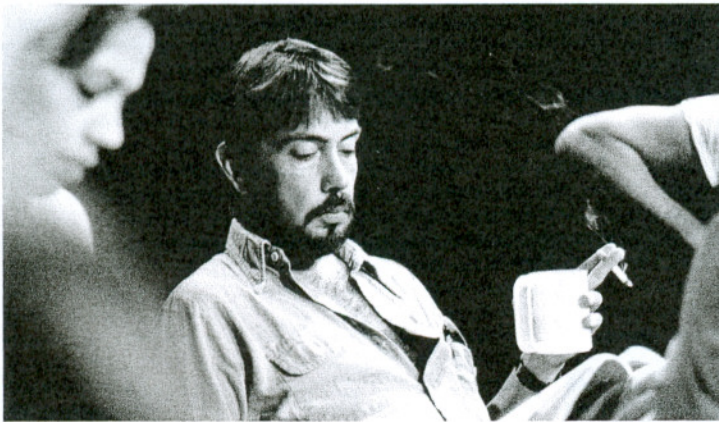


THE 1980S



Another decade, another play, another journey:
At the end of Hugh Wheeler's revision of the 1956 Leonard Bernstein musical, *Candide*, Voltaire's optimistic young hero finds himself on a plot of farm land with his wife and friends after a long journey which has taken him around the continent, across the ocean, through wars and earthquakes. He tells them what he has discovered: "We must make our garden grow." These words were sung at a record 103 performances at the conclusion of Arena's production of the musical in the 1982-83 season.

A year later, at the announcement ceremony of Arena's six-million-dollar Endowment Campaign, Zelda optimistically spoke of another long journey:

We don't know at all that we are the best, but we do know that we are the American theater that has taken the longest journey between the two most distant points, a journey that has touched on all the points in between, missing none... [that we are] still childlike in our curiosity, and divinely restless; still determined that all the nay-saying forces that surround us will be put down; and still guileless and trusting that where vision and imagination are, there will money follow to make them real, and the human folk to dig that money out of the resisting earth.

Guileless and trusting, *Candide* dug into his plot of earth; guileless and trusting, Arena dug into its plot of resisting earth in the eighties, cultivated it, and made it yield forth some astonishing products. It was a decade of new challenges for the resident theater movement. Despite the negative forces of Reaganomics that caused many companies to retrench in their choice of repertory, the movement pressed on and truly became the center of theatrical artistry in America. Arena continued to be one of the country's three or four major companies and the vanguard of the artform it had pioneered. As other theaters outgrew their adolescence, Arena was approaching middle age. As other theaters began to expand in new ways by sending productions to Broadway or by sending their productions on national and international tour for the first time, Arena concentrated its energies on expanding and deepening the possibilities of its own institution, on its own plot of earth in southwest Washington.

Nowhere was this expansion and depth more apparent than in the artwork on stage. There had always been productions of classics, but they became bolder, more visionary, more visually exciting. Directors like Lucian Pintilie and Liviu Ciulei sometimes literally brought the house down, as in the case of Pintilie's *Tartuffe*, broadening our points of contact with a classic text while creating productions that received international attention and triumphed at the box office. Zelda brought to the rehearsal process her special ability for "creating a safe environment for dangerous psychological exploration" as she probed contemporary life through such plays as *The Three Sisters*, *The Crucible*, and *A Doll House*. There had always been productions of comedies, but they became more detailed, more inspired, more full of the kind of life that the Arena acting company could supply in dizzying doses. Directors like Douglas C. Wager, Garland Wright, and Gary Pearle imbued productions like *The Man Who Came to Dinner*, *The Imaginary Invalid*, and *Cloud 9* with a mixture of exuberance and integrity. There had always been productions of musicals, but nothing could match the diverse professionalism of such first-rate productions as *Happy End*, with its Brechtian crackle; *On The Town*, with its goofy ingenuousness; and *Merrily We Roll Along*, with its mordant lyricism, courtesy of Stephen Sondheim.

As an institution, Arena would move ahead with some visionary initiatives, finding, as Zelda predicted, that the money would follow to make the imagination real. The 1983-84 season alone saw the establishment of two important initiatives: the creation of an endowment fund and the expansion and cultivation of the resident ensemble.

The unprecedented endowment was a way of helping to guarantee a future for the theater in what looked like increasingly harder times. The fact that an additional \$6.2 million was raised concurrently with annual fundraising was a tribute to the community and to the theater's development staff. Arena reaffirmed its commitment to its acting company, which carried the banner of the theater's aesthetic and allowed it to produce plays of a size and scope found hardly any place else in the country. The National Endowment for the Arts recognized this achievement by awarding Arena the largest single amount in the country for its ensemble grant.

The decade's close would see two other extraordinary initiatives. After several seasons of reduced activity, Arena decided in 1987 to focus on the research and development of new plays. The Stage Four program would fly in the face of the accepted mode of developing new work: instead of reading and workshoping new plays into oblivion, it channeled the theater's commitment into actual production. While physical resources for these productions were lean, the actors and directors were of the highest talent Arena could provide from within its artistic ensemble. Several of the plays have gone on to further productions and national acclaim, and Stage Four has earned itself a permanent place in Arena's future. Perhaps the most impressive initiative was the cultural diversity program, which sought to include and develop a multiracial artistic ensemble and staff in awareness of the realities of contemporary society. The full story of this five-part program, which included the addition of Tazewell Thompson to the staff as artistic associate and a fellowship program for the training of artists and administrators from minority cultures, is revealed in a later essay, but suffice it to say that its vision attracted the support of the NEA with a \$1 million three-to-one Challenge Grant.

None of these achievements could have happened without an artistic and production staff that worked together like a true ensemble. Douglas C. Wager became associate producing director in 1985, helping to guide the institution through its decade of growth while directing some of the theater's most successful productions. Justly recognized for his sure and ebullient touch with musicals and comedies, Wager also contributed some of the decade's most potent dramatic powerhouses, such as *Execution Of Justice* and *All the King's Men*. Garland Wright became an artistic associate in 1985, bringing his love for language and music together with a knack for restoring classics to vibrant life. Producing Associate James C. Nicola coordinated the increasingly complex season casting, while making a reputation for himself as a first-rate director of contemporary plays. The annual logistics of juggling a thirteen-production season in three theaters with 175 staff employees and over 300 guest artists qualified Guy Bergquist to be an honorary Flying Karamazov Brother. Starting in 1982 as production coordinator, Bergquist eventually became so integral to the running of the institution that he became associate producer in 1988.

By the time the decade ended, Arena could look back on ten years of the most substantial growth and change in its history. In 1980, the annual operating budget was \$4.1 million; by the decade's close, it was just shy of ten million dollars, one of the largest, if not the largest non-profit theater budgets in the country. There were changes in management: Tom Fichandler, the financial and managerial leader of the theater since its inception, retired in 1985. William Stewart, who had run the American Shakespeare Festival and the Hartford Stage Company, became the theater's managing director for three seasons.

But as Arena entered its fourth decade, it made perhaps its most significant change. On April 3, 1990, Zelda announced that she would relinquish her post as producing director at the end of the 1990-91 season. In addition to a continued association with the theater as a director and artistic associate, Zelda will expand her commitment to

actor development by becoming the artistic director of The Acting Company, a national touring company of classical actors founded in 1972 by John Houseman and Margot Harley. She will also continue as artistic director of the Graduate Acting Program at New York University, which she revitalized to serve as a source of young actors for the resident theater movement.

