

THE 1985-86 SEASON

Avner The Eccentric
by Avner Eisenberg (K/SP)

The Good Person of Setzuan

by Bertolt Brecht
Translated by Ralph Manheim
Directed by Garland Wright (A)

'Night, Mother

by Marsha Norman
Directed by James C. Nicola (K)

Women And Water

by John Guare
Directed by Douglas C. Wager (A)

**The Regard of Flight and
The Clown Bagatelles**

Written by Bill Irwin
Original music by Doug Skinner (K/SP)

Restoration

by Edward Bond
Music by Nick Bicat and John McKinney
Directed by Sharon Ott (A)

The Wild Duck

by Henrik Ibsen
Translated by David Westerfer
Stage version by Lucian Pintilie
Directed by Lucian Pintilie (K)

The Philadelphia Story

by Philip Barry
Directed by Douglas C. Wager (A)

Old Times

by Harold Pinter
Directed by Garland Wright (K)

The Taming of the Shrew

by William Shakespeare
Directed by Douglas C. Wager (A)

Stray Dogs

by Julie Jensen
Directed by James C. Nicola (OVR)

Banjo Dancing (OVR/SP)

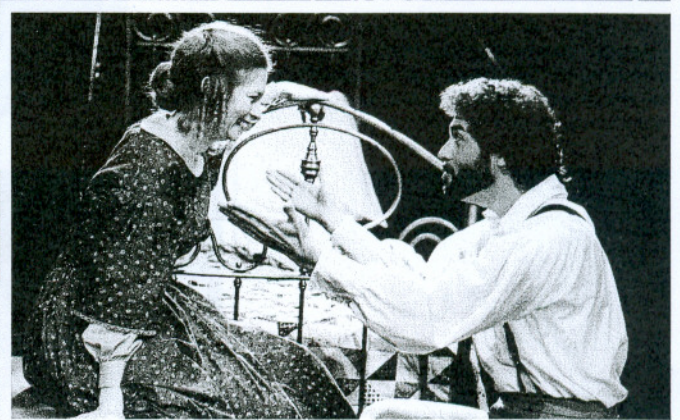
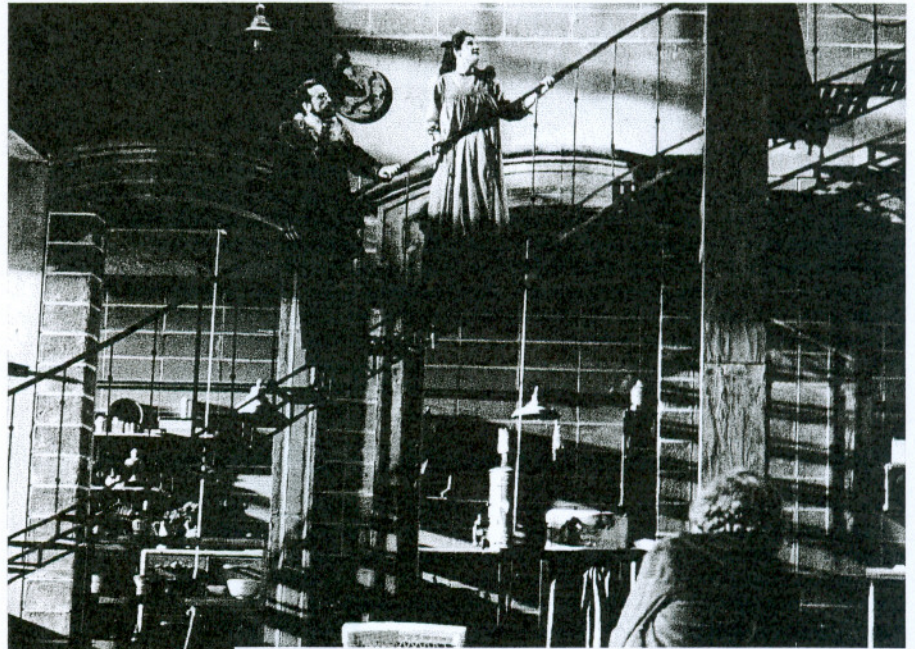
SPOTLIGHTS

The Wild Duck

Lucian Pintilie returned to explode Ibsen's parable of illusion and reality as it affects a photographer and his family by literally stripping the Kreeger to its bare walls. To show "the corrosive effects of wealth and envy," Pintilie and his designer Radu Boruzescu built an opulent mirrored set for the first act, only to reveal the back walls of the theater for the rest of the play. However, it was the powerful cast and the intense, yet often hilarious, playing of the scenes that made this one of the Kreeger's most popular shows. The *New York Times* said Pintilie "had found more in *The Wild Duck* than one ever knew was there."

The Taming of the Shrew

Ferrari, Gucci, and Fiorucci may not have existed in Shakespeare's Padua, but they figured prominently in this ultra-contemporary look at the Bard's famous battle of the sexes. Richard Bauer spoke the prologue in the guise of Shakespeare himself and what he would have made of Casey Biggs and Randy Danson's (as Petruchio and Kate) wooing scene around and in a hot tub is anybody's conjecture. A special performance of this flashy, often poignant conflation of commedia dell'arte and the Downtown scene featured a tribute to the departing Tom Fichandler.

