

Learning Places Fall 2016
Chin/Swift

SITE REPORT [part 1: place] Metropolitan Opera House at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts



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INTRODUCTION

The current incarnation of the Metropolitan Opera House was the result of nearly 40 years of planning. Ground was broken for the 97,700 square foot theater in October of 1961, and between 1963 and 1966, construction took place. On September 16, 1966, the Met – as it would be called -- officially opened with the premiere of Samuel Barber's *Antony and Cleopatra*. The design of this structure is of a modernistic style and was originally conceived by architect Wallace K. Harrison. The Met, as with the other Lincoln Center buildings, was built as part of Robert Moses' Lincoln Square Renewal Project of the 1950s and 1960s.

PRE-VISIT REFLECTION

Before the visit, I was reflecting on the uniquely designed features inside the Met. One feature I was mostly interested in was the array of crystal chandeliers in the multi-story lobby. Each of the chandeliers resembled constellations with moons and satellites spread out in all directions. I also had an interest in the cantilevered staircases, the sculptures made by Aristide Maillol and Wilhelm Lehmbruck, and the portraits of notable performers and members of the Metropolitan Opera.

SITE DOCUMENTATION (photos/sketches)



Metropolitan Opera House
at Lincoln Center
30 Lincoln Center Plaza
New York City, NY 10023

This is my sketch of the exterior of the Metropolitan Opera House at Lincoln Center.



A photo of Lincoln Center at twilight, featuring the Metropolitan Opera House, the Charles H. Revson Fountain, and David Geffen Hall (then called Avery Fisher Hall); taken October 21, 2011 by Jeff Bergman

The Metropolitan Opera House is one of the centerpieces of New York's Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, along with David Geffen Hall (formerly Avery Fisher Hall), the David H. Koch Theater (formerly the New York State Theater), and the Charles H. Revson Fountain.



QUALITATIVE SITE OBSERVATIONS

1. Neighborhood / Street Character
 - a. Lincoln Square Neighborhood
 - b. A popular tourist destination
2. Vitality of Place
 - a. General Description
 - i. The area is a very popular public space visited by many people.
 - b. Pedestrian Activity
 - i. There's a lot of pedestrian activity
 - c. Vehicular Traffic
 - i. Many vehicles pass by Lincoln Center
3. Age of Buildings (provide evidence for prediction)
 - a. Building was opened in 1966
 - b. As of 2016, it's now 50 years old.
4. Relationship Between Buildings (urbeme)
 - a. Occasionally features banners at the front of the building
5. Building Details (historical/architectural styles, morphemes)
 - a. Building is made out of white travertine (a form of limestone deposited by mineral springs).
 - b. Building's eastern façade consists of five barrel-vaulted concrete arches and a

large glass and bronze curtain wall, towering 96 feet above the main plaza.

6. Building Uses

- a. Opera performances
- b. Ballet
- c. Concerts

7. Other Observations

- a. The Met, David Geffen Hall, and the David Koch Theater surround a water fountain in the middle of the main plaza.
- b. The Met is parallel to West 62nd Street and West 65th Street
- c. The Lincoln Center complex also features Alice Tully Hall (which is located within the Juilliard School on Broadway between West 65th and West 66th Streets).

QUANTITATIVE DATA for Area of Study

Subject	Data
Street Names	30 Lincoln Center Plaza
Street Width	-
Pavement Type	Concrete
Building Heights	The Met is approximately 96 feet tall from the ground level of the plaza.
Building Widths (Window Bays)	Five arches

Building Types/Uses	Performing arts
Empty Lots / Gardens	The Met is situated on the central plaza, which features a fountain and is used as an outdoor performance space.
Shops / Restaurants	The neighborhood has plenty of shops and restaurants.
Industrial Shops	-
Other Data	Nearby, there's the Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School and the Fordham Law School campus
Other Data	-

QUESTIONS TO RESEARCH FURTHER

QUESTIONS:

1. When the Metropolitan Opera House at Lincoln Center first opened on September 19, 1966, *The New York Times* declared the opening as what?
2. The cantilevered stairway in the lobby is made up of what material?
3. The Met hosted the *MTV Video Music Awards* in what years?

RESEARCH METHOD/SOURCE FOR EACH QUESTION ABOVE:

1. Question 1
 - a. <http://www.metopera.org/user-information/new-york-times-article/>
2. Question 2
 - a. <http://www.landmarkwest.org/publications/Fall%2007/Lincoln%20Center/MetropolitanOperaHouse.pdf>
3. Question 3
 - a. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metropolitan_Opera_House_\(Lincoln_Center\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metropolitan_Opera_House_(Lincoln_Center))

SUMMARY / POST VISIT REFLECTION

After the visit, I was fascinated by the beauty of the Metropolitan Opera House, and of Lincoln Center in general. The design of each building shows the uniqueness and attractiveness of the area. I also got to know more about the area around the Lincoln Center as well as the history of the complex.