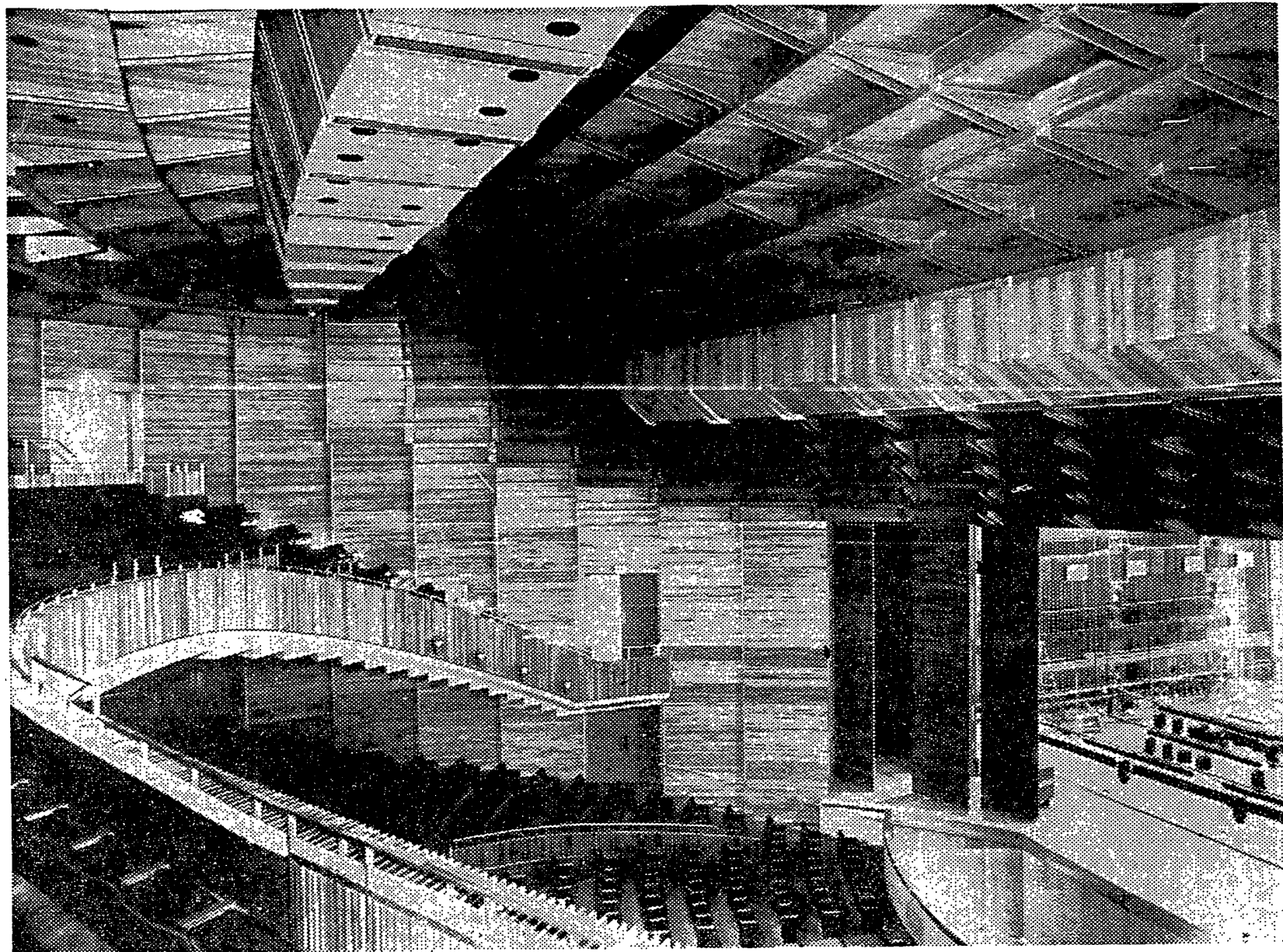


# Juilliard's New Building: Esthetic Reality

By ADA LOUISE HUXTABLE

New York Times (1923-Current file); Oct 8, 1969; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times

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The Juilliard Theater has complex, adjustable ceiling and will house everything from opera and drama to chamber music

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ALTHOUGH the Juilliard School won't open formally till the end of the month classes have started and the first of its four theaters, Alice Tully Hall, is on a full-time operating schedule. It is now time to take a look at the last of the buildings of Lincoln Center. You can't hit

An Appraisal  
sour notes all the time. The Juilliard School is a good building, free of the un-

certain pretensions and pomposities of the Metropolitan Opera House, the New York State Theater and Philharmonic Hall. With the Vivian Beaumont Theater, it forms the one corner of the Lincoln Center complex that makes a case with some conviction for the contemporary arts. It is also free of fake gold leaf.

