

RADIO CITY MUSIC HALL, ground floor interior consisting of the ticket lobby and ticket booths, advance sales lobby and ticket booth, inner lobby, south entrance vestibule, curved staircase at south end, entrance foyer, grand foyer, grand staircase, exit lobby, elevator lobby and elevator cabs, auditorium, including the seats, side ramps, staircases, light control board, orchestra pit, the stage and stage wings; interior of the first level below the ground floor consisting of the main lounge and its staircases, elevator lobby and elevator cabs, men's lounge, men's washroom, men's toilet, foyer, women's lounge, powder room, women's washroom, women's toilet, orchestra pit, stage elevator; first mezzanine interior consisting of the upper part of the grand foyer, grand staircase and landing, lounge, curved staircase at south end, powder room, telephone alcove, women's toilet, smoking room, telephone alcove, men's toilet, promenade, foyer, north staircase connecting first and second mezzanines, elevator lobby and elevator cabs, first balcony including seats, upper part of the auditorium, upper part of the stage house; second mezzanine interior consisting of the upper part of the grand foyer, lounge, curved staircase at south end, powder room, telephone alcove, women's toilet, smoking room, telephone alcove, men's toilet, promenade, foyer, north staircase connecting second and third mezzanines, elevator lobby and elevator cabs, second balcony including seats, upper part of the auditorium, upper part of the stage house; third mezzanine interior consisting of the upper part of the grand foyer and ceiling, lounge, powder room, telephone alcove, women's toilet, smoking room, telephone alcove, men's toilet, promenade, foyer, elevator lobby and elevator cabs, third balcony including seats, upper part of the auditorium and ceiling, and upper part of the stage house and skylight; and the fixtures and the interior components of these spaces, including but not limited to all lighting fixtures, wall-coverings, murals, mirrors, floor-coverings, stage curtains, statues, attached furnishings, drinking fountains, lavatory fixtures, telephone booths, railings, metal grilles over ventilation ducts and fire hoses, doors, and signs; 50th Street and Avenue of the Americas, Borough of Manhattan. Built 1931-32; architect The Associated Architects.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1266, Lot 1 in part consisting of the land on which the described building is situated.

On March 14, 1978, the Landmark Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as an Interior Landmark of the Radio City Music Hall, ground floor interior consisting of the ticket lobby and ticket booths, advance sales lobby and ticket booth, inner lobby, south entrance vestibule, curved staircase at south end, entrance foyer, grand foyer, grand staircase, exit lobby, elevator lobby and elevator cabs, auditorium, including the seats, side ramps, staircases, light control board, orchestra pit, the stage and stage wings; interior of the first level below the ground floor consisting of the main lounge and its staircases, elevator lobby and elevator cabs, men's lounge, men's washroom, men's toilet, foyer, women's lounge, powder room, women's washroom, women's toilet, orchestra pit, stage elevator; first mezzanine interior consisting of the upper part of the grand foyer, grand staircase and landing, lounge, curved staircase at south end, powder room, telephone alcove, women's toilet, smoking room, telephone alcove, men's toilet, promenade, foyer, north staircase connecting first and second mezzanines, elevator lobby and elevator cabs, first balcony including seats, upper part of the auditorium, upper part of the stage house; second mezzanine interior consisting of the upper part of the grand foyer, lounge, curved staircase at south end, powder room, telephone alcove, women's toilet, smoking room, telephone alcove, men's toilet, promenade, foyer, north staircase connecting second and third mezzanines, elevator lobby and elevator cabs, second balcony including seats, upper part of the auditorium, upper part of the stage house; third mezzanine interior consisting of the upper part of the grand foyer and ceiling, lounge, powder room, telephone alcove, women's toilet, smoking room, telephone alcove, men's toilet, promenade, foyer, elevator lobby and elevator cabs, third balcony including seats, upper part of the auditorium and ceiling, and upper part of the stage house and skylight; and the fixtures and the interior components of these spaces, including but not limited to all lighting fixtures, wall-coverings, murals, mirrors, floor-coverings, stage curtains, statues, attached furnishings,

drinking fountains, lavatory fixtures, telephone booths, railings, metal grilles over ventilation ducts and fire hoses, doors, and signs; and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 1). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Seventy witnesses spoke in favor of designation. Among them were Lieutenant Governor Mary Ann Krupsak; Orin Lehman of the New York State Office of Parks and Recreation and the State Historic Preservation Officer; Henry Geldzahler, New York City Commissioner of Cultural Affairs, Joseph Papp of The New York Shakespeare Festival Theater; Whitney North Seymour, Esq.; Paul S. Byard, Esq.; Joan K. Davidson, President of the J.M. Kaplan Fund; Professor Carol Herselle Krinsky, author of Rockefeller Center (Oxford University Press, 1978); architectural editor and critic Douglas Haskell; Jack Kroll, senior editor and film and theater critic of Newsweek; Professor Rosemarie Haag Bletter, co-author of Skyscraper Style, Art Deco New York (Oxford University Press, 1975); Kitty Carlisle Hart, Chairman of the New York State Council on the Arts; Charles Hoyt, associate editor of Architectural Record and representing the New York Chapter, American Institute of Architects; Gerald Schoenfeld, Chairman of the Board of the Shubert Organization; and Robert Dryfoos, counsel to Lieutenant Governor Mary Ann Krupsak. There were five speakers in opposition to designation including Alton Marshall, President of Rockefeller Center, Inc., and Charles R. Hacker, Executive Vice President of Radio City Music Hall, Inc. Seven persons submitted forms to speak in favor of designation but left before they could be called; three left statements to be made a part of the record. The Commission has received numerous letters, telegrams, petitions, and other communications from all over the country in support of designation. These have been received from, among many others, Brendan Gill, Chairman of the New York Landmarks Conservancy; architect Philip Johnson; Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan; Lisa Taylor, Director of the Cooper-Hewitt Museum, Smithsonian Institution; Ben Beckman, President of the New York Metropolitan Chapter of the American Society of Interior Designers; Peter Blake, Chairman of the Boston Architectural Center; Lloyd Herman, Director of the Renwick Gallery, Smithsonian Institution; Harry Lowe, Assistant Director of the National Collection of Fine Arts, Smithsonian Institution; James Biddle, President of the National Trust for Historic Preservation; architect Edward Durell Stone; composer Stephen Sondheim; and Diana S. Waite, Executive Director of the Preservation League of New York State. A letter has been received from the representatives of Columbia University opposing the proposed designation.

#### DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The interiors of Radio City Music Hall, which the Commission designates an Interior Landmark, are among the most impressive spaces in the history of modern theater design. The original character of the Art Deco style interior has been remarkably preserved, and it is distinguished by the total unity in design of the architectural, artistic, and decorative features. Three prestigious architectural firms, together with many distinguished artists and designers, contributed to the creation of the interior. The extensive collaboration between the artists and architects in the design of a single building was exceptional. When the Music Hall opened in 1932, it was widely recognized for both its artistic and technical excellence; it was hailed as a "theatrical accomplishment worthy of the greatest theatrical city in the world."<sup>1</sup> Today, more than forty years after the opening of the Music Hall, the design of its interior has gained in architectural significance. No other surviving American theater of the period equals the interior of the Music Hall in scale and in variety of architectural, artistic, and decorative elements. The interior of the Music Hall remains one of the most dramatically effective spaces in the country. As one of the finest theater spaces in the United States and as one of the principal achievements of the Art Deco style, the interior of Radio City Music Hall is of unique importance to the history of American architecture and design.

## Early History of Rockefeller Center

The complex history of the development and construction of Rockefeller Center dates back to 1926 when the Metropolitan Opera Company began to search for a site on which to erect a new opera house. A number of sites were suggested and, in 1928, the area owned by Columbia University, between 48th and 51st Streets, Fifth and Sixth Avenues, was proposed. The Opera Company secured the collaboration of John D. Rockefeller, Jr. (1874-1960). Following a series of negotiations, a contract between Rockefeller and Columbia University was drawn up on October 1, 1928; Rockefeller agreed to lease the three blocks owned by Columbia for a period of 24 years, with options for renewal, at an annual rate of over \$3 million.

During the preliminary stages of the planning process, Rockefeller called upon the expertise of the Todd, Robertson & Todd Engineering Company. Despite its name, the firm specialized in real estate development and management and eventually played a critical role in the success of Rockefeller Center. The three partners--John R. Todd, a lawyer; James M. Todd, a doctor; and Hugh S. Robertson, a realtor--were extremely competent men to whom John D. Rockefeller entrusted almost complete control of the vast project. Shortly before Rockefeller had signed the contract with Columbia in 1928, the Todd firm had commissioned the architectural firm of Reinhard & Hofmeister to devise various schemes for the midtown site. Both Reinhard and Hofmeister had been associated with the Todd firm a few years before on the interior planning of the Graybar Building. The Reinhard & Hofmeister plans of 1928 for the Opera Company project included, in addition to the Opera House, department stores, hotels and apartment buildings. A number of architects were eventually commissioned to work on the complex, among them two highly prestigious individuals, Raymond Hood and Harvey Wiley Corbett. No single architectural firm is responsible for the design of Rockefeller Center, rather all three of the firms involved worked under the group name of "The Associated Architects."

In December, 1928, Rockefeller established the Metropolitan Square Corporation, a holding company for his interests in the Columbia property. The project was known simply as "Metropolitan Square" for several years. Rockefeller also purchased the lots facing Sixth Avenue and formed another holding company for the property which he called "Underel" since the land was situated under the elevated railroad.

The joint venture between the Metropolitan Opera Company and John D. Rockefeller, Jr., terminated after the disastrous stock market crash of 1929; Rockefeller was left with a costly long-term lease on the Columbia property. A few months after the Opera Company withdrew from the project, it was announced by Mr. Todd that the culturally-oriented complex originally planned would be transformed into "a commercial center as beautiful as possible, consistent with the maximum income that could be developed."<sup>2</sup> The problem of replacing the Opera Company in this new "Commercial Center" was solved by the architect, Raymond Hood, who suggested that the Radio Corporation of America (RCA), and its subsidiaries, the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) and Radio-Keith-Orpheum (RKO), be the major tenants of the enterprise. RCA signed a contract for space, including two theaters, in June, 1930. These companies played a key role in the success of the Rockefeller Center project, which at first was popularly called "Radio City." In 1932 the complex was officially named Rockefeller Center.

The designs for the center were redrawn by The Associated Architects to suit the new purposes of the complex. The drawings produced in 1930, known as the "H" series, were the first to include plans for Radio City Music Hall and the RKO Building. Since no structure could be built above a theater, according to codes then in effect, the Music Hall is only 112 feet tall. It is flanked by two skyscrapers--the RKO Building (now the AMAX Building) on the northwest, and the Associated Press Building on the east.

The construction of Radio City Music Hall began in September, 1931. Originally known as the International Music Hall, it was the first structure

in "Radio City" to have the foundations laid, and it was the first of the Rockefeller Center buildings to be officially completed. The largest indoor theater in the world in 1932, Radio City Music Hall rapidly became one of the principal attractions of Rockefeller Center.<sup>3</sup>

### "Roxy" And The Planning Of The Music Hall

A few months before construction was actually begun on Radio City Music Hall, the man who was to create and promote the unique role of the Music Hall in American theater had been hired by the RKO Corporation as the director of both of the theaters in Rockefeller Center. Samuel Lionel Rothafel, known as "Roxy", played a highly influential role, not only in the programming for the Music Hall, but also in the actual design of the interior. An eccentric and creative genius, Roxy sought the spectacular for every aspect of the Music Hall. Both he and RKO had unlimited ambitions for the new theater. Upon the hiring of Roxy the president of RKO announced these goals:

With our resources and facilities and with Roxy's visions, originality, good taste and keen perception of public demands, it is our hope to develop a standard of entertainment for Radio City which has never before been reached in the history of popular amusements.<sup>4</sup>

Born in 1892 in a small town in Minnesota, Roxy was the son of Gustave Rothafel, a shoemaker. His parents moved to New York City when he was twelve and after working in a department store as a cash boy, he entered the Marines. Seven years later, he traveled as a house-to-house peddler and ended up in Pennsylvania where he met his future wife. While working in his father-in-law's bar, Roxy transformed the large dancing hall at the rear into a movie house. He bought a second-hand screen and projector, rented 200 chairs from an undertaker, hired a pianist, and charged five cents admission. He then moved on to Minneapolis and later Milwaukee, introducing such innovative entertainment features as music and dance performances to movie theaters.

Roxy came to New York City in 1913 to manage the Regent Theater on Upper Broadway where he improved the traditional program with novel lighting effects and a 100-piece orchestra. From the Regent, Roxy moved on to the Strand, Rialto, Rivoli, and Capitol theaters. While at the Capitol, he began broadcasting his radio programs which became famous across the country. In 1927 he became the manager of the brand new Roxy Theater on 50th Street and Seventh Avenue. Named after the remarkable impresario, the Roxy seated slightly less than 6,000 people and was equipped with many of the most up-to-date technical devices. The film program at the Roxy was interspersed with vaudeville acts, music and dance performances.

