

Surprise! No race war on premiere of 'Survivor'

The show may instead
 force honest discourse.

The much-hyped *Survivor Segregation* finally debuted last week, and, contrary to most people's predictions, no race war broke out.

What a surprise! Judging from the hand-wringing by pundits and advertisers leading up to last Thursday's premiere, you would have thought that the whites would be out to lynch the blacks, who in turn would be trying to sell crack to the Asians, who'd be karate-chopping the Latinos, who would be souping up a Chevy, attempting to high-tail it off of the island.

Everybody worried that race-based *Survivor* would, as the Wall Street Journal accused, "play up race politics in a crude and potentially rancorous way," or, as the Hollywood Reporter denounced, exploit "America's obsession with race for personal gain."

Imagine that. *Survivor* creator Mark Burnett used the tried-and-true ratings-grab formula for a show that's lost its steam: Release details of a provocative racial experiment, sit back and watch pundits, press, bloggers, and anyone else who cares beat to death the gimmick before seeing the show, track ratings as viewers flock to their sets to see what all the fuss is about.

Guess what. The show easily won its time slot. You have to wonder what high-profile companies like General Motors and Coca-Cola must be thinking now after pulling their advertising once the controversy started to simmer. It's funny how they scampered when race was part of the storyline, but never gave a second thought to supporting TV shows that celebrated a lack of diversity (can you say *Friends*?).

Maybe I'm in the minority here — on *Survivor*, I'd be part of the See **SURVIVOR** on C8



Annette John-Hall

Philadelphia Theatre Company's planned new venue is designed so the excitement starts on the street.



Show-off showplace

By Inga Saffron
 INQUIRER ARCHITECTURE CRITIC

All the world may be a stage, but theaters in general, and those on the Avenue of the Arts in particular, have a bad habit of hiding one of their most exciting dramas behind the solid walls of their buildings: the preshow arrival of their well-dressed patrons.

The Philadelphia Theatre Company, which tonight plans to show off the first architectural renderings of its new Broad Street home,



KieranTimberlake Associates

The theater, to be built on South Broad Street, with a peekaboo entrance and proscenium arch, will have a retro sense of glamour.

intends to greet the world with more flash. Its entire 70-foot-long facade will be a series of large shop windows that allow voyeuristic glimpses of the gathering crowd in the lobby, and should generate a buzz of excitement that has so far been missing from the Avenue of the Arts.

When the company, which specializes in new American plays, moves into the Symphony House condo building in October 2007, it will be the fourth new theater venue to open on, or just off, Broad See **THEATER** on C8



Book Review

New translation of 'Musketeers' one for all times

The Three Musketeers
 By Alexandre Dumas
 Translated by Richard Pevear
 Viking, 704 pp. \$35

Reviewed by Frank Wilson

Inside

Newsmakers: Pitt in for Cruise in the next "Mission: Impossible"? **C2.**

Pop Music: Cassandra Wilson at World Cafe Live. **C2.**

Theater: Pinter's "The Birthday Party" in Princeton. **C3.**

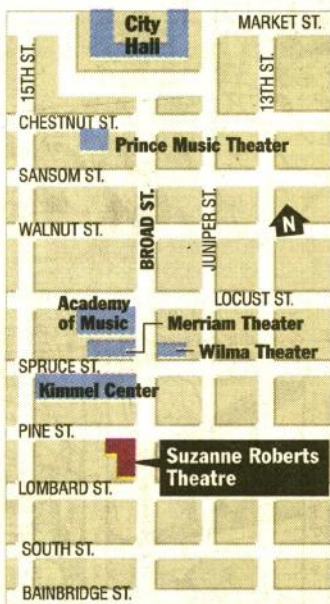
Theater plan includes a grand entrance

THEATER from C1
Street since it was dubbed the Avenue of the Arts by the Rendell administration. While PTC won't have a free-standing building, as the Kimmel Center and the Academy of Music do, its 365-seat space on the corner of Lombard Street has been designed by Philadelphia's KieranTimberlake Associates to grab public attention. It will be the first and only one of the six venues on Philadelphia's theater row to give passersby a clear front-row seat on the lobby action.

The designers, led by Richard L. Maimon, have taken their inspiration in equal measure from Comcast's flamboyant Suzanne Roberts, the benefactor for whom the theater is named, and from opulent 19th-century playhouses. Roberts' name will appear on a sculpted, deep red metal scarf fluttering over the entrance.

The theater company is moving only a few blocks, from the historic, but run-down, Plays & Players Theatre on Delancey Street. But it hopes that having its own home and a state-of-the-art stage will enable it to stretch its dramatic wings. It will immediately expand its season from the current 26 weeks to 36. The project also includes a performance studio that can be used for rehearsals, readings and events.

