

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: BUILDING PUBLIC(S): THE EARLY
HISTORY OF THE NEW YORK
SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

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This dissertation explores the New York Shakespeare Festival/Public Theater's earliest history, with a special focus in the company's evolving use of the rhetoric and concept of "public." As founder Joseph Papp noted early in the theater's history, they struggled to function as a "private organization engaged in public work." To mitigate the challenges of this struggle, the company pursued potential audiences and publics for their theatrical and cultural offerings in a variety of spaces on the cityscape, from Central Park to neighborhood parks and common spaces to a 19th century historic landmark. In documenting and exploring the festival's development and perambulations, this dissertation suggests that the festival's position as both a private and public-minded organization presented as many *opportunities* as it did challenges. In this way, company rhetoric surrounding "public-ness" emerged as a powerful

strategy for the company's survival and growth, embodied most apparently by their current moniker as The Public Theater.

BUILDING PUBLIC(S):
THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE NEW YORK SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

by

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
2018

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Dedication

For all those, living and not, that climb the hill to see the play

Acknowledgements

I must first and foremost thank my advisor Dr. Franklin J. Hildy, for seeing this project through with me, from my earliest interest in outdoor Shakespeare to the incorporation of progressively wider spheres of relevance to both my world and the world of Theater Studies. This expansion could not have been possible, and proved infinitely richer with the guidance and prodding of Dr. Laurie Frederik, whose insight and patience proved critical during some of the project's greatest challenges. Also critical and caring throughout the life of this dissertation was Dr. Faedra Carpenter whose enthusiasm buoyed me and inspired me. Both Laurie and Faedra's belief in my capacities frequently outpaced my own, and for that I am forever grateful. Thanks also to the rest of my dissertation team, Dr. Kent Cartwright, Dr. Denise Albanese and Dr. Christina Hanhardt.

I must also thank my family, for sharing the value of art and theatre throughout my life, and for their incredible support throughout the dissertation process. The first Shakespeare play I performed in was *Midsummer Night's Dream* as a high school freshman, with my older brother Ben playing Oberon. This was my first taste of Shakespeare. I was thrilled to share that experience with you and I am thrilled to continue savoring our shared passion for Shakespeare and theatre. Endless thanks for your support and the support of Aimee and (future Shakespearians) Oliver and Violet.

The very first time that I went to the Delacorte Theater in Central Park was with my mother. We were both passionate about theatre, so passionate in fact, that not even a half an hour rain delay deterred us from watching the wonderful conclusion of

The Winter's Tale. Thank you for taking that journey with me, and for your endless support on *this* journey.

When I was no more than 8 years old, I found some old black and white production photos, each of which had a familiar face, my father as a tender and callow actor in college. Thank you for setting the example, inside the theatre and out. I do not know where I would be in this process without the incredible support from you and Tim.

Very special thanks must go to Jess Krenek for her extraordinary support and true friendship. I cannot imagine what life at UMD would have been without you there to share it, occasionally curse it and always in the end, laugh about it. I cannot wait to laugh about this when it's over. Special thanks as well to Dr. Lee Stille who guided me through my earliest forays into academia with tremendous support, good humor and an always curious mind.

I reluctantly discovered theatre in high school. I met the most incredible group of friends, known as "the boys." Lloyd, Wesley, Peter, Brian, Chris and Arik, thanks for your support, laughs, insults and friendship for so many years. I cannot imagine my life without these indestructible friendships. I also cannot imagine our time in high school drama without our fearless leader, the late Barbara Gensler. Her passion lit a fire under me that burns to this day and helped fuel this project's development.

Thanks to friends far away whose support across time zones proved nourishing throughout my time as a doctoral student. Jenny, Julie and Maggie, you are true and wonderful friends and thanks for keeping me connected to the life that helped my work and world as a doctoral student.

Finally, I must thank my beloved Thalia, for her unimaginable support, patience and enthusiasm throughout the last two critical years of this dissertation. I am thankful beyond words for your belief in my work and me. All I can say is ‘thanks, thanks and *ever* thanks.’ I love you and cannot wait for the next ‘chapter.’

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Introduction

The New York Shakespeare Festival (NYSF) and later the Public Theater came of age in the prosperous and turbulent 1950s and 1960s in New York City. Amidst profound demographic shifts and the tail end of the urban renewal boom of the 1930s and 1940s, company founder Joseph Papp grew his company from a modest workshop dedicated to the exploration of Shakespeare's work into a vast, multi-sited theatrical institution. As the institutional reach of the NYSF extended, the company's relationship with the city of New York intensified. Deployment of the term 'public,' by Papp and others within the company, increased and evolved with this relationship, as did Papp and other's deployment of the 'public.' This dissertation seeks to examine the NYSF's uses of this elusive term in their earliest history. A handful of scholars, beginning in the late 1960s have considered the festival's growth and development. None, however, have substantially pursued what has become a defining characteristic of the institution; namely how the NYSF (and later Public Theater) deployed the term and concept 'public' throughout their earliest history in several spaces and sites of performance.

Review of Literature:

This project sits at the intersection of several overlapping bodies of historical and theoretical literature. The largest of these bodies are works devoted specifically to the study of the NYSF, and mainly recount the company's history, consider the company's casting practices, focus on Papp as a producer, or select provocative or representative productions for analysis. Other relevant sources include works that frame Shakespeare more broadly in American life, as a figure produced and

appropriated in a variety of ways, and works that address the myriad theatrical influences – both historical and contemporary – upon the company. Scholarly consideration of the NYSF’s early history began in earnest around 1967 when the company began production at the Astor Library, and proliferated as operations expanded to include televised presentations of the company’s offerings as well as a residency at Lincoln Center starting in 1973. Both of these developments increased the NYSF’s exposure to a wider audience, and further cemented their institutional status on the off-Broadway theatre scene. Another important shift – which might help to explain an uptick in scholarly interest – came with the commercial success of the company’s musical adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Two Gentlemen of Verona* in 1972, and the monumentally successful musical *A Chorus Line* in 1975. Both productions began at one of the company’s “permanent” homes – the Delacorte Theatre and Astor Library respectively – before moving to Broadway. It is difficult to imagine how the company’s overall history might have unfolded without the success of these two productions, as they netted the NYSF ticket revenues, outside funding, and media exposure they could have only dreamed of in their earliest incarnation as the New York Shakespeare Workshop (NYSW).

The most comprehensive account of the company’s history came from Yoko Hashimoto’s 1972 dissertation, *Joseph Papp and the New York Shakespeare Festival*. As with most other histories of the NYSF – and somewhat with good reason – Hashimoto begins her dissertation with the biography of Joseph Papp, underscoring the authors’ insistence that *any* explanation of the company’s identity and history must begin with the formative years of its founder. Hashimoto builds on the work of

David Black, David Harry Watrous Smith, Paul Buhtanic, and Robert Michael Newman who focus their works on the very earliest years of the NYSF's existence.¹ In the case of Black, the author took advantage of his role as "bookkeeper, budget-maker, audience development director, and official chronicler of the Festival," to gain valuable access in researching the NYSF's early years, producing his manuscript in late 1961.² Like Black and Smith, Hashimoto was one of the first scholars to gain access to Papp, his assistant and eventual wife Gail Merrifield Papp, but also some of the NYSF's rehearsal processes at their, still very new downtown location.

Hashimoto's study comprehensively considers the NYSF's first fifteen years of existence, beginning with their earliest work in the converted basement of Emanuel Presbyterian Church in 1954 all the way through the city's purchase of the Astor Library on the company's behalf in 1971. Smith's work, by contrast, offers a very tight focus on the first two years of the festival when they still operated indoors as the New York Shakespeare Workshop (NYSW), before eventually beginning outdoor performances in the summer of 1956 at East River Amphitheatre. Written as a Master's thesis in 1967, Smith's work seeks to uncover how aspects of the company's work in the 1960's can be traced back to its earliest existence as a workshop dedicated as much to *exploration* as production. Among these aspects are the NYSF's ongoing attempts to reconcile the Method and more classical approaches to acting, especially verse speaking. This is all part of what Smith, citing an early prospectus of the NYSW (discussed in Chapter 1), sees as a search for an authentically American way of performing and exploring Shakespeare. Another important aspect cited by

¹ Black, David. *History of the New York Shakespeare Festival, 1952-1961*. Buhtanic, Paul. *The Origins*

² Helen Epstein. *Joe Papp: An American Life* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1994), 161.

Smith, is the presence of a permanent artistic home where Papp and his company could “work freely and creatively in theatre.”³ Even before the founding of the NYSW in 1954, Papp was keen to find a home for the Oval Players, a troupe for whom he had directed several productions. Interestingly, the troupe would be made up of professional performers and local amateurs (from the Stuyvesant and Peter Cooper Village) in the production of his plays. The timing of Smith’s thesis, produced in the same year as the Astor Building’s theatrical opening in 1967, is suggestive. The NYSF sought to embark on their most ambitious venture yet, to say nothing of the programs that eventually fell by the wayside. These included a national actor-training program and a proposed partnership with Columbia University leading to a degree in Theatre, all of which Smith mentions as representative of the company’s ambition and growing importance.⁴ With the size of their operation more than doubling in a few short years, it is worth asking – as Smith does – how the company’s founding tenets have fared; whether they will be able to survive while producing mostly contemporary work, and moving away from the supposed prestige that comes with producing solely Shakespeare?

In Robert Michael Newman’s *S.R.O. Culture: The Development of the New York Shakespeare Festival*, produced in 1968, the author cites the great debt he owes to Smith in his account of the NYSF’s first two years. Despite this debt, Newman’s conclusions challenge – or at the very least complicate – Smith’s notion that the foundational principles of the NYSW will continue to be the guiding principles of the NYSF beginning with the 1967 season:

³ Smith 7

⁴ Smith v

...the future of the Festival, and any further contribution it may make, rests with the Public Theater, that institution which reversed the three basic principles of the organization: presenting classics, charging no admission, and encouraging a mass audience.⁵

Newman's work suggests that the newly opened Public Theatre may in some ways renovate the principles of the NYSF, and profoundly shift the place it occupies on the theatrical and civic landscapes.

This shift might be presaged, in slightly different ways by Paul Buhtanic's 1963 manuscript entitled *The Origins and Development of the Free, New York Shakespeare Festival, Central Park, New York City, 1954-April, 1963*. Despite the title of his work, Buhtanic does not substantially explore the implications of *free* Shakespeare in Central Park, even after making reference to several other Shakespeare festivals that charge admission. Of all the works encountered in compiling this review of relevant literature, however, Buhtanic's thesis is the only one that devotes even cursory attention to *other* Shakespeare festivals, as a way of placing the NYSF's activities in the context of the shifting ways that Shakespeare was performed in the postwar years. He draws similarities and comparisons between other prominent festivals in Oregon, Toledo, OH, and Stratford, CT – including their affiliations with institutions of higher education, funding sources and methods, and public response to the projects – but does not explore how those similarities compare with the activities of the NYSF. Still, his thesis proves relevant as I seek to contextualize the work of festival, and uncover similarities, correlations and/or connections with other theatre operations and offerings.

⁵ Newman 144

The NYSF's movement outdoors, starting at the East River Amphitheatre in the summer of 1956, brought with it the strong hand of director Stuart Vaughan. Vaughan recounts his experience of directing with the NYSF in his 1969 book *A Possible Theatre*. While Vaughan's book should not be taken as a "history" of the NYSF, it offers valuable insight into the company's evolution from a small-scale workshop to a large producing organization. Vaughan was a man of strong opinions on the design and performance practice of classical plays. What he provides in *A Possible Theatre* is an elaboration of his techniques and philosophies for staging Shakespeare for the NYSW, inflected with his belief in the repertory system, fluid staging, and design that would facilitate such staging. Additionally, Vaughan discusses his work and training with the Theatre Guild and the American Shakespeare Festival and Theatre, a company founded in the same year as the NYSW.⁶ Both these institutions provided Vaughan the opportunity to further explore the virtues of repertory work, in combination with conservatory training.

Most writing on the NYSW, and later the NYSF, only sparingly addresses the significant influence Vaughan exercised during his brief but prolific time working with the company. Vaughan averred a commitment to blending a conservatory approach to acting – rigorous training of body, voice, and “stage sense” – with the postwar orientation toward the “Method” of Lee Strasberg. Despite this, Vaughan, during and after his time at the NYSF, remained committed to *period* costuming and the fluid staging that he felt worked best for Shakespeare and many other classical works. So influential was Vaughan, that the Mobile Theater's staging unit, designed

⁶ Stuart Vaughan. *A Possible Theatre* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1969), 26-27.

and built for the 1957 summer season comported to his specifications for ideal space upon which to stage Shakespeare. Vaughan, in *A Possible Theatre* and later interviews, articulated a distaste for modes of Shakespeare production he felt attempted some “relevance” to contemporary life, a fact that may have affected the company more profoundly if he had stayed with them more than a couple years. His practices were an intriguing blend, very much influenced by the open staging of Tyrone Guthrie and the repertory staging of postwar England, the later of which he studied extensively as part of his Fulbright Grant.⁷ Vaughan went on to found several regional theatres, and was influential in the movement toward “resident companies” at these theatres. With the exception of Vaughan’s book, sources mentioned above, and many others which will be discussed below, accounts of the NYSF’s history are inextricably linked to Papp’s “personal growth and development” as a producer and director. Smith attributes the company’s success to their unwavering commitment, again thanks to Papp’s guidance, to remaining an educationally oriented, non-profit organization. As with other chroniclers of the company’s early years, Smith attributes much of this commitment to Papp’s hostility toward the commercial theatre of the mid-1950’s and early 1960’s.

For the first two years of the NYSF’s existence, it is entirely appropriate to suggest that Papp’s administrative and artistic methods exercised the greatest influence on the company’s development. In fact, Newman claims “Papp and the festival are basically synonymous.”⁸ The success, identity and aesthetic of the NYSF, have therefore frequently been elaborated as a function of the biography and persona

⁷ Vaughan, Stuart. “Stuart Vaughan at HB Studios.” 17 Mar 2014, New York, HB Studios.

⁸ Newman 1

of its founder, Joseph Papp. No wonder then, that the fullest accounting of company's creation, activities, and ethos came only three years after Papp's death, in the form of a nearly five hundred-page biography by Helen Epstein.⁹ Epstein's biography underscores the significance of Papp's efforts in building the NYSF, and also draws upon resources – including interviews with Papp, Vaughan, and other important figures in the company's development – unavailable to previous researchers. She compiled most of her archival resources from the NYSF's offices, before those resources were donated and catalogued at the Lincoln Center Library for the Performing Arts.

What is most intriguing is Epstein's evocation of Papp's incessantly exploratory attitude toward the production of Shakespeare, an attitude that is at once aesthetic and civic minded. Papp, in responding to critical response to his shifting aesthetic, fell back on what might be the NYSF's *raison d'être*:

What is consistent in my work is that I have always wanted to provide access to the best human endeavor to the greatest number of people. This has always been my central idea, my aesthetic. I am not an academic, not an intellectual, not some kind of cultural missionary bringing Shakespeare to the natives. I believe that great art is for everyone – not just the rich or the middle class.

When I go into East Harlem or Bedford-Stuyvesant and see kids who come to our shows, I see nothing so clearly as myself.¹⁰

It is small wonder, given Papp's avowed affinity – if not outright similarity – with the diverse audiences of the NYSF, that most treatments of the company's early existence

⁹ Helen Epstein. *Joe Papp: An American Life* (New York: Da Capo Press), 1994.

¹⁰ Epstein 18

position Papp as primarily responsible for the company's identity and overall philosophy. Because greater accessibility is so foundational to the NYSF, several other sources train their focus on the composition and qualities of the company's audiences.

The most extensive study of the NYSF's audience was produced by the Twentieth Century Fund in conjunction with the Mobile Theater's 1964 production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The study underscores the novelty of Papp's citywide Shakespeare enterprise, and offers this novelty – along with its public policy potential – as a rationale for the study. Statistical data, relating to race, age, and gender, were collected along with extensive interviews before and after the production. On the whole, the study concludes that audiences viewed the production as “spectator event” or as a “social ritual” rather than an “intellectual experience.”¹¹ The implications of this ritual – for the various communities within which they are situated – is never extensively addressed by the study, and constitutes a fruitful avenue for exploration in the *current* project and study, one I will pursue in Chapters 3 and 4. One of the limitations of the study was the assumption of appropriate audience comportment, from which researchers calibrated audience response to the performances. Based on the “norms of behavior while witnessing high culture,” the study concludes that the “Mobile Theater was not altogether successful.”¹² The Twentieth Century Fund severely limited itself with its assumptions about Shakespeare and audience reception. The NYSF's work and mission challenges the assumption that Shakespeare

¹¹ Richard Faust and Charles Kadushin. *Shakespeare in the Neighborhood: Audience reaction to “A Midsummer-Night's Dream” as produced by Joseph Papp for the Delacorte Mobile Theater* (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1965), 23.

¹² Faust 63

represents or embodies “high culture;” that in fact his plays are not to be treated with such high-minded reverence, but can be shuffled about and molded to fit any cultural or civic context. The question of what constitutes “fitting” is an important one, which will be explored below in reference to the Shakespeare’s historical positioning in American life.

Another important re-shuffling of Shakespeare’s work came when Papp adapted *Hamlet* into what he called *The Naked Hamlet*, which will be discussed in the conclusion of this dissertation. *The Naked Hamlet* was the second production at the Astor Library, opening in early 1968. In conjunction with this production, Papp produced a “Production Notebook” that included his adaptation, thoughts on the play, and as part of the preface, excerpts from letters, both in opposition and in support of the production from educators, students, and people from many other walks of life.¹³ His attention to audience response underscores the NYSF’s continuing concern with greater accessibility to audiences not accustomed to theatergoing. It might be argued, dovetailing on Papp’s conflation of aesthetic with civic or philanthropic concerns that his textual re-arrangements and liberties in *The Naked Hamlet* were inspired as much by bringing the play *closer* to the audience (i.e. rendering it more accessible), as they were on placing his directorial stamp or interpretation on the play. In this way, *The Naked Hamlet*, and Papp’s “Production Notebook” might be thought of as an extension of the mission statement for the NYSF/Public Theatre as I suggest in Chapter 6.

¹³ Papp, Joseph. *William Shakespeare’s “Naked” Hamlet: A Production Handbook* (London: MacMillan Company, 1969), 10-16.

Interestingly, Papp used the biography and ethnicity – it may actually more accurately be termed “ethnicity-as-biography” – of actor Martin Sheen in the role of Hamlet. One of the chief alterations that Papp made to the original text involves Hamlet’s departure for England. Papp chose to have Hamlet disguise himself – he was after all, in Papp’s words a “master of a hundred disguises” – as a Puerto Rican janitor named Ramon. Sheen’s given name was in fact “Ramon,” and he was encouraged by Papp to speak in his native Puerto Rican accent for this portion of the production. Similarly, when Cleavon Little took over the role for subsequent re-mountings of the production, he was also disguised as a lowly janitor named Rastus.¹⁴ Papp’s directorial attention to race and ethnicity (in this particular case, an example of “race conscious” casting) in the production of Shakespeare – at once simplistic, yet intriguing – points toward another important strain in scholarship on the NYSF; that of *colorblind* casting.

In her wide-ranging edited volume, entitled *Colorblind Shakespeare*, Ayanna Thompson claims that the “systematic practice of nontraditional or colorblind casting began with Joseph Papp’s New York Shakespeare Festival in the 1950’s.”¹⁵ Charlene Widener, in her 2006 dissertation, on colorblind and uni-racial casting practices at the New York Shakespeare Festival, extends Thompson’s claim to suggest that Papp’s project was part of the larger movement toward creating social and cultural institutions that reflected the diversities and pluralities of New York City and the

¹⁴ Papp 32-33. As the rehearsal process for the *Naked Hamlet* was highly improvisatory and at times chaotic, it is difficult to discern where the racially charged name “Rastus” originated. Ted Cornell, at first assistant director of the production and eventually director for the Mobile Theater’s production of the play claimed that Little’s approach was less spontaneous and more “fixed” than Sheen’s had been. This fact partially explains why Papp surrendered the reins of the production, and perhaps suggests that the name and persona “Rastus” came at least in part from Papp.

¹⁵ Ayanna Thompson, ed. *Colorblind Shakespeare: New Perspectives on Race and Performance* (London: Routledge, 2006), 1.

nation more generally.¹⁶ Widener addresses aspects of colorblind casting, from 1964 through the end of Papp's official tenure in 1989, and using the notions and frameworks of "racial formation" she examines the "intent of Papp's colorblind and uni-racial casting, the nature of the racial project, and the extent of the racial project."¹⁷ She also suggests, despite Papp's obviously progressive casting practices, that questions remain about the favorability of such practices from critics and audiences of all races. Citing and expounding upon Thompson's work, Widener suggests that some of Papp's casting choices actually underscored the stereotypes they were meant to subvert.

The issue of colorblind casting is part of a much larger conversation opened up by the work of the NYSF, one that subsumes race; that is the positionality of the NYSF in relation to the diverse – racially, economically, and otherwise – audiences they hope to expose to Shakespeare. Papp's fear that he might be labeled as a cultural missionary bringing Shakespeare to the unlearned natives reflects a deep-rooted sense that Shakespeare in America is for a certain class of people. This is not to say that Papp subscribed to this belief, but his own awareness that such a charge might be levied, points to a *historical* reality in which Shakespeare figures variously as a badge of culture, a native language, an icon, and a publically held monument. In his study of cultural hierarchy in American life, Lawrence Levine draws a distinction between the

¹⁶ Charlene Widener. "The Changing Face of American Theatre: Colorblind and Uni-Racial Casting at the New York Shakespeare Festival Under the Direction of Joseph Papp." PhD diss., University of Missouri-Columbia, 2006.

¹⁷ Widener 4-5. The concept of "racial formation" and "racial projects" can be traced to the work of Michael Omi and Howard Winant who developed the notion that "human identities and social structures are racially signified" and are in fact "embedded in social structures" (Omi & Winant 13).

reception and appropriation of Shakespeare in the nineteenth as opposed to the twentieth century:

If Shakespeare had been an integral part of mainstream culture in the nineteenth century, in the twentieth he had become part of “polite” culture – an essential ingredient in a complex we call, significantly “legitimate” theater. He had become the possession of the educated portions of society who disseminated his plays for the enlightenment of average folk who were to swallow him not for their entertainment but for their education, as a respite from – not as a normal part of – their usual cultural diet.¹⁸

The reasons for this shift, as Levine maintains, are various, but they might be fruitfully explained by his belief that in the late 19th century “Shakespeare was being divorced from the broader world of everyday culture.” Nearly a century later, by the late-1970’s, his work had become, in the words of one columnist “theatrical spinach.”¹⁹

Levine’s argument, based on other sources consulted, is apt if somewhat incomplete.²⁰ Around the same time that Levine claims Shakespeare’s flight from “everyday culture,” the outdoor theatre movement began in earnest in the United States. The work of Ben Greet, as Lew Akin’s 1975 dissertation suggested, exposed new American audiences previously denied access – for economic, geographic, or

¹⁸ Lawrence Levine. *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 31.

¹⁹ Levine 31-33

²⁰ See also: Vaughan, Virginia Mason and Alden T. Vaughan (ed.). *Shakespeare in American Life*. Washington DC: Folger Shakespeare Library, 2007. Dunn, Esther Cloudman. *Shakespeare in America* (New York: B. Blom, 1968).

social reasons – to the work of Shakespeare.²¹ This certainly supports Levine’s claim that the work of Shakespeare had become the province of a certain class of people, as Greet would seem to represent a revival of a more populist Shakespeare, whose work ought to be as free and inclusive as the open spaces in which he staged his productions. Yet, it is worth mentioning that many of Greet’s production venues included college and university campus,’ proof perhaps that this was not quite Shakespeare for entertainment’s sake, but for edification’s sake. Indeed, Akin claims that the desire for self-improvement among lower and middle class audience’s fueled Greet’s success. Small wonder then that Greet was so popular among the Chautauqua and Lyceum circuits, forms of popular display and learning in their own right.²² Akin’s claims do not directly contradict Levine’s argument, but they do offer an addendum to it. Though Shakespeare perhaps circulated less in “everyday life,” new audiences from all social classes were still being exposed to his work.

Another addendum might be offered through other forms of outdoor performance, such as Shakespeare pageants. As Alden T. and Virginia Mason Vaughan suggest in *Shakespeare in America*, the 1916 tercentenary production of Percy Mackaye’s *Caliban on the Yellow Sands* may well be read as an attempt at national unity, and cultural supremacy. Attendees might be able to experience national unity and identity, as the production dramatized America as a “bastion of Anglo-Saxon culture at a moment in time when that status was being threatened both from within and without.”²³ Again, Vaughan complicates Levine’s argument by

²¹ Akin, Lew Sparks. “Ben Greet and His Theatre Companies in America: 1902-1932.” PhD diss., University of Georgia, 1975.

²² Akin 60-61

²³ Vaughan and Vaughan 108

suggesting that Shakespeare had not retired to the citadels of knowledge, available to only the select few. Rather, Vaughan suggested that pageants and performances like *Caliban on the Yellow Sands* actually served as expressions of shared identity among an ethnically, economically, and linguistically diverse nation. National unity was not the only objectives of Tercentenary celebrations, however. Performer and producer Margaret Anglin marketed her production of *As You Like It* as an ideal opportunity for community involvement in the presentation and production of the play. The result was at once a performance and an event, meant to celebrate Shakespeare and the local community (in Anglin's St. Louis performance most notably). While Anglin's performance of *As You Like It* and Mackaye's *Caliban on the Yellow Sands* could not be termed "everyday" by a stretch of the imagination, the communities they celebrate and the allegiances they hope to inspire could certainly be characterized as everyday. I will not dwell further on Community Drama and pageants, though they are worth mentioning as precursors to the Shakespeare festival movement, both before and after WWII.

Dennis Kennedy explains the emergence of such festivals in the postwar years as an attempt to declare a common "public heritage."²⁴ This further elaborates Levine's claim by suggesting that in addition to being "theatrical spinach," Shakespeare could – as with Shakespeare pageants or other Shakespeare-influenced Community Drama performances – serve as a locus for shared heritages and beliefs. This helps to collapse Levine's notion that Shakespeare-as-entertainment and Shakespeare-as-edification must of necessity function separately, and sets the stage

²⁴ Dennis Kennedy. *The Spectator and the Spectacle* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009), 102.

for the postwar festival movement. While many postwar festivals took advantage of the “open-air populism” provided by outdoor amphitheaters, they also relied heavily on associations with universities for facilities and resources.²⁵ One very notable exception was the NYSF, though Papp did attempt to establish university affiliations *after* the festival had become something of a New York City institution. Despite the populism of many postwar festival ventures, most eventually began to draw primarily middle class audiences. Some of this can be attributed to the geography of these festivals, as they often functioned as tourist destinations, and therefore required the use of an automobile. Though again the very notable exception is the NYSF, which travelled throughout the city *and* possessed a permanent home in Central Park. It may have been a destination, but it was a destination for a specific community of people – i.e. New Yorkers.

Finally, two sources on postwar Shakespeare festivals that prove useful in understanding their emergence and development are *Shakespeare Companies and Festivals: An International Guide* and *The Shakespeare Complex*.²⁶ In the first, Ron Engle and Felicia Londre catalogue almost 200 Shakespeare companies and festivals, both extant and defunct, through the 1995 performance season. The list is by no means exhaustive, as the authors point out in their preface, because the “grass-roots appeal” of Shakespeare made the enormous proliferation of companies that much more difficult to document. That said, *Shakespeare Companies and Festivals* presents

²⁵ Vaughan and Vaughan 92

²⁶ Engle, Ron and Felicia Hardison Londré, David J. Watermeier. *Shakespeare Companies and Festivals: An International Guide*. London: Greenwood Press, 1995. Leiter, Samuel L. and Langdon Brown. *Shakespeare Around the Globe: A Guide to Notable Postwar Revivals* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986). Glenn Loney and Patricia MacKay. *The Shakespeare Complex: A Guide to Summer Festivals and Year-round Repertory in North America* (New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1975).

an enormous variety of festivals, and provides – despite their rich diversity of theatrical offerings, administrative structures, geography, and connections to various communities – a working definition of what constitutes a “Shakespeare company” or “Shakespeare festival”:

Nevertheless, for our purposes, in order to designate a “Shakespeare festival or company,” either a substantial portion of a company’s annual season had to be dedicated to producing Shakespeare’s plays or Shakespeare was designated as central to the company’s artistic mission. Most festivals, for example, present as many (sometimes more) non-Shakespearean plays as Shakespearean plays, but they all acknowledge Shakespeare’s plays to be the foundation, the core, on which their repertoire rests.²⁷

This distinction is significant, as the NYSF certainly changed the ways that they used Shakespeare in both their repertoire and their artistic mission. The name “New York Shakespeare Festival” has in some ways been completely replaced by the “Free Shakespeare in the Park,” under the auspices of the overarching institutional name “The Public Theatre.”

This shift by the NYSF might arguably be endemic of a fear Glenn Loney and Patricia MacKay articulated in *The Shakespeare Complex*. Apart from the company’s consideration of the role Shakespeare will play – symbolically, artistically or otherwise – in their repertoire and mission, the word “festival” has historically been a source of anxiety for some groups, as they seek to define themselves as a company. Some companies refuse to use of the name, as Loney and MacKay contend, believing that it often connotes a shortened season, special events, and/or guest or celebrity

²⁷ Engle, Londre and Watermeier ix

performers.²⁸ Ironically, the words “festival” were actually inserted into the name of the NYSW in 1960, concomitant with preliminary steps toward building a permanent theatre space in Central Park. In other words, they were slowly becoming a New York City institution. As Loney and MacKay are at pains to stress, and as the title of their book suggests, the festival phenomena is not merely a matter of physical structures, personnel, and funding, it is a “state of mind.” This state of mind overlaps with reverence for the Shakespeare in the academic and educational arenas, and therefore creates multiple venues and methods for expressing this reverence. The thickness of the web created by such theatrical, educational, and cultural investments is not easily untangled. In the case of the NYSF, operating in a variety of different spaces while claiming dedication to the public and service to that public, it was particularly challenging.

Frameworks

The major function of this dissertation, therefore, is to unravel and analyze the NYSF’s ongoing ambition, commitment and *strategy* to serve and embody the “public(s).” To supplement previous scholarship, I will draw on literature that explores and elucidates the use of both urban and theatrical spaces (in the historical and theoretical capacity) and most importantly, scholarship that examines and illuminates the uses of the term and concept of “public.” Given the NYSF’s eventual moniker (The Public Theater) and continual invocation of the term throughout their earliest history, such scholarship is critical to understanding the history of this complicated theatrical institution and cultural phenomenon.

²⁸ Loney, MacKay 3-4

Literature on the study of space has proliferated of late in connection with what has been called the “spatial turn” in the humanities.²⁹ In the same year that the NYSF moved in to Astor Library, Michel Foucault declared that the ‘present epoch will perhaps be the epoch of space.’³⁰ The incorporation of literature focusing on the design and use of space is therefore historically and theoretically necessary to this dissertation. Scholarly interest in and exploration of spaces of performance intensified after the publication of Marvin Carlson’s seminal *Places of Performance* in 1989 and roughly intersects with the above-cited ‘spatial turn’ in the humanities and social sciences.³¹ One of the fulcrum’s that guides this shift is Carlson’s semiotic approach to interpreting theatre spaces in *Places of Performance*. Carlson elaborates this shift in his essay “The Theatre Ici” as a move away from “linear structure” and a “narratology of temporality” in understanding the performance event, and stresses the centrality of space/place instead. Theatrical events remain “grounded in topology,” as Carlson asserts, and understanding the ‘grounded-ness,’ of *theatrical* contexts illuminates their *social* context more fully to scholars and theorists of this turn in the study of social and artistic phenomena.³²

In her wide-ranging study of the use and design of space in performance, performance theorist Gay McAuley blends semiotic *and* phenomenological approaches to consider the complex relationship between performance spaces and the larger, wider urban spaces in which they are ensconced. Given the NYSF’s peripatetic

²⁹ David Harvey. “Space as a Keyword.” *Spaces of Global Capitalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 129.

³⁰ Michel Foucault. “Of Other Spaces.” *Visual Cultural Reader 2nd Ed.*, Nicholas Mirzoeff, ed., (London: Routledge 2002), 237.

³¹ Marvin Carlson. *Places of Performance: The Semiotics of Theatre Architecture* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1989).

³² Marvin Carlson. “Theatre Ici.” *Performance and the Politics of Space* (Erika Fischer-Lichte, ed.) Routledge, 2013), 16.

impulse and multi-sited history, McAuley's *Space in Performance* proves critical in unraveling the circulation of social energies in and around spaces of performance. Performance theorist Ric Knowles, in his book *Reading Material Performance* extends McAuley's exploration of these social energies into considering what he calls the "geography of performance." This geography, more than any other consideration in the artistic product and process, influences the production and reception of the performance event.³³ In the reception of the performance event, I utilize the work of sociologist Erving Goffman and phenomenologist Edward Casey. Goffman's exploration of the behavior of park-goers, as articulated in *Behavior in Public Places* prove useful in analyzing the context of the NYSF's work in Central Park and the Mobile Theater. The later, initiated by the company in 1957 before a brief hiatus and reemergence in 1964, will be examined at length in Chapters 3 and 4. Additionally, Goffman's notion of theatrical framing and keying are critical to understanding the NYSF's process of creating theatrical spaces – with all that accompanies these spaces in terms of audience behavior and comportment – in public spaces all around the five boroughs.³⁴ Finally, Casey's analysis of boundaries and borders help to elucidate what the NYSF's presence in various urban contexts might connote and reveal.³⁵

In addition to literature exploring the uses of theatrical and urban spaces, I will lean heavily on scholarship dedicated to analyzing the development and use of 'public' as both a concept and a rhetorical gesture. Somewhat bridging the body of

³³ Ric Knowles. *Reading the Material Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004).

³⁴ Erving Goffman. *Frame Analysis* (New York: Penguin Books, Inc., 1976). Erving Goffman. *Behavior in Public Places*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1966).

³⁵ Edward S. Casey. "Boundary, Place, and Event in the Spatiality of History," *Rethinking History*, Vol. 11, No. 4, (December 2007). Edward S. Casey. *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-world* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).

literature enumerated above with notions of public, Miles Orvell and Jeffrey Meikle's edited volume *Public Space and the Ideology of Place in American Culture* explores the relative ambiguity of the term "public space." These spaces become sites of contestation, at once embodying authority and the "subversion of authority."³⁶ The embodiment of both demonstrates the incredible flexibility of the notion of 'public,' and this flexibility is at the heart of this dissertation and the growth of the NYSF. In his book chapter "Playbills and the Theatrical Public Sphere," Christopher Balme claims that when a theatre deploys the term public it connotes, among other things, a "potential audience" yet to be realized. In addressing audiences, these public(s) somewhat outside the confines of the theatre space, theatrical institutions help to create what Balme calls the "theatrical public sphere." This realm of communication and exchange will be explored throughout this dissertation as the NYSF and later the Public Theater established and grew their institutional presence.³⁷ According to Balme, the study of theatrical institutions, their *potential* audiences and inchoate public spheres have received much less scholarly attention than the performance events themselves. This dissertation in many ways seeks to fill this relative void. Finally, dovetailing on the fluidity of "public space" is Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge's notion of the public *sphere*. This sphere embodies both a "horizon of social experience" for those inhabiting public and/or civic spaces, *and* various institutions, agencies and authorities tasked with governing and administering the city and its

³⁶ Miles Orvell, Miles and Jeffrey L. Meikle. *Public Space and the Ideology of Place in American Culture* (New York: Rodopi, 2009), 10.

³⁷ Christopher Balme. "Playbills and the Theatrical Public Sphere," *Representing the Past: Essays in Performance Historiography* (Charlotte Canning and Thomas Postlewait) (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 2010), 40-41. See also: Christopher B. Balme. *The Theatrical Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2014).

spaces.³⁸ Several other supplementary pieces of literature will emerge throughout the dissertation, but the scholarship cited above serves as the framework through which I interpret the NYSF's development throughout.

The dual embodiment of the public sphere proposed by the Negt and Kluge underscores how “illusory” this sphere can be in practice, a fact that redounds throughout this dissertation. The development of the NYSF relies heavily upon the fluidity of the public sphere, as the company develops as a private organization deeply invested in public work. Joseph Papp deploys both notions of public in his opening night speech at the newly constructed Delacorte Theatre in Central Park:

The existence of this theatre has many ramifications, many important considerations. But one of the most important, I think, is that it is a tribute to democracy. It's a dramatization of a city government's response to the will of its people. In the process of its evolvment, we had recourse to every piece of democratic machinery: the courts, the press, petitions, citizen's committees, et al. All these joined in the struggle to keep Shakespeare free in Central Park. The fact that it is free is key to the understanding of the significance of the festival. Because by keeping it free, I feel we have supported and defended the very core of the democratic philosophy, which is the greatest good for the greatest number.³⁹

It had been a winding road to the opening of this outdoor amphitheater, one partially forged by the young producer, and abetted by the “democratic machinery,” of New

³⁸ Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt, *Public Sphere and Experience: Toward an Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), ix.

³⁹ “The Taming of Robert Moses.” WNYC, Originally Broadcast June 18, 1962. <http://www.wnyc.org/shows/fromthearchives/2007/jun/01/> Accessed 2/10/18

York City. How sizable a percentage of the city's population represented this "will" remains an open question, one the festival itself sporadically addressed, as I will elaborate throughout this dissertation.

To augment our understanding of this machinery and the NYSF's earliest history, this dissertation seeks to explore the processes and challenges of creating 'public(s)' for the company's offerings, theatrical and otherwise. Through this exploration we discover a company deeply invested in maintaining the fluidity and ambiguity of the 'public,' mentioned above, to nourish their institutional presence on the New York City's cultural landscape. Papp, along with NYSF administrators and staff participated in this complex and dynamic process, responding to myriad factors, including demographic shifts, the company's evolving mission, changes in the ways civic space were designed and used and many other considerations that will emerge throughout the dissertation.

Chapter 1: Borders & Frontiers

Theatrical Prospecting:

In the Provisional Charter for the NYSW, granted by the New York State Department of Education in 1954, Joseph Papp articulated three intertwined tenets to the company's mission.⁴⁰ First and foremost, the company would "encourage and cultivate an interest in poetic drama," through play production, classes to provide both historical context for the plays and instruction in Elizabethan acting and stagecraft, public play readings with audience discussion, and presentation of plays – in excerpt – at "high schools, colleges, community centers and similar institutions."⁴¹ In the course of the NYSW, and eventually the New York Shakespeare *Festival* (NYSF), several of these potential spaces and demographics were de-emphasized, if not entirely phased out. These included extensive school touring and exploratory work in connecting with universities and collegiate training programs. Touring and the educational aspects of the NYSW's work will be addressed in Chapter 3 as they provide perspective on the other elements of the company's wider and wider search for theatrical audiences and publics. The second major tenet of the NYSW Provisional Charter called for the establishment of an "annual Summer Shakespeare

⁴⁰ The company name's history is complicated, as I somewhat suggest below. When the Provisional Charter was granted in 1954, the organization went by the "New York Shakespeare Workshop," "Shakespeare Workshop," and occasionally simply the "Elizabethan Workshop." When Papp began to solicit support for his enterprise, however, he called it "Wooden 'O Productions," even drawing up a Business Certificate under that moniker. This name will actually re-surface in unexpected ways in Chapter 3 when I discuss the acquisition and renovation of the Astor Library building. When an Absolute Charter was granted in 1960, the name was changed to the "New York Shakespeare Festival." Beginning in 1965, as Papp and the Board made overtures to acquiring the Astor Library, they began referring to the new space variously as the "New York Public Theatre," the "Public Theatre." Finally, for many years from the 1990's through 2011, the theatre went by the name "The Public Theatre/New York Shakespeare Festival." Now, "Shakespeare in the Park" is promoted as an offering of the "Public Theatre" and/or "The Public."

⁴¹ "Provisional Charter for Shakespeare Workshop," 1954, Series I, Box 1, folder 1. New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

festival.” The first two chapters of this dissertation focus on this particular tenet, the connotations of “festival” in reference to the NYSW, and what types of audiences and publics were most associated with festivalising.

Shakespeare festivalising and the imperative of constructing a permanent theatrical space – whether reconstructions of Elizabethan playhouse, sylvan theatres, or otherwise – have a long and complicated history.⁴² Therefore, before diving into the NYSW’s drive toward perennial festivalising, I want to mention the final tenet of the NYSW provisional charter, the ambition to build a “replica of an Elizabethan playhouse.” This tenet, paired with the second, suggests the importance of a theatrical spaces conception, design and use in the establishment of perennial Shakespearean festivalising. Papp’s infatuation with original practices and Elizabethan theatre spaces – in spirit and/or practice – was in some sense embodied by his short-lived moniker for his theatre company. Before settling, albeit for only about a half a decade on the name NYSW, Papp drew up a Business Certificate’ for ‘Wooden ‘O Productions,’ as the name for his company in 1954.⁴³

Papp’s affinity for early modern theatre spaces had a great deal to do with what he felt they symbolized and what audiences experienced while dwelling within

⁴² This history dates back at least to the touring Ben Greet’s Woodland Player’s, continued with the work of the Chautauqua movement, and finally with the founding – in various forms – of yearly summer festivals. For further reading on Ben Greet: Lew Akin, “Ben Greet and His Theatre Companies in America: 1902-1932,” (doctoral dissertation, University of Georgia, 1974). Richard Palmer, “Ben Greet and the Elizabethan Revival,” *Theatre Symposium*, v. 12 (2004): 8-19. Michael Dobson, *Shakespeare and Amateur Performance*, (Oxford UK: Oxford UP, 2011), 152-196. Don-John Dugas. *Shakespeare for Everyman: Ben Greet in Early Twentieth Century America* (London: Society for Theatre Research, 2016). For further reading on the history and development of Shakespeare Festivals see: Glen Loney and Patricia MacKay, *Shakespeare Complex: A guide to summer festivals and year-round repertory in North America* (New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1975), 3-46. Ron Engle, Felicia Hardison Londre and Daniel J. Watermeier, *Shakespeare Companies and Festivals: An International Guide* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), vii-xx. Christopher Scully, *Constructed Places: Shakespeare’s American Playhouses* (doctoral dissertation, Tufts University, 2011).

⁴³ “Business Certificate: ‘Wooden ‘O Productions,’” Series I, Box 1, folder 28, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

them, as his infatuation with Elizabethan staging practices continued well into his time as artistic director of the NYSF. We know that Papp was aware of Margaret Webster's abbreviated presentations of Shakespeare's plays in the reconstructed Globe at the 1939-40 World's Fair in New York City. Whether he attended is less important than the fact that at least twenty years after the company's founding, Papp remained fascinated with the design and production potential of Elizabethan playhouses.⁴⁴ These playhouses, according to Papp, operated as spaces of accessibility for the "multitudes and the leisure classes," and that they issued from larger cultural shifts indicative of the Renaissance. The result, he contended, was a flow of social energies to and from the theatre to the world beyond its walls:

A few hundred years ago in a little country – that blessed plot, that earth, that realm, that England underwent a transformation; amongst the better people it

⁴⁴ Two books that Papp surely used as inspiration and possibly reference, were John Cranford Adams' *The Globe Playhouse: Its Design and Equipment* and C. Walter Hodges' *The Globe Restored: A Study of the Elizabethan Theatre*. Each author settles on a slightly different design for the Globe Theatre, despite working from much the same evidence. Adams' work, published in 1942, collated myriad sources and went further than any scholar had at the time in 1942 in substantially interpreting this evidence into a design and speculating about the function that emanated from that form. Hodges, writing a little more than a decade later considered images, several bits of textual evidence and his own well-informed opinion on the subject to provide his own reconstruction of the Globe Theatre's design and suggestions of how this design operated in practice. J.C. Adams. *The Globe Playhouse: Its Design and Equipment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1942). C. Walter Hodges. *The Globe Restored: A Study of the Elizabethan Theatre* (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1953). Interestingly, one of the books catalogued from Papp's office at the time of his death was C. Walter Hodges' *Shakespeare's Second Globe: the missing monument*. One of the sections that seemed to fascinate Papp the most, judging by his copious underlining and marginalia, was the closing section of the book when Hodges turns to speculating about what design might be best for reconstructing an Elizabethan playhouse. It is true that Hodges book was not published until 1973, but Papp's excitement about the possibility of a re-imagined Globe Theatre at least twenty years after his company's founding certainly attests to the durability and depth of his passion and commitment to the virtues of original design and practice. This item can be found in Series XIII, Box 6, folder 8 of the New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Library of the Performing Arts. Additionally, it is worth mentioning that according to Stuart Vaughan, one of Papp's earliest directors and collaborators, Papp's interest was intensified by a British actor he had met while working at CBS. Unfortunately, Vaughan was unable to recall the actor's name, but I would argue that it was Whitford Kane. Kane worked several times at CBS and was in several of Wooden O Productions' earliest theatrical offerings. Also, interestingly, he performed in *Hamlet* directed by Margaret Webster only a few months before the 1939-40 World's Fair got underway. Finally, Kane spent time at the Actor's Lab in Los Angeles where Papp spent his earliest years as a director/producer in training. Stuart Vaughan, interview with author, May 2, 2014.

was called a “cultural renaissance”. This period in the reign of Elizabeth produced with miraculous abundance great tomes of works which were performed before the multitudes and the leisure classes. Characteristic of these plays was the breaking away from earlier and cruder forms of writing as well as from a content that dwelt on morality themes. This age was swept by energetic interest in the world around men – and in the men themselves. The writing it produced reflected this energy and interest... There were no prosceniums separating audience from actor. The entire wooden o was the theater and scenes moved fluidly from one playing area to another...⁴⁵

The strict historical accuracy of Papp’s assertions is less important than the ideology they envelope, though it is worth mentioning that Papp displayed familiarity with the historical literature of the time from scholars like Alfred Harbage and C. Walter Hodges.⁴⁶

Papp’s figuration of Elizabethan theatre spaces, far from an antiquarian fascination, however, was much more about what design of space meant for the *experience* of that space, especially for audiences. Papp’s ambitions and passions aside, he functioned within the limitations imposed on the would-be producer of theatre outside the commercial realm in the mid-1950s.⁴⁷ The space he settled on for

⁴⁵ “Prospectus-Wooden ‘O Theatre Productions,” Series I, Box 1, folder 28, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

⁴⁶ Papp likely drew his consideration of Elizabethan audiences from Alfred Harbage’s 1941 book *Shakespeare’s Audience*, which Papp makes reference to in a 1957 correspondence with the author. Joseph Papp to Alfred Harbage. Series I, Box 1, folder 27, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. From Harbage, Papp inherited the notion of Shakespeare’s audience as both popular but diverse in terms of vocation, class and education. Alfred Harbage. *Shakespeare’s Audience*. New York: Columbia UP, 1941.

⁴⁷ Papp’s previous directing efforts included productions staged at Yugo-Slav American Hall just south of the commercial theatre district as an example. The other viable options for theatre outside the commercial realm were theatres associated with settlements, theatre schools and/or institutions such as

his Shakespearean workshop had, as late as 1953, housed a community theatre company called the Oval Players. They had performed in the basement and Sunday school room of Emmanuel Presbyterian Church at 729 East Sixth Street. Papp directed a production of John Patrick's *The Curious Savage* for the Oval Players in 1951 and was slated to direct Lorca's *House of Bernarda Alba*, but the company disbanded in early 1953 before rehearsal and production began.⁴⁸ The space itself could house as many as 250 spectators, arranged in a semi-circular – though very shallow – thrust around the stage. Downstage left and stage right featured two raised platforms, which Papp points out, might be used in contrast or conjunction with the main playing area. Additionally, the basement theater included a crossover to entrances and exits stage left and right, and an additional balcony upstage right.