In the wake of Zelda's departure, a newly constituted artistic management team was put together. Zelda's position of producing director was eliminated and her overall responsibilities realigned. The Board of Trustees named Douglas C. Wager as artistic director, responsible for the theater's artistic vision, both seasonal and long-range in scope. Stephen Richard, previously managing director of the Pittsburgh Ballet, was named executive director, making him responsible for overseeing Arena's long-range fiscal needs, its development efforts, and its relations with the local and national communities. Guy Bergquist became the theater's general manager, responsible for delivering plays from plan to performance and running the complex day-to-day operations of the building. Richard W. Snowdon, president of the Board, commented, "Now Zelda can fulfill long-held personal and professional visions and we can engage a superb artist as our artistic leader, while the theater is in a position of strength."

As the decade closed, however, several pressing challenges from the world outside began to loom large. In the discomfiting shadow of possible funding reductions and the political reevaluation of the NEA, Arena became more and more aware of the importance of a cogent national policy for the support of the arts. Although the storm clouds hovering over the NEA seemed to be clearing by the end of 1990, Zelda herself testified before Congress in mid-May on behalf of Arena's sister theaters:

What has been built in roughly the past third of a century is an American National Theatre—the fastest growth of a new form for the arts in history. It is a theater admired now the world over. . . for its energy, its level of artistry, its originality, its playwrights, its amazing power of survival with a minimum of government support—and admired for its freedom of dissent, up to now unhampered.

Arena Stage had reached the year 1990 having lived out the whole history of this "fastest growing art form in history" and was in a privileged position to be its spokesperson. In the words of Hugh Southern, the director of the NEA's own Theatre Program in 1985:

[Arena] has led, defined, and redefined the regional theater movement in the United States. At this point, it is the flagship of the not-for-profit theater: an immensely successful company with a keen artistic vision, a large and committed family of artists, a superbly capable support organization, a complete and workable facility, and secure finances. In short, in all respects, the envy of and a beacon for the theater field.

And the ship sails on.

Facing page, top: In 1985, Zelda received The Acting Company's John Houseman Award for "commitment and dedication to the development of young American actors." Houseman (seated, right) was not only a major producer with the Federal Theater Project in the thirties, but was the first artistic director for The Acting Company. At the end of the 1990-91 season, Zelda will leave Arena to become the artistic director of this institution.

Facing page, middle: As an artistic associate in the early eighties, Garland Wright directed such productions as Molière's *The Imaginary Invalid* and Brecht's *The Good Person of Setzuan*. In 1985 he was appointed to succeed Liviu Ciulei as artistic director of the Guthrie Theater.

Facing page, bottom: Douglas C. Wager first came to Arena in 1974 as a stage management intern, went on to become the theater's associate producing director, and will become artistic director in July, 1991.

THE 1980-81 SEASON

The Flying Karamazov Brothers (OVR/SP)

Gertrude Stein
Gertrude Stein
Gertrude Stein

by Marty Martin
Directed by Milton Moss (K/SP)

Galileo

by Bertolt Brecht
In the version by Charles Laughton
Directed by Martin Fried (A)

One Mo' Time by Vernel Bagneris
Directed by Vernel Bagneris (K)

The Man Who Came to Dinner
by Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman
Directed by Douglas C. Wager (A)

Banjo Dancing or the 48th Annual Squitters Mountain Song Dance Folklore Convention and Banjo Contest...and how I lost

Devised by Stephen Wade with Milton Kramer
Directed by Milton Kramer (OVR/SP)

The Suicide
by Nikolai Erdman
Adapted by Richard Nelson

Directed by Gene Lesser (A)

Kean

by Jean-Paul Sartre
English version by Frank Hauser
Based on the play by Alexandre Dumas
Directed by Martin Fried (A)

The Carousel of New Plays In Repertory:

Disability: A Comedy

by Ron Whyte
Directed by Richard Russell Ramos

The Child

by Anthony Giardina
Directed by Douglas C. Wager

Cold Storage

by Ronald Ribman
Directed by Ron Lagomarsino (K)

God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater

Based on the novel by Kurt Vonnegut
Book and lyrics by Howard Ashman
Music by Alan Menken
Additional lyrics by Dennis Green
Directed by Howard Ashman (A)

American Buffalo

by David Mamet
Directed by Robert Prosky (OVR/SP)

Pantomime

by Derek Walcott
Directed by Martin Fried (K)

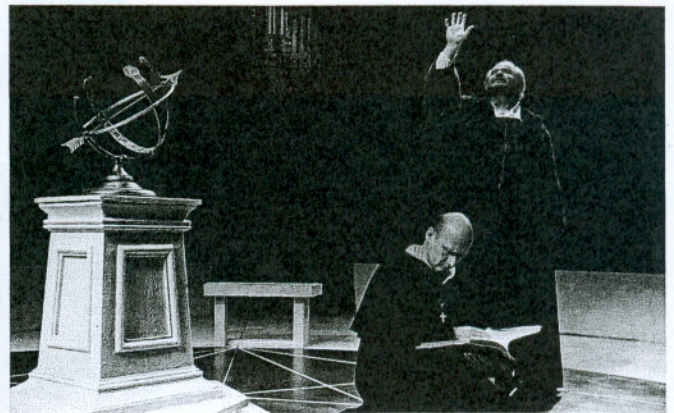
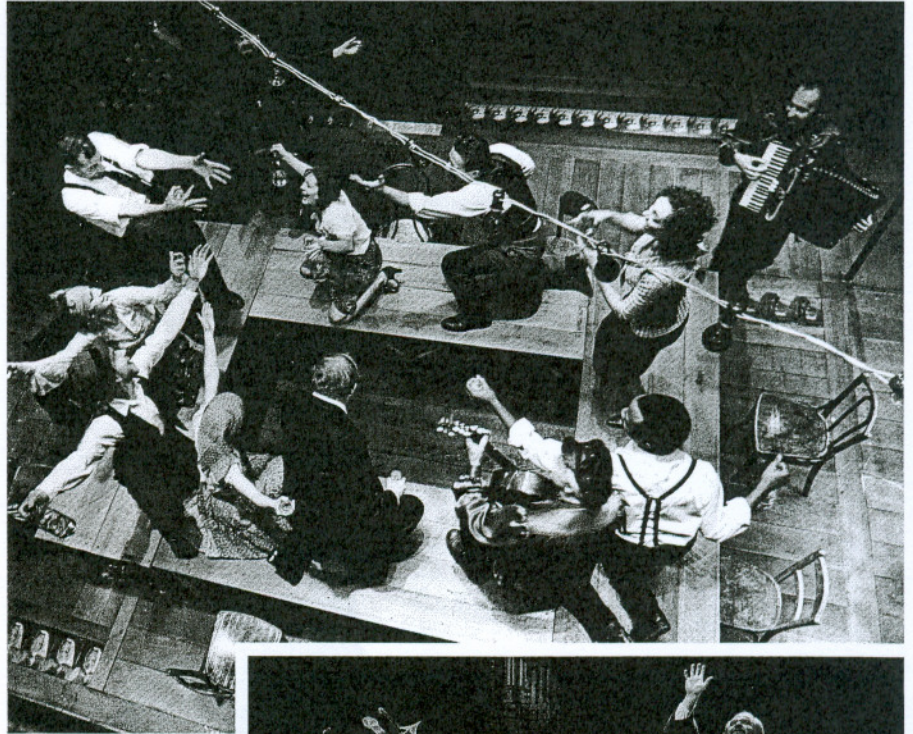
SPOTLIGHTS

The Suicide

Nikolai Erdman's 1932 frenzied political farce, repressed by Stalin, was smuggled to the West in the 1970s after the playwright's death. Richard Nelson's appropriately subversive adaptation, coupled with Tony Straiges' two-story metal framework set, showed how political opportunists capitalized on the planned suicide of an average citizen to further their own causes. It was another Eastern European triumph for Arena, described as "if Shakespeare, Joe Orton and Gogol had been able to collaborate on a comedy."

