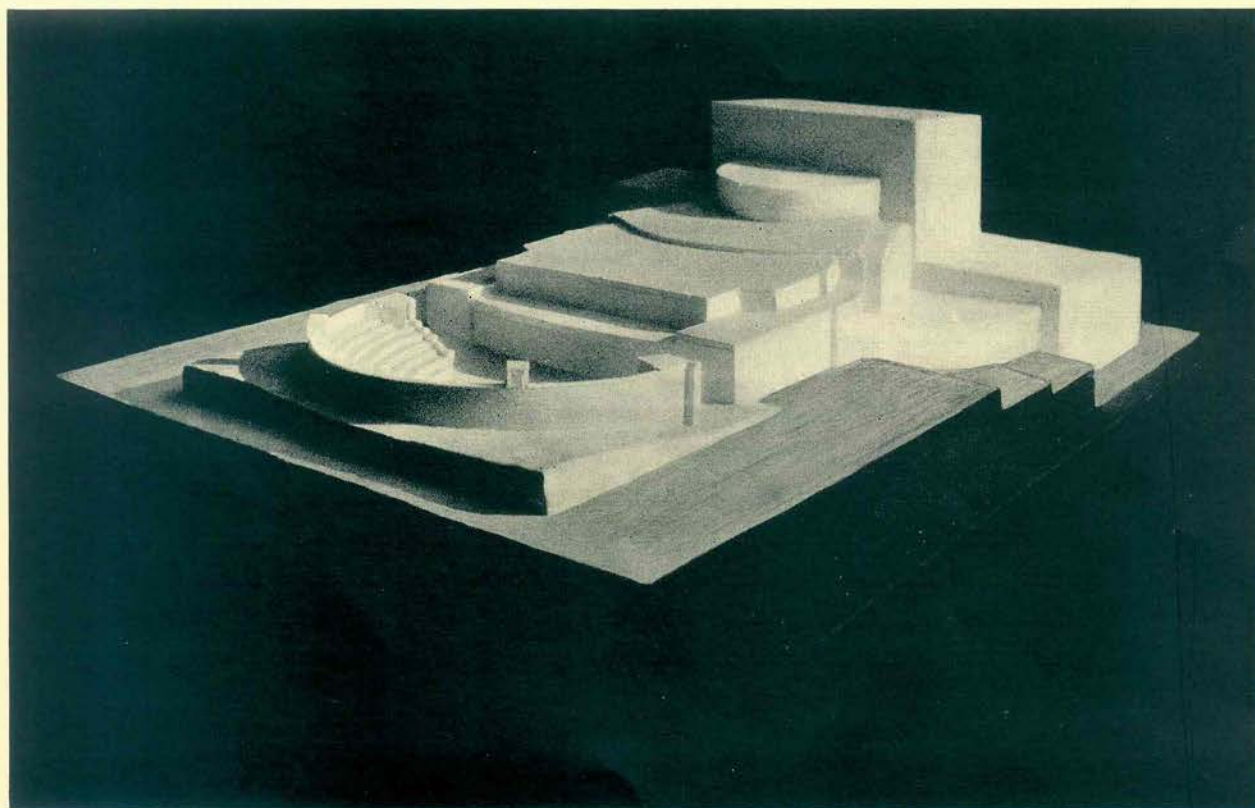


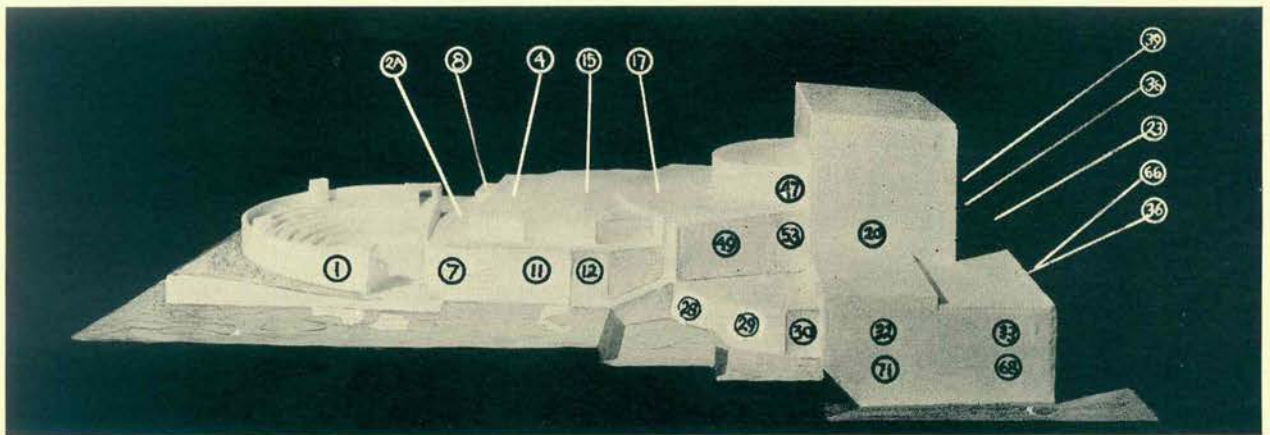
A Theatre for Bennington

ARCH LAUTERER



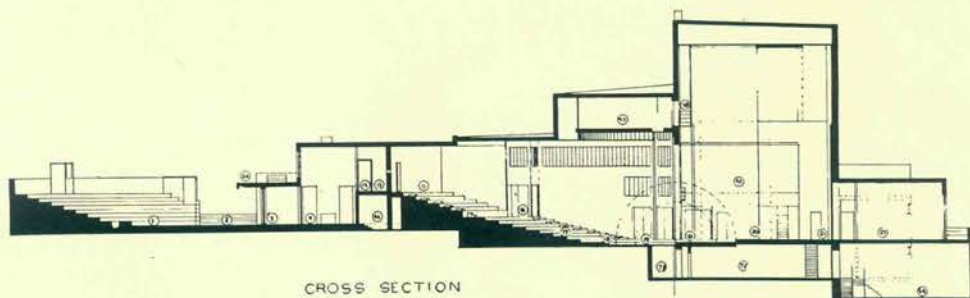
Small Scale Model of the Theatre

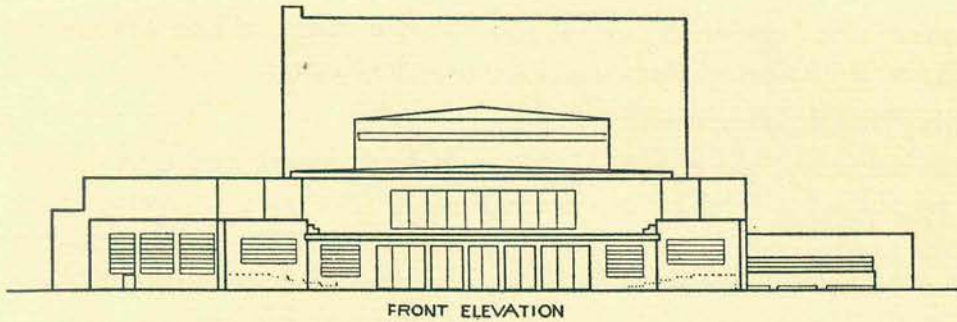
NOTES ON A PROJECT BY THE DESIGNER



Model, Side View

THE Trustees of Bennington College have accepted the model for a theatre on the College campus designed by Arch Lauterer, member of the Department of Drama at the College. There are several facts that make this an interesting decision. This is probably the first time in which the man who will direct the work in drama and the production of plays at an American college has had the opportunity to design with entire freedom the theatre he is to use, and to fit it both adequately and flexibly to the needs and the opportunities of college production and community service. Moreover, the architecture of the College is Colonial in feeling and design, in keeping with the style of the New England town in which it is situated and in whose life it plays a conspicuous part. Yet the Trustees felt not only that this modern design harmonized with the architecture and with the character of the country around, but that any design less modern would be wasteful for the fulfillment of the manifold purposes of a college theatre.





