

## New theater will reclaim old space in Minneapolis

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Hennepin Theatre Trust to open a 300-seat playhouse in City Center later this year.



Hennepin Stages' new performance space will be the New Century Theatre, in honor of the theater and later movie house that stood where City Center is now.

Photo: **Roy Swan**, Minneapolis Star

The Hennepin Theatre Trust is building a performance space in the heart of downtown Minneapolis. The organization will fashion new offices in City Center at the end of this month and build an adjacent 300-seat theater.

Publicist Karen Nelson said the move is part of the Trust's mission to help revitalize Hennepin Avenue. The nonprofit, which manages the city's big downtown theaters, has been looking for space that could accommodate offices and provide a flexible-seating performance space.

The new space will be called New Century Theatre, in homage to the Century Theatre -- one of four historic theaters that used to operate near S. 7th Street and Hennepin Avenue S.

Performances will begin "sometime next fall," Nelson said. Programming would be similar to what the Trust offered at Hennepin Stages, such long-run comedies as "Girls Only" and the "Don't Hug Me" franchise. Nelson said the Trust also will use the space for the Spotlight Musical Theatre program, cabarets, workshops and the Broadway Confidential series. Drawings of the theater are not yet available, but it will be on the street level at City Center, across from the big lobby on 6th Street.

The original theater opened in 1908 as a 2,000-seat vaudeville house called the Miles. It was rebuilt several times and eventually was dubbed the Century Theatre in 1929. It closed and reopened often until it was retooled to seat 1,145 and transformed into the Century Cinerama in the mid 1950s. "Cleopatra" in 1963 and "The Unsinkable Molly Brown" were two of the final movies shown there. The Century burned in 1964 and was bulldozed the following year.

Hennepin Stages was sold this spring to Brave New Workshop, which will redevelop that space at 824 Hennepin Av. S. in advance of a fall opening.

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