These descriptions and details come from an early prospectus Papp drafted for Wooden 'O Productions, along with letters for the solicitation of artistic and financial support, to actors such as Alfred Drake and the general public respectively. Papp devotes a chunk of his prospectus to elaborating the physical capabilities and virtues of this basement theatre space, stressing the importance of creating a space in which it was “possible to visualize the staging and fluid movement of the Shakespearean plays and other Elizabethan works.”⁴⁹ To Papp, what this theatre lacked in physical

libraries and other community organizations. Papp also directed at the Equity Library Theatre (a joint venture of the Actor's Equity and the New York Public Library) and at the Neighborhood Playhouse. See: Brooks Atkinson, “At the Theatre,” *New York Times* (Atkinson, B, May 8, 1952), p. 35) and Greenberg, Ed. “Reviews,” *Show Business* 27 Apr 1953. Morganthau, Rita Wallace. Letter to Joseph Papp, 3 Feb 1952,. Series XIII, Box 1, folder 14, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

⁴⁸ “Papirofsky Directs Oval Players,” *The Villager* (New York, NY) Dec 12, 1952.

⁴⁹ Papp, Joseph. Letter to Alfred Drake, August 18, 1954, Series I, Box 1, folder 28, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY. “Prospectus-Wooden ‘O...”

similitude to early modern theatre spaces, it made up for in its capacity to enact the flow and currents fundamental to early modern dramas.

Interestingly, Papp extolled not only the virtues of this basement theatre's interior, but also the buildings placement in the neighborhood and the city. As the Introduction suggested and Carlson elaborated, surrounding urban environs are vital to understanding an audience's and the public's experience of the theatrical event and the theatre as an institution. Papp's interest in this connection between theatrical spaces, civic spaces and the 'public(s)' emerged in a form letter to potential sponsors for his then-as-yet unnamed theatre:

This letter's being sent to those who have expressed an active concern for the cultural activities of the East Side and to whom the opening of a new community theater in this area would have a special interest. This inter-racial section of the City, rich in melting-pot traditions, has been the source from which numerous theater movements have sprung up, flourished, and spilled over into our national cultural life. These groups owe their beginnings and survival to the enthusiastic and unstinting patronage of people like yourself.⁵⁰

Papp and the NYSW's concern with the theatre's space and surrounding environs, along with the potential for artistic and cultural reverberations on a regional or national scale, expressed the nascent company's sensitivity to the complicated relationship between the city's changing geography, demography, design and use. Given ongoing projects for residential overhaul and development often referred to

⁵⁰ Papp, Joseph. Letter to prospective sponsors, 1953, Series I, Box 1, folder 28. New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

before and after as “slum clearance,” it is not entirely clear what ‘community’ or public Papp hoped to serve.

Near the end of his prospectus, however, Papp mentions that the “invited audience” for his fledgling project will be “drawn from the immediate community, schools, universities, community centers, as well as from the theatrical professions.”⁵¹

The immediate community includes, a mere half block away, residents of the Riis Houses, Lillian Wald houses, both public housing projects opened only four years before the formation of the NYSW and the renovation of their new home on East 6th Street. To further complicate matters, Papp had expressed, during his time with the Oval Players in the early 1950’s, an aspiration that the eventually defunct theatre would mainly serve the community coalesced and created by Stuyvesant Town-Peter Cooper Village.⁵² Given his statement to potential supporters and his prospectus, it would appear that Papp’s new theatrical venture would at least in part serve the population in and around the recently constructed village. The community created by Stuyvesant Town-Cooper Village was something of a patchwork, with residence drawn from communities considered blighted or failed from all the five boroughs.⁵³

Also of note, the racial make-up of Stuyvesant Town from its beginnings was entirely Caucasian. Because of the private-public nature of this particular residential re-

⁵¹ “Wooden ‘O Productions...”

⁵² “Papirofsky Directs...” Stuyvesant Town-Peter Cooper Village was a private-public partnership initiated by Robert Moses, at the request of then Mayor LaGuardia. This was part of a project to clear “slums” and communities believed to be “failed” or “failing.” It was extremely controversial, and took several years to work through the logistics of the racial, ethnic and religious prohibitions that existed based on whether integration might be “less profitable.” It finally opened in August of 1947, only two year before the construction of both the Lillian Wald Houses and the Riis Houses immediately to the south.

⁵³ Samuel Zipp, *Manhattan Projects: The Rise and Fall of Urban Renewal in Cold War New York* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010), 363. “Planners looked at people like commodities, quantifiable units, or assortments of average populations that could be moved across the city at will and grouped in monolithic island towers.”

development project, integration – so argued Metropolitan Life Insurance Company – could prove unprofitable moving forward.⁵⁴

This is not to say that Papp’s project to serve this “inter-racial section” of the city proved disingenuous, if not downright inaccurate; it is merely to qualify his idealism in the context of demographic and spatial realities. As the scope of the NYSW – and eventually the NYSF – grows and their institutional presence and permanence (spatially and otherwise) increases, a similar granularity will need to be provided for terms and concepts such as “community,” “civic” and most importantly “public” as an embodiment of the company’s mission, ethos and activities in various spaces. Public housing projects, such as the Riis Houses and the Lillian Wald house, are themselves problematic as they often aspired to enact some degree of racial integration, but frequently failed in this aspiration. As these massive public enterprises displaced tens of thousands of residents, some of whom settled back into the housing project that replaced the ‘slum,’ and many *new* residents of housing projects came from other communities and even boroughs.⁵⁵ Papp evokes the rich heritage, ethnic and racial diversity of the Lower East Side, but contemporary housing developments in and around this area complicate his characterization. Demographic shuffling and the urban renewal process that facilitated it continued to problematize

⁵⁴ Scott A. Henderson. *Housing and the Democratic Ideal: The Life and Thought of Charles Abrams* (New York: Columbia UP, 2000), 140-142.

⁵⁵ As Jane Jacobs noted in *The Rise and Fall of Great American Cities*, housing projects – like the urban theory and architectural sensibilities that undergirded them – set residential spaces apart from other spaces and forms of social and cultural intercourse. The dedicated leisure spaces, for example, often at the center of housing developments, rarely drew as many inhabitants as neighborhood parks or spaces collectively and publically acknowledged as spaces of congregation. Additionally, residential spaces were segregated from business districts, entertainment venues and many other amenities often associated with urban living. Jane Jacobs *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York, NY: Random House, 1961), 4-25. For more information on public housing, its antecedents, history and legacy, and a slightly more sympathetic view of its enterprises and philosophy, see” Nicholas Dagen Bloom, *Public Housing that Worked: New York in the Twentieth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

the NYSW and later the NYSF's rhetoric surrounding notions of public and the company's deployment of this rhetoric.

Of (Urban) Festival Spaces

As mentioned above, the NYSW sought to establish a yearly Shakespeare festival and to construct a replica of an Elizabethan playhouse. Despite the latter never coming to fruition, it is worth mentioning that two major predecessors, and one near contemporary, to the NYSW in the realm of Shakespeare festivalising established a powerful link between the re-creation of Elizabethan theatre spaces and yearly Shakespeare festivals. In briefly exploring the predecessor to the NYSW, I hope to provide a fuller context for Papp's avowed mission to establishing a yearly summer Shakespeare festival and permanent venue to house their operations. Evaluation of the NYSW's venture to scout festival spaces, reveals an intensification of the company's relationship with and rhetoric surrounding the 'public(s).' Compounding this was the rich, challenging history of Central Park, rendering the planning and construction of the amphitheater space all the more complex.

Spatial considerations when siting Shakespeare festivals – at once logistical, symbolic, and demographic – have long been a primary concern to producers and practitioners alike. As McAuley points out, “the frame constituted by a particular building or venue is not something fixed and immutable but a dynamic and continually evolving social entity” that gains a reputation within a cultural community based on the theatrical work presented.⁵⁶ Audiences and publics are crucial to the development of this reputation and evolution, as choices of artistic programming and space are intimately entwined in the minds and memories of

⁵⁶ McAuley 41

practitioners, audiences and the greater public alike. Founder of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF) Angus Bowmer, for example, recalled a rainy March day when he entered the roofless, hollow shell of an old Chautauqua⁵⁷ building in Ashland, Oregon that would become the site of the festivals first permanent space:

We were here because we had noted a peculiar resemblance between the circular roofless walls of this old structure and the seventeenth century sketch of Shakespeare's Globe drawn by Wenceslaus Hollar. It is true that this impression was an illusory one and only possible when the building was viewed from below across the little pond in Lithia Park. But fleeting as it was, this comparison stimulated the germinal idea of a Shakespeare Festival.⁵⁸

Clearly, and self-admittedly, Bowmer exercised a bit of whimsy in constructing a connection between the historical Globe Theatre and his own theatrical operation.

The connection between the natural landscape and original production practices was nothing new in the 1930's, as the enormous success of Ben Greet's American theatrical offerings – mainly on college quads and village greens – attested. It is worth mentioning, however, that Greet devoted most of his time in the United

⁵⁷ The Chautauqua movement, at once performative and educational, possessed strong connections to early outdoor Shakespeare in the United States. Continuity between the late Chautauqua movement and Shakespeare festivals can also be seen in the educational associations of Bowmer and B. Iden Payne at the University of Washington and Bowmer's subsequent work at the Southern Oregon Normal School (now Southern Oregon University) in Ashland in the early 1930's (Kathleen F. Leary and Amy E. Richard, *Images of America: Oregon Shakespeare Festival* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2009), 9-22). Also, in the years before the founding of the NYSW, Arthur Lithgow established the outdoor Antioch Shakespeare Company that eventually become the Great Lakes Shakespeare Festival at Antioch College, and Donald H. Swinney founded the Hofstra Shakespeare Festival at Hofstra University, after encouragement from theatre scholar and director Bernard Beckerman. (see Engle, Londre and Watermeier 262-265 and Loney and Mackay 174-179 respectively). For further reading on Chautauquas and specifically the theatrical aspects thereof, see: Charlotte Canning, *The Most American Thing in America: Circuit Chautauqua as Performance* (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 2005), 187-216.

⁵⁸ Angus Bowmer, *As I remember Adam*, (Ashland, OR: The Oregon Shakespeare Festival Association, 1975), 9. It should be noted that the Hollar drawing recreated the *second* Globe Theatre.

States to touring. Hence Bowmer's focus on a permanent theatre and Festival ensconced in the landscape represented something relatively novel among American practitioners and producers in the 1930's. So, for Bowmer and the OSF, considerations of space and place more or less begin with a stable, perennially occupied location for the performance of Shakespeare. The evocation of the historical Globe makes this all the more apparent as it embodies a sort of immovable (in both space and memory) theatrical monument.⁵⁹ Bowmer's notion of the illusory theatre *space* appearing when one is properly *placed* on the landscape elucidates how the public (traversing the grounds of Lithia Park) and the theatre space (the old Chautauqua building cast as early 17th century playhouse) collaborate in the creation of festivals.

The complex relationship between theatrical spaces, geographic spaces and prospective audiences and publics in and around this space resonate with Ric Knowles' characterization of the "geography of performance" as fraught with meaning for both practitioners and audiences alike. In *Reading the Material Theatre* he writes:

The geography of performance is both produced by and produces the cultural landscape and the social organization of the space in which it 'takes place,' and to shift physical and/or social space is to shift meaning... (G)eographical

⁵⁹ Johanna Schmitz has written intriguingly and persuasively on the significance of location in the creation of contemporary theatrical "monuments" to early modern playhouses. Johanna Schmitz, *Desire for Authenticity: Millennial Reconstructions of Shakespeare's Theatre* (doctoral dissertation: University of California-Davis, 2011). Johanna Schmitz, "Location as a Monumentalizing Factor at Original and Reconstructed Shakespeare Theatres," *Theatre Symposium*, v. 12 (2004): 86-97. In the latter publication, Schmitz blends consideration of the rediscovered Rose Theatre and the reconstructed Globe Theatre. In these considerations, she reveals the touristic and educational interest that animated both projects, and I would argue that such interests undergird – if not totally determine – the development of nearly every large scale Shakespeare Festival in cultivating interest among the public and prospective audiences.

and architectural spaces of theatrical production are never empty. These spaces are full of histories, ghosts, pressures, opportunities, and constraints, of course, but most frequently they are full of ideology – the taken-for-granted of a culture, that don't need to be remarked upon but which are all the more powerful and pervasive for being invisible.⁶⁰

For as whimsical as Bowmer's musings above might be, beneath them are important ideological considerations associated with the ways spaces are imagined and used by the public and practitioners. Bowmer's vision for his Shakespearean festival was an amalgam of theatrical and performative ghostings, from the Chautauqua gatherings – with their educational and cultural overtones – once enacted within the now disused structure, to Hollar's rendering of the second Globe Theatre.⁶¹ The passage cited above will redound again and again as I examine the process through which the NYSW created their own theatrical spaces, alongside the process of prospecting for and developing theatrical 'public(s).' The company's figurations of *public* constitute the most salient aspects of their evolving mission as will become evident in later chapters of this dissertation.

Like the Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF), the theatrical venture that would become the San Diego Shakespeare Festival (SDSF) began amid the Great Depression, and developed from an even firmer conviction in the playing potential of recreated Elizabethan theatrical spaces. Designed by architect George Vernan

⁶⁰ Ric Knowles, *Reading the Material Theatre* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge UP, 2004), 63

⁶¹ Marvin Carlson. *The Haunted Stage* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001). "All theatrical cultures have recognized, in some form or another, this ghostly quality, this sense of something coming back in the theatre, and so the relationships between theatre and cultural memory are deep and complex" (2). Also, Carlson's notion of 'haunted houses' as a blend of touristic and ritualistic functions and phantoms intersect with Knowles ideas as well.

Russell, and based on a model from the 1934 Chicago World's Fair, the San Diego Globe featured as part of the California Pacific International Exhibition held in Balboa Park.⁶² After a wrecking crew purchased the theatre for the modest sum of \$400, several sources – including the WPA – furnished funds to acquire and place the theatre in the historic park, setting the stage for the second major Shakespeare festival in the United States. As part of an “entertainment attraction” at the Exposition, two other structures – Ye Olde Curiosity Shoppe and Falstaff Tavern – lay adjacent to the recreated Globe Theatre.⁶³

While festivalising evolved beyond what might be characterized as an attraction or exhibition, the theatre space itself at the SDSF abides amongst many of the structures from the 1934 Exhibition.⁶⁴ This proximity contributed to a tangle of artistic, educational, and cultural investments, rendering the connotations of ‘festival’ quite differently than the OSF had, and therefore targeting a slightly different public. Balboa Park is located in one of the largest cities in southern California, while Lithia Park (as the site of the OSF) is relatively remote, requiring many hours of automobile

⁶² Scully 41. It is worth mentioning that regular production did not begin until 1954 – the same year as the NYSW began. The postwar boom offered funding and infrastructural development that not even the WPA could furnish.

⁶³ Engle, Londre and Watermeier 46

⁶⁴ The increasing presence of Shakespeare in performance and as cultural object at World's Fairs demonstrates the challenges of unraveling this tangled cultural phenomenon. Fair-goers participated in a complex and often grand performance and presentational event that fulfilled educational, cultural and at times moral purposes. The public(s) created and served by these events left edified, entertained and dazzled, which as will become apparent throughout this dissertation was often the public response to the NYSW and NYSF's work. See for example: Rosemary Kegl “Outdistancing the Past: Shakespeare and American Education at the 1934 World's Fair” in *Shakespearean Educations*, ed. Coppelia Kahn, Heather S. Nathans and Mimi Godfrey (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2011), 247-275. Additionally, Margaret Webster's cut versions of Shakespeare's plays produced in a re-created Globe Theatre at the 1939 World's Fair in New York City, also blur the lines between art, education, and attraction. Other examples of exhibitions, such as the Actor's Fund Fair of 1892 and 1907 – which included reproductions of the Globe Theatre and Shakespeare's Stratford-upon-Avon respectively – provide a blend of the potentially educational and the entertaining, to say nothing of the commercial aspects of these exhibitions. Actors' Fund of America, “Fair in Behalf of the Actors' Fund of America: The Official Programme” (New York: Actor's Fund, 1907). Actors' Fund of America. “Souvenir Programme of the Actor's Fund Fair” (New York: J.W. Pratt & Son, 1892).

travel to access. So, while SDSF's (later the Old Globe) founding intersects with practices and purpose of a large urban park and public exhibition, the OSF intersected with touristic concerns of an emerging automobile culture. The growth of the festival increased exponentially as access and affordability of automobiles increased. The audiences for these festivals, which proliferated in the 1950's and 60's, were by and large white, middle class audiences, because of the relatively high cost of automobile travel.⁶⁵

One year before Papp acquired the Provisional Charter to establish the NYSW, director Tyrone Guthrie received an invitation from Thomas Patterson of Stratford, Ontario, Canada to come to his town and discuss the possibility founding a classical theatre there. Patterson expressed aspirations, after being deeply impressed with classical performance forms – opera, ballet and verse drama – in European countries, of establishing a theatre that might coalesce and express national Canadian artistry and aspirations. In his first few seasons, presented in a tent theatre, Guthrie – a native Irishman – stressed the importance of the Stratford Festival in helping develop a sense of ownership toward Shakespeare, not merely as a valued import but a part of Canada's artistic heritage. A prospective festival also meant the revitalization of town and its people after the demise of the railway industry following WWII.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan, *Shakespeare in American Life* (Washington DC: Folger Shakespeare Library, 2007) 94-95.

⁶⁶ Diana Brydon and Irene Rima Makaryk, *Shakespeare in Canada: A World Elsewhere* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2002), 122-123. "The narrative of the Stratford Festival usually relates how Tom Patterson had long felt that the idea was an 'absolute natural,' that it was the town's birthright: 'After all... we had a city named Stratford, on a river named Avon. We had a beautiful park system'... Patterson's plan was thus irrevocably linked to the potency of the birthright cult. When combined with those statements urging the production of the classics, especially Shakespeare, this identification laid the ground for the Stratford Festival to be labeled as the leader of the Canadian

How then, can we establish common ground for characterizing or at least attempting to encompass the ideology of Shakespeare Festivals of Depression-era and postwar Shakespeare Festivals? The beginnings of an answer are provided by Dennis Kennedy who claimed that the “idea of the festival” correlated to “(c)ultural reconstruction.”⁶⁷ The manifestations of this reconstruction vary widely, from the re-creation or exploration of original stage space and practices (as at OSF and SDSF), to efforts – the year before the founding of the NYSF in 1953 – to mold a post-industrial railway town into an ideal Shakespearean mecca (as in Canada’s Stratford Festival). Kennedy’s idea is echoed in a somewhat different context by Guthrie’s interest, at Stratford Festival and elsewhere, to re-invest theatre with a sense of ritual, the aim of which was to reclaim a sense of community after the socio-psychological ravages of technology and urbanization.⁶⁸

Marion O’Connor and Jean Howard supplement and augment Kennedy’s notion of festival-as-reconstruction to encompass *all* theatre, while also articulating

theatre scene before a single production had been urged. The narrative relates that Patterson returned from military service overseas determined, on the one hand, to enrich the lives of his hometown with a stimulating and well-respected arts enterprise and, on the other, to relieve the town’s economic plight. In the postwar years, the town of Stratford was faced with the closing of the Canadian National Railway’s repair yards, which had been at the core of the town’s economy since the early years of the century. Patterson’s avowed intention was to establish a festival that would do for Canadian Stratford what the Shakespeare Industry was doing for the economy of mother Stratford and Warwickshire.”

⁶⁷ Dennis Kennedy, *The Spectator and the Spectacle* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2009) 77. It is important to note that Kennedy blends a variety of different spaces in which spectators contact history, cultural memory, and the many spectacles associated with these. The site of this reconstruction, I would suggest, is the degraded public sphere and space. Ironically, the festival as a domain set apart spatially and temporally, must somehow exercise change in the everyday life of the theatrical and wider public.

⁶⁸ Joe Falocco, *Re-Imagining Shakespeare’s Playhouse: Early Modern Staging Conventions in the Twentieth Century*. Rochester (New York: Boydell & Brewer, Ltd., 2010), 122. The Stratford Festival began just one year before the NYSW’s operations, relying heavily upon the artistic influence of Guthrie. As will be discussed below, Papp and NYSW scenic designer Eldon Elder travelled to Stratford in August of 1959. Elder would later become the one of the primary consultants for the permanent theatre in Central Park, and helped with re-designing the American Shakespeare Festival’s theatre space in the early 1960’s.

the peculiar ideology of festival performances and the desired public for these performances:

Theater as a social practice, is inevitably implicated in ideological production and reproduction. On a very simple level, this is illustrated by the way the geographical placement of certain North American Shakespeare festivals in lush rural settings difficult to reach by public transport results in white audience of middle-class culture buffs, a result which both is produced by and also further strengthens the tacit assumptions about who owns Shakespeare and green fields (the nature) with which he is so insistently connected.⁶⁹

In the case of the NYSW, like the festivals just mentioned, the cultural and ideological reconstruction undertaken by the company is intimately connected to their spaces of performance, and the public's association with those spaces. In the case of the present chapter, and our eventual considerations in Chapter 2, Central Park in the postwar years as the NYSW's most recognizable early venue, could hardly be called "rural." However, the experience it was designed to evoke for city-goers, one of both ownership and identification, was similar to the experience suburbanites might glean from encountering the landscape upon which a festival might be situated, according to O'Connor and Howard's characterization.

The NYSW and then NYSF also participated in the wide spread phenomena of constructing and reconstructing American audiences for theatre; audiences that had become increasingly suburbanized and therefore isolated from collective expressions of cultural and artistic appreciation and consumption such as those offered by

⁶⁹ Jean E. Howard and Marion F. O'Connor, *Shakespeare Reproduced: The Text in History and Ideology*, (New York: Routledge, 1987), p 4.

Shakespeare festivals.⁷⁰ While the evolution of television was wrapped up in development of the private sphere, most notably, the suburban home, the public sphere and the space that expressed and enacted it, developed in very different ways in ‘great cities,’ most notably New York City as designed and imagined by Robert Moses.⁷¹ The growth of the New York City Parks Department from the 1930s until the end of the 1950s, demonstrates the desire for public spaces in the form of parks, beachfronts, playgrounds and public housing green spaces. Papp and the NYSPF capitalized on the re-invigoration, renovation and ultimately the *reconstruction* of these spaces as embodiments of public cohesion and conviviality in an increasingly diverse city.⁷² No park, perhaps in the entire nation, more fully embodies or at least purports to embody this civic cohesion than Central Park.

Of Park & City

Like Balboa Park in San Diego, New York City’s Central Park was a product of Victorian landscaping, gardening, and urban design. Conceived in the mid-1850s and completed almost a decade later, Central Park was in a variety of ways an embodiment of New York City’s transition from what one historian called a “walking

⁷⁰ The construction of American audiences for legitimate theatre accelerated with the Little Theatre Movement in the opening decades of the 20th century, and continued with increasing urgency during the Great Depression with the work of the Federal Theatre Project. See: Chansky, Dorothy. *Composing Ourselves: The Little Theatre Movement and the American Audience*. Carbondale, IL: SIU Press, 2004; Osborne, Elizabeth A. *Staging the People: Community and Identity in the Federal Theatre Project*

⁷¹ Richard Butsch, *The Making of American Audiences from Stage to Television, 1750-1990*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1-19.

⁷² During the early 1950’s New York City and specifically the areas that surround Central Park underwent enormous demographic shifts. The Puerto Rican population of New York City doubled between 1950 and 1955, and many of those new to the city settle in East Harlem, but also the west side of Central Park. These newly settled immigrants, along with the enormous African American population in South Harlem/ Morningside congregated and recreated in Central Park as relief from crowded tenements and traffic chocked avenues. The Upper West Side specifically will become the target of some of the most ambitious urban renewal projects, as will become apparent in subsequent chapters. Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar, *The Park and The People* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1992), 476-478.

city” to a “radial city”; the latter typified by the emergence of mass transportation, incorporation of outlying areas, specialization of urban spaces, and greater distances between residential and occupational areas.⁷³ As the technologies of transportation grew, in scope and scale, so too did the potential for leisure spaces further afield from the city center. In this way, Central Park was both intimately connected to the city’s industrial and economic growth, but also viewed as a pastoral counter-space for public recreation and retreat from the city’s increasingly cramped environs and economic excesses.

Despite the somewhat unified design of Olmstead and Vaux’s ‘Greensward Plan,’ a plethora of “aesthetic sensibilities” influenced the design of Central Park including republican simplicity, popular eclecticism, romantic naturalism, and civic display.⁷⁴ The park was also a place designed to provide consensus in an era of growing class, racial, ethnic and regional conflict.⁷⁵ In order to maintain this consensus through the late 19th and early 20th century, park administrators and politicians continually augmented the park’s original design to provide for the needs and practices of the population. This included the addition of dedicated spaces for sports, playgrounds, and the proliferation of statues and monuments. In the case of the latter, a desire to enact civic and republican ideals intersected with calls to create in

⁷³ Steven A. Riess, *City Games: The Evolution of American Urban Society and the Rise of Sports* (Champaign-Urbana, IL: 1991), 2-3.

⁷⁴ Olmsted was responsible for the overall design of the park and its many elements, while Vaux took command of designing most architectural structures within the park, including pavilions, bridges, and the handful of buildings Olmsted’s design required (Rosenzweig and Blackmar 103).

⁷⁵ One of the remnants of this are the twenty ‘gates’ that dot the park’s borders, each dedicated to a specific vocation or avocation, though there are those such as “Stranger’s Gate,” “Children’s Gate,” and “Women’s Gate,” that prove an exception. These gates, attempting a catalogue of city-dwellers, declared in stone who was welcome. It was therefore, at least in principle an egalitarian space, designed for accessibility to all who would seek the wholesomeness and edification of what Whitman called “outdoor influences.”

Central Park and other public spaces a cityscape more reflective of the city's diversity.⁷⁶ In the case of the former, parcels of space were apportioned for the construction of playgrounds and athletic fields amidst park spaces more fluid in use, leading during this period to what one historian called the "fragmented park."⁷⁷ The significant question for our purposes, especially as it relates to NYSW's presence in Central Park, is how the nascent festival's ideas about public – theatrical and otherwise – intersect with ideas about the use of Central Park.

We can begin to unravel this question by looking at perhaps the most significant event in the NYSW's early history, their extended public dispute with New York City Park's Commissioner and master builder Robert Moses.⁷⁸ Moses was appointed Commissioner of the consolidated Park's Department in 1934 after serving as head of several municipal and state agencies and bureaucracies. As Park's Commissioner from 1934 until 1960, Moses renovated existing parks and perhaps most importantly acquired new and unused land for park and parkway uses. For this reason, city goers as well as suburbanites felt his influence in the form of neighborhood parks and vast intra-city freeway projects such as the Cross-Bronx Expressway and the Brooklyn Queens Expressway. Like many of his predecessors in the borough Park's Departments, Moses was heavily influence by the progressive

⁷⁶ Michelle H. Bogart, *Public Sculpture and the Civic Ideal in New York City, 1890-1930* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press, 1997). The monuments variously enacted diversity and created cultural touchstones of collectively and/or universally held values, such as the three sculptures of Latin and South American liberators Jose Marti, Simon Bolivar and Jose de San Martin placed at the head of what was renamed "Avenue of the Americas" (6th Ave) and Central Park South. Mayor LaGuardia's renaming came at a propitious – and frankly politically exigent – moment as immigration from nations to the south increased slowly and then exponentially in the postwar years. In a variety of ways, the festival would come to function as just another – albeit a very prominent – monument.

⁷⁷ Rosenzweig and Blackmar 373-411

⁷⁸ For more on Robert Moses and his legacy, see: Robert Caro, *Powerbroker* (New York: Vintage, 1975). Hilary Ballon, *Robert Moses and the Modern City: The Transformation of New York* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2007). Joel Schwartz, *The New York Approach: Robert Moses, Urban Liberals and the Redevelopment of the Inner City* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1993).

playground movement, and his views on Central Park certainly demonstrate this influence.⁷⁹ The impression Moses left on the cityscape and its immediate surroundings is monumental and still highly contested. He was, and continues to be, a figure at once admired and reviled, even by the likes of Joseph Papp himself who characterized Moses as “quite a tyrannical man, a very, very brilliant man in many respects.”⁸⁰ Papp’s characterization came more than a decade after his company’s public dispute with Moses and the Park’s Department. In order to fully understand this dispute, we must recount the NYSW’s early efforts at outdoor performance, the desired public(s) for these performances, along with Moses’ view of leisure, recreation, and the performing arts in public parks.

‘The Outward Visible Symbols of Democracy’

After two seasons of *indoor* playing in their basement theatre at Emmanuel Presbyterian Church, the NYSW sought to reach a wider audience than their 250-seat venue could accommodate.⁸¹ Serving the immediate community of the Lower East Side seemed to be the extent of Papp’s ambition, and indeed little else could have been expected considering the relative inaccessibility of the performance venue. From the very beginning of his company’s existence, however, Papp had larger designs on playing in public parks, stating at the conclusion of the prospectus cited above that

⁷⁹ Rosensweig and Blackmar 439-463. “Moses, as it became clear, had little interest in the natural qualities of the park, nor did he see Central Park as a special kind of park...Moses viewed all parks as places of active, wholesome play, for ball fields, tennis courts, swimming pools, and playgrounds; he believed in recreation, not conservation. For him, Central Park was ‘essentially a playground...’” (449).

⁸⁰ “Joseph Papp: theater producer, and founder of the Public Theater.” *Day for Night*. CUNYTV, New York, NY. 29 Nov. 1973. Television.

⁸¹ As mentioned in the Introduction, the work of David Black and most especially Henry Watrous Smith recounts the earliest indoor activities of the NYSW. Smith’s tight focus on the workshops indoor activities prior to their first outdoor production in the summer of 1956, provides some insight as to the company’s growth from a small indoor enterprise for a mostly local and/or student audience to a ‘festival’ (in spirit if not in name) with a progressively wider reach to new public(s).

there “are other objectives a little more far reaching such as a Shakespearean Festival under a tent next summer in one of the city’s parks. Investigations are already underway.”⁸² Perhaps as part of this investigation, or simply the product of Papp’s frequent perambulations of the Lower East Side, the producer happened upon the East River Amphitheatre in Corlears Hook Park just south of the Williamsburg Bridge. Built by the Works Progress Administration in 1941, Moses originally conceived the park in concert with the construction of FDR Drive that runs just behind the amphitheater’s audience space.

After just fifteen years in existence, however, the amphitheater was on the cusp of being abandoned by the city. As author and activist Jane Jacobs noted, much of this neglect came from the highly specialized function of the park’s space. The park was providing “demand goods,” according to Jacobs, but they were too “limited in quantity and too desultory in time.”⁸³ Demand goods met very specific needs and desires of the general public, or in some cases what city planners *believe* are the needs and desires of the public. When these goods were not in use, park spaces appeared at best neglected, and at worst blighted and/or potentially dangerous. This combination of neighborhood demand, park-goer use (and neglect), and the park’s design produced a public space only partially linked to the surrounding community. This fact, in addition to Moses’ association with the original construction of both the park and the amphitheater might help to explain why the Parks Department offered their

⁸² “Prospectus: Wooden ‘O...’ Papp was surely thinking, at least in part, about the tent theatre only recently erected for the 1953 season in Stratford, Ontario. This temporary set-up lasted for a few seasons before a permanent facility was built in the 1957 to house the festival’s operations. Diana Brydon and Irene Rima Makaryk, *Shakespeare in Canada: A World Elsewhere* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2002), 24-27. Such an arrangement in the case of Papp’s company corresponds to Papp’s equivocal feelings about creating a permanent presence on the city, for practical, financial, and perhaps cultural reasons.

⁸³ Jane Jacobs, *The Life and Death of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961), 108.

consent for outdoor Shakespeare performance. Moses' willingness to accommodate the fledgling organization might also be explained by the master builder's investment in public residential projects in and around the neighborhood abutting Corlears Hook Park. As part of his re-design and development of the Lower East Side, Moses constructed the Vladek Houses the same year as of Corlears Hook Park and FDR Drive, the LaGuardia Houses in the summer of 1957, and the Baruch Houses in 1959.⁸⁴

Moses' commitment to binding refurbished or reconstructed residentially spaces with recreation spaces began in the late 1930's and continued through his work on several mayors' "slum clearance" committees. In 1938, only four years after his tenure as Park's Commissioner began, Moses delivered a speech to major realtors and reformers entitled "Housing and Recreation." In this speech, responding to the passage of the Wagner-Steagall Act in 1937 (creating the United States Housing Authority and allocating hundreds of millions of dollars in capital grants to cities to clear slums and areas deemed "blighted") Moses bemoaned previous housing reform

⁸⁴ Christopher Mele. *Selling the Lower East Side: Culture, Real Estate and Resistance in New York City* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 118-119. Richard Plunz, *A History of Housing in New York City* (New York: Columbia UP, 1990), 239-242. While Moses never held any position within the NYCHA, his role as Parks commissioner included extraordinary power and oversight of various projects and ventures in and around New York City. See: Themis Chronopolous *Spatial Regulation in New York City* (New York: Routledge, 2011). Chronopolous articulates the scope of Moses vision and influence: "Robert Moses possessed the technical expertise, political connections, and power to carry out the legally complicated and socially questionable aspects of the Housing Act of 1949. He argued that this act was nothing more than a slum clearance bill, and in the 1950s he embarked on an effort to clear and rebuild substantial swaths of land in the city and redistribute populations according to race and class. After the passage of the Housing Act of 1954, which appended that of 1949, this method of urban development became commonly known as "urban renewal." Moses understood the imperatives of urban renewal and was able to coordinate them. Urban renewal required an efficient and strong municipal government that could mobilize substantial resources to thwart opponents. Since the rapid, complete, and inexpensive displacement of existing residents of areas designated as slums by authorities was required, the city government needed the capacity to remove resisting residents, meet court challenges, and compromise political opponents; sometimes it even meant the ability to intimidate people on the way. Moses single-handedly coordinated most of these tasks, though his projects still depended on the cooperation of the city government" (7).

and renewal as insufficiently concerned with linkages between residential and leisure spaces:

There is no such thing as a sound recreation policy for this city which is not based upon close coordination with slum clearance, low-rent housing, and indeed, housing or rehousing of every kind. Practically all major public improvements are vitally affected by the housing program.⁸⁵

What followed in Moses' talk – and in the brochure that accompanied it – were ten proposals for urban renewal projects that specifically paired residential projects with accompanying recreational spaces. Though Moses' path toward more extensive control of urban renewal processes would detour during the mayoral tenure of Fiorello LaGuardia, Moses progressively gained more control of projects that involved the renovation of both residential and recreational spaces.⁸⁶ Chapters 3 and 4 – which explore the NYSF's Mobile Theater Unit – will take up the practices and ideologies at work in the festival's endeavor to cultivate audiences and publics within these two spaces.

During the summer of 1956, the amphitheater in East River Park became the first *outdoor* theatre in which the NYSW performed. The company's notion of a summer Shakespeare festival intersected with Moses' determination to link public

⁸⁵ Moses, Robert. "Housing and Recreation," (New York: Department of Parks, 1938), 2. A paper delivered at the Museum of Natural History on November 23, 1938. Moses talk, in its entirety was printed in the brochure, along with renderings and statistics associated with each of the ten proposals he outlined.

⁸⁶ This increased control over the – as characterized by Moses – complementary relationship between residential and recreational spaces occurred alongside Moses' other realms of influence which included blending renovation of transportation spaces (bridges, expressways and the like) and recreational spaces into close connection and consideration. In his 1938 speech cited above he stated that "(t)he notion that housing experts can function in a vacuum is absurd," and in many ways this idea translates into his work later as Park's Commissioner. Recreation, transportation, and residential reform and renewal were all of a piece, and his comprehensive policy for urban renewal reflects that.

residential and leisure spaces. Aimed at the residents of the rapidly increasing public housing blocks adjacent to the park space, the company's theatrical offerings would provide activity in a space prone to long stretches of inactivity. In one of the earliest correspondences of what would become a long, complex relationship, Papp solicited the Park Department, head-quartered at the "arsenal" in Central Park, for use of the amphitheater as well as resources (financial and otherwise) to stage two productions at the East River Park, to which Moses replied with an "expression of interest."⁸⁷

This came almost immediately on the heels of Moses' *New York Times* editorial articulating the purpose of public parks, as something the public "must share in common." Despite writing specifically about public parks, Moses' editorial might be read as a primer for his philosophy of urban design and development, as well as spatial and cultural growth more generally:

We have boxed the compass. The political prophecy of the two-car garage and a chicken in every pot, seems almost to have come true. But the poor we still have with us, and what they cannot get individually they must share in common. That is one of many reasons why public parks are no longer a luxury. Prosperity without prudent control, physical growth without regulation in the common interest, movement without plan or purpose, pursuit of happiness with no common objective, prolongation of life without cultivation

⁸⁷ Robert Caro. *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1974), 1027. Papp, Joseph. Letter to Robert Moses, 5 Dec 1956, Series I, Box 1, folder 12, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY. Moses, Robert. Letter to Joseph Papp, 6 Dec 1956, Series I, Box 1, folder 12, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

of leisure, this is not civilization. Parks are the outward visible symbols of democracy. That in my book is what they are for.”⁸⁸

Moses wrote this in response to what was called the “Ramble Dispute” in which he failed to respond to the pleas of local residents concerning the use of the area just south of Belvedere Lake. Moses previously ran afoul of local residents who felt that the public space within the park, should be reserved as a space for leisure and strolling on one side and those crying out for more dedicated sports spaces and playgrounds.

In 1956, Moses drew the ire of area residents when it was learned of his plans to build a parking lot for Tavern on the Green (which actually opened in 1934, his first year as Commissioner). An acre of land, previously used for recreation by neighborhood children, was paved as parking for the upscale restaurant. The incident is often referred to as “Moses v. Mothers” as many of those who most vociferously objected were mothers to neighborhood children now bereft of their playground.⁸⁹ Even earlier than this, Moses was involved in a controversy involving the construction of the Triborough Bridge (now the RFK Bridge). Moses had just been named Park’s Commissioner, when in 1934 he also began work as part of the Triborough Bridge Authority. Many in city government objected, as they felt this was a violation of what was called Executive Order 129. The order, issued by Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, stated that no single person should hold a “municipal and PWA-project office” simultaneously.⁹⁰ Moses eventually triumphed, largely because of his supporters in the press and public. This overwhelmingly

⁸⁸ Moses, Robert. “The Moses Recipe for Better Parks.” *New York Times*, Jan 1, 1956.

⁸⁹ Caro 984-1004

⁹⁰ Caro 426-443

positive image of Moses would begin to unravel in 1948 with construction beginning on the Cross Bronx Expressway. His disregard for concerns of locals (in the Bronx, but also Washington Heights over which the expressway traversed) proved especially damaging. Finally, the battle for the space just north of the eventual site of the Delacorte Theatre – now known as the Great Lawn – pitted Upper Eastsiders against those on the Westside and in Harlem; the former wishing for a quiet neo-Victorian ellipse, the latter for baseball diamonds.

In these disputes, he frequently came down on the side of those members of the public seeking specialized spaces for sport and recreation. More than any other Parks Commissioner or since, Moses favored the creation and production of park's spaces with dedicated functions, be they sportive, performative or otherwise. Despite this, incidents and disputes such as those describe in the previous footnote call into question his commitment to meeting the recreational needs of park-goers. The confluence and sometime contradictions between his stated philosophy in his editorial and elsewhere, as well as these public disputes indicate that his thinking about public spaces was more conflicted than much of his idealism would indicate.⁹¹ The success of performances at the East River Amphitheater emboldened the NYSW, and for the 1957 summer season the company pitched the idea of touring – with a portable stage

⁹¹ His inclusion of words such as “control,” “regulation” and “plan” or “purpose” in relation to commonly held outward symbols of democracy reveal how invested he was in the representations of space he relied upon to enforce order over spatial practice and in some cases representational space. This would seem ironic that Moses evokes the image of parks-as-spaces as symbols of democracy, indicating that the sharing, experiencing and perception of those spaces is akin to sharing control over such spaces. Much evidence to the contrary indicates that Moses in fact held less regard for city-goers' production of spaces (through practice and otherwise) than his own ‘control’ and ‘regulation’ of such spaces. Moses had already run afoul of local residents who felt that the public space within the park, should be reserved as a space for leisure and strolling on one side and those crying out for more dedicated sports spaces and playgrounds.⁹¹ Moses came down on the side of those seeking specialized spaces for sport and recreation. More than any other Parks Commissioner or since, Moses favored the creation and production of park's spaces with dedicated functions, be they sportive, performative or otherwise.

– to various locations all around the five boroughs. One of those sites was the Belvedere Lake area in Central Park.⁹² In fact, the touring portion of the season had to be curtailed that season, because of the wear and tear on the travelling stage house, and it was decided that the bulk of the company’s final production *Two Gentleman of Verona* would play in Central Park.

Moses and the department had reason to be wary of Papp’s operation, however, specifically in reference to Central Park. Just one year before, theatrical impresario Billy Rose unveiled an idea that he believed would revitalize Central Park. Moses forcefully rejected Rose’s proposal for “more jazz and classical concerts, an annual Shakespeare festival, underground parking lots, floodlighted tennis courts and baseball diamonds, and other enticements to an entertainment-hungry public.”⁹³ Rose claimed that this would make the park “more valuable,” to which Moses responded, “(a)s long as I’m around New York, Central Park will not be turned into a night club.”⁹⁴ What Moses reveals here is the contradiction at the heart of his thinking about urban spaces and their use by the leisure and recreation-seeking public. The Commissioner’s anxiety about public park spaces, suggested an assumption that these spaces functioned as a commodity. Roses’ suggestion is ultimately about treating public park spaces as just another commodity, and arguably no one knew that better than Moses in postwar New York City, despite the Commissioner’s disavowal of

⁹² Moses, Robert. Letter to Joseph Papp, 10 Apr 1957, Series I, Box 1, folder 31, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY. Other tour spaces included the East River Park, Brooklyn War Memorial Park, King Park (Queens), Williamsbridge Oval Park (Bronx), and Cloves Lake Park (Staten Island). I will revisit these sites as part of the background for the Mobile Theatre in Chapter 3, but it is worth mentioning that – as I elaborated above in reference to East River Park – these park spaces had been constructed or heavily renovated during Moses’ tenure as Parks Commissioner and some of them had fallen into disuse. The Belvedere Lake area in Central Park, as I explore below, certainly falls under this characterization.

⁹³ “Rose’s Park Plans Scorned by Moses,” *New York Times*, Dec. 16, 1955.

⁹⁴ “Rose’s Park...”

such a notion in favor of his vision for public parks as a space design and maintained not as a luxury but a right to the public shared and enjoyed in common.

Still, in spite of Moses' skepticism, one might say disdain for Rose's proposal, he found in Papp less an impresario than a crusader. Relations between the Parks and the NYSW continued to be productive, with Moses consistently lauding the company's efforts and placing Park's spaces, funding and resources at their disposal.⁹⁵ As the NYSW's presence and prestige grew, however, the relatively unused public space just north of Belvedere Castle became a staging ground for conflicting visions of what constituted public and the nature of the "service" the NYSW offered that public.

⁹⁵ In October of 1957, Moses published an article in the *New York Tribune* entitled "THEATRE IN THE PARKS---PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE." Moses praises such performing arts offerings as the NYSW had been providing for the previous two summers, while also promoting the enormous variety of park offerings, especially those in existing structures like the newly constructed or refurbished Wollman Rink, Jones Beach and Flushing Meadow (both notable for its proximity to newly settled and growing suburbs). While Moses' tone was magnanimous throughout (even poking fun at himself for disliking jazz and acknowledging its popularity, without elaborating any firm plans for its inclusion in summer performance activities) with the Commissioner seemingly willing to try any avenue to accommodate public demand. "In speaking about several jazz shows at Wollman Rink, Moses explains: "But we want real theater in this part of Central Park, New York theater. It is true that some of the most blatant, and to my way of thinking, horrible jazz shows were the greatest success there this summer. Provided it isn't too raw, I am by no means certain that we officials, clothed as the Bard said with a little brief authority, ought to be too critical just because some of us don't like any jazz entertainment. I certainly don't. The minute we try to become producers we're in trouble. I don't think we have a right to do that. We do have to fix bounds and limits. And that's what we're going to try to do at the Wollman Rink." Robert Moses, "THEATRE IN THE PARKS---PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE," *New York Tribune* (New York, NY), Oct. 1, 1957.

Chapter 2: Fighting for Festivalising, Winning the Public

After issuing a permit to perform at the East River Park Amphitheater in late January of 1956, the Parks Department extended this to include parks in all five boroughs for the 1957 season, as Moses wrote to Papp in a December 6, 1956 letter that “(w)e are very much interested in your proposal to provide a five-borough program of Shakespeare in the parks next summer.”⁹⁶ After issuing the 1957 permit, Stuart Constable (Moses’ chief lieutenant) declared: “I feel sure that these productions will give much pleasure to the patrons of our public parks... We are very happy to cooperate with you in this fine public service.”⁹⁷ Subsequently, until early 1959, support was unwavering with regard to the NYSW continuing to produce in Central Park. So, extraordinary was Moses and Constable’s enthusiasm, that they suggested moving the company’s offerings to Lincoln Square Park for the 1958 season.⁹⁸ This park and the arts complex, however, were still several years from completion.

The first half of 1959 saw a stunning reversal of Moses’ mainly unflagging support for the NYSW’s efforts. This reversal and the ensuing court battle continued the process of defining and refining what the performing arts – in this case a would-be Shakespeare festival – meant in public park spaces, while influencing the NYSW’s evolving ideas about the nature of the audiences and public(s) they addressed and what relationship the company fostered with this publics. These ideas were

⁹⁶ “Permit: Department of Parks-City of New York,” December 6, 1956, Series I, Box 1, folder 12. New York Shakespeare Festival Records. New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

⁹⁷ Constable, Stuart. Letter to Joseph Papp, 27 May 1957, Series I, Box 1, folder 31. New York Shakespeare Festival Records. New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

⁹⁸ Constable, Stuart. Letter to Joseph Papp, 6 Aug 1957, Series I, Box 1, folder 31. New York Shakespeare Festival Records. New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

supplemented by the company's knowledge, understanding and potential comparison to *other* Shakespeare festivals in the post-war period, as I intimated in Chapter 1. One such festival was the American Shakespeare Festival (ASF) in Stratford, CT, founded in 1955.⁹⁹ Stuart Vaughan, Papp's earliest artistic collaborator and one-time artistic director of the NYSW, trained for several years at this festival – and earlier under festival founder Lawrence Langner at the Theater Guild – as part of their training conservatory. The ASF's commitment to creating a conservatory as a training ground for performers destined for the festival's main stage, served to create a sense of artistic and educational continuity. Vaughan brought this sensibility to his work at the NYSW, and long after he left to helm the Phoenix Theatre in 1958 Papp extolled the virtues of artistic continuity in the form of a partnership between the educational and artistic potential of connecting a training conservatory with a professional theatre.¹⁰⁰

How realistic was this model, however, in New York City? The festival context, which is the real and imagined spaces of Shakespeare performances and their environs, proved very different in a city as complex and dynamic as New York. In contrast to other Shakespeare festivals referenced in the previous chapter, the NYSW alternately eschewed and pursued a permanent performance space in their earliest history, despite the challenges of continued operation, both artistic and administrative. This equivocation mirrored the sense in which the festival functioned, and in some sense continues to function, as a *public* and *private* producer of theatrical and cultural performances and programming. As a result of this orientation away from permanence and despite New York City being awash in state and federal

⁹⁹ Engle, Londre and Watermeier 100-101

¹⁰⁰ Stuart Vaughan. *Possible Theatre: Experiences of a Pioneer Director in America's Resident Theatre*. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1969), pp 88-91.

monies, city officials and bureaucrats hesitated to commit city resources – including most notable indoor or outdoor spaces for performance – to an operation they felt went beyond providing a “public service,” as Moses’ lieutenant Stuart Constable characterized the NYSW’s offerings.