With Radio City Music Hall, Roxy sought to surpass all of his previous theatrical achievements. He intended it to be the world's largest theater with the world's greatest stage shows. In order to exceed the almost 6,000 seats of the Roxy Theater, the Music Hall was designed to seat 6,200. From his many years in theater management, Roxy had developed an unrivaled expertise in his knowledge of audience behavior. At the Roxy he had noted the advantage of the low ceiling of the ticket lobby, which created a striking contrast to the large space of the foyer. This same type of design was repeated in the Music Hall. From the relatively compact space of the ticket lobby, one enters the tremendous foyer, with its high ceiling and impressive decorative effects. The design of this room was crucial to Roxy, for he believed "that the patron must begin to feel what might be called the spell of the theater before he reaches his seat."<sup>5</sup>

The layout of the auditorium was of equal importance to Roxy. Aware of the role of crowd psychology in the theater, he thought that in an auditorium of this size it was best not to divide the audience into two distinct groups, one in the orchestra and one in a long balcony. Not only did a single deep balcony impede the view of those in the orchestra, but it also did not allow those in the rear of the balcony to see the orchestra audience. Roxy's solution was three shallow mezzanines which were designed to create a sense of

psychological intimacy among the members of the audience on the various levels. Transforming the vast auditorium space into a more intimate one was a chief concern of Roxy. Another unusual feature introduced to the Music Hall auditorium in order to minimize its scale is the ramp extending from either side of the stage to the first mezzanine level. These ramps were to be used by the performers in order to give the impression of the stage encircling the audience. It was not the first time that such stage extensions had been used in a theater; Richard Wagner's theater, the Festspielhaus (1872-76), in Bayreuth, Germany, utilized them, as did an unbuilt project, the "Music Centre" (1929), designed by the architect, Joseph Urban.

Much of the mechanical equipment in the Music Hall was specified by Roxy. The huge stage was designed to have a central revolving section, composed of three units which may move independently of one another. These units facilitate elaborate changes in scenery. At the center of the revolving section is an opening for fountains and other water effects. This stage was designed by Peter Clark, who was also responsible for the stage at the Roxy Theater which had the same type of revolving mechanism. The movable orchestra platform, or "bandwagon" as it was called, of the Music Hall was also adapted from the Roxy Theater. The platform can be moved above or below the stage. The introduction of a variety of light and color effects into the theater was another of Roxy's contributions to entertainment programs, and at the Music Hall no limits were placed on the wide range of possibilities. The complex lighting system of the Music Hall was one of its extremely innovative features and incorporated the most modern techniques of the time.

Roxy departed in September, 1931, on a European tour to observe recent developments in music, theater, and broadcasting. Two of the architects of the Music Hall, L. Andrew Reinhard and Wallace K. Harrison, accompanied him as did Peter Clark, and a number of NBC officials. Although the plan of the theater had already been established, the designers surveyed various architectural and technical developments in modern European theaters and radio studios, but incorporated little of what they saw into the final version. Roxy concentrated on engaging potential performers for the Music Hall. During his travels he noted a trend in European theater towards the display of spectacular effects. Roxy himself had of course already begun to introduce grand theatrical displays to the American stage; at Radio City Music Hall, he planned the ultimate in live entertainment. When he returned to New York, it was announced that the program of the new Music Hall would be international in character, consisting of stage shows of a wide variety and tremendous proportions. Unlike his other theaters, the Music Hall was not intended as a movie house, but rather as a theater for sophisticated entertainments, such as legitimate drama, ballet, and opera, combined with vaudeville acts, jazz, and chorus girls, to be known as the "Roxyettes."

Roxy's imaginative ideas for the variety and scale of entertainments to be offered at the theater, while not wholly successful, created a national image of the Music Hall, which soon became known as the "Showplace of the Nation." In addition, his contribution to the actual design of the theater gave it an innovative and impressive character, making it one of the most extraordinary theaters in the country. Despite the unusually significant part Roxy played in devising the interior plans of the Music Hall, the general design scheme was determined by The Associated Architects.<sup>6</sup>

## The Associated Architects

The architectural firms responsible for the buildings in Rockefeller Center, including Radio City Music Hall, were Reinhard & Hofmeister; Corbett, Harrison & MacMurray; and Hood, Godley & Fouilhoux (after 1931, Hood & Fouilhoux). These firms worked under the joint name of The Associated Architects, so that no specific credit may be given to any of the firms for the design of individual buildings.

The first architects to be hired for the Rockefeller Center project were L. Andrew Reinhard and Henry Hofmeister, with whom the Todd firm had previously worked. The newly formed firm of Reinhard & Hofmeister was commissioned by Todd, Robertson & Todd in September, 1928, to design a plot plan for the total scheme.

L. Andrew Reinhard (1891-1964) received his architectural training at the Mechanics' Institute and the Beaux-Arts Institute of Design, then worked in the architectural offices of Benjamin Wistar Morris--the first architect to work on the Metropolitan Opera Company project--and also collaborated with other architects. Following eight years in the offices of Todd, Robertson & Todd, he formed a partnership with Henry Hofmeister (1890-1962) in 1928. Hofmeister, who studied at the Atelier Hornbostel and the Beaux-Arts Institute of Design, had joined the firm of Todd, Robertson & Todd in 1925. Hofmeister had acquired a reputation for being methodical and having a good knowledge of such practical matters as plumbing, ventilation, and efficient interior layouts. He organized the Rockefeller Center architectural office and supervised the preparation of the necessary architectural drawings. Following the completion of Rockefeller Center, the partners received gold medals for their work from the Architectural League of New York and the Fifth Avenue Association.

Other works later executed by Reinhard & Hofmeister include: the World's Fair Hall of Music of 1939, which had many spatial similarities to Radio City Music Hall; the Federal Building at John F. Kennedy International Airport; buildings for the New York Medical College, Chase Manhattan Bank, the Italian, Swedish, and Waterman steamship lines; the Dun and Bradstreet home office building in New York; the surgical building and research center of the New England Medical Center in Boston; the Deeds Carillon Tower in Dayton, Ohio; and the World War II American cemetery chapel at Neuville en Condroz in Belgium. The firm was dissolved in 1956.

Reinhard was a member of the National Commission of Fine Arts in Washington in 1945-50, a fellow of the American Institute of Architects, and served as an officer of the New York Chapter of the A.I.A., the Architectural League, and the Municipal Art Society.

Hofmeister served as a consultant during World War II to Nelson Rockefeller, then coordinator of Inter-American Affairs with the State Department. He was a member of the American Institute of Architects, the New York Building Congress, and the Architectural League of New York, directing the League's program for aiding unemployed or needy architects for a number of years. Shortly before his death, Hofmeister served as a planning consultant on the Lincoln Center project.

At the end of 1928, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., held an architectural "symposium", in which a number of well-established firms were invited to submit schemes for the total complex. A variety of plans were presented in May, 1929. The three judges--Cass Gilbert and John Russell Pope, two of the most prestigious architects of the time, and Milton B. Medary, a specialist in institutional architecture--favored the scheme executed by Harvey Wiley Corbett, a well-known modernist and a member of the firm, Corbett, Harrison & MacMurray.

Harvey Wiley Corbett (1873-1954) was born in California and educated at the University of California (1895) and the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris (1900). Returning to New York, he entered the architectural office of Cass Gilbert. Between 1903 and 1912 he was in partnership with F.

