



BROOKLYN

Shakespeare's got a new home in Brooklyn, thanks to Theatre for a New Audience

Fort Greene black box is not only an architectural gem, but a major cultural hub. Performances start with 'A Midsummer Night's Dream,' now in previews.

BY JOE DZIEMIANOWICZ [Follow](#) / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS / Tuesday, October 22, 2013, 10:26 AM

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Theatre for a New Audience's Polinsky Shakespeare Center is already presenting "A Midsummer Night's Dream" in previews. Mayor Bloomberg will formally cut the ribbon on the Fort Greene hall on Tuesday.

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All the world may indeed be a stage, but few places have one as nice as Brooklyn's newest hall.

The 34-year-old Theatre for a New Audience will cut the ribbon Tuesday on its first permanent home — a \$69.1 million, Hugh-Hardy designed stunner that will quickly become a centerpiece of the booming BAM Cultural District in Fort Greene.

"We've been given an incredible opportunity," said Jeffrey Horowitz, artistic director of the company, which is known for its Shakespeare productions, but is also beloved for championing lesser-known classics. "We've been transformed. This is our next act."

Officially known as the Polinsky Shakespeare Center — hey, that's what you get when you give \$10 million! — the glass box comprises an innovative main theater with movable seats, a mini theater for more intimate classics, and a public plaza filled with honey locusts.

"It's like a dream," said Horowitz.

The beating heart of Horowitz' dream is the 299-seat Samuel H. Scripps Mainstage — hey, that's what happens when you give \$5 million — and its multi-use design.



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Theatre for a New Audience Artistic Director Jeffrey Horowitz in the plaza in front of the Hugh Hardy-designed space. The theater will formally open with "A Midsummer Night's Dream," now in previews.

Inspired by the Cottesloe Theatre of Britain's Royal National Theatre company, it's an Elizabethan-style courtyard theater — but with 2013 technology that allows seats to be configured in any way and stages to rise and fall so that gods may easily descend or fairies arise.

Even the acoustics are finely tuned so that hearing, like the quality of mercy, isn't strained.

"It's a shapeshifter," Horowitz said. "Everything is movable. The only thing fixed are the balconies. It gives directors lots of freedom."



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Inside, a huge black box features movable seats and two balconies.

people in."

For the first production — the Julie Taymor-directed "Midsummer Night's Dream," which is in previews with a Nov. 2 opening — orchestra seats surround the stage on three sides. And the two balconies are pretty much right on top of the action.

"It's been an exciting place to discover and work on the play," Taymor told the News.

The show actually begins before you step inside the building — built with \$34.4 million in help from the city.

Perched at 262 Ashland Pl. — a stage whisper away from the Brooklyn Academy of Music and the Mark Morris Dance Center — the Center gleams like a black cube. Its glass front overlooks a concrete plaza designed by landscape architect Ken Smith.

"I love the transparency of the face," said Horowitz. "This isn't a citadel. It's meant to invite



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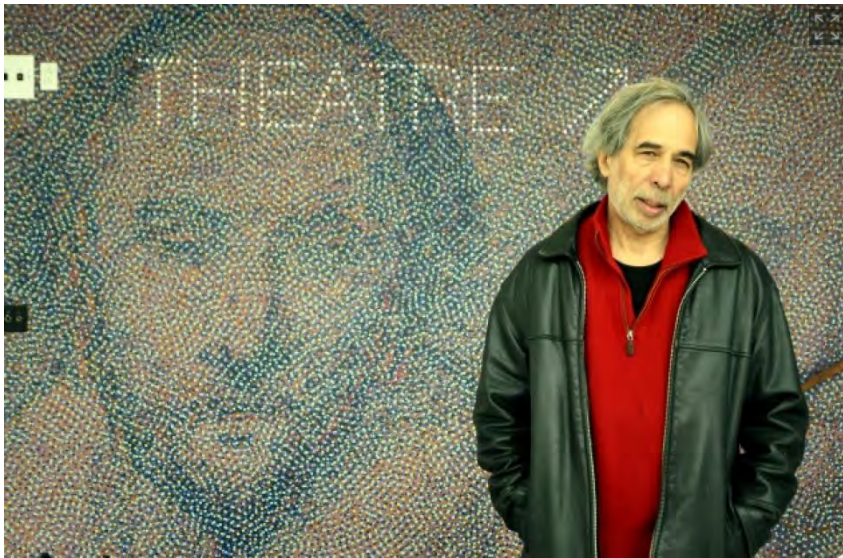
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All that was needed was a little respect, some novel thinking and genuine cooperation between labor and management.



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Ghost of Bards past: Theatre for a New Audience Artistic Director Jeffrey Horowitz shows off a banner of William Shakespeare hanging from the rafters.

Through yonder windows breaks a long sky blue banner bearing Shakespeare's face designed by famed graphic artist Milton Glaser.

The English playwright gets another visual shout-out by Glaser in the lobby. Below an arrow directing theatergoers to the stage, Shakespeare's face emerges, pointillism-style, on flecked wallpaper.

"The idea is that Shakespeare is in your mind," says Horowitz. "Then he comes into focus."

A fitting metaphor for a theater complex that will definitely keep the Bard of Avon in the minds of New Yorkers for years to come.

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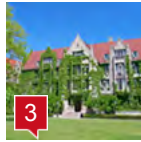
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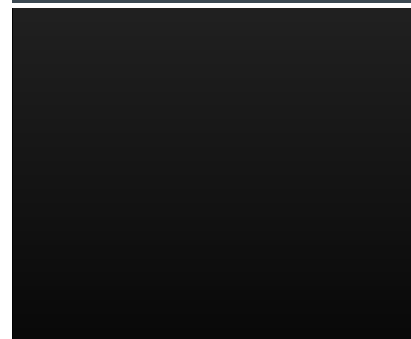
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