Pantomime

The American premiere of West Indian playwright Derek Walcott's *Pantomime* followed hot on the heels of his winning a MacArthur Foundation "genius" grant. The play shed new light on the master-slave relationship within the confines of a hotel on the island of Tobago where the white proprietor (played by Richard Bauer), a has-been English music-hall performer, and a black calypso singer/hotel worker (played by Avery Brooks) discover the perils of racial role-playing while undertaking a dramatization of *Robinson Crusoe*.

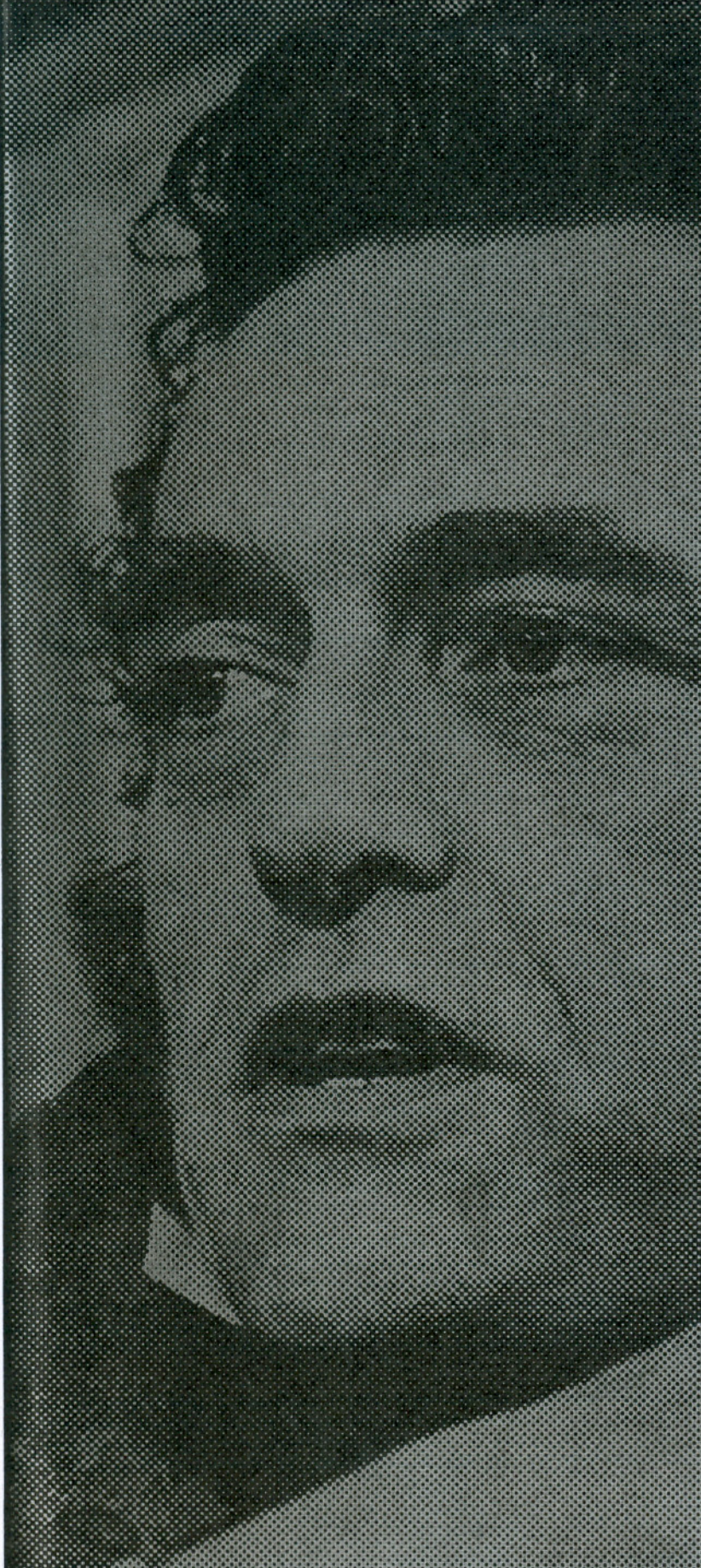


Galileo

In this opening production of the thirtieth anniversary season, Robert Prosky played the title character in Brecht's portrait of the Italian astronomer who bowed to pressure from the Inquisition and chose to recant his scientific theories rather than sacrifice his life's work—and his life. By chance, the opening of the show coincided with the Vatican's announced decision to reconsider their condemnation of Galileo in 1633 for his "heretical" defense of the Copernican system. The timeliness of the production caused it to be covered far and wide, prompting Zelda to comment, "People always think we plan these things—that's just the way it happens."

Top: The cast of *The Suicide*. Middle: James Tolkan and Robert Prosky in *Galileo*. Bottom: Richard Bauer and Avery Brooks in *Pantomime*.

THE 1980-81 SEASON



Following her two-year sabbatical—the latter half of which was devoted to planning the thirtieth anniversary season—Zelda returns to Arena full-time as the theater begins a particularly eclectic third decade with a gala celebration during the run of *Galileo*.

Hindsight reveals the understatement of the season, perhaps of the decade, as one journalist notes that "Stephen Wade may be here all summer." Wade's unique creation, *Banjo Dancing*, "a one-man sampler of American folklore," goes on to play in the Old Vat Room for eight years, totaling 2,198 performances.

Arena's restrooms are made wheelchair accessible, and the theater becomes one of the first public-use buildings to install a wheelchair lift.

The Exxon Corporation gives \$54,500 to Arena for its thirtieth anniversary. Donald Smiley, vice president of the Exxon Corporation, announces the gift, the largest made to date by a private corporation to Arena, as an "indication of Exxon's continuing support for and general faith in the fine work of Arena. The theater merits recognition and support from the private sector."

Liviu Ciulei, who has been associated with Arena since 1974, is appointed artistic director of the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis.

Local news reports a decline in all area theaters' subscriptions due to the recession. Inflation is cited as the primary culprit in the theater's struggle for fiscal balance.

President Reagan proposes 44% cuts in NEA and NEH budgets. Innumerable artists come to D.C. to testify and protest the cuts. Among them is James Earl Jones, who cites the importance of the training and development provided by an endowed non-profit theater such as Arena. Business leaders support the artists, saying that the corporate community could not bridge the significant gap that would be left by the proposed cuts. Eventually, an 11% cut is made, which is consistent with the across-the-boards cuts to other agencies made during the Reagan administration.

An unprecedented spring sees all of Arena's three theater spaces active until June. With the "Carousel of New Plays" it is possible to see as many as four plays in three days under the same roof.

A fourteen-year-old blind girl speaks for the first time in seven years during a Living Stage performance in which children in the audience are invited to create the play's ending. One actor, unaware that the girl doesn't speak, invites her to ride in an imaginary taxi and tries to engage her in conversation. "Stop the cab!" the girl yells in reply. "The keys to my heart are lying on the sidewalk."

Stanley Anderson (*pictured*), one of Arena's most versatile actors, turns his talents to portraying one of the most versatile actors of the nineteenth century, Edmund Kean, in *Kean*, a portrait of the thespian by Jean-Paul Sartre, by way of Alexandre Dumas.

