



A BRIEF HISTORY OF CLEVELAND PLAY HOUSE

Cleveland Play House is America's first permanently established professional theatre company, 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.

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 Cleveland Play House. They found a home at East 85th and Euclid Avenue, in a farmhouse donated by Cleveland industrialist Francis Drury. It ultimately became the site of a long-lasting home to CPH.

The eventual facility, built in 1927, housed the Brooks Theatre and the Drury Theatre. In 1949, to accommodate its growth, CPH 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 1950s and 1960s. In the 1980s, the 77th Street Theatre was closed, CPH purchased the Sears building, and the world-renowned 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 campus for CPH became the largest regional theatre complex in the country.

In 2009, through a collaboration called The Power of Three, CPH partnered with Playhouse Square and Cleveland State University to create the new Allen Theatre Complex in downtown Cleveland. In July of 2009, CPH sold its building on 85th Street to Cleveland Clinic. In September of 2011, CPH kicked off its 96th consecutive season in a reinvented Allen Theatre at

Playhouse Square. Two additional venues, Second Stage (which has since been renamed the Outcalt Theatre) and The Helen Rosenfield Lewis Bialosky Lab Theatre, opened in early 2012. CPH's administrative offices and education center are on East 13th Street, adjacent to the theatres. Its production center is located along Cleveland's lakeshore.

CPH has had nine 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); Michael Bloom (2004-2013); and Laura Kepley (2013-present).

In November 1933, CPH launched the nation's first theatre education programs. Education remains a high priority. Each year, more than 20,000 students from 350 different schools attend CPH productions, and the KeyBank CPH College program takes area high school students behind-the-scenes of a professional regional theatre. Case Western Reserve University and CPH offer a Master of Fine Arts degree in Acting, with the three-year program in residence at CPH. CPH also has educational partnerships with Cleveland State University and the Cleveland School of the Arts.

Throughout its rich history, CPH has remained an artist-inspired theatre that serves its community by bringing to life stories that are entertaining, relevant, and thought-provoking. It has produced more than nearly 100 World and/or American Premieres. An estimated 12 million people have seen more than 1,600 productions. In 2015, CPH will celebrate its centennial season, the first American regional theatre to reach that milestone. CPH is the recipient of the 2015 Regional Theatre Tony Award.[®] With dynamic leadership, exceptional programming, and top-flight facilities in place, CPH stands on the threshold of an exciting new century of service to the people of Northeast Ohio.