinan Flood created a subterranean three-story Irish tenement for *Juno and the Paycock*.

The economic advantages that were apparent in 1950 have been rendered obsolete by the technical and artistic devotion to the work: all costumes and props have to look good from all sides and from as

close as eighteen inches away. Even lighting takes on a different character. As Douglas Wager points out, a blackout is harder to achieve with the same sharpness as on a proscenium stage: "You have to blackout so many more cubic feet of air."

The actors, of course, are the foot soldiers in this battle to create art in a cubic space—the evening is ultimately won or lost with them. Arena actors have to put in twice as much devotion and energy in this space, as they must act with all of their body, even their back, in order to convey their passions and words to the audience. In praising the new Arena space, Richard Coe wrote, "If true acting requires the performers' keenest concentration in conventional theaters, the concentration—and hence the effect—is even keener in this more intimate style."

Defining this "style" has become an on-going proposition. "The implications in terms of acting and directing, in terms of the search for 'truth' within 'style' and the 'style of truth' are enormous," said Zelda. "And although our work in this form has gone on since 1950, we do not feel we have by any means exhausted its challenge." The craftspeople and artists who enter this arena must constantly bring new questions and answers into the space. Rules are constantly being redefined, giving the arena stage its "infinite variety."

Facing page, left: In the Arena, one of the first design questions that must always be addressed is what to do with the stage floor. For Douglas C. Wager's production of *As You Like It*, designer Tom Lynch painted a withered 18th-century landscape on the deck.

Facing page, right: For *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Heidi Landesman built a skeletal dome above the stage and a swimming pool below it to bring to life the fairy kingdom inhabited by Puck (*Charles Janasz*) and Flute (*Richard Bauer*).

Below: Robin Wagner's sketch for *Dark of the Moon*, his first Arena Stage production. "This design fundamentally changed the approach to design at the Arena. Wagner removed part of the stage floor and built under it—something Ming Cho Lee would do more than ten years later; he explored the vertical space of the theater, and filled the theater with ramps, bridges, and constructions not only to provide a variety of acting areas but to create a rhythmic and dynamic space."



THE 1954-55 SEASON

The Crucible

by Arthur Miller
Directed by Elliot Silverstein

Androcles and the Lion

by George Bernard Shaw
Directed by Joan Vail

Golden Boy

by Clifford Odets
Directed by Zelda Fichandler

The Miser

by Molière
Adapted by Miles Malleson
Directed by J. Robert Dietz

The World of Sholom Aleichem

A Tale of Chelm
Bontche Schweig

The High School

Dramatized by Arnold Perl
Directed by Zelda Fichandler

Rain

by John Colton and Clemence Randolph
Directed by Joan Vail

The Mousetrap

by Agatha Christie
Directed by Zelda Fichandler

THE 1954-55 SEASON



Repeating its year-round performance schedule, the new season opens September 7 without a summer break but reducing the number of productions to seven while increasing scheduled runs from four weeks to six weeks or longer.

After previewing at Washington's National Theatre, *All Summer Long* opens on Broadway at the Coronet Theatre with Alan Schneider directing.

Neatly complementing the National's production of *Saint Joan*, Arena produces *Androcles and the Lion* featuring Lester Rawlins in a personal triumph as the Lion.

Arena Stage closes its Hippodrome Theatre after five years of performances in search of a five to six hundred-seat house which will increase potential income to fund the artistic growth of the company and permit raises for a staff and acting company currently working for substandard salaries. In a matchless act of faith, on closing night Zelda hands out matchbooks with ticket stubs attached bearing the inscription: "Admit two to the new Arena Stage." Arena's "Intermission" year begins with the theater postponing production for the 1955-1956 season.

SPOTLIGHTS

The Crucible

Stage and television actor Michael Higgins' powerfully sensitive portrayal of John Proctor in this first post-Broadway production prompted the *Washington Daily News* to suggest that TV might help to build enthusiasm for the living theater and produce a generation of actors with opportunities in a wide variety of mediums. Higgins figured if *The Crucible* played to packed houses for three hundred years at Arena Stage, as many people would see it as see one hit show on TV in a single night. As it was, the show rocked the house with its energy and passion.