A THEATRE FOR BENNINGTON

THIS Theatre is planned to serve the needs of the Bennington College community and to contribute to the cultural life of the town of Bennington. It would be in active use the year around. In the summer months it would house the activities of the School of the Dance. The building is planned for a hillside location, facing northwest. When the outdoor theatre is used in the afternoon this puts the sun to the back of the audience, illuminating the actor. The building material is to be brick, marble and slate. The interior finish is to be chiefly yellow birch, a semi-hard wood. All of these materials are products of Vermont. From the site one looks over a broad valley

NUMBER KEY TO ALL PLANS

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| 1. Amphitheatre | 24. Proscenium entrance | 49. Lighting area (auditorium) |
| 2. Outdoor stage | 25. Lecture theatre | 50. Ladder to switchboard |
| 2A. Upper playing level | 26. Stage (lecture theatre) | 51. Stairs to music booth and light bridge |
| 3. Entrance | 27. Chair storage | 52. Switchboard |
| 4. Foyer | 28. Office | 53. Music booth |
| 5. Box-office | 29. Conference room | 54. Pin rail |
| 6. Exhibition dark-room | 30. Green room | 55. Stairs to kitchen |
| 7. Director's office | 31. Furniture room | 56. Kitchen |
| 8. Reading room | 32. Rehearsal room | 57. Design studios |
| 9. Exhibition room | 33. Costume studio | 58. Property studio |
| 10. Stairway | 34. Stairs | 59. Property studio storage |
| 11. Faculty lounge (music room) | 35. Designer's office | 60. Heating plant |
| 12. Entrance halls | 36. Toilets and showers | 61. Drapery storage |
| 13. Mezzanine lounge | 37. Dressing room (3) | 62. Dark room |
| 14. Projection booth | 38. Dressing room (6) | 63. Design studio |
| 15. Upper section auditorium | 39. Carpenter shop | 64. Designer's office |
| 16. Cross aisle | 40. Paint room | 65. Model-making studio |
| 17. Lower section auditorium | 41. Stairs to scenery storage | 66. Dance composition studio |
| 18. Area of removable chairs | 42. Technician's office | 67. Lockers |
| 19. Folding stage | 43. Stairs | 68. Dance offices |
| 20. Stage | 44. Electrical storage | 69. Dye room |
| 21. Cyclorama (movable) | 45. Scene dock | 70. Costume storage |
| 22. Hall | 46. Toilets and check rooms | 71. Dance studio |
| 23. Rehearsal room (backstage) | 47. Light booth | 72. Scene storage |
| | 48. Light bridge | 73. Orchestra pit |

THEATRE ARTS MONTHLY

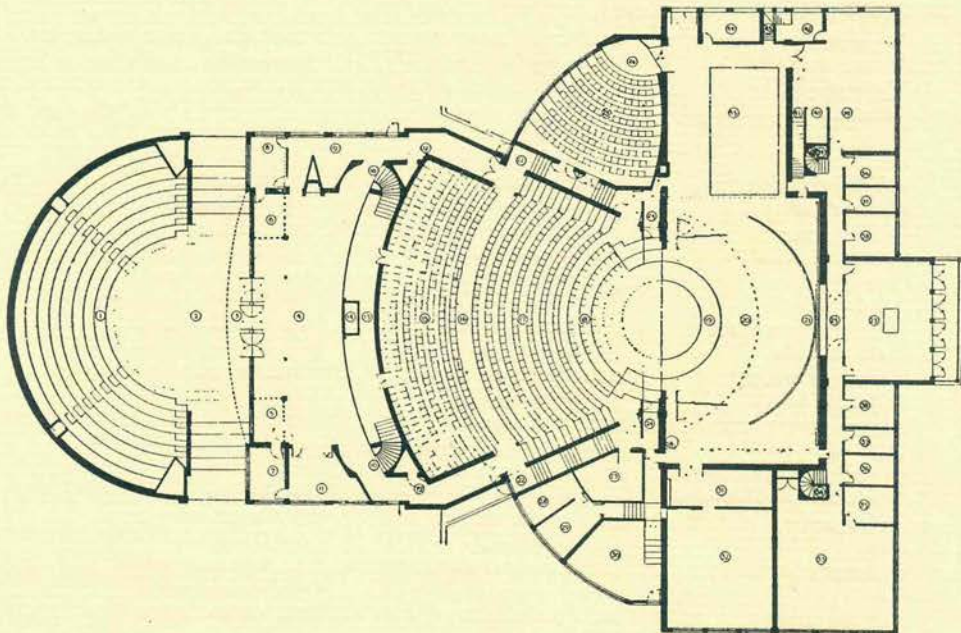
toward the regular skyline of the Taconic range, a line that is repeated in the broad, horizontal lines of the theatre.