THE 1981-82 SEASON

Gertrude Stein Gertrude Stein Gertrude Stein

by Marty Martin
Directed by Milton Moss (K/SP)

Major Barbara

by George Bernard Shaw
Directed by Martin Fried (A)

The Flying Karamazov Brothers (K/SP)

A Lesson from Aloys

by Athol Fugard
Directed by Douglas C. Wager (K)

A Midsummer Night's Dream

by William Shakespeare
Directed by David Chambers (A)

Tomfoolery

by Tom Lehrer
Adapted by Cameron Mackintosh and
Robin Ray
Directed by Douglas C. Wager (K)

A Delicate Balance

by Edward Albee
Directed by Zelda Fichandler (A)

Undiscovered Country

by Arthur Schnitzler
In a version by Tom Stoppard
Directed by Garland Wright (A)

K2

by Patrick Meyers
Directed by Jacques Levy (K)

Animal Crackers

Book by George S. Kaufman and
Morrie Ryskind
Music and lyrics by Bert Kalmar and
Harry Ruby
Directed by Douglas C. Wager (A)

Banjo Dancing (ÖVR/SP)

SPOTLIGHTS

Undiscovered Country

Director Garland Wright turned his unique combination of mordant wit and visual style to Tom Stoppard's version of the 1911 Arthur Schnitzler play *The Vast Domain* which depicted the fall of Vienna while exploring the effects of greed and corruption on one man, his family, and friends. The highly stylized set and costumes by Adrienne Lobel and Marjorie Slaiman reflected the *haute* mood of the times run amok in the irrational territory of human behavior.

A Midsummer Night's Dream

Avery Brooks as Oberon and Kathleen Turner as Titania commanded the stage as well as their fairy kingdoms in this novel interpretation, but the real star of the show was Heidi Landesman's set, a lunar landscape replete with a four-foot-deep swimming pool as Titania's bower. The floor was made of sixty pieces of individually sculpted styrofoam covered with fifty gallons of latex. The production was touted as combining 2001, a Chagall painting, and a Ziegfeld water ballet. Said Bob Mondello of the *City Paper*, "You may have gone for the pool, but you'll take home the poetry."



Tomfoolery

Composer/lyricist Tom Lehrer was, in his own words, "making a general nuisance of himself at rehearsals" for the American premiere of this adaptation of his witty and irreverent satire. Lehrer, the "Jonathan Swift of songwriters," left no stone unthrown as he manically mocked American fears and anxieties from mushroom clouds to New Math. Director Douglas C. Wager, musical director Rob Fisher, and costume designer Marjorie Slaiman subsequently moved the production to the Charles Playhouse in Boston, which came to be affectionately referred to as "Arena North."

Top: Charles Janasz (center) and the cast of *Undiscovered Country*. Middle: Timothy Jerome, Eric Weitz, and Terrence Currier in *Tomfoolery*. Bottom: Avery Brooks and Kathleen Turner in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.



THE 1981-82 SEASON

Arena is chosen from among fifteen hundred applicants for a \$100,000 grant from the Kresge Foundation. The grant is designated for a new, computerized lighting system for the theater to replace a ten-year-old system that had been put together from discarded elements sold at auction by the federal government. The new system will provide increased artistic possibilities.

"Audio Description," a service to provide visually impaired patrons with a live, in-performance description of sets, casts, and stage action, is conceived by longtime Arena Stage house manager Wayne White and developed with the help of Margaret Rockwell and volunteers from the Washington Ear Theater Audio Service. The system has since been adopted by arts organizations throughout the country.

The production of *Major Barbara*, Arena's third of that play, coincides with Shaw's 125th birthday year.

Tony-award-winning actor Zakes Mokae joins company members Halo Wines and Stanley Anderson in Douglas C. Wager's production of Fugard's *A Lesson from Aloes*. Hap Erstein of the *Washington Times* called the play "a time bomb [with] the explosive power of shrapnel cutting to the heart of what it means to betray one's beliefs and friends."

The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation awards Arena a \$100,000 grant for general operational support.

Inspired in part by the Royal Shakespeare Company's unique adaptation of *Nicholas Nickleby*, Douglas C. Wager, Producing Associate James Nicola, and members of the company work with playwright Lanie Robertson in an attempt to fashion a play from the Sinclair Lewis book, *Elmer Gantry*. Arena presents the play as a workshop.

The National Theater, citing a lack of available touring plays, decides to close for the summer. The theater remains dark from April 1982 until June 1984.

PBS airs a thirty-minute documentary on Living Stage's work with various audience groups, including very young children, nine- and ten-year-olds, physically disabled children, women and men in prison, and senior citizens.

Zelda and David Lloyd Kreeger are selected as two of five honorees of the National Choral Foundation at the Kennedy Center.

K2 and *Animal Crackers* open back to back and are extended simultaneously to packed houses in the Kreeger and Arena theaters. The American Theater Critics Association holds a conference in D.C. during these runs, which leads to national press coverage, including this comment by Sylvie Drake of the *Los Angeles Times*: "If intelligent diversity is a measure of a theater's creative genius, the Arena Stage has got it all." Charles Janasz (pictured) silently stole the show—as well as the silverware—as Harpo in *Animal Crackers*.

THE MAKING OF K2



Top: From left, set designer Ming Cho Lee and lighting designer Allen Lee Hughes (with headphones) at work during a technical rehearsal.

Bottom: Over 50,000 board-feet of plastic foam was needed to build the glacial mountain on the Kreeger stage.

Facing page: In *K2*, all the elements of production came together in what was hailed as an extraordinary union of acting, direction, design, and technical ingenuity.

Inset: From left, Technical Director David Glenn, director Jacques Levy, and cast members Stephen McHattie and Stanley Anderson during a rehearsal.

If there was ever an artistic endeavor at Arena Stage that seemed like climbing Everest, it was undoubtedly the making of *K2*.

Patrick Meyers' 1982 play concerns the harrowing adventures of two amateur mountain climbers as they make their descent from the peak of *K2*, the world's second largest mountain. Trapped on an icy ledge some 27,000 feet high, both men come to terms with their past, present, and precarious future, as one of them, Taylor, attempts to retrieve a lost rope and carry his injured companion, Harold, to safety.