Golden Boy

In this landmark production of Odets' play about a gifted young violinist who drives himself to quick fame and early doom as a prizefighter, the Arena acting company took a noticeable step forward in its growth as an ensemble. The *Washington Post* noted, "While there are leading parts (and capably done), the smaller roles and scenes are tightly meshed around them and the company plays with total awareness of each individual. Arena is beginning to achieve something inevitably lacking on most of our American stages." The group spirit was in large part attributed to Zelda's sensitive direction.



ESSAY

People are often known by the company they keep. Arena Stage is known—and renowned—for the company it has kept, the acting company which has been the core of its aesthetic since it was founded. Despite the difficulties and impracticalities of creating and keeping a company, the theater has insisted on this ideal as organic to its artform. The importance of the acting company is perfectly articulated in a 1984 speech of Zelda's:

The centrality of an acting company was never an abstraction but grew out of our over-all view of theater's role in society. We look upon theater as a humanist art, an art deriving from life and seeking, by the artistic means at its disposal, to objectify it, to organize it, so we may better understand it, more clearly recall it, more surely control it. . . . In a theater so conceived, the actor stands at the center, for only a man can represent a man. The actor has the ultimate power—not only to *be* a human being like the rest of us, but to *show* us a human being.

Of course, the actual members of the company change from season to season, but from its beginnings Arena has maintained a core of company actors, supplementing them with guest actors from Washington, New York, and across the country, a basic model that has remained consistent over four decades. However, over the years, out of the comings and goings of hundreds of actors, several key companies clearly emerge. The first company was composed of the gifted young actors—almost all under thirty—who started with Arena in 1950. Coming out of training programs from around the country, they stretched their talents by performing a variety of roles normally denied them by their age. But they grew into their abilities from this challenge and, led by Lester Rawlins (playing thirty-four leading roles in the first fifty productions), actors such as Frances Sternhagen, George Grizzard, Pernell Roberts, Dick O'Neill, Gerald Hiken, Allen Joseph, Alan Oppenheimer, Dorothea Hammond, Anne Meacham, and Henry Oliver became first-rate actors and local favorites.

This company hit its stride in 1954 with Zelda's production of *Golden Boy* which was held up by the critics as a particularly striking example of what a permanent company could achieve. A second company was created by the transition from the Hippodrome to The Old Vat when several returning company members were joined by the new talents of Philip Bosco, Tom Bosley, and, at the end of the decade, Robert Prosky. When the new building was created in 1961, a third company was formed to bring forth a more complex and exciting level of acting to inhabit the new space. Among these highly individual actors were David Hurst, Anthony Zerbe, Roy Scheider, Stephen Joyce, Rene Auberjonois, Melinda Dillon, Ray Reinhardt, Ned Beatty, Jane Alexander, Dana Elcar, Richard Venture, Robert Foxworth, and Richard Bauer. Joining them midway through the decade were George Ebeling, James Kenny, Richard McKenzie, and Ted D'Arms. This company proved to be so evolved that it could expertly tackle such complex shows as *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* and *The Devils*. This momentum built to the production of *The Great White Hope* in 1967, which, ironically, not only demonstrated an ensemble's capability, but also fractured the company as many members left Arena to follow the show to New York.

After a brief experiment with rotating repertory and an integrated company for the 1968-69 season (described more fully in a later essay) and the appearance of actors like Michael Tucker and Jill Eikenberry, the ensemble rebuilt itself in the early seventies to become the fourth company, a group of extraordinary and tireless actors who would take the height of the American acting craft on tour to Russia and Hong Kong, as well as tackling the first wave of Eastern European plays performed in this country. The group contained such favorites as Leslie Cass, Gary Bayer, Max Wright, Mark Hammer, Halo Wines, Terrence Currier, Dianne Wiest, Howard Witt, and Stanley Ander-

son, as well as the continuing talents of Prosky and Bauer. Their level of artistry reached a pinnacle with the Bicentennial Rep of American Plays, a project unthinkable without a committed ensemble.

