Form 10-300  UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM  
(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)  

1. NAME  
COMMON:  
New York Shakespeare Festival Public Theater  
AND/or HISTORIC:  
Astor Library  

2. LOCATION  
STREET AND NUMBER:  
425 Lafayette Street  
CITY OR TOWN:   
New York  
STATE:   New York  
CODE:   31  
COUNTY:   New York  
CODE:   631  

3. CLASSIFICATION  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>OWNERSHIP</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
<th>ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>In Process</td>
<td>Occupied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Being Considered</td>
<td>Unoccupied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Bath</td>
<td></td>
<td>Preservation work In progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)  
- Agricultural  
- Government  
- Park  
- Private Residence  
- Transportation  
- Other (Specify)  
- Comments  
- Educational  
- Industrial  
- Military  
- Religious  
- Museum  
- Scientific  

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY  
OWNER'S NAME:  
New York Shakespeare Festival  
STREET AND NUMBER:  
425 Lafayette Street  
CITY OR TOWN:   
New York  
STATE:   New York  
CODE:   31

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION  
COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:  
City Clerk's Office  
STREET AND NUMBER:  
Municipal Building  
CITY OR TOWN:   
New York  
STATE:   New York  
CODE:   31

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS  
TITLE OF SURVEY:  
Landmarks Preservation Commission  
DATE OF SURVEY: 1965  
Federal  | State  | County  | Local  
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
Landmarks Preservation Commission  
STREET AND NUMBER:  
305 Broadway  
CITY OR TOWN:   
New York  
STATE:   New York  
CODE:   31  

**Admission to building unrestricted and free of admission charge; admission to certain performances by admission charge.
7. DESCRIPTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONDITION</th>
<th>□ Excellent</th>
<th>□ Good</th>
<th>□ Fair</th>
<th>□ Deteriorated</th>
<th>□ Ruins</th>
<th>□ Unexposed</th>
<th>□ Altered</th>
<th>□ Unaltered</th>
<th>□ Moved</th>
<th>□ Original Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

DESCRIPT THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

1. Number of stories: central block is four stories plus basement; wings are each three stories plus basement.

2. Number of bays: west facade is fifteen bays wide.

3. Layout and/or shape of plan: irregular in plan.

4. Wall construction: foundations are stone. Walls are brick laid up in running bond, and have stone trim.

5. Structural system: brick bearing walls; masonry columns, cast iron columns.


7. Chimneys: brick chimneys.

8. Important interior features: elaborate cornice panels and moldings, decorative cast iron columns, arched windows, and original ornamented skylights.
S. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

☐ Pre-Columbian
☐ 16th Century
☐ 17th Century
☐ 18th Century
☐ 19th Century
☐ 20th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1849-53; 1856-59; 1879-81

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

☐ Aboriginal
☐ Prehistoric
☐ Historic
☐ Industry
☐ Agriculture
☐ Invention
☐ Architecture
☐ Art
☐ Commerce
☐ Communications
☐ Conservation
☐ Education
☐ Engineering
☐ Landscape
☐ Architecture
☐ Literature
☐ Military
☐ Music
☐ Political
☐ Religion/Phil.
☐ Science
☐ Sculpture
☐ Social/Humanitarian
☐ Theater
☐ Transportation

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

THE NEW YORK Shakespeare Festival Public Theater is situated in the historic Astor Place section of Manhattan, an area characterized by such notable historic buildings as Cooper Union and LaGrange Terrace. The theater has been described by critic Ada Louise Huxtable as New York’s most celebrated cultural and architectural monument when it was constructed in the 1850’s.

Three architects built its matching sections as the library expanded. The south wing, by Alexander Sæltzer, went up from 1849 to 1853; the central section was the work of Griffith Thomas, from 1856 to 1859; the north wing was completed by Thomas Stent from 1879 to 1881.

Inside, from south to north, the chronology of construction is a fascinating record of mid-century progress from solid stone to light iron, demonstrating the switch from masonry to metal that eventually made the skyscraper possible.

Restored and remodeled, the theater brings glamour back to what was once the most stylish area of New York. The building was the height of fashion when it opened in 1854; listed as ‘Italianate’ by the Landmarks Preservation Commission, it was described as ‘Byzantine’ in accounts of the day.1

Acquired by the New York Shakespeare Festival in 1966 and saved from threatened demolition by a real estate developer, the old Astor Library has been converted into the New York Shakespeare Festival Public Theater, a cultural facility containing three legitimate theaters (two of 300 seats, one of 100 seats), an avant-garde 104-seat cinema, one chamber concert hall, two art galleries, and technical and administrative facilities for the Shakespeare Festival. Over $2,500,000 has been spent upon restoration and conversion to its new use, with careful preservation of its historic architectural features under the supervision of architect Georgio Cavagliari.

The Astor Library was designated a New York City Landmark by the New York City Landmark Preservation Commission in October 1965.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES


10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

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<thead>
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<th>CORNER</th>
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<td>Degrees</td>
<td>Minutes</td>
<td>Seconds</td>
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<td>SW</td>
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APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY:

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE:</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>COUNTY:</th>
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11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Joseph Papp, President

ORGANIZATION: New York Shakespeare Festival

STREET AND NUMBER: 425 Lafayette Street

CITY OR TOWN: New York

STATE: New York

12. STATE LIASON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National X State Local

Name

Title

Date

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date

*Ed. by Diana S. Waite, N.Y.S. Historic Trust, Albany, N.Y.*
1. NAME
   New York Shakespeare Festival Public Theater

2. LOCATION
   STREET AND NUMBER: 425 Lafayette Street
   CITY OR TOWN: New York
   STATE: New York

3. PHOTO REFERENCE
   PHOTO CREDIT: George Cserna
   DATE OF PHOTO: 
   NEGATIVE FILED AT: New York Shakespeare Festival

4. IDENTIFICATION
   DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.
   View of Lafayette St. (front) facade,