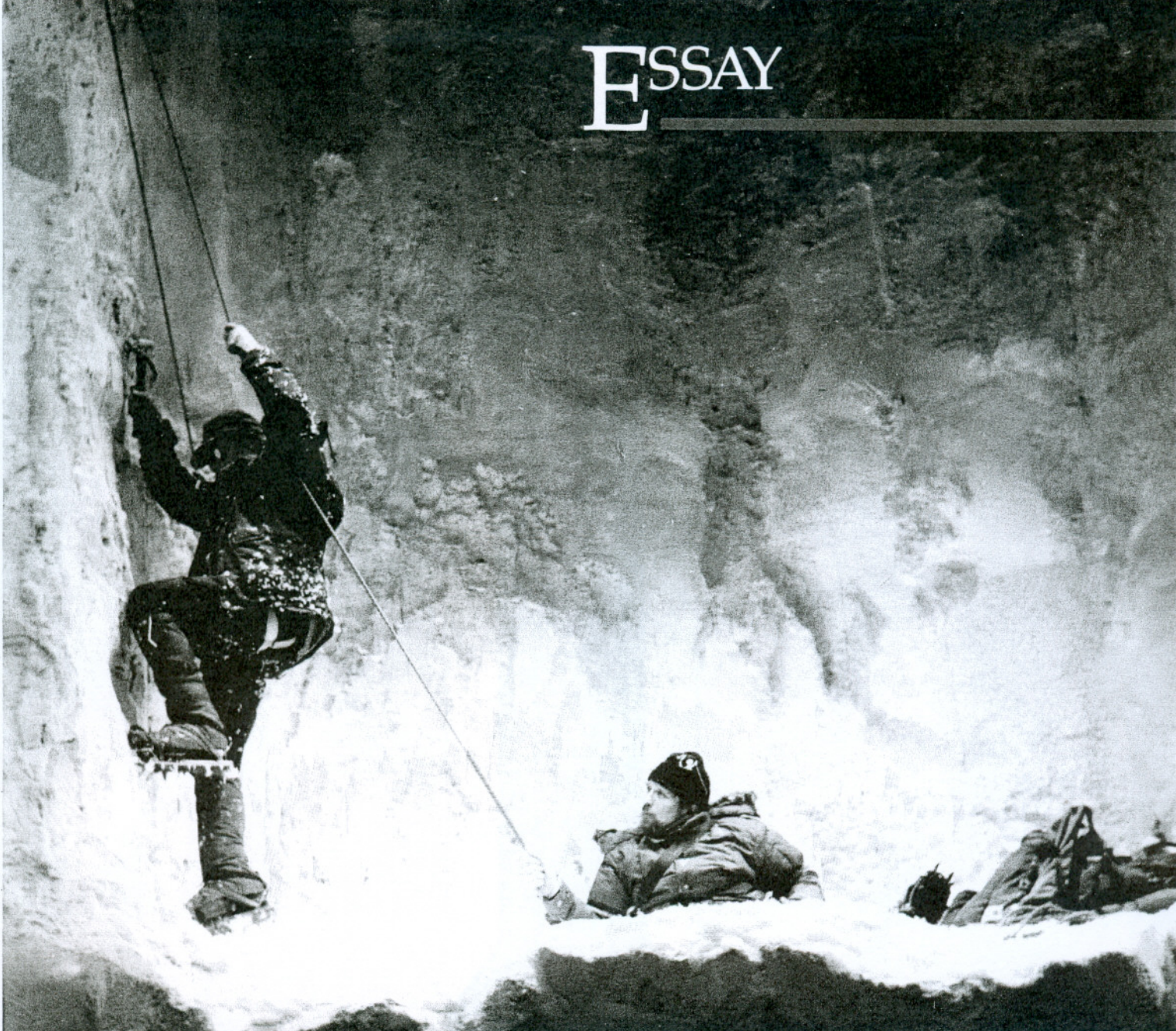
Although the play had been performed previously in New Hampshire on an abstract set, Arena Stage and director Jacques Levy decided on the tantalizing challenge of creating a realistic environment. Indeed, Technical Director David Glenn made some early inquiries into the use of real ice and snow machines. But after designer Ming Cho Lee presented the crew with designs that looked like topographical maps and several meticulously carved models, it became clear that styrofoam and ingenuity would replace Mother Nature. As Master Carpenter James Glendinning noted, styrofoam had already been used a number of times to create contoured decks in the Arena—the trick for the *K2* team was essentially to stand such a deck perpendicular to the Kreeger stage and thereby create a glacial mountain.

After building a skeleton of scaffolding in the Kreeger, some 50,000 board-feet of plastic foam were applied to the set, with eight 8' x 16' plastic foam blocks forming the center section where most of the action takes place. The foam was carved, sealed, painted, and, in a wonderfully simple solution, ice was added: "The set builders didn't believe me," said Lee, "but I discovered that white tissue paper, stretched and painted with an acrylic, gave it a translucent, icy appearance." The illusion of different ages of ice was created by using different shades of paint on different areas of the mountain. In fact, the only non-plastic substance on the set was a white carpet on the deck of the ledge—without it, the actors' crampon-shod boots would have pulled up chunks of styrofoam.

However, the most astonishing pinnacles of achievement of the highly acclaimed evening were a perfect marriage of script, direction, acting, design, and technical ingenuity. In his attempt to secure a dangling rope, Taylor (Stephen McHattie) hacks into the ice wall and, with pick and crampons, scales it beyond the audience's view. High-density urethane foam was built into the wall to form the climbing path—the chewed-up sections were frequently replaced during the run. A three-hundred-pound avalanche of artificial snow, choreographed brilliantly with Jay Rosenberg's sound and Allen Lee Hughes' lights, accompanied Taylor's second climb. But it was the third climb, when Taylor slipped at the height of the set (the audience could only see his legs dangling) and then plummeted past the ledge, only to be retrieved by Harold (Stanley Anderson), that made the audience gasp in astonishment. The fall was achieved through a complicated rigging switch of climbing ropes just below the grid.

Hughes' lights helped to make the illusion complete by painting the set with everything from the hope of a Himalayan sunrise to the doom of an avalanche. Noel Borden's costumes were specially designed to keep the actors comfortable while wearing gear designed for sub-zero weather. When the show moved to Broadway the next season, Lee won the Tony Award and Hughes a nomination for their work, but the problems and solutions had been dealt with at Arena first. For David Glenn, it was a "once in a lifetime" experience: "No one had ever climbed foam before. Actually, so much stuff we did nobody had done before." A towering achievement by an acclaimed design and technical team working at their peak.

ESSAY



THE 1982-83 SEASON

The Flying Karamazov Brothers (K/SP)

On The Razzle

by Tom Stoppard
From a play by Johann Nestroy
Directed by Douglas C. Wager (A)

Home

by Samm-Art Williams
Directed by Horacena J. Taylor (K)

Monteith And Rand

Directed by Bill Russell (K/SP)

Cymbeline

by William Shakespeare
Directed by David Chambers (A)

The Imaginary Invalid

by Molière
Translated by John Wood
Directed by Garland Wright (K)

Screenplay

by István Örkény
Adapted by Gitta Honegger with
Zelda Fichandler
From a literal translation by
Eniko Molnar Basa
Directed by Zelda Fichandler (A)

Geniuses

by Jonathan Reynolds
Directed by Gary Pearle (A)

Buried Child

by Sam Shepard
Directed by Gilbert Moses (K)

Candide

Music by Leonard Bernstein
Book adapted from Voltaire by Hugh Wheeler
Lyrics by Richard Wilbur
Additional lyrics by Stephen Sondheim and
John Latouche
Directed by Douglas C. Wager (A)

Still Life

by Emily Mann
Directed by James C. Nicola (SC)

Banjo Dancing (OVR/SP)

SPOTLIGHTS

Still Life

The converted Kreeger rehearsal space was inaugurated as a fourth performance space, The Scene Shop, with this engrossing drama about a Vietnam Vet, his wife, and his lover. Playwright Emily Mann interviewed three people in Minnesota for her quasi-documentary piece about people trying to make sense out of the post-Vietnam era. According to one reviewer, James C. Nicola's production "snaps, crackles and pops with electricity."

Candide

Director Douglas C. Wager worked with designer Zack Brown on the "best of all possible productions" as nearly 90,000 people attended this revision of the 1956 Leonard Bernstein musical odyssey based on Voltaire's classic tale of undaunted optimism in the face of catastrophe. The set of this extravaganza included four sunken orchestra pits, moving platforms, traps, puppets, and elevators. The show broke all previous box office records; it was held over for two months and closed only when it absolutely had to in order for the new season to begin.




On The Razzle

The American premiere of Tom Stoppard's lively adaptation added twentieth century punch and puns to Johann Nestroy's 1842 comedy and was a dazzling success. The Nestroy play, which was also the inspiration for Thornton Wilder's *The Matchmaker* and spawned the musical *Hello, Dolly!*, traces the hijinks of two assistant grocers (one of whom was played by Christina Moore, dressed as a boy) who decide to live like rich people for a night out "on the razzle." David Richards praised director Douglas C. Wager's ability to achieve "the same massive orchestration of people and props that Napoleon brought to the battlefield" while remaining "astutely aware of those little nuggets of comedy tucked away in a corner."

Top: Charles Janasz, Christina Moore, and Halo Wines in *Still Life*. Middle: Stanley Anderson and Christina Moore in *On The Razzle*. Bottom: Marilyn Caskey and Paul Binotto in *Candide*.

THE 1982-83 SEASON



Zelda is appointed artistic advisor of the newly formed Huntington Theatre Company in Boston, affiliated with Boston University where she taught. As artistic advisor she will consult with the producing director, Peter Altman, on decisions in all artistic areas. Altman lauds Zelda, saying, "Her sensitivity and experience will be invaluable as we proceed to choose the artists and produce the plays of our first season, and as we develop our plans for the future."