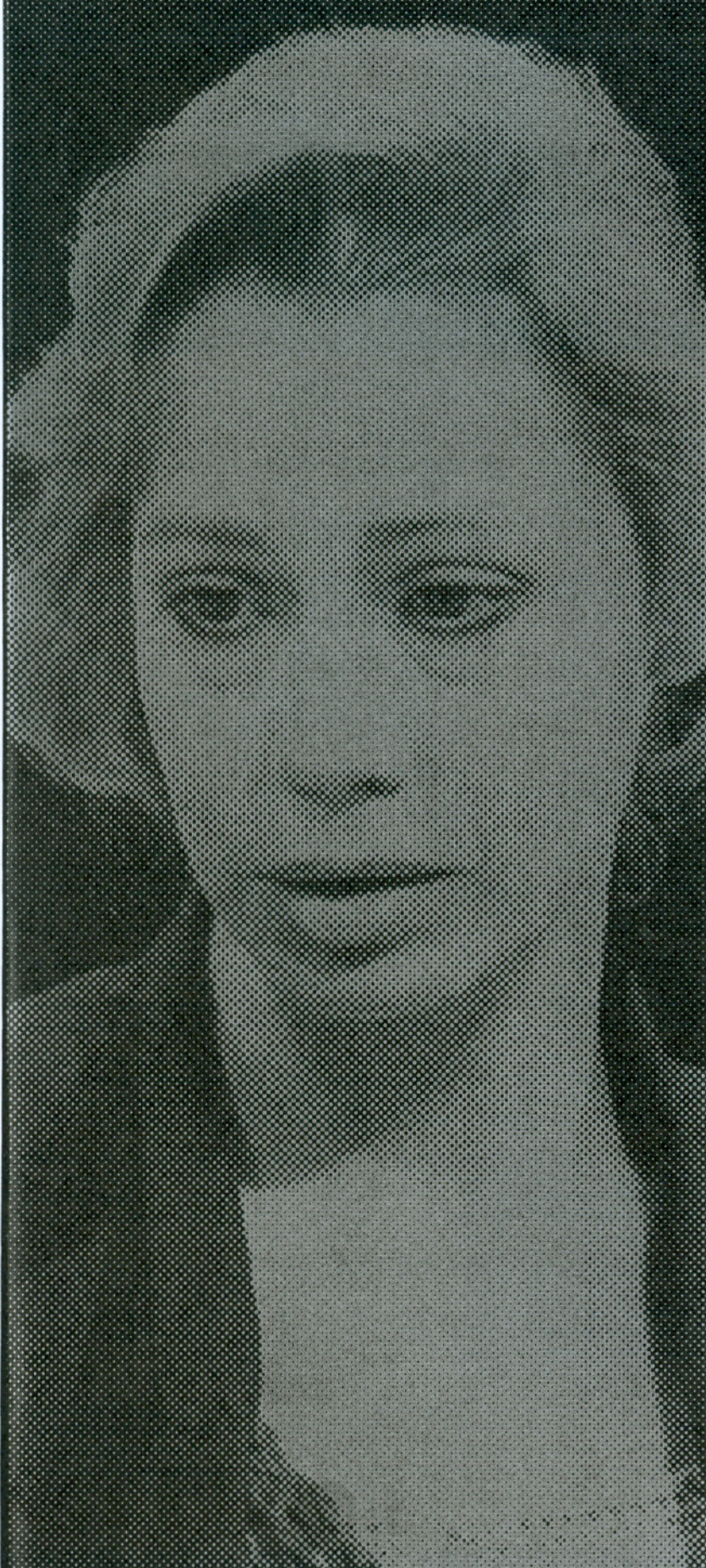


Women And Water

This was John Guare's third play in a projected tetralogy called "The Nantucket Cycle." Developed with the Arena company, this world premiere told the story of a Civil War nurse, Lydie Breeze (played by Cary Anne Spear), and the men in her life, as they dream of a nineteenth-century utopia. Twenty-nine actors took the sprawling story through a steamboat trip, ghostly mariners, a battle between Lee and Grant, and meetings with buzzards and a wild boar (played by Stanley Anderson—he researched his part at the National Zoo). Critics found this attempt to encompass the scope of nineteenth-century melodrama unwieldy, but impressive.

Top: Christopher McCann, Rebecca Ellens, and Richard Bauer in *The Wild Duck*.
Middle: Cary Anne Spear and Tom Hewitt in *Women And Water*. Bottom: Casey Biggs and Randy Danson in *The Taming of the Shrew*.

THE 1985-86 SEASON



Arena doubles its acting company to eighteen members and puts them all on full-year contracts, courtesy of a five-year NEA matching grant of \$1,032,500. This enables a core company to work on developmental projects with artistic associates and designers during the summer, to participate in training, and to become the center for a larger acting ensemble during the regular season. This new company spends its first summer residency at Colorado College, teaching students and workshopping *Main Street*, *Nijinsky's Diaries*, and *Women And Water* with playwright John Guare.

William Stewart, who had been the managing director of the Hartford Stage Company and the American Shakespeare Festival, is chosen as the first managing director to succeed Tom Fichandler.

For the opening-night gala of the thirty-fifth anniversary season, a black-tie audience watches *The Good Person of Setzuan*. The contrast between the formally attired house and the aggrieved, impoverished urban characters in Brecht's parable about the world's cruelty does not go unnoticed.

One month after Arena's production of *Execution Of Justice* is slated to move to Broadway, Dan White, whose murder trial is the subject of the play, takes his own life in prison.

Zelda wins the Sixth Annual Commonwealth Award for Distinguished Service in the Arts. Previous winners of the \$16,000 cash award include Tennessee Williams, Laurence Olivier, Joseph Papp, Harold Prince, Jessica Tandy and Hume Cronyn, Athol Fugard, and Stephen Sondheim.

Arena steps up its program for handicapped accessibility, installing a TDD (telecommunications device for the deaf) in the box office and offering large-print playbills to visually impaired patrons. It becomes a model for theaters across the nation.

As Garland Wright takes over from Liviu Ciulei as artistic director of the Guthrie Theater, PBS' "American Musical Theater" series televises his production of Brecht and Weill's *Happy End*, which he directed for Arena's 1984-85 season.

Living Stage performs *Images* for one week in Pittsburgh and for two weeks in Boston. The new piece deals with a disabled youth who finds himself pitted against a prejudiced and competitive world. Both residencies are funded by a \$60,000 grant from the Hasbro Children's Foundation.

New plays at Arena get a double boost at the end of the season: Out of 1,200 scripts read for the Foundation of the Dramatists' Guild/CBS New Plays Program, Julie Jensen's *Stray Dogs* is chosen to be performed for three weeks in the Old Vat Room with James C. Nicola directing. Also, *Reader's Digest* awards a three-year, \$25,000 grant for playwriting.

Execution Of Justice takes the Helen Hayes Award for best resident production and Douglas C. Wager is honored for its direction. Randy Danson (*pictured*) receives an award as Outstanding Lead Actress for her performance as the divided Shen Te/Shui Ta in *The Good Person of Setzuan*.

THE 1986-87 SEASON

Beehive

Created and directed by Larry Gallagher (K/SP)

The Flying Karamazov Brothers (A/SP)

The Marriage of Bette and Boo
by Christopher Durang
Directed by James C. Nicola (K)

Measure For Measure

by William Shakespeare
Directed by Douglas C. Wager (A)

The Piggy Bank

by Eugène Labiche and A. Delacour
Translated by Albert Bernel
Directed by Garland Wright (A)

Crime And Punishment

by Fyodor Dostoyevsky
Adapted by Yuri Lyubimov and Yuri Karyakin
Translated by Michael Henry Heim
Directed by Yuri Lyubimov (K)

Glengarry Glen Ross

by David Mamet
Directed by Douglas C. Wager (A)

Ourselves Alone

by Anne Devlin
Directed by Les Waters (K)

Heartbreak House

by George Bernard Shaw
Directed by Mel Shapiro (A)

The Late Great Ladies of Blues and Jazz

Conceived and written by Sandra Reaves-Phillips (K/SP)

The Crucible

by Arthur Miller
Directed by Zelda Fichandler (A)

Banjo Dancing (OVR/SP)

SPOTLIGHTS

Beehive

"Sock it to me, give it to me, *Beehive!*" raved a local critic in what was, by comparison, a fairly sober critique of this summer book-in musical revue. Phone lines were jammed the day after the reviews, with the box office selling a record 1,394 tickets in one day (three hundred is considered average). Extended until September 14, the show could have run longer if it weren't for the commitment to Arena's regular season. Said one of the show's disgruntled producers: "You want to know the difference between Broadway and regional theater? Regional theater is where you close a show that's grossing \$82,000 a week."

The Crucible

Arena's third mounting of Miller's tale of persecution and unexpected heroism was directed by Zelda in a time which, sadly perhaps, seemed ready for it again. In an age of AIDS, public intrusions into private lives, and moral zealotry, Zelda made the play come alive again by centering on "how much you have to save for yourself in terms of private conscience." The production, framed by designer Douglas Stein's suspended windows, had one preview performance in the Arena before a week's performance at the Israel Festival in Jerusalem and then returned for an acclaimed run.