Livingston Pell and between 1912 and 1927 in partnership with Frank J. Helmle. While a lecturer at the School of Architecture of Columbia University between 1907 and 1911 and 1920 and 1935, Corbett trained many students in the "Atelier Columbia," which was modeled after the system of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. One of Corbett's major works was the Bush Terminal Building, on West 41st Street, of 1923 which established his reputation as practitioner of "modern" architecture. He was an early and strong advocate of the skyscraper as an urban building form and wrote and lectured extensively in support of this concept. Corbett also achieved a reputation as a planner, and acted as a consultant to the Regional Plan Association and served on the architectural planning committees for the 1933 Chicago Century of Progress Exposition (beginning in 1929) and the 1939 New York World's Fair.

The firm of Corbett, Harrison & MacMurray was established in 1927. Because of Corbett's reputation and because of the firm's experience in theater design--it had recently designed the Horace Bushnell Memorial Hall in Hartford, Connecticut--the Board of Directors of Rockefeller Center was anxious to secure its expertise.

Corbett was a fellow of both the American Institute of Architects and the Royal Institute of British Architects and received honorary degrees from the University of California, the University of Liverpool, and Columbia University. He was a member of the Fine Arts Commission of the State of New York and served as president of the Architectural League of New York and the National Arts Society.

Wallace K. Harrison (b.1895) studied construction engineering at the Worcester Polytechnic Institute. After working as a draftsman for the firm of McKim, Mead & White, he entered Corbett's atelier where he learned the Beaux-Arts methods of design. He then studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Returning to New York, he entered the office of architect Bertram Goodhue in 1922. In 1926 he married Ellen Milton whose brother was the son-in-law of John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and the following year joined in partnership with Corbett and MacMurray. In addition to Rockefeller Center, Harrison has been associated with several other notable urban complexes with Max Abramovitz, a partnership formed in 1941. These include the United Nations, Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, and the Empire State Plaza in Albany. In 1967 Harrison was awarded the gold medal of the American Institute of Architects for "his demonstrated ability to lead a team in producing significant architectural works of high quality over a period of more than 30 years."7

William H. MacMurray (1868-1941), the third member of the partnership, became associated with Corbett some time before 1927. His prime concern was the partnership's business affairs; he had little to do with the design process of the Rockefeller Center project.

In the fall of 1929 it was announced by John R. Todd that Reinhard & Hofmeister would be the general architects, with Corbett and Benjamin Wistar Morris serving as consultants. Morris withdrew from the project a few months later. Also appointed as consultant at this time was the prominent architect Raymond Hood, a member of the firm of Hood, Godley & Fouilhoux.

Raymond Mathewson Hood (1881-1934) received his architectural education at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. As a draftsman he was employed in the offices of Cram, Goodhue & Ferguson, Boston; Palmer, Hornbostel & Jones, New York; and Henry Hornbostel, Pittsburgh. He set up his own office in New York in 1914, but did not achieve any great architectural success until 1922. That year John Mead Howells asked Hood to join him in submitting a design for the Chicago Tribune competition. Hood's winning design was a soaring tower terminating in setback peaks and flying buttresses of neo-Gothic design. The competition established Hood's reputation as a skyscraper designer and brought his firm several notable commissions: the American Radiator Building, the Daily News Building, and the McGraw-Hill Building, all in New York City. Hood's originality and the publicity generated by his previous skyscraper designs were positive factors in his selection for the

Rockefeller Center project. One of the original ideas which he brought to the Rockefeller Center project was that of roof gardens. He eloquently stated the situation:

The view from the tower window of Radio City--and the privileged towers of the blocks adjacent--will look down not upon the dirty-brown cluttered waste of unrelieved ugliness which is the roof view of New York, but upon a picture to which art and nature have contributed color and design with a note of gayety.<sup>8</sup>

Hood was a fellow of the American Institute of Architects, a president of the Architectural League of New York, and a trustee of the Beaux-Arts Institute of Design. He received the Medal of Honor of the Architectural League in 1926, and in 1940 was posthumously awarded a gold medal from the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects.

Frederick A. Godley (1887-1961) studied at Yale University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. After working in the architectural offices of Guy Lowell, he established his own firm in 1915. In 1924 he joined Raymond Hood in the partnership of Hood, Godley & Fouilhoux, specializing in the business affairs of the office. He left the firm in 1931, while the Rockefeller Center project was underway, to join the faculty of the Yale University School of Architecture, teaching there until 1947. Godley was also a fellow of the American Institute of Architects and chairman of the educational committee of the Beaux-Arts Institute of Design.

Jacques André Fouilhoux (1879-1945), a French-born engineer, received his training at the Ecole Centrale des Arts et Manufactures. Coming to the United States in 1904, he worked in Portland, Oregon, and for the firm of Albert Kahn, noted industrial architect, in Detroit. Moving to New York after World War I he joined Raymond Hood in partnership in 1921. Following Hood's death, Fouilhoux formed a partnership in 1935 with Wallace K. Harrison, formerly of Corbett, Harrison & MacMurray. Harrison & Fouilhoux continued to be involved in the Rockefeller Center project and also designed the Trylon and Perisphere for the New York World's Fair of 1939. Fouilhoux was a fellow of the American Institute of Architects and served as treasurer of the Beaux-Arts Institute of Design.

The design supervisor for Radio City Music Hall was Edward Durell Stone (b.1902). A graduate of the University of Arkansas, Stone studied architecture at Harvard University (1925-26) and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (1926-27). After working with The Associated Architects on the Music Hall in 1930-32, he formed his own firm. During the 1930s he established his reputation as a leader of the International Style. In 1939 he was the associate designer, with Philip L. Goodwin, of the Museum of Modern Art, for which he won international recognition. Since 1945 Stone has introduced classical elements into his designs. His more recent work includes the American Embassy in New Delhi (1958-59), the United States Pavilion at the 1958 World's Fair in Brussels, the auditorium of the California Institute of Technology (1963), and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (1965-71) in Washington, D.C.

Upon the suggestion of Reinhard, the status of Corbett and Hood changed early in 1930, so that all three architectural firms had an equal share of responsibility in the design. From 1930 on, the drawings of the complex are credited as the work of all three firms, under the group name of The Associated Architects.

One of many unusual problems facing the architects in the design of the Music Hall was the entrance. Since the theater was on a site at the interior of a block, it was necessary to place the entrance at an eye-



catching location. The 50th Street corner was chosen not only in order to provide a spacious approach to the theater from the street--in keeping with Roxy's ideas of dramatic entry--but also so that this corner and the large marquee of the theater could be viewed from the busy theater district on nearby Broadway.