I will revisit this challenge in subsequent chapters, as the NYSW and eventually the NYSF struggled to establish a sense of permanence without an indoor home for institutional continuity. In the ensuing battle over Shakespeare in Central Park and subsequent wrangling over the new amphitheater’s design, questions of public versus private space and mobility versus permanence arise again and again. In developing strategies for the continued survival of the Shakespeare in the park, Papp and the NYSW focus their energies on alternately questioning and asserting what it means to reside and/or play in a public park. Their answers are never entirely definitive; a fact that bedevils Parks personnel and ultimately drives the company’s movement, growth and cultivation of audiences during the earliest years of its operations.

In early 1959, Constable informed Papp that the Parks Department could not afford the extra maintenance cost incurred by the NYSW, and that the company would have to reimburse the Department for such maintenance.¹⁰¹ Constable claimed that the only option for meeting this expense would be to charge an admission fee. Papp had very publically stated on several occasions, his absolute commitment to free Shakespeare in Central Park. There were questions about what the Park’s portion of an admission fee was meant to finance, but Constable suggested that there had been

¹⁰¹ “Outline History of the New York Shakespeare Festival and Relationship with City of New York and Parks Department,” Series I, Box 1, folder 31. New York Shakespeare Festival Records. New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY. See also: Caro 1029.

significant erosion in the space where NYSW audience members congregated. The area north of Belvedere Castle – adjacent to the Turtle Pond and its environs, abutting the Great Lawn, and the oval with its many tributaries – had for many years functioned as an unpaved multi-use space, and the yearly – though temporary – presence of the NYSF did little in the eyes of Moses and others to discourage ‘undesirable’ park-goers to the area.¹⁰² Papp’s contention in the weeks following the Park’s reversal centered on questions of how other park activities such as “football, softball, and other sports” affected the parks green spaces. These activities, many of which had specialized spaces in and around the Great Lawn, were free to all park-dwellers and aroused no concern about erosion from Park’s Department personnel and administrators.

This is a common strain of argumentation that Papp employed in an open letter to Commissioner Moses on May 4, 1959. I would like to quote it at length because it contains language that is both potent, but also very ambiguous especially as it relates to distinguishing and conversely *blurring* the lines between public and private:

¹⁰² Affidavit, *Shakespeare Workshop v. Robert Moses*, May 18, 1959. Series VIII, Box 5, folder 10. New York Shakespeare Festival Records. New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY. As with other spaces in Central Park, the Great Lawn’s history was one of territoriality and wrangling over its uses. The space, which roughly spans the 79th and 86th street traverses near the center of the park originally functioned as a rectangular reservoir, the southern part of what had been called Croton Reservoir. The northern end, oblong and irregular in shape, is today called the Jackie Onassis Reservoir and spans almost the entire width of the park. In the years just prior to Moses’ tenure as Parks Commissioner the reservoir was emptied, with plans for the construction of a ‘Great Lawn’ once it was drained in the opening weeks of 1930. With the deepening depression, however, the plan was stymied and for the next several years thousands of poor, indigent, and unemployed city-dwellers constructed makeshift residences and communities. Within a few years, controversy again ensued over plans to build baseball fields – arising mainly from residents of the nearby East and West Side and real estate agents therein – and reflected the acrimony that can often arise from confronting the question of which public(s) the park’s design and redevelopment served and by proxy, what activities were encouraged by such design. (See Rosensweig and Blackmar 412-454)

That you still hold to the proposition that the Shakespeare Audience must be singled out to pay for the privilege of using public facilities...is regrettable and we have no other course than to reject this discriminatory and anti-popular concept. While we acknowledge your authority to regulate our operation in the park, we feel that does not extend to the internal workings of the Festival. Since we are dedicated to a principle of free admission, it is hardly within your purview to insist that we alter the basic purpose of our organization...we cannot be a party to a scheme which places the burden of the cost of such facilities on the backs of our tax paying audiences.¹⁰³

Papp desired the advantages of playing in a public park space; affordable venue, accessible to the public and potential audiences, equipment and other resources provided by the city. In addition, however, he would like to maintain the autonomy of his organization and its “internal workings.” According to this logic, it is the space itself (its freeness, its openness, and most notably its ‘publicness’) that in large part makes the NYSW’s *free* theatrical offerings possible. The final sentence quoted above is especially evocative, as it suggests that the company is somehow advocating for the rights of the *play-going* public to attend performance or protecting them from the burden of paying for an amenity due to them as members of the *city-dwelling* public. This rhetorical gesture, connecting and sometimes conflating the festival’s audience with the wider public, was and still is a familiar strategy exercised by the company, and what animates this gesture is the moving target, *public*.

¹⁰³ Press Release, New York Shakespeare Festival: Open letter to Park’s Commissioner Robert Moses, May 4, 1959. Series VIII, Box 5, subseries 2, folder 10, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

Settling into a permanent theatre space might have stifled this crucial rhetorical gesture. Occupying a specific geography, especially one as ideologically fraught as Central Park, meant committing to serving a specific, albeit still relatively diverse audience and public. Though “central,” the park’s location still possessed limitations for members of the public further afield. Papp and his administrators were surely aware of this, as the company toured the boroughs in only their third year in operation in 1957. As a result, almost as soon as plans for a permanent theatre were in development, Papp severely downplayed the relationship between the NYSW and the spaces in which they perform. This relative contradiction, born perhaps of the tension between *use* of public space and *occupation* of public space – and what this suggests about the company’s relationship and responsibility to the theatre-goers in Central Park and the wider public – will intensify during the process for designing and constructing a permanent theatre space in Central Park.

At issue are the meanings of “public” and how those meanings play out spatially. As Miles Orvell and Jeffrey L. Meikle contend, notions of “public space” denote a domain specifically created as a “public amenity” with “deliberate public use, be it ceremony, recreation, celebration, or commerce.” The two authors maintain that public space is in a sense “functional space,” and as such is a “construction” and the “expression of someone’s will.”¹⁰⁴ In the case of the NYSW and Park’s Department dispute, Papp claimed the NYSW’s offerings as deliberate public use, like other functions and practices of Central Park’s spaces. His choice of “regulation,” rather than ‘own,’ ‘govern,’ ‘curate,’ ‘design,’ etc. signals the fact that ownership of

¹⁰⁴ Miles Orvell and Jeffrey L. Meikle. *Public Space and the Ideology of Place in American Culture*. (New York: Rodopi, 2009) pg 9.

public space and in fact the notion of ‘public’ itself is a contested category. Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge partially locate this indeterminacy in the various ways that the “public sphere” manifests and expresses itself. Negt and Kluge contend that the public sphere denotes both a “social horizon of experience,” and “institutions, agencies (and) practices” in connection with law enforcement, press, politicians, public opinion and the like, renders this sphere a conception and construction, simultaneously occurring in space and also proving to be “illusory.” The character and limits of ‘public’ therefore, prove difficult. In the case of the NYSW/NYSF, the ways the company deploys the term, concept and construct of ‘public’ only proliferate and complicate as they grow and evolve as a company that performs in several different spaces.¹⁰⁵

In addition to the meanings of ‘public,’ issues of control played an important role in the dispute between Moses and the NYSW. Despite police presence and surveillance on a nightly basis, the theatre site operated within a park setting, which embodied what sociologist Erving Goffman characterized as a “very loosely defined behavioral setting,” producing and sometimes containing practices discouraged, marginalized, or even criminalized. The “involvement structure” of other city spaces, which he claims are more or less ‘institutionalized’ exercise less sway in city parks.¹⁰⁶ The question of whether a permanent outdoor theatre space – not to mention other buildings and venues in Central Park – would be enough to suggest or even enforce

¹⁰⁵ Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt, *Public Sphere and Experience: Toward an Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 1-2. See also, Christopher B. Balme. *The Theatrical Public Sphere*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2014), pp 1-46. Craig Calhoun. *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), pp1-48. Michael Warner. *Publics and Counterpublics*. (Brooklyn, NY: Zone Books, 2002), pp 7-20.

¹⁰⁶ Erving Goffman. *Behavior in Public Places*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1966), p 215.

such involvement structures is an open question. The behavior of the theatre-going public varied greatly in and around a purpose built theatre structure versus a temporary theatre building, thus rendering and producing space in a variety of ways.

The beginnings of an answer to this open question can be offered with recourse to the NYSW's 1957 and 1958 seasons and audience's use of space in and around the theatre. As photos of the 1957 and 1958 season in Central Park indicate, the public overflowed the bounds set by fencing and police barricades, even viewing from as far as the open space just south of the great lawn proper. Edward Casey's distinction between edges, in-between spaces, bounds and boundaries proves useful here, and will continue to resonate with other spaces I consider in Chapters 3 and 4. For our purposes, the concepts he articulates illuminate kind of experience the public might expect and what relationship this 'public service' organization fostered through the construction of a permanent space. As Casey noted in his 2008 essay "Edges and the In-Between,"

Edges supply bounds to the in-between, outer limits so to speak...By "bounds," I mean boundaries, porous edges that take in as well as give out, in contrast with borders, which act to delimit institutions and discrete practices in the life-world and which characteristically call for linear representation. The in-between offers a matrix for edges, a concrete nexus in which they are located.¹⁰⁷

Boundaries prove porous, while borders delimit access and ultimately serve to bolster the strength of the institution hemmed in by those borders. The permanence or

¹⁰⁷ Edward Casey, "Edges and the In-Between," *PhaenEx* 3, no.2 (fall/winter 2008): 9.

portability of the amphitheater in Central Park therefore had far reaching implications for the NYSW and NYSF.

Creating a more permanent, substantial and ‘sealed’ theatre space meant a corresponding need to control the practices and theatrical offerings within that space. The more an outdoor performance space resembles a traditional theatre space, the greater pressure on the public to comport to the rules of that space. Portability, in this context might be seen as creating boundaries that allow for permeability between spaces – and the public(s) who occupy those spaces – outside and within the theatre. The free flow and circulation of the public’s energies would seem to indicate more than simply providing a service to this public, but perhaps somewhat embodying the verve and vitality of this public. The establishment of institutions – public or otherwise – and their architectural embodiments creates a sense of closure both physically and symbolically. In order to continue pursuing their strategic and highly equivocal use of the term ‘public,’ the NYSW needed to, at least on some level resist the construction of a permanent theatre space.¹⁰⁸

In late winter and early spring of 1959 questions of what function park spaces served were central to deciding whether Moses misused his power in demanding that the NYSW charge an admission fee.¹⁰⁹ A shift in public debate came when *New York Times* theatre critic Brooks Atkinson, advocated on behalf of the NYSW as “a part of

¹⁰⁸ This links back to Goffman’s idea of the involvement structures of more regulated and/or permanent spaces. As the NYSW and NYSF’s history unfolds, and the institution grows, so too does the involvement structures in the practices and expectations attendant with other spaces and buildings, encouraging and occasionally pressing the various public(s) the company served and embodied.

¹⁰⁹ The most extensive treatment of this battle can be found in Caro’s *The Power Broker* cited above, pages 1028-1039. Caro’s magisterial work provides a portrait of Moses as both a visionary and tyrannical presence in city and state government throughout his professional life. This characterization was not unlike Papp’s own assessment, and reflects the still contested legacy of Moses well after the effects of his policies, projects and redevelopment philosophy were felt.

municipal promotion, good for hotels, bus tours and the entertainment industry.”¹¹⁰ Despite the fact that the festival continued to offer *free* Shakespeare, its economic impact could potentially be felt on businesses and other municipal institutions, as is evidenced by the company’s enlistment, starting in early 1958, of the New York City Department of Commerce and Public Events and over 1,000 different firms associated with the New York Convention and Visitors Bureau (NYCVB).¹¹¹ Despite the relative newness of the NYSW, and their initial commitment to civic and educational objectives, the company now seemed to be appealing, at least in part, to touristic concerns and the spaces associated with those concerns.

The most important of these spaces in this regard was Time Square, heart of New York City’s commercial theatre. In the postwar years, producers, politicians and artists began promoting Broadway as part of New York City’s touristic appeal, accessible through transit, and available to more people given the increase in leisure and the economic boom.¹¹² Additionally, throughout the early years of the festivals existence, New York City launched a yearly summer campaign entitled “New York is a Summer Festival.” This initiative, begun in 1956 by the NYCVB, served to attract visitors to take advantage, in the words of Mayor Wagner “the world’s greatest convention and vacation city” that boasted “the world’s finest entertainment, hotels, shops, restaurants” and was “rich in historical landmarks and magnificent sightseeing

¹¹⁰ Brooks Atkinson, “Theatre: Sound and Fury.” *New York Times*, May 16, 1959.

¹¹¹ Papp, Joseph. Letter to Mayor Robert Wagner, January 31, 1958. Series I, Box 2, folder 8, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY. In this letter to Mayor Robert Wagner, Papp claimed that the company’s offerings would appeal to those “strongly interested in the tourist trade” and could “contribute greatly to New York City’s prosperity during the summer months.”

¹¹² Thomas Allen Greenfield, *Broadway: An Encyclopedia of Theater and Culture*, v 2 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2010), 660.

attractions.”¹¹³ Interestingly, this series of promotional events and celebrations opened only a week before the NYSW’s first performance outdoors at the East River Park Amphitheater.

The campaign against Moses and the Parks also coincides with the NYSW’s connection to the established theatre world and beyond. Actor’s Equity president Ralph Bellamy assisted in their campaign aimed at the NYCVB, and the company also won the Special Tony Award in 1958 given to exceptional theatrical companies around the country. Such recognition and exposure both locally and nationally, helped circulate the NYSW’s programming and also their eventual plight to the *new* public(s) and potential donors. Through this circulation, the tension of a private organization offering a public service became exacerbated. As the NYSW’s forays into commercial and established theatre evolved, their profile as a ‘public’ theatrical venture became necessarily more complicated. As noted above, one vital and continuously utilized strategy to resolve this complication was Papp and the company’s search for new spaces of performance, new audiences, and therefore new ‘publics’ throughout the five boroughs, a strategy explored at length in Chapters 3 and 4.

The NYSW’s recourse to touristic and private commercial interests help to explain Moses’ shift, from viewing the festival as an extension of public spaces and patronage, to a separate and therefore accountable organization. It appeared that Moses had moved on from the NYSW, claiming in a WNEW radio program that the dispute over Shakespeare in the park was a “closed incident” and offered a firm “No”

¹¹³ “Mayor Proclaims Summer Festival,” *New York Times*, 22 Jun 1956.

when asked whether the NYSW would produce plays in the parks that summer.¹¹⁴ On the radio program “News Closeup,” Moses responded with a firm “No” when asked whether he saw any hope of Shakespeare in Central Park that summer. In a June 1959 *New York Times* interview, he proclaimed to New Yorkers and tourists alike that an entire summer season of performance was planned for the Wollman Rink space, and that operation of this space would be a “genuine, outdoor, controlled, decently run theatre.”¹¹⁵ He also enumerated the panoply of performances in public parks throughout the summer.¹¹⁶ Moses favored activities and offerings in dedicated, specialized spaces to activities and operations that attempt to occupy spaces of ambiguous or equivocal function. He contended that *free* offerings of Shakespeare were not—indeed perhaps ought not be—a regular part of the parks budget and operations, at least not as a temporary tenant in the park’s spaces.

On June 2, 1959 Supreme Court Justice Samuel Gold responded to the NYSW’s affidavit to re-admit the festival into the Park. Gold claimed that he was acting reluctantly, and indeed judicial incursions into administrative decisions by

¹¹⁴ Radio program cited from: Sam Pope Brewer, “Dispute Over Plays ‘Closed’ by Moses.” *New York Times*, May 18, 1959.

¹¹⁵ Brewer. This program included a production of *Guys & Dolls*, an operetta, dueling pianos, and several dance performances. Tickets were available at major ticketing outlets, where commercial theatre tickets were also available, suggesting a connection between the “Theatre-in-the-Park” enterprise and more commercial theatre in conventional theatre spaces and their places on the civic landscape. Between the NYSF’s appeal to local businesses, other commercial and tourist interest, and Moses.’

¹¹⁶ The issue of containment and control is not an insignificant one. As Casey points out, establishing firmer borders is often an important expression of institutional authority and presence. Drawing a contrast between the operation of the NYSW in Central Park and other performances in public spaces, Moses continues in response to a query about reimbursement from sponsors of other performances for use of public spaces: “It isn’t necessary in the case of Goldman concerts and most of the other concerts. There is a music shell which was presented to the city. There is a mall. There are benches there, and the whole thing is *contained* and *controlled*; and that of course doesn’t apply to running a free show out on the grass where there is no lighting and no facilities or anything of that kind” (Brewer 2).

municipal commissioners were not traditionally made.¹¹⁷ In explaining both his sympathies for the NYSW and substance of his decisions Gold contended that he was:

most sympathetic to those who feel that the Shakespeare Festival has been a bright constellation in New York City's cultural firmament. [The Commissioner] has full discretion to determine whether or not a particular recreational or cultural activity of a special nature such as theatrical performances should be conducted in any specified area of the public parks.¹¹⁸

The issue of whether free Shakespeare in the Park was an activity of a "special nature," was a significant one. Clearly, as mentioned above, other recreational activities such as football, baseball, and hiking were considered acceptable activities for the park. Acceptable, insofar as there are facilities and spaces designed to accommodate these activities and assurance that park's facilities will be maintained after the public partakes of such activities.

The NYSW appealed Gold's decision, and on June 17, 1959 Judge James McNally reversed Gold's decision claiming that "(s)uch a requirement (Moses' insistence that NYSW charge admission) incident to the issuance of a park permit is clearly arbitrary, capricious and unreasonable."¹¹⁹ Though the NYSW had won their

¹¹⁷ Arthur Gelb, "Moses Wins Case on Plays in Park." *New York Times*, June 3, 1959.

¹¹⁸ Gelb.

¹¹⁹ *Shakespeare Workshop v. Robert Moses*. Lexis Nexis 2. Supreme Court of New York, Appellate Division. 17 June 1959. In his decision, Judge McNally cited a case from nearly forty years earlier that speaks at first emphatically, then at turns ambiguously about the purpose of New York City Parks (*Williams v. Gallatin*). In this case, as in *Shakespeare Workshop v. Robert Moses*, the purpose and promotion of Central Park is at issue, as McNally's opinion cites components of parks' spaces, their function, and place visavis the public: "Monuments and buildings of architectural pretensions which attract the eye and divert the mind of the visitor; floral and horticultural displays, zoological gardens, playing ground, and even restaurants and rest houses and many other common incidents of pleasure contribute to the use and enjoyment of the park. The end of all such embellishments and conveniences

appeal, the court could only go so far as to censure Moses for his denial of the license. They could not in any way compel him to grant the festival the license. Moses could have appealed the decision, but the Commissioner acquiesced, with one stipulation; the NYSW must contribute \$20,000 to make the area around the theatre safe and controllable, claiming that the Parks Department would provide any expense beyond that.¹²⁰ After asking for these monies, however, or a bond in that amount, Moses requested that the Board of Estimates grant the NYSW \$20,000 to prepare the site.¹²¹ This was the first modest gesture toward reconciliation on the part of Moses, and also represented a step toward providing the festival with a more permanent site for free Shakespeare.¹²²

Speaking with *New York Times* reviewer Arthur Gelb on opening night of the 1959 summer season, Papp acknowledged that the controversy “clarified certain issues and brought an expression from people all over the city regarding a desire for a permanent Shakespeare Festival in Central Park.”¹²³ This expression of desire from the public embodies for Papp a powerful weapon against resistance to the festival’s growth. This embodiment contains affinities with Kluge and Negt’s notion of the public as “horizon of social experience” cited above. Papp and the festival gesture toward the grateful, passionate city-dwellers in every corner of the city as proof and

is substantially the same public good. They facilitate free public means of pleasure, recreation, and amusement and thus provide for the welfare of the community.” McNally’s citation of this case, shows how contentious the issue of Central Park’s use was, and continues to be. Also of note, is that fact that the earlier case primarily concerned the use of one of the first *permanent* structures built in Central Park, The Arsenal, and whether it ought to be subject to the same rules and possess the same accessibility as the rest of the park.

¹²⁰ Louis Calta, “Show Will Go On if Papp Gets Bond.” *New York Times*, June 19, 1959.

¹²¹ This preparation included paving the area in and around the temporary theatre space, a significant development that both suggests further construction in the area and also discourages certain activities and practices.

¹²² Charles G. Bennet, “Moses Asks Funds by City for Plays,” *New York Times*, June 20, 1959.

¹²³ Arthur Gelb, “Papp and Troupe Return to Park.” *New York Times*, August 4, 1959.

precedent for the company's existence and classification as a public, civic-minded venture. Papp's choice of language is also characteristically ambiguous with reference to a permanent *structure*, favoring the moniker 'Shakespeare *festival*.' Small wonder then that the "*workshop*" in the company's name was changed to "*festival*" when the NYSW applied for and received an Absolute Charter in January of 1960.¹²⁴ The name, as the previous chapter indicated, comes freighted with architectural and artistic precedents, but also additional monies to fund the festival's yearly offerings. As Papp and others noted in a December 1959 NYSW Board of Trustees meeting, the company's previous season's fund raising and pre-production efforts represented an outdated model. The move toward a permanent venue in Central Park required a shift in thinking for the NYSW and eventually the NYSF. Would the company function primarily in Central Park as an extension of the park's patronage and prestige? Or would they, in an effort to keep their desired audience and public forever on the horizon, de-emphasize their presence in Central Park?

The beginnings of an answer emerge near the end of the 1959 season, when Moses asked the City Planning Commission to provide \$250,000 for the construction of a permanent theatre space for use by the NYSW. Two months later, a Citizen's Committee was formed for the NYSW, which promptly proposed the appointment of trustees for company, similar to those helping to administer the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the city's public libraries.¹²⁵ Working on such a model shifted the NYSW's operations in Central Park toward a more permanent; we may even say

¹²⁴ Amendment to Provisional Charter and Absolute Charter: New York Shakespeare Festival, January 28, 1960. Series I, Box 4, folder 27, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

¹²⁵ "Trustees Proposed for Park Theatre." *New York Times*, October 20, 1959.

institutional status.¹²⁶ Libraries and museums occupied firmer ground – literally and figuratively – on the city’s cultural and geographic landscape, and enjoyed a long history of public patronage. The approval of funding for a permanent theatre and the appointment of trustees on the NYSW’s behalf – a la other cultural offerings and institutions – certainly paints the picture of a theatrical venture engaged in public or at least civic-minded work. And yet, the balancing act between institutional embodiments of public and more social constructed notions of public – to adapt Kluge and Negt’s dichotomy proved a crucial element in the NYSW’s strategy for continued survival and even growth. To this day, the Public Theater trumpets its partnership with city government and agencies while pursuing what artistic director Oskar Eustis calls the most inclusive, diverse and radical notion of democracy in the theatre’s artistic and cultural programming. Pursuing both these notions of public was written in the DNA of NYSW, NYSF and eventually the Public Theater.

In mid-December of 1959, the Board of Directors for the NYSW met to discuss a variety of matters, from the prospective amphitheater, the relationship with Moses to the campaign for funds. This last item dominated the meeting, notably what the public perception certain forms of fund raising might be. For example, NYSW press agent Merle Debuskey expressed fears about running television or radio advertising for fear that such promotion would smack of a private commercial venture rather than a public minded venture filling a public need otherwise unavailable.

Several suggestions were floated, including the head of the “New York is a Summer

¹²⁶ See Joan Shelley Rubin, Paul S. Boyer and John E. Casper eds., *Oxford Encyclopedia of Intellectual and Cultural History* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013) 12-13, 96-98, 636-640. This work provides an overview and history of the movement to render museums, libraries and parks (among other spaces) institutional and permanent on the cultural and geographical map.

Festival” committee Bernard Gimbel sponsoring an advertisement. Any indication, however, that the company had moved away from offering free Shakespeare as a civic-minded project Debuskey maintained, and many on the board certainly concurred, would taint the “pristine pure organization” they had thus far forged.¹²⁷ The press agent’s assertions certainly were idealistic, but so long as the NYSW and later NYSF operated in Central Park, such anxieties about public and political perception of the organization would be present.

Delacorte Theatre: ‘Permanent, but Portable’

Navigating the perilous terrain of Central Park’s ideologically fraught landscape did not end with Moses’ acquiescence and the call for funding from the City Planning Commission. Closer analysis of the events of 1960 through 1962, reveal the NYSF’s equivocations on the issue of a *permanent* theatre space in Central Park. As indicated in my discussion of Casey’s notion of *boundaries* and *borders*, the edges that circumscribe any space – their durability, permeability and possible flexibility – bear upon the institutional integrity of the space they encircle and the power that administers or maintains that space. The prospective theatre’s portability and permanence therefore inspired questions about the firmness of the NYSW’s institutional presence in Central Park, a presence about which Papp and the festival had very mixed feelings. In general, the Parks Department favored a performance space that could be characterized as permanent, while the NYSF favored a performance space with moveable and portable elements. Pursuing portability

¹²⁷ NYSW Board of Trustees-Minutes, 15 Dec 1959. Series I, Box 3, folder 9, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY. The eventual consensus among board members was the continuation and expansion of the organizations sponsorship program and exploration of something they called “membership” program.

represented in theatrical design terms the festival's desire to keep a weather eye the horizon when searching for new audience's and prospective public(s) for their theatrical offerings.

The first clash over control of the design and construction of the new theatre came near the beginning of 1960 when Papp began to contact Parks Department leadership about the forthcoming amphitheater. In what was likely one of their last official exchanges as founder of the NYSW and Parks Commissioner respectively, Papp queried Moses in a February 11, 1960 letter about the forthcoming design contracts for the new amphitheater in Central Park suggesting that "a meeting can be arranged with all those concerned to discuss the design and basic facilities."¹²⁸

Moses' responded in characteristically officious fashion declaring that: "(d)esign of the theatre at Belvedere Lake will be by the Department of Parks force to accommodate a variety of parks uses. Our designers will discuss the project with you at the appropriate time."¹²⁹ Papp ultimately did not have an opportunity to substantially answer Moses' reply, as the Parks Commissioner left his post just over three months later to helm the 1964 World's Fair.¹³⁰ Moses' insistence that the new performance space serve several different purposes – not simply as the theatrical 'home' of the NYSW – reflects his desire to create a space akin to the aforementioned Wollman Rink, that hosted orchestral performances, musical theatre, dance and

¹²⁸ Papp, Joseph. Letter to Robert Moses, Feb. 11, 1960 Series I, Box 4, folder 17, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

¹²⁹ Moses, Robert. Letter to Joseph Papp, Feb. 18, 1960. Series I, Box 4, folder 17, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

¹³⁰ "Moses to Give Up Parks Job." *New York Times*, May 15, 1960.

barbershop quartet competitions, and even a paddle tennis tournament among other activities and performances.¹³¹

So long as the new performance venue remained “multi-purpose,” its use would not be over-determined by one style of performance, recreation or activity. Therefore, though the space would be occupied and ‘practiced’ in a variety of different ways, design, administration and control of it could remain firmly in control of the Parks Department. Creating a performance space that merely served to house a single type of performance – i.e. outdoor Shakespeare – would have rendered Papp and the NYSF’s scenic designer Eldon Elder’s input indispensable. As the Parks department imagined it, however, the performance venue would serve many purposes, demographics and ultimately *publics* all in a single space. In this way, the new space would prove responsive to the needs of the Parks department rather than the NYSF. Whatever similarities abided between the public served by the Parks Department and NYSF were obscured by Papp’s rhetoric cited above concerning the festival’s determination and mandate to serve the people of New York City who essentially willed the continuing existence of the company.

Moses’ successor Newbold Morris re-iterated his predecessor’s notion that the new theatre space would serve a variety of purposes, not merely as a theatrical home

¹³¹ New York City Department of Parks, *Department Of Parks: Annual Press Releases*. 1959. Web. 20 Oct. 2015. New York City Department of Parks. *Department Of Parks: Annual Press Releases*. 1960. Web. 20 Oct. 2015. The many uses of Wollman Rink demonstrate an important period of transition for both the parks and the city. As mentioned above, city agencies, bureaus and business owners were embarking on a concerted campaign to make New York City a more desirable tourist destination. Artistic and cultural spaces and offerings were an important piece of this desirability, along with recreational spaces such as Central Park. As will be discussed in Chapter 5, the late 1960’s saw the consolidation of cultural programming – including the Department of Parks – under the umbrella of the newly formed Department of Cultural Affairs. This shift signaled the melding of cultural, recreational, educational and artistic concerns in service of the public(s), and especially focused on bolstering existing institutions.

for the NYSF as Morris wrote to Papp: “We must remind you that the intent of the Capital Budget request and the purpose of the allocation is to provide a permanent Shakespeare Theatre and park development suitable for various recreational purposes.”¹³² Moses and Morris’ responses to Papp’s inquiries on the new theatre space foreshadowed and suggested several points of contention that plagued the planning, design, and construction of this new outdoor theatre space. Throughout the design, engineering and construction process questions concerning the space’s permanence or relative portability cropped up again and again, as did Papp’s concern that creating a flexible space might damage the spirit of the NYSF offerings and what the festival hoped the public might experience from those offerings.¹³³ As I suggested above, and will continue to elaborate with respect to the NYSF’s activities in public spaces, the company maintained a fairly conflicted – or at the very least ambivalent view of a permanent presence in the city’s public spaces. In an effort to maintain the autonomy of the NYSF from intervention by city agencies and departments, the company stayed on the move, even as they continued to court the favor and resources of these same public agencies and departments.

Though Papp later flatly denied that the festival ever wished for a permanent theatre space in Central Park, his dispute with Morris complicates this characterization of his wishes.¹³⁴ He feared coming under the regulations of the Parks

¹³² Morris, Newbold. Letter to Joseph Papp, 15 Aug. 1960. Series I, Box 4, folder 18, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

¹³³ Papp, Joseph. Letter to James Felt, Feb. 22, 1960. Series I, Box 4, folder 18, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY. Felt was chairman of the New York City Planning Commission, and proved instrumental in the Zoning Resolution of the 1961 which incentivized the construction of public spaces next to new real estate developments by offering ‘bonus’ property to owners and developers.

¹³⁴ Kenneth Turan and Joseph Papp. *Free for All: Joe Papp, The Public, and the Greatest Theater Story Ever Told*. (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2009), 152-153.

Department, by lease or other agreement between the two parties, and his clash with Moses exacerbated his wariness. Despite this, the producer initially *supported* plans for the new theatre's design developed in the latter half of 1959. This design, while possessing fewer amenities for actors and audiences, remained almost entirely portable. Papp favored the flexibility of this arrangement, as was evidenced by his belief that nearly all features of the new theatre space – with the exception of the stage – should be “permanent, but portable.”¹³⁵ This simultaneous permanence and movability form an important motif for the NYSF, as they sought to signal their public presence in a variety of ways; at once settled and institutional, but also nimble and responsive to needs of a constantly evolving public.

Moses, and arguably Morris, considered the presence of a permanent performing arts venue another component in the project for urban re-development.¹³⁶ A temporary or partially portable venue met the needs of Papp and his theatre, functioning *in* if not always being *of* the public space in which they performed. The Parks Department frowned on temporary or portable venues, as they did not entirely serve their needs and desires. Permanent structures within the park reflected the Park's idea of ‘contained’ and ‘controlled’ operations, those cordoned off with firm

¹³⁵ Papp, Joseph. Letter to Newbold Morris, 11 Aug. 1960. Series I, Box 4, folder 18, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY. Morris' response – dated August 15 – contains the repeated phrase (drawn from Papp's proposal enclosed with the August 11 letter) “permanent, but portable” to characterize Papp's requirements and design ideas for the new space. Morris, Newbold. Letter to Joseph Papp, 15 Aug. 1960. Series I, Box 4, folder 18, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

¹³⁶ Many spaces in the Parks Department's vast dominions were outfitted with performing arts venues of various sizes. During the 1930's under the leadership of Moses and often with funding from the WPA, the department constructed numerous band shells alongside other leisure and recreational spaces in the city's parks. Examples include Jackie Robinson Park band shell, Prospect Park band shell, and East River Park amphitheater. Even more closely tied to urban renewal and development was the project to re-develop the Lincoln Square area into an arts complex and surrounding district. This project connected with Moses attempts to clear areas of the Upper West Side considered ‘slums.’

borders. As the Parks saw it, the difficulties of managing an area left vacant by the removal of temporary performance venues became threatening to surveillance and management of public spaces. Additionally, the management of temporary tenants within these impermanent performance venues presented a challenge for municipal bureaucrats charged with encouraging and in some cases mandating what activities theatrical tenants presented. Both Parks Commissioners made very clear from the outset that the design and function of the new theatre of the space would conform to the Park's specifications, and serve more than just the festival and its mission. In this way, Moses' solicitation of a quarter of a million dollars for the theatre's construction represent the final power play from the aging master planner and powerbroker, rather than an expression of support for the NYSF. The new amphitheater was complex amalgam of city funding and grassroots public advocacy on the NYSW's behalf. Each component claimed a portion of the 'public' character and profile for the project, though the size and shape of each portion continued to be a subject of debate and negotiation throughout the design and construction process.

After *intense* discussion over the theatre's initial design, it was announced in April of 1961 that the opening of the new amphitheater would be delayed, as the building's contractor Bristol Construction Company cited contract delays and poor weather as reasons for the postponement.¹³⁷ Initially, plans called for the theatre's opening in July of 1961, but so contentious was the process and so tangled were the city bureaucracies involved, that completion and production were postponed until the 1962 season. In the interim, Papp pressed – and in fact included in the press release

¹³⁷ New York Shakespeare Festival. Press Release. *Opening Of Central Park Shakespeare Theatre Postponed*, 10 Apr. 1961. Series 1, Box 7, folder 2, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

cited above – for a temporary space in close proximity to the Belvedere site for the 1961 season. The general feeling amongst the NYSF’s Board was that the city’s public(s) associated the festival with the space they had perennially occupied for the previous four summers. Any re-location might have clouded the association between the festival and park spaces. Whether this ‘association’ constituted a permanent presence for the festival in Central Park is an open question. It is certainly a *type* of permanence, one at once spatial and cultural. The Parks department responded to the NYSF’s notion of a temporary space near Belvedere Lake with the suggestion of the permanent East River Amphitheater as the most performance-ready space, but eventually settled on – again permanent – performance space at Wollman Memorial Rink in May 1961.

House or Home

Permanence and/or portability were not the only concerns the NYSF focused on throughout the design process. Papp also expressed an ongoing interest in the “esthetics and audience’s mental and physical relationship to the stage.”¹³⁸ This concern and interest manifested itself in Papp’s insistence that designer Eldon Elder – retained by the NYSF as a set designer – be as integral to the design process as possible, much to the chagrin of Commissioner Morris. Because the Parks Department wished to construct a theatre that might also – much like the Wollman Rink – house public music concerts, ballet, and other performances, they needed to create a space of sufficient flexibility. This meant, in particular, creating an audience

¹³⁸ Papp, Joseph. Letter to Newbold Morris, 20 Oct. 1960. Series I, Box 4, folder 19, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

space with a gentler slope than Papp desired.¹³⁹ Between Elder and Papp, inspiration for the new theatre came from spaces as diverse as the Hollywood Bowl, Stratford Festival and the Muny in St. Louis.¹⁴⁰ Interestingly, only one of those spaces was designed primarily for the presentation of Shakespeare, the Stratford Festival's open stage with a steeply raked audience space designed by Tanya Moiseiwitsch.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, unlike previous Shakespeare festivals, the NYSF in some ways resisted the establishment of a permanent outdoor performance space. Still, a sense of civic and artistic permanence emanated from the establishment of earlier festival theatres, and the NYSF certainly took a step toward permanence acquiring an Absolute Charter in late January 1960. Taking on the name '*festival*,' however, cannot obscure how unique the NYSF was among Shakespeare festivals of the time and before. Artistic and institutional legitimacy typically emanated from the construction of a permanent theatre space or support from notable artists and impresarios. No other Shakespeare festival, however, so thoroughly ran the gauntlet of municipal politics the way the NYSF had, and their wariness at firmly planting theatrical and institutional roots were the result. This wariness, however, also proved a sound strategy in simultaneously offering what might be characterized as a 'public service,' while avoiding the entanglements of establishing a permanent venue in a public space.

¹³⁹ As an example, Papp claimed that the Wollman Rink – designed by architect Edward Stone – did not possess an audience space that was “sufficiently raked,” as Papp stated in his October 1960 letter to Morris cited above.

¹⁴⁰ Like the San Diego Shakespeare Festival (later the Old Globe), the Muny resides in a large St. Louis public park, called Forest Park and used for display and exposition purposes. Forest Park, proposed the year before the completion of Central Park in 1864, hosted the 1904 World's Fair.

Despite Papp and the festival's wariness, they did capitalize on opportunities to link the as-yet-unnamed theatre with their operations, declaring in promotional materials for the 1961 season that: "Because you asked for it, in the summer of 1961 a NEW SHAKESPEAREAN THEATRE built by the City of New York will rise on the shores of Belvedere Lake in Central Park."¹⁴¹ The operative phrase, echoing Papp's earlier rhetoric was "(b)ecause you asked for it," referencing the public(s) desire for the new Central Park theatre. Tellingly, the "you" in question proves difficult to determine. Such is the evolving strategy of the festival, typified by evoking a public constituted from the festival audience *and* the wider public throughout the city. Framed in these terms, the new theatre represents a monument to public will with the festival as humble servants to the public(s). Morris bristled at this promotional material, as well as Papp's continual insistence that Eldon Elder ought to be credited as the designer of the new amphitheater, rather than Morris' own Chief of Design Harold Thompson and other designers and engineers at the Parks Department. Papp eventually conceded on credit and ultimate control of the theatre's design, though as mentioned above he never entirely ceased voicing his concern and credit for the audience-stage relationship for which Elder was primarily responsible.¹⁴²

Even amidst planning for the new amphitheater in Central Park, however, and especially after its completion in the spring of 1962, Papp sought ways to expand

¹⁴¹ Promotional brochure for Audience Sponsors program of 1961. Series I, Box 7, folder 22. New York Shakespeare Festival Records. New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

¹⁴² Even from Elder's earliest design proposals, submitted to the Ford Foundation for potential funding, audience involvement and the theatre's potential effect on the public were of the utmost importance. See McAuley (53-63) for discussion of audience spaces in reference to other spaces in and around theatre buildings, connotations of the audience-practitioner-presentational space relationship.

operations for the NYSF into other venues and spaces.¹⁴³ The producer pitched several ideas that would have downplayed the importance of the Belvedere area amphitheater, including running two productions that would rotate between the amphitheater and another venue, such as the East River Amphitheater, Wollman Rink, and/or the band shell in Prospect Park.¹⁴⁴ Though this production rotation never came to fruition, Papp's plans indicate an important oscillation in the company's ideas about the public(s) and their theatrical offerings. Though there was anxiety among NYSF administrators over moving the summer season to a space far afield from the Belvedere site, the opportunity to reach the widest possible audience and expand the company's public profile drove the NYSF to look elsewhere in the five boroughs, as Chapters 3 and 4 demonstrate.

Control of the Belvedere space, in the form of administrative and design dominion consistently emerged from Papp and Morris' correspondence. In castigating Papp for not sharing the promotional materials cited above for approval, Morris asserts that: "(s)ince the subject involves City property under park jurisdiction, I think you might have sent the draft here for approval before you had it printed."¹⁴⁵ Morris' justification for previewing materials was the 'involvement' of city property, and control and 'jurisdiction' emanates from this involvement. Papp's response to this interpretation of the Parks Commissioner's reach is instructive:

¹⁴³ "New York Shakespeare Festival Board Minutes," 5 Sep. 1963. Series I, Box 14, folder 32, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

¹⁴⁴ Papp, Joseph. Letter to Newbold Morris, 2 Aug. 1961. Series I, Box 7, folder 3, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

¹⁴⁵ Morris, Newbold. Letter to Joseph Papp, 8 Mar. 1961. Series I, Box 7, folder 2, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

I think that you will agree in all fairness that a line has to be drawn between printed material that is distributed outside of the Park and that which falls directly within the area of the Park system. Therefore, we will be most happy to send you, as you request, copies of the programs or inserts which we plan to use for the summer in Central Park. But as far as any other printed material that we use for our own fund raising is concerned, I think we must reserve the right to be free from any control or censorship. We are a private organization involved in public work utilizing municipal resources. This in itself carries with it a built-in stumbling block which from time to time inevitably arises to plague us.¹⁴⁶

Papp characterized Morris' control in purely spatial terms, claiming that activities *in the park* – in this case the distribution of printed materials – may be subject to regulation.

Still, Papp's ambiguous phrase "private organization involved in public work," raises many more questions than it answers, and will become increasingly important in the coming chapters as the NYSF's institutional presence, and claim to the highly suggestive moniker "public," increases. Rather than a "stumbling block," I would suggest that operating as a "private organization" doing "public work" seemed to drive the growth of the NYSW and NYSF. For a company committed to providing a public service, exploring the bounds of what denotes "the public," proved vital to its development. This exploration thrived on movement and a dynamism unseen from Shakespeare festivals at the time or since. By March of 1962, just three months before

¹⁴⁶ Papp, Joseph. Letter to Newbold Morris, 9 Mar. 1961. Series I, Box 7, folder 2, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

the theatre's opening, Papp somewhat dissociated the festival from the new theater claiming that engineering concerns – the purview of the Parks Department – had over-ridden aesthetic considerations in the theatre's design and construction.¹⁴⁷

By the spring of 1962, Papp shifted his energy from the *design* of the Delacorte Theater to more directly address whether the amphitheater's *location* would assist the festival in reaching, serving and perhaps embodying the public in the most substantial way possible. Early on in the planning stages for the amphitheater, before control of the new theatre inspired such consternation from both parties, Papp also hoped the theatre's unique location-in-space would draw in diverse public(s) – specifically African Americans and Puerto Ricans – from the Manhattan's Upper West Side most especially.¹⁴⁸ This hope gave way to the realization that a permanent theatre space in Central Park limited the company's reach. The public and audience they sought required a more flexible relationship to the city's spaces than working within the constraints of Central Park. In the NYSF's next enterprise, the Mobile Theater, the company would venture into public spaces all around the five boroughs in search of a new, more diverse audiences and publics.

¹⁴⁷ Papp, Joseph. Letter to A.O. Rothschild, 13 Apr. 1962. Series I, Box 12, folder 8, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY. Joseph Papp to George Delacorte, Mar. 26, 1962. Series I, Box 10, folder 13, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

¹⁴⁸ “New York Shakespeare Festival Board Minutes, 12 Dec. 1959. Series I, Box 3, folder 12, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

Chapter 3: Charting the Territory

The NYSW's notion of touring began only a few months after their first outdoor performances at East River Park in 1956. In December of that year, Papp and the Parks Department developed plans to bring the company's summer productions to *other* spaces around the five boroughs. In a letter to Parks Commissioner Moses, Papp referred to the inter-borough touring offerings as a "civic-cultural venture," and claimed that the stage could be set up "almost anyplace."¹⁴⁹ The summer tour of 1957 would ultimately be curtailed because of wear and tear on the portable stage, and in a neat bit of serendipity the company settled at the space north of Belvedere Castle for the final two weeks of the summer season.¹⁵⁰ This of course eventually led to the festival establishing a strong association between their outdoor activities and that location, as discussed in Chapter 1. Ironically, it was the construction and presence of this permanent theatre space in 1962 that renewed calls by Papp and other NYSF administrators for touring the company's theatrical offerings and expanding their reach *beyond* Central Park.

¹⁴⁹ Papp, Joseph. Letter to Robert Moses, 5 Dec. 1956. Series I, Box 1, folder 12, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

¹⁵⁰ After their correspondence of late 1956, the Parks Department and the NYSF selected six tour sites: two in Manhattan and one in each of the other boroughs. They included East River Park, the festival's first outdoor site and the area north of Belvedere Castle (approximate site of the Delacorte Theatre) (Manhattan), Williamsbridge Park (Bronx), War Memorial Park (Brooklyn), King Park (Queens), and Clove Lake Park (Staten Island). An ambitious schedule of three productions would open with four performances in Central Park and then two performances at each venue, ending at East River Amphitheater. Interestingly, the NYSF never again played at East River Park, though they did play other spaces in somewhat close proximity to the park. These include the Baruch Houses Playground and Tompkins Square Park. The combination of losing the portable stage, focus on creating a strong association between the Central Park location and the NYSW's funding challenges – that nearly led to the cancellation of the 1958 summer season – put citywide touring on the shelf for more than half a decade. Additionally, indoor playing at the Heckscher Theater at 5th Ave and 105th St, allowed for continued programming with less funding and more readily available municipal facilities and monies. Prior to beginning school tours in 1960, The Heckscher also proved important in cultivating a relationship between the NYSW and the city's schools and students.

In late 1963 speaking with his fellow festival board members, Papp voiced the belief that despite having a home base in Central Park they still were not reaching a mass audience, one with little or no knowledge and/or exposure to “legitimate theatre.”¹⁵¹ To ameliorate the limitations of a permanent, albeit relatively centralized playing space, the subject of touring the outer boroughs became an important extension of the company’s mission first articulated in their Provisional Charter. This chapter explores the NYSF’s preparations for touring to various spaces in search of a wider, audiences among the theatrically uninitiated public. The Mobile Theater (MT) offered something quite different (though historically speaking not *entirely* novel) and for a very different public, than the festivals work at the Delacorte and later the Astor Library would.¹⁵² The theatrical offerings and publics of the citywide tour evolved in

¹⁵¹ Board of Director’s Minutes, September 9, 1963, Series I, Box 14, folder 32. New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

¹⁵² The most notable historical precedent for the MT was the Federal Theatre Project’s (FTP) Caravan Theatre. Operating during the summers of 1936 and 1937, it toured parks and city playgrounds, serving nearly 2 million New Yorkers in each of the five boroughs throughout each summer season. Though units shifted or were sometimes eliminated, the Caravan Theatre’s performance units mainly comprised vaudeville, classical theatre, Yiddish, children’s, and African American units. The sheer variety of programming is extraordinary and certainly understandable for a project that endeavored to serve as many audiences and publics as possible. The NYSF and later the Public Theatre embarked on a similar project of expanding, contracting and shifting their programming to incorporate and in certain respects *guide* underserved publics into the culture of theatre-going and cultural consumption. As such, this project is at once activist, artistic and service oriented, though the extent to which it continued to function as all three fluctuates during the life of the MT. Venues for the Caravan Theatre included the Washington Square Park and Corlears Hook Park (prior to renovation and the East River Amphitheater) in Manhattan, along with Prospect Park in Brooklyn and St. Mary’s Park in the Bronx, each of which hosted the NYSF’s Mobile Theatre within its first three seasons. The goals of the Caravan Theatre, other than providing entertainment and diversion for audiences, was to help build an audience for more permanent theatre ventures, including commercial theatres. As playwright and director Mayer Portner noted in the 1938 quarterly magazine of the FTP, “(I)t is hoped that an appreciable percentage of this audience will be sufficiently impressed by the performances to become permanent, paying patrons of the living theatre thereafter.” Portner, Mayer. “Outdoor Season Begins in New York,” *Federal Theatre Magazine*, Volume 1, No. 6 (pg. 7). While emphasis during the earliest years of the MT remained the service of marginalized publics unfamiliar with Shakespeare and live theatre more generally, use of the MT to nurture an interest in the festivals other offerings and programming certainly typifies their movement away from Shakespeare in the late 1960’s. For additional information on the Caravan Theatre, see Beth Osborne’s “Hidden in Plain Sight: Recovering the Federal Theatre Project’s Caravan Theatre,” in *Working in the Wings: New Perspectives on Theatre History and Labor* (Beth Osborne, ed.), pages 109-124.

part from the dynamics associated with the spaces, sites and venues operated and occupied by the MT. This eventually resulted in a variety of theatrical ventures (Delacorte Theatre, MT and later the Astor Library location downtown), operating under the same, albeit very wide, institutional umbrella known as the “Public Theater.” The varied programming of each venture arose from the somewhat distinct audiences at each location, and the character of the services and offerings for each figuration of the “public.” The dynamics of these various spaces were vital to the NYSF’s ongoing interrogative, “what is the public?” In fact, beginning with this chapter, the question may well be interpreted as “*where* is the public?” The company’s evolving responses to this very open question, as intimated in earlier chapters, constitutes a crucial strategy for their growth as a purveyor of services to various publics.