A cultural truth that seems to have eluded the builders of most of today's cultural centers is that culture is all one thing. The art with which you house the other arts is part and parcel of the art of our time, and the buildings set an intellectual and sensory standard for all the rest. As one approaches, there is the exhilaration of greatness or the letdown of mediocrity. The tone and the mood are set.

### Playing It Safe

It has been sincere, play-it-safe, gussied-up mediocrity almost all the way at Lincoln Center. The unsureness with which the committees of planners, sponsors and architects have dealt with this basic art and building truth, and the manner in which it has been compromised with

pretty banalities and backswipes at tradition, with the intention of invoking the glamour of things past, makes Lincoln Center a cruel disappointment as a modern monument.

Turn right beyond the fountain, then, for the art of our time. The spaces you pass through are the most felicitous part of the plan; the main plaza relates happily to the secondary one to the northwest for those rarest of New York pleasures, pedestrianism and a touch of sky.

Travertine facing is the one tie between the subsidiary grouping of the Beaumont Theater and Juilliard School that adds variety to the static symmetry of the main trio. These two are stronger, better buildings than the tiresomely, tentatively traditionalized star structures. They have been released from the formula, and the formalism, of pseudo-classicism and mock colonnades. At least they know what they want to be.

### Costly Equipment

My music colleague, Harold C. Schonberg, has called the new Juilliard the Taj Mahal of conservatories. It is a big, handsome building, 355 feet long by 200 feet wide (a city blockfront is 200 feet) and crammed with lavish facilities.

There are five stories above ground and four below. The architects are Pietro Belluschi, with Eduardo Catalano and Helge Westermann associated. Its luxury, however, is in space—measured today by the solid gold foot—and equipment, not in materials and details. This is the era when status office buildings hover at \$100-million.

Juilliard is the Taj Mahal on a budget.

Close to \$30-million has bought 490,000 highly specialized square feet, including equipment and furnishings. There are Juilliard's three theaters and Lincoln Center's Tully Hall, served by the most complex and advanced machinery, special orchestra and choral rehearsal rooms, 15 large dance, opera and drama studios, 3 organ studios, 84 practice rooms, 27 classrooms and ensemble studios, 30 private instructional studios, profligate scenery and costume studios and workshops, a library, lounge, snack bar and administration offices.

### Beauty of Wood

If you look beyond the wall-to-wall carpeting, this large, institutional structure is stripped to a spartan simplicity. Surfaces meant to be wood-faced have been left as bare concrete aggregate—sometimes an esthetic gain rather than a loss, although the concrete work often leaves something to be desired.

Wisely, there has been little skimping on the theaters, and they promise to be the best in town. Tully Hall has already been judged an acoustical pleasure, and Heinrich Keilholz, the acoustician, has been the consultant on the whole building.

Tully is attractive, with its wood walls, wood and plaster ceiling and lavender carpet casting 1930's-ish mauve lights in the foyer. But the Juilliard Theater opposite, not yet open, promises to be even better.

The entrance to the Juilliard Theater, red-carpeted, ringed with huge, clear glass globes of sparkling light, will

have a wall-length Louise Nevelson construction at the foyer's west end. It is theatrically handsome without overreaching. Overreaching and underachieving have been the twin design hazards of cultural center committees.

Inside, black seats temper red carpet. This theater holds 961, as against Tully's 1,060, but its near-circular shape promises greater intimacy and liveliness than Tully's long, deep plan.

Meant for multipurpose use, it has an overwhelmingly complex, adjustable wood ceiling.

The two other theaters are the Drama Workshop and Paul Recital Hall, each with 277 seats. Paul Hall is a lovely cherry-wood miniature marred only by plastic seat covers (for economy), with an organ on stage—without the usual covering—that is an abstract sculpture hard to beat.

Theaters and working floors are tied together by a simple, dramatic architectural device: an open, central entrance court rising several stories, that gives focus and orientation to the building. Further focus will be given by a stone arch by the Japanese sculptor Masayuki Nagare.

The style, guided by Mr. Belluschi, an architect of notable sensibility who has worked most beautifully, in wood, for almost 40 years, is a kind of restrained establishment modern. It is not avant-garde, but its refinements and simplicities are timeless. With the Beaumont Theater, Juilliard offers architectural and esthetic reality to the cultural confusions of Lincoln Center, ending 14 years on an upbeat.