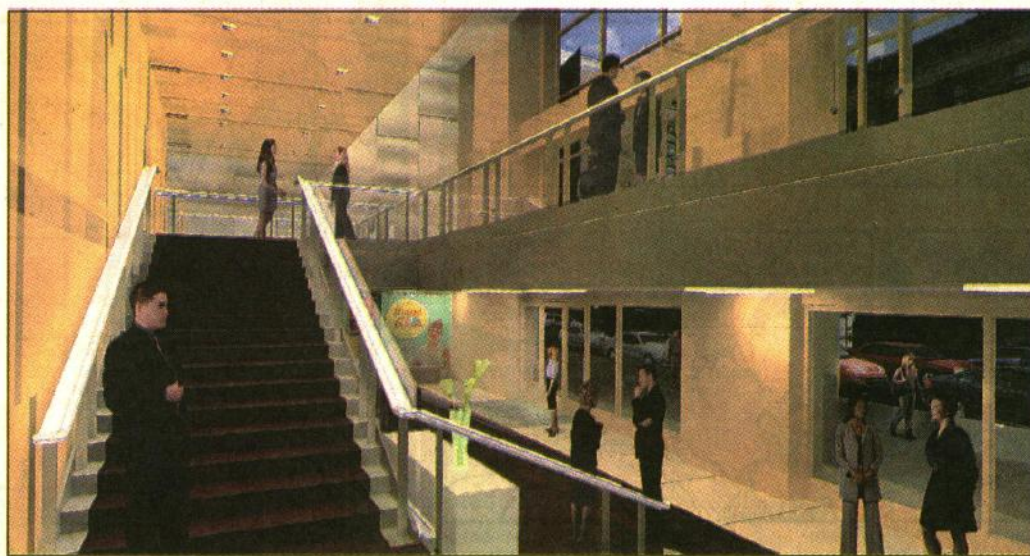
KieranTimberlake generally works in an understated, modernist style, but the PTC's interior will be drenched in rich colors and treated with a variety of textures. Those touches are meant to evoke the lushness of the Academy, rather than the stark industrial atmosphere of venues like the Arden Theatre,



The Philadelphia Inquirer

also designed by KieranTimberlake. The stage at the \$22 million Suzanne Roberts Theatre will be outfitted with a traditional proscenium arch, a feature that will serve as the frame for a full curtain and will also camouflage the flyhouse that stores the lights, pulley ropes and scenery high above the stage.

Taken together, these design elements represent a significant departure from purely functional spaces like the Arden, and a return to a more formal kind of theater experience. Ever since Bertolt Brecht denounced stage gimmickry in the 1920s, many new theaters have been designed to downplay the make-believe. Stages became open platforms, leaving actors without the refuge of the wings or a curtain. Theater hardware was exposed, so that patrons saw exactly how all the



KieranTimberlake Associates

The design calls for a small and tight lobby. The aim is to create a convivial space while encouraging Philadelphia Theatre Company patrons to take the stairs up to the theater entrance.

tricks were done.

By contrast, the PTC stage includes 20-foot wings. By cocooning its main theater in voluptuous colors and fabrics, the PTC is signaling that it wants patrons to sink into their plush seats and suspend disbelief for the length of the performance. PTC doesn't have the money or inclination to adorn its theater with gilt and plaster, so the walls will instead be covered with thick prefab slabs in the shape of a wavy funhouse mirror. They will be stained the color of red wine and adorned with soft, horizontal lights.

If KieranTimberlake can create the luxurious, self-contained atmosphere of a traditional theater for PTC inside the bland Symphony House, it will be quite a feat of magic in itself. The condo building, now under construction, is likely to be any-

thing but glamorous in appearance.

Designed by Philadelphia's Bower Lewis Throer for developer Carl Dranoff, the building attempts to emulate a classic 1920s apartment house, but is a cluttered compilation of historical elements — a mansard roof, porthole windows, arched doorways. The whole thing is clad in cheap-looking panels that are meant to be a stand-in for real brick and limestone. In what seems to be the new paradigm for Philadelphia's residential towers, Symphony House rests on a bulky garage podium.

Because the site was originally owned by the city, Dranoff was obliged to include a cultural component. By teaming up with PTC and offering the company ownership of its own space, he was able to triumph over several other bidders for the site.