Even before exploratory talks on a revived citywide tour in 1963, however, the company had much wider and ambitious plans for touring. From the fall of 1962 until the end of summer 1963, Papp explored touring the South, the Midwest, and even touring overseas to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare’s birth in 1964. This was in addition to their ongoing touring in New York City’s public schools.¹⁵³ The desire to tour further and wider was part and parcel of the NYSF’s ambitions to grow the scope and reach of their operation to address and embody various audiences and publics. This growth also meant increased scrutiny from inside

¹⁵³ The NYSF activities in public schools began at the conclusion of the 1960 summer season, when planning for the design and construction of the Delacorte were in full swing. Interestingly though, Papp’s initial vision for the MT called for relative continuity between the citywide tour and the school tour, including casting, design, and directing. This points to possible correlations between the type of educational programming the NYSF provided and the educational character of the services furnished by the MT. As we will see below, Papp mainly eschews such correlations while still strategically operating as a producer of plays and a pseudo-educational organization with the MT. See Hashimoto 88-109.

and outside the company, about what function the festival ought to serve. What kind of public service was this private organization providing as they looked beyond Central Park, and indeed beyond Manhattan? Were they merely a producer of plays, or did touring perhaps introduce additional responsibilities and expectations to the public they purported to serve, a public more or less distinct from audiences at the NYSF's permanent outdoor theatre space in Central Park? These questions, along with the larger questions posed by this dissertation – what in fact constitutes ‘public’ – unfolded in complex ways. The openness of these questions proved vital to NYSF's ongoing project of funding a private organization, while providing services they characterized as ‘public.’ Touring around the five boroughs, along with the NYSF's exploration with other forms of theatrical touring, provided myriad insights into this ‘public’ the NYSF identified and cultivated. Despite this cultivation, as I intimated earlier, the ‘public’ was as much on the horizon as it was in the spaces and audiences the company occupied and directly addressed.

Searching America, Representing America

Before planning began for MT tour of 1964, the NYSF explored the possibility of touring further afield than New York City. In setting their sights beyond New York City, the NYSF explored the possibility of fresh demographics, and ultimately potential publics for their programming and the service these theatrical offerings provided. Despite many of their touring plans falling through, the period between the opening of the Delacorte and the beginning of 1964 can be seen as a kind of trial period. During this crucial time in the company's growth, the festival continued to rehearse various types of public presence both in the United States and abroad.

Through these rehearsals, the company uncovered some of the limits and possibilities for what the festival might embody and achieve as a private organization invested in public work. Such insights informed the NYSF's citywide touring venture.

In the summer and fall of 1962, Papp began making contact with educators, politicians, and bureaucrats to facilitate touring outside New York City.¹⁵⁴ One such educator was Dr. Esther Jackson, then a young professor at Clark College in Atlanta. Amidst directing *King Lear* at the Delacorte, Papp received a letter from Jackson inquiring about the possibility of working with the festival in a research and educational capacity for the 1963 season, to which Papp assented.¹⁵⁵ Their correspondence, and subsequent professional relationship proved challenging for both, and reveal important insights about the nature and purpose of the NYSF's theatrical offerings and their connection to the theatrical publics they encountered during the crucial years of 1964 through 1966. Jackson sought throughout her time with the festival a more substantial commitment to educational and audience outreach from the festival, beyond the bits of preparatory literature distributed to community leaders and educators in various communities. Though Papp and Jackson eventually

¹⁵⁴ As early as December 1955, however, prior to taking their theatrical offerings outdoors, the NYSW began to explore the possibility of touring to New York State colleges and universities, a tour that came to fruition briefly in the early 1960's. Papp, Joseph. Letter to John McKiernan, State Teacher's College of Geneseo, 1 Dec. 1955, Series I, Box 1, folder 9, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY. As mentioned in the footnote above, the NYSW began touring schools during the winter season in late 1960. Because of the festival's association with the State Board of Education, funding the tour (even with a company composed of Equity performers) proved less onerous than their ongoing efforts to finance the outdoor season on the Central Park. Papp, Joseph. Letter to Dr. Esther Jackson, 27 Nov. 1962, Series I, Box 21, folder 28, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

¹⁵⁵ Jackson, Dr. Esther to Joseph Papp, July 25, 1962, Series I, Box 21, folder 28, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY. Sallee, Hillmar. Letter to Dr. Esther Jackson, August 3, 1962, Series I, Box 21, folder 28, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

fell out throughout her time with the festival, their correspondence began auspiciously enough.

After the conclusion of the 1962 season – the NYSF’s first at the Delacorte – Papp contacted Jackson and floated the idea of a Southern Shakespeare Conference and suggested Clark College as an appropriate venue for this conference. His objectives were more than educational, however, as he planned to connect this conference with a theatrical tour of the South in which the “problems and objectives of having an integrated acting company playing to integrated audiences in key southern locations” could be explored.¹⁵⁶ In this way, a prospective Southern tour bore the mark of advocacy or public service through artistic and cultural bridge building. The locations for this experiment consisted primarily of college campuses all over the South.¹⁵⁷ In the midst of the Civil Rights Movement, which saw the vital involvement of college students and when many campuses became places of protest and resistance, the NYSF’s proposed inter-racial tour would be more than artistic and educational enrichment.¹⁵⁸ The performances may, in the most modest sense, have created a space in which artistic offerings might serve as a public forum, or a site of

¹⁵⁶ Papp, Joseph. Letter to Dr. Esther Jackson, September 12, 1962, Series I, Box 21, folder 28, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY. Additionally, this integration ran along racial and socio-economic lines as well. In consultation with stage manager Peter Lawrence, Papp characterized the objective of the Southern tour as an extension of their existing work to reach “new deprived audiences, deprived because of economics or culture.” “May 10th notes – Meeting – Joe and Peter Lawrence,” 10 May 1963, Series I, Box 17, folder 30, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

¹⁵⁷ Tour stops for the 1964 Southern tour would have included colleges in Maryland (Goucher, Loyola, and St. Mary’s), North Carolina (Davidson, Livingstone, and Greensboro), Alabama (Talladega and the Tuskegee Institute), Georgia (Clark), and Virginia (Old Dominion and Randolph-Macon) (“New York Shakespeare Festival-Southern Tour-1964. “Itinerary to Date,” 22 Jul. 1963, Series I, Box 16, folder 7, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

¹⁵⁸ Wallenstein, et al. *Higher Education and the Civil Rights Movement: White Supremacy, Black Southerners and College Campuses*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2009, 123-125.

cultural intervention. The audience and public of this proposed tour would be an integrated one, in stark contrast to the still very segregated public and assembly spaces of the American South.

Papp attended the Southern Shakespeare Conference in November of 1962 at Clark College, and even made another visit in February of 1963. Following Papp's two visits to Clark College, Jackson characterized the central concern of proposed tour as the "problem of playing-places."¹⁵⁹ The hunt for suitable playing spaces, according Jackson's recommendation wove together considerations of demographics and 'physical facilities,' and warned against the power and politics of "any agency" that might try – on demographic grounds – to restrict the performance of an integrated company in front of the integrated public. For the MT, very different agencies and forces circulate and intervene in the spaces of performance. Papp and Jackson's ongoing correspondence continued through early 1966, as she served as an educational advisor to Papp and the festival, but eventually ended after disagreements about the festival's educational programming and community outreach. The seeds of their later disagreements were sown during this period as Jackson continually pressed Papp to clarify the educational and cultural substance of potential touring activities, and later the MT and its supporting administrative structures. Jackson consistently called for greater accountability to the educational and cultural reverberations of the

¹⁵⁹ Jackson, writing to Papp after his second visit, summarized the salient problems and issues of touring: Assessing this problem, Jackson writes: "It appears to me that this is the central problem which must be faced in a Southern tour. I think that we should seek to engage, in each center, the best facility available, in terms of the following considerations: 1) Physical facilities: size, stage area, equipment, etc. 2) Accessibility of auditorium in terms of potential audience groups. 3) Availability of auditorium to all persons, without attempt, by any agency, to restrict its use on grounds of race, creed, or color. 4) Evidence of an organizational structure which can be utilized for tour promotion." Jackson Dr. Esther. Letter to Joseph Papp, 25 Feb. 1963, Series I, Box 21, folder 28, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

NYSF's work on audiences, especially as their spaces of performance and publics encountered proliferated. In the end, after an acrimonious two years, Papp abruptly ended the festival's Education Department, claiming that the focus of the organization was on artistic production rather than what was variously described as community outreach and public advocacy. Concerns similar to Jackson's emerged among other MT staff and administrators.

Planning for a 1963 tour of the South, despite the potential support and resources of the National Education Association and the United Negro College Fund, fell through. During the spring and summer of that year, however, the NYSF re-opened the possibility of such a tour for 1964. In characteristically ambitious fashion, Papp also expressed an interest during the opening months of 1963 in launching a Midwestern and Northeastern tour of colleges and universities, likely just following the 1964 summer season.¹⁶⁰ In order to raise the profile of such regional tours and take advantage of additional funding opportunities, Papp planned a series of performances at the State Department Auditorium in Washington DC, before embarking on a tour of Southern campuses and communities. He also began soliciting governmental personnel, and even first lady Jacqueline Kennedy to muster the needed

¹⁶⁰ Peter Lawrence (Production Stage Manager of the NYSF) wrote to Sol Hurok (Owner of Hurok Attractions, Inc.) concerning a partnership that would make the tour possible. Lawrence, Peter. Letter to Sol Hurok, 28 May 1963, Series I, Box 17, folder 28, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY. Word of this prospective tour had spread enough by early spring 1963 that the NYSF began to receive solicitations from many colleges and universities in the Midwest, mainly members of the Great Lakes Colleges Association. Manning, Provost Thurston (Oberlin College). Letter to Joseph Papp, 17 May 1963, Series I, Box 17, folder 15, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

funding and support for the tour, as institutional and foundational sources provided less support than Papp and Jackson anticipated.¹⁶¹

This was not the first time that Papp had solicited the White House for support. Concomitant with their explorations in developing a regional touring venture, the NYSF also explored touring – under the banner of state sponsorship – all over the world.¹⁶² In one of his first correspondences with Jackson, Papp actually mentioned the proposed Southern tour as a prelude for performances in Washington DC and an eventual global tour under sponsorship of the U.S. government. Only a few days after opening *King Lear* to conclude his artistic duties for the NYSF's inaugural 1962 summer season at the Delacorte Theater, Papp wrote to President Kennedy concerning the 1964 quadricentennial of Shakespeare's birth and the potential benefits of international theatrical touring:

Would it not be propitious for the United States to commemorate the occasion with a world tour of the New York Shakespeare Festival? To present the leading Shakespearean company in the country with an integrated cast of actors, cannot help but demonstrate to our detractors how art and democracy work together to the advantage of both.¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ Jackson, Dr. Esther. Letter to Joseph Papp, 20 Dec. 1963, Series I, Box 21, folder 28, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY. Ultimately, the Southern tour's itinerary proved too scattered, as Papp and Jackson failed to inspire enough interest to justify the expense and labor of the tour. The prospective itinerary failed to draw foundational or governmental support, and the Southern tour of 1964 proved untenable.

¹⁶² Only a few years before, the American Repertory Company, under the sponsorship of the American National Theatre and Academy and the State Department, organized an international tour of three plays by American playwrights (*Skin of Our Teeth*, *Glass Menagerie*, and *The Miracle Worker*). "Equity Fetes for Theatre Troupe," *New York Times*, December 15, 1961, 46.

¹⁶³ Papp, Joseph. Letter to John F. Kennedy, 17 Aug. 1962, Series I, Box 14, folder 12, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

Papp continues in this same letter to more specifically underline whom he believes these detractors to be, making reference to the State Department's magazine *Amerika*. This magazine, a Russian-language publication, was distributed in the Soviet Union as a way of educating Russians about American life. From Papp's letter and specifically his mention of potential international "detractors," such programming was also designed to extoll the virtues of American culture. In framing the NYSF opposite "our detractors" Papp casts his relatively young company as an object lesson in the symbiotic relationship between art and democracy. The NYSF's international tour would, according to Papp, not merely be offering a 'public service,' but in fact be embodying the values and virtues of that same public.

Papp took aim at the State Department and their international cultural programming as an ideal umbrella under which the NYSF might perform. Included in this programming was President Kennedy's proposal and eventual implementation of the "Arts in Embassies" program in 1963. Many in the established art world scoffed at the semi-professionalism of the embassy art collections, as limitations on available sites often meant the display of incongruent pieces, in unusual spaces.¹⁶⁴ The result was somewhere between aesthetic appreciation and cultural performance, as most artwork was designed to embellish and adorn embassy spaces while serving as an expression of national aspirations or public prestige.¹⁶⁵ As part of the first round of artistic offerings for this program, theatre was conspicuous in its absence, as Papp

¹⁶⁴ Walter L. Hixson. *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture and the Cold War, 1945-1961* (New York: Palgrave-MacMillan, 1997), xiv.

¹⁶⁵ Richard T. Arndt *The First Resort of Kings: American Cultural Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century* (Washington DC: Potomac Books, Inc., 2005), 375-376.

noted in a March 1963 letter to President Kennedy. In a series of attempts to solicit support from the President and the First Lady, Papp was politely rebuffed.

Undeterred, Papp continued to pursue governmental assistance and sponsorship for the NYSF's theatrical offerings. The producer wrote to State department personnel, including the Director of the Office of Cultural Presentations Glenn C. Wolfe and Lucius D. Battle, the Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs, and inquired about the allocation of funding to cultural projects for 1964.¹⁶⁶ Papp claimed that the services the NYSF might offer to the State Department – in potentially touring internationally, with material and financial assistance – “will aid United States objectives overseas.” He lays out the reasons for the company's fitness for such funding:

It has cost a million dollars to establish the institution of the New York Shakespeare Festival – money that has been supplied from municipality and from private sources. As you know we have few permanent companies in the United States. In fact, there are no classical repertory theaters at all. The Festival is unique in this respect.¹⁶⁷

In arguing for international touring, Papp feels it necessary to invoke the NYSF's status as a permanent company on the artistic and cultural landscape, a landscape he claims is bereft of such institutions and the permanence they embody. Additionally, Papp reiterated his characterization of the NYSF as private organization engaged in

¹⁶⁶ These correspondences followed a meeting by Papp in March of 1963 with Wolfe, Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall, and August Heckscher in his capacity as Special Consultant on the Arts to President Kennedy. Papp, Joseph. Letter to White House Social Secretary Leticia Baldrige, 27 Mar. 1963, Series I, Box 18, folder 15, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

¹⁶⁷ Papp, Joseph. Letter to Lucius C. Battle, March 25, 1963, Series I, Box 18, folder 15, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

public work. Instead of characterizing this as a “stumbling block,” Papp suggested that such a partnership proved vital to the festival becoming an institution. This was one of the earliest indications that wide theatrical touring and a strong institutional presence might be linked for the NYSF. The publics(s) this institution served (home and abroad, national and international) and the character of the services on offer emerged as crucial considerations during this exploratory time for the NYSF.¹⁶⁸

So, within in the course of just over one year, the NYSF developed myriad plans to tour beyond New York City, but ultimately failed to bring these plans to fruition. Despite this failure, and the company’s propensity and *strategy* for reaching well beyond its grasp, their efforts reveal important motifs in thinking about institutional identity and the festival’s relationship to potential publics, audiences and governmental entities. These three embodiments of “public,” are of course not mutually exclusive, and the NYSF utilized rhetoric designed to cloud the borders between the three. The search and struggle for new theatrical and cultural frontiers fuels their ongoing project of creating a theatrical institution that can eventually proclaim itself, albeit ambiguously the “Public Theater.” Rather than a settled and

¹⁶⁸ The history of other theatrical institutions demonstrates this correlation, including the Stratford Shakespeare Festival, The Royal Shakespeare Company and the Royal National Theatre. Between 1962 and 1967 Artistic Director Michael Langham sought to institute “operating continuity” through the establishment of a winter home, winter touring and also using their work to engage more with the “world around” the theatre. In fact, in 1956, only three years after the company’s first season under the tent theatre, and still one year removed from the opening of the permanent theatre, Langham insisted on touring far and wide to “test itself before unfamiliar audiences.” The impulse to tour went hand in hand with laying the institutional foundations (quite literally and symbolically) of the theatre. (Euan Ross Stuart, “The Stratford Festival and Canadian Theatre,” in *Theatrical Touring and Founding in North America* (L.W. Conolly, Ed.) (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982), 180-181. Similarly, at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, precursor to the Royal Shakespeare Company, “commitment to tour” was always one of the fundamental tenets of its existence. The practice had been abandoned for nearly two decades until actor and director Anthony Quayle took over as Artistic Director in 1948. He revived the practice in concert with re-centering – for a time – the company’s theatrical offerings in Stratford, declaring “Damn London. Let London come to us.” Sally Beauman. *Royal Shakespeare Company: A History in Ten Decades* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1982), 199-202. The RSC’s institutional profile was at once localized – in the sense of a stable, perhaps monumental presence – and moveable.

boldly defined vision of what that “public” was, the festival treats it as an open question, one that will become as fundamental as any mission statement or pseudo-monumental theatrical home.

The festival, however, still needed to demonstrate their prestige and permanence as a theatre company and cultural institution in order to solicit funding and support for touring, whether internationally or regionally within the United States. Signaling this permanence also required the NYSF to exhibit a commitment to being *more* than simply a producer of plays. This helped inform the development of a Community Relations Department in 1965, charged in part with exploring the cultural and educational potential of the MT’s work. I will explore this Community Relations Department below as the NYSF works to define the efficacies of its intra-city tour offerings. Intimately entwined with the signaling of this institutional status were the NYSF’s ongoing efforts during this time to acquire a permanent space to house not only their theatrical offerings, but also their administrative operations. The impulse and capacity to tour and the effort to acquire a permanent space functioned symbiotically. The more *settled* they were, geographically and symbolically, the further afield and more extensively they could tour. They traced the boundaries of their institutional reach, even as they labored to establish borders around their increasingly public institution.

Encountering other spaces as potential sites for performance, the NYSF also encountered various communities and audiences, triggering a fresh investigation of meanings behind their ongoing use of “public” in company’s rhetoric surrounding the touring venture. In addition to spaces, the company also encountered practices native

to the recreational and community spaces of the MT, and questions about whom the citywide tour was meant to serve, and more importantly the very nature of the service, dominated the touring operations planning and earliest history.¹⁶⁹ The process of marking out the NYSF's institutional presence, refining the target and nature of the MT offerings and the rich and challenging context of MT's performance spaces proves most apparent in looking at the various publics that peopled, practiced and produced touring sites and spaces. It is the people after all – producers, audiences, performers, police and provocateurs – that embody notions of “public” so critical to the NYSF's earliest figurations of themselves as a private organization dedicated to *public work*. I will address the complex encounters of these agents in the following chapter. First, however, I would like to provide a brief overview of the MT's first five seasons, discuss the process by which the NYSF selected sites, before exploring the NYSF's earliest attempts to connect with communities and the eventual development of a Community Relations Department. The formation of this department, and the challenges they encountered are essential to understanding what the MT *meant* in various spaces, the limits of their reach and ultimately what kind of relationship the NYSF sought – through the MT – with the city, its communities and the “public” they served and occasionally embodied.

¹⁶⁹ The failure of the Southern tour is instructive in this regard. In consulting with Jackson on the tour, Papp and the NYSF confronted many of the challenges that come with providing theatrical presentations to educational institutions. Jackson's interest, which likely align with other university administrators interested in hosting the NYSF, were primarily educational and she consistently pressed Papp and the festival to clarify the objectives of the tour in order to achieve the best *educational* outcome for student audiences. Jackson would bring a similar orientation to her work as the head of the short-lived Education Department in the NYSF. Her recommendations for the MT clashed again and again with Papp's own ideas about the efficacies of his company's activities in varied spaces and contexts, before very diverse publics. Jackson, Dr. Esther. Letter to Joseph Papp, 25 Feb. 1963, Series I, Box 21, folder 28, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

Of Sites and Services

The NYSF's MT operated from 1964 through 1979, before the company slowly phasing out citywide touring from its programming.¹⁷⁰ In the first five years of operation they produced six plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, including *A Midsummer Nights Dream* (1964), *Henry V*, *Taming of the Shrew* (1965), *Macbeth* (1966), *Volpone* (1967) and *Hamlet* (1968). In addition to Shakespeare performed in English, from 1964-66 the MT concluded their summer program with Spanish-language productions to selected sites.¹⁷¹ This included Lorca's *The Shoemaker's Prodigious Wife* (1964), a Pablo Neruda translation of *Romeo & Juliet* (1965) and a Spanish-language *Macbeth* (1966). Lack of funding prohibited this aspect of the MT from continuing past 1966, despite efforts from the NYSF and community leaders to raise funds. The notion of a Spanish-language theatre would be taken up again as Papp and others considered what programming to include in the new Astor Library in 1967.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ Touring continued after 1979 under the sponsorship of the NYSF by the Riverside Shakespeare Company and later the Board of Education (SEASON OVERVIEWS). "New York Shakespeare Festival: DATES LIST," 28 October 1987, Series VIII, Box 7, folder 11, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY. Utilizing the original portable stage design by Eldon Elder and Ming Cho Lee for the 1964 summer touring season, the Riverside Shakespeare Company operated for several seasons before – like the portable stage constructed for the 1957 season – the MT's stage collapsed in transit at the intersection of 42nd Street and 8th Avenue. Colford, Paul D., "On the Road again, with free Shakespeare," *Newsday*, June 11, 1984.

¹⁷¹ These sites changed over the three year tour, as the NYSF tried to identify pockets of the city where Spanish speaker were most prevalent. In general, they selected many of the same sites as the main MT, though they settled in for longer stints in predominantly Hispanic areas. Despite the Spanish Mobile Theater's short life, it progressively expanded from a weeklong tour, to a week and half, and finally to two full weeks in the summer of the 1966.

¹⁷² Osvaldo Riofrancos, a theatre director and producer who oversaw MT's Spanish-language operation previously worked with the aforementioned Theatre in the Streets, and became an important resource for Papp in conceiving of artistic programming for the Astor Library in 1967. For Theatre in the Streets, a short-lived outdoor performance troupe operating throughout the early 1960s, Riofrancos had acted in *The Shoemaker's Prodigious Wife* in 1962, which likely provide some of the inspiration for the initial offering of the NYSF's Spanish Mobile Theater. Bracker, Milton, "Audience Gripped by Street Play," *New York Times*, September 2, 1962.

Finally, starting in 1965, the MT included programming specifically geared toward children and teenagers, to be performed in the afternoon before evening performances of MT's primary offerings. In that year they staged *We Real Cool*, and in subsequent seasons *Potluck!* (1966) and *Lallapalooza* (1967). The sites for the tour included parks, public housing recreational spaces and school playgrounds, and each of these spaces possessed its own history, limitations, potential, and position within the community. Instead of creating an exhaustive account of each space, each production or even each year in the MT's history, I will begin by looking at the NYSF's revived interest for citywide touring in 1963 and the groundwork the festival laid for the MT. In the next chapter, I will look at audiences, performers and the various agents and agencies that constituted and questioned the festival's notion of "public" in the MT's first four seasons.

In July 1963, a month before the cancellation of the NYSF's proposed Southern tour Papp began corresponding with Parks Commissioner Morris about reviving the short-lived citywide tour the NYSW initiated in 1957. Papp echoed the sentiment – cited above from NYSF Board of Trustee's meetings – about the limitations of the Delacorte as a permanent theatre space:

I have been giving our expansion plan a lot of thought and have come to the conclusion that the only way to service the many areas throughout the city is to be portable – on wheels... Now that we have an excellent home base at the Delacorte, it seems to me that we shouldn't get into building new stages in any one area, i.e. the East River Park amphitheater. There are many other culturally deprived communities in the vast wasteland of the city that our

function becomes defined as bringing the mountain to Mohammed. Because of the geography and general ignorance of our existence many people never get to see productions. And we do turn away so many thousands every week.¹⁷³

The type of tour that Papp proposed would be, according to him, something “like the marionette theater” that had been touring the parks since 1940 under the sponsorship of the Parks Department. Most sites were either traditional neighborhood parks or playground adjacent to public schools. Notably, however, the marionette theatre also toured to public housing playgrounds and common areas in its twenty-two year existence, ending with the summer of 1962. Whether this modest, moveable marionette enterprise was a legacy of the FTP’s Caravan Theatre or other similar civic-touring projects is unclear. What is clear is the extent to which the NYSF would rely heavily upon the knowledge of Parks personnel with respect to the fittest spaces – parks, playgrounds and otherwise – for the MT.

What Papp also rather subtly signaled here, after previously distancing the NYSF from its firm association with the Delacorte, was the dual desire to settle in a centralized theatrical and cultural location while providing services to culturally neglected publics and communities in the city. This service, Papp claimed, would benefit “constituents of each of the five boroughs,” and drafted a letter to the borough presidents outlining the financial outlay necessary to fund the project.¹⁷⁴ By involving representatives and seeking funding from each the five boroughs (in fact Papp

¹⁷³ Papp, Joseph. Letter to Newbold Morris, 25 Jul. 1963, Series I, Box 14, folder 27, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

¹⁷⁴ Papp, Joseph. Letter to New York City Borough Presidents, 29 Aug. 1963, Series I, Box 25, folder 17-20, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

eschewed the idea that the proposal to fund the moveable theatre unit should come from City Hall) Papp sought connections with a less centralized notion of “public” than merely touting the festival’s presence in public spaces under the sponsorship of the Parks Department, with help from the Mayor’s office, could provide. The dichotomy articulated in previous chapters between a public embodied by elected officials, agencies and bureaucracies and one associated with the direct experience and desires of city-dwellers persists here. In fact, Negt and Kluge’s notion finds its fullest expression in the development and execution of the MT. In re-initiating the MT, the company erred initially on the first half of this dialectic, and in December 1963 Papp, along with several NYSF board members met Commissioner Morris and Mayor Wagner to discuss the theatre-on-wheels. In the midst of this meeting, they also explored the festival’s more extensive three-part proposal, of which the MT and the Delacorte Theater were part.¹⁷⁵

Site selection for the MT began in late July of 1963, and continued throughout the second half of that year, as Papp initially expressed interest for playing in Manhattan, specifically Harlem and the Lower East Side, Brooklyn in Prospect Park and Brooklyn Heights, along with locations and areas he claimed the company knew

¹⁷⁵ “New York Shakespeare Festival Board Minutes,” 17 Dec 1963, Series I, Box 14, folder 32, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY. The third part in this proposal, was the establishment a permanent year-round indoor theatre space. Beginning in January of 1963 the NYSF, as plans for a new Civic Center adjacent to City Hall in downtown Manhattan emerged, proposed the inclusion of a 1200 seat theatre as part of this urban re-development project. By the end of 1963, earnest but isolated efforts to acquire a permanent indoor home turned into a comprehensive plan for expanding the NYSF as a single institution with a variety of spaces and serving a variety of publics. Proof of this emerges in Papp’s contention, during the above-cited board meeting, that there is no need to differentiate and/or assign separate bits of funding for the company’s varied activities. The fundraising, insisted Papp, was for the NYSF’s “total program” and that it would feed among the various projects. Once acquisition of the Astor Building occurred, however, fundraising became more complex as the relationship with municipal departments and funding sources evolved. Chapters 5 and 6 will pick up this search for a permanent space and the process of settling into and programming it.

about in the remaining boroughs.¹⁷⁶ In February of 1964, Papp toured the five boroughs with officials from the Park's Maintenance and Operation division, capitalizing on their intimate knowledge of park and playground spaces' potential. The NYSF's criterion for site selection were fairly straightforward, including logistics and ease of setup and strike, and most importantly proximity to potential audiences in depressed areas of the city. The results of this search in Manhattan yielded four suitable sites: two in Harlem (Mount Morris Park and Colonial Park), one on the Lower East Side (Tompkins Square Park), and one in Chelsea (Chelsea Park).¹⁷⁷ All four of these sites were neighborhood parks and playgrounds, located in densely populated areas. The process was repeated in each of the other boroughs, and appropriate sites identified. The park sites initially identified in late 1963 through spring of 1964 formed the core of what would become the MT yearly tour itinerary, with several sites added or eliminated in subsequent years based on attendance, favorability of reception and repertory.

Parks were not the only sites surveyed by the NYSF, however. The company also wished to tour their portable theatre to at least one public housing project playground, specifically citing the Jefferson Houses, Carver House, and the Wagner Playground, all located in East Harlem.¹⁷⁸ Performance spaces in or adjoining public

¹⁷⁶ Papp, Joseph. Letter to Newbold Morris, 25 Jul. 1963, Series I, Box 14, folder 27, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

¹⁷⁷ White, Sam. Parks Department memo to R. Jenkins, 18 February 1964, Series I, Box 23, folder 7, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY. Goodman, J. Parks Department memo to Sam White, 20 Feb. 1964, Series I, Box 23, folder 7. New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY. The first three sites correspond to Papp's initial interest in playing at sites in Harlem and the Lower East Side, but the Chelsea site emerged from local community organizations directly soliciting the NYSF to come to their neighborhood.

¹⁷⁸ Papp, Joseph. Letter to Edward Dudley, 7 Feb. 1964, Series I, Box 25, folder 17, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

housing projects, as will become clear below, constituted some of the most challenging venues in which to play. Willingness on the part of the Park's Department to allow for playing within these spaces reflects the complementary relationship between the Park's Department and the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), of which the NYSF took ample advantage.¹⁷⁹ Still, as the NYSF continued to explore potential sites, concerns emerged that some densely populated areas – many of them poorer and without the amenity of an accessible recreation or leisure space – might be deprived of the MT's offerings.¹⁸⁰

This inspired Papp and his fellow NYSF administrators, principally associate producer Bernard Gersten, to explore sites outside those initially scouted and offered by the Parks Department or the NYCHA. In March 1964, Gersten wrote to John Paul Haverty, Superintendent of Schools for the Archdiocese of New York, inquiring about the use of several sites under the control of the Catholic Archdiocese. These sites included four high school playgrounds and athletic fields, along with university athletic field and a neighborhood recreation center playground. Ultimately, only one

¹⁷⁹ Nicholas Dagen Bloom and Matthew Gordon Lasner, *Affordable Housing in New York: The People, the Place and the Policies that Transformed a City*, (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2015), 113-128. This relationship dates back to the Commissionship of Robert Moses who cultivated, as I analyzed in Chapter 1, a relationship between housing and recreational spaces, and the municipal departments that oversaw these spaces.

¹⁸⁰ The MT's first few seasons saw areas around the five boroughs that solicited the NYSF in vain for the tour to visit their – in their own characterization 'impoverished' – neighborhoods. As the notoriety and scope of the MT increased in its second and third season, such solicitations increased. Maggie Curran, a member of the Community Relations department of the NYSF in 1966, corresponded with administrators from the South Brooklyn Neighborhood Houses (SBNH), Woodside Houses (Queens), and the Parent's Association of PS 151 in the Woodside area. Curran, Maggie. Letter to P. Balian (SBNH), 23 Jun. 1966, Series I, Box 330, folder 19, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY. Curran, Maggie. Letter to Miriam Feldman, Manager (Woodside Houses), 12 Jul. 1966, Series I, Box 330, folder 19, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY. Curran, Maggie. Letter to Theresa A. Scalone (Parents Assoc., PS 151), 21 Jul. 1966, Series I, Box 330, folder 19, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

of these sites was included in the final 1964 MT tour, but the NYSF's interest in the use of publicly funded school facilities would only grow as the renewal and refurbishment of schools in the five boroughs increased.¹⁸¹ When word surfaced amongst Park's administrators that the NYSF had been exploring the possibility of non-parks sites – excluding those under NYCHA jurisdiction – for the MT, Morris reminded Papp about the liabilities of playing in spaces other than those sanctioned by the Park Department. Morris specifically reminds Papp that payroll and equipment expenditures from the Board of Estimate were contingent upon the MT remaining in parks or Park's other authorized public spaces. While the NYSF was of course concerned about the technical and logistical viability of sites, and was therefore guided by those Park Department personnel most capable of assessing this, reaching underserved publics through the surveying of *other* spaces also guided the company as the MT evolved in its first five seasons.

The festival's determination to press for greater accessibility to MT offerings demonstrates their commitment to embodying the broadest notion of *public*. So long as communities around the city remained untouched by their reach, the NYSF's process of defining themselves as a "public theater," would and could never end. If the MT's touring production only travelled to sites administered by the Parks Department, the open question, "what is public?" would be closed, or at least severely limited. This limitation would represent an encumbrance to the festival's strategic

¹⁸¹ The postwar years in New York City saw a marked depopulation of many parts of the city, and yet school construction and renovation actually increased from 1950 until the late 1970's. Because playgrounds and even green spaces – often multi-purpose – went along with the construction of such schools and the renovation of existing schools and were often relatively centrally located in communities, the NYSF took an increased interest in them as the MT evolved. Vincent Wilcke. "Mid-Century Modern Schools: Preserving Post-war Schools in New York" (master's thesis, Columbia University School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, 2013), 1-2.

deployment of public as widely and flexibly as possible in fostering the growth of the company. Public park spaces were sanctioned by city agencies and therefore created a vision of ‘public’ refracted through the city’s sometimes-tangled bureaucracy.

Scouting sites *outside* these spaces, the NYSF sought to reach audiences general neglected in the municipal figurations of what constituted the “public.”¹⁸² Therefore, two visions of public predominated in the NYSF’s search for MT venues, one vision rooted in established public spaces and their denizens – created and administered by municipal authority – and one vision seeking the presence and engagement of *other* spaces and ultimately *publics*.

The NYSF’s previous touring activities to the city’s public parks, most notably their 1957 venture cited above, featured large, relatively centralized, and mass transit accessible locations in each of the five boroughs. East River Park might be something of an exception among the six sites selected for the 1957 tour, as it was – and in fact continues to be – a long walk from the nearest subway. Still, with the park and amphitheater in such close proximity to several large housing projects, the site proved an excellent location for drawing in *local* audiences. Unlike the earlier tour, Papp insisted that in only a few instances was accessibility to public transportation a major concern for the MT. The initial idea behind the citywide tour in 1964 was to play one-night stands, which Papp referred to as “community performances,” while occasionally settling in for three-performance stretches at

¹⁸² This neglect dates back at least as far as Robert Moses, whose work on park activities and facilities appeared to broaden access to these parks. The reality, however, was greater segregation of New York City’s increasingly diverse population in the post-war years. Moses’ obsession with shifting the city toward not only a car-friendly but car-*centered* metropolis left many neighborhoods devoid of recreational spaces or access to mass transits and/or encumbered by elevated expressways.

“popular park areas.”¹⁸³ In the MT’s inaugural season, therefore, the NYSF selected several centralized park locations for multiple-night stands – including sites at Mount Morris Park (Harlem), Prospect Park (Brooklyn), and Van Cortlandt Park (Bronx) – and one and two nightstands in smaller parks, playgrounds and housing projects around the five boroughs. In the case of the three large parks mentioned, either densely populated areas with low-rise housing and tenements and/or accessibility to the public transportation justified the extended stay of the MT. In addition, security for the portable stage was also better assured in these larger centralized parks, as was the police presence that went along with densely populated areas. The target audiences and public(s) at most *other* venues were the residents of the immediate surrounding neighborhood, though in the case of a handful of sites further east in Queens and Brooklyn for instance, the surrounding neighborhood was much larger geographically and often required travel by car or taxi to reach the site.¹⁸⁴

Though site selection initially hinged most heavily on the presence of an underserved public, as the MT refined their community relations operation the existence of at least some interest from community organizations or parties charged with representing and/or supporting the community proved vital to the continued use of sites and spaces over the course of the MT’s early existence. This meant that areas with fewer *local* mechanisms for expressing an interest in and providing assistance

¹⁸³ Papp, Joseph. Letter to Edward Dudley, 7 Feb. 1964, Series I, Box 25, folder 17, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

¹⁸⁴ Evidence of this can be seen in the distribution of questionnaires to area community centers, housing projects, businesses and schools, for assistance in the distribution of promotional materials. The ‘area’ covered by this flier and poster distribution rarely exceeded 7-8 blocks, except in cases where a specific community center or neighborhood organization assisted in getting the word out. QUESTIONNAIRE: Manhattan, Bronx, Brooklyn and Queens, Spring 1964, Series I, Box 22, folder 10, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

for hosting the MT would either be left out of the “public” the MT served, or these areas would need to rely on municipal authorities to articulate the communities need and desire for such programming. Whether these two figurations of “public” are entirely contrasting remains to be seen, but the NYSF undeniably partook of both to help further their inchoate touring venture. Because of local variability in MT spaces and indeed the size, shape, and demographics of those communities, more would have to be done to connect them to the MT and the NYSF. Each prospective site, whether a school playground, public park or public housing project, possessed its own challenges and opportunities, which the company met with new administrative structures and a substantial commitment to define and refine the services the MT provided, the extent of their connection to communities, the vision of the public(s) they cultivated.

In February 1964, after the site assessment with Parks Department personnel, Papp wrote to the five borough presidents, inquiring after officials in the presidents’ offices that might be able to serve as liaisons to the community organizations on the NYSF’s behalf. Substantial assistance was not forthcoming, so to help facilitate the MT’s operations, the NYSF created a department tasked with connecting to host communities and preparing them for of the visiting MT. This department would evolve into the ‘Community Relations’ department of the NYSF, with a handful of individuals charged with connecting to communities and preparing the public for the MT’s presence and productions in their neighborhoods. In the MT’s inaugural season, however, the task fell mainly to a young, aspiring social worker named Sophronus

Mundy.¹⁸⁵ In anticipation for the 1964 MT season, Mundy drafted a proposal in which he outlined some aspects of the community and public relations campaign integral to the success of the MT. One of the guiding assumptions of this proposal was that:

Shakespeare means one thing in Mt. Morris Park and another in Riverdale. Any public relations campaign must take the nature of its audience into account. In Mt. Morris Park, Shakespeare will represent an opportunity to enjoy oneself by getting out of the hot apartment into the cool park for an evening's entertainment – Shakespeare as public event.¹⁸⁶

Whatever the accuracy of Mundy's description of the environs surrounding Mount Morris Park, his characterization of MT's productions as 'public event(s)' is an important one.

Because of the variety of neighborhoods to which the MT travelled, Mundy and the NYSF developed strategies for understanding the 'character' of each neighborhood by contacting local leadership, local papers and businesses. This took the form of both direct correspondence, but also questionnaires from housing projects and community organizations for advertising and community engagement purposes. The NYSF therefore was able to tap into already existent 'interpretive communities' to help constitute, instruct and mold potential audiences and publics for their MT

¹⁸⁵ Zolotow, Sam, "Mobile Theatre Rallies Neighborhoods." *New York Times*, July 2, 1964. In subsequent seasons, as the scope of the MT grew, so too did the size of the Community Relations Department. By 1966, the seasonal department had evolved into a four-person operation, under the leadership of William Hairston, who had served as theatre manager at the Delacorte for the 1963 season.

¹⁸⁶ Mundy, Sophronus. "NEW YORK SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL – SUMMER, 1964. Mobile Theater Tour of *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM*. Some proposals for our public relations campaign," Spring 1964, Series I, Box 22, folder 7, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

venture. As Susan Bennett notes: “The spectator comes to the theatre as a member of an already constituted interpretive community and also brings a horizon of expectations shaped by the pre-performance elements.”¹⁸⁷ Understanding these ‘elements’ was a significant part of the MT’s preparation, as the elemental mixture varied from audience to audience, site-to-site and public-to-public. Newspapers, radio, television advertising, along with more immediate forms of information dissemination coalesced (or in Bennett’s words “constituted”) the public around the prospective theatrical ‘event.’

The goals of such coalescence, as Mundy maintained, were both “to make the Shakespeare Festival an institution for the people of greater New York,” and “excite a sense of civic pride, a real desire to help.” Despite Mundy’s assertion that Shakespeare meant various things depending on the space in which it was presented, he also maintained that the MT’s mission centered around enlarging the company’s reach and relevance for the largest public possible:

(I)t must be remembered that we are not trying to create an audience for just one evening, or just one season. We are trying to elicit an enthusiastic response from the citizens of this city so that a continued and even expanded program might be envisioned for the future. The idea of a mobile Festival is unique to the United States and comparatively new to New York. The Festival in Central Park boldly presented the theater of Shakespeare. The mobile units, however, in going out to the people, many of whom ordinarily could not afford the time, money, or effort to see Shakespeare, is going even further in

¹⁸⁷ Bennett, Susan. *Theatre Audiences* (London: Routledge, 1997), 139.

presenting Shakespeare's art to the city, and perhaps more importantly, in creating numerous evenings for civic celebration throughout the neighborhoods of this great city.¹⁸⁸

Mundy's proposal, while idealistic and in some ways unrealistic, articulates an important aspect of the NYSF's unfolding relationship with the city's spaces and communities.

Mundy here rehearses one of the significant themes at the heart of this dissertation, i.e. the notion that the festival's offerings might address a very specific segment of the public, but the relevance of their work reverberates to the public(s) well beyond the theatre's walls. After all, as Mundy notes, an enthusiastic response from various populations to the MT performances will mean 'expanded programming' in future and therefore render the NYSF 'an institution for the people of New York.' The festival sought to broaden the public(s) that they served, travelling through and settling in diverse spaces around the city. Mundy's proposal pairs perfectly with the NYSF's determination, to question, define and refine what is meant by "public" in the company's mission and proliferating theatrical and cultural offerings. The primary strategy for this process, as I suggested above and will continue to elaborate below, was movement from space to space, context to context and public to public.

Welcoming the Public

To ensure receptive audiences at each tour stop, NYSF administrators, most notably Bernard Gersten, provided support for Mundy in the process of connecting

¹⁸⁸ Mundy, "NEW YORK SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL..."

with community organizations associated with or in proximity to the MT's sites.¹⁸⁹ In addition to organizations connected with and in service of specific neighborhoods, Gersten and Mundy made contact with municipal agencies through which they were able to more quickly access localities and the umbrella organizations that set policy and practice for these localities.¹⁹⁰ This included contact with the aforementioned NYCHA. In March 1964, Gersten wrote to the Preston David, the Director of Social and Community Services at NYCHA, following up on a recent meeting between the two. Gersten re-iterated that NYCHA, and specifically David's division therein represented the NYSF's "most natural allies and friends" and that the "half a million residents in (housing) projects are our most organized and ready element of our potential audience."¹⁹¹

The advantages of the NYSF and NYCHA's association went beyond scouting and preparing audiences for the potential performances in or near public housing projects. Gersten made clear that David's assistance would also help identify projects that might be served by public parks and playgrounds in their less immediate vicinity. NYCHA not only helped search for audiences and spaces around the five boroughs, but also helped enlist local talent to serve as curtain warmers for nightly performances of the MT. They suggested singers, musicians and dance troupes that

¹⁸⁹ These included, among many others, the Harlem Cultural Committee (HCC), Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited (HARYOU), Bedford-Stuyvesant Youth in Action (BSYA), Pelham Parkway Citizen's Council, Hudson Guild, Inc., and community centers from the William Dodson Community Center in the Bronx to the Menorah Day Center in Brooklyn. "Community Contacts in Five Boroughs," Series I, Box 25, folder 16, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

¹⁹⁰ These agencies and organizations included the New York City Neighborhood Conservation Bureau, through which the NYSF contacted the Arverne Area Services Project in Brooklyn, the Chelsea Conservation District and the Morningside Conservation District in Manhattan. See: "Community Contacts in Five Boroughs," Series I, Box 25, folder 16, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

¹⁹¹ Gersten, Bernard. Letter to Preston David, 26 Mar. 1964, Series I, Box 15, folder 16, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

sprang from local communities and might provide welcome and help link communities and publics to the MT's company and productions. In addition to soliciting David for warm-up entertainment, Gersten and Mundy also called upon individual projects and community organizations to offer their own suggestions for entertainment from the greater community.¹⁹²

As part of promotional and informational material produced for the MT's inaugural season, Mayor Wagner issued the following statement about these community entertainments and resources:

To strengthen the link between the touring New York Shakespeare Festival production of *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM* and the communities where it plays, local talent will be presented on the stage during the half-hour preceding the play's performance. Such entertainment will be of a community and/or ethnic character and of professional or near-professional level. In some instances it will be small instrument combination – playing perhaps Spanish music in a Puerto Rico neighborhood; it will be a jazz combo or church singing group in a predominantly Negro neighborhood. It might be individual musical performers related to the community from which they spring. In any case, they should serve to enhance the general entertainment value of the visit

¹⁹² Flier distribution varied from tenants, patrons, and passersby at local businesses and rental offices, to targeted and somewhat more direct interventions into daily life in the form of mailbox distribution and attachment to project-wide newsletter distribution (sometimes slide under doors or into tenants' mailboxes). Responses to these varied dramatically from the offer to distribute fliers and posters assiduously and widely, offer ushers and community entertainment, to requesting a very small number of posters to be displayed or distributed to select community leaders or other organizations. For more specific information on specific localities, see: QUESTIONNAIRE: Manhattan, Bronx, Brooklyn and Queens, Spring 1964, Series I, Box 22, folder 10, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

of touring Shakespeare as well as providing an excellent prologue to the play.¹⁹³

It is instructive, however, that these “cultural riches” were not included in subsequent seasons (following 1964) of the MT, in favor of the prepared content created by artists and groups at least loosely associated with the NYSF’s operation.

Supplementary programming from the 1965 season onward, as noted above, targeted young people and children, whom the NYSF felt the MT’s Shakespeare offerings did not directly address and accommodate. Mining different agencies and organizations near MT tour sites, municipal or otherwise, for cultural and artistic resources continued the NYSF’s exploration of what programming would best serve, address and potentially embody the public(s) they encountered during their citywide tour. That exploration consistently uncovered the dichotomy between the proffered or promised “public” of such organizations and the living breathing groups of people that attended MT performances and made up a much more contested and challenging vision of “public.”

Encounters between the MT and its audience could be quite volatile, a fact presaged by the rhetoric of Papp and others in advance of the citywide tour’s inaugural 1964 season. Papp insisted that the social significance of the MT depended entirely upon the artistic quality of the productions created by the cast and crew that he suggestively characterized as “our Phalanx going out.”¹⁹⁴ This military imagery expressed the anticipated challenges – physical and cultural – that both the NYSF and

¹⁹³ Wagner, Robert. “A Statement from the Mayor,” in “New York Shakespeare Festival: Five Boroughs Tour of William Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*,” spring 1964, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

¹⁹⁴ Little, Stuart, “A Bus, a Truck, a Dream, a Youthful Cast,” *New York Herald Tribune*, June 2, 1964.

municipal authorities anticipated. Echoing these sentiments, Mayor Wagner proclaimed in the promotional material cited above, and re-printed in the reverse side of fliers for the 1964 MT seasons that, “(i)n 25 local parks in all the five boroughs, a portable stage will serve as a battering ram breaking down the cultural walls that criss-cross our metropolis.”¹⁹⁵ Both sentiments suggest barriers, danger and potential unrest between the NYSF/MT and the public(s) they might encounter. Papp and Wagner’s language was rather dramatic to be sure, but fear among practitioners and staff of the MT was part and parcel of the MT’s earliest history.

Gersten’s plans and Mundy’s proposal are complicated artifacts to be sure, and raise as many questions as they answer about the connection between the MT, its tour stops and potential publics. Why does the company need ‘welcoming’ into a neighborhood? How does the NYSF reconcile the various representations and figurations of the “public” that they utilize in building their touring operation? What power, energy or force – emanating from their precarious position as both a private and public venture – does the MT bring to sites and communities? Conversely, what forces and energies are audiences and publics embodying at MT offerings? The course of the MT’s first few seasons rarely runs smoothly, as evidenced by all manner of flying projectiles and audience disturbances. And yet, were this particular outdoor operation to run smoothly, i.e. like any other theatrical venture and its attendant conventions and spaces, something of the verve, the context and the open-ness of playing outdoors in the city would be lost. Most importantly for our purposes, such

¹⁹⁵ “Free Shakespeare is Here” (MT flier), Series I, Box 22, folder 7, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

disturbances and the MT's movability furnish crucial insights and challenges to the NYSF's process of defining, cultivating and refining "public."