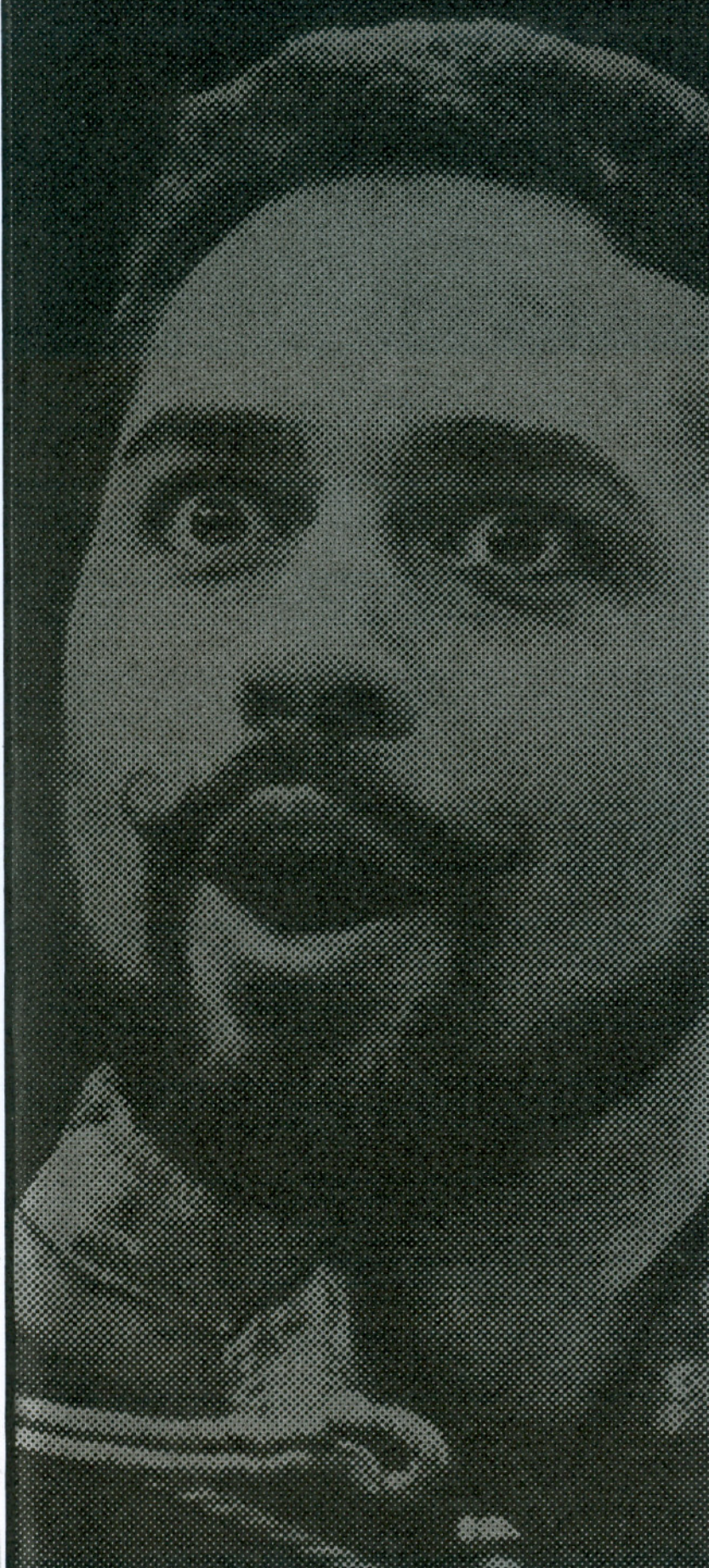


Crime And Punishment

Exiled Moscow director Yuri Lyubimov's American debut with his legendary adaptation of Dostoyevsky's novel attracted international attention. Rehearsals were surrounded by rumors of his reinstatement to the Taganka Theatre by the Soviet government, but it didn't materialize until 1988. What did materialize was an extraordinary, brilliantly disciplined fragmentation of the classic story of the murderer Raskolnikov and his nightmarish descent into guilt and understanding. A minimal representational set, hand-held lighting, and the authority of a world master working with an American company made this a critical and financial success of the first order.

Top: The cast of *Beehive*. Middle: Randle Mell and Kate Fuglei in *Crime And Punishment*. Bottom: Robert Westenber and Randy Danson in *The Crucible*.

THE 1986-87 SEASON



The Endowment Campaign exceeds its original goal by raising \$6,260,250. The NEA contributes \$750,000; \$2,000,000 is raised from corporations and businesses; and individuals from the community contribute \$3.4 million.

In local news, Michael Kahn becomes artistic director of the Shakespeare Theatre at the Folger, and Peter Sellars goes "on leave" as artistic director at the American National Theatre, effectively suspending its operations.

Heather McDonald's play about the farm crisis, *The Rivers and Ravines*, is presented for the staff at Arena in August and is further workshopped as a PlayLab in June along with Howard Korder's *Boy's Life*.

The *Washington Post's* Miss Manners has her video guide to wedding protocol taped at Arena with company members performing as well-mannered brides and grooms.

Ming Cho Lee receives TCG's second annual Peter Zeisler Award for a career of excellence in the non-profit theater.

The struggles in present-day Northern Ireland are given a personal perspective in the American premiere of Anne Devlin's *Ourselves Alone*. The play, which won the prestigious Susan Smith Blackburn Prize after its British production, is staged by visiting director Les Waters.

Twenty-three actors and a thirteen-member production staff travel to Jerusalem where they perform Zelda's production of *The Crucible* at the Israel Festival. To accommodate the production, staged for an arena space, the Festival transforms its traditional proscenium theater into a makeshift arena. After the Jerusalem engagement, the company returns to Washington to complete a successful Arena run.

Three new acting company members for the 1987-88 season are graduates of Zelda's first class of NYU's Tisch School of the Arts Graduate Acting Program: Marissa Copeland, Bob Kirsh, and David Marks.

The Helen Hayes Committee gives an honorary award to James Earl Jones, who is currently starring in August Wilson's *Fences* in New York. Arena wins four awards: Outstanding Lead Actress (Tana Hicken, *The Wild Duck*); Outstanding Supporting Actor (Stanley Anderson, *The Piggy Bank*); Outstanding Costume Design (Martin Pakledinaz, *The Piggy Bank*); and Outstanding Set Design (Radu Boruzescu, *The Wild Duck*).

Measure For Measure, set by Shakespeare in Vienna and, in Arena's production, brought forward in time to fin-de-siècle Vienna (a period which is in vogue in 1986), has a gala performance sponsored by the Austrian Embassy. Tom Hewitt (pictured) is the licentious Lucio, a Viennese cavalier.

THE MARX BROTHERS

George S. Kaufman was standing in the lobby of the Music Box Theater in 1925, talking to a friend during the matinee of the musical of *The Cocoanuts*, which he and Irving Berlin wrote for the Marx Brothers. Suddenly, he broke away and walked into the theater. When he came back into the conversation, he apologized to his friend. "I had to do it," Kaufman said, "I thought I heard one of my original lines."

Kaufman wasn't the only one looking for his original lines. In the early eighties, while doing research on other Kaufman plays, Douglas C. Wager came across references to *Animal Crackers*, which Kaufman and Morrie Ryskind had written as a stage vehicle for the Marx Brothers in 1928. The merry Marxes had started their madcap career in vaudeville and in the mid-twenties they went "legit"—getting major craftsmen like Kaufman and Berlin to write Broadway vehicles for them. The combination was certainly good box office, but the Marxes treated the written word with the same anarchic disrespect with which they treated everything else. When Wager and dramaturgs Mark Bly and John Glone followed the paper trail, it was as if the Marxes themselves were performing *A Day at the Archives*, foiling the detectives' attempts to find a complete, extant script at every turn.