Company member Richard Bauer is featured as Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* at the Folger Theater.

The season opens with a gala for Tom Stoppard's *On The Razzle* attended by British Ambassador Sir Oliver Wright, Lady Marjory Wright, Secretary of State George Schultz, and Herman Wouk.

Zelda and Elspeth Udvarhelyi, director of development, travel to Budapest, Hungary to get a sense of the culture, architecture, and the circus which figure prominently in Arena's upcoming production of István Örkény's *Screenplay*. They also see a production of the play at the Vigszínház Theater, where the dramaturg—Örkény's widow, Susan—consults with Zelda about the play.

Howard Sackler, author of Arena productions *Mr. Welk and Jersey Jim* and *The Great White Hope*, dies on the Spanish island of Ibiza at the age of fifty-two.

Mayor Marion Barry declares December 13, 1982 Robert A. Alexander Day, and Alexander is named Washingtonian of the Year by *Washingtonian* magazine, which proclaims, "Robert Alexander is not on a job, he is on a mission." For his part, Alexander says, "Nothing less than changing the world is what I am about."

National Geographic features Arena as one of the top institutions "making the nation's capital distinctive."

PlayLab, a series of new-play readings, takes place between January 30 and February 20. Over the next six seasons, plays by such writers as Heiner Müller, Maria Irene Fornes, Dick Beebe, Emily Mann, and Harry Kondoleon will be given readings as part of the program.

Arena gets a \$15,000 grant from Atlantic Richfield to begin a three-year project to computerize administrative functions.

In spite of NEA budget cuts, Arena is noted by the *New York Times* to "illustrate a vitality on the regional front, a forerunner in that pack and an influence on all the others."

Arena receives a \$100,000 grant from the Andrew Mellon Foundation. The three-year grant will support the production of classics and contemporary plays that merit revival.

Garland Wright's penchant for Molière results in a delightfully zany production of *The Imaginary Invalid*. Christina Moore (pictured) is the textbook definition of a "saucy maid."

THE 1983-84 SEASON

Monteith And Rand

Assisted by Bill Russell (K/SP)

The Importance of Being Earnest

by Oscar Wilde

Directed by Richard Russell Ramos (A)

Beyond Therapy

by Christopher Durang

Directed by Gary Pearle (K)

As You Like It

by William Shakespeare

Directed by Douglas C. Wager (A)

The Three Sisters

by Anton Chekhov

Translated by Randall Jarrell

Directed by Zelda Fichandler (A)

Accidental Death of an Anarchist

by Dario Fo

Adapted by Richard Nelson

From a literal translation by Suzanne Cowan

Directed by Douglas C. Wager (K)

Quartermaine's Terms

by Simon Gray

Directed by Jacques Cartier (A)

Cloud 9

by Caryl Churchill

Directed by Gary Pearle (K)

Happy End

Lyrics by Bertolt Brecht

Music by Kurt Weill

Book and lyrics adapted by Michael Feingold

Directed by Garland Wright (A)

Foolfire

by Bob Berk

Directed by Ricardo Velez (K/SP)

Banjo Dancing (OVR/SP)

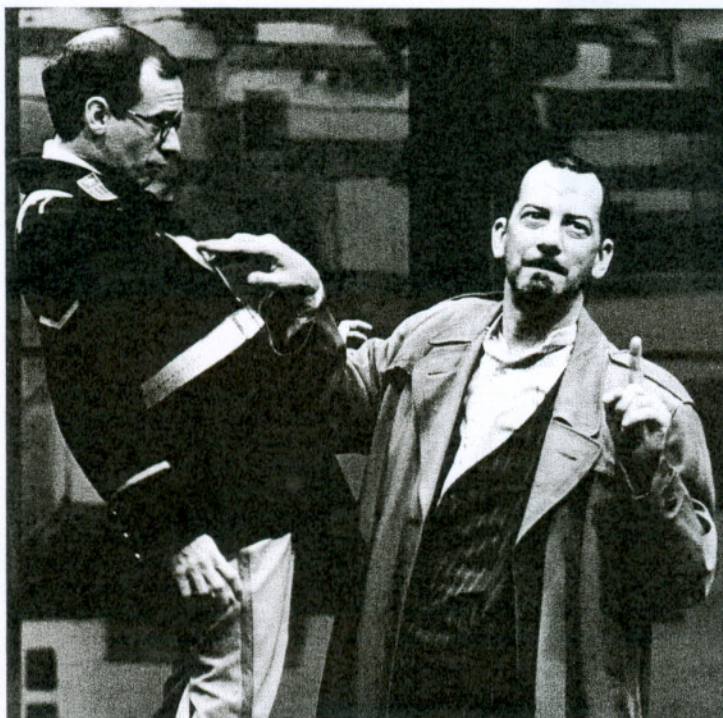
SPOTLIGHTS

Cloud 9

A play "with more insidious reverberations than the San Andreas fault," Caryl Churchill's maze of sexual inversions explored sexual confusion from 1880s Victorian British Africa to 1980s London. Women played men, men played women, adults played children and subscribers wrote letters—mountains of them. David Richards of the *Washington Post* proclaimed the production "a treat... a feast... a comedy of dizzying intelligence."

Accidental Death of an Anarchist

A political farce loosely based on an actual incident in which a detainee "fell" from a window in a Milan police precinct, this American premiere of a commissioned adaptation by Richard Nelson stirred furor in the international literary community when the State Department denied visas for playwrights Dario Fo and his wife, Franca Rame, citing them as "dangerous individuals" for their Communist affiliations in Italy. Later, the show would move to New York, again under Douglas C. Wager's direction, and the husband/wife playwrights would finally be admitted to the country.




The Three Sisters

This rendition of Chekhov's 1901 classic captured the Prozorov sisters' longing for immortality and fear of being forgotten in a riveting production that "looks, sounds, feels, *smells* Russian." Photography was integral to the interpretation: in the first scene one of the soldiers brought a camera to Irina's saint's day celebration. During the fire, the remains of the camera were poignantly presented, and nostalgic photos were hung in the eaves of the set ceiling. In collaboration with set designer Alexander Okun, former art director at the Moscow Art Theater, Zelda created a world immortal in memory for its subtle and searching depiction of yearning mortality.

Top, l to r: Halo Wines, Kevin Donovan, Christina Moore, Mark Hammer, Stephen Mellor, and Cherry Jones in *Cloud 9*. Middle: Christina Moore, Halo Wines, and Randy Danson in *The Three Sisters*. Bottom: Michael Jeter and Richard Bauer in *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*

THE 1983-84 SEASON



The Theatre Communications Group issues a report showing the curbing of artistic/creative activity due to budgetary restrictions among its constituent theaters. Arena Stage is one of the few exceptions to the trend.

In cooperation with several area theaters, Arena hosts the annual holiday performance to gather food for the city's needy. On stage in the Kreeger: a reading of *Peter Pan* with Christina Moore in the title role and Richard Bauer as Captain Hook. Price of admission: Five pounds of non-perishable food. Two tons of food are collected.

Waiting In Vain, *Women And Rape*, and *Me Too! Me Too!*, three demonstrational pieces, are incorporated in two special events in an effort to allow the public to view Living Stage's work. *Waiting In Vain*, a piece about a fifteen-year-old poet struggling against racism and poverty, is revived for three evenings in April after playing for two nights in January to sellout audiences.

Soviet director Yuri Lyubimov is ousted from his position as artistic director of the Taganka Theater in Moscow after extending his trip to the West by eight months. Arena negotiates to bring him to D.C. to direct for the theater.

