

The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

Facilities include: *The Bruno Walter Auditorium* and *The Shelby Cullom Davis Museum*

Cost: \$8 million

Seating Capacity for The Bruno Walter Auditorium: 212

Owner: City of New York

First architectural schemes drawn: 1960

Groundbreaking: 1962

Opening: November 30, 1965

The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts was designed by Gordon Bunshaft of Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill. Bunshaft (1909-1990) was a New York native who received his Masters degree in architecture from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. After traveling in Europe and North Africa, he returned to New York to work for SOM and became a partner in 1949. His designs were typically contemporary classical style with a focus on discipline and function. He particularly emphasized the use of artwork, interior detailing and furnishings as a major feature of his buildings. The Lever House (1952), and Chase Manhattan Bank (1961) are two important examples of his work.

The Library and Museum are housed on the roof of the Vivian Beaumont Theater behind the windowless attic of the facade and extend behind the theater stagehouse, descending two stories to Amsterdam Avenue. Tucked between The Metropolitan Opera House's north side and the theater is the Library-Museum's two-story facade of glass and steel and main entrance. Near the entrance is a large stabile titled *Le Guichet* designed by Alexander Calder for the plaza.

The interior exhibits a series of functional spaces, the most successful of which are the plaza-level entrance area, the children's library, and the mezzanine-level gallery space with the exposed-concrete, coffered ceiling of the Beaumont Theater lobby as well as a window wall opening views to Amsterdam Avenue and 65th Street. Another successful space is the Bruno Walter Auditorium.