Several of these artists, such as Anderson, Bauer, Wines, Hammer, and Currier, carried over into the eighties, as others, like Wiest and Prosky, went on from Arena to share their talents with a larger national audience. A new generation of young leading actors came to Arena to fill out the ranks, performers like Tom Hewitt, Randy Danson, Robert Westenberg, Charles Janasz, Christina Moore, Casey Biggs, Marilyn Caskey, and John Leonard Thompson. This fifth company was supplemented by several seasoned actors, such as Tana Hicken and Henry Strozier, who joined Arena from other resident theaters. A major confirmation of this company's ideals and skill came in 1984 when Arena was awarded the largest of nine ensemble grants given by the National Endowment for the Arts to resident theaters focused on building companies. New young actors, such as David Marks, Marissa Copeland, Teagle F. Bougere, Jurian Hughes, and others added vibrancy to the company, coming fresh from New York University's Graduate Acting Program, which Zelda had headed since 1984.

As Arena rides into the nineties, a sixth company begins to emerge, a multicultural ensemble, adding a variety of voices and perspectives to the theater's aesthetic, making good on the promise posed by the 1968-69 repertory.

In describing the Arena actor, twenty-four-year company veteran Richard Bauer said, "Arena develops the whole artist rather than an actor who can play a single role in a given play." An excellent example of this kind of "whole artist" is actor Stanley Anderson, who has been with Arena for seventeen years. Anderson was attracted to Arena because of its high level of "collective consciousness" for an artist—"the company situation was how the best theater was produced." The challenge for Anderson is in the variety a company offers: "Each play is like starting over, and the more variety you show, the more the theater trusts the actor."

In Anderson's view, the familiarity with fellow ensemble actors leads to "a shortcut of process, a shortcut of socialization. With artists like Mark Hammer, Halo Wines, Richard Bauer, whom I've worked with for years, we have a monitoring system for each other. There's a free exchange of notes and ideas, a balance of tact and candor." Sometimes the downside is that familiarity can breed, well, familiarity, and the actor needs to find a way to create an antagonism towards another character when he has nothing but affection for the actor playing that character.

Anderson and his colleagues provide a heartening familiarity for the audience as well; in an era when a permanent acting company is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain, the appearance and emergence of a core group of actors from play to play provides an audience with a tangible form of continuity. And it proves heartening for the actor as well. In Zelda's words:

The individual actor always develops best within a continuing group. It is sometimes quite astonishing to see the flowering that can take place when failures can be outlived, successes are not blown up out of proportion to what life can consistently offer, continuity is assured, casting is sometimes offbeat—for the benefit of the actor, not the management—and friendly faces permit experimentation, a "what-the-hell" attitude towards work that everyone really knows is very serious, and a de-emphasis on quick results.

The results at Arena are anything but quick: the standards of its internationally recognized acting company are the product of forty years of hard and joyous work, a longevity matched by few other companies since the days of Shakespeare and his players.

**THE 1956-57 SEASON
in The Old Vat:**

A View from the Bridge

by Arthur Miller
Directed by Alan Schneider

Tartuffe

by Molière
Adapted by Miles Malleson
Directed by J. Robert Dietz

The Prisoner

by Bridget Boland
Directed by Iza Itkin

The Girl on the Via Flaminia

by Alfred Hayes
Directed by John O'Shaughnessy

Dream Girl

by Elmer Rice
Directed by Zelda Fichandler

Three Plays:

Bedtime Story

by Sean O'Casey

Portrait of a Madonna

by Tennessee Williams

Man Of Destiny

by George Bernard Shaw
Directed by John O'Shaughnessy

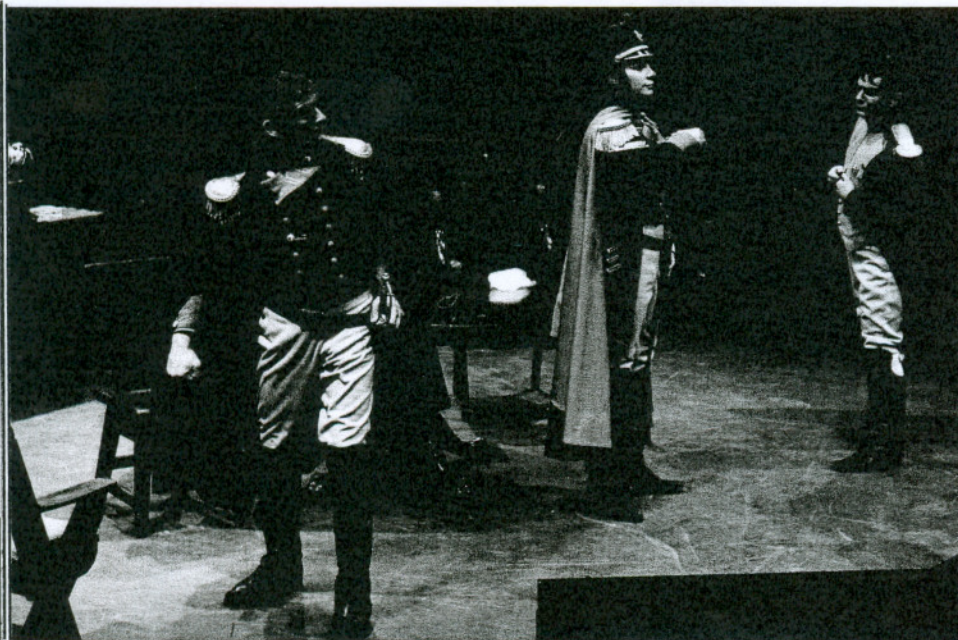
The Three Sisters

by Anton Chekhov
Translated by Stark Young
Directed by John O'Shaughnessy

Witness for the Prosecution

by Agatha Christie
Directed by Zelda Fichandler

THE 1956-57 SEASON



As area theatergoers eagerly anticipate Arena's return, Zelda and Tom Fichandler spend the year searching for a new home for the by now internationally acclaimed theater. The commitment of Board members J. Burke Knapp, Albert M. Berkowitz, Israel Convisser, Leslie Amouri, and Henry J. Danilowicz is instrumental in securing the Old Heurich Brewery as the new Arena Stage. The brewery's "Hospitality Hall" is converted into a five hundred seat theater-in-the-round with increased playing space and a new lighting system specially designed by Leo Gallenstein. Costumer Jane Stanhope, inspired by the brewery's huge kettles, nicknames the theater "The Old Vat," saying, "London has its Old Vic and Washington now has its Old Vat." Richard L. Coe joins the community in celebrating Arena's return, stating: "There is every reason to expect, with its potential increased, Arena's aims and achievements will now be even higher." Fulfilling the promise she made on a hot August night in 1955, Zelda announces that Arena will re-open in its new home on November 7, 1956 with Alan Schneider directing a newly-revised and expanded version of *A View from the Bridge*. Washington theatergoers welcome Arena's return so enthusiastically that *A View from the Bridge* must be extended for two weeks.

SPOTLIGHTS

Three One-Acts

Considered to be an innovative programming idea, this evening of one-act plays was thought to be the season's most inspired bill. Combining O'Casey's farce about a timid bachelor trying surreptitiously to get a girl out of the house at three in the morning with Williams' requiem of a faded spinster afflicted with romantic delusions and Shaw's impudent comedy about Napoleon's encounter with an adventuress made for a three-course meal the public simply gobbled up.

A View from the Bridge

Opening The Old Vat, this production of the revised and expanded version of Miller's play about Italian immigrants in Brooklyn ran concurrently with its London premiere. Alan Schneider worked with Arthur Miller on the script while Schneider was in London directing during Arena's 1955-56 "intermission" season (The pages came "hot off the typewriter"). The *Washington Star* welcomed the return of both: "Under Alan Schneider's vivid direction this was Arena with more than its remembered vigor and spirit, a theatre with something to say and a distinctive way of saying it."



CHRONOLOGY

Top, l to r: Peter Breck, William Conn, and Jerry Rockwood in *Man Of Destiny*. Bottom: Del Tenney, Gene Gross, Allen Joseph, and Margot Hartman in *A View from the Bridge*.