Chapter 4: Space, Play & the Boundaries of Public(s)

Audiences and publics, as Mundy indicated, varied according to location, production and demographics of the surrounding community. One constant, however, was the marked presence of young people in virtually every MT audience in the citywide tour's first four seasons. Younger members of the public most consistently blurred or broke the boundaries and borders the MT sought to create, from the chain link fences around the moveable theatre space and the subtle partition of audience space and performance space, to the enforcement of appropriate theatre-going behavior. In this blurring and breaking, we see the NYSF's vision of 'public' encountering the living breathing presence of the MT's audience and public. For this reason, in analyzing the early history of the MT, I will focus on several instances of tumult and/or friction, each of which intersected with the NYSF's unfolding policies and encounters with young people and the general public.

Of necessity, some consideration will also be given to those that secure and surveilled the borders and boundaries of the MT, the police, and those that sought to mark and perforate the space from *outside* as well. These instances will reveal the special dynamics of playing outdoors in temporary public spaces, designed and used for a variety of purposes. This dynamic, especially as it relates to the NYSF's increasingly permanent place on the cityscape, poses challenges and questions about the limits and responsibilities of their institutional ambitions. Concomitantly, the process of serving the 'public' occurred alongside the discovery and cultivation of new horizons peopled by a theatrically uninitiated 'publics.' Additionally, it is worth re-visiting Negt and Kluge's notion that the public represents at the very least two

more or less distinct notions: public as embodied by governmental or community authority and public as a horizon of social experience, i.e. one connected to a diverse population of individual actors. The NYSF strategically avails itself of both notions to build its institutional presence. As the MT evolves, however, frustrations about the kind of dynamism and occasional danger endemic to the latter, challenges the festival. The militaristic language deployed by Papp and Wagner might have served the festival in promoting the inaugural season of the MT, but as the touring venture unfolded the company required new methods for serving and embodying the public(s). The dynamics of public spaces around the city made this institutional introspection a necessity.

In order to properly and thoroughly analyze the dynamic of the MT's playing spaces and their use, I will enlist frameworks used to illuminate performance in outdoor public spaces and the formation and function of play. These include Goffman's ideas about the loosening of behavior in park's spaces, Casey's notion of borders and boundaries, Goffman's notion of the 'theatrical frame' and 'keying,' the ecological figurations of theatre and performance explored and elaborated by Baz Kershaw and Gregory Bateson's discussion of danger and imbalance in play. These authors and their frameworks will serve to coalesce diffuse practices, designs, and symbolizations from the NYSF and audiences, and provide elucidation for what might otherwise be characterized as unruly audiences and/or hostile members of the public where the MT toured. Ultimately, these theorists will assist in our understanding of how such varied notions of public(s) can abide in a single space, at times playfully and others more uneasily. Dove-tailing off Goffman's notion that

parks encourage a loosening of behaviors and ‘involvement structures,’ the NYSF sought to some extent to re-institute these structures, at least in spirit. The extent to which the NYSF acknowledged and honored these rules varied from site to site, as they sought to create their own rules tethered to the expectations of theatre-going and received notions (born from more than a decade in operation) of public(s).

Involvement structures are, I would suggest constantly evolving, even when they functioned within what Goffman called the “theatrical frame,” as they most certainly do for the NYSF’s MT. This frame refers to the conventions that govern the network of roles that the theatrical event contains. This includes theatregoers, who function in other roles outside the theatre (occupational, familial, etc.), and also the complex relationship between the actors and the roles they enact (along with their extra-theatrical roles). The dual role that the audience additionally embodies is the role of “onlooker” whose responses might be distinct from the theatregoer.¹⁹⁶ Play participants associate strongly with communally established reality while also creating an alternative space that could at once be called theatrical and playful. The complicated procession of associations that a theatre-goer/onlooker experiences, which might call up experiences from everyday life or their own associations with play, expand the theatrical frame beyond a mere continuum between real and fictional, onstage and off. The use of the term ‘onlooker’ is especially useful in the case of the MT, as the moniker ‘theatre-goer,’ may not satisfactorily describe what audiences to the MT experienced. Because of the selective inattention, distraction from other audience members, and persistent environmental shifts – fire engines, opened fire hydrants, planes overhead, changing weather conditions, etc. – the

¹⁹⁶ Erving Goffman. *Frame Analysis* (New York: Penguin Books, Inc., 1976), 131.

theatrical frame for the MT had to be incredibly flexible. The MT address the ‘theatrical public’ at one and the same time as they contend with the “park-going public” and other wider publics, as we will see throughout this chapter.

These categories and conventions prove especially fluid in the case of the MT’s interactions with the public, which comports with Goffman’s “central concept” of the theatrical frame, “the key.” This key, according to Goffman is “(t)he set of conventions by which a given activity, one already meaningful in terms of some primary framework, is transformed into something patterned on this activity but seen by participants to be something quite else.”¹⁹⁷ In a variety of ways, the NYSF sought to enact and enforce the conventions of a traditional theatre space, keying the public(s) to conventions as important foundations for building a fictional theatrical world, with varying degrees of success. As supplement to Goffman’s ‘theatrical frame,’ I will also utilize Kershaw’s notions of the “ecologies of performance” and “edge-phenomena” which Kershaw characterizes as the:

Different types of performance possess different ecologies in ways that make it difficult to say, in general, that one factor is more important than another for the sustainability and survival of any particular genre or form. So, to bring this complexity within the reach of analysis, I shall focus on the theatrical equivalent of what ecologists call “edge-phenomena.” Edge-phenomena are places, such as riverbanks and seashores, where two or more ecosystems rub

¹⁹⁷ *Frame Analysis* 43-44.

up against each other to produce especially dynamic life-forms and processes.¹⁹⁸

To borrow Kershaw's terminology, determining which 'factors' constructed performances in the complex ecosystems that were the MT sites can prove challenging.

It is also worth noting the intriguing parallel between Kershaw's use of 'edge-phenomena,' and Casey's use of borders and boundaries. Both imagine edges as the primary spaces where dynamic and tumultuous life spring forth. Casey, following the work of German sociologist and philosopher Georg Simmel, echoes Kershaw's sentiments in cartographic rather than ecological terms: "...the most important arena of action is not in the center of the stage but at the periphery—or better, *peripheries*, as is always more than one kind of edge in a given circumstance. Rather than being the zone in which human action gives out or comes to an end, the boundary is precisely where it intensifies; where it comes to happen in the most effective or significant way.¹⁹⁹ Casey ascribes the importance of edges and *peripheries* to their function as the site where human action intensifies. This intensification, to fold in Kershaw's characterization of the life-propagating edges of adjacent ecosystems, helps us discern the "different ecologies" of the MT's performance space and the larger park space it both abutted and within which it was circumscribed.

The edges of this performance space were powerfully charged with encounters between the festival's figuration of the public they served and represented and masses

¹⁹⁸ Baz Kershaw. "Oh for Unruly Audiences! Or, Patterns of Participation in Twentieth Century Theatre." *Modern Drama*, 44.2 (2001), 136.

¹⁹⁹ Edward S. Casey "Boundary, Place, and Event in the Spatiality of History," *Rethinking History*, Vol. 11, No. 4, (December 2007), 508.

of playgoers who brought their own ideas about the MT's spaces of performance and the vision of public associated with them. As much as MT staff, performers and NYSF administrators wished to entirely control the forms and functions of these ecosystems, enacting the activities and conventions of the theatre often proved perilous. These activities and conventions were transformed amidst the encounter of performers, police, producer and the publics encounter and occasional collision at three notable MT sites: The Forest Houses Playground (Bronx), Morningside Park (Manhattan) and a Parks Department Playground in Bedford-Stuyvesant (Brooklyn). It should be noted that despite the festival and communities' attempts to establish and maintain decorum, identifying the causes of commotion is incredibly challenging.

It is critical to remember that the groups of congregated individuals in the MT's performance spaces were at one and the same time audiences to a Shakespeare play and a gathering of individuals in a public playground. Playgrounds, according to Johan Huizinga, embody what he calls "temporary worlds," populated by diverse a diverse group of individuals and governed by the rules, limitations and priorities tentatively established.²⁰⁰ The extent to which the NYSF acknowledges and honor these rules varied from site to site, as they seek to create their own rules tethered to the expectations of theatre-going and receive notions (born from more than a decade in operation) of public(s). Of equal importance to the operation of 'play' is what Bateson characterized as "meta-communication." The phenomenon of play, Bateson maintained, is predicated on the existence of a meta-communicative exchange

²⁰⁰ Johan Huizinga. *Homo Ludens* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 10.

between participants. Bateson argues that while engaged in play there is a complicated series of transmissions containing the understanding that “this is play.”²⁰¹

Shakespeare and the Bronx; or The Case of the Forest Houses Playground

Housing projects, as noted above, constituted important constituencies for the MT’s theatrical offerings.²⁰² The brief partnership between the NYSF and the NYCHA was a natural one according to both, but also one fraught with incredible challenges and obstacles. As a demonstration of their commitment to playing at housing project commons and playgrounds, the MT planned in the summer of 1964 to play at three different housing projects in the Bronx – two nights each at the aforementioned Forest Houses and Pelham Houses, and one night at the Edenwald Houses – during their first two seasons of operation.²⁰³ By the summer of 1967, only the Pelham

²⁰¹ Gregory Bateson. *Steps to an Ecology of the Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 180.

²⁰² From very early on in preparation for the 1964 season, the NYSF created a long list of housing projects in proximity to prospective sites, including names and contact information for the management office of each. Nearly every site in Manhattan and the Bronx had, in the estimation of the NYSF housing projects a reasonable distance from the performance site. By their calculations, a ‘reasonable distance’ topped out between three quarters of a mile and one mile. Around half the sites in Queens and a bit less than half the prospective Brooklyn sites had housing projects within a reasonable distance. (“List of Housing Projects Near Sites,” undated (~Spring 1964), Series I, Box 25, folder 21, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

²⁰³ “NYSF – Summer 1964 Tour Schedule,” Series I, Box 25, folder 21, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY. “NYSF – Summer 1965 Tour Schedule,” Series I, Box 32, folder 7, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY. In addition, the NYSF committed to playing at a housing project in each of the other boroughs, excluding Staten Island, in 1964. These included the Baruch Houses in Lower Manhattan, the Astoria Houses in Queens and a Housing Playground at Scholes St. and Graham Ave. in East Williamsburg. In 1965, the MT continued to visit Baruch and Astoria Houses, but discontinued the MT visit to the Housing Playground in East Williamsburg. This last site lay at the end of Graham Ave, an area heavily populated with Spanish speakers, a fact evidenced with the renaming of the street as Avenue of Puerto Rico. Because of the demographics in proximity to this space, the Spanish Mobile Theater continued to play there, even after the main MT stopped play at public housing projects and spaces in Brooklyn after the 1964 season. The refusal to play there may also be tied to challenges encountered during an August 16, 1964 performance of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in which “egg throwing incidents” ended the performance near the top of the second act. Despite the pleas and advice from the Committee to Advance Racial Integration in Schools (CARIS), the NYSF subsequently found the site unfit for future playing, at least for the English-language incarnation of the MT. Rebecka Peters (CARIS). Letter to

Houses remained among housing project sites in the Bronx, and finally in 1968 the MT played only parks and playgrounds in the Bronx, eliminating public housing sites. In that same year, the Pomonok Houses and Queensbridge Houses in Queens were all that remained of the partnership – at least with respect to the use of potential playing spaces – between the NYSF and the NYCHA.²⁰⁴ The first major shift occurred, however, in 1966 when the MT eliminated the Forest Houses from their citywide tour itinerary. The elimination of the tour stop, and the reasons for this decision, hinge on the uneasy and at times volatile encounters between the NYSF’s MT staff, local audiences and the community. This was no more apparent than during the NYSF’s two-night stands at the Forest Hills Houses in the South Bronx during the middle of July 1964 and 1965.

In anticipation of the MT’s 1964 visit to the Forest Houses, Mundy and the NYSF contacted the NYCHA management office within the housing project. The management office responded with a request for more than 1,300 fliers to be distributed to each tenant, likely in either a weekly newsletter or inserted in tenants’ mailboxes, and a single poster to be displayed in the project’s management office.²⁰⁵ By way of comparison, the two other public housing projects in the Bronx, Edenwald and Pelham Parkway, not only requested fliers for each tenant, but also requested 25 and 45 posters respectively to display in nearby community centers, day care centers,

NYSF, 20 Aug. 1964, Series I, Box 22, folder 9, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

²⁰⁴ “NYSF – Summer 1966 Tour Schedule,” 1966, Series I, Box 41, folder 9, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY. “NYSF – Summer 1967 Tour Schedule,” 1967, Series I, Box 53, folder 18, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY. “NYSF – Summer 1968 Tour Schedule,” 1968, Series I, Box 63, folder 6, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

²⁰⁵ “QUESTIONNAIRE: Forest Houses,” 1964, Series I, Box 22, folder 10, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

stores, as well as entrances and other “public spaces” within the housing projects’ grounds.²⁰⁶ Additionally, the Edenwald management office committed to providing ushers and pre-show community entertainment for one of the two performances. The Forest Houses provided scant assistance and involvement from local community organizations was not forthcoming. Whether this led to the events of July 14th and 15th described below cannot be known. As Papp acknowledged, however, the ‘best control’ occurred when the ‘whole community’ was involved and when police cooperation and presence was conspicuous. As a matter of policy, police barricades were used to cordon MT sites upon arrival of the portable stage and seating the morning of tour stops, along with the use of patrolman during set-up performance and sporadically overnight during two and three night engagements.²⁰⁷ Contained within Papp’s sentiments about effective control of performance sites is the assumption that the ‘whole community’ may somehow be reached, guided and perhaps ‘known’ through the festival’s cooperation with community organizers and municipal authorities working at the local level.

²⁰⁶ “QUESTIONNAIRE: Edenwald Houses,” 1964, Series I, Box 22, folder 10, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY. “QUESTIONNAIRE: Pelham Parkway Houses,” 1964 Series I, Box 22, folder 10, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

²⁰⁷ Joseph Papp. Letter to Captain Irving Moverman, 9 Jul. 1965, Series I, Box 32, folder 6, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY. The involvement of community organizations along with police presence was not only designed to quell incidents of interrupted performances, but also ameliorated anxiety among performers and staff about playing in certain areas of the city. The best example of this was the MT’s 1964 visit to Bedford-Stuyvesant in August, only one month removed from several days of rioting in and around the police precinct in which the MT played. The rioting began in response to protest and unrest in Harlem, after a 15-year-old black teenager named James Powell was shot by a white police officer in Manhattan’s Upper East Side. The NAACP and CORE organized non-violent protests in both Harlem and Bedford-Stuyvesant that turned violent. For more on the riots, their precipitating events and aftermath see: Marilynn S. Johnson. *Street Justice: A History of Police Violence in New York City* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003), 234-237.

The MT stage manager did not begin filing daily reports until the 1965 season, and the role of “theatre manager” and/or “house manager” appears to have been shared between the stage manager and the community relation’s staff of the MT for the 1964 season. More elaborate administrative structures were put into place for the 1965 season, in response to both the MT’s short-lived shift to a two-show repertory schedule in 1965 and the hard lessons learned during the 1964 summer season. Though stage manager Nathan Caldwell, Jr. did not file any daily reports for the MT’s inaugural season, he felt compelled to document the events of the July 14th and 15th performances of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* at the Forest Houses. The July 14th performance served as the borough opening for the production, with the MT’s nearly two-week run of performances at seven different sites in the Bronx. Entering their fourth week of production, the company would encounter some of their greatest challenges to date.²⁰⁸ The pair of performances at Forest Houses would also lead to

²⁰⁸ As mentioned, no stage manager or theatre manager reports exist for the 1964 season. In an October 1964 assessment of the MT at the NYSF Board meeting, however, Papp and others conceded that during the opening three performances of the MT at Mount Morris Park, stones were thrown at the stage, until the fourth and final performance at that space yielded a rock-free performance. Papp actually kept one of the larger stones in his office, perhaps as a reminder of the challenges and triumphs of citywide touring. “NYSF Board Minutes,” October 6, 1964, Series I, Box 23, folder 12, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY. Also, given documentation from subsequent seasons, it seems unlikely that the MT did not encounter projectiles or “disruptive behavior” in performances preceding their 1964 visit to Forest Houses. For example, at a June 29, 1965 performance of *Taming of the Shrew* at Mt. Morris Park, a member of the crew was struck with a rock and one of the cast dressing rooms was burglarized. Also, the topography of Mount Morris Park proved conducive to projectile hurling from outside the theatre space, as a large rocky hill ascended not far from the southwest edge of the park where the MT’s portable stage was sited on a baseball diamond. Similar problems would arise when playing in close proximity to neighborhood residential buildings, both tenements and public housing. The same proximity that renders the MT susceptible to all manner of flying object, however, also creates opportunities to draw in curious members of the public to their windows, fire escapes and rooftops. Also in 1965, preceding the MT’s visit to Forest Houses on July 5th and 6th at a playground adjoining PS 117 in East Harlem, they played *Taming of the Shrew* and *Henry V*, and both performance were interrupted by projectiles from the house, a peach pit and eggs. “Stage Manager: Daily Performance Report,” July 5 and 6, 1965, Series I, Box 29, folder 1, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

re-evaluations of policing practices, site security, and addressing the prominent presence of young people in the audience.

The July 14th performance was nearly waylaid by eggs thrown toward the stage. The cast, crew and bulk of the audience, however, were able to get through the performance, in spite of the “rudeness,” of those seated in the bleachers.²⁰⁹ In handwritten notes following both performances, Caldwell documented the challenges, incidents and behavior of some audience members for the benefit of both Papp and other NYSF administrators charged with shaping policy and ensuring the safety of MT personnel. The July 15th performance yielded even greater challenges in the form of noise, stones aimed at the stage and the bleachers on audience left, fighting in the bleachers, police non-cooperation (caused by fear, contemptuousness and/or a bit of tipsiness), along with a lack of adequate fencing around the theatre space.²¹⁰ Curtain-warming remarks from Clifton James (performing the role of Bottom) at the

²⁰⁹ Such was the characterization of audience member Anita Fields, who along with six youngsters from her household a half-mile from the MT site attended the July 14th performance. Whether the eggs came from the bleachers or outside the theatre space is not entirely clear, but what is very apparent was the restlessness of the audience. This audience according to Caldwell was composed of 30% small children with no apparent supervision. Excerpts from Fields’ letter appeared in the NYSF *Annual Report* for 1964, the only audience member (of either the Mobile Theater or Delacorte in Central Park) quoted.

²¹⁰ This account of audience dynamics is partially corroborated by the three audience members later interviewed by researchers from the Twentieth Century Fund. This organization, as examined in the Introduction, investigated the uses of the arts and cultural programming for the purposes of social policy and development, as well as exploring audience dynamics according to race and class. The interviews were not published, but collected in a bound volume of interview notes, mostly in shorthand. Twentieth Century Fund, *Audience Survey of the Delacorte Mobile Theater of the New York Shakespeare Festival: transcript of interviews* (manuscript), Bureau of Applied Social Research, Columbia University, 1964. The report they published in late 1964, as Papp, Esther Jackson and others associated with the NYSF noted, was limited. See: Esther Jackson. Letter to Joseph Papp, 9 Feb. 1965, Series I, Box 37, folder 1, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY. August Hechscher (Director of The Twentieth Century Fund). Letter to Joseph Papp, 17 Feb. 1965, Series I, Box 37, folder 1, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY. Merle Debuskey (NYSF Press Agent). Letter to Joseph Papp, undated, Series I, Box 37, folder 1, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY. For the Twentieth Century Fund’s published study, see: Richard Faust and Charles Kadushin. *Shakespeare in the Neighborhood: Audience reaction to “A Midsummer-Night’s Dream” as produced by Joseph Papp for the Delacorte Mobile Theater* (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1965).

beginning of the show as well as following intermission could not settle the audience, and the show was called shortly after intermission.

This was the first of four performances that summer cancelled because of rock throwing, and Papp along with the community relation's staff responded with a wire to the mayor outlining concerns for the safety of the MT operation and personnel. Stating that fencing must be present around the sites, and that they "cannot play in unprotected areas," Caldwell claimed that the lack of partition around the space resulted in "constant movement from (the) street" and people standing in the aisles of the theatre. This fluidity between the surrounding space and the theatre space, the stage manager claimed, was "conducive to disorder."²¹¹ The imperative to secure boundaries and borders around the space cropped up again and again in the MT's first few seasons, and underscores Casey's characterization of borders as sites of encounter and contest, as well as finding referent in Kershaw's idea of 'edge-phenomena.' Both suggest a crosscurrent, a blending and perhaps some irritation – from audiences, MT staff and cast, and those members of the public in and around the neighborhood, as various agents in the urban ecosystem 'rub up against each other.' In soliciting the mayor, the NYSF sought the protection of public governmental authority including elected official such as the mayor, the Parks department and local police precincts. In serving the 'public' in the form of the restless audiences and community members, the festival favored established forms of authority and 'publicness.'

²¹¹ Nathan Caldwell, Jr., "Wire to the Mayor-Mobile Unit," 15 Jul. 1964, Series I, Box 32, folder 6, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

To that end, the MT staff lamented the lack of police control, fearing that there might be resignations amongst the cast if their safety could not be assured.²¹² Disappointment over police cooperation was another ongoing issue for the MT and audiences alike, despite extensive preparation by Papp, Gersten and Mundy beginning in April 1964 to receive consistent police presence and surveillance. Also at issue in the creation and maintenance of order was the preparation and presence of capable ushers in the MT's temporary theatre space. Whether ushers were drawn from members of the immediate community around the MT site, or provided by community or municipal organizations, they were issued a list of instructions. These instructions, meant to help ushers keep the public orderly and be of service to the audience, included directives to disallow running at all times and congregating near the entrance to the theatre (the latter of which, claimed the instructions, caused the crowd to become unruly), to break up large groups of younger children and infiltrate their ranks with adults, and to avoid creating pockets of empty seats.²¹³

Open spaces, such as aisles, theatre entrances or sparsely populated sections of seating were clearly a source of anxiety. According to these instructions, if the temporary theatre space was not properly marked or used as such, the specter of other activities such as running, standing, milling or evening wrestling haunted these in-between spaces within the portable theatre. The outer walls of the MT's space were not the only borders to be demarcated and transgressed by members of the public. Ushers were also expected, and here the instructions appear to anticipate noise and at

²¹² "Wire to the Mayor..."

²¹³ "Ushers-Delacorte Mobile Theater, New York Shakespeare Festival," 1964, Series I, Box 22, folder 7, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

least some level of disruption, to “help keep the audience quiet and escort any disorderly persons from the house as quietly as possible.” The rhetoric used by the NYSF in preparing ushers for encountering the public and the theatre space alike suggests the marking of parks and playgrounds with the signs and practices associated with traditional theatre spaces. Such practices encouraged relative passivity, and the ordered, perhaps even reverential behaviors associated with many indoor theatre spaces. The MT space itself was an interesting blend of seating options in this regard, options that embody different messaging to the public. Around 500 individual chairs were placed on the ground, arrayed around a small thrust stage. Almost a dozen tiers of benches rose up on four bleacher sections at the rear of the floor seats. The result was a striking contrast between the atomized spectators on the ground and those sitting in the bleachers. Movement around the seating area in the bleachers was more unfettered, and therefore treated less as a component of the theatre space and more like another piece of park equipment by the public.

As tumultuous as the MT’s 1964 visit to the Forest Houses had been, their two-night stand there in 1965 would prove even more dangerous and ultimately led to a recommendation from MT staff not to return to the Forest Houses in the future. After struggling through a July 13th performance *Henry V*, during which paper clips, eggs and even “a length of steel” were hurled at the stage, and persisting despite a stoppage to break up a fight in the bleachers, the cast and crew were more than a little shaken. Though they completed that performance, the following night at Forest Houses, during a performance of *Taming of the Shrew* the show was stopped and

cancelled after a “commotion in the house.”²¹⁴ Though it is not entirely clear the nature of this commotion, audience member and community leader Reverend Philip Pfatteicher from nearby Bethany Lutheran Church, described this commotion as a “shameful disturbance” and “the hazardous discourtesy of the few.”²¹⁵ Pfatteicher and other members of the audience remained in the theatre space following the performance to express their embarrassment and appreciation for the company’s work. There was, however, according to Caldwell’s account, a dissenting voice among the congregation of audience members. One woman pled with the playground director not to bring the MT back to the playground, as it appeared that many did not want them there, especially the children.²¹⁶ In response to this objection at the presence of the MT in their community parks space, the playground director recounted Papp’s sentiment that the festival would come back after last years incidents, even if rocks were thrown again. Caldwell admits to paraphrasing, but further recounts that the playground director passed along Papp’s sentiments that children must be exposed to live theatre and performance in order to appreciate and understand it.

In the case of the MT’s 1964 and 1965 seasons, it is not clear if the ‘keying’ for the theatrical frame – to borrow Goffman’s term – was entirely discernible by performers and audiences alike. Attempts to establish consensus between MT

²¹⁴ “New York Shakespeare Festival, Stage Manager’s Daily Performance Report,” July 14, 1965, Series I, Box 32, folder 10, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

²¹⁵ Rev. Philip H. Pfatteicher. Letter to Joseph Papp, 7 Jul. 1965, Series I, Box 31, folder 16, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY. The reverend offered an apology and something of an explanation for the disturbance: “There will be such unpleasantness as we try somehow to overcome generations of injustice and neglect, and I hope that these distasteful events do not deter us from a nobler purpose.”

²¹⁶ “New York Shakespeare Festival: Stage Manager’s Daily Performance Report,” July 14...

performers and the public can be seen in the presence of performer Clifton James operating somewhere between Bottom (who frequently addresses and commiserates with the audience), elder actor of the company, and audience curator in the 1964 production. Confusion about James' status/identity might be partially explained by Goffman's notion of "spatial brackets," which he explains is part of the definition of keying, and "commonly indicate(s) everywhere within and nowhere outside of which the keying applies on that occasion."²¹⁷ James' presence on the stage space, out of character and addressing the audience somewhat disrupts these brackets, and the "keying" necessary to uphold the theatrical frame to which Goffman refers and the MT labored so assiduously to maintain. Whatever hopes remained of creating consensus about the appropriate conventions of the bounded, fictive stage spaces were dispelled with James' presence. The bounds of the physical stage space were also fuzzy. Around the five edges of the thrust stage were stairs leading to the audience level below, creating a kind of alleyway between the audience and the stage.

This arrangement was repeated to similar effect for the 1965 and 1966 seasons.²¹⁸ The suggestion of access from the audience space to stage space charged this boundary with an intriguing blend of fiction and reality. This blending, along with the charged boundary between the moveable theatre space and the everyday spaces beyond, nourished the NYSF's process of refining and exploring what kind of publics the MT sought. This multi-layered blending inspired questions about the

²¹⁷ *Frame Analysis* 45

²¹⁸ These cursory descriptions for each of the MT's stage space through the first three seasons is drawn from photographs at various sites, including Chelsea Park, Mount Morris Park, Washington Square Park, Baruch Houses Playground, and Prospect Park. See: "Venues-Mobile Theater circa 1964-1970," Series XII, Box 35, folder 5-10, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

relationship between the not always welcoming public(s) that filled the ranks of the MT audience. Robert Hooks as the eponymous character in the MT's 1965 *Henry V* performed a similarly equivocal function as James' Bottom the day after a cancelled performance of *Taming of the Shrew* at Forest Houses. The show was interrupted when a woman in the audience was struck by a rock thrown from behind the control truck, which straddled two sets of bleachers at the rear of the theatre. She received medical attention, the houselights came up, and Hooks addressed the audience, most especially a group of young men heckling him from the bleachers. Questioning why anyone would want to harm the actors or the audience, Hooks stated that no one would drive him from the stage and would answer to their own conscience if they tried to injure him.²¹⁹

The illumination of the houselights signals a shift in the energy flow between audience and performer, as did the sight of Hooks attired in battle garb addressing very real danger brewing in the bleachers.²²⁰ Once Hooks seemed to have settled the crowd, and the lights went back down, both stage manager and police thought the show could continue. Soon, however, a fight broke out amongst the hecklers with conflicting reports about a brandished knife, causing audience panic. In the midst of

²¹⁹ This description of the evening's events is drawn from a lengthy statement drafted by stage manager Donald Koehler, and appended to the already cited daily performance report for July 15, 1965. "New York Shakespeare Festival, Stage Manager's Daily Performance Report," July 15, 1965, Series I, Box 32, folder 10, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

²²⁰ McAuley 255-264. In exploring what she calls the "Play of Looks" in the theatre, McAuley describes the effects of houselights on the public's experience of a performance: "Not only is the two-way flow of energy between actor and audience impeded, but the spectators can no longer see each other, and while this has certainly led to quieter, more sedate audiences, it has also greatly diminished the working of what I see as the third look of the theatre," i.e. the spectator/spectator look (264). When the houselights come up, specifically to interrupt the performance, the 'play' of the public(s) gaze upon themselves and one another intensifies. No longer constrained or protected by darkness, looking about during interrupted – and in the case of the MT's *Henry V*, erupted – performances can be both exciting and anxiety inducing.

this, one performer out of fear or thoughtlessness stepped off the stage toward the house with spear in hand causing “commotion” (using the stage manager’s words) among the audience. Clearly, however, the MT utilized lowered houselights, individual seats (for some), bounded outer walls signaling privileged access to the theatre space, ushers to enforce decorum, dramatic action that (despite direct address to the audience) stayed on the stage space, and printed programs to orient the public to the proper manner in which to engage with theatre spaces and the offerings houses therein.

The disruptions of these conventions, whether in the form of stones surmounting the portable theatre’s walls, apertures in the fencing in or around the theatre, timidity or uncooperativeness of ushers, and actor-audience interaction that blurs boundaries between dramatic action and the comings and goings of everyday life, emanate from the vicissitudes public of park and playground spaces.²²¹ Similarly, the open question the festival consistently asks, “What is ‘public?’” and what is the nature of their service to that public reached challenging new territory. Would the festival favor the use of municipal authorities to help administer, create and in some ways control the theatrical public they encountered? Or, was there virtue in pursuing a more radical course, one that could potentially draw lessons from exploring the horizons of the public’s experience of the festival’s work?²²²

²²¹ In Koehler’s list of recommendations, attached to the July 15th daily report, one of his primary concerns was the plugging of holes in park and playground fencing and partitions. This concern, persistent partly because of the tenacity of youngsters, again reiterates Casey’s contention that strong borders are often associated with the ambitions and imperatives of institutions, seeking closure to shore up its position and power.

²²² Once such radical course was charted by Maryat Lee and the theatre she founded in 1965 known as “SALT” (Soul and Latin Theater). Composing her company from a diverse group of East Harlem high students, Lee aimed her productions for audiences in some of the most depressed areas of New York City and also developed a circuit of inner-city high schools to which the theatre toured. Lee explained

Additional blurring and challenges came during assembly and set up of the portable stage and seating area itself. Both posed safety risks, as each contained many large, moving pieces. Set up and break down of each, therefore rendered park and playground spaces as virtual construction sites, with all the dangers these sites possessed. Photographic and video evidence from the 1964 and 1966 summer season reveals that very little differentiation was made between the MT's assembly and preparation spaces for the portable theatre and other recreational spaces such as basketball courts, baseball diamonds and handball courts. Set up for the MT was a massive undertaking, and took nearly four hours, even with a small army of personnel. Portions of public parks and playgrounds were transformed by the presence of theatre artists and technicians. And yet, these spaces that the NYSF sought so diligently to secure proved decidedly permeable, as the public (including many children and teenagers) congregated and played in and around the assembly site and after set up was complete inside the theatre itself.²²³

the company's mission and orientation to their audiences in a proposal for the theatre's 1968 summer programming: "As stated in the summer proposal, the Street-Sixties should develop a theater of its own for the 97% of the population who do not and never will go to the theater. Our aim was to find a shape, a voice where there has been no shape or voice, and let it ring out over the noise and confusion. Our aim was to be an extension, an articulation of that aggressive, vital and unnerving audience the people of the back streets. We were there to catalyze, surprise and give shape to the voice of the street people themselves in their street environment with its own language, ideas, insights, rhythms, celebrations and vision. 'Crime isn't in the streets.' Political programs aren't their either. People are. And people who are fantastically sophisticated moving audiences – if given a chance. Our aim was to belong to this huge theater, and to be heard by the amazed streets themselves and secondarily by the outside world. The wild reception, the transformation from boredom to vocal immediate involvement was something to make indoor theater forever after, pale." Lee, Maryat. "Soul & Latin Theater: A Street Theater Project" Series I, Box 62, folder 12, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

²²³ Refer to MT images cited above, but also photographic proofs: "Venues-Mobile Theater circa 1964-1970," Series XII, Box 35, folder 10-15, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY. Additionally, video of set up, disassembly and transport of the MT's portable theatre proved revealing as to the permeability and fluidity of recreational and theatrical spaces. "Delacorte Mobile: Shots of Preparation and Set-up for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," 1964, Joseph Papp Public Theatre/New York Shakespeare Festival

Throughout its first two seasons, the MT explored ways to create clearer messaging about the ways their portable space was to be received and occupied by the public. With this exploration came the progressive realization that the uses and dynamics of public parks and playground spaces required more flexibility than some of their earlier orthodoxies about creating a certain type of order and providing a specific kind of programming. Because of how vital young people were to the dynamics of the MT's public playing spaces, the issue of how best to accommodate and/or shape their behavior and expectations of the touring theatre took on ever-greater importance.²²⁴ The 1966 and 1967 MT seasons brought this issue into tighter focus after several incidents further challenged the NYSF's use of public recreational spaces and the public(s) that utilized and in some cases vied for that space.

Thunder in the Valley, or the case of Morningside Park

The MT's site at the north end of Morningside Park was situated at foot of two long hills. One descended from Harlem to the north and the other from the neighborhood of Morningside to the west, and together they created something of a crossroads. Up the hill to the west was, and still is, Columbia University and its environs, Morningside Heights. Up the hill to the north and east was the historic, and by the early 1960's beleaguered and economically depressed expanse of Harlem. The

Moving Image Collection, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

²²⁴ As early as April 1965, in a talk entitled "Changing Times, But is There and Change in the Theater?" at the Overseas Press Club, Papp and Jackson discussed the challenges of audience building and the importance of the arts in the education and cultural well being of young people. "Changing Times, but is There a Change in the Theater?" *New York Shakespeare Festival at the Overseas Press Club*. WNYC, New York City. 14 Apr. 1965. Radio. Papp and Jackson would profoundly disagree about the emphasis of the NYSF with regard to its educational programming and orientation, as partially evidenced by Jackson's outrage at not being consulted about *We Real Cool* (discussed below), and feeling that the choice of that short performance offering had educational and social reverberations on the public to which Papp was not sufficiently sensitive. Dr. Esther Jackson. Internal Memo to Joseph Papp, Bernard Gersten and William Hairston, 21 Jun. 1965, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

context of the immediate area around the site at West 123rd St and Morningside Ave was therefore deeply informed and re-enforced by urban renewal. Occupying the space just north of Columbia University was Morningside Gardens, a middle-income housing development that municipal housing officials had hoped would attract a racially diverse tenancy. To the north and west of Morningside Gardens lay two trapezium-shaped tracts of land (bound by 125th St to the north and bisected by Amsterdam Ave) upon which the low income General Grant Houses were sited. Both Morningside Gardens and the General Grant Houses were completed in 1957, and in fact the two projects were intimately linked.²²⁵ By the mid-1960's the area continued to be a staging ground for the complex forces of urban renewal, despite the shift away from the models and methods pioneered by Moses and his contemporaries.²²⁶

Especially significant for our purposes is the battle over construction of the first school in New York City specifically dedicated to children from kindergarten to early elementary grades in the area just north of the MT site in Morningside Park. Morningside Heights, Inc. (MHI) successfully lobbied local government to provide funding for a public school to be built at the northeast edge of Morningside Park, just north of the MT performance site. Clashes began before the City Planning Commission in early 1964, with opponents of the proposed school contending that the

²²⁵ For an extended account of unfolding redevelopment of the areas bordering Harlem and Morningside Heights, see: Themis Chronopolous. *Spatial Regulation in New York City* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 14-20. The razing of the area that would become Morningside Gardens displaced 36,000 people, and a community organization called Morningside Heights, Inc. – with the endorsement of Robert Moses – encouraged the construction of public housing north of Morningside Gardens as a buffer from the rest of Harlem.

²²⁶ In 1964 and 1967, two Columbia University faculty residential buildings were constructed along 125th St just west of Broadway, and with a striking lack of access on that busy border between Columbia and Harlem to the north (Chronopolous 17). In 1967, MHI lobbied for permission from the city to build a large gymnasium at the south end of Morningside Park, but were rebuffed and the majority of the park remained under the banner of the Parks Department (Chronopolous 19).

use of parks land for non-recreational uses ought to be prohibited.²²⁷ In opposition, many in the community and government felt that a school on such a site would help to integrate the area's severely segregated schools, while eliminating what Borough President Dudley characterized as a "haven for vagrants and a peril to playing children."²²⁸ The presence of children in and around the MT's Morningside site, however, brought its own perils, and enacted a blurring of the theatrical and recreational in attending the MT's offerings, both Shakespeare and otherwise.

Following the 1964 season, the NYSF sought to more directly address the needs, tastes and enthusiasms of young people by including afternoon performances of original works, incorporating music and dance. In 1965, actor Robert Hooks in addition to playing the title character in the MT's production of *Henry V*, helped to provide material for afternoon performances at the portable theatre space. Hooks had been working with a group of young people from Harlem whom he developed into a performance ensemble (called the Group Theater Workshop). The work they had explored together became a performance entitled *We Real Cool*, inspired by the Gwendolyn Brook's 1959 poem of the same name, and composed of short pieces exploring contemporary issues like gang violence, the ongoing struggle for civil rights. The hour-long performances ran on the second evening of each two-night stop of the MT at 5:30pm. Hooks echoes Papp's sentiment, cited by the Forest Playground director, when he claimed that a "lot of kids don't come to the festival shows, and we

²²⁷ "Use of Part of Park for School Argued" *New York Times*, January 16, 1964.

²²⁸ Dudley, Edward R. "Park School Defended" *New York Times*, February 17, 1964.

felt that it would help to indoctrinate them as soon as possible in appreciation of the living theatre.”²²⁹

In querying Hooks about his interest in bringing the fruit of his workshop to the MT stage, Papp elaborates the uses of the workshop performance for both performers and potential audiences:

There is no doubt that youngsters working with you are benefitting from the experience in terms of their being able to express their hostilities openly and within the disciplines of a theatrical situation. The purgative values are inescapable, but so are the entertainment values. One of the lacks of our touring Shakespeare unit, in so far as the composition of the audience is concerned, is the teen-ager. We have noticed that, although the theater is full every night we play, there is a scarcity of young people in the 16 to 20 age group. It is my hope that your company could help stimulate the attendance of these youngsters by performing on our mobile stage during the afternoons, immediately prior to our Shakespeare performances.”²³⁰

Objections over the content of *We Real Cool* came from Dr. Esther Jackson in her capacity as the director of the NYSF’s Education Department and from Parks Commissioner Morris. Jackson registered her dissatisfaction with *We Real Cool*’s depictions of juvenile delinquency and, despite being based on a poem of the same name, felt that the piece’s title re-enforced habits of speech that as an educator she could not disregard. On top of that, Jackson was confounded that she was not consulted in her capacity as Education Director on the potential content of MT youth-

²²⁹ Calta, Louis, “Shakespeare Rolls into Chelsea Park,” *New York Times*, July 3, 1965.

²³⁰ Joseph Papp. Letter to Robert Hooks, 14 Jun. 1965, Series I, Box 32, folder 11, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

centered performances, as she felt such presentations overlapped heavily with the work and programming she recommended and enacted on the NYSF's behalf.²³¹ Her confusion is significant, as it demonstrates the ongoing challenge of defining just what the MT does. Is it primarily educational, an extension of the *theatrical* offerings presented at the Delacorte or perhaps even an offshoot of the *recreational* programs on offer by the Parks Department? What service were they rendering for the public(s)?

The festival responded in the summer of 1966 by creating their own in-house afternoon entertainment for younger audiences. NYSF administrators (notably Bernard Gersten) took it upon themselves to create their own content for the afternoon performances. The result was *Potluck!* that included folk, Rock & Roll music and popular dances performed by an inter-racial cast of young, lithe performers. On July 3, 1966, the MT was concluding their first week with a two-night stand at their MT site in Morningside Park. It was the hottest day of the year, with temperatures topping out at 103 degrees, as audiences settled in for a performance of *Potluck!* just after 3:30pm.²³² Near the conclusion of the hour-long performance piece, during what the stage manager described as the "squirt gun business," around 200 children rushed onto and around the stage. According to the stage manager, they had "no clear intent except noise and excitement."²³³ On such a sultry day, we might suggest that short of an open fire hydrant, this may be the quickest way to gain relief

²³¹ See letter to Papp, Gersten and Hairston cited above.

²³² US Department of Commerce, NOAA, National Weather Service. "National Weather Service New York, NY - 100 Degree Days Page." National Weather Service. May 29, 2002. Accessed January 24, 2018. <http://www.weather.gov/okx/100degreedays>.

²³³ "New York Shakespeare Festival: Stage Manager's Daily Performance Report," July 3, 1966, Series I, Box 41, folder 20, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

from the blistering afternoon heat.²³⁴ Ironically, during the evening performance of *Macbeth*, described below, an open fire hydrant just outside the theatre's entrance broke during intermission. The stage manager describes this event as “adding a touch of fun” to the evening. Like the youngsters in Bedford-Stuyvesant I will discuss below, an invitation toward play might have been on offer in the form of playground staples such as squirt guns and performers' encouraging younger audience members to ape the dances they performed onstage.

Whatever the reason, at this very same site the evening *before*, the behavior of children in the audience was the subject of MT's evolving policies towards public comportment and decorum. The same stage manager reported that there were “too many unattended, noisy children,” and that he received a number of complaints from adult audience members that they could not hear above the din. Such noise and disruption, which also included the pops and whistles of exploding firecrackers from outside the theatre, was great enough that the MT staff instituted a policy for the evening performance on July 3rd that prohibited the presence of *any* children under 10, regardless of whether they were accompanied by an adult.²³⁵ A group of frustrated parents and chaperones for young children remained at the entrance to speak with the theatre manager during the first act of the performance to voice their dissatisfaction

²³⁴ It is hard to know just what he means by “fun,” but the presence of children just outside the theatre's entrance, as the above report and correspondence cited below indicates, prove suggestive. We can, I would argue, assume that more than one sopping child entered the theatre for the second act of the play, or at the very least the playfulness and relief of an open fire hydrant must have seeped into the audience and performers energy. After all, it was not the theatre manager – charged with observing the public, entrance security and other environmental factors – that reported the ‘fun’ of the open fire hydrant, but the stage manager, whose observations mainly focused on actor energy, audience receptivity and other factors that might have affected performers or technicians.

²³⁵ “New York Shakespeare Festival: Stage Manager's Daily Performance Report,” July 3, 1966, Series I, Box 41, folder 7, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

with this policy. Rosemary Wood, who lived only a few blocks away in the General Grant Houses, brought her six year old son to that evening's performance, and felt compelled to pen a letter to Papp following her disappointing evening. Appended to the letter was a snippet from the production's program in which Papp lays out the NYSF's mission, which Wood claimed the barring of children violated. Papp's program statement read:

The belief that the arts are indispensable to a full life and that every citizen, regardless of age, race or economic status, is entitled to enjoy them as a vital part of his growth and education, upon such bedrock has the NYSF been built, and for twelve years has flourished. A free admission policy which opened the doors to great numbers of the disenfranchised has helped to create a truly democratic audience whose parallel existed at the Globe in Shakespeare's time."²³⁶

Wood's claim places in stark relief the challenge the NYSF faced in refining its purpose and practice, at once training public(s) for theatre-going while trying to accommodate more theatre-savvy members of the public.

When children, with or without supervision, are banned from attending MT productions, what is lost? Clearly, the NYSF understood what would be gained, i.e. a quiet, orderly and presumably appreciative public. The environment of the theatre, to use Kershaw's language, no longer embodied an 'edge-phenomena' and therefore lost much of the dynamism of theatrical encounter in public parks and playgrounds as they teemed and overflowed with life. Boundaries become borders, and borders are

²³⁶ Rosemary Wood. Letter to Joseph Papp, 3 Jul. 1966, Series I, Box 41, folder 13, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

closed, encompassing spaces and practices determined and enforced on the public by the institutions that secure those borders and mend them when penetrated. And yet, the theatrical ecosystems encountered by the NYSF's MT prove remarkably resistant to closure. The results of closure on the evening of July 3rd were a "quiet house," and something vital and exciting – intimately wrapped up in the presence and play of children – was contained, if not entirely tamed that evening. The activity that accompanied the spewing fire hydrant is proof perhaps that the forces of fun and play wait restively and vigilantly at the border. In the examples that follow, however, the performance and the play of children blended, revealing perhaps a more vigorous, unfettered engagement with the public(s) and the spaces they inhabited and imbued with life.

'Your danger's ours'; or the case of the Madison St. & Ralph Ave. Playground

In August 1966 during the penultimate week of the MT's tour, the production of *Macbeth* settled into a Parks Department playground at the corner of Ralph Avenue and Madison Street in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn. Like other parks and playgrounds on the MT's itinerary, this space operated as a site of recreation. The space for the park was acquired and developed by the Parks Department in 1944, and adjacent to it in 1962, the city built a school that would become PS 309. The site therefore, bound by a large baseball diamond to the west and the school to the east, would have been well known and frequently used by children and young people of the surrounding neighborhood.²³⁷ In a telling bit of reportage, a voiceover (intoned by

²³⁷ Like many MT sites in central Brooklyn, this space and performances therein served mainly the immediate communities, though their proximity to mass transit may also have fed the demographic for the audience. Seven blocks to the south stood the Brevoort Houses, public housing projects with its

NYSF alum George C. Scott) to a 1966 CBS news piece entitled “Shakespeare in New York,” claimed that the “Mobile Theater is the most complex chunk of playground equipment in use in New York, and it attracts a lot of kids.”²³⁸ This quote provided underscoring for a clip of eager children entering the portable theatre space for an afternoon performance of *Potluck*. For young members of the public noted above, the boundaries – spatial, theatrical and fictional – of conventional theatre spaces did not always hold. The result was a special and sometimes chaotic atmosphere in which ‘the play’ and the invitation to ‘play’ blended in unexpected and exciting ways.

The MT scheduled a two-night stand at this particular space, as it had in the previous two seasons and in the summer of 1967. The weather, however, did not cooperate, as the August 9, 1966 performance of *Macbeth* had to be canceled due to rain. In fact, the MT staff and performers encouraged the audience – who presuming the performance would not go on, began to leave amidst the rain – to take their seats as the theatre manager announced over the PA system that the show would go on. And go on it did, until the rain came again, leaving all but fifty or so intrepid audience members. The show was cancelled. The weather was not the only thing to prove somewhat uncooperative, as the theatre manager characterized the MT’s encounter with the audience: “We fought a losing battle all the way. Audience mostly kids and teenagers who came to show for want of something else to do. Lots of

own recreational space. The NYSF rarely played at public housing spaces in Brooklyn, favoring two night stands at a half dozen or so sites each summer.

²³⁸ “Shakespeare in New York,” 1966. CBS-TV, New York, NY. 1966.

hostility from teenagers and kids. Cops did a good job.”²³⁹ Encountering such challenges, the MT battened down the hatches for the following evening’s performance.