The Library of Congress yielded a manuscript, but it didn't have any of Bert Kalmar and Harry Ruby's songs. The Princeton University Library Theater Collection had the script and lyrics, but no music. The Groucho Marx Collection at the Library of Congress had a post-Broadway touring version, but this was heavily altered by the Marx Brothers. Finally, all these versions, plus the 1930 screenplay, were conflated to highlight the best of the material. The music for several of Kalmar's lyrics was never found, so music director Eric Stern was commissioned to compose three songs. Two Kalmar/Ruby songs from other shows were brought in to round out the score.

What actually happens in *Animal Crackers*, like most Marx Brothers material, hardly matters. Suffice it to say that the usual shenanigans surround a jewel heist in a swank Long Island mansion where Captain Jeffrey T. Spaulding, the African explorer (Groucho), is a guest. Wager auditioned over seven hundred actors before arriving at his newly reconstituted Brothers: "We did not want impersonations, we needed people who understood the nature of four different clowns." Musical direction was by Robert Fisher, dance arrangements and orchestrations were provided from scratch by Russell Warner, and Baayork Lee's choreography was a gentle but witty tribute to the more inane aspects of Busby Berkeley. The first production of this musical in over fifty years opened in the Arena on May 7, 1982 and was an immediate hit, extending into July.



When Irving Berlin celebrated his one-hundredth birthday in 1988, it seemed only natural to revive his 1925 vehicle, *The Cocoanuts*. It was no easier to find a definitive text. There was a 1925 stage version at Princeton University and a considerably altered screenplay from 1929 in an Albany archive. Tracing the evolution was like being given a picture of New York and a picture of Los Angeles and then being asked to describe the United States. Still, Wager, directing again with most of his same team, was able to resurrect the best parts of the various texts. Although the Berlin estate had forbidden the use of "Always," a hit song discarded from the otherwise hit-less show during its Atlantic City try-out, there was one felicitous discovery: one song, "The Bell Hops," had lyrics but no available written music—until Fisher and company heard some music on the film's soundtrack that fit the lyrics perfectly.

This romp, concerning real estate scams and a Marx-run hotel in "Sunny Florida," included the famous "Why-a-duck?" routine, chorines dressed as monkeys, a free-floating Harpo rhapsodizing on the moon, and an insane finale in Spanish garb. Stephen Mellor and Charles Janasz repeated their antics as Groucho and Harpo respectively, as did Fisher and Lee. Again, it was a first-time revival, opening on April 23 and extending through August 14. The *New York Times* called the show "comic pandemonium" and said, "After seeing and savoring *The Cocoanuts*, one wonders why it took so long for revival." One happy footnote: in 1990, the Berlin estate agreed to reinstate "Always" for future productions, based on the success of the Arena text.

Although sitting through six weeks of rehearsal with the Marx Brothers would seem to be fun enough on its own, the drive to produce these carefully orchestrated madhouses came out of a respect both for Kaufman's comic craftsmanship (the notion that Groucho ad-libbed all his lines is a myth—understanding) and the spirit of four classic clowns. "The Marx Brothers celebrate what's most rambunctious and individual about being human," said Wager. "The pressures of everyday life are large in ways we don't even acknowledge, and to watch them lambast everything that's pretentious—it's very freeing."

During the "Why-a-duck?" sequence, there is the following exchange:

GROUCHO: Now here's the main road leading out of Cocoanut Manor. That's the road I wish you were on. Now, on this site we're going to build an Eye and Ear Hospital. That's going to be a sight for sore eyes.

CHICO: I see.

GROUCHO: Over here is the old coffee factory. I grew up playing on the grounds. You understand?

CHICO: That's where you bean.

GROUCHO: Now all along here—this is the riverfront—all along the river, those are the levees.

CHICO: Thatsa the Jewish neighborhood?

GROUCHO: Well, we'll pass over that.

It's a good thing that Arena didn't pass over this engaging, zany part of American theater history.

Left: Captain Jeffrey T. Spaulding (Stephen Mellor) is surrounded by a bevy of exotic beauties in this scene from *Animal Crackers*.

Facing page: In *Cocoanuts*, Stephen Mellor as Mr. Schlemmer can picture Mrs. Potter (Halo Wines) bending over a hot stove—only he can't see the stove.

Inset: Douglas C. Wager's 1988 revival of *The Cocoanuts* ended with a hilarious travesty of Bizet's *Carmen*. From left to right, Mitchell Greenberg (Chico), Terrence Currier, Ralph Cosham (Zeppo), Charles Janasz (Harpo), and Stephen Mellor (Groucho).

ESSAY



THE 1987-88 SEASON

The Immigrant: A Hamilton

County Album by Mark Harelik
Conceived by Mark Harelik and Randal Myler
Directed by Randal Myler (K/SP)

Joe Turner's Come and Gone

by August Wilson
Directed by Lloyd Richards (K)

All the King's Men

by Robert Penn Warren
Stage adaptation by Adrian Hall
Music by Randy Newman
Directed by Douglas C. Wager (A)

Stage Four:

American Splendor

Based on the comic books by Harvey Pekar
Adapted for the stage by Lloyd Rose
Directed by James C. Nicola (OVR)

The Rivers and Ravines

by Heather McDonald
Directed by Douglas C. Wager and
Paul Walker (K)

Checkmates

by Ron Milner
Directed by Woodie King, Jr. (A)

Light up the Sky

by Moss Hart
Directed by James C. Nicola (A)

Enrico IV

by Luigi Pirandello
English version by Robert Cornthwaite
Directed by Mel Shapiro and
Zelda Fichandler (K)

Les Blancs

by Lorraine Hansberry
Text adapted by Robert Nemiroff
Directed by Harold Scott (A)

The Cocoanuts

Book by George S. Kaufman
Music and lyrics by Irving Berlin
Directed by Douglas C. Wager (K)

The Cherry Orchard

by Anton Chekhov
Translated by Jean-Claude van Itallie
Directed by Lucian Pintilie (A)

Banjo Dancing (OVR/SP)

SPOTLIGHTS

The Cherry Orchard

Arena combined its love of Chekhov with one of its favorite directors, Lucian Pintilie, in this classic about a fading generation holding on to memories embodied in a family estate. A short comic scene cut by Chekhov in the original 1904 production was reinstated and the stage yielded forth a now-famous field of wheat for the second act. The passage of a culture was summed up by a resonant final image: a lone champagne glass, left by the family, trembles on a table out of some internal tension and smashes to the ground into a thousand shards—"a startling conclusion to a mesmerizing production."

All the King's Men

Robert Penn Warren's novel of a populist demagogue governor (based on Louisiana's Huey Long) was adapted by Adrian Hall, who had directed it in Dallas and Providence. Douglas C. Wager did his own production for Arena, orchestrating forty-two scenes, twenty-five actors, and twelve songs by Randy Newman which culminated in a multimedia finale. Stanley Anderson was singled out for his towering performance as the politician, Willie Stark. Hall said before the production, "I'm very anxious to see [the play] in Washington—I hope that our political roots are recognized, and that we all know more by presenting this play than we knew before."