THE 1957-58 SEASON

The Doctor's Dilemma

by George Bernard Shaw
Directed by John O'Shaughnessy

Answered The Flute

by Sam Robins
Directed by Zelda Fichandler

Brother Rat

by John Monks, Jr. and Fred F. Finklehoffe
Directed by John O'Shaughnessy

Juno and the Paycock

by Sean O'Casey
Directed by John O'Shaughnessy

Pictures in the Hallway

by Sean O'Casey
Adapted by Paul Shyre
Directed by John O'Shaughnessy

Two Plays:

Apollo

by Jean Giraudoux
Adapted by Maurice Valency
Directed by Mesrop Kesdekian

The Browning Version

by Terence Rattigan
Directed by Zelda Fichandler

Romeo And Juliet

by William Shakespeare
Directed by Zelda Fichandler

Mademoiselle Colombe

by Jean Anouilh
Adapted by Denis Cannan
Directed by Warren Enters

Summer of the 17th Doll

by Ray Lawler
Directed by Alan Schneider

SPOTLIGHTS

Summer of the 17th Doll

Arena was the first American acting company granted permission to tackle what the Australian playwright adamantly insisted was the kind of play whose essence and mood could not be captured by non-Australian actors; the overwhelming success of this production clinched Arena's growing reputation for making hits out of recent Broadway flops. Washington audiences were so taken with this fascinating portrait of the ambitions, fears and longings of two Australian sugar-cane cutters who hit the big city for a five-month holiday, it could have easily run through the summer had the theater been air-conditioned.

The Doctor's Dilemma

A superior example of Arena's knack for successfully producing Shaw, this production was a glittering showcase for the season's new resident acting company, which included newcomer William Ball as the charming, brilliant, but disreputable artist who causes the dilemma and Astrid Wilsrud as his beautiful wife who turns the head of the doctor in question. Ball would eventually begin directing for Arena and in 1965 would go on to become artistic director of the American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco.



Top, l to r: Dana Elcar, Louise Latham, Margaretta Warwick, and Gaylord Mason in *Summer of the 17th Doll*. Bottom: Astrid Wilsrud and William Ball in *The Doctor's Dilemma*.

THE 1957-58 SEASON

The Ford Foundation takes an important new direction in arts funding by, instead of granting individual fellowships directly, having the fellowships flow through cultural institutions. The Foundation, guided by Vice President for the Humanities and Arts W. McNeil Lowry, also selects Arena as one of ten theaters to receive grants to support the production, during the 1959-1960 season, of new plays by playwrights-in-residence.

Alan Schneider bows out of *Answered The Flute* to direct the premiere of Beckett's *Endgame* off-Broadway. Zelda steps in.

Pauline Flanagan, a member of the Ireland Catholic Actors' Guild, joins the company to play Juno in Sean O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock*. Arena complements its production of the play with a dramatic reading of O'Casey's autobiographical *Pictures in the Hallway* on Saturday matinees and Sunday evenings.

Julie Harris is quoted saying she prefers Arena's production of *Mademoiselle Colombe* to the failed Broadway premiere in which she starred.

Arena's temporary home in the Old Vat building is scheduled for demolition in June of 1959 to make way for the Constitution Avenue Bridge. The company must make plans for finding a new permanent home.

CHRONOLOGY

THE 1958-59 SEASON

The Front Page

by Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur
Directed by John O'Shaughnessy

Three Plays:

Once around the Block

by William Saroyan

The Purification

by Tennessee Williams

A Memory of Two Mondays

by Arthur Miller

Directed by John O'Shaughnessy

The Hollow

by Agatha Christie
Directed by Zelda Fichandler

The Devil's Disciple

by George Bernard Shaw
Directed by John O'Shaughnessy

A Month in the Country

by Ivan Turgenev
Adapted by Emyln Williams
Directed by William Ball

The Plough and the Stars

by Sean O'Casey
Directed by John O'Shaughnessy

The Lady's Not for Burning

by Christopher Fry
Directed by Alex Horn

Epitaph for George Dillon

by John Osborne and Anthony Creighton
Directed by Alan Schneider

THE 1958-59 SEASON



SPOTLIGHTS

The Front Page

The Front Page boasted the largest cast, twenty-five, yet assembled for an Arena production. Tony Dowling led the company as the irascible managing editor at the center of an action-packed Chicago criminal court press room. Within a solid group of mature players, Philip Bosco glittered as a nifty Diamond Louis and Robert Prosky, in his Arena debut, shone as the sheriff who gives the condemned man the gun with which he shoots his way to freedom.

Epitaph for George Dillon

The story of an arrogant young actor-playwright, *Epitaph for George Dillon* was noted as the best production of the season. Filled with carefully drawn cameos, the play afforded many moving performances in the finest tradition of Arena Stage. The first Arena production to tour, it played at the outdoor Boston Arts Festival where on opening night the audience stayed riveted to their seats despite the unseasonable cold and driving rain. When the audience applauded the performers and the performers returned the applause, it was a moment of deserved tribute, on both sides.