Perhaps the most striking and impressive space in Radio City Music Hall is its huge auditorium. The effect of this room upon the viewer has been captured by the architectural critic, Douglas Haskell:

The focus is the great proscenium arch, over 60 feet high and 100 feet wide, a huge semi-circular void. From that the energy disperses, like a firmament the arched structure rises outward and forward. The "ceiling", uniting sides and top in its one great curve, proceeds by successive broad bands, like the bands of northern lights.<sup>9</sup>

Roxy had specified that the auditorium be oval-shaped, a popular form for auditoriums at the time which was thought to greatly improve acoustic effects. An earlier precedent for the egg-shaped auditorium was Albert Kahn's Hill Memorial Auditorium of 1914 at the University of Michigan. A more immediate design source for the shape of the Music Hall auditorium and for its suspended acoustical plaster ceiling was the auditorium at the New School for Social Research in New York, designed by Joseph Urban in 1929. The relationship between Joseph Urban and the design of Radio City Music Hall is not surprising, since Urban and Raymond Hood were close friends and perhaps shared their professional ideas. It is ironic that Urban's work may have influenced the design of Radio City Music Hall, since he worked briefly with Benjamin Wistar Morris on the original schemes for the Metropolitan Opera Company project.

The sculptor René Chambellan made a series of models of the auditorium; some of the later ones were published in the Architectural Forum (April, 1932). An early design showed a curved coffered ceiling, quite similar to Joseph Urban's 1927 drawing for the interior of the Metropolitan Opera House. Many alternatives were considered, with the design supervisor, Edward Durell Stone, attempting a definitive solution. However, it was not achieved until Raymond Hood suggested a design somewhat similar to another theater project by Joseph Urban which was published in 1929 in Urban's book, Theaters. Urban's plan for the "Music Centre" not only incorporated side ramps, but also "a ceiling with telescoping bands decorated with perpendicular rays like those of a sunburst, forecasting those of Radio City Music Hall."<sup>10</sup> The bands of the Music Hall ceiling overlap each other, with a space of almost 2 feet between them. The complex cove lighting system for the theater was installed in between the ceiling bands and regulated by the large control board. This Thyatron reactor lighting control was an innovative theatrical mechanism. It was installed in front of the stage, on the audience's side of the footlights, rather than at its traditional location in the stage wings. The intricate lighting system of the Music Hall embodied all the most up-to-date techniques, such as proportional dimming and automatic color change control. The walls and ceiling of the auditorium could rapidly become blue, red, green, or amber by means of this complex mechanism. Such exciting light effects stemmed from Roxy's theory that the drama of the theater should not be restricted solely to the stage; that the auditorium, as well as the lobbies, should be considered as part of the audience's total experience in the theater.

Radio City Music Hall was designed as a "self-contained theatrical community."<sup>11</sup> All preparation for the productions could take place in the single building. Included in the plans were a carpenter shop, a property shop, and sewing rooms, all to be located below the stage. Dressing rooms for 600 people were provided and were to be wired to connect to the speakers on the stage. Also part of the scheme was a large dormitory to be used by members of the chorus.

The architects of the Music Hall worked closely, not only with Roxy, but also with the many artists commissioned to execute various designs in the theater. The architectural details of the building are completely integrated with the decorative and artistic features, creating an exceptional unification of design.<sup>12</sup>

## The Interior of The Music Hall And The Artists' Contribution

The extraordinary unity of the decorative features in Radio City Music Hall, from the carpets, wall-coverings, and murals to the statues, light fixtures and furniture gives great distinction to the interior. The success of this concept of design of the total environment in the Music Hall is due to the skills and imagination of Donald Deskey and the many artists he commissioned.

In the spring of 1932, a competition was held to select the interior decorators of the two theaters at Rockefeller Center. Four decorating companies, as well as Eugene Schoen and Donald Deskey entered the competition. Deskey is said to have spent his "last \$5,000" on his entry, and he rented a special office in which to deliver his presentation. His efforts were rewarded, since he won the competitions for both theaters. His submission was the only one in which the murals and other art works were treated as an integral part of the design. Deskey only accepted the commission for Radio City Music Hall, however, and let Eugene Schoen assume charge of the Center Theater.

Born in Blue Earth, Minnesota, in 1894, Deskey moved to California when he was 18 and, while he worked at a variety of different jobs, he studied architecture at the University of California. His studies were interrupted by World War I and he never received a formal degree. After the war he developed an interest in painting and, for a brief period, he worked as an artist in Portland, Oregon. He moved on to Chicago, New York, and finally Paris, where his interests were divided among painting, decoration and architecture. In 1925 he attended the Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes, an important European influence on the American Art Deco style.

In the period following the first World War, architects in Europe and the United States began to simplify traditional design forms and to use new industrial materials in innovative ways in order to characterize the modern age. The term, Art Deco, which is also referred to by several different names such as the Style Moderne and Modernistic, is adopted from the Paris Exposition of 1925. Millions of Americans attended this Exposition and the style was rapidly popularized.

When Deskey returned to New York in 1926, the timing for an artist of his talents was right. At the end of the 1920s, the relationship between art and industry began to be appreciated. A show at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1929, called "The Architect and the Industrial Arts," gave official recognition to this important new trend. Deskey's first success was with screens in display windows, which he executed for the Franklin Simon and Saks Fifth Avenue department stores. The apartment he designed for Adam Gimbel, the president of Saks, drew particular attention. The walls of the living room were of transite, an asbestos compound, and aluminum, while the hall was done in stainless steel and vitrolite. These rooms were among the earliest in the United States to be executed in industrial materials. The use of new materials, such as metals and plastics, combined with innovative uses of traditional materials, is one of the hallmarks of the Art Deco style. Deskey was one of the founders of the American Union of Decorative Artists and Craftsmen and also helped to establish the American Designers' Gallery, which was to serve as a liaison between the artist and the manufacturer.

In 1930 he had designed a picture gallery and a print room for the town house of John D. Rockefeller, Jr., on West 54th Street, so that he was not entirely unfamiliar with the tastes of his client when preparing the presentations for the Music Hall.

Deskey sought a modern, well-integrated design for the interior of the Music Hall. Not only did he coordinate the decoration of the vast interior, but he also designed all of the furniture as well as some of the carpets, lamps, and wall-coverings. It was his hope to engage

many of the most talented artists of the time in the decoration of the building. Deskey, in referring to the scope and significance of the undertaking, noted:

The choice of the works of the most advanced American artists will be unusual in that it will constitute one of the largest private collections of modern art in America and will be the first time that a semi-private institution has given recognition to our progressive artists.<sup>13</sup>

He was given a budget of about \$50,000, and from that he paid each of the participating artists as much as \$1,500. Mural painting was considered particularly appropriate for the project since it created a rich effect. Mural art was in vogue at the time, and in 1932 the Museum of Modern Art held a show, "Murals by American Painters and Photographers," in which many of the artists commissioned for the Music Hall exhibited. Theoretically, the decorative scheme for all of Rockefeller Center was to be based on a general theme, "The Progress of Man, his achievements through the centuries in art, science and industry."