The theater company will occupy the lower two levels on the southern end of Symphony House. Sharing the fate of the Wilma Theater, completed by New York's Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer in 1996, PTC will be shoehorned under a garage. But KieranTimberlake has done a significantly better job on Broad Street. Despite the swoopy lines of a neon sculpture that hangs from its facade, it's impossible to ignore the fact

that the Wilma is housed in a concrete bunker.

The Wilma can at least blame limited means. It remains a mystery how architect Rafael Viñoly

was allowed to squander the Kimmel Center's ample Broad Street frontage with a dull brick facade and a meaningless granite cube.

Patrons will enter the Suzanne Roberts Theatre at grade, but KieranTimberlake has followed the Academy's example and kept the lobby small and tight. The intention is to create a convivial space while at the same time encouraging patrons to take the open stairs up to the theater entrance. Like the lower lobby, the upper level has full windows. Inside, patrons will either take their seats on the balcony or descend to the main level.

And when the houselights dim and the curtain opens, there should be no doubt that the audience has crossed from the real world of Broad Street into the realm of the imagination.

Contact architecture critic Inga Saffron at 215-854-2213 or isafron@phillynews.com.

All for one; one for all times

MUSKETEERS from C1

Larissa Volokhonsky, gave us a splendid *Anna Karenina* a couple of years ago — came out last month, I resolved to spend some time once again with D'Artagnan and his three friends, Athos, Porthos and Aramis.

They proved to be just as good company as before.

There have been many English translations of *The Three Musketeers* — three in 1846 alone, just two years after the book was first published in France. One of those, by William Barrows, is still in print. It is, Pevear says in "A Note on the Translation" included in this new edition, "good and faithful ... following the original almost word-for-word" — except that "all of the explicit and many of the implicit references to sexuality and the human body" are omitted.

As for more recent translations, Pevear calls them "text-book examples of bad translation practice ... verbose, periphrastic, and dull." Pevear's aim, he says, was "to keep as much as possible of the pace, pungency, and wit of the original," and his translation certainly does sparkle and flow. And at just the right tempo.

That is important, because much of Dumas' charm derives from his unerring sense of pace. The actual story of *The Three Musketeers* is quite simple: The Duke of Buckingham, the dashing, handsome and unscrupulous favorite of England's King Charles I, is in love with Anne d'Autriche, French King Louis XIII's queen. Her

Cardinal Richelieu, Louis' chief minister, would like to use this hint of scandal as a wedge to drive Anne and Louis apart, both to strengthen his own hand and to weaken any influence the queen might have over the king.

That, as I say, is the story. The plot is something else again. At once intricate and transparent, its forward motion never flags, but never unduly hastens, either. The novel began life as a serial, and Dumas' art lies in making each chapter both satisfying and tantalizing: What is served is nourishing, but we want — and need — more. Chapter XIX, for instance, "The Campaign Plan," recounts a full story — how the four comrades figure out how to go about getting word to Buckingham in London that the queen desperately needs back something she has given him. But of course, once the plan is drawn up, we want to see how it is carried out — but that doesn't get started until the next chapter.

The plot centers on D'Artagnan and the three musketeers. (D'Artagnan doesn't become a musketeer himself until fairly late in the book.) They are king's men, hence opposed to the cardinal and his schemes. (Richelieu, by the way, is portrayed as an antagonist but not a villain.) These schemes involve Constance Bonacieux, the wife of D'Artagnan's landlord and one of the queen's handmaids, who is abducted by the cardinal's henchmen, among them a man dressed in black whom D'Artagnan spends the entire book pursuing (because of an insult tendered because in Chapter 2,

collaborator. Milady is heart-warmingly evil. Made a prisoner by her brother-in-law, "the first moments of captivity were terrible: several convulsions of rage, which she had been unable to master ... But she gradually overcame the outbursts of her wild anger, the nervous tremblings that shook her body disappeared, and now she was coiled up on herself like a weary serpent resting."

It is a measure of Milady's strength that it takes all four of our heroes' wiles to bring her to bay.

And what of those heroes? Well, it is they who give the book its life. It is they one remembers when one puts it down, who stay with one forever after — noble, melancholy Athos; large, rambunctious Porthos; elegant, introspective Aramis; and shrewd, impulsive, courageous D'Artagnan.

Critics and scholars have never thought much of Dumas' works. As the *Encyclopedia Britannica* condescendingly puts it: "Without ever attaining indisputable literary merit, Dumas succeeded in gaining a great reputation first as a dramatist and then as a historical novelist. ..." His books remain in print because of the common reader's devotion. In the case of *The Three Musketeers*, that means devotion to a quartet of characters we cannot help regarding as dear, dear friends.

Contact books editor Frank Wilson at 215-854-5616 or fwilson@phillynews.com.

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