OUTDOOR THEATRE

THE facade of the theatre serves as a background and provides an upper playing level for the outdoor stage. The ground-level playing area measures 53 feet across and 37 feet in depth from front centre to back. The stadium seats 510. Lighting and light control are provided for from within the four towers built into the enclosing wall.

FOYER

THE ticket office on the right of the entrance, and the dark room (exhibition) on the left, are designed in a combination of folding and sliding walls, to make possible their removal, resulting in a foyer measuring 64 feet long and 24 feet deep with a height of 20 feet. The wall of the faculty lounge, facing the foyer, is also designed to fold back, opening this area into the foyer, which can then be utilized as a music room. The enlarged foyer will serve for both formal and informal dances and entertainments. The exhibition rooms, at the left of the foyer, are so planned as to attract the greatest number of people and to serve as promenade and circulation space. Check rooms and toilets are under the mezzanine lounge.



ENTRANCE LEVEL AND AUDITORIUM PLAN

A THEATRE FOR BENNINGTON

AUDITORIUM

THE auditorium is flexible in relation to the stage and in size and seating capacity. It is composed of an upper and lower section joined by a cross aisle, making one continuous bank when used in its entirety. When so used the seating capacity is 570. A rubberized curtain, operating from a traveller immediately behind the cross aisle, serves to reduce the auditorium in size and seating capacity to 350. This is adequate for strictly college functions. The first three rows in the lower section are made up of removable chairs so as to serve as additional playing space when the stage is opened out into the auditorium. Rows are 42 inches from chair back to chair back, eliminating the necessity for centre aisles. The wide side aisles connect the stage with the cross aisle at the back, making possible the movement of the actor around the audience. The lighting in the auditorium is indirect, coming from the louvres in the side walls. This type of lighting makes for better control in both color and intensity and will heighten the union of stage and auditorium. At the right and left, toward the stage and above the entrances at these points, hidden by louvres similar to those used for the lighting, is located the switchboard on the left, and the music booth on the right. This placement enables the electrician and musician to see the stage at all times. Halls to the right and left of the auditorium allow for traffic through the theatre without interfering with the use of stage and auditorium.

STAGE AND SCENE DOCK

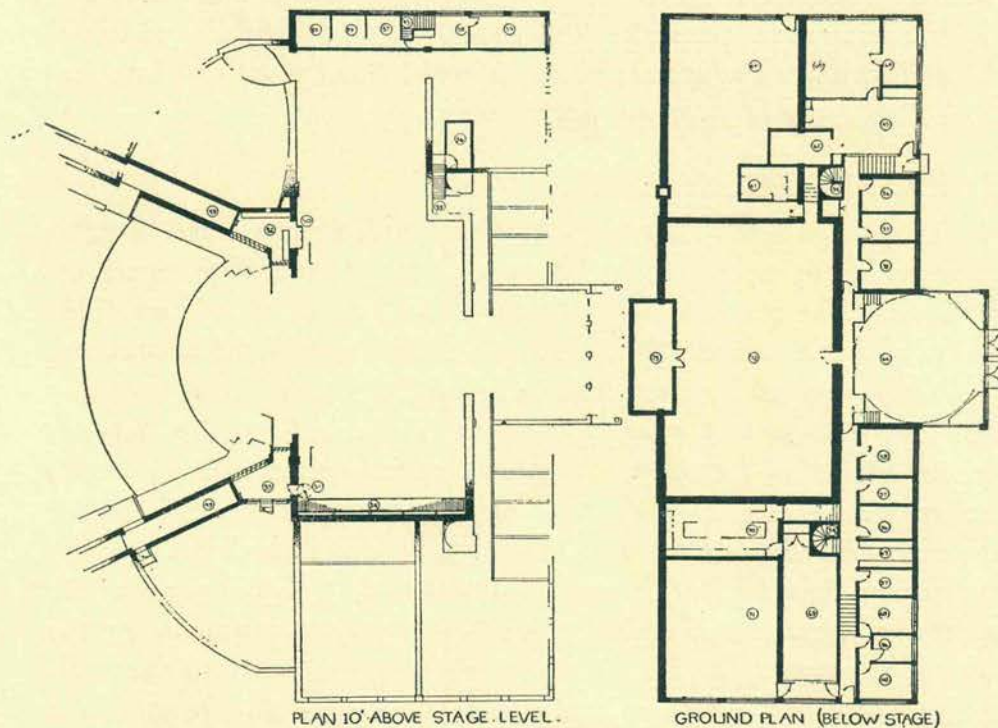
THE stage is 68 feet wide and 40 feet deep, with a proscenium opening 36 feet wide by 24 feet high. The scene dock, 24 feet high, opens directly onto the stage, making a total overall width of 106 feet. This makes possible horizontal as well as vertical movement of scenery, the latter supplied by a gridiron 54 feet in height. A sliding stage, 17 feet deep and 32 feet wide, operates from the dock to the stage. A smaller stage, 14 feet deep by 30 feet wide, operates in jack-knife fashion from stage left. These two stages are stacked on end against the rear wall when not in use. The stage floor is 16 inches above the auditorium floor level; this combined with the 15 degree ramp of the auditorium results in a sight line enabling every spectator to see the floor of the stage. The folding stage, when opened out into the auditorium, connects with the first rise of steps here and results in a