New York director John O'Shaughnessy continues his on-going relationship with Arena by committing to four productions this season, beginning with the season opener *The Front Page*.

The eight-play season is scheduled for four-week runs over a thirty-two-week period with a seven-member company including Robert Prosky and Philip Bosco.

Zelda's directorial affinity for Agatha Christie's plays is no mystery, as she makes a third success with *The Hollow*.

Three Arena directors each receive a \$10,000 Ford Foundation grant to assist their creative development. Zelda will use her grant to help increase both the size and salaries of the resident company, to hire an assistant, and to allow her to spend time searching for a new, permanent home for Arena Stage. Alan Schneider and William Ball will use their grants to support their directing endeavors in resident theaters around the country, including Arena.

Arena company veteran George Grizzard receives a Tony Award nomination for his Broadway performance in *The Disenchanted*.

Arena Stage gets a reprieve from the wrecking ball until June 1960. Plans begin for another season in The Old Vat and the building of a new space.



Top, l to r: Harry Bergman, Warner Schreiner, Nicolas Coster, and Richard Lederer in *The Front Page*; Alan Schneider in *Epitaph for George Dillon*.

THE 1959-60 SEASON

Major Barbara

by George Bernard Shaw
Directed by F. Cowles Strickland

Clandestine on the Morning Line

by Josh Greenfeld
Directed by Alan Schneider

Three Men on a Horse

by John Cecil Holm and George Abbott
Directed by F. Cowles Strickland

The Cherry Orchard

by Anton Chekhov
Adapted by Stark Young
Directed by Alan Schneider

The Caine Mutiny Court-Martial

by Herman Wouk
Directed by F. Cowles Strickland

The Iceman Cometh

by Eugene O'Neill
Directed by F. Cowles Strickland

Ring Round the Moon

by Jean Anouilh
Adapted by Christopher Fry
Directed by F. Cowles Strickland

The Disenchanted

by Budd Schulberg and Harvey Breit
Directed by F. Cowles Strickland

SPOTLIGHTS

The Disenchanted

In this memoir of 1939 Hollywood, Philip Bosco triumphed in his toughest role of the season as the broken, haunted novelist, who is reduced to hacking out a movie script with the help of a young admirer, Shep Stearns, a part played in the New York production by George Grizzard. Washington critics felt the play fared better in the round than in its proscenium production in New York. Playwright Budd Schulberg apparently agreed, having come to D.C. to see his autobiographical play and to meet the cast. He was especially taken with Anne Meacham's performance as the novelist's neurotic wife.

Clandestine on the Morning Line

This world premiere was one of eight plays selected for presentation under the Ford Foundation Program for Playwrights, a grant intended to nurture young playwrights through a more complete experience in the production of a play, from casting to actual performance. Compared in reviews to a less self-consciously sentimental William Saroyan, author Josh Greenfeld centered his story around the strangers who frequent the New Coney Island Restaurant and Lunchroom.



Top: Anne Meacham and Philip Bosco in *The Disenchanted*. Bottom: Marion Morris and Harry Bergman in *Clandestine on the Morning Line*.

THE 1959-60 SEASON

Arena Stage becomes a co-producer with Sidney Bernstein, moving its revival of *Summer of the 17th Doll* (with Alan Schneider and three of the original cast members) off-Broadway to the Players Theatre in Greenwich Village. It closes after a five-week run.

F. Cowles Strickland, on sabbatical from Stanford University after two years teaching and directing at Finland's National Theatre, signs on for the season as Arena's first resident director since Alan Schneider.

The Ford Foundation makes Arena's dream come true with a \$127,000 three-year grant which allows Zelda to guarantee annual contracts of \$200 weekly to each member of a ten-person core acting company.

Demolition of the Christian-Heurich Brewery is postponed until June of 1961, providing much needed construction time for the new theater and a final season in The Old Vat.

Tom Fichandler resigns from his job as research associate with the Twentieth Century Fund to sign on officially as Arena's first executive director and as vice president of the Board of Trustees of the Washington Drama Society (Arena's governing body).

CHRONOLOGY