

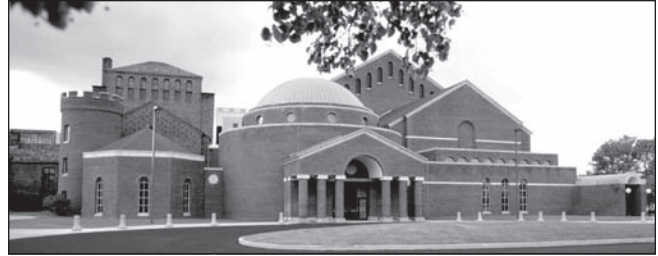
A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CLEVELAND PLAY HOUSE

The Cleveland Play House is America's first permanently established professional theatre company. It was founded in 1915 midway through a decade of cultural renaissance in Cleveland. Through a partnership of idealistic vision and philanthropic largess, many of Cleveland's major cultural organizations were formed between 1910 and 1920—Cleveland Music School Settlement, Karamu House, the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Cleveland Institute of Music and the Museum of Natural History.

Joel Grey, Margaret Hamilton, Paul Newman and Jack Weston are among the many actors whose careers began at the Play House, which also operates the nation's oldest community-based-theatre-education programs.

In the early 1900s Cleveland theatre featured mostly vaudeville, melodrama, burlesque and light entertainment. But a select group of eight Clevelanders, among them Charles and Minerva Brooks, sought plays of substance on timely topics. Together, they formed The Cleveland Play House. They found a home in a farmhouse donated by Cleveland's industrialist Francis Drury located at East 85th and Euclid Avenue which ultimately became the site of the permanent home of the Play House.

The original Play House facility, built in 1927, housed the Brooks Theatre and the Drury Theatre. To accommodate its growth, the Play House in 1949 opened the 77th Street Theatre in a converted church, which featured America's first open stage – the forerunner of the thrust stage that was popularized in the 1950's and 1960's. In the 1980's, the 77th Street Theatre was closed, the Play House purchased the Sears building and the world-renown architect Philip Johnson designed significant additions for the complex, including the Bolton Theatre. With the 1927 buildings, the Sears building and the Johnson buildings taken together, the Play House is the largest regional theatre complex in the country.



The Cleveland Play House



Margaret Hamilton



Paul Newman, age 11



Original Play House facility, built in 1927



77th Street Theatre

The Play House has had eight Artistic Directors since 1915: Raymond O'Neil (1915-21); Frederic McConnell (1921-58); K. Elmo Lowe (1959-70); William Green (1970-71); Richard Oberlin (1971-85); Josephine Abady (1988-93); Peter Hackett (1994-2004) and Michael Bloom (2004-present).

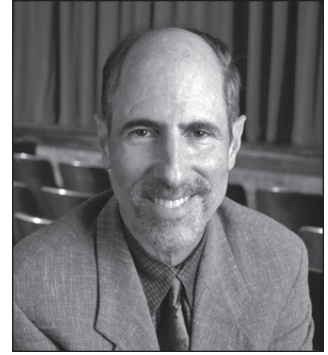
In November 1933, the Play House launched the nation's first theatre education programs. Education remains a high priority. Each year, more than 30,000 students from 350 different schools attend Play House productions, as well as drama and playwriting classes offered by the Education Department. The Play House and Case Western Reserve University offer a Master of Fine Arts degree in acting, and the three-year program is in residence at the Play House. The Play House also has educational partnerships with Cleveland State University and the Cleveland School of the Arts.

Internationally, The Cleveland Play House has hosted or exchanged productions with the National Theatre of Hungary, The Czech National Theater, Slovak National Theater, and Russia's New Experimental Theater of Volgograd. Associate Artistic Director Seth Gordon directed the Arabic premiere of *Our Town* in Cairo in 2004. In the 2008 season, we hosted a production of *Hamlet* from Tel Aviv's acclaimed Cameri Theatre.

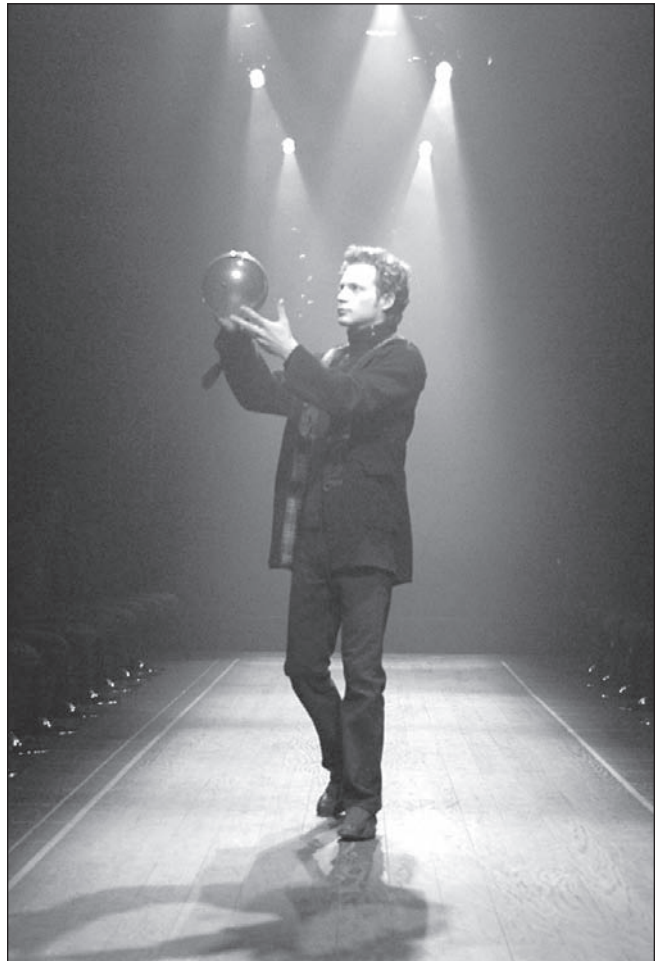
Throughout its rich history, The Cleveland Play House has remained an artist-inspired theater that serves its community by bringing to life stories that are entertaining, relevant and thought provoking. It has produced more than 100 World and/or American Premieres, and over the 93 years more than 12 million people have attended the Play House's 1,300+ productions.



Raymond O'Neil



Michael Bloom



Tel Aviv's Cameri Theatre performs *Hamlet* at The Cleveland Play House, 2008