The August 10th performance, at the very same site, was again mired by ‘hostility’ from a handful of younger members in the portable theatre’s audience. At the conclusion of the presumably tense Act II, scene II in which Macbeth and Lady Macbeth slew Duncan and two of his sons, the performer playing Macbeth – identified in the stage manager’s and theatre manager’s notes as simply “Jimmy” – was to speak the line “To know my deed, ‘twere best not know myself. / Wake Duncan with thy knocking! I would thou couldst!”²⁴⁰ Before exiting the stage, however, the actor remained, clutching the bloody daggers in his equally bloody hands. Irritated by the steady stream of projectiles from the audience, including paper clips and peas, however, the performer remained down center, “brandishing his 2 daggers,” and paused for 15 seconds before addressing a group of young people near the front of the audience saying in a quiet voice “(o)nce more.” The response, surely to the chagrin of the leading player, was a “hail of peas and paper clips” to which he very sternly told them to “cut it out.” Not even the grave visage and booming voice of the great James Earl Jones could immediately stem the tide of disruptions. Despite this, the fearless youngsters finally stopped, and after an additional scene was performed, the house lights came up and the stage manager addressed the audience

²³⁹ “New York Shakespeare Festival: Theatre Manager’s Daily Report,” August 9, 1966, Series I, Box 41, folder 14, Series I, Box 41, folder 7, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

²⁴⁰ William Shakespeare. *Macbeth* (London: Methuen, 1982) 56.

saying the performance would not continue if members of the audience continued, “harassing the actors.”²⁴¹

In contrast to earlier incidents in which performers like James and Hooks addressed the audience from the stage, the use of the PA system here shifts the frame for the audience. A disembodied voice, emanating from the same sound system that carried the voices of performers, creates a sense that the ‘theatrical frame’ is being re-tuned to another ‘key,’ one in which accepted and prohibited conventions and behaviors are being re-enforced and discouraged, respectively. The remainder of the performance went on without incident, and interestingly both the theatre manager and stage manager insisted that the ovation and enthusiasm from the audience was the best the company had received all summer. Such enthusiasm, as we have seen, often accompanied invitations of contact and interaction equally suitable for a public park or playground space as for the theatre space. Enforcing the rules of decorum, the festival also in certain respects enforces their vision of ‘public,’ one attuned to the conventions of the theatre. Public spaces such as those utilized by the MT, however, have their own unique dynamics that enforce and/or encourage other activities and freedoms from the park-going public. If the MT and by proxy NYSF was to continue the strategy of pursuing the open question “What is public?” they could not afford to ignore these activities, freedoms and the public(s) that availed themselves of both, even in the face of potential danger.

In fact, the success of this performance may be illuminated by Bateson’s account of “danger” and “imbalance” in the realm of play. According to Bateson the

²⁴¹ “New York Shakespeare Festival: Stage Manager’s Daily Report,” August 10, 1966, Series I, Box 41, folder 13, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

presence of the real life “danger” or “imbalance” to which the playfulness refers—and participants circulate in the form of meta-communications—must be present and fictive at once for the play to work. The “presence” of danger is fundamental to the power of the fiction that audiences and performer circulate. As participants within play, meta-communication is what coheres the participants together in their joint investment to play, even as they constantly *acknowledge* that they play. I would argue that Jones, despite clutching stage daggers, had no intention of wielding them as weapons. Yet he occupied a place of power, elevated as he was and mere steps from the small staircase that would have allowed access to the audience. This paradoxical blend of play and reality constitutes the special power of play, whether Jones knew he was meta-communicating with the youngsters or not.²⁴² In this way, the playful dynamics of the performance potentially shuffle the power dynamics of the MT’s performance and public(s). The MT’s company of performers and audience – restive, scornful or otherwise – co-produce a notion of ‘public’ inflected with the energies of both. In this way, the MT provided an opportunity for NYSF to go beyond merely creating docile, appreciative audiences, to instead radically extend their exploration of potential publics and the innovative ways to serve and embody those publics.

A similar invitation to play – and its attendant anxieties – was proffered during the 1967 MT production of *Lallapalooza*, which like *Potluck* played during the afternoon at various MT sites. The youth-aimed performance of the latter was described as,

²⁴² To refer back to the panicked performer from the Forest Houses’ performance of *Henry V*, descending the stage steps toward the audience created a commotion and fear of *real* danger precisely because of confusion in the meta-communication between performer and audience. The ‘negative’ part of the meta-statement, as Bateson called it, the part that clarifies the connotation of the playful act was missing.

a rollicking children's show, features dancers, mime, a clown, and a rock 'n' roll band, "The Bruthers," who are really brothers. Audience is an important part of LALLAPALOOZA, and at certain moments during the show youngsters are invited onstage to perform with the professional entertainers.²⁴³

In addition to the invitation to join the performers onstage, the production incorporated popular music and dance, as they had done in *Potluck!*, and encouraged the audience to emulate them, to the chagrin of several parents who questioned how age-appropriate this dance move was.²⁴⁴ It is worth noting as well, that like *We Real Cool* and *Potluck* before it, *Lallapalooza* played in the afternoon, when lighting could not be used to shape and direct audience attention and energy. Placing the audience at the center of this experience, blending the energy of the performers and publics, to say nothing of the dynamics created by various MT spaces, cut both ways, however.

The MT presented *Lallapalooza* to a packed house of 1600 at St. Mary's Park in the Bronx, on July 19, 1967. The stage manager recounts that the overflowing crowd, including standees was very attentive. The theatre manager Richard Dow, acknowledging the energy of the audience, however, and warned that the performance threatened to spiral out of control near its conclusion. In a note to

²⁴³ Press Release. "LALLAPALOOZA – A SHOW FOR KIDS," NYSF Community Relations, Spring 1967, Series I, Box 54, folder 5, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

²⁴⁴ Mrs. Haggard. Letter to Joseph Papp, 7 Jul. 1967, Series I, Box 53, folder 9, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY. The previous summer *Potluck!* featured the popular dance the "frug," made most famous by choreographer Bob Fosse. At many performances youngsters would use audience spaces to try out the slides, jumps and gyrations of the dance. One parent questioned why a children's show would include such a dance. Papp responded that the afternoon productions are designed for youngsters from the age of 4 to 16, and that entertainments must be selected accordingly. Sue Van Clute. Letter to Joseph Papp, 8 Jul. 1966, Series I, Box 53, folder 9, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY. Joseph Papp. Letter to Sue Van Clute, 12 Jul. 1966, Series I, Box 53, folder 9, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

Gersten that Dow included in the daily performance report, he articulated his concerns about the show's blurring of theatrical boundaries and the effects of this blurring for young audiences:

Because *Lallapalooza* is so exciting to the kids and because the incidents of audience participation work so well, in a full house this intense level of excitement reaches dangerously high. Such titillation, seems, to me, at moments, to defeat one of the purposes of the show. It leaves the children raw and manic at the end. I suggest that the final bow only be changed so that the performers do not jump into the audience but momentarily shake hands with the kids from the stage and then exit. In addition, exit music would improve the atmosphere and calm the audience as they leave the theatre.²⁴⁵

Larkins' unpacking of this particular performance addresses the charged border between audience space and performance space, but also child-as-audience and child-as-performer and perhaps most intriguingly theatrical space/time and everyday space/time.

Part of Larkins' concern arises from the fact that the children will carry the 'raw and manic' energy of the show's conclusion out into the street, into everyday times and places. Rather than having that energy released or settled by dance and music as they leave the theatre space, they might blur or even blast the borders between theatre-space and city-space. The borders, it is worth noting, are both spatial and temporal. Interestingly, the potential crumbling of borders between city and theatre, performer and public again comes in the form of troubling the distinction

²⁴⁵ "New York Shakespeare Festival: Theater Manager's Daily Report," July 19, 1967, Series I, Box 53, folder 16, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

between ‘play’ and ‘the play.’ This echoes Jen Harvie’s assessment of the city’s peculiar function in the growth of theatre:

Because the city can trap you, nurture you, teach you, unravel you, unspeak you. Because you are just one among many here, and the dynamic of one relation to many (conversation, dialogue, difference, the negotiation of public space) is what theatre emerges from and thrives on, what art must address and what cities must somehow contend with if they are to survive.²⁴⁶

Harvie’s evocation of ‘conversation, dialogue and difference’ proves useful in drawing an analogy between the special dynamics of urban spaces and the NYSF’s responsibility to engage with these dynamics. In questioning, strategically or otherwise, what is/are ‘public(s),’ the company coalesces around a ceaseless, precarious but ultimately generative process endemic to the urban milieu.

At the conclusion of the 1966 season, Larkins drafted a final report that included observations from the 1966 season and recommendations for future seasons. On the subject of children at MT productions, he writes:

God bless ‘em and I love ‘em. But something has to be done about them. They want to see! We bring with us an irresistible milieu of magic: costumes, lights, makeup, stage. They love it. It meets and challenges their imagination. They want “in.” However, the play is generally long and boring to them and they move about too much when their interest is lost.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁶ Jen Harvie. *Theatre & the City* (New York: Palgrave-MacMillan, 2009), xiv.

²⁴⁷ William Larkins, “In Thunder Lightning or in Rain: A Report from the Theatre Manager,” New York Shakespeare Festival Mobile Theatre, Summer, 1966,” Series I, Box 41, folder 14, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

This description of children at the MT productions corresponds to Larkins' characterization of the audience more generally. The theatre manager further claimed that the use of some sites left prospective audiences bereft of their accustomed recreational and leisure spaces (for their "accustomed basketball game or just sitting in the park fraternizing" as Larkins calls it) and created an expectation of something "enjoyable."

When this expectation was not met, various methods for the reclamation of the space emerged as we saw above, from the whimsical to the criminal. In the case of both adults and children, claims over the space and its use heavily informed reception of the MT's offerings. From early on, the NYSF was aware that they were essentially playing on someone else's 'turf,' and so a line or series of lines needed to be drawn between recreation and leisure that might be associated with this turf and theatre. Drawing this 'line,' claiming (always with negotiation) the 'turf' of each MT space cast and re-cast the NYSF's relationship to the city's neighborhoods and public(s), at once a welcome presence, a nuisance and at times a threat.²⁴⁸

I offered these extended examples as a demonstration of various figurations, practices and expectations of space among social actors who ultimately 'produce' the space. While these accounts might have at first appeared to be amusing stories about disruptive audience members, I hope to have elucidated the deeper implications revolving around the ideologies, reverently or irreverently embodied by publics in highly contested spaces. The behavior of various MT audience members and

²⁴⁸ During the August 9, 1967 performance of *Volpone* cited above for example, a man told the theatre manager to take the play out of the park because he felt it was "corrupting the minds of Black American Youth." "New York Shakespeare Festival: Theater Manager's Daily Report," August 9, 1967, Series I, Box 53, folder 16, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

performers signaled the openness that performance in parks and playgrounds embodied. The NYSF characterized MT productions as ‘public’ and ‘civic’ events. As such, even through the unruliness of projectile-hurling patrons we see an event that blurs the boundaries between the action onstage and action in the ‘house,’ in unexpected and instructive ways. In this spatial blurring, something crucial is happening for the NYSF, something as yet unexplored by the company. As Papp and subsequent artistic directors never tire of intoning, the theatre’s guiding principles are essentially democratic. At times, whether through Papp’s occasional autocracy or the need to solicit funding from municipal or foundational sources, the company’s policies belie this idealism. And yet, as I have argued throughout this dissertation, the question of what constitutes the ‘public(s)’ could never be settled for the NYSF, both because of Papp’s agonistic tendencies and because of how nourishing the process of defining and refining ‘public(s)’ proved for the festival.

Here I have unpacked how audience expectations and associations of MT spaces contributed to and sometimes contrasted and clashed with MT’s vision of the space and performance. In response to these clashes and the challenges of bringing Shakespeare and his contemporaries to the city’s recreational and leisure spaces, the NYSF gave up producing Shakespeare for the MT. The final Shakespeare offered by the MT was a 1968 adaptation of *Hamlet* that had played at the Astor Library earlier that year and toured to city schools that spring. I will further explore this production and its connection to the spatial, dramaturgical and poetic context of the MT at the conclusion of Chapter 6. First, however, it will be necessary to unpack the final piece of the three-part proposal for the NYSF’s expansion: the scouting, acquisition and

siting of the Public Theatre in the Astor Library during the mid-1960's. The forces and context that led to the adaptive repurposing of this 19th century landmark further intensified the NYSF's exploration of public(s) and their connection to those public(s).

Chapter 5: Of House & Home; the NYSF's Search for a Permanent Space

*The art center is a fusing force and must find its roots in the earth and not look down on the world from Olympian opera glasses. Art itself has great problems in an institutional environment since it is highly subjective and easily overwhelmed by institutional structures. We must search out the means of reconciling marble with creative blood. I don't think this is impossible.*²⁴⁹

As with citywide touring, the impulse and desire to establish a permanent indoor theatre emerged in 1957 during the earliest years of the NYSF, and tellingly *re-emerged* around the same time in late 1962 to early 1963 after the company completed their first season in Central Park's Delacorte Theatre. Beginning in August 1957, Papp sought a permanent winter home, and contacted mayoral assistant Stanley Lowell to explore the possibilities. Papp's main concern, as he articulated to Lowell, was creating a sense of "continuity" from season to season. This continuity would ameliorate the financial and logistical challenges of essentially beginning anew with each summer season. Papp wrote to Lowell that, "to start all over again requires monumental effort."²⁵⁰ Papp initially cited interest among Parks Department officials for a permanent theatre in the area being developed around Lincoln Square, but acknowledged that the protracted timetable for the overall redevelopment of the area would prove prohibitive to the permanent theatre in the short term.²⁵¹ The producer finally scouted a space in the Heckscher Foundation Building at 105th St and 5th Ave.

²⁴⁹ Joseph Papp, "A House is not a Home" (speech, ACA Conference, Ottawa, January 8, 1976). Series XIII, Box 7, folder 6, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

²⁵⁰ Joseph Papp. Letter to Stanley Lowell, 2 Aug 1957, Series I, Box 1, folder 32, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

²⁵¹ It was in fact Stuart Constable, whom Papp would later run afoul of in the fight for free performance in Central Park, that offered the suggestion for a permanent theatre at Lincoln Center. In a December letter of the same year, Robert Moses finally dismissed the idea of a theatre for a repertory company in the short term stating that the opera house and concert hall would be given first priority. Robert Moses. Letter to Joseph Papp, 11 Dec 1957, Series I, Box 1, folder 31, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

Papp's primary selling point for the NYSW's winter program at the Welfare Department-administered building was the presentation of matinees for high school students from the five boroughs and beyond. He began soliciting Lowell about the use of the Heckscher Theatre for what the producer tentatively called the "Heckscher Foundation Theater Shakespeare Program." This program, in addition to student matinees for city and state high school students in collaboration with the Board of Education, would include special benefit performances for foundations and patrons of the arts and attempts to involve churches, community organizations and groups from nearby housing projects.²⁵²

In the end, the relationship Papp and the NYSW forged with the Welfare Department proved fruitful enough for several indoor productions from 1957 through 1959. But lack of consistent funding doomed the Heckscher's prospects as a permanent theatrical home in the long-term. Also, starting in early 1961, the NYSF's touring activities to the city's schools diminished the importance of the Heckscher Theatre as a site for student matinees.²⁵³ The festival initially looked to establish its first permanent indoor space with a series of relationships with city and state governmental agencies – Welfare Department, Parks Department, State Board of Education and City Education Department – a fact that partially explains how rapidly their first venue came together. While the time was ripe for siting a theatre devoted primarily to student matinees, thanks in large part to city funding for educational

²⁵² Joseph Papp. Letter to Stanley Lowell, 8 Aug 1957, Series I, Box 1, folder 32, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY. This parallels later efforts, cited above, among NYSF administrators and organizers of the MT to involve individual housing projects, community organizations and NYCHA in connecting the company's theatrical activities to the wider public in and around performance spaces.

²⁵³ "Shakespeare goes to the Children," *New York Herald Tribune*, January 10, 1961.

programming and a handful of fallow city-owned buildings, the NYSF's larger ambitions bent toward building a repertory theatre that would draw in a wider audience.

As outlined in Chapter 1 and 2, battles over keeping Shakespeare free in Central Park, producing a summer repertory in Central Park and the construction and design of the Delacorte Theatre occupied much of the NYSW's energies and resources from late 1958 through the inaugural season in the new amphitheater. Beginning in early 1963, even as they considered expanding their programming to include regional and international touring, NYSF administrators began scouting potential locations for a permanent indoor theatre.²⁵⁴ The size, shape and institutional associations of these spaces and sites varied significantly, and the festival's ideas about optimal theatrical design evolved. These evolutions unfolded in relation to the specifics of each space and also as the festival more substantially considered what theatrical programming they would offer at this year-round theatre space. Would they offer plays from the classical repertory, or would their new space be a place of experimentation and *new* work?

This is a significant question with respect to the prospective theatre's audience and the various publics it might potentially address and/or embody. As the search for a permanent space intensified, knowledge of and exposure to a variety of theatre spaces shifted Papp's vision for what kind of indoor operation the NYSF hoped to

²⁵⁴ As noted in the Introduction, several dissertations and masters theses, including Hashimoto's fairly comprehensive 1972 dissertation, make note of earlier attempts at permanent spaces. None, however, explore the breadth of this search or the implications of various spaces. As an example, Hashimoto dedicates a single paragraph to the nearly two-year search for a permanent space. My objective here is to explore this crucial time in the life of the festival – post-Delacorte and amidst wide citywide touring – supplementing and deepening the work of Hashimoto and others, including Penny Landau, Timothy Chandler and David Black to name a few.

found and develop. We cannot discount the influence of the MT in helping shape and mold this vision, as exposure to the tumult and verve of the city and its public(s), in highly contested spaces, offered the NYSF its most substantial view of the public's horizon of experience, social as well as artistic. I will enumerate these changing visions – along with the potential publics and in some cases institutional affiliations (public or otherwise) of each – as they arise with each site and space that the NYSF considered and pursued. As with the company's festival performances in Central Park, earlier and concurrent theatrical examples – from regional theatre to off-Broadway – will be considered as they contextualize the NYSF's pursuit of various spaces, audiences and publics. The space they eventually settled into – as I will explore in Chapter 6 – embraced a certain variety in defining 'public' (indeed as I suggest in earlier chapters, this embrace is strategic) but also presented fresh challenges as the newly christened "Public Theater." They encountered new embodiments and manifestations of 'public' in connection with municipal authority and bureaucracy. The process of defining and refining *public* deepened significantly as the company settled into the Astor Library in early 1966. And yet, not long after the NYSF's first season at the Delacorte Theater, Papp sought forms of institutional support that would have created a very different theatre for a very different public.

Of Spaces Educational

The search began in earnest in January of 1963. Only a few weeks before his trip to Clark College to meet with Dr. Esther Jackson about the prospective Southern Tour, Papp contacted two university presidents about building a permanent indoor theatre for the NYSF, New York University (NYU) President James M. Hester and

Columbia University President Grayson Kirk.²⁵⁵ Appended to each letter was a proposal for the construction of a 1000 seat theatre, a 150 seat experimental theatre, space for scenic and costume shops and administrative offices. The proposal also indicated the integration of some programming and activities between the NYSF and each university, and use of the smaller theatre space for educational and theatrical purposes by the university.²⁵⁶ The larger theatre space would house a thirty-week season from the classical repertory, and the proposal specifically sites plays from “Aeschylus to Shaw,” with a five-week run for each production, and a potential tour of state and local schools, universities and communities.

In the case of Columbia, communication continued, with the advice of Kirk’s assistant Robert Herron and Director of Columbia University Arts Center Program Davidson Taylor, and Papp eventually submitted a proposal for their consideration. Papp and Gersten also consulted with Professor of International Law Dr. David Smith, who was in charge of construction for the new International Studies Center. Smith assured Gersten that a 500-seat theatre was planned for the Max Abramovitz-designed building, but that it was not too late to consider a 1200-seat theatre if funding could be acquired.²⁵⁷ Despite optimism from Smith, within a month of Papp’s initial correspondence, Taylor wrote to inform the producer that any use of university

²⁵⁵ Joseph Papp. Letter to Grayson Kirk, 24 Jan 1963, Series I, Box 14, folder 1, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

²⁵⁶ While Papp does not elaborate further about the nature of these activities, as we will see further into their search for the permanent space, the NYSF continued to explore the connection between a permanent theatre space and professional training programs for the performing arts.

²⁵⁷ Bernard Gersten. Letter to Joseph Papp, 20 Feb 1963, Series I, Box 14, folder 1, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY. In a theatrical context, Abramovitz is perhaps best known for designing the building that would become Avery Fisher Hall at Lincoln Center. The building opened the year before Papp and Gersten’s correspondence and was part of the first wave of the larger redevelopment of Lincoln Center. “Max Abramovitz Dies, 96; Architect of Avery Fisher Hall,” *New York Times*, September 15, 2004.

real estate must be justified on “educational grounds” and for “educational purposes.”²⁵⁸ Activities that take place on university property must maintain a certain educational efficacy and therefore occur under the supervision of university professors and administrators. As with the MT, the NYSF again found itself in the position of melding educational and theatrical ventures and purposes. Given the NYSF’s appeal to public support and patronage during their battle for Shakespeare in Central Park and afterwards, directly soliciting a private university—albeit with definite interests in shaping municipal and public policy vis-à-vis its presence at the highly charged crossroads between Manhattan Valley and Harlem—seemed an intriguing choice for Papp and company.²⁵⁹

The issues that arouse from such melding emerged again in the NYSF’s proposal and correspondence with NYU. Papp received slightly more interest than he had from proposals to Columbia, in part because NYU had agreed to temporarily house the company that Robert Whitehead and Elia Kazan planned to bring to Lincoln Center upon the completion of the Upper West Side arts complex.²⁶⁰ Additionally, Papp’s correspondence arrived at a propitious time, as the university was in the process of the establishing the School of Creative Arts and Communication (SCAC). Department of Drama Art chairman John McCabe and Papp continued to explore opportunities for a theatrical and educational association until June of 1963.

²⁵⁸ Davidson Taylor. Letter to Joseph Papp, 1 Mar 1963, Series I, Box 14, folder 1, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

²⁵⁹ See Chronopoulos 42-45.

²⁶⁰ Zeigler 222-226. Funding for the temporary space, located just southeast of Washington Square Park was provided by the American National Theatre and Academy (ANTA), a producing organization founded in 1935, by Congressional charter. At one time, ANTA aimed to be a sort of ‘people’s theatre,’ though federal funding for the project was not forthcoming. Additionally, ANTA purchased the Guild Theatre on Broadway in 1950, providing a temporary space for repertory companies, commercial productions, and beginning in the late 1960’s regional theatre companies from all over the country. “Repertory Group Will Act in Tent,” *New York Times*, April 3, 1963.

McCabe claimed that before any association between the NYSF and the SCAC could be explored, a more substantial articulation of the “principles” and the “educational design” of *both* the SCAC (at the time still in the planning phases) as well as what potential educational programming of the festival might entail.²⁶¹ The initial proposal clearly had not sufficiently elaborated the festival’s educational ambitions, programming and philosophy vis-à-vis NYU. The festival’s interest in occupying spaces near or in fact on university campuses required re-considering their mission, offerings and the educational objectives behind those offerings. Most significantly for our present considerations were shifts in the types of audiences and publics targeted by such spaces. In determining these types, exploring useful corollaries to the NYSF’s ambitions is necessary.

A week before contacting Columbia and NYU, Papp wrote to Peter Strauss, President of WMCA radio station about his determination to establish a relationship between his company and institutions of higher education. Papp cited the Loeb Theatre Center (LTC) at Harvard – which would eventually house the American Repertory Theatre (ART) – as a precedent. The LTC came about thanks to a large donation from the Harkness family, and Papp hoped that such a donation might be solicited with the assistance of Strauss and his wealthier acquaintances. Papp’s mention of the project at Harvard suggests an intriguing point of connection to the regional theatre movement of the time.²⁶² Despite Joseph Zeigler’s contention that Papp and the NYSF “were not part of the regional theatre revolution,” the initial

²⁶¹ John McCabe. Letter to Joseph Papp, 3 Jun 1963, Series I, Box 14, folder 1, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

²⁶² Joseph Papp. Letter to Peter Strauss, 1 Feb 1963. Series I, Box 14, folder 1, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

designs and interests of festival administrators during the search for a permanent space indicate points of confluence in the guiding philosophies of the regional theatre movement and Papp's initial vision for his indoor theatre.²⁶³

Writing in 1973, nearly a decade *after* the NYSF's search for a permanent space commenced in earnest, Zeigler draws contrasts the contexts of both the regional theatre movement and the NYSF. This contrast illuminates the challenges and opportunities of running a private organization with pretensions toward public service and funding.

(The NYSF) was not within the regional theatre movement; while his institution qualified structurally, Papp remained an outsider. He was not legitimized by the Ford Foundation support. He was not homogenized by Theatre Communications Group support. He was neither pigeonholed by the movement's overstructuring nor haunted by its malaise. He shared its dream, but he lived outside its rules; he lived and worked by the rules of the New York game. His region was within the central situation, a psychological rather than a physical region. He was able to banish Broadway and still rub against it. Strengthened by institutionalism but unencumbered by decentralization, he had to fight only half the battle. Therefore, his success came not from doing better work than the regional theatres did but from doing it in a context where it could reach furthest and matter most—the central situation. He was able to storm the citadel from within.²⁶⁴

²⁶³Joseph Wesley Zeigler. *Regional Theatre: The Revolutionary Stage* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1973), 226-232.

²⁶⁴ Zeigler 230-231.

While this might be an accurate assessment of the NYSF's spatial, symbolic and psychological context *after* the founding of the Public Theatre in the early 1970s, the context *before* such assured institutionalism was quite different.

Before Papp and NYSF even considered functioning 'outside' rules and institutional strictures, however, they first explored operating very much *within* established institutional *structures*, as their overtures to Columbia and NYU demonstrate. Educational institutions offered a sense of both spatial and financial stability, as the emergence of a handful of educationally affiliated regional theatres in the early to mid-60s demonstrated. The Hilberry Theater at Detroit's Wayne State University (1961), the Dallas Theater Center's association with Trinity University (1963), and Yale Repertory Theatre at the University of the same name (1966), were just a few of the theatre's founded in partnership with and sometimes in residence at institutions of higher learning.²⁶⁵ An even more substantial tangle of institutions structures surrounded the NYSF's next attempt at a permanent space in the form of a theatre complex in the proposed Lower Manhattan Civic Center.

Of Spaces Political

Re-development of the area surrounding City Hall and the Manhattan approach to the Brooklyn Bridge dates back to the early years of the 20th century. Until WWII, most attempts at a comprehensive plan failed, and the area remained a haphazard array of municipal, state and federal buildings. In 1942, however, the city's Capital Budget Report suggested, "numerous improvements were needed in certain areas where special opportunities existed for general replanning and the correlation of

²⁶⁵ Zeigler 249. Substantial enough was this model for the founding and fostering of professional regional theatres, that the University Resident Theatre Association (URTA) formed in the early 1970s to further the mission of these increasingly common partnerships.

public projects in ways that would enhance civic values and stimulate private redevelopment.”²⁶⁶ One such area was the area around Manhattan’s City Hall and the area in Brooklyn between the Brooklyn Bridge approach and downtown Brooklyn. Throughout the postwar years, and continuing into the early 1960’s, comprehensive redevelopment in Brooklyn proved more successful – by the standards of planners and municipal authorities – than redevelopment plans across the river in Manhattan. Despite this, various plans for the Civic Center of downtown Manhattan continued to receive consideration from political actors, the press and the general public, albeit in somewhat less ambitious scope than plans immediately following the war.²⁶⁷

One such plan came before the City Planning Commission in April of 1963.²⁶⁸ Papp and the NYSF pinned some of their hopes for a permanent theatre to this 1963 plan. Several months before, aware that a proposed plan was in the works, Papp wrote to Mayor Wagner floating the idea of an indoor theatre as a potential public amenity to the prospective Civic Center project:

I trust it is not premature to suggest for your consideration the thought of including a one thousand seat theater in the proposed Civic Center, with the NEW YORK SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL as its occupant. 1964 will mark our tenth year of operations. I think you’ll agree that a decade is long enough

²⁶⁶ City Planning Commission. *A Plan for Manhattan Civic Center and Related Improvements*. New York, 1948.

²⁶⁷ As indicated in Chapter 1, much of the capital investment in large municipal projects throughout the five boroughs arose thanks to the maneuvering of Robert Moses in procuring state and federal funding well before many officials and politicians in other cities and states even knew such funding existed. Beginning in the early 1960’s, however, and coinciding with Moses’ departure as Parks Commissioner, faith in and funding for such large municipal projects – particularly those in the city’s heart – diminished significantly. Ultimately this would lead to significant financial crises during the mayoral tenure of John Lindsay, a fact that will be considered at length in relation to the acquisition and renovation of the Astor building in the same year Lindsay assumed office.

²⁶⁸ “Lower Manhattan Comes of Age: Antique Buildings Yield to New.” *New York Times*, April 18, 1963.

for a trial period and that a theater institution capable of surviving so many years with honor deserves an indoor home... The necessity for a roof at this juncture is not merely a question of a building. (Stone and mortar does not a theater make). It is essentially an artistic development, nurtured in the sun of public approval and now ready for picking. The great cultural void in the city is its lack of permanent classical theaters committed to the production of the great works of dramatic literature.²⁶⁹

According to Papp's logic, the creation and cultivation of "public approval" ought to translate into the bestowal of public funding and spaces dedicated to the NYSF. Two overlapping, though certainly distinct figurations of 'public' operate in Papp's proposal. As demonstrated in Chapters 1 and 2, this was not the first time he deployed this logic, as free Shakespeare in the Park (and by extension the construction of the Delacorte) was by Papp's own characterization the result of public outcry and support in a variety of forms. This *public* outcry ought, in according to his logic, arouse the ear and support of *public* officials. Papp continues in his proposal by enumerating many of the same ideas included his previous proposals to Columbia and NYU, including shape and size of the prospective theatre space and dramatic programming, though he made no mention of an experimental theatre space as he had in the Columbia proposal.

In addressing Wagner, Papp accentuates the service the NYSF might provide to the public(s) of New York City in accommodating what he sees as a 'great cultural void' through the presentation of classical works of dramatic literature. While the

²⁶⁹ Joseph Papp. Letter to Robert Wagner, 30 Jan 1963, Series I, Box 23, folder 5, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

previous proposals emphasized the *educational* potential of hosting the NYSF, though clearly not enough to satisfy university officials, Papp's letter to Wagner and more formal festival proposals over the subsequent two years focused on a prospective theatre's contribution to *civic* life and *public* enrichment. After several months of overtures, including the presentation in April 1963 of comprehensive plans for the Civic Center site, Papp provided a vision for the NYSF's proposed theatre to Mayor Wagner and to the newly appointed head of the Office of Cultural Affairs Robert Dowling.²⁷⁰ In July 1963, in addition to providing Dowling with a proposal for "a public theatre in the Civic Center complex," Papp also enclosed a pair of artistic reproductions to offer Dowling an idea of what type of theatre space he had in mind.²⁷¹

Both theatrical precedents Papp provided, the Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis and the Chichester Festival Theatre in the southeastern English county of Sussex, represented important pioneering ventures in the history of American and British regional theatre, respectively.²⁷² The latter dovetailed with the emergence of the National Theatre in England, helmed by Sir Laurence Olivier and featuring a repertory company. This company, founded in the somewhat provincial environs of Chichester would within a matter of years become the new National Theatre's core. It

²⁷⁰ The Office of Cultural Affairs (OCA) had been established the year before in 1962 with a focus on providing funding to cultural institutions like the Metropolitan Opera, New York State Theatre, New York Philharmonic and the NYSF with funding to provide free programming in city parks and other publically administered spaces. The reach and scope of the OCA expanded dramatically under Mayor John Lindsay when he merged it with the Parks Department to oversee cultural, recreational and leisure spaces all over the five boroughs, along with the activities therein. This expanded department, called the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs Administration (PRCA), would eventually become vital to the entire scope of the NYSF's activities in myriad civic spaces. For more on the founding of PRCA, see: Joseph Viteritti, *Summer in the City* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2014), 200-201.

²⁷¹ Joseph Papp. Letter to Robert Dowling, 16 Jul 1963, Series I, Box 23, folder 5, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

²⁷² George Rowell and Anthony Jackson, *The Repertory Movement: A History of Regional Theatre in Britain*. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984), 102.

is instructive that the Chichester Theater – and by association the National Theatre – emerged out of a venture that began as a seasonal theatre *festival*, initially serving decidedly touristic purposes. In fact, the festival theatre was sited in Oaklands Park, and founder Leslie Evershed-Martin claimed inspiration from Guthrie’s siting of Ontario’s Stratford Festival in Upper Queen’s Park.²⁷³

Acknowledging that the space he envisioned was a blending of the two vital and highly influential companies, Papp maintained that the theatre would feature an open platform thrusting into a three-sided audience space of between 1200 and 1400. He likened it to a somewhat smaller more flexible version of the recently inaugurated Delacorte Theatre. Like Guthrie, Papp espoused the symbolic significance of the open stage arrangement as embodying a sense of unity, egalitarianism and intimacy among the public and performers. In describing the successes of the Guthrie Theatre’s design, Guthrie emphasized the blurring of borders between seating sections, offering audiences the sensation of collectivity while solving what the director called the “second-class-citizen problem.”²⁷⁴ The kinds of artistic experiences, at once communal and inclusive, unlocked by these theatre architectural arrangements appealed to Papp, as we saw in Papp’s insistence on certain design features for the Delacorte Theatre and the MT’s portable stage and audience spaces. This experience, as with Guthrie’s thinking elaborated in Chapter 2, signaled an ethos that reverberated well beyond the walls of the theatre space, toward an anti-authoritarianism and egalitarianism.

²⁷³ Leslie Evershed-Martin. *The Miracle Theatre: The Chichester Festival Theatre’s Coming of Age*. (Exeter, UK: David and Charles 1987), 7-11.

²⁷⁴ Tyrone Guthrie. *The New Theatre*. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), 70-71.

The evolutions in Papp's thinking about architectural spaces and their connection to his purportedly public and democratic experiment intensified as the NYSF settled into and substantially renovate the Astor Library, as I will explore at length in Chapter 6. At this early date in the NYSF's search for a permanent space, however, such evolutions and connections were guided and limited by municipal politics, existing structures (real or symbolic) of these politics, and city officials and administrators own notions of what constitutes "public." Already we have seen how divergent these notions can be from the NYSF's vision, most notably in the case of the NYSW's battle with Robert Moses, and the various officials and agencies the festival confronted in planning and administering the MT. In the case of the proposed Civic Center Theatre, the festival's sense of access and egalitarianism encounters city governmental authority in perhaps its most dramatic embodiment.

Following his meeting with Dowling at the end of July 1963 Papp commended Dowling's idea that the theatre "serve as the hub of a municipal exhibition hall." Continuing, Papp situates the NYSF within the proposed Civic Center:

It will be meaningful, as you say, to include a multi-purpose complex of spacious lobbies and airy corridors where dramatic displays of the city's operation will be presented. Comparable uses immediately come to mind – both historical and artistic. This is particularly pertinent to our conception of a professional municipal theater serving the city as well as the vast and growing downtown population.²⁷⁵

²⁷⁵ Joseph Papp. Letter to Robert Dowling, 30 Jul 1963, Series I, Box 23, folder 5, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

In characterizing the municipal theatre's place within the Civic Center, Papp re-purposes Dowling's suggestion that the operations and activities of the theatre would benefit from their proximity to exhibitions of other public, municipal activities. In potentially situating the theatre *amidst* and *by* other exhibitions and embodiments of municipal life, the ideology of such exhibitions inevitably informs the reception by audiences and publics to the programming and activities *within* the theatre. Serving both *specific* audiences of downtown denizens, the prospective theatre space would also serve the city's wider public according to Papp. It would therefore locate the 'public' somewhere between the local and the citywide. As I elaborated in previous chapters, the NYSF developed this strategy of targeting specific audiences and publics while referring and intimating their service to larger publics, and as-yet untapped audiences.

Though the theatre would be permanent, Papp's contention that it would be "serving the city" reinforces the correlation between a "public theatre" and city government, as both represented and served those well beyond downtown Manhattan. The reach of city governmental power (real and/or symbolic) would increase the reach of the NYSF's proposed theatre. As with other evolutions in the NYSF's history, Papp and company needed to weigh the potential benefits of increasing their association with municipal institutions, and the figurations of 'public' purveyed by such institutions. Papp offers some indication of what public he hopes to attract in his elaboration of the programming and activities for the Civic Center Theatre. He solicits more than 200 actors to participate in what he called a "reading workshop" to develop a repertory company that would work and perform in the new Civic Center

theatre. He includes a list of plays for this prospective workshop and classical repertory company, that featured exclusively plays drawn from the Western dramatic canon, and several more recent works that might be deemed in the early 1960's as 'modern classics,' such as Brecht's *Galileo*, T.S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* and Christopher Fry's *Lady's Not for Burning*. Interestingly, no American playwrights are named on this list.²⁷⁶

This play list corresponds in large measure with the repertory choices of other regional theatres of the early 1960's. In 1961, there were only twenty-three regional theatres, and most offered programming similar to Papp's 1963 proposal.²⁷⁷ Most notable, however, were the similarities between Papp's proposed programming and programming at the still-developing Lincoln Center Theater and other developing repertory theatres of the time.²⁷⁸ Critic and founder of both the Yale Repertory Theatre and American Repertory Theatre Robert Brustein characterized the Lincoln Center model as "repertory fever" brought on by audience fatigue with the "hit-flop" mentality of the commercial Broadway theatre at the time. Lincoln Center Theatre along with prospective ventures such as Papp's Civic Center Theatre were designed to palliate and cure this fever, though Brustein does articulate three major obstacles to their success. The first two connect to actor and theatrical training to meet the

²⁷⁶ Joseph Papp. Letter to Prospective performers in the 'reading workshop.' 20 Aug 1963, Series I, Box 15, folder 17, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

²⁷⁷ Zeigler 73: The opening season of the Guthrie Theater featured the *Miser*, *Hamlet*, *Three Sisters*, *Death of a Salesman*. The second season in 1965 featured *Richard III*, *The Way of the World*, *The Cherry Orchard* and a return engagement of the *Miser*. As Stuart Vaughan recounts in *A Possible Theatre*, the first several seasons of the Seattle Repertory Theatre – which he founded in 1963 – included *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Taming of the Shrew*, *Twelfth Night*, *Man and Superman*, among other staples of the American dramatic canon (Vaughan 147-206).

²⁷⁸ Gerald M. Berkowitz. *New Broadways: Theatre Across America: Approaching a New Millennium*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 83-84.

demands of repertory playing. The third obstacle or as Brustein refers to it, “threat” to the establishment of repertory companies “lies in the nature of the American audience.”²⁷⁹ He elaborates the requisite audience for the development of repertory companies:

A repertory company can develop a great vision only if it is supported by an intelligent, imaginative, and enthusiastic audience, but the typical American theatregoer of today is the most passive, immobile, and moribund spectator in the world. He may go to the movies for escape or pleasure, but when he rouses himself to go to the theatre he expects to be neither stimulated, enlightened, or entertained, for he sits out three hours in a cataleptic trance, coming to consciousness only to applaud the star’s entrance, exit, and his curtain call. The stupefying vacuity of the Broadway audience is the direct result of economics. With ticket prices soaring in the stratosphere, the audience has become dominated by the prosperous business class, most of whom attend the theatre not because they want to but out of some external pressure. Going to a play is now a form of conspicuous consumption, the play itself less important than the circumstances surrounding it.²⁸⁰

What Brustein offers in this passage is a state of the American theatregoer in the middle to late 1960s. While his characterization might be exaggerated to help demonstrate the enormity of the task facing prospective theatre companies, what is undoubtedly true, is the balkanization of American theatre audiences.

²⁷⁹ Robert Brustein. *Seasons of Discontent: Dramatic Opinions, 1959-1965*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967), pp 209-218.

²⁸⁰ Brustein 214

This fissuring of the audiences, as Brustein indicated in the passage above, occurs along economic and socioeconomic planes. The varieties of audiences and publics consuming theatre – from the public that goes to the theatre for “charity, business or sightseeing” to the public seeking edification and/or cocktail party banter – form a tempting mirage according to Brustein. While these publics might offer economic or institutional stability to developing companies, the most vital targets for theatrical programming in the late 1960s were those who stayed away from the theatre “out of penury, apathy, or disgust.” Much of the advice provided by the group of theatrical professionals selected by the Lincoln Center Board corroborates Brustein’s assertion. Any future theatrical ventures must bring those audiences and publics back that left a generation earlier to consume more affordable and accessible fare, such as film and television. Because of its unique geography, however, Lincoln Center Theater, and somewhat by association, Papp’s prospective Civic Center Theater, would encounter challenges in audience development and public engagement. Many of these challenges relate to the complex phenomena known as urban renewal.

As intimated in earlier chapters, New York City has a long and complicated history with large-scale urban renewal projects, and Lincoln Center Theater was the first of the great urban renewal arts centers. At the same time, despite Moses re-directing his energies to planning the World’s Fair of 1964 in Queens, Lincoln Center was in fact the *last* re-development project he oversaw, and certainly bore a resemblance to earlier brands of renewal. Indeed, the multi-building complex was vital to plans for the redevelopment of an even larger area stretching from Columbus

Circle to West 96th Street. Before it became politically explosive to use such language, this entire section of the Upper West Side was a major target of the mayor's "Committee on Slum Clearance." Re-development that entailed "clearance of any kind" required incredible political initiative, capital and public interest. Any supposed urban renewal associated with the repertory theater at Lincoln Center would, therefore, need to prove profitable – directly or through related business and real estate interests – to those at the vanguard of redevelopment efforts. Whichever "public" Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts was designed to serve, it certainly did not include the tens of thousands of residents, mostly Puerto Rican, black, and Japanese-American among many other racial minorities, evicted from their homes in the area cleared to make way for the arts complex.²⁸¹

By the end of the summer season of 1964, the NYSF's prospects of a permanent theatre at the Civic Center appeared less likely. In light of other redevelopment plans in New York City during the early 1960's, including Lincoln Center, the World's Fair site preparation and the construction of Shea Stadium, the ambitious plans for the Civic Center were curtailed because of budgetary constraints. Still as late as December of 1964, Papp submitted a more substantial proposal for a permanent theatre in the Civic Center. This proposal, unlike the Columbia and NYU proposals, included renderings from festival scenic designer and theatre consultant Ming Cho Lee, with input from the overall project's chief architects. Papp also indicated that the financial arrangement for the proposed theatre would resemble that which obtained at City Center, in which the company would enter into a leaseback

²⁸¹ Zipp 197-249. Zipp offers an illuminative analysis of the "battle for Square," which pitted local residents and advocates, aligned with liberal reformers disillusioned and fatigued with Moses brand of urban renewal, against city officials and bureaucrats.

agreement of one dollar a year for the use of the space.²⁸² Additionally, just as George Delacorte stepped in to help finance the amphitheater, Mrs. Louis K. Anspacher provided the NYSF with important philanthropic support for the prospective project. Anspacher offered to pay design costs and offset the considerable sum to install the permanent theatre at the Civic Center. Despite this promising public-private partnership, the redevelopment of the Civic Center area would continue into early 1965 without the inclusion of a permanent theatre space. Anspacher's relationship to the festival would continue, however, and in fact her contributions to the festival during the vital period in early 1967 would allow for the renovation of the Astor Library's large reading room. The theatre space created from this reading room therefore bears her name as the 'Anspacher Theater.'

European Interlude

Another important development in the NYSF's ongoing search for a permanent theatre space and facility occurred in the fall of 1964 when Papp, his wife, Gersten, and NYSF Board member Joseph Martinson took a month-long trip to Europe.²⁸³ This trip occurred concurrently with the NYSF's interest in a permanent space in the downtown Civic Center, but what Papp and Gersten encountered during their travels influenced and expanded the possible spaces for NYSF's theatrical home. This trip initiated a shift away from arts complexes at Lincoln Center and early theatres of the regional theatre movement – academically affiliated or otherwise – as the NYSF moved into late 1964 and early 1965. The trip had a profound effect on

²⁸² Joseph Papp. Letter to Henry Marx, 22 Dec 1964, Series I, Box 23, folder 5, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY. Marx served as attorney for Mrs. Louis Anspacher.

²⁸³ Epstein 182-183

Papp, as he returned to the United States deeply impressed with large, publically subsidized theatrical institutions in several large European cities and with companies founded in adapted spaces as well.

What most activated and excited Papp were avant-garde productions, and more specifically, innovative adaptations of classical works at these institutions from Brecht's adaptation of *Coriolanus* to Peter Brook's *Marat/Sade* respectively and a "utopian and neo-Brechtian adaptation" of Aristophanes' *The Peace* staged at the Berliner Ensemble, Royal Shakespeare Company and the Deutsches Theater respectively.²⁸⁴ These productions indicate a more experimental path and type of programming, and therefore different publics and audiences, than Papp's prospective Civic Center theatre or campus theatres would feature and seek to reach. These heavily subsidized theatrical institutions offered a model, albeit one that proved somewhat unrealistic in the American context, for Papp's evolving vision of a permanent theatre in service of and perhaps embodying the public. The artistic quality and adventurousness at institutional public theatres in Europe fortified Papp's belief in a permanent theatre that somehow both served and symbolized the city and its inhabitants. Experimentation, permanence and a sense of civic-mindedness emerged, therefore, as complimentary phenomena according to Papp's evolving ideas about what space they might potentially create or occupy.

²⁸⁴ Gonda von Steen, "Snapshots of Aristophanes and Menander." *Cambridge Companion to Greek Comedy* (Martin Revermann, ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2014, pg. 445. Anecdotes of these productions are from Papp's personal notes from his trip abroad. Series I, Box 24, folder 8, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

Another important theatre Papp encountered on his European sojourn was the London space acquired by Arnold Wesker's Centre 42 in July of 1964.²⁸⁵ Papp met Wesker the previous year when the English-born writer and director brought his play *Chips with Everything* to Broadway's Plymouth Theatre and then Booth Theatre. Later that year, Papp received correspondence from acquaintance Alfred Levinson stating that Wesker was "trying to set up some sort of free theater," and that the Brit might potentially "learn from your (Papp's) experience."²⁸⁶ Papp re-connected with Wesker during his time in England, and became infatuated with the late Victorian locomotive facility that would eventually be known as the 'Roundhouse Theatre.'²⁸⁷ Papp latched onto not only the notion of adaptively reusing an existing space, but also Wesker's community-bound and based ethos for the theatre.

As Richard William Hayes notes, Papp's interest in a theatre more intimately connected to the community and accessible to the public were evidenced by Wesker's memo to his prospective architect Rene Allio, and Papp's response thereto. Wesker wrote:

We must eliminate that most fatuous and depressing of criticisms: that we are imposing. *So let us site our first principle: that the artist should never go*

²⁸⁵ Jinnie Schiele. *Off Centre-Stage: Fringe Theatre at the Open Space and the Round House, 1968-1983*. (Hertfordshire: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2005), 123-124.