The first mural commission for the Music Hall was won by Ezra Augustus Winter (1886-1949), whose vast "Fountain of Youth" embellishes the grand foyer at the landing of the grand staircase. Winter studied art in Chicago and then won a three-year scholarship to the American Academy in Rome. He executed murals for the Eastman Theater in Rochester, N.Y.; the Birmingham Public Library in Alabama; the Chamber of Commerce in Washington, D.C.; the Bank of Manhattan Trust Company at 40 Wall Street in Manhattan, and the Cunard Building, where the Todd firm and the architects Reinhard and Hofmeister had worked. His 60 foot by 40 foot mural for the Music Hall was said, in 1932, to have been the largest of its kind ever executed. Winter had to paint it in two sections, using an indoor tennis court on Long Island for his studio.

The subject of the mural is based on a legend from the folklore of the Oregon Indians. According to the story, the "author of life" lived near the fountain of youth at the top of a high mountain which became inaccessible to all humans after the evil spirits caused an earthquake. In Winter's interpretation of the myth, an old man is depicted as gazing upward at the gleaming mountain top, realizing the futility of his quest. Across the sky, in the shape of a rainbow, floats a procession symbolizing the ambitions and vanities of life.

Winter's mural, with its warm dark colors, harmonizes effectively with the total design of the elliptically-shaped grand foyer, while its great scale is appropriate for a space as large as the grand foyer. The room is particularly tall; its gold ceiling is at the same level as that of the third mezzanine. Two long glass chandeliers, each weighing two tons, are suspended from the ceiling and the light from them reflects off the 50-foot tall gold mirrored panels which extend from the marble wainscoting to the ceiling on the west wall. On the east wall, the promenades of the three mezzanines open onto the grand foyer, and mirrored panels are placed beneath the openings. Viewers on the promenades can see their reflections in the mirrors on the opposite wall. Ornate crystal lights, similar in design to the ceiling chandeliers, accent the bases of the mirrored panels. The walls between the mirrors are covered in brown suede. This extensive use of mirrors, combined with the unusual wall-covering of suede, is characteristic of Art Deco. Simple, yet elegant, brass and chrome railings are set at either side and at the center of the grand staircase and extend up to the landing. This type of handsome brass and chrome railing recurs throughout the Music Hall. At the southern end of the grand foyer is the projecting curved first mezzanine balcony, with

brass and chrome railing, which complements the curved form of the grand staircase landing opposite it.

The carpet of the grand foyer represents abstract designs of musical instruments, executed in shades of red, brown, gold, and black. This carpet, which continues on all the staircases as well as the three mezzanine levels, was the work of Ruth Reeves, a member with Deskey of the American Union of Decorative Artists and Craftsmen (AUDAC).

Born in California in 1892, Reeves had studied art at the San Francisco School of Design, Pratt Institute, the Art Students League and the Académie Moderne in Paris with the famed Fernand Leger. A specialist in textile design, she had previously executed a radio room--a novel household idea--for Mrs. J.E. Spingarn, and panels and wall-hangings for many residences. In addition to the carpet at Radio City Music Hall, Reeves also designed the linen wall-covering of the rear wall of the auditorium.

The grand foyer is entered through the ticket lobby and adjacent advance sales lobby at the southwest corner of the building. Each lobby has walls of red marble above black marble wainscoting and black terrazzo floors. In the small advance sales lobby the ticket booth is at the eastern wall. The larger ticket lobby has a particularly effective design. Entered from either the advance sales lobby at the south or from the Avenue of the Americas on the west, this lobby, like other spaces in the theater, was designed as an integrated whole. The low ceiling is painted black, harmonizing with the four large black marble piers of the lobby. Circular light fixtures, also painted black, are suspended from circular recesses, painted white, which form a grid on the ceiling. These light fixtures give the ticket lobby a dramatic quality, reflecting Roxy's philosophy of making the entrance to the theater an exciting experience for the audience. There are four ticket booths in the lobby; all are faced in brass and have rounded edges. The two outermost booths are set into the marble walls, while the two central ones are freestanding and have windows on two sides. Complementing the brass facing of the ticket booths are the handsome brass and chrome hand railings which extend from the booths to the eastern end of the lobby and aid in directing the audience flow into the grand foyer.

At the southern end of the grand foyer is a shallow vestibule with walls of red marble. This vestibule faces onto 50th Street and is closed off by a set of doors from the entrance foyer of the grand foyer. In this entrance foyer two massive columns, faced with red marble, harmonize with marble walls of the same color. The three circular light fixtures suspended from the ceiling are related in design to the long crystal chandeliers of the grand foyer.

Behind the entrance foyer, on the western side of the theater, is the southern staircase leading from this level down to the main lounge. The curved stairwell is attractively faced in dark brown leather, accented with narrow horizontal incised bands extending along the walls.

In a marble niche at the top of this southern staircase stands one of the three cast-aluminum statues commissioned for the Music Hall. This statue is entitled "Eve" and was designed by Gwen Lux, who was only twenty years old at the time. Miss Lux was born in Chicago in 1912; she studied at the Maryland Institute of Arts in 1926-1927, at the Boston Museum School in 1927-1928, and then in Europe for three years. She has since exhibited at the Whitney Museum of American Art, the National Academy of Design, the Detroit Institute of Arts, the Salon d'Automne in Paris, as well as many other prestigious institutions and galleries.

At the northern end of the grand foyer is the exit lobby. This small enclosed space with red marble walls is dominated by the single chrome and brass light fixture which is suspended from a large circular recess in the ceiling.

To the west of the exit lobby is the marble-faced elevator lobby. The four stainless steel elevator doors are original and are ornamented with handsome bronze bas-reliefs, depicting figures with musical instruments. The interiors of the elevator cabs are of maple veneer; each has three inlaid panels representing wine, women, and song.

The curved staircase at the northern end of the grand foyer extends down to the main lounge. Elegant brass and chrome railings, which recur throughout the Music Hall, follow the graceful curve of the stairway. The brown suede wall-covering and marble wainscoting of the grand foyer continue in this northern stairwell.