Joe Turner's Come and Gone

Arena's first production of an August Wilson play was guest-directed by his trusted collaborator, Lloyd Richards. The story of a sharecropper's journey north in 1910 was punctuated by the poetry and feeling of this significant author's words. This production first opened at the Yale Repertory Theatre, then came to Arena, then went to the Huntington Theatre in Boston, then to the Old Globe in San Diego, and finally opened on Broadway, completing a cycle of developing a play regionally, which was to become standard practice for the team of Wilson and Richards.

Top: Shirley Knight and Tana Hicken in *The Cherry Orchard*. Middle: Delroy Lindo and Ed Hall in *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*. Bottom: Stanley Anderson in *All the King's Men*.

THE 1987-88 SEASON



The Ford Motor Company gives Arena a three-year, \$350,000 grant to start the "Stage Four" project for new plays, so called because it creates a fourth "arena" for the development of new work. To implement the project and give the writers full productions, for the first year the eighth subscription play is replaced by three Stage Four slots. *American Splendor* is scheduled for the Old Vat Room, *The Rivers and Ravines* for the Kreeger, and *Checkmates* for the Arena. The grant helps underwrite a \$10 ticket for all three venues.

Living Stage is honored with the Mayor's Arts Award for "Excellence in an Artistic Discipline" at a Gala Celebration of the Arts.

Arena emphasizes a new student matinee subscription with a \$5 ticket, an aftershow discussion, and study guides. Managing Director William Stewart says, "This will enable us to educate our future audience."

James C. Nicola leaves Arena after seven years to accept the post of artistic director at the New York Theatre Workshop. Nicola says, "The last seven years could not have been better preparation for assuming the leadership of a theater."

Silas Jones' *The John Doe Variations* and Deborah Pryor's *Briar Patch* are given staged readings in PlayLab. Both authors will have plays performed at Arena in the upcoming seasons.

As part of Black History Month, Arena stages the first performance since 1970 of Lorraine Hansberry's uncompleted play, *Les Blancs*. A symposium sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities and entitled "Lorraine Hansberry, Transcultural Humanist" draws a standing-room-only audience to the Kreeger.

Director of Development Elspeth Udvarhelyi is chosen as Outstanding Fund Raising Executive by the National Society of Fund Raising Executives. Her achievement of raising \$2.6 million in contributed income in one year leads the press to describe her as "a person who tracks through the money jungle with the assurance of the native-born Scotswoman she is."

The NEA honors poet laureate Richard Wilbur with a presentation in the Kreeger called "The Poet in the Theater." Brian Bedford and members of Arena's company perform scenes from Wilbur's famous translations of Molière.

It's a night for plays and their directors at the Helen Hayes Awards. *The Crucible* and *Zelda Fichandler* win awards for Outstanding Resident Production and Director; *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* and Lloyd Richards take similar honors in the Non-Resident category.

The backstage world of the theater proves irresistible in Moss Hart's *Light Up the Sky*. Tana Hicken (pictured) brings her legendary *soignée* sophistication to this romp.

THE 1986-87 SEASON

The Tale of Lear

Tadashi Suzuki's adaptation of Shakespeare's *King Lear* (A/SP)

Abyssinia Music by Ted Kocielek
Lyrics by James Racheff

Book by James Racheff and Ted Kocielek
Directed by Tazewell Thompson (A/SP)

Six Characters in Search of an Author by Luigi Pirandello
English version by Robert Cornthwaite
Directed by Liviu Ciulei (K)

King Round the Moon

by Jean Anouilh
Adapted by Christopher Fry
Directed by Douglas C. Wager (A)

Playboy of the West Indies

by Mustapha Matura
Directed by Tazewell Thompson (K)

A Chorus of Disapproval

by Alan Ayckbourn
Directed by Mel Shapiro (A)

Stage four:

Briar Patch

by Deborah Pryor
Directed by Max Mayer (OVR)

Judevine

by David Budbill
Directed by Tazewell Thompson (K)

A Lie of the Mind

by Sam Shepard
Directed by Douglas C. Wager (A)

The Pool Show

Conceived and written by Geoff Hoyle (K/SP)

Nothing Sacred

by George F. Walker
Directed by Garland Wright (K)

On The Town

Music by Leonard Bernstein
Book and lyrics by Betty Comden and Adolph Green
Directed by Douglas C. Wager (A)

A Walk in the Woods

by Lee Blessing
Directed by Paul Weidner (K/SP)

Banjo Dancing (OVR/SP)

On the Way Home

Written and gathered by Stephen Wade
Directed by Milton Kramer (OVR/SP)

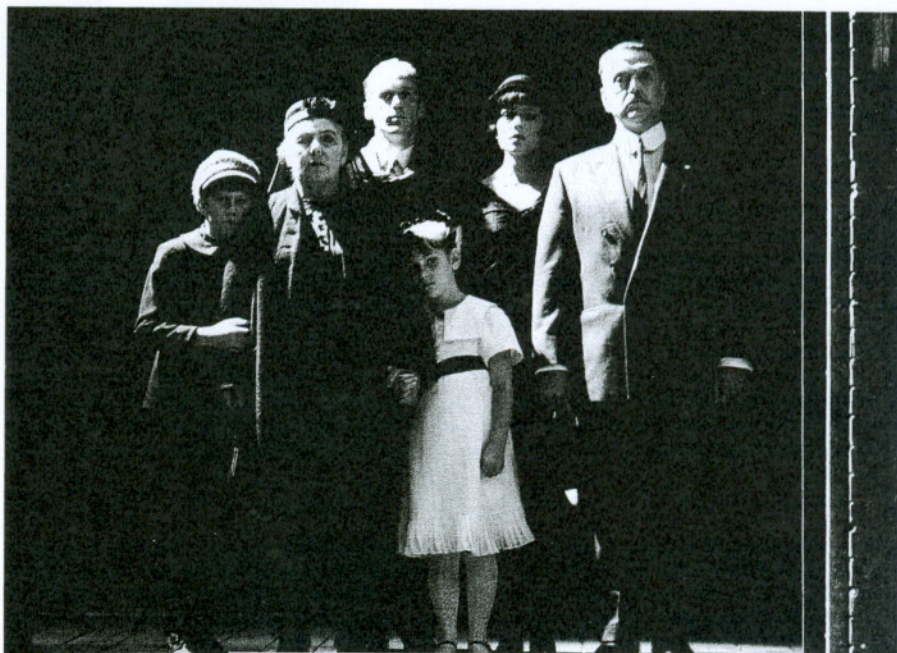
SPOTLIGHTS

Six Characters in Search of an Author

Arena returned for the third time to Pirandello's excursion into reality and illusion, this time seen through Liviu Ciulei's distinctly European vision. He chose to set his production in an Italian theater from the twenties at work. As stagehands swept the floor, a huge marble panel fell to the floor—instead of the expected crash, it floated to the ground like the muslin-covered flat it was. The tensions and egos of the theater world clashed with the characters' quest for a valid existence in this production brilliantly lit by Allen Lee Hughes, who, along with Ciulei, won a Helen Hayes Award for his work, as did the show itself.