While in London working on a new American play, Alan Schneider is fatally struck by a motorcycle as he crosses the street. The loss to Arena—and the American theater—is incalculable. On the eve of the opening of his 1973 production of *Our Town*, Schneider had said, "I can't believe it's twenty years ago we first did *Our Town* at Arena, and think of all the lives in that production that have crossed and recrossed again since. . . . Best of all, Arena's still here, the idea and the ideals stronger than ever. What Arena began has been spreading and I hope to be around to stage Thornton's timeless play in 1993. It's not so far off and we'll all be more so of whatever we are now!"

Arena Board president Lee G. Rubinstein announces the start of a \$6 million fund drive, "The Arena Stage Campaign," the first move to endow a non-profit resident theater company in the nation's history. AT&T gives Arena \$50,000, the first corporate gift received by the campaign office.

Upon being named chair of the Graduate Department of Acting and Directing at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, Zelda states, "I see this connection as an important means for the developing of acting companies."

A happy end to the season is provided by Brecht and Weill's *Happy End*, which features Henry Strozier (pictured) as a wigged-out criminal genius, the Professor. The production is videotaped for PBS.

SPECIAL PRODUCTIONS

ESSAY



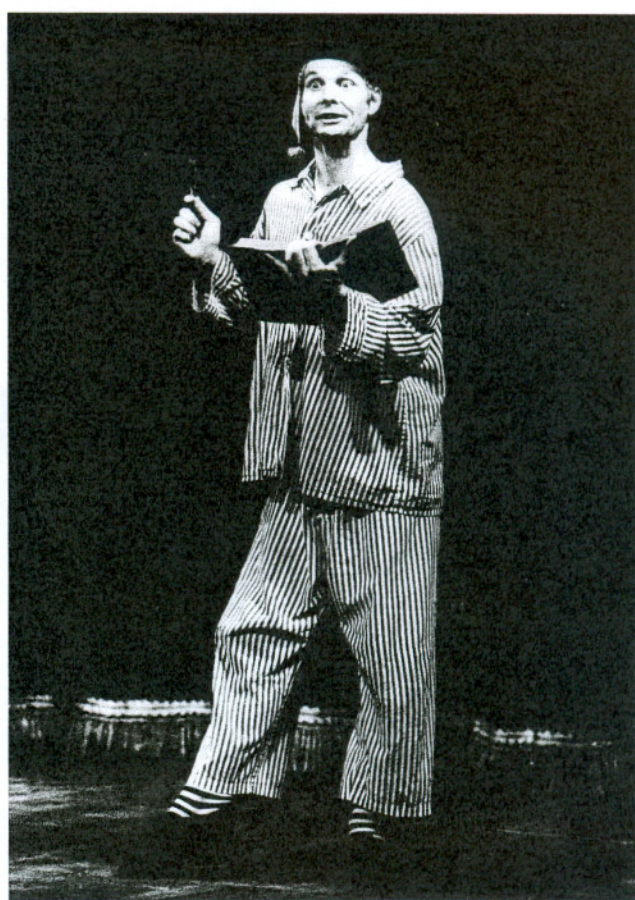
Every family has its favorite uncle. He's a familiar type: he comes by once a year—usually during Christmas—tells stories, cracks a few jokes, maybe sings a song or two. And then he moves on to other pastures and you're always sorry when he leaves. Arena's artistic family is no different. Even within a busy season of anywhere from ten to fourteen plays, there is always time to host a gifted relative in the arts. Whether the uncle has a banjo, or is an aunt who does a great impersonation of a famous Parisian writer, or is a team of cousins who juggle the table silverware, Arena has, in its special productions, presented some of the country's most talented performers on its stages.

When the new Kreeger Theater was conceived in the late sixties, one of its possibilities was to offer a space for guest productions that could comfortably house everything from a one-person show to a music concert. Special productions offered the opportunity for additional income, as well as programming to keep the theater open and in use during the year when there were gaps in the season schedule. The special productions have always been of a special caliber from the start, when the Kreeger's second show in 1970 was *Jack MacGowran in the Works of Samuel Beckett*. The well-known Irish actor adapted excerpts from Samuel Beckett plays to create this one-man performance piece not about Beckett's life, but about his philosophy. Playing to sold-out houses for a two-week run before embarking on his world tour, MacGowran commented at the time, "It's amazing how the reaction to Beckett has changed in the last ten years or so. I remember playing *Endgame*—I think we ended up playing to four people. Now you can play Beckett to packed houses for weeks and weeks. I don't think audiences have changed that much. It's just that now audiences understand Beckett and understand what he is saying."

Two other popular solo performers were Welsh actor and playwright, Emyln Williams, and actress Pat Carroll. Williams performed his world-famous program as Charles Dickens in 1975, reading an ever-changing selection of pieces by the English novelist, and returned the next season with a similarly structured program, this time in the guise of his fellow Welshman, Dylan Thomas. One visit to Arena was not enough for the collaborators of *Gertrude Stein Gertrude Stein Gertrude Stein* either. Pat Carroll had commissioned the show as a vehicle for her ebullient personality and brought the one-woman performance about the Left Bank legend as a pre-season special event for the 1980-81 and 1981-82 seasons. One writer heralded the show as "certainly the most artistically rewarding of the season's openers."

The same season as Carroll's debut, comedy made an obstreperous entrance with the Flying Karamazov Brothers. Their motto: "Juglito ergo sum." "They're not brothers. They don't fly. And they aren't Russian. The four-man team from California combines juggling, vaudeville, and cheap theatrics in a Marx Brothers style," said a local critic. This hilariously inventive foursome played the *Old Vat Room* and the Kreeger for three successive seasons. They kicked off their visit at the beginning of the 1982-83 season by arriving for a press conference via helicopter. They were so popular that, for their 1986 production (entitled—groan!—*Juggle And Hyde*), one tier of the Arena was closed off and they performed in that larger space, demonstrating, among other amazements, their challenge to the audience that they could juggle practically any item the audience cared to heave at them. They usually won the bet.

Actor/clown/performance artist Bill Irwin took his particular brand of civilized insanity to the Kreeger for a successful holiday performance in 1986. *The Regard of Flight*, which mixed lowbrow antics with highbrow theory, was probably the most successful vehicle for the "New Vaudevillians," a loose term for comic performers influenced by the best bits of Chaplin and Beckett. "It's a handy phrase and so it won't



die," said Irwin. "We disdain the term, but end up using it." It was a welcome sight to see the avant garde skewered. When the character of a pretentious professor went up to Irwin and said, "So, you're a prophet," and Irwin responded, "No, non-profit," he had clearly found a home at Arena. Other "New Vaudevillians" included the silent, graceful, acrobatic Avner the Eccentric, who seemed to have a running battle with the props of the physical world; Monteith and Rand, whose witty and sexy improvisational repartee was so well-suited to the vagaries of the nation's capital that they performed three separate times during the eighties; and Geoff Hoyle, a versatile clown and actor whose history of foolery, *The Fool Show*, was capped by the appearance of a three-legged man.

Music has played an important part in these special productions. Sandra Reaves-Phillips' self-explanatory *The Late Great Ladies of Blues & Jazz* and *Closer Than Ever*, an unofficial sequel to Maltby and Shire's *Starting Here, Starting Now* (which was a success in the Old Vat) both received their fare share of acclaim. But the sound of music became the sound of money in July of 1986. *Beehive*, a musical revue dedicated to the pop girl-groups of the fifties and sixties, was still running in Greenwich Village when a second company was cast and a set built at Arena. The combination of hip tunes and hot weather must have created the euphoria among the local critics: the raves were so extraordinary that Arena sold \$28,306 worth of tickets in one day—to this day a box office record. Only the beginning of Arena's 1986-87 season could force the closing of this *Beehive*, which made plenty of honey and plenty of money.