Separating the grand foyer from the auditorium are eleven double stainless steel doors ornamented with bronze bas-reliefs, designed by René Chambellan, representing theatrical scenes. These doors lead to a transverse aisle, off of which extend the aisles of the auditorium, one of the grandest spaces in the history of theater design. The rear walls of the transverse aisle and of the auditorium are covered in a hand-blocked linen fabric, designed by Ruth Reeves, in shades of brown and beige, which depicts the "History of the Theater." At the rear of the auditorium, cove lights are located under the shallow first mezzanine balcony. These lights recur at the first and second mezzanine balconies. The carpet is the work of Donald Deskey and is also used in each of the three upper balconies. The large orchestra seats approximately 3,500 people. The rows of henna-colored plush seats, like those in the mezzanines, are spaced 2 feet, 10 inches apart, rather than the standard 2 feet, 4 inches. In addition to extra leg room, the audience was also provided with such luxuries as small lights at the end of every row, and hat racks under the seats. The most striking feature of the auditorium is the great curved acoustical plaster ceiling, made up of eight overlapping arches which repeat the form of the arched proscenium. These arches, which unite and enclose the enormous hall, create a dramatically effective space. The ceiling and arches are stippled with red, blue, and green on a cream-colored background, creating a neutral color until the ceiling is made to be one of these primary colors by use of the complex lighting equipment of the theater. Grilles in the arches of the ceiling conceal the air-conditioning and sound equipment. The light control board is in front of the large stage, in between the first row seats and the movable orchestra platform. A 48-ton steel and asbestos fire curtain separates the auditorium from the stage. Behind this curtain is a second plush one which may be raised in different sections. Behind the main arched proscenium is a rectangular proscenium which may be adjusted to various sizes. At the center of the stage, which measures 144 feet by 80 feet, is the revolving turn-table section, 50 feet in diameter. From either side of the front of the stage, a ramp, stepped at intervals, extends to the level of the first mezzanine. A ramp in front of the orchestra platform connects the two side ramps. At the base of the ceiling arches are curtained sections, known as "choral stairways," which open onto the side ramps. The great scale of the auditorium, combined with the impressive series of all-encompassing arches, creates an unusually exhilarating and memorable space.

The two staircases described above lead to the main lounge, at the level below the grand foyer, where a rich effect is created by a variety of elements. Nine diamond-shaped piers, faced with gunmetal mirrors with chrome trim at the edges and tops, support the coffered, cream-colored ceiling from which diamond-shaped light fixtures are suspended. The walls are covered in black permatex, a novel material at the time. The combination of the black walls with the unusual light fixtures reflecting in the mirrors of the piers gives this room a dramatic character. Three of the piers are not structural and were strategically placed to act as "silent ushers" in directing the crowd descending from the grand foyer. The black walls are ornamented with vignettes from Louis Bouché's mural, "The Phantasmagoria of the Theater." Executed in tones of brown, white, and terra-cotta, Bouché's mural depicts a historical account of theatrical figures. Despite his French name, Louis Bouché (1896-1969) was an American, born in New York. He studied in Paris at La Grande Chaumière in 1910-15 and at the Art Students League in New York the following year. A painter and a mural decorator, Bouché's work was exhibited internationally and he executed a number of private commissions for individual clients, among them the prominent New York

lawyer, Paul Cravath. Bouché's murals were part of the Museum of Modern Art mural show of 1932.

Also in the main lounge is the cast-aluminum statue, "The Dancing Girl," by the prominent sculptor, William Zorach (1887-1966). Born in Lithuania, Zorach came to the United States at the age of four and grew up in Ohio. He studied at the Cleveland Art School and later at the National Academy of Design. In 1910 he went to Paris, where he first saw Cubist and Fauve art. Returning to New York, he exhibited his paintings at the Armory Show in 1913. Zorach did not become a sculptor until 1917, working first in wood and, beginning in 1924, in stone. During the 1930s, Zorach was considered a leader of the modern movement in America. His works are in the collections of many prestigious institutions, among them the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Museum of Modern Art.

The furniture of the main lounge, like that throughout the Music Hall, was designed by Donald Deskey. Generally the furniture is simple and unobtrusive, skillfully fitting into the overall composition of each of the rooms. Most of the pieces have chrome accents, which are said to have been added after Roxy claimed the furniture was not sufficiently ornate. Shortly after the theater opened, Deskey's furniture was noted as "some of the finest modern furniture placed in a public building in this country."<sup>14</sup> In the main lounge the furniture is of rosewood, red lacquer, and metal, upholstered in a variety of fabrics. Also by Deskey is the carpet of a brown, black and white pattern.

Deskey was also responsible for many of the light fixtures in the Music Hall. In addition, Henry Varnum Poor executed all the ceramics and ceramic lamp bases in the theater. A painter and ceramic artist, Poor came to New York in about 1920 and had his first pottery show at the Montross Gallery in 1921. His work is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, and other museums. Poor was another of the Music Hall artists represented in the 1932 Museum of Modern Art mural show.

At the northern end of the main lounge is the elevator lobby. The western wall is faced in marble and three cylindrical chandeliers are suspended from the ceiling. Three massive columns contrast with the more delicate piers at the other end of the main lounge. Deskey-designed furniture and a large circular mirror are placed along the eastern wall of this lobby.

On the eastern side of the main lounge is a hallway, off which opens the smoking room, or men's lounge, and women's lounge and powder room. Two marble drinking fountains are in this hallway. The smoking room is masculine in character and has brown cork walls, a dark terrazzo floor, and a copper leaf ceiling, from which hang copper light fixtures. Originally the most prominent feature of this room was the large Stuart Davis mural entitled "Men Without Women," which hung on the north wall and is now in the Museum of Modern Art.

Stuart Davis (1894-1964) was one of America's most important 20th-century artists. He studied in 1910-12 with the well-known New York artist Robert Henri, a member of the famous Ash Can School. He exhibited at the Armory Show in 1913, where the display of modern European paintings had a deep impact on him. Davis' work became progressively abstract, and he began experimenting first with collage and later with 'simultaneous vision' paintings, in which the objects are abstracted and take on ambiguous inter-relationships. He had his first one-man show in 1927 and became increasingly successful during the 1930s. He executed a major mural series for the WPA Federal Art Project and for the New York World's Fair of 1939. Davis' works are in the major art museums of the country and are recognized today as an extremely significant contribution to modern art.

The men's washroom and connecting men's toilet open off of this smoking room. The fixtures in these rooms are simple in design and the black and white tile work is particularly handsome. The fixtures and tile work in the men's toilets at the mezzanines are of the same type. All of these elements are original. The brass grille over the fire hose has a geometric design, characteristic of the Art Deco; grilles of this type recur throughout the Music Hall.

Across the hallway from the men's lounge is the women's lounge, where the mural entitled "The History of Cosmetics" by Witold Gordon, adds great elegance to the room. The walls, above a deep beige wainscoting, are of parchment and the soft colors of the mural work well with the beige background. The furniture is upholstered in colors which complement the mural. A painter and book illustrator, Gordon studied art in Paris. His first commission in the United States was as a costume designer for the Metropolitan Opera Company. His later work included a number of interior decorating jobs for restaurants and private residences. Gordon also executed a second mural for the Music Hall in the men's lounge on the first mezzanine.

A powder room with connecting washroom and women's toilet opens off of the women's lounge. In the powder room, the walls are covered in a silver and white fabric designed with a leaf and branch pattern by Margaret Mergentime (d. 1941), another member, with Deskey, of AUDAC. A fabric and textile designer, Mergentime worked for a number of commercial institutions such as the Kleinert Rubber Company and the Dupont Rayon Company. At the western end of the powder room, paneled mirrors extend along the north and south walls. Light fixtures and double-tiered glass tables are installed at the sides of these panels; low stools are in front of the mirrors.