The Tale of Lear

In what was called "the most ambitious cross-cultural event yet undertaken by America's regional theaters," Arena, Milwaukee Repertory, StageWest, and Berkeley Repertory shared a tour of Tadashi Suzuki's twelve-character, all-male distillation of Shakespeare's classic. Thirty-year-old Arena company member Tom Hewitt, who had studied Suzuki's unique method of rigorous physical and vocal control in Japan, played Lear in a transcendent performance. The ninety-minute production combined ritual, reason, and madness to create a world where Eastern techniques met Western text with a blazing intensity.



Briar Patch

Deborah Pryor's backwoods Gothic of lust, murder, and betrayal was called a cross between "Al Capp and Sigmund Freud" and represented the significant development of an original voice. Pryor, a local resident, was a literary intern at Arena and submitted some work to James Nicola in 1985. Several years later, Arena did a PlayLab of *Briar Patch* before producing this version as part of the Stage Four series. The play went on to receive a production in New York, a film option (Pryor received a grant to write the screenplay), and the Helen Hayes Award as Best New Play.

Top, l to r: Joshua Shirlen, Bette Henritze, John Leonard Thompson, Amanda Waters, Roxann Biggs, and Stanley Anderson in *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. Middle: David Marks and Marissa Copeland in *Briar Patch*. Bottom: Tom Hewitt and Charles Tuthill in *The Tale of Lear*.

THE 1988-89 SEASON

After six years as production coordinator, Guy Bergquist is promoted to associate producer. Zelda acknowledges "his understanding of how one gathers together the various threads that knit up the skein of the artistic process."

An ambitious but complicated arrangement to exchange two Arena productions with two from Moscow's Taganka Theatre falls through due to lack of funds. The project, which would have been the first U.S./U.S.S.R. theatrical exchange under a cultural agreement signed by Reagan and Gorbachev, was to bring *The Crucible* and a second production to Moscow, while Arena hosted Bulgakov's epic *The Master and Margarita* and *Vysotsky*, a portrait of a Soviet counter-culture singer/actor.

In conjunction with *Playboy of the West Indies*, an NEH-sponsored panel brings over Trinidadian playwright Mustapha Matura from London for a discussion on literature from the Caribbean.

Nothing Sacred, by Toronto playwright George Walker, is performed at six resident theaters this season, including Arena, an outstanding number for a new play that never ran in New York.

Tazewell Thompson is named artistic associate after having directed *Abyssinia* and *Playboy of the West Indies*. Zelda says, "Tazewell is a strong individual artist, a committed human being, and enthusiastically supports our efforts at cultural diversity."

AT&T: On Stage sponsors Arena's reconceived production of *On The Town*, which extends its run into July. *The Wall Street Journal* notes that the production works on two levels: as a "charming if lightweight musical from another era" and "as a comparison that audiences must make between today and . . . the innocence and apparent simplicity of the wartime U.S."

The Signature Series, devoted to seminars exploring the African American experience as it relates to the season's repertoire, begins its first program with "Uptown/Downtown" around the production of *On The Town*.

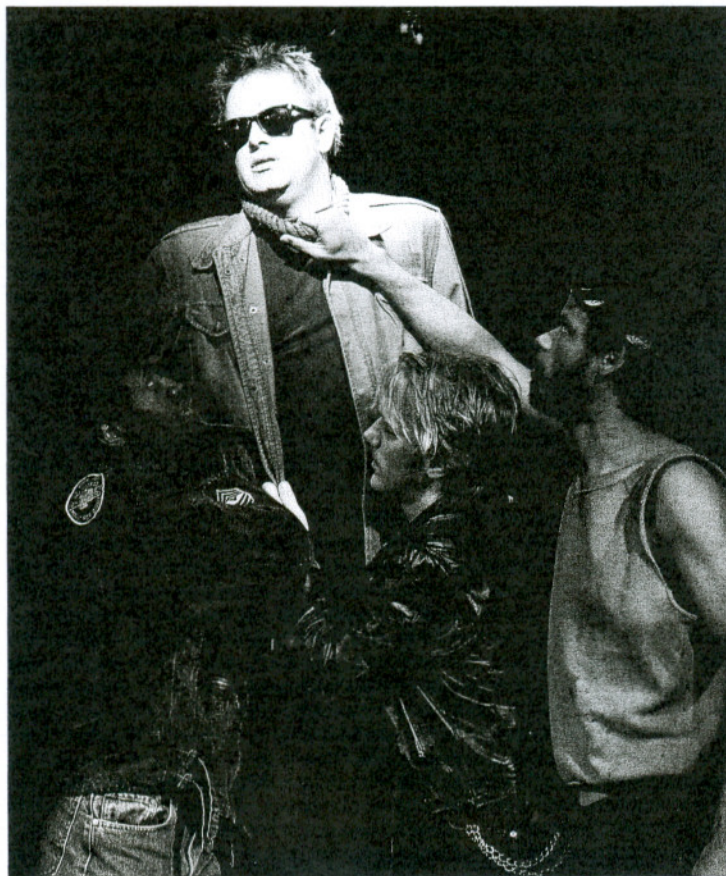
Following a number of performances of *A Walk in the Woods*, Arena hosts informal discussions with several former government arms negotiators, including Paul Nitze on whom the play is based.

Besides the three awards for *Six Characters*, Arena wins two Helen Hayes Awards for *The Cocoanuts*: one for Outstanding Resident Musical and one for Charles Janasz as Outstanding Lead Actor in a Resident Musical for his role as Harpo.

Arena produces the East Coast premiere of Alan Ayckbourn's *A Chorus of Disapproval*, which concerns a British amateur theater group performing *The Beggar's Opera*. The production features Ralph Cosham (pictured), a reluctant Macheath—onstage and off. The Shakespeare Theatre at the Folger produces *The Beggar's Opera* the same season and the two theaters collaborate on a symposium discussing the ballad opera's lasting influence.