²⁸⁶ Alfred Levinson. Letter to Joseph Papp, 17 Sep. 1964, Series I, Box 22, folder 1, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

²⁸⁷ Richard William Hayes. *Setting the Scene: Perspectives on Twentieth Century Theatre Architecture* (ed. Alistair Fair). Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2015), 205-206. Hayes contends that Wesker's project was foremost in Papp's mind upon his return to New York City. Hayes cites Papp's copy of Wesker's memo to prospective architect Rene Allio as evidence of the NYSF founders interest in creating a theatre intimately connected to community and accessible to the general public.

anywhere unless he is called for, the public must be encouraged to adopt the new habit of calling for the artist” (emphasis in the original).²⁸⁸

Papp bracketed this quote, commenting in the margins that “(h)e’s dreaming.” Wesker was responding at least in part to what he saw as the “occasional, spare-time cultural missionaries” traversing and temporarily occupying “culturally bankrupt areas.” The implications of Papp’s comment, likely written in late 1964, prove all the more significant given the NYSF’s tumultuous first season of the MT and their evolving ideas about their place on the cityscape and the publics they encountered there. Within the inaugural season of the MT, as explored in Chapter 4, the NYSF and Papp learned much about what audiences and publics called for, desired and resisted. The producer’s response to Wesker’s rather idealistic belief in a theatre that emerges from public need is revealing at this critical juncture in the NYSF’s history. On the cusp of creating a permanent space for his ten year old company, Papp remained skeptical of the NYSF’s position to the larger public they purported to serve and represent.

Of Spaces Developed, Of Spaces Adapted

Papp returned from Europe with fresh perspective – namely renovating an existing, smaller structure for theatrical production – on the search for a permanent home, and the potential public for such a home. Despite this he and other NYSF administrators continued to pursue plans for a larger theatre even as the Civic Center theatre appeared less and less likely. The festival explored other sites on the cityscape, including the area west of the Natural History Museum, mere blocks from

²⁸⁸ Rene Allio, “Centre 42 – The Allio Brief.” Series I, Box 24, folder 6, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

the Delacorte in Central Park, in the heart of what had been the vast urban renewal zone (between West 59th Street and West 96th Street) mentioned above. Another prospective site was located in what was called the Central Park North development area. Plans included a Community College and performing arts high school, alongside public housing developments.²⁸⁹ Though these plans never came to fruition, Papp's willingness to entertain such avenues demonstrates a variety of visions for the prospective theatre space. In this variety, we observe a complex process of identifying potential audiences and calibrating how various sites position the NYSF differently in relation to these publics.

The examples of the Guthrie and Lincoln Center are most instructive here, as these new theatrical ventures developed alongside other artistic and civic spaces. In the case of the Guthrie, attachment to the Walker Art Center, and proximity to the outdoor sculpture garden and nearby Loring Park proved vital to its construction as a locus of culture, for a decidedly middle class audience. Lincoln Center Theatre sits amidst other performing arts venues, galleries and new residential real estate construction, ensuring its place as a local and civic cultural center.²⁹⁰ Occupying a renovated space – as with Wesker's Centre 42 – suggested a very different relationship between such spaces, prospective publics and the surrounding neighborhood. Ric Knowles and Gay McAuley offer illuminative and complimentary accounts of the ways that cities, theatres and publics interact and help to constitute one another. Knowles, in *Reading the Material Theatre*, provides extensive insight

²⁸⁹ Gail Merrifield Papp, Letter to Joseph Papp. 23 Sep 1965, Series I, Box 33, folder 14, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

²⁹⁰ See: Guthrie's *A New Theatre* pages 45-67 for an account of settling into the new theatre space and its surroundings.

into the significance of architecture and geography in the reception of both artistic programming and a theatre company's claimed connection with civic or public culture. As mentioned earlier, "ideological coding," inscribed and enshrined in any theatre building or arts complex could reinforce dominant ideologies, or it could function as a site at once "community-oriented, populist or even overtly resistant to dominant ideologies."²⁹¹

Knowles elaborates on the complex interplay of cities, theatres and publics in a passage that will continue to prove revelatory in the following chapter:

In the Western world since ancient Greece, theatre and the cities (most often) in which it happens have tended to be mutually constitutive and have either comprised mutually legitimating symbolic economies (as is the case with large civic arts centres and opera houses at the heart of large cities) or have intersected as oppositional spaces in which civil society might be formed (as is the case with many small converted factories, warehouses, and retail shops housing "workshop: theatres in "ethnic" or working-class neighborhoods.) In either case, and however each term may be located on a scale from cultural affirmation to cultural intervention, good theatre makes good citizens, while good theatre and good cities make good civilizations.²⁹²

In the context of Knowles contention, the NYSF's potential theatrical home represented a symbolic economy and/or an oppositional space. Both denote a sense of exchange, though the path toward good citizens and good publics differs in each. Gay McAuley, evokes a similar exchange between city, theatre and publics. Summarizing

²⁹¹ Knowles 71

²⁹² Knowles 66

the theories of Antoine Vitez, McAuley draws similar distinctions between the “theatre as edifice” and the “theatre as shelter.”²⁹³ Both suggest relationships between structures and audiences, institutions and publics at once magisterial and imposing on the one hand, protective and comforting on the other. The former declares itself a theatre, suggesting knowledge of its special rituals and decorum as prerequisite for entrance, while the latter contains “minimal formal constraints” according to McAuley.

Whether the NYSF sought to create an edifice, a shelter, or an oppositional space in hopes of staging a cultural intervention or affirmation, from late 1964 through the fall of 1965, the company continued to pursue spaces of varying sizes and shapes, while staying attuned to promising redevelopment projects. This search resulted in a refinement of the company’s mission, as they began to more boldly and specifically define what brand of “public” this new theatre would be. Adapted spaces had, and continue to have their own challenges. These challenges were ameliorated, however, by a growing concern for historic and landmark spaces throughout the city, as outcry for the preservation of historic buildings reached a fever pitch with the destruction of the historic Pennsylvania Station in 1963, and subsequently establishment in 1965 of the New York City Landmarks Commission (NYCLC).²⁹⁴

Two months before the creation of the NYCLC, Papp dispatched Gersten and others to investigate the existence of potential spaces that might be adapted for theatrical production. Concomitantly, Papp and Anspacher met to discuss the former’s notions and requirements for a permanent theatre space. In a letter following

²⁹³ McAuley 38

²⁹⁴ J.B. Cullingworth. *The Political Culture of Planning*. (London: Routledge, 1993), 141.

the meeting, Papp laid out the “conceptual and practical aspect of moving into a year-round space.” In contrast to earlier proposals and suggestions, Papp’s letter to Anspacher calls for an intimate 299-seat theatre suitable for the production of classical and modern plays. The letter also gives a rough estimate of the cost for such an operation, the lion share of which would be devoted to renovation and refurbishment of the prospective space.²⁹⁵ A week later, Gersten contacted real estate heiress Carol Haussamen about the festival’s interest in acquiring and renovating an existing space. Like Papp and Anspacher’s exchange, Gersten provided Haussamen with the company’s basic physical requirements, stating the bare minimum dimensions for the creation of a single 300-seat theatre space in an existing structure. Gersten goes further stating that suitable spaces might be “(c)hurches, synagogues, movie theaters, banks, firehouses, night clubs, hotel banquet rooms, and warehouses and loft facilities of unusually spacious proportions.”²⁹⁶

Many of these spaces would seem to comport with Knowles notion of a theatre space as ‘cultural intervention,’ considering that the festival’s indoor space would likely operate somewhat – and potentially in a positive sense – in opposition with surrounding ‘symbolic economies.’ As such, audiences would be invited to participate in disruption of such economies. Interestingly, however, Gersten’s brief list of “(a)ccceptable areas” for where this adapted and renovated space might be located, included the Lincoln Center area, along Broadway between 72nd St and 96th St, West Greenwich Village, locations in Chelsea and accessible east side locations in

²⁹⁵ Joseph Papp. Letter to Florence Anspacher. 1 Feb 1965, Series I, Box 33, folder 13, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

²⁹⁶ Bernard Gersten. Letter to Carol Haussamen. 8 Feb 1965, Series I, Box 33, folder 13, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

Manhattan. The majority of these areas, most notably the Lincoln Center area and other portions of the Upper West Side, had long been identified as areas desperate for large-scale renewal and renovation, though it should be noted that increased outrage over the loss of significant architectural and cultural treasures slowed the process of renewal – according to earlier models of urban development – in the mid-60s.

Papp, Gersten and the NYSF's legal counsel explored a variety of spaces, as the two festival administrators continued to explore what these prospective spaces required. In the same week that Papp and Anspacher met to discuss the producer's revised specifications for a prospective permanent space, potential sites emerged through the NYSF's real estate contacts. The first, the Salisbury Hotel on West 57th St between 6th and 7th Ave, sat adjacent to – and in fact was owned by – Calvary Baptist Church, and was only a short half block from Carnegie Hall.²⁹⁷ This possibility was short-lived, partially because of the challenges of the space, which was a sixteen-story building in a heavily trafficked area that the church was determined *not* to operate as a hotel. The entire building, therefore, would require extensive renovation, and finding potential tenants with enough resources for such renovation and rental costs proved challenging.

Throughout 1965, several other spaces caught the eye of the NYSF, most of them roughly conforming to Papp and Gersten's revised spatial requirements outlined to Anspacher and Haussamen. In mid-February 1965, after the NYSF received word that the Salisbury Hotel would ultimately not be available for sale, the Friend's Meeting House on East 20th St and the Spring Street Presbyterian Church came to the

²⁹⁷ Gerald Schwartz. Letter to Miss Dennis. 3 Feb 1965, Series I, Box 33, folder 14, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

company's attention.²⁹⁸ The former, sited at the south end of Gramercy Park, lay amongst an area that would be deemed a 'historic district' the following year and included such historic structures as the Player's Club, Washington Irving's former place of residence, Pete's Tavern and the Gramercy Park Hotel. Because of the Meeting House's historic setting, therefore, the cost would ultimately prove prohibitive to purchase by the NYSF.²⁹⁹ The Spring Street Presbyterian Church emerged as a potential site around the same time as the Salisbury Hotel and Friend's Meeting House in February of 1965. The church, built in the 1830's in the Greek revival style, ceased its use by the Presbytery in 1963. The plot on which the church sat was the smallest they had yet encountered in their search, but would according to assessments and correspondence from later in the year accommodate the NYSF modest proposal for a single 300-seat theatre space. By September, the Salvation Army sought to sell the Spring Street Presbyterian Church, and the NYSF was poised to pursue acquisition of the space according to a memo sent from Gersten to Papp.³⁰⁰ Efforts to acquire the church and the Quaker meeting house had stretched over the better part of the year in 1965, and *during* that time the above-mentioned Landmarks Commission – created by the enactment of the April 1965 Landmarks Law – began to cultivate a list of properties to be spared from demolition. The yield of this cultivation was the eventual acquisition of the Astor Library by the NYSF.

²⁹⁸ Robert Montgomery (attorney for NYSF). Letter to Joseph Papp. 18 Feb 1965, Series I, Box 33, folder 14, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

²⁹⁹ Harry B. Helmsley (Helmsley-Spear Inc. (real estate)). Letter to Joseph Papp. 7 Oct 1965, Series I, Box 33, folder 14, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

³⁰⁰ Bernard Gersten. Letter to Joseph Papp. 28 September 1965, Series I, Box 33, folder 13, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

These correspondence and subsequent consideration of various spaces embodied a shift in thinking on the part of not only Papp, but other NYSF administrators as well. That shift is at once physical, programmatic and arguably philosophical. Usable theatrical and infrastructural models, like the Guthrie Theater and the Vivian Beaumont Theatre at Lincoln Center, did not *entirely* intersect with the spatial realities by early 1965, or with Papp's evolving thinking about what kind of theatre would best embody his vision of radical accessibility and inclusion for and of the public(s). Large-scale urban renewal projects such as the one at Lincoln Center became somewhat problematic in light of the wholesale demolition of neighborhoods and the public(s) that inhabited them. Additionally these costly projects developed extremely slowly and were therefore becoming more and more difficult to justify in the city's economic and political climate. The renovation of an existing space, as evidenced by Papp's cost-analysis to Anspacher for a renovated space, accommodated the NYSF's ambitions and desire to accelerate the process of finding a permanent space.

Even as the company's search for an existing space intensified, however, Papp continued to explore the possibility of tethering a prospective theatre to larger urban redevelopments. As mentioned near the beginning of this section, the NYSF inquired about a redevelopment site adjacent to the Museum of Natural History as a potential site for a large theatre space for the festival. Though Papp's proposed 1600-1800 seat theatre never came to fruition, in communications with city officials, the producer began articulating a more a substantial vision for the NYSF's civic-minded enterprise than he had in earlier proposals aimed at redevelopment and renewal sites. Writing to

Mayor Wagner in July of 1965, Papp offered a snapshot of his evolving ideas about a prospective theatre space and the public this space might attract. Unlike earlier correspondences with elected officials and municipal bureaucrats, Papp does not indicate a specific site when soliciting funding. He offers no indication of programming, beyond suggesting that the new theatre house a “repertory company.”

Of even greater significance was Papp’s use, and in fact the *first* use in official festival correspondence, of the moniker “Public Theater” to describe the festival’s proposed space. Writing somewhat wistfully, and invoking the “long and fruitful relationship” he and Mayor Wagner shared, Papp offers the first inkling of the “public theater” he envisioned:

As for the festival, while we are no longer a young, struggling theater, we have great problems for the future...The major stumbling block to meaningful artistic development has been the lack of year-round continuity...Because of the special nature of our theater – no admission charge, integrated, out-of-doors – we have received no major foundation grants. Our ally has been the City of New York, because we serve people here in the most democratic way. At this crucial stage, we need the assurance of year-round operation and we can turn only to the source with whom we have the most in common – the city of New York. A major grant of four million dollars to cover the construction and operation of a 1,200-seat Public Theater for the period of five years is needed. The theater will be geared to the dispossessed audiences that will never get in to Lincoln Center. It will become a monument to cultural

democracy in New York City and be the first fully democratized professional theater in the United States.³⁰¹

Papp concludes this correspondence with the suggestion that state and federal officials be solicited for matching funds to augment any municipal funding. Papp would seem to be aligning his project with the City of New York (indeed Papp's contention of a 'common' mission certainly suggests an intensification of his rhetoric surrounding the term 'public'), but also with the United States – and the appropriately ambiguous phrase “cultural democracy” – in hopes of casting the broadest possible net for his evolving institution.

Such ambiguity correlates to the openness of the appellation “public.” As noted in the introduction and reiterated throughout, the term ‘public’ –among other things – denotes a *potential audience*.³⁰² Given this denotation, a “public theatre” proclaims one of its central tenets, merely based on its moniker. Namely, that the theatre, the company, its administrators and even its artists are never entirely satisfied with the audience's that patronize their theatre, but always endeavor for greater exposure and relevance to an *expanding* audience, as yet unaddressed by their theatre. Earlier correspondence surrounding sites near Columbia University, New York University and the Civic Center simply referred to the prospective theatre as the “festival theatre,” “municipal theatre,” or “civic theatre” to name a few.

In subsequent correspondence, Papp more freely deploys the term “public,” as he did in a letter to Julius Edelstein in the middle of August 1965. Wagner passed Papp's proposal off to Edelstein, serving as Coordinator of Executive Programming

³⁰¹ Joseph Papp. Letter to Robert Wagner. 6 July 1965, Series I, Box 33, folder 14, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

³⁰² Christopher Balme. *The Theatrical Public Sphere*. (Cambridge; Cambridge UP, 2014), 40-41.

and Policy Planning in the mayor's office. Edelstein queried Papp for further details, given the paucity of the like in his letter to Wagner. Papp obliged, and responded with the fullest expression of the future theatre's place on New York City's cultural landscape:

The proposed New York Public Theater will be different from any other major professional theater in New York City and the United States. The differences will lie in the composition of its audience. Theater in the United States is a middle class form of entertainment; it is even more limited in that only a small part of the middle class regularly patronize the theater... The groundwork will be laid in the public school system, and will continue in the higher institutions of learning. A program in communities of New York City in cooperation with churches, clubs, centers, etc., will be vigorously developed to encourage the most interested elements to use the public theater... In brief, our contention (supported by eleven years direct experience) is that a new and vital audience for the theater exists in the City of New York, and that this audience can be found and cultivated.³⁰³

Papp uses strikingly similar language in his prospectus for Wooden 'O Productions, discussed in Chapter 1. Fundamental to the NYSW's early and sustained existence as the NYSF was the assumption that large potential audiences existed for Shakespeare in New York City. On the cusp of acquiring an indoor theatre, Papp adapts this sentiment to theatre more generally, while also recounting, invoking and imagining

³⁰³ Joseph Papp. Letter to Julius Edelstein. 10 Aug 1965, Series I, Box 33, folder 13, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

the potential connections the NYSF might foster with other established ‘public,’ or public-minded enterprises and institutions.

Even as late as Papp’s letter to Edelstein in mid-August 1965, the NYSF founder *still* pursued more or less contrasting visions for its theatre. Until the conclusion of the summer season at the Delacorte in 1965, redevelopment sites still appeared viable. Had these requirements been fulfilled, the history of the NYSF may well have unfolded quite differently. The challenges of building and developing theatre spaces in such close proximity to spaces with strong educational and/or civic functions and ambitions, however, had already beleaguered several theatrical institutions by the mid-1960s. Take for example the above-mentioned theatre complex at Lincoln Center and ANTA slightly before it. The former suffered mightily in its first decade of existence, shuffling through various theatre companies and producers, including the Public Theatre from 1973 to 1977. Much of this can be attributed to the financial health of the city in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, which I will touch in the Conclusion. So, though NYSF officials communicated enthusiastically with city officials and administrators, the company’s continued interest in adapted spaces indicates relative skepticism to pairing an indoor home with a redevelopment project.

Seeking to widen the NYSF’s search, Papp wrote to Geoffrey Platt, the Chairman of the Landmarks Commission simultaneously offering solidarity with the Commission’s objectives and expressing a desire to collaborate with the Commission in the festival’s search for a permanent theatre space.³⁰⁴ Invoking what Papp calls the

³⁰⁴ Joseph Papp. Letter to Geoffrey Platt. 29 Sep 1965, Series I, Box 33, folder 14, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

NYSF's 'quasi-official relationship with the City of New York,' the producer suggested a similar arrangement for any landmarked building turned permanent indoor theatre space. This arrangement would involve the purchase of a historic building by the city, with renovation and refurbishment costs taken on by the NYSF. Unlike earlier properties such as the Friend's Meeting House, the Spring Street Presbyterian Church and the Salisbury Hotel, whose purchase and renovation would have relied on large foundational and other philanthropic support for the lion's share of total cost, Papp's proposal to the newly formed Landmarks Commission relied on a large outlay of funding from municipal government sources.

While such funding was more or less in line with the NYSF's summer operation in Central Park and the MT, a proposed indoor theatre presented unique challenges for the company. Unlike their two summer operations, a permanent indoor theatre required an admission charge for their theatrical offerings, albeit a modest one. Still, even a small admissions charge represented a world of difference, as did entering into the thorny world of city real estate. Selling elected officials, foundation heads and the general public on the idea of free Shakespeare in parks and public spaces was very different than commandeering an existing piece of real estate for newer, experimental work, or at the very least an expanded repertory beyond the established dramatic canon.

Liaising with the Landmarks Commission provided an added dimension to the NYSF's search for a permanent space, aligning them with the very latest evolutions in urban re-development. Lincoln Center and the proposed Civic Center theatre embodied an earlier form of redevelopment, typified by neighborhood clearance and

wholesale development of the sites and spaces cleared. Adaptively re-purposing existing buildings, by contrast, provided a less imposing ‘edifice,’ to use McAuley’s word and suggested a sense of mutuality between the areas and peoples surrounding the theatre. Matching the company’s mission and vision to an eventual theatrical home, took nearly two years. This time provided, much like the dispute with Robert Moses recounted in Chapter 2 and the re-launched MT in 1964 recounted in Chapters 3 and 4, an opportunity for the NYSF to explore various figurations of public and calibrate its position on New York City’s *cultural* landscape. Finding a site, a space, and a home on the *cityscape* reflective of that position brought them to the historic, Astor Library building in September 1965.

Chapter 6: What is the City, but the Public!

While we in American today try to resolve the historical contradiction, “art institution,” we must understand that, in the final analysis, art itself cannot be institutionalized; that art itself is a form of rebellion against convention, against established and accepted ways of viewing life. At its best, it does not simply destroy the conventional intellectual structure; rather, it subjects such principles to re-examination, revision, and, in the case of great art, to rebuilding.³⁰⁵ –Joseph Papp

In October of 2011, I ventured to Manhattan’s East Village to take in the Public Theatre’s production of *Love’s Labor’s Lost*. Drawn by the bargain-basement price of admission—an unheard of \$15—I had never in fact been the Astor Place location of the Public Theatre, and therefore thought that a sojourn downtown was long overdue. As I approached the building, I noticed that construction scaffolding covered the trademark German Romanesque revival façade. Ascending the makeshift wooden stairs and platform to the lobby level, I peered through the window to see translucent drop-tarps partitioning the lobby. I made my way to the temporary box office, just off the lobby proper, with ten gallon buckets of plaster, paint, and linen drop clothes visible behind the gently swaying plastic. On the plastic tarps at various points along the path to the box office hung signage apologizing for the state of the lobby, and promising that the renovations would make the Public Theatre more welcoming than ever. Picking up my tickets, I ascended the two flights of stairs that led to the Anspacher Theater on the third level of the building. This theatre, site of so many iconic productions, including the Public Theater’s premiere 1967 production of *Hair*, had many of the mid-19th century library’s architectural features still visible. The almost total overhaul of the Public Theater’s lobby area had not, for the most part, included their performance spaces.

³⁰⁵ Joseph Papp. “Comment by Joseph Papp,” *Arts in Society* (Ed. Edward L. Kamarck). Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965, p 320.

In the weeks following the performance, I learned more and more about the Public Theater's four year, \$40 million renovation. The theater still maintains, in its mission, promotional materials, educational and artistic programming, a commitment to being a "public" institution, indeed a public "center for art, culture, and ideas."³⁰⁶ As noted throughout this dissertation, the appellation "public" featured heavily in the history and evolving identity which the NYSF and later 'Public Theater' sought to create and reform over its more than 60 year history. What this moniker connotes is constantly shifting, even as the theater re-dedicates its downtown location and advances capital campaigns for the reconstruction of the Delacorte in Central Park. A year after my first encounter with the Public Theater, in early October of 2012, the theater held a series of re-dedicatory events designed to "advance the Company's core mission of increasing accessibility and fostering public engagement."³⁰⁷ Questions remain, however, concerning the demographic and economic make up of this "public" to which the theater wishes to offer greater accessibility. To whom are these advertising campaigns directed, and whom does the Public Theater imagine will partake of, not only their theatrical offerings, but their renovated lobby, which current Artistic Director Oscar Eustis (and others) describe as a "public piazza?"

I offer this extended anecdote about the contemporary state of the Public Theater for several reasons. First, to demonstrate that the physical renovation of the theatre – begun in earnest at the beginning of 1966 – continues unabated 50 years after its opening. Secondly, the unceasing *physical* evolution of the theater

³⁰⁶The latter, quoted phrase has been seen on season brochures, tour buses, and city buses throughout Manhattan.

³⁰⁷ Public Theater, "A Revitalization of our Home at Astor Place." (Promotional material, acquired on October 4, 2012 at The Public Theatre Re-dedication Ceremony, 425 Lafayette St.)

corresponds to the unending project to define and refine the theater's mission and notion of 'public.' Finally, this anecdote makes plain something only hinted at in earlier chapters, namely that even civic-minded artistic and cultural projects like the Public Theater require incredible resources and political will. All three of these reasons, and most especially the mission to embody, attract and reach the widest most diverse public possible remains as pressing today as it was in the closing months of 1965.

Acquiring the Astor Library:

In October of 1965, a little more than a week after Papp contacted Landmarks Commissioner Geoffrey Platt, the producer convened the board of the NYSF. In board meetings leading up to the October meeting, most of the minutes were devoted to managing the funding of the festival as well as preparing for and reflecting on the Mobile Theatre's second season in operation. A single paragraph on the meeting's minutes was devoted to the new "winter theatre," Papp first makes mention of his correspondence with the officials from the new Landmarks Commission and other city officials, claiming enthusiasm for the idea of renovating and operating a theatre in an existing or soon-to-be landmarked building.³⁰⁸ In a late-October 1965 letter to Barry Edelstein, with whom he had corresponded only a few months prior about a prospective theatre near the Museum of Natural History, Papp called the mayoral assistant's attention to news from the New Landmarks Commission that the Astor Library (most recently operating as the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS))

³⁰⁸ NYSF Board Minutes, 7 Oct 1965, Series I, Box 33, folder 16. New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

would be the first building selected for preservation.³⁰⁹ One week later, Papp reported to his Executive Board that the festival would pursue the library in the hopes of renovating as their new winter theatre.³¹⁰ In fact, the Landmarks Commission just the day before Papp's letter to Edelstein released the "designation report;" testament both to Papp's tenacity and the extent of his knowledge into public municipal operations.

What's in a Name?

In conjunction with their ambition to acquire the Astor Library, the NYSF also faced an interesting and rather illuminating quandary as an organization. Even as early as the fall of 1965, the festival's fundraising operation gained several sources of funding for the company's proposed winter theatre space. Writing to the festival's lawyers in late November 1965 through January 1966, Papp expressed concern about differentiating funding for the company's offerings in Central Park and elsewhere, from funding for the permanent indoor theatre. An umbrella corporation was developed, or rather revived in the form of "Wooden 'O Productions.'" Invoking the Shakespearean roots of Papp's organization expressed only part of what the company sought with the new theatre, as evidenced by a letter to Parks Commissioner August Heckscher from Papp in January of 1966:

We are proceeding to form a non-profit membership corporation that will be responsible for the destiny of the Astor Library building and its fulfillment. In addition to serving as the instrument of all financial matters pertaining to the renovation and some operation of the building, the corporation's purposes will

³⁰⁹ Papp, Joseph. Letter to Julius Edelstein, 27 Oct 1965, Series I, Box 33, folder 14. New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

³¹⁰ NYSF Board Minutes, 4 Nov 1965, Series I, Box 33, folder 16. New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

be broad enough to include civic improvement of the area in which the building is situated as well as activities of a cultural nature...Our attorneys are in the process of completing the form of the new corporation which will function under the name of: WOODEN O PUBLIC THEATER CORPORATION.³¹¹

What ensued over the next several months, as the festival ironed out the specifics of acquisition and renovation of the Astor Library was an extended dialogue over what name would be most appropriate for the company's indoor theatrical venture.

A certificate of incorporation was granted under the name 'Wooden O Public Theatre Corporation' in January of 1966, and beginning almost immediately Papp and company began cobbling together both the new theatre's board and exploring what this new theatre venture might be named. With a nod towards the NYSF's origins, the 'Wooden O' of Papp's prospectus, original business certificate and now certificate of incorporation remained. Additionally, the NYSF boldly proclaimed what they had only suggested in correspondence with donors and city officials, promotional materials and a wide array of other media, namely that this new indoor theatrical venue and venture would bear the moniker "public." This blending of the organization's past and future yielded the tentative name "Wooden O Public Theatre of New York," after a several month process of designing letterhead and settling on the Board of Directors for the prospective theatre. Though this name did not abide, the NYSF's commitment to embodying and serving audiences and publics in New

³¹¹ Papp, Joseph. Letter to August Heckscher II, 13 Jan 1966, Series I, Box 47, folder 16, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

York City was never more outwardly apparent at that time than in deliberation over the name for the theatre complex at Astor Library.

Despite this moniker, which at once expresses a relatively definable (within the bounds of the city) though still somewhat ambiguous audience and public, the NYSF now had a very specific geography from which to address this ‘public.’ Performing in various spaces throughout the first dozen years of the festival’s existence was, as discussed throughout this dissertation, something of a strategy to ensure the company’s relevance and identification of *various* demographics and geographies. At the very moment when the festival secured a permanent indoor home, they more boldly proclaimed themselves “public,” than ever before. The challenges of developing, defining and refining what this proclamation meant and would continue to mean intensified once the festival lacked the advantages of movability and its associated strategies at the Astor Library in the East Village.

‘Come, go we in procession to the village’

Though Central Park continued, and still continues to be foundational to the identity of the Public Theater, the acquisition of the Astor Library as a permanent home signaled the beginnings of the company’s most sustained (indeed it continues to this day) articulation of its role as a “public” institution. Just before turning the company’s attention towards occupying an existing – let alone a landmarked – building in the fall of 1965, Papp expressed a desire that the NYSF’s theatrical home might be located in a less fashionable area of Manhattan, perhaps serving as an impetus for wider redevelopment of that neighborhood. Additionally, proximity to universities and the geographic and institutional stability they provided was desirable,

as was an abundance of younger audiences and publics.³¹² Questions remain, as I will explore in this final chapter as to what type of audience the NYSF could develop in an area that seemed to be very much in transition. Clearly proximity to New York University would ensure a strong educational, institutional presence, and an audience of educated and politically engaged students, during a time when campuses had become staging grounds for protest, as mentioned in Chapter 3. In its earliest productions, the Public Theater eventually engaged directly with concern of the young, disenfranchised, and marginalized.

The presence of young people and a strong educational and institutional presence tells only half the story in unpacking the East Village's unique history and context. Though heavily gentrified today, the East Village has a varied history, which informs the Public Theater's founding narrative and claim as a *public* institution:

The East Village has a long and lively history as an arena of aesthetic practice and political activism. As a point of embarkation for a variety of immigrant ethnic groups since the nineteenth century, the area has seen the likes of Yiddish theater, the Christodora Settlement House (now luxury co-ops), an assortment of socialist and anarchist movements, and Abstract Expressionists of the 1950s. More recently, it has been called home by a collection of 1960s countercultural representatives.³¹³

These “countercultural representatives” were moving into the beleaguered neighborhood that had previously housed an enormous, tightly packed Ukrainian

³¹² Epstein 184

³¹³ Judith Huggins Balfe. *Paying the Piper: Causes and Consequences of Art Patronage*. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 162.

immigrant population.³¹⁴ A decline in the overall population of the East Village “steadily decreased after the 1920s, with the heaviest decline taking place throughout the 1960s.” This decline meant abandoned buildings, and a steadily growing drug trade.³¹⁵

Given the challenges the neighborhood experienced, it was little wonder that the Cooper Square District – a roughly 12-block tract of city space – drew the attention of Moses. Throughout the 1950s, as plans for Lincoln Center and the associated ‘slum clearance’ continued apace, Moses along with head of the United Housing Foundation Abraham Kazan developed plans to raze the district around the Astor Library Building. As indicated in earlier chapters, however, Moses’ brand of urban redevelopment and renewal proved, even as early as the late-1950s to be unsustainable and at times exploitative. Emboldened by the Housing Act of 1949, most notably Title I of this Act, Moses leveraged federal funding to enact large-scale slum clearance. A spirited group of urban liberals, including Jane Jacobs and others, rose throughout the city to meet this brand of “renewal,” and advocates for the Cooper Square district were no different. Once Moses located a “sponsor” in the form of the United Housing Foundation, plans for the redevelopment of Cooper Square appeared imminent. In 1959, the same year that Moses finally acquiesced to Papp and the NYSF, resistance to Moses’ plans for the Cooper Square District coalesced into the “Cooper Union Committee.”

Having staved off Moses’ larger renewal plans, the group solicited New School for Social Research city planner Walter Thabit to draft an alternate plan for

³¹⁴ Epstein 184

³¹⁵ Balfe 162-163

Cooper Square. This plan included low, moderate and middle-income housing, variety in newer construction and perhaps most importantly it “honored and protected the diverse fabric of neighborhood life.”³¹⁶ Though this particular plan never fully came to fruition, its effects and the forces of urban renewal and slum clearance the plan took aim at, could still be felt in early 1966. Frances Goldin, one of the founders of the Cooper Union Committee – by then called the “Cooper Square Community Development and Businessmen’s Association” – wrote to Papp welcoming him to the neighborhood:

Welcome to our turf. We look forward to your fine theatre as a most welcome addition to our already fine neighborhood. As you know, we in Cooper Square have been trying to make it even finer these past seven years, and are still trying. We have great ideas for the rebuilding of Cooper Square, and although all give us great credit and praise, there’s a row to hoe before we save our patch of land from the evil urban renewers. We’d love to talk with you about what we are doing, and what we have already done, and to say hello on home ground.³¹⁷

Clearly the forces for large-scale urban renewal, under Title I or otherwise, remained powerful enough in February of 1966 to justify Goldin’s characterization of her organization’s ongoing battle in rebuilding Cooper Square.

Other correspondence from similar organizations interested in preserving the neighborhoods spirit, architecture and otherwise, poured into the NYSF’s offices before and after they moved into the Astor Library. They included the Historic

³¹⁶ Zipp 355-357

³¹⁷ Frances Goldin. Letter to Joseph Papp, 7 Feb 1966, Series I, Box 33, folder 14, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

Landmarks Society, the Lafayette Historical Group and neighborhood institutions like Cooper Union. In the case of the Historic Landmarks Society (HLS), they drafted their own plan for the area's redevelopment, which included proposals for rezoning the "Upper Lafayette Street Area" of the East Village for "institutional and residential purposes." The anchor for this September 1966 proposal, from the perspective of HLS at least, was the Old Merchant House on East 4th Street just around the corner from the Astor Library. To facilitate and justify rezoning, the plan featured pedestrian malls and green spaces to make the area more amenable to residential development. The proposal echoes Balfe's sentiments cited above, claiming the area is part of a large and "deteriorating manufacturing district." This manufacturing district, claims HLS, impedes eastward expansion of Greenwich Village and potential connection of this historic district with the Cooper Square residential area further east of Lafayette St.

Indeed, the primary purpose of the proposal was to facilitate private redevelopment of the area, with the assistance of city and federal funding and most notably for the purposes of the Public Theater's early years, creating landmarked buildings as anchors to such development. The transformation this document envisions includes "institutional and hi-rise residential developments," and the "presence of... landmarked buildings could be used to facilitate this transformation."³¹⁸ Despite this transformation never coming fully to fruition, it is instructive to note the context of the redevelopment into which the NYSF ventured with the acquisition of the Astor Library. As with earlier production sites and models,

³¹⁸ Shields, John I., "Proposals for the Upper Lafayette Street Area." Historic Landmark Society, September, 1966, Series I, Box 46, folder 13, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

most notably the Mobile Theater, the company gained an emerging sensitivity for the peculiar context of each performance space.

In light of the festival's growing ambitions toward creating something of a 'public institution' in its new East Village abode, the new Public Theater needed to reckon with both plans for redevelopment of the area. Papp's plans for the *theatre's* development, as I will explore later in this chapter, offer similar models to those offered by the above organizations for the development of the Cooper Square district, including public and private partnership. In fact, Papp employs a well-worn and highly effective strategy, first elaborated in Chapter 2, when he insisted in 1959 that festival was a *private* organization involved in *public* work. Before exploring the character of this organization and the nature of their work at the Astor Library, I would like to offer additional context for their presence in the East Village. Beyond the area's physical redevelopment, artists and producers were exploring alternatives to the commercial theatre uptown. Papp and company were by no means the only organization interested in scouting and developing younger audiences for the theatre, as the mid-1960s saw the emergence of "off-Broadway" theatre's in New York City.

Off-Broadway Context:

The Off-Broadway scene began in earnest in the 1950s primarily as a response to the commercial theatres further uptown. For much of its early history, it remained a domain of young playwrights and performers creating and producing original work and re-imagining classical works informed and inflected with contemporary sensibilities, contexts and spaces. These spaces, often adapted from existing buildings and dwellings, appealed especially to younger, more progressive audiences hungry

for theatre that spoke more urgently and directly to them. Off-Broadway began as an alternative to the commercial theatre, embodied by the boom and bust fare of Broadway. It operated through the innovation of artists and impresarios such as Julian Beck, Judith Molina, Joseph Chaikin, Joe Cinno, Richard Barr, along with innumerable playwrights and performers. Barr was especially instrumental in establishing the legitimacy of off-Broadway as a source for American theatrical innovation – particularly in playwriting – when he produced a double bill of Beckett’s *Krapp’s Last Tape* and Albee’s *Zoo Story* (in its American premiere) at the Cherry Lane Theatre in 1960.³¹⁹ On the strength of this production’s reception, Barr took a chance on Albee’s other great work of the early 1960s, *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* bringing it to Broadway in 1962.

The kind of exposure Barr achieved for Albee’s work influenced an entire generation of writers, many of whom wrote for the aforementioned Café Cinno, Ellen Stewart’s La MaMa, Judson Street Theatre and Theatre Genesis. At these venues, the cornerstones of the early Off-Broadway and emerging Off-off-Broadway movement, playwrights and performers worked for little or no remuneration, sharing what might be scraped together by passing the hat. These plays were “spontaneous, outrageous, half-finished, scatological, and sometimes incomprehensible,” responding to the verve, vitality and sometime violence of the 1960s.³²⁰ Barr’s Off-Broadway remount of *Zoo Story* and Broadway production of *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* also

³¹⁹Stephen Bottoms. *Playing Underground: A Critical History of the 1960s Off-off-Broadway Movement*. (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 20-21.

³²⁰David Crespy. *Off-Broadway Explosion*. (New York: Backstage Books, 2003), 18.

inspired what Stephen Bottoms characterized as increasing levels of “inflated and unsustainable speculative activity.”³²¹

Following such speculation, off-Broadway budgets ballooned, leading many young writers further underground to the inchoate off-off-Broadway movement. Michael Smith and Nick Orzel, writing in a 1966 collection of plays from the early years of the off-Broadway elaborate in this shift:

Off-Broadway’s happy days were over quicker than anyone expected; ironically nearly a dozen Off-Broadway theatres were built or reconstructed just to late, and Off-Broadway today is glutted with empty theatres. As the movement became established, rents went up, unions moved in, ticket prices climbed, audiences were reduced in number and every more subject to “hit psychology.” A play could be produced for a few hundred dollars in the middle fifties; in the sixties Off-Broadway productions have required initial investments ranging from a minimum of \$10,000 to upwards of \$40,000.³²²

By the mid-1960s, what began as a response to the excesses and extravagances of commercial theatre became susceptible to the boom and bust mentality, referenced in the previous chapter. As with Brustein’s assessment of the project and programming at Lincoln Center, Smith and Orzel’s assessment rests on the creation of permanent theatre spaces and the perils endemic to such enterprises.

These contrasting characterizations of Off-Broadway, at once a site of potentially lucrative “speculation” and a place of real, relevant and revolutionary theatrical and cultural innovation find analogy in Martin Gottfried’s notion of a

³²¹ Bottoms 22

³²² Michael Smith and Stephen Orzel, eds. *Eight Plays of Off-Off-Broadway*, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966), 4-5.

“theatre divided.” According to Gottfried’s 1967 book of the same name, American theatre can be broadly divided between the “left wing” and the “right wing,” with the former characterized by change and a progressive orientation toward the new, while the later maintains tradition with an orientation toward the artistically conservative. Instead of passing judgment on which ‘wing’ ought to be favored in the nurturing and development of American theatre, Gottfried claims that both must nourish one another. His basic thesis states that both ends of the theatrical spectrum and the forces they wield have, since the conclusion of the Second World War, been divided and theatrical growth suffered as a result.³²³ Gottfried articulates the implications for Off-Broadway succinctly and provocatively:

The left wing also includes off-Broadway, or at least some of it, now that middle age, high production costs, excessive union demands and the profit motive have reduced most of its participants to junior Broadwayites.

Whatever part of off-Broadway still looks for the artistic, the noncommercial, the offbeat is left wing. The left wing *must* be antagonistic to the norm. It pushes for change. By nature it resists *popularity*.³²⁴

Gottfried confirms what Crespy, along with Smith and Orzel suggested, namely that off-Broadway had by the early to mid-1960s fractured under the weight of economic and cultural pressures.

Into this balkanized theatrical landscape, Papp and the NYSF had significant decisions to make about how their previously proclaimed mission and rhetoric – most especially as it relates to audience development and public service – would sound in

³²³ Martin Gottfried. *Theater Divided: The Post-War American Stage*. (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1968), 3-7.

³²⁴ Gottfried 7

their newly renovated theatre complex, along with equally important decisions about the company's programming for this new cultural and artistic complex. Before tuning their rhetoric and mission in the Astor Library, however, the festival needed to defend existing funding for their Shakespeare activities that they suddenly found under attack in the spring of 1966. In defending the NYSF's funding for their outdoor and peripatetic activities, the strategic deployment of "public" and its various analogues increased and intensified, as befits an inchoate institution tentatively named the "Public Theater of New York."

'Let him go up into the public chair'

Beginning in the early 1960s and most notably after the opening of the Delacorte, as explored in Chapters 1 and 2, Papp trumpeted free Shakespeare as a 'public service,' and therefore worthy of municipal support. Most importantly for our present considerations, however, Papp maintained that the extraordinary growth of the festival's popularity and vitality constituted grounds for an institutional presence on the city's rapidly burgeoning cultural landscape.

I felt even a quarter would be too much. Because, I feel there are public libraries that are free. I feel a city the size of New York should have a free theatre. Now there are people who can pay to go to the public library...can pay for a book. Why don't we charge admission? Why don't we charge rental on these books? Because it is considered important to the life of a city, to the educational life of people. And I feel that the theatre can represent that too and

I feel at least one theatre in the city should have had it. So it was very important we keep it free for that reason.³²⁵

At the time, with the post-war municipal construction, development and resources still booming, these words might have seemed idealistic, but not unimaginable. Having run the gauntlet of municipal bureaucracy and in the main prevailed, the NYSF was right to be optimistic and ambitious. Less than four years later, however, much had changed for both the city and the theatre.

Still, in 1966, Papp and his fellow administrators at the NYSF drafted a highly ambitious proposal for a “five-year program designed to develop and cultivate audiences in New York City, New York State and cities throughout the United States” with a budget of just over \$13 million. It includes the present programming for the festival, describes prospective theatrical and educational programming and offers a glimpse of how the new Astor Library Theatre complex fits into the company’s overall structure. This proposal, though still very early in the renovation process at Astor Library, rehashes and rehearses much of the same language used by Papp and the festival dating back the earliest elaborations of their *raison d’etre* as an organization, namely the cultivation of new audiences for the theatre and breaking down barriers to accessing this theatre.

THE PREMISE that cost is a principal deterrent to popular theater-going guided the formation of the New York Shakespeare Festival in 1954 and the adoption of a policy of free admissions. The FREE IDEA was not original. It applied to the theater the democratic principle of availability without regard to

³²⁵ BBC-TV. “BBC Monitor: Shakespeare in New York,” (Television broadcast filmed in 1962 (exact date unknown)). Joseph Papp Public Theater/New York Shakespeare Festival Moving Image Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

means found in other American institutions of learning and culture.

SUPPORT FOR THE FESTIVAL followed the same historic path traversed by other educational institutions. Initially underwritten by private funds, the Festival programs after six years assumed a public character which warranted municipal subvention. This TWELVE YEAR EXPERIMENT in democratic theater-going has reached over two million people at a cost of \$3,998,596, of which \$1,801,000 has been City funds and \$2,197,596 private funds.³²⁶

The above text opens the proposal itself and deploys a method subsequently – and presently more than ever – used by the festival in promotional materials and all manner of media.

This kind of popularity would seem to indicate that the NYSF errs on the side of conservatism and Gottfried’s above-mentioned “right wing,” even as Papp began to entertain more experimental fair for the Astor Library. I will explore these offerings more at length near the conclusion of this chapter, as they bear heavily upon the Public Theater’s attempts to balance their core mission of creating and cultivating “publics,” their commitment to original work to bolster the dramatic canon, and their intrepid pursuit of more experimental and politically engaged material. One of the primary means the festival disseminates this mission is through the telling and re-telling of the company’s storied history.

³²⁶ Papp, Joseph. “A presentation and documentation proposed by the New York Shakespeare Festival requesting support for a five-year program, Series I, Box 37, folder 17, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY. Among these educational and cultural initiatives and institutions was the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts. The crucial difference between these public service institutions and the Public Theater were the latter’s existence in a discrete geography and service to a relatively discrete public.

Few theatres in the United States more continually tell and re-tell their story than the NYSF and Public Theatre. In the retelling quoted above, the company strategically frames their early history as a demonstration of their fidelity to the “democratic principle of availability.” Having developed the “public character” of their work in Central Park, the festival now – according to their logic – rendered them worthy of monies and support from municipal authorities and institutions. Similar rhetoric permeates earlier proposals for public funding and/or governmental sponsorship, including the festival’s attempts, albeit short-lived to tour abroad under the banner of the US State Department, as discussed in Chapter 3. Though this rhetoric and strategy were by the opening months of 1966 well rehearsed, they took on a fresh relevance in light of the NYSF’s acquisition and renovation of Astor Library. In referencing other “American institutions of learning and culture,” the festival confirmed what had merely been intimated in earlier seasons of peripatetic playing. In following the path of these institutions, and adopting their methods for popular and financial support, the NYSF could join the pantheon of New York City’s cultural and arts institutions.

This process unfolded even as the architect helming the Astor Library’s renovation, Giorgio Cavaglieri (in close consultation with theatre and scenic designer Ming Cho Lee) informed festival administrators that the March 1966 plans cited above would prove challenging. Those plans called for the construction of an 800-seat theatre space, likely akin to the spaces Papp proposed as part of earlier proposals for the Civic Center and Columbia University theatre complexes. The cost of renovating the library to accommodate such a large theatre space, however, proved

prohibitive and Cavaglieri overhauled his plans accordingly in May of 1966.³²⁷ This process concluded in early June, with Cavaglieri and Lee finally offering fresh renderings and estimates for what would become the Anspacher Theater, which seated just fewer than 300 patrons. This shift is not an insignificant one, as it signals the death knell of Papp's ambition to emulate the design of theatres such as the Vivian Beaumont at Lincoln Center, the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis and the Stratford Festival theatre in Ontario. Clearly these design models, and the ethos that undergirds them explored in Chapter 1 and 5, still exercised an influence on Papp, even after half a year in the Astor Library. The *new* design model created by Papp, Cavaglieri and Lee called for a variety of theatre spaces under one roof. In serving public(s), having multiple theatre spaces proved propitious. In place of casting the widest net with repertory playing in a single theatre, the Public Theater could address and embody various publics with varied programming and theatrical offerings.

In that same month, the festival encountered *another* unexpected challenge, however, when the Board of Estimates decided to slash the company's funding. Clearly, it was a tumultuous time for the festival, as it juggled preparations for the 1966 summer season at the Delacorte and the Mobile Theater with fresh forays into municipal and financial support for the festival and the enormous challenges of renovating a century year old building. The cuts to the festival's funding from the city occurred even as funding to other artistic and cultural institutions *increased*, a fact much discussed at the NYSF's Board meeting on May 4, 1966. Whatever 'service'

³²⁷ Cavaglieri, Giorgio. Letter to Joseph Papp, Series I, Box 46, folder 20, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY. In this letter, Cavaglieri begins the process of exploring how Phase I (out of a total of five "phases" for the renovation) might be shifted to focus on the renovation of the library's 3rd floor reading room into a 299-seat theatre space.

the festival provided to the city and its cultural enrichment, at least in the eyes of the Board of Estimates, did not justify an increase due to other cultural and/or arts institutions. The approach going in to the May 5th Board of Estimate meeting would be to accentuate the previously established precedent that the “administration...accept(ed) the responsibility of a certain amount of support for the cultural lives of its citizens, and that any reduction of support at this time will be a step backwards from the progress made in this area.”³²⁸ This was familiar rhetorical gesture employed by the festival, namely that *service* to the public ought to translate into municipal support and funding of the service *institution*’s enterprise and/or activities.

Having rehearsed this rhetoric and strategy at the NYSF’s Board meeting, Papp issued an impassioned plea before the Board of Estimates on May 5th. This was a critical moment for the festival as the city’s cut’s to the festival’s appropriations would have meant eliminating stops on the Mobile Theater, and the Spanish Mobile Theater altogether. His rhetoric is understated and assured, despite the direness of the circumstances for the festival:

If we had entertained the notion of providing you with a dramatic demonstration of the numbers of people from all walks of life who support the New York Shakespeare Festival and who are outraged at the fact of a drastic cut in the city’s contribution to the programs, we could easily have filled city hall and all the environs of this downtown Civic Center. We could have put on a great show. But we do not believe that this body here requires any

³²⁸ NYSF Board Minutes. 4 May 1966, Series I, Box 43, folder 16, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

convincing. Anyone who lives in the city of New York with the slightest interest in first-rate cultural activities and democratic distribution of these activities is aware of the work of the festival. This awareness did not spring up as an overnight phenomenon, but resulted from twelve years of struggle to establish the principle of city responsibility for the cultural welfare of its citizens – all classes and of all colors.³²⁹

What Papp stresses here is crucial for understanding the festival's notion of "public" on the cusp of occupying the Astor Library. 'Public' is a process and a presence, a struggle and a commitment to serve. Papp stands, by his own characterization, before the Board of Estimates on behalf of an absent, but supportive and highly diverse group of New Yorkers cultivated through time and dedicated to the NYSF and its work.