The striking black and white tile work and fixtures of the washroom and women's toilet are similar to those of the men's washroom and toilet. The sinks, however, are a brilliant shade of aqua. Circular mirrors with vertically-placed cylindrical lights accent the walls above the sinks. The original hand dryers remain intact. The women's toilets at the mezzanines have the same kind of tile work and fixtures. All of these elements are original.

From the grand foyer, a curved stairway at the southern end leads to the lounge of the first mezzanine level, while at the northern end, the grand staircase leads to the foyer of this upper level. A long hall or promenade connects the foyer with the lounge; the walls in these areas at all three mezzanines are covered in a dark brown and gold material called tokko, above a marble baseboard. Handsome marble drinking fountains are placed in niches along the western walls of the promenades at all three mezzanine levels. Lighting fixtures designed to harmonize with the decor cast a warm glow in the mezzanine spaces. On the western walls the fixtures are arranged in triple groups with chrome trim, while on the opposite walls they are slender, horizontally-placed brass cylinders. Above the doors of the first and second mezzanine promenades, the aisle signs are set in original brass frames. Other signs in brass frames indicate the different levels of the theater and are placed by the staircases. In front of the small first mezzanine lounge is a deep curved balcony with couches and chairs from which one has an impressive view of the grand foyer.

In the center of this lounge stands a cast-aluminum statue, called "The Goose Girl," by Robert Laurent (1890-1970). Born in France, Laurent came to this country at an early age, after his artistic talent had been recognized by the American painter, Hamilton Easter Field. In 1915 Laurent had his first one-man show in New York and he rapidly became a leading American sculptor. Like his colleague, William Zorach, he first worked

in wood and, in 1923, began carving in stone. Laurent taught at the Art Students League in the late 1920s and from 1945 until the late 1960s he was a member of the faculty of Indiana University.

At the western end of the lounge are the smoking and powder rooms, with adjacent toilet rooms and telephone alcoves. The doors leading to the toilet rooms are accented with handsome metal grilles in a striking geometric pattern. The telephone booths are original with rectangular ceiling lights and padded seats. These features are also repeated at the second and third mezzanines. In the smoking room, the canvas-covered walls are decorated with "Maps of the World" by the artist Witold Gordon, whose mural "The History of Cosmetics" is in the powder room off the main lounge. The stylized map designs in the smoking room are in tones of terra-cotta, black, and brown. Complementing the wall-covering is Deskey's walnut furniture upholstered in brown leather.

The powder room on the first mezzanine was designed by Deskey. It is a circular-shaped space faced with sixteen mirrored-glass panels above the level of the dressing tables and wainscoting, both executed in yellow structural glass. The extensive use of glass combined with the circular shape creates a dazzling effect, intensified by the reflections of the light fixtures at either side of the mirrors. A rug, designed in two shades of blue by Donald Deskey, repeats the circular shape of the room, while the low stools in front of each dressing table form another circle. Three doorway openings have chrome moldings.

Doorways on the eastern side of the long promenade lead to the first balcony. Eleven rows of seats, similar to those in the orchestra, are at this level. Extending across the front of this shallow balcony, as well as the two balconies above, is a handsome railing, covered in leather and supported on brass discs. The northern end of the promenade leads to a foyer, off of which is the elevator lobby. In all of the elevator lobbies at the three mezzanines, the western wall is marble-faced. In the elevator lobby of the first mezzanine is a handsome chest of Deskey design with a large circular mirror on the wall above. Full-height mirrors ornament the east walls of the elevator lobbies at the second and third mezzanines.

The plan of the second and third mezzanines is generally similar to that of the first mezzanine. The stairways at the northern and southern ends of the first mezzanine level lead to the foyer and lounge respectively of the second mezzanine. Full-height mirrors ornament the walls by the tops of the stairways. The three mezzanine lounges at the south of the promenades have circular mirrors placed on the curved walls above attached tables. In the southern lounge of the second mezzanine the curved wall is faced with mirrored panels.

From the lounges and promenades of the second and third mezzanines one may look out onto the grand foyer. The smoking and powder rooms on these levels connect with men's and women's toilets respectively and telephone alcoves. The walls of the second mezzanine smoking room are decorated in aluminum foil paper ornamented with a design by Donald Deskey, entitled "Nicotine". Executed in brown and white, Deskey's wallpaper represents abstractions of the different stages involved in growing tobacco. The furniture harmonizes well with the decor of this room. Narrow vertically-placed light fixtures hang in the corners of the room.

The powder room of the second mezzanine is characteristically feminine in decoration. The well-known American artist, Georgia O'Keefe, had been commissioned to design the mural in this room; however, after part of the wall-covering began to peel off, she withdrew from the project. Instead the commission went to a Japanese-born artist, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, who painted graceful, magnified floral forms on all four walls and clouds on the coved ceiling. Kuniyoshi's colors are delicate and oriental in feeling. His design works unusually well with the large circular mirrors hung on the walls. Narrow cylindrical lights are at either side of the mirrors; small glass tables are beneath them. The low black patent leather chairs in front of the mirrors were designed by Deskey.

Kuniyoshi was born in Japan in 1893 and came to the United States at a young age. After attending the Los Angeles School of Art and Design,



he studied in New York at the Art Students League, the National Academy of Design, and with Robert Henri at the Independent School of Art. Kuniyoshi's work can be seen in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Chicago Art Institute. Among his numerous clients were John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Elmer Rice, and Thornton Wilder.

Similar in design to the promenade at the first mezzanine, the promenades of the second and third mezzanines connect the lounges and foyers at the respective levels. The shallow balconies are entered through doorways located along the eastern walls of the promenades. There are ten rows of seats in the second balcony and eight rows in the third balcony. The rear wall of the third balcony is covered in dark canvas.

The third mezzanine is reached by stairways at the northern and southern ends. The view of the grand foyer from the promenade and southern lounge is particularly spectacular at this level. Installed in the ceiling of the grand foyer is a large cable from which scaffolding may be hung when the walls and mirrors are cleaned. In the smoking room off this lounge, the walls are paneled in brown leather with chrome trim and the terrazzo floor has a brown and beige geometric pattern. This room is decorated around a central theme--the Wild West--which was the subject of the three murals which originally hung here. The murals, only one of which remains, were executed by Edward Buk Ulreich, in a rather unusual technique. The design was done on stoneware, a new material of the 1930s, which produced slightly rough textures.

Buk Ulreich was born in Hungary and came to the United States when very young. He grew up in the Midwest and later studied at the Fine Arts Institute in Kansas City, Missouri. He then moved west, spending some time as a cowboy. He received scholarships to study at the Pennsylvania Academy and later in Europe. After the war, Ulreich went to California, where he decorated