A SEASON FOR ALL AUDIENCES

ESSAY

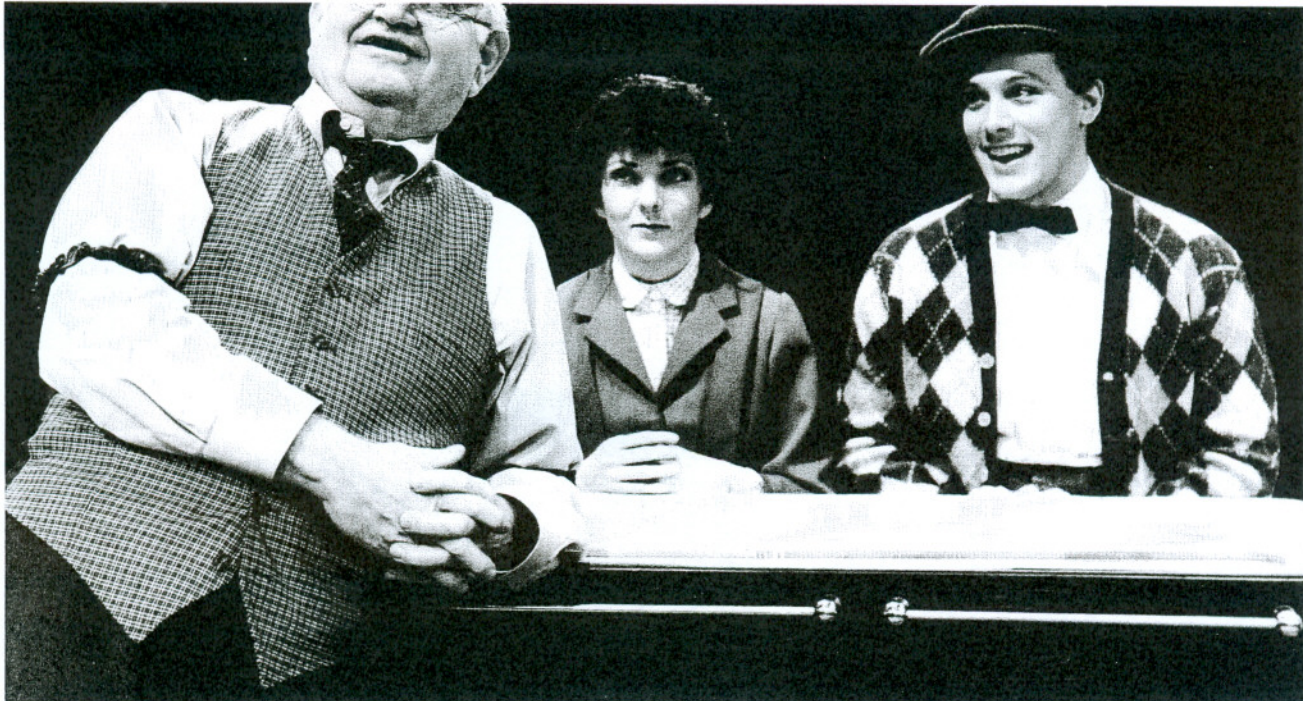


The French writer and art critic André Malraux used to teach art history by taking postcards of artwork from cultures all over the world and scattering them on the floor. He'd ask his students to pick up any two at random and describe what they had in common, pointing out that contrast was as important as similarity. Theater seasons seem to be chosen with the same randomness: a series of different titles scattered on the floor. But, in reality, the season planning process is an arduous year-long task, and, at Arena Stage, it raises a host of questions and challenges about the institution's very identity.

"Repertory is the destiny of a theater. It's how we communicate to our audience, and planning the repertory is the real center of our artwork," said Zelda. She and her colleagues on the artistic staff spend most of the year meeting regularly to find a common ground between the two basic questions: "What would they like to see?" and "What would we like to do?" The selection process is essentially the tension between a series of what Shakespeare called "mighty opposites": past and present, then and now, tragedy and comedy, traditional and innovative, large and small, real and imaginary, exorbitant and manageable. The theater must take its audience on an ongoing journey forward, and yet not so far nor so fast that it loses them every time it takes a turn. The final product of the repertory reveals a broad spectrum of drama that makes Arena one of the country's most eclectic theaters. The plays come together to form a mosaic of different styles and cultures, what Zelda called "a universe our audience can believe in." There are several artistic priorities which Arena considers from season to season.

Classics. These timeless excavations of the human spirit have always formed the backbone of Arena's aesthetic. The Arena space, the acting ensemble, the adventuresomeness of the audience—these elements all help keep the classic play from becoming an endangered species on the American stage. Arena has always looked into the past to illuminate the present. A classic text can tell us how little the world has changed; director Liviu Ciulei, in talking about the sexual politics in his 1989 production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, said, "There isn't a modern writer who could write it any more modern than Shakespeare." Or a classic can pinpoint exactly how our world has changed by putting the past in perspective; Zelda's production of *A Doll House* had a much more ambiguous view of its heroine than it would have had in 1879—or in 1979 for that matter. Several classics have been done three times at Arena: *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Heartbreak House*, *The Crucible*, *Our Town* and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*. The reappearance of such plays is no coincidence; each time they spoke in an eloquent new language to a new audience. For example, when *Chalk Circle* was done in 1961, the Berlin Wall had just gone up and—full circle—in 1990, the Wall had just come down and a multicultural company gave the play a new viewpoint.

The second chance. As a not-for-profit theater, Arena is able to take a gamble on reinvestigating plays that failed in their first commercial outings for reasons that may have had nothing to do with the plays' artistic merit. Arena has embraced this notion from the beginning. *The Crucible* ran less than two hundred performances on Broadway in its 1953 debut, but when Arena produced the first post-New York version of the play a year later, it was hailed as a major work. *Mademoiselle Colombe* by Jean Anouilh, *Summer of the 17th Doll* by Ray Lawler, a revised version of *The Wall* by Millard Lampell, *Comedians* by Trevor Griffiths—these are but some of the many plays that found a second life at Arena. A recent example of this was Arena's 1989 revival of the Stephen Sondheim/George Furth musical, *Merrily We Roll Along*. The show had run on Broadway for only sixteen performances in 1982, but became a cult favorite and went through several other resident theater attempts to rehabilitate its



reputation. Douglas C. Wager got in touch with Sondheim and Furth and they substantially rewrote the musical for Arena's production, giving them and the audience a chance to discover the promise of material that might have otherwise sunk into the sea of obscurity.

Indeed, **musicals** have gotten an increasing number of productions at Arena, as the theater recognizes the uniquely American role that musicals play in the dramatic canon. But contrary to a frequent assumption, Arena does not produce one musical per season as a kind of formula—they are chosen when a particular project, usually one that requires a certain amount of creative restoration, excites the artistic staff.

New plays, which have always been a part of the Arena repertory, have experienced a resurgence in the past several years, largely because of the Stage Four program. Although the Stage Four projects are usually not part of the subscription season, they are chosen along with the mainstage repertory to increase the variety of playwriting voices within a season. New plays can come from outside Arena, such as *Stand-Up Tragedy*, or they may come out of the developmental process, such as the repertory of new plays—*Before It Hits Home* and *Born Guilty*—that will appear in the 1990-91 season. New voices continue to invigorate the company and the audience, and keep Arena on the cutting edge of our nation's theaters.

In the past three seasons, **cultural diversity** has become a major priority. Arena has increased its production of plays by writers of color and has also given new dimensions to classic plays, as in the case of the all-black *The Glass Menagerie* directed by Tazewell Thompson, which gave an artistically viable black perspective to Tennessee Williams' familiar play. A 1987 German play, *Conquest of the South Pole*, was reset in America for its Stage Four production, in order to provide an urban and racial reality for the company and for the play.

The desires and the needs of the artistic staff of the theater are also of prime consideration. **The acting company** makes up the core of the cast in most of the season's choices and the plays must be chosen with them in mind. What plays will suit this particular ensemble? What plays will stretch the ensemble in new ways? Is there a particular style of play the company hasn't tackled in a while? For example, *She Stoops to Conquer*, to be directed by Joe Dowling for the 1990-91 season, will be the first Restoration comedy attempted by the company in almost thirty years. The challenges of the play develop the skill of the individual actor, and as the individual actor grows, so does the talent and range of the company. **Directors** also bring their ideas to the season planning process, for, after all, they are the ones who bring the world of the play to life. Staff directors such as Zelda, Douglas C. Wager, and Tazewell Thompson often bring their own

ideas and projects into the process, while guest directors such as Liviu Ciulei and Joe Dowling discuss which projects might interest them and how those might fit into the context of the season.

When all these considerations are stirred into the pot, there is one ingredient that must always be added to the stew: **the fun factor**. It is always important to leaven the season with some pure entertainment—after all, there are two masks of the theater, tragedy and comedy. "Believe me," said Zelda, "I like a good joke—but it has to be a *good* joke." In its productions of comedies—particularly the plays of George S. Kaufman—Arena has achieved a national reputation.