Papp was armed with the belief that he marches at the head of an enthusiastic public, and the conviction that the festival's work "arose out of an evolutionary process with deep roots embedded in the city's life." Support from municipal authorities and monies from the public coffers were merely monetary manifestations of what was therefore beyond dispute, according to Papp. The strength of Papp's claim rests largely on joining two visions of 'public' in his brief remarks before the Board of Estimates. First, Papp trumpets previous support for the festival, evoking an impassioned public hungry for the festival's offerings. Secondly, he evokes a public that may not necessarily attend the company's productions, but nonetheless shares his organizations concerns and determination to "democratically distribut(e)" the

³²⁹ Papp, Joseph. "Board of Estimate Meeting: Joseph Papp Statement," 5 May 66, Series I, Box 42, folder 10, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

festival's offerings. Papp's assumptions and methods draws us back to Balme's contention, cited in both the Introduction and the previous chapter, that "public" might refer to a 'potential audience.'

In the case of Papp's strategy for positioning the NYSF at this critical juncture in their history, however, something else was afoot. In his book *Publics and Counterpublics*, cited in the Introduction, Michael Warner sheds significantly light on Papp's rhetoric and the absent but present "public" for whom he speaks:

The temptation is to think of publics as something we make, through individual heroism and creative inspiration or through common goodwill. Much of the process, however, necessarily remains invisible to consciousness and to reflective agency.³³⁰

Papp certainly leans heavily upon the "common goodwill" his company cultivated, as this dissertation occasionally elaborates in letters, speeches and other statements to wider audiences. If, as Warner indicates, however, the process of making publics relies at least in part upon the machinations of that process remaining invisible, what becomes individual agency? When an institution, and inarguably the NYSF in the middle of 1966 sought such a distinction, adopts the complicated rhetoric that swirls around 'public,' what added responsibilities do they also adopt? For Papp, and others who speak on behalf of the theatre, they become the visible presence of an institution that relies – to extend Warner's analogy – on a process that requires a certain level of invisibility and absence.

Papp anticipated and expected municipal subsidy was deserved and ought to be forthcoming, based on his company's earnest and committed service to enriching

³³⁰ Michael Warner. *Publics and Counterpublics*. (Brooklyn, NY: Zone Books, 2002), 14.

the city's cultural life. In this way, according to Gottfried, the NYSF bore a resemblance to other producers and emerging institutions around the country that believed subsidy was their due.³³¹ Gottfried offers a highly critical, nearly lacerating assessment of the NYSF's positioning and strategies for funding and maintaining their new permanent indoor space.

Because of the festival's dependence upon contributions, mostly from New York City, Papp has become increasingly involved with politicking and fund-raising. Like other resident theater directors, he built his in a bubble that he insisted could not burst. Like them too, the very existence of his theater became no longer his alone to control. He confidently formulated plans for a two-theater, winter program. The millions of necessary dollars were only figures-on-paper dreams. Certainly, if Papp had waited until the money was raised the theaters would never get built. Certainly a degree of brazen ambition is necessary to start a create thing...It is all very fine for the city to be given free Shakespeare. While the audiences at Central Park are obviously capable of purchasing tickets, perhaps they wouldn't come for even a fifty-cent admission price. The system of giving reserved seats to contributors is a neat way of indirectly selling some of the tickets and the "free" idea is Papp's gimmick as well as his social ideal. The price of that gimmick, though is absolute dependence upon outside sources, forcing Papp to become an annual weeper while his theater grows fat.³³²

³³¹ Gottfried 142

³³² Gottfried 147

Gottfried's characterization of the festival's plight on the cusp of opening the Astor Library is apt and very suggestive. First, as every history of the festival and its founder attest, the ambitions of the company always flew before the means to achieve that ambition emerged.

This method for organizational perseverance was not only necessary, but also paired perfectly with Papp and the NYSF's strategy – Gottfried calls it a “gimmick” – of offering tickets gratis. Furnishing this public service entitled the festival, according to Papp and company's logic, to the expectation of patronage due to other examples municipal institutions. This tangle of service and strategy, appropriation and patronage connote a series of important questions, posed by Gottfried but also at the very heart of our present considerations. While acknowledging the “weird custom of the American Subsidy system” in which great and costly enterprises were conceived before the assurance of public appropriations, Gottfried claims that “(e)vidently theatres are being built. But when they are, *whose* will they be? And *what* will they be?”³³³ The “who” and the “what” were, and continue to be after five decades, intimately entwined, not only in the Public Theater's mission and strategic deployment of “public,” but also in the process of selecting artistic programming to support and pair with their figuration(s) of this ‘public.’

Programming the Public:

As with so many other moments and evolutions in the NYSF's early history, including the complex process of creating and/or finding a permanent theatre space unpacked in Chapter 5, designs on programming shift with each new exigent for the company. Bereft of the cultural cache of Shakespeare's work to draw in public

³³³ Gottfried 147 (my *emphasis*)

interest and municipal funding, and operating in the dynamic and occasionally explosive environment of Off-Broadway Papp and the festival's administrators needed to reframe the company's mission and priorities. While audience development and public service still functioned as the twin pillars of the theatre's mission, the Astor Library and the process of determining what type of programming would fill its prospective performance spaces forced a bit of institutional soul-searching. The first inclinations of what might fill the performance and rehearsal spaces of the Astor Library came well before specific plays or productions were discussed, and were in fact included in the five-year plan cited above. The "NEW PUBLIC THEATER OF NEW YORK" would, according to plan, feature "low cost theater for motivated and theater-oriented audiences of low- and middle-income children's plays and experimental plays."³³⁴ So, while the festival's outdoor offerings remained oriented toward the theatrically uninitiated, the earliest vision of the company's programming in the Astor Library was for those already schooled or at the very least "oriented" to the theatre.

This somewhat narrower definition of "public" – i.e. audiences already disposed to theatre-going – comports with Balme's claim that "(t)heatres communicate continually with the theatre-going public," as this ongoing communication forms a crucial component of the "theatrical public sphere."³³⁵ In the case of the NYSF, now about to renovate and open a theatre complex with much smaller audience spaces and in an area of the city undergoing profound shifts in demographics and design, the nature of this communication was critical. There was a

³³⁴ "A presentation..."

³³⁵ Christopher Balme. *The Theatrical Public Sphere*. (Cambridge; Cambridge UP, 2014), 41.

natural affinity between earlier notions of ‘public’ and the wide-open theatre spaces of Delacorte and the Mobile Theater. They were designed to enact, as explored in Chapters 2 and 3, a sense of openness, access and egalitarianism.

Now in a monumental structure like the Astor Library, with an impressive and potentially forbidding edifice, the NYSF needed to select artistic programming that might soften the rough edges of that façade and make it welcoming for a new ‘public’ hungry for new works. Antoine Vitez’s notions of the theatre as either an “edifice” or a “shelter” – cited above in McAuley – illuminate the NYSF’s challenges in creating, renovating and programming the Astor Library. When the theatre operates as an edifice, it declares itself a theatre by virtue of impressive or monumental design, and surely the Astor Library fits this characterization. By contrast, when theatres function as shelters, the formal constraints endemic to more heavily designed and curated spaces are lifted, or at least loosened. These spaces welcome rather than forbid, and access is freely offered.³³⁶ This dichotomy offers more than merely architectural or symbolic insight, especially for the NYSF’s new Public Theater.

The notion of ‘public’ suggests something much grander than mere brick and mortar, something hinted at in Papp’s statement to the Board of Estimates. It was not merely a public service that the NYSF offered, which would certainly place them in the same realm as other artistic and cultural institutions in the city. The festival operated as a defender and conservator of “cultural welfare.” Given this characterization of the company’s relationship to the city and its public(s), the Astor Library might certainly be deemed a ‘shelter.’ Therefore, Vitez’s insistence that theaters *must* be either an edifice or a shelter might prove incomplete in the case of

³³⁶ McAuley 38-39.

the Public Theater. In fact, the experience of the festival creating and growing the Mobile Theater, explored in Chapter 4, reflects the challenges of maintaining the decorum of a traditional theater space (edifice), while offering enough openness and inviting the enthusiasm of audiences (shelter). Striking this balance, in the case of Mobile Theater, meant taking a good hard look at the types of programming the festival took to neighborhood parks around the city.³³⁷ After the funding crisis of May 1966 was averted, Papp and festival administrators began this process of introspection in developing programming for the Astor Library.

Two months after addressing the Board of Estimate, Papp wrote in response to Jane Smith, whom directed in the 1965 Delacorte production of *Troilus and Cressida*. Smith wrote in response to receiving promotional materials from the festival about the new Astor Library theatre complex, to which she responded enthusiastically. She then queries Papp about the type of programming he had in mind, making very clear that her services (specifically for a “knock-down, drag-out Phaedra to launch your season) were at the company’s disposal, should they desire them.³³⁸ Papp responded cordially, first acknowledging delays in the theatre’s opening; it would now begin production in January of 1967.³³⁹ Papp admits that planning for the festival’s summer season proved prohibitive to substantial deliberation on theatrical offerings for the Astor Library. He did, however, offer a snap shot of his thinking about programming at the new theatre center:

³³⁷ As mentioned in Chapter 4, the festival moved away from Shakespeare altogether after the 1968 Mobile Theater, thereafter favoring more contemporary fare that Papp and others thought would address the concerns and tastes of local communities and demographics.

³³⁸ Jane Smith. Letter to Joseph Papp, 28 Jun 1966, Series I, Box 46, folder 16, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

³³⁹ In reality, the challenges of renovating the landmark building eventually pushed the building’s opening to October 1967.

Our orientation is toward new works and we have been reading plays ad nauseum without coming up with a single producible (in our opinion) American work. We do have a couple of European plays which are very interesting and may do them. If we can't find enough new plays to make a season, we will consider classic revivals, carefully chosen. For the first year we cannot consider repertory because it's too expensive...³⁴⁰

Papp's interest in new work from Europe aligns with the importance of European influences on the development of the Off-Broadway movement, both before and after the move toward creating permanent theatres cited above.³⁴¹

Despite the pressures of planning and administering the 1966 summer season being behind them, the festival was still casting about for producible plays to open the Public Theater in December 1966. By then, it also became apparent that a January 1967 opening for the theatre complex would prove impossible and October 1967 became the new target for Public Theater's inaugural production. Papp informed the Board, without providing specifics about prospective productions, that if suitable contemporary plays for the theater could not be found, that the festival would produce plays from the "classical repertory."³⁴² Finally in March of the following year, Papp and company developed a list of prospective plays for the 1967-68 season. This list featured four works by European playwrights including *Armstrong's Last Goodnight*

³⁴⁰ Joseph Papp. Letter to Jane Smith, 1 Jul 1966, Series I, Box 46, folder 16, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

³⁴¹ Zoltan Szilassy. *American Theater of the 1960s*. (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois UP, 1986), 2-3. The European influences on Off-Broadway and its development were varied and ran the gamut from Ionesco and Beckett's "Theatre of the Absurd," to the "Poor Theater" of master teacher and theorists such as Jerzy Grotowski, to the "Theatre of Commitment" pioneered by Edwin Piscator and Bertolt Brecht, and finally Peter Brook's *Empty Space*.

³⁴² NYSF Board Minutes, 13 Dec 1966, Series I, Box 44, folder 1, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

(John Arden, British), *La Pieta di Novembre* (Franco Brusati, Italian), *The Memorandum* (Vaclav Havel, Czech) and *Ergo*, simply noted as an “Untitled New Play” at the time (Jakov Lind, German). Among the new American plays under consideration were *The Line of Least Existence* (Rosalyn Drexler), *The Owl Answers* or an “Untitled New Play” (Adrienne Kennedy), *Hair* (Gerome Ragni, James Rado and Galt McDermott) and a new play by Frank Zajac. I have noted the nationality of each writer, as Papp and press agent Merle Debuskey provided the provenance for each playwright, suggesting perhaps that a balance between international voices and American voices were desirable for this new ‘Public Theatre.’³⁴³

The NYSF’s tight focus on plays imbued with the vitality and verve of contemporary life for the Astor Library emerged in promotional materials from the first half of 1967. In a February 1967 brochure entitled “Some Questions and Answers about the New York Shakespeare Festival at the Astor Library Landmark Building” proclaimed that the Public Theater would house “(n)ew plays from all parts of the world.” The brochure continues by articulating the unifying ethos of these plays, their style of production and providing the intriguing suggestion of the company’s openness to classical works presented in a fresh and potentially controversial fashion:

The concentrations of both theaters will be new plays, plays that deal with contemporary questions and modern form. However, the theater literature of the world will have a place in these two theaters. As will Shakespeare.

Classics will be done when modern production scheme, or an unusually good

³⁴³ Joseph Papp and Merle Debuskey, “Agenda: Public Relations Schedule Between Now and Next Year,” 24 Mar 1967, Series I, Box 57, folder 16, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

casting choice or unorthodox point of view about the play promises to result in a new view of a traditional work.³⁴⁴

The second half of this enumeration of the Public Theater's programming reflects Papp's, and to a somewhat lesser degree his artistic associate Gerald Freedman's, desire to develop fresh, more artistically adventurous ways of producing great works of dramatic literature.³⁴⁵ This desire inspired in an eleventh hour alteration to the NYSF's opening season, as I will discuss at the conclusion of this chapter.

Only a week after the NYSF Board's December 1966 meeting cited above, Papp learned of another proposal to produce *Memorandum* in New York City had surfaced.³⁴⁶ The following week, he sent a telegram offering a \$500 advance and an eight-week run, demonstrating the company's enthusiasm for Havel's absurdist, black comedy.³⁴⁷ Thus, the Czech author's play was the first production confirmed in the

³⁴⁴ "Some Questions and Answers about the New York Shakespeare Festival at the Astor Library Landmark Building," Series I, Box 57, folder 16, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

³⁴⁵ Papp's infatuation intensified with his 1964 trip to Europe in which he experienced the Berliner Ensemble's adaptation of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* and continued until September of 1966 when Papp became aware of an audacious and controversial adaptation of *Macbeth* entitled *MacBird!* Papp took a keen interest in the play and even helped by raising funds and loaning costumes to the production when it opened in February of 1967 at the Village Gate Theater. It was an audacious and controversial play in its time, featuring numerous contemporary references to assassinations and political corruption. Freedman directed a production of *Titus Andronicus* for summer 1967 season. The director explored the use of mask and highly expressive movement, offering something akin to the grandiloquence of Greek tragedy. To some, this production was viewed as innovative and terribly exciting. For others, it was viewed as manipulating the play beyond what Shakespeare had intended. Outrage at such modest experimentation with the production might be attributed to the relatively staid artistic choices festival-goers came to expect from performances in Central Park.

³⁴⁶ Vera Blackwell. Letter to Joseph Papp, 21 Dec 1966, Series I, Box 65, folder 13, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

³⁴⁷ Joseph Papp. Telegram to Vera Blackwell. 27 Dec 1966, Series I, Box 65, folder 13, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY. NYU Professor of Theater Ted Hoffman provided the program note for *Memorandum* in which he explores the affinities between the play and the Public Theater in its infancy: "The *Memorandum* is made for this theater. The product of this decades cultural thaw, it is already an East European classic. Havel's communiqué from the heart of bureaucracy choreographs that ultimate travesty of civilized role playing in which even the human voice is trained to kill. The *Memorandum* is no *RUR*, or *1984*, projecting an ominous future. It's time is everpresent, since the control of language in the interest of improved communication is the original sin of all civilized institutions. The act of producing, or

opening season of the Public Theater. Despite Papp's early commitment to Havel's work, interest in the work of James Rado and Gerome Ragni goes back nearly as far. The NYSF employed the services of various literary agencies to assist in the process of script selection in late 1966. In response to one such agent's submission of poet Robert Lowell's translation of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, Papp extolled the talent, vision and work of the quietly poetic Rado and the mercurial Ragni, characterizing their "sprawling" portrait of disaffected youth as more relevant to the pressures of the times and illuminative of the "present dilemma."³⁴⁸

Papp appeared equally committed to producing playwright Jakov Lind. Despite not having a script in hand, the producer again included the author's name in an April 1967 update to the NYSF Board on programming for the Public Theater. Another important revelation from this meeting was the delays in construction for the downstairs theatre on the south end of the Astor Library. In earlier correspondence, internal memos and board meetings, the company tentatively anticipated producing up to eight different productions in the opening season. The very real possibility emerged that only one theatre might be available for the 1967-68 season. Papp's report to the board reiterates the titles under consideration discussed with Debuskey a few weeks prior.³⁴⁹ As discussed above, the festival contracted to produce *Memorandum* in late 1966, and Papp's enormous enthusiasm and ongoing

attending *The Memorandum* is a struggle with automation of the mind, in which we are all engaged today, whether in the shabby and shiny bureaus of power, in drop-out psychedelia, or in pleasurable beds. The compulsive laughter and evocative fears *The Memorandum* has provoked in Europe are perhaps the same reactions *Hamlet* and *Ergo* have provoked in Mr. Papp's action theater of metaphysical slapstick. They may be the only appropriate reactions for a public waiting to be opened." (*Memorandum* Program, Series II, Box)

³⁴⁸ Joseph Papp. Letter to Janet Roberts, 21 Nov 1966, Series II, Box 79, folder 13, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

³⁴⁹ NYSF Board Minutes, 11 Apr 1967, Series I, Box 55, folder 9, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

commitment to *Hair* and Jakov Lind's as-yet-unwritten play left only one production slot in the revised four-play season.

In the spring of 1967, the first round of promotional materials for the general public unveiled a four play season including the aforementioned *Hair*, *La Pieta di Novembre* by Franco Bruscati, *Ergo* by Jakov Lind and *Memorandum*. The Bruscati play, described as an "Italian view of the making of an assassin" explored the life and mind of Lee Harvey Oswald, and would follow *Hair* as the second production. Through the summer of 1967, this was to be the opening season at the Astor Library, and as late as a September 18th meeting of the NYSF Board this season schedule endured. In the midst of this Board meeting, Papp and Freedman took a moment to discuss the reasoning behind opening the Public Theater with the rock musical *Hair*. The work, by Papp's own characterization, was "unpolished" but appropriate as it focused on "the war, the draft (and) the loneliness of young people."³⁵⁰ It would open a winter season for the festival that would, anticipated Papp draw a completely different audience than the company's work in Central Park. Freedman, for his part, stressed the "timeliness" of the play and the enormous resonance and popularity of the "hippie movement."

Having addressed the Board only a month before the first production of the Public Theater's opening season, one would think that Papp and company crossed the Rubicon. A week later, however, Papp wrote to Debuskey saying that he would like to drop Bruscati's play from the season and replace it with a "swinging, updated production of *Hamlet*." The production, according to Papp, would "redesign" the

³⁵⁰ NYSF Board Minutes, 18 Sep 1967, Series I, Box 55, folder 10, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

play, feature modern dress and aim for a “sophisticated audience.”³⁵¹ Despite being a last second addition to the 1967-68 season, Papp’s *Hamlet*, had been somewhat in development for nearly a year. In fact, at the September 1967 NYSF Board Meeting, Papp expressed his desire to stage the production on the festival’s 1968 school tour “as a new, fresh presentation in a modern framework.”

Poem Unlimited, Public Unlimited³⁵²:

The *Naked Hamlet* offered a bold vision for how the company planned to operate in the Astor Library, as the production’s kaleidoscopic style corresponds to the Public Theater’s approach to defining, refining and ultimately collating multiple ideas about what constitutes ‘public.’ Papp initially directed *Hamlet* at the Delacorte Theater for the summer 1964 season.³⁵³ The production, described as “Elizabethan in affect, used a production style familiar to other Shakespeare festivals, including costumes that strongly resembled Laurence Olivier’s 1948 cinematic adaptation and Maurice Evans turn on Broadway in 1946.”³⁵⁴ The intervening years from 1964 through 1967, as demonstrated above, proved revelatory for Papp and the NYSF, however. No longer could previous production styles, and the ethos that undergirded them, embody and address the challenges of the mid-1960s. The idealism and

³⁵¹ Joseph Papp. Letter to Merle Debuskey, 25 Sep 1967, Series I, Box 57, folder 13, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY. In a contemporaneous memo to Freedman, Papp revealed his conviction that Brusati’s play was “old fashioned melodrama” and that the “characters pale against the real events and people it parallels.” Joseph Papp. Memo to Gerald Freedman, undated, Series I, Box 57, folder 13, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY

³⁵² Portions of this chapter were previously published in a chapter I authored in the edited volume: *Hamlet in an Age of Textual Exhaustion*. Sonya Freeman Loftis, Allison Kellar and Lisa Ulevich, ed. London: Routledge, 2018, 137-151.

³⁵³ Interestingly, Papp’s ambition for the opening of the Delacorte was a Tyrone Guthrie-directed *Hamlet* in 1961, but when the opening of the Delacorte was delayed, those plans fell by the wayside. Joseph Papp. Letter to Tyrone Guthrie. 26 Feb 1960, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York City Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

³⁵⁴ Funke, Lewis. “Theater: Burr’s ‘Hamlet.’” *New York Times*. 18 Jun. 1964.

populism of Shakespeare festivals, pioneered by men like Guthrie and vastly expanded by Papp, could never prove satisfying to the latter as the fullest embodiment of “public.” The producer knew this early on; the Mobile Theater was born, as the public and audiences he sought were always elsewhere. *Hamlet* and later the *Naked Hamlet* sat at the crossroads of this seeking, somewhat because of the plays enduring susceptibility to contemporary analogy. As Jan Kott claimed in his paradigm-shifting book *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, also published in 1964: “*Hamlet* is like a sponge. Unless it is produced in a stylized or antiquarian fashion, it immediately absorbs all the problems of our time.”³⁵⁵ Far from the festival context in Central Park, Papp’s *Hamlet* became a prism for present exigencies and agonies.

In developing the *Naked Hamlet* in parallel with the profound shifts in the NYSF’s mission and programming. The connection between the play and the emerging Public Theater’s identity are strikingly articulated in Papp’s hand-written notes throughout the rehearsal process. One such note, entitled “An Act of Creation – Birth” demonstrates this connection:

*MY HEART WAS OPEN-TO RECEIVE THE SEED OF THE GREAT WORK –
MY BODY WAS FERTILE – AND THE PLAY ENTERED MY
BLOODSTREAM – BLOOD AND JUDGMENT COMINGLED – THE SPACE
WAS A THEATER I HAD SPENT MY LIFE CREATING – IT WAS AN
EXTENSION OF MYSELF – I DISCOVERED THE ARTIST IN THE PLAY –
THE FEELINGS OF THE MAN, THE WRITER – BALLOONS – THE
PLACENTA – BURST – THE UMBILICAL CORD WITH THE CHIEF
CHARACTER & THE COMPANY – A 4-WEEK PROCESS OF BIRTH –*

³⁵⁵ Jan Kott. *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1964), 64.

ERRATIC BUT INEXORABLE – CUTTING OF CORD – BUT RETAINING A PARENTAL FEELING.”³⁵⁶

Clearly identification between this new and innovative staging of *Hamlet* with the fresh and renovated Astor Library-as-Public Theater proved deeply affecting to Papp. His intrepid company of performers embarked on a highly improvisatory rehearsal period during which Shakespeare’s script was shuffled and mixed with endless references to contemporary life and mores. Even in the latter performances of the show’s run, an openness and spontaneity permeated the production, according to the production’s assistant director Ted Cornell.³⁵⁷

The objectives of this dramatic shifting were disorientation of the audience, in hopes of inspiring questions about “what kind of *Hamlet* they (the audience) are going to see.”³⁵⁸ He likened this disorientation, somewhat ambitiously to the “shattering of focus in modern music and painting,” citing the work of Picasso and Kandinsky as inspiration for the deconstruction of *Hamlet*. Instead of a ‘single focus,’ Papp envisioned a play, a world and an eponymous character shattered into many foci, and he compared Hamlet’s own view of Elsinore to Picasso’s view of a conventional landscape. The result, a *Hamlet* imagined somewhat like a cubist rendering of Shakespeare’s play, offered perspectival diversity for audiences who experienced both the symbolic and real space of performance. The process of disorientation continued throughout the production and perspectives multiplied through the performance’s frenetic pace and constant shifting between Shakespeare’s

³⁵⁶ Papp, Joseph, “An Act of Creation,” Series XIII, Box 3, folder 3, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

³⁵⁷ Cornell, Ted. Interview with the author, 8 Aug 2016, telephone.

³⁵⁸ Joseph Papp. *William Shakespeare’s “Naked” Hamlet: A Production Handbook*. (London: The Macmillan Company, 1969), 20.

heavily abridged text and small ‘bits,’ ‘gambits,’ ‘ploys,’ ‘tableau’ and ‘variations’ as Papp referred to them.

The resulting production, a bricolage of Shakespeare’s text and an amusing, though often terrifying look at the state of the world in the 1960s, sought resonances not only the theater-going public, but arguably the widest possible public. In his production notebook for the *Naked Hamlet*, Papp offered an indication of the scope of his ambitions for his production and by analogy his new Public Theater:

Hamlet—what a wounded name—survivor of wars, cataclysms, and catastrophes. What a piece of work is a man—sprawled in the dirt in Vietnam—on the beaches in Iwo Jima—in the trenches of Verdun—on 125th Street in Harlem—on the streets of Detroit, Newark, Cleveland—in a grave in Alabama that held the remains of Andrew Goodman, civil rights worker—the death of Roosevelt, of Einstein, Marilyn Monroe, and a fourteen-year old boy in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn.³⁵⁹

This poem offers a catalogue of suffering and beleaguered humanity, and Papp provocatively asserts that somehow all the calamities and eruptions of the world are contained within the character and the play. *Hamlet* and Hamlet are the unifying presences for myriad perspectives, from those on the frontlines of global warfare to the distress of a Brooklyn teenager.

Papp’s poem symbolizes the Public Theater’s challenge of not only *servicing* the public(s), as the NYSF had done throughout their early history, but striving to

³⁵⁹ “*Naked*” *Hamlet* 27. Papp reprinted this text from a much longer poem he wrote in anticipation for the publication of the notebook. His somewhat comprehensive view of humanity extends to the natural and even the cosmic realm in the later text of this unusual and free-associative poem. Full poem may be accessed at: Series I, Box 3, folder 5, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

embody these public(s). The strategies for ensuring the theater's growth and abiding existence, tied closely to their exploration and refinement of what constitutes "public," inspired the exploratory and experimental nature of their earliest work at the Astor Library. The multifarious meanings of this illusive idea nourished the growth of the Public Theater, both institutionally and artistically from the late 1960s until the middle of the 1970s, as I will briefly discuss in the Conclusion. The process of refining and re-examining what comprises the largest most representative "public" remains resistant to closure, as demonstrated throughout this dissertation. Therefore, the existence of the Public Theater remained and continues to remain safe so long as the company invests financial, artistically and promotionally in this process.

Conclusion

In the 50+ years since the opening of the NYSF's Public Theater at the Astor Place Library, the company's investment in the cultivating and serving various publics has intensified and evolved. Though 1967 marked the beginning of production at the Astor Library, the NYSF/Public Theater extended stewardship of the renovated landmark was not assured until April 1971 when the leaseback arrangement hinted at above was finalized. In a letter to supports, donors and subscribers Papp recounting the struggles of the previous three years in securing the Astor Library in relative perpetuity and underscoring the significance of the City Council's decision to approve the leaseback arrangement:

I hope you share with me the pleasure and sense of achievement that the City purchase gives us. The significance of the Administration's act, particularly at this moment, bears out the soundness of the program of the Public Theater and its validity to the City's cultural life.³⁶⁰

As with earlier correspondence and rhetorical strategies, the support of public officials and the potential patronage and permanence it connotes emanated from the 'program' of serving the public and enriching the cultural life of the municipality. Again, the programming on the Public Theater's stages directly served an *actual* audience, while Papp evokes a potential audience not yet actualized. Even as they settled in as the 'Public Theater,' however, the company began setting its sights on a new theatrical frontier and public, one Papp began his career eschewing.

³⁶⁰ Joseph Papp. Letter to Emergency Committee to Save the New Shakespeare Festival PUBLIC THEATER, 30 Apr 1971. Series I, Box 79, folder 3, New York Shakespeare Festival Records, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York, NY.

Only months after the Public Theater's victory before the city council, Papp and company mounted the company's first homegrown smash hit in the form of John Guare and Galt McDermott's musical adaptation of Shakespeare's *Two Gentleman of Verona*. *Hair* could certainly be characterized as a hit, but its development began well before Papp became aware of its two brilliant and mercurial authors. Also, *Hair* continued after its production at the Anspacher Theater to venue's uptown and eventually all over the world. None of these productions were produced by the Public Theater, unlike *Two Gents* and later *Chorus Line*, both of which bolstered the theater's reputation and filled the company's coffers. Response from audiences and critics to *Two Gents* was overwhelmingly positive, as the production blended Shakespeare's plot and characters with popular music, dance and a generous helping of raucous and at times raunchy onstage action. This production was something of a departure for the company in their programming for the Delacorte Theater, and inspired the Public Theater to set their sights on other theatrical horizons in search new publics for their offerings. Papp began his career, as I mentioned in the opening of this dissertation lambasting the ethics and economics of the commercial theatre, most notably the staid and safe productions on Broadway. Despite this, Papp moved *Two Gents* to the St. James Theatre in the heart of the theatre district in the fall of 1971. It ran for a year and a half and signaled a significant shift in the NYSF/Public Theater's process of defining and refining the public(s) they serve. This Broadway transfer, however, was only the beginning.

The half decade after the success of *Two Gents*, the company brought a handful of productions to Broadway with productions ranging from moderately

successful to box office disappointments. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, the MT also moved away from producing classical work for various publics throughout the five boroughs, instead opting for original work that occasionally transferred to or from the Astor Library location and/or even transferred to Broadway.³⁶¹ Broadway was not the only frontier explored by the Public Theater during the mid-1970s, however. As I intimated in Chapter 5, Lincoln Center Theater encountered many challenges in their first decade in operation. In order to help resurrect the beleaguered institution, Papp and the Public Theater began what would become a nearly four-year residency in the fall of 1973.

The 1970s, therefore, were a time of incredible growth for the Public Theater, as the company established a formidable presence in a variety of spaces the city's cultural landscape. Each of these space brought fresh challenges and opportunities in the theater's project to serve and embody the widest public. The challenges *and* the opportunities intensified in nearly equal measure with the company's enormously successful, in fact record-breaking run of the musical *Chorus Line* on Broadway from July 1975 until April 1990. *Chorus Line* came along at a propitious time for the Public Theater, as New York City's financial crisis might otherwise have affected the company's streams of funding and patronage. While the city, and in fact the entire

³⁶¹ The 1970 MT saw the production of *Sambo*, a musical montage describe as a "Black Opera with White Spots." The production originated at LaMama before moving to the Astor Library and finally the MT. The story traced a young black man's feelings of alienation in a predominantly white society. Bernard L. Peterson, Jr. *A Century of Musicals in Black and White: An Encyclopedia of Stage Musical by, about, or Involving African Americans* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993), 303. Another example of the company transferring productions from venue to venue came with a production of *What the Wine-sellers Buy* in February of 1974 at the Public Theater's newest space, discussed below, Lincoln Center. The production, focusing on the struggles and temptations of being a young black man in a Detroit "ghetto" continued on the MT in the summer of 1974. Allen Woll. *Dictionary of the Black Theatre: Broadway, Off-Broadway, and Selected Harlem Theatre* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983), 178.

nation slide into recession, the Public Theater remained relatively prosperous by comparison. *Chorus Line* was instrumental in the resurgence of Broadway as a cultural institution and helped, among many other advertising and promotional campaigns, to turn Broadway and New York City into a tourist destination. The musicals *Pippin* and *Grease*, from Broadway's 1972 season were the first two shows to employ television commercials to enormous success for the life of those productions. Half a decade later television commercials for *Chorus Line* proved even more successful as they were entwined with the "I Love NY" campaign. Steven Adler.³⁶² Not only did these commercials and this campaign prove a boon for *Chorus Line* and the Public Theater, but also signaled Broadway's resurrection. *Branding New York* by Greenberg can also help make this point about the link between Broadway and the "I Love NY" campaign.³⁶³

Within a year of *Chorus Line*'s opening night on Broadway, plans were afoot to help rebrand New York City around graphic designer Milton Glaser's iconic logo "I Love NY," with the signature "heart" shape replacing the word "love." The complexity of The Public Theater and the NYSF's evolution in the 1970s, as city government and agencies struggle for solvency constitutes a fruitful avenue for future research. In some ways, the company retreads some of its earlier steps, traversing the politically and culturally fraught terrain of urban re-development. The re-development of Broadway commenced in earnest in 1983 with the destruction of

³⁶² Steven Adler. *On Broadway: Commerce and the Great White Way* (Carbondale, IL: South Illinois UP, 2004), 193.

³⁶³ See: Miriam Greenberg. *Branding New York: How a City in Crisis was Sold to the World* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 210-211. Greenberg her recounts the roll out the new campaign and slogan, including society events with casts from several Broadway musicals (including *Chorus Line*) featured in commercials promoting Broadway as a critical piece of the "I Love NY" campaign.

several Broadway theatres to make way for the Marriott Marquis Hotel in the very heart of the theatre district. Papp was on the front lines of the prolonged protests that included round-the-clock readings from plays produced in the doomed theatres, singing and more than a few horrified screams as wrecking balls pierced the walls of the Morosco Theatre where the likes of *Death of a Salesman* and *Our Town* saw their first major productions. Ironically, it was theatrical sensations like *Chorus Line* that contributed to the evolution of Broadway into an *international* tourist attraction and an enormous source of revenue for both private developers and municipal coffers. Broadway had also been a ‘tourist attraction’ per se, but the late 1970s and early 1980s offered not simply tourist revenue, but an opportunity – long sought by the city and investors – for a renovation and renewal of the area in and around the theatre district. The Public Theater reaped the benefit of these redevelopment opportunities, even as they played a role in creating those opportunities.

The success of *Chorus Line* and by proxy the Public Theater rested on attracting and addressing a very different public than they developed during their first two decades of existence. As the *New York Shakespeare Festival*, for the first decade-plus of their existence, the audiences and public the company endeavored so mightily to access remained more or less *local*. This of course has its exceptions, as we saw in Chapter 3, when the festival considered addressing audiences and publics in the United States and abroad. Similarly, for nearly a decade after the opening of the Public Theater at the Astor Library, programming confronted pressing issues of national and international concern, but the company occupied a discrete location on the cityscape and the reverberations of their work from that location were still

limited.³⁶⁴ The Public Theater's shift toward and reliance on the success of Broadway as an institution and its related industries, also remains a fascinating avenue for future scholarly exploration. I hope in some modest way that this dissertation paves the way toward such an avenue and several others.

Much has changed for the Public Theater since the simultaneous boom and doom of the 1970s. Long-time producer, artistic director and founder Joseph Papp died in October of 1991, a year and a half after *Chorus Line* closed on Broadway. What followed was the controversial year and a half tenure of Joanne Akalaitis as artistic director. The late 1980s saw, perhaps in anticipation of Papp's eventual exit as artistic director, the assembly of a group of artistic associates tasked with developing, nurturing and in some cases finding talent and programming for the Public Theater. Akalaitis served as one such associate, as did actors Kevin Kline, Raul Julia and Meryl Streep. The task of taking over from Akalaitis fell, however, to thirty-nine year old director George C. Wolfe, another of the Public Theater's artistic associates. He served in the position until the fall of 2004, heading an institution that was by the mid-2000s struggling financially and whose artistic programming gained mixed

³⁶⁴ The most obvious example of this programming were plays by young playwrights David Rabe, Dennis Reardon and Pulitzer Prize winner Charles Gordone. Rabe and Reardon had both done tours of service in Vietnam and much of their early work, produced at the Public Theater, offered a portrait of life before, during and especially after military service. Reardon's *Happiness Cage* about a soldier recovering from severe PTSD opened the Newman Theater in the fall of 1970. The following season, Rabe's *Sticks and Bones* opened at the Anspacher after the author's *Basic Training of Pavlo Hummel* closed the season in the Newman Theater in May of 1971. The first tells the story of a young man returning from the war, blind and traumatized by his experience. His family, patterned after the family in television's *Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*, cannot cope with their returning son's shift in perspective and apparent nihilism. In the second play, Rabe explores the dynamic of young men from wildly different backgrounds preparing to go to war. Finally, Gordone's *No Place to Be Somebody* began its life at the Public Theater, and despite Papp's best efforts only a one week run on Broadway. The play centered on the efforts of a transplanted black Southerner, to overcome the exploitation of the city's white liquor distributors.

reception from audience and critics.³⁶⁵ Somewhat because of the controversy surrounding Akalaitis's dismissal from her position, about which scant information is available in press or archival sources, Wolfe's tenure at the Public Theater has been seen with more than a bit of sympathy in theatrical circles. Wolfe was, above all, a director and helmed many productions during his time as artistic director.

This kind of directorial output was in direct opposition to the *current* artistic director of the Public Theater Oskar Eustis. Akalaitis, Wolfe and Eustis, like Papp before them, grew up as artists and administrators in New York City. Eustis, by contrast, spent the lion's share of his professional life outside of New York City, working as a dramaturge and director. During the decade before he took over at the Public Theater, he served as artistic director for Trinity Repertory Company and oversaw the development of the Brown/Trinity Consortium linking artistic and educational institutions.³⁶⁶ Unlike Wolfe, who struggled with the financial aspects of his position at the Public Theater, leaving a greatly diminished endowment when he stepped down in 2004, Eustis had done wonders in the realm of fundraising at Trinity and markedly increased the subscriber base. Success at a regional theatre like Trinity, one institutionally buttressed by a prestigious Ivy League university, would prove relatively facile for Eustis in light of the challenges at the Public Theater. While I will not delve too deeply in these challenges, indeed an entire dissertation might suffice for each of Papp's subsequent artistic directors, I will briefly explore the current state of the Public Theater's process in defining and refining 'public' under the stewardship of Eustis. In unpacking the company's current strategy for addressing

³⁶⁵ Jason Loewith (ed.). *The Director's Voice, Vol.2: Twenty Interviews* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2012), 117.

³⁶⁶ Loewith 116

and embodying the public(s), I hope to draw analogies to the company's history explored at length throughout this dissertation. I also hope to reveal what future scholars, audiences and artists might expect from the Public Theater in the way of programming, theatrical and otherwise.

In 1993, when Wolfe took the reins of the Public Theater, the new artistic director consulted with groundbreaking graphic designer Paula Scher who would later consult with Eustis on the design of promotional materials for the theatre's theatrical offerings and institutional literature. Under Wolfe, Scher created an incredible variety of designs, and her posters for productions from the early 1990s through 2003 accentuate the corresponding variety in the Public Theater's offerings. Even though Scher occasionally used different fonts during this period to tie together a single season's programming, the Public Theater's promotional material emphasized the integrity of each production. This shift in the style of the promotional material followed a period in which Wolfe and later Eustis encouraged Scher to "revisit the identity of the theatre" in design terms. The result of these re-designs during Wolfe's tenure was an image of the Public Theater as host to a dizzying and wonderful variety, in form, content and style, of theatrical offerings under one institutional umbrella. And yet, the outlines of this umbrella, given the relative lack of continuity, were not always discernible.

Part of this obscurity comes from Wolfe's concern that the people of New York City still did not know what to call the theatre. This echoes an anecdote from previous Artistic Director Joanne Akalaitis just after she took over the Public Theater in 1992:

I'm educating this whole army of cabdrivers....I get in and I say, 'Take me to the Public Theater' and nobody knows where it is. So I direct them in this very bitchy, highfalutin way: 'Turn right on 3rd and now turn right on Lafayette Street. See, here it is. Have you ever heard of this theater? Have ever been inside? Believe me, you'd love what's going on in here.'³⁶⁷

Nearly forty years after the humble beginnings of the NYSF, they were still in search of entirely new audiences and publics, even and perhaps especially those that were entirely unaware of their existence. Even after twenty-four years at the same location, the Public Theater was struggling to be known, not only as a *location* – as Akalaitis' anecdote demonstrates – but as an institutional *identity*. When Wolfe arrived, much of the promotional material had included portraits from productions to help establish the theatre's institutional identity. What Wolfe and Eustis pioneered, in consultation with Scher was a sustained advertising campaign that featured the “theatre as the star.”

In 2007, three years after he took over the Public Theater as artistic director, Eustis comments on the special place the theater occupied, municipally and even nationally. He echoes both Akalaitis and of course Papp in his rhetoric around attracting new audiences and potential publics to the Public Theater:

The Public serves a specific niche, not only the New York theatre but I think the American theatre. And that niche is as a crossroads, that the Public is the largest of the downtown theatres. It's the mother ship of the experimental and fringe theatres of New York, and it's the smallest and scruffiest and the closest to the people of the mainstream theatres. And what it's supposed to be

³⁶⁷ Pacheco, Patrick, “I'm Not Avant-Garde: JoAnne Akalaitis, Joseph Papp's heir, faces the biggest challenge of her career: getting the public into New York's Public Theater” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), Nov. 15, 1992.

doing is making all those of artist cross by each other and rub up against each other and those audiences rub up against each other. Bring audiences into the theater that haven't been there before. Bring experimental and young and marginalized artists into the mainstream that haven't been there before...³⁶⁸

Eustis even extends this argument by suggesting that the Public Theater occupies an indispensable place as a leading "citizen within America's theatrical community.... if we don't do what the Public is there to do, that is a whole that nobody else can fill." What the Public is "there to do," has changed markedly since the beginning of the Eustis' tenure.

Eustis' primary focus has been on strengthening the institutional structure of the Public Theater to avoid what he called the "boom-or-bust cycles that have always marked the Public's History."³⁶⁹ The result of these cycles was a constriction in the variety of programming the Public Theater offered; the cessation of the Spanish MT in 1967 and the inchoate Education Department in 1966 being two early examples. In the last six years, Eustis and the Public Theater have not only strengthened the institutional foundations of the theater but to add fresh and/or resurrected programs to that institutional and artistic base. The two most ambitious programs initiated under Eustis are the revived Mobile Theater and the Public Works program. The former is a significantly modified version of its mid-1960s forbearer, which Eustis described in a December 2012 interview with *American Theatre* magazine:

Resetting the Mobile was, in a way, going back to the beginning. The

Delacorte, which is the home of free Shakespeare in the Park, has been one of

³⁶⁸ *American Theatre Wing* (2007, June) "Working in the Theatre: Artistic Directors." Retrieved from: (http://americantheatrewing.org/wit/detail/artistic_directors_06_07)

³⁶⁹ Soloski, Alexis. "Oskar Eustis Seizes the Moment," *American Theatre*, December 2012, 26.

the great success stories in the history of the American theatre, and I'm incredibly proud of what we do there. But the reality is that because it's been so successful, we now have a theatre that has eliminated the economic barrier to attendance, but raised cultural barriers. The theatre that was founded to provide access to everybody is now the hardest to get tickets to in the United States. And it's because who the hell can stay in line overnight to see a Shakespeare play? So the re-founding of the Mobile was about realizing that Shakespeare in the Park no longer reaches the people it was originally intended to. We have to get back *to* them.³⁷⁰

What Eustis articulates here, is nothing new of course. Nearly fifty years earlier, Papp lamented that free Shakespeare in the park was not reaching a "mass audience," as I explored in Chapter 1 and 2.

The revived MT, instead of touring to outdoor parks, school playgrounds and public housing projects, focuses on facilities that house the "most neglected, the most despised" (to borrow Eustis' language) among the public, who may not otherwise have access to the riches the Public Theater provides. Eustis again employs the familiar strategy of locating the "public" (or at least the public most associated with the theater's mission) somewhere on the horizon. Movement, at once physical, cultural and artistic fuels (as it has always fueled) the expansion of the theatre and the public it serves and embodies. The other major evidence of this expansion is an ongoing initiative that Eustis characterizes as the "most important thing we do at the Public Theater."³⁷¹ Considering the breadth of programming from the Public Theater,

³⁷⁰ Ibid 28

³⁷¹ Program note for the *Odyssey*, attended September 6, 2015.

this is an extraordinary claim. And yet, Public Works is like nothing else the Public Theater has ever done before. Now in its sixth season, The Public Works program creates pageant-style musical adaptations of well-known plays and stories as the capstone to year-round partnerships developed and cultivated with five community organizations in each of the five boroughs.

Rarely has the Public Theater gone further afield in search of audiences and publics to develop and cultivate. The yield of this community cultivation, as Eustis proclaimed in his pre-show speech to the 2015 adaptation of *The Odyssey* is the "promise of America, [the] promise of the city, and the promise of The Public."³⁷² As with the early years of the NYSF and Papp's progressively more audacious use of "public," Eustis continues to deploy rhetoric that evokes something both local and specific, but also potentially national and with indeterminate borders. Closure of these borders, ideologically speaking would be the death of the institution, as I have intimated throughout this dissertation. Programs such as Public Works represent the grandest manifestation of the question posed throughout the NYSF's early history and explored at length in this dissertation; namely, 'what is public?' The question of what type of theater would best serve the public could not entirely accommodate Papp's grand vision, or the vision of the current crop of Public Theater administrators.

This somewhat explains the shift initiated by Eustis and enshrined in the design of Paula Scher for the Public Theater's logo. The word "theater" has been dropped entirely, and a bold, square period forms the full stop after "PUBLIC." This period and the word "THE" ensconced inside the "P" in "PUBLIC," offer a sense of

³⁷² *Public Works: The Odyssey*. By Alex Timbers. Delacorte Theater, New York, NY, September 6, 2015.

finality. In contrast, the font of each letter becomes progressively less bold, giving a sense of distance and perspective. As your eyes move across the letters, they seem to traverse a space and arrive at a place with the bold *period* at the conclusion.³⁷³ The Public Theater in this way always seems to be arriving and moving at once. The public they seek is *already* constituted and forever in the process of being constituted at once. The public are of course the patrons at Astor Place, the patient park-goers waiting online at the Delacorte, the millions and millions of those lucky enough to score tickets to *Hamilton* and many other theatre goers wherever banner of the “PUBLIC” flies. Most crucial of all to the company’s mission and their strategy for fulfilling that mission are those unreached and therefore unaddressed by their theatrical and cultural offerings. This underserved and in some cases reviled public remained a major source for Papp’s restlessness in the early years of the festival, and under Eustis stewardship has received considerable attention.

At a recent humanities event at the Public Theater’s Newman Theater, one dedicated to exploring Papp and the festival’s passion for Shakespeare, Eustis leapt onstage congratulating the performers who gave voice to Papp, Moses and many, many others, and exclaimed that his (Eustis’) vision for Shakespeare and the Public Theater was perfectly in line with Papp’s. He crossed his fingers to help signal how entwined he and Papp’s passion for the Public really was. I cannot help seeing in this gesture, however, a wish or a hope. Try as Eustis might to shore up the company’s current institutional edifice, what drove the company’s growth in the early years was the complex and at times uneasy process of defining and refining for whom these

³⁷³ "Public Theater - Home." The Public. Accessed February 10, 2018. <https://www.publictheater.org/>.

institutional structures were built? While this continues in some ways to be the life blood of the institution and one the primary rhetorical strategies for promotional, fund-raising and audience development purposes, doubts remain whether a theater such as the Public Theater can maintain the mission in practice, without succumbing to the pressures of the boom-or-bust model. Exploring the Public Theater in its current context, however, with its vast institutional structures, and unpacking how these structures serve and embody publics in the 21st Century is another project for another time.

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