THEATRE ARTS MONTHLY

playing area 24 feet of which is in front of the proscenium line. By means of a combination of sliding and folding walls at the rear of the stage the playing area can be extended into the rehearsal room, making a total possible depth of 92 feet. The stage is equipped with a flexible cyclorama, in six sections; four of these, when combined, make a curved cyclorama 30 feet high and when used with the remaining two, 48 feet high. The lower section can be moved forward to provide a background for the stage when it is extended beyond the proscenium line. The inner proscenium is constructed of hinged panels which can either cut down the total width of the opening or join with the cyclorama to complete the background. The stage is completely trapped behind the line of the folding stage so as to allow for the lowering of scenery into the storage space below.

REHEARSAL SPACE (DANCE, DRAMA)

THE theatre contains four rehearsal rooms measuring on the average 30 feet by 28 feet, large enough to be of real rehearsal value. The scene dock, with a setting on the sliding stage, can be shut off from the stage and shop, and here the actor can rehearse in the setting for a particular play. The stage of the lecture theatre can be used for voice



A THEATRE FOR BENNINGTON

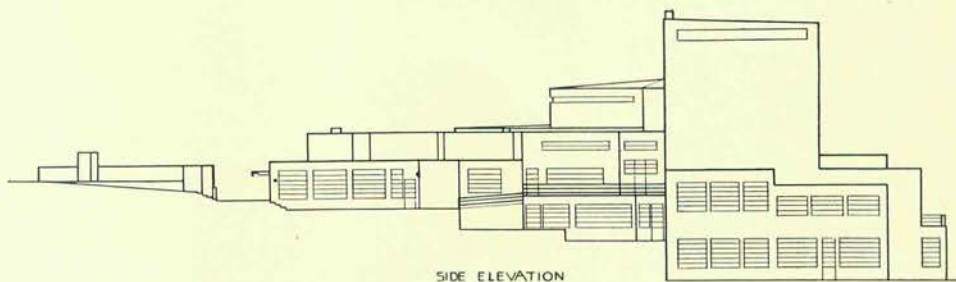
and improvisation exercises. The rehearsal rooms and playing areas of both the outdoor and indoor stages are all approximately the same size, to insure the greatest flexibility in the use of the building.

SHOPS

THE carpenter shop measures 700 square feet by 18 feet high. It is removed far enough from the stage to eliminate sound disturbance. The stairs to the scene storage are in the shop to eliminate disturbance in the dock in case of rehearsal. The costume shop contains 900 square feet and is 12 feet high. The dyeing room and costume storage are directly below this area. Stairs and a conveyor for the transference of costumes and material connect these two areas.

DRESSING ROOMS

EACH dressing room has an outside window, placed high enough for privacy yet insuring light and air. The general scheme is as follows: two large dressing rooms accommodating six people each and two small dressing rooms for three each, with two toilets each and two showers for the men on the left side of centre, and the same plan plus one extra dressing room, for three, for women on the right side. In the centre on the stage level floor the rehearsal room can be utilized for a mob dressing room. There is space provided in the furniture storage area, down stage left, for a quick-change dressing room.



A Reprint
from the December
THEATRE ARTS MONTHLY
40 East 49th St., New York, N. Y.