As if these considerations didn't all seem byzantine enough, they are merely the preamble to the final selection process. Every season, Arena produces eight plays—plus Stage Four and special productions—in three theaters with a core company of fifteen to eighteen actors. The scheduling process of such a complex institution can sometimes make artistic meetings seem like a session of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The logistics, the discretion, the orchestration with which these plays are organized and presented require months of work and planning. The building and the very forms of the theaters themselves define the work as well; there is a significant amount of discussion over which plays are better suited for the Arena and which for the Kreeger.

And, of course, the ever-mounting **cost** of such an enterprise as Arena Stage is an omnipresent factor. Play choices have to be monitored with cost in mind. Such considerations as how many actors can be hired in a given year, how many opening nights can be scheduled within a given time, the workloads of the various technical shops—all these questions must be addressed. When the finished product appears in a subscriber brochure, it is not only the end-product of months of drawing up lists, graphs, and charts, it is an artwork in and of itself—it is the tangible symbol of the theater's identity, a vision of itself it can present to the world at large and say, "This is who we are. This is what we stand for."

Facing page, top: Arena is committed to providing a second chance to plays and musicals, like *Merrily We Roll Along*, that didn't find a place in the commercial venue of Broadway. Douglas C. Wager's production featured David Garrison, Victor Garber, and Becky Ann Baker.

Facing page, bottom: In the 1989-90 season, Arena commissioned Silas Jones and Literary Manager/Dramaturg Laurence Maslon to adapt German playwright Manfred Karge's *Conquest of the South Pole* for the Stage Four new play series. From left to right, Teagle F. Bougere, David Marks, John Leonard Thompson, and Clayton LeBouef.

Above: *Our Town* is one of a number of plays that has found a new audience each generation. In the 1990-91 season, Robert Prosky reprised his role as the Stage Manager, Christina Moore was Emily, and David Aaron Baker was George.

THE 1989-90 SEASON

A Midsummer Night's Dream

by William Shakespeare
Directed by Liviu Ciulei (A)

The Glass Menagerie

by Tennessee Williams
Directed by Tazewell Thompson (K)

The Man Who Came to Dinner

by Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman
Directed by Douglas C. Wager (A)

Monteith And Rand

Directed by Bill Russell (K/SP)

Stand-Up Tragedy by Bill Cain

Directed by Max Mayer (A)

Merrily We Roll Along

Music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim
Book by George Furth
From the play by George S. Kaufman
and Moss Hart
Directed by Douglas C. Wager (K)

A Doll House

by Henrik Ibsen
Version by Irene Berman and
Gerry Bamman
Directed by Zelda Fichandler (A)

Stage Four:

Conquest of the South Pole

by Manfred Karge
Adaptation by Silas Jones and
Laurence Maslon
Directed by Paul Walker (OVR)

Born Guilty

Stage version by Ari Roth
Based on the book by Peter Sichrovsky
Directed by Zelda Fichandler (SC)

Fences

by August Wilson
Directed by Tazewell Thompson (K)

Juno and the Paycock

by Sean O'Casey
Directed by Joe Dowling (A)

On the Way Home (OVR/SP)

SPOTLIGHTS

Stand-Up Tragedy

Bill Cain's episodic, highly theatrical play about a teacher and his gifted student in a New York inner-city high school was developed and produced at the Mark Taper Forum and the Hartford Stage Company, but came to Arena where it underwent further development in its own separate production using the Arena ensemble and in the arena space. Arena's production galvanized the community, presenting a social problem that transcended local boundaries in an extremely energized form. The following season, the Mark Taper production of the play opened on Broadway. Preferring Arena's production, David Richards noted that at Arena "when [the play] exploded, it exploded outward in all directions."

The Glass Menagerie

Arena artistic associate Tazewell Thompson directed this all-black version of the famed Tennessee Williams play. Acclaimed actress Ruby Dee returned to Arena after her performance in *Checkmates* in the 1987-88 season to play the demanding role of the mother, Amanda. This production, while maintaining the universality of Williams' view of families and their dreams, added the aspirations of a black family in the North during the Depression. The production was successful enough to extend past its subscription run.




The Man Who Came to Dinner

Arena celebrated George S. Kaufman's centennial with a revival of this classic comedy written with Moss Hart. This production, Arena's eighth of a Kaufman play, opened on November 16, his one hundredth birthday, and kicked off "Kaufmania," a season-long tribute consisting of seminars, exhibits, a film festival, and a reading of Kaufman and Hart's *Merrily We Roll Along* with the cast of the musical. On the occasion of the establishment of the George S. Kaufman Fellowship in Comic Writing, Anne Kaufman Schneider, the playwright's daughter, said, "To be one hundred and dead is no trick, we're all going to manage that. I feel my father—through his plays—is one hundred and very much alive."

Top, l to r: David Calloway, Trevor Jackson, Luis Ramos, Kelly Chauncey Smith, and Roumel Reaux in *Stand-Up Tragedy*. Middle: Richard Bauer in *The Man Who Came to Dinner*.



THE 1989-90 SEASON



As part of its Stage Four series of new plays, Arena commissions six playwrights to write for Arena: Leslie Lee, Mark O'Donnell, Deborah Pryor, Silas Jones, Alonzo Lamont Jr. and Dick Beebe.

After three seasons as Arena's managing director, William Stewart resigns and becomes managing director of the Williamstown Theatre Festival.

The National Endowment for the Arts comes under attack by members of Congress for subsidizing allegedly obscene material. Zelda testifies before Congress in May, saying, "[The American theater] cannot survive on box office income alone, and it needs the knighthood that only the federal government can bestow, in order to continue its evolutionary climb."

Terrence Currier, Arena company member for seventeen years, gets his first Broadway role in *Annie 2*, the sequel to the musical blockbuster. It closes out-of-town at the Kennedy Center.

The National Endowment for the Arts awards Arena a \$1 million challenge grant for cultural diversity. John Frohnmayer, in awarding the grant, points out "Arena's lifelong commitment to social issues and expanding the boundaries of our cultural limitations."

Stephen Sondheim and George Furth are in residence at Arena to work on rewrites during *Merrily We Roll Along*.

Vaclav Havel, a dissident Czech playwright, is named president of Czechoslovakia. To honor Havel, and as a benefit for the Free Czechoslovakia Fund, Arena stages a reading of three of his one-acts. Over seven hundred people attend.

Stage Four presents the American premiere of German playwright Manfred Karge in a version of *Conquest of the South Pole*, which is subsequently published by TCG's "Plays in Process."

Living Stage's first residency outside of the United States takes place in Stockholm, Sweden where the troupe conducts a series of workshops and performance/seminars in May for Swedish artists, educators, legislators, and press.

Zelda announces she will step down as producing director at the end of the 1990-91 fortieth anniversary season. Douglas C. Wager will succeed her in the post of artistic director.

Deborah Pryor's *Briar Patch* wins a Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding New Play, as does its lead David Marks for Outstanding Lead Actor. Adriane Lenox wins as Lead Actress in a Musical for *On The Town* and Allen Lee Hughes wins Outstanding Lighting Design for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Although it is one of Ibsen's absolute masterpieces, *A Doll House* hadn't received a production at Arena until Zelda's acclaimed production. Pamela Nyberg (pictured) brings new life and a contemporary perspective to the anguished heroine, Nora.