And then, of course, there's Arena's favorite performing uncle, who brought his banjo and his clog shoes over one January 15th in 1981 and stayed. Stephen Wade's *Banjo Dancing: or the Forty-eighth Annual Squitters Mountain Song Dance Folklore Convention and Banjo Contest... and how I lost* became more than an Arena Stage phenomenon, it became a national phenomenon, chalking up 2,198 performances in the Old Vat Room, making it Washington's longest-running production. Wade, who is an archivist of American folklore as well as a banjo virtuoso, brought his unique blend of banjo playing and storytelling to the Old Vat from Chicago in what was supposed to be a three-week run. He came to Washington the same week as Ronald Reagan and outlasted even him.

There have been many attempts to analyze Wade's remarkable

doomed to failure because they fail to take into account his extraordinary rapport with his audience and his almost moving devotion to his craft and its history. In a simple, unpretentious way, Wade spins tall tales in a spellbinding manner, interspersed with displays of virtuosity on any one of his vast collection of banjos. He has always worn his traditional blue suit, blue shirt, and blue tie, explaining, "When you look at pictures of old-timey musicians, you see that they are in their best clothes. Going to play for someone always has been a formal occasion." Wade stopped performing *Banjo Dancing* in 1989 to open the equally successful *On the Way Home* in the Old Vat, but, he said: "I still get nervous every show. Theater's value partly derives from the fact that it can be good enough to be repeated. I wanted to create something that would be wonderful all the time for everybody who came to see it. That's really hard. I mean, I don't know if it's really hard—it's not like digging coal. That's really hard, I guess. But this is a religion. That's what you're talking about here for me."

The energy from these artists has come back to Washington and Arena in many different ways. Pat Carroll returned to Washington to become a unique classical actress with the Shakespeare Theatre at the Folger in the late eighties. Douglas C. Wager directed Bill Irwin in *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* when he moved his production to Broadway. Stephen Wade composed and arranged the music for Arena's 1989 production of Sam Shepard's *A Lie of the Mind*. They have rounded out the balance of the artistic season, giving further variety to an already diverse selection of plays. The table always has a place set for these special production performers, for they have become part of Arena's extended family.

Facing page, top: Stephen Wade's *Banjo Dancing* was originally slated to run for three weeks in the Old Vat but became a Washington phenomenon that lasted over eight years.

Facing page, middle: The Flying Karamazov Brothers in their 1986 extravaganza, *Juggle And Hyde*.

Facing page, bottom: Actress Pat Carroll's one-woman performance as Gertrude Stein was presented twice.

Above left: Geoff Hoyle's hilarious one-man history of clowning, *The Fool Show*.

THE 1984-85 SEASON

Woza Albert!

Created by Percy Mtwa, Mbongeni Ngema and Barney Simon
Directed by Barney Simon (K/SP)

The Tempest

by William Shakespeare
Directed by Garland Wright (A)

The Gospel at Colonus

Conceived, adapted and directed by Lee Breuer
Music composed, arranged and directed by Bob Telson (A)

Passion Play

by Peter Nichols
Directed by Elinor Renfield (K)

Man And Superman

by George Bernard Shaw
Directed by Douglas C. Wager (A)

Real Estate

by Louise Page
Directed by Christopher Markle (K)

Tartuffe

by Molière
English verse translation by Richard Wilbur
Directed by Lucian Pintilie (A)

Isn't It Romantic?

by Wendy Wasserstein
Directed by Amy Saltz (K)

Execution Of Justice

by Emily Mann
Directed by Douglas C. Wager (A)

Banjo Dancing (OVR/SP)

SPOTLIGHTS

Tartuffe

Romanian director Lucian Pintilie's singular interpretation of Molière's masterpiece of a manipulating religious con man incisively illuminated corruption in the modern world. Radu Boruzescu's set transformed the Arena into an asylum: off-white tiles extended from the floor of the set up the audience steps and onto the walls where four large clocks kept apprehensive time. In the apocalyptic denouement, the theater shook, the tiled walls and floor collapsed, and a "deus ex helicopter" chopped its way onto the stage "detonating a ton of dramatic TNT."

The Gospel at Colonus

Director Lee Breuer and composer Bob Telson presented their thrilling hybrid of gospel music and Greek tragedy in the Arena. The fifty-seven-person cast helped re-enact the story of the blinded Oedipus and his exile, narrated by a Pentecostal preacher played by Morgan Freeman. Clarence Fountain and the Five Blind Boys of Alabama joined in, making the show a force of power that threatened to lift the roof off the Arena. An enthusiastic devotee praised it as "a play that turns you inside out, steam cleans and presses you, and leaves you purified and delighted, if exhausted."



Execution Of Justice

Emily Mann's confrontational docudrama cross-examined what led to the 1978 assassinations of San Francisco mayor George Moscone and city supervisor Harvey Milk (a revered, openly gay official) at the hands of Dan White, a disgruntled former city councilman at odds with the changing socio-political climate of the city. Ming Cho Lee's set, which cast the audience as jury, had four video screens that broadcast historical film footage, slides, titles, and live images from two on-stage television cameras, allowing the audience "to witness the world on different levels simultaneously" as the action paralleled "everyday reality at flashpoint."

Top: Isabell Monk and Katherine Leask in *Tartuffe*. Middle, l to r: Martin Goldsmith, Richard Bauer, Mark Hammer, and Casey Rizzo in *Execution Of Justice*. Bottom: Morgan Freeman



THE 1984-85 SEASON

After years of looking for additional space in which to work and rehearse, Living Stage finds a new home at the Old Bali Club on 14th and T Streets, N.W. Robert Alexander is quoted in the *Washington Post*: "I can't imagine a better place than 14th Street to be with the people." The eighty-nine-year-old building has an extensive history: when it was a jazz club in the 1940s, Louis Armstrong, Billie Holiday, and Charlie Ventura performed there.

The Kennedy Center announces its intention to form a resident theater operating within the Center's theater complex on the banks of the Potomac. Twenty-six-year-old Harvard wunderkind Peter Sellars is made artistic director of the ambitious undertaking named the American National Theater. The ANT lasts only three seasons.

Accidental Death of an Anarchist, a highlight of the 1983-84 season, opens on Broadway, directed by Douglas C. Wager and featuring British actor Jonathan Pryce, MacArthur genius grant recipient/"new vaudevillian" Bill Irwin, and Patti LuPone. It lasts thirty-five performances.

Presidential candidate Walter F. Mondale and family come to see *The Gospel at Colonus* and meet with Tom Fichandler.

In conjunction with its production of *The Gospel at Colonus*, Arena sponsors a discussion on the "history and impact of spiritual and gospel music" at the 19th Street Baptist Church. Director/playwright Lee Breuer and Pearl Williams of the University of the District of Columbia conduct the session.

Members of the Royal Shakespeare Company, on tour in Washington, perform Peter Barnes' *Lament For Armenians* and *Grey Viruses* in the Old Vat Room as part of their community-outreach efforts.

Garland Wright, affiliated with Arena since directing *Undiscovered Country* in the 1981-82 season, is appointed artistic associate.

The Washington Capitals hockey team comes to see *Man And Superman*. Quips one reporter, "Some of the Caps may come to see it as comparable to a stint in the penalty box."

The Washington Theater Awards Society announces the first annual Helen Hayes Awards, created to recognize excellence in the community as well as "bring a sense of solidarity for Washington theater." Arena receives twenty-five nominations and wins three awards for *Cloud 9*: Outstanding Resident Production, Director (Gary Pearle), Lead Actress (Halo Wines); and two awards for *Man And Superman*: Outstanding Lead Actor (Francois de la Giroday) and Costume Design (Marjorie Slaiman).

Arena's first production of Shakespeare's elegiac final play, *The Tempest*, is the stuff that dreams are made on. John Leonard Thompson (*pictured*) makes some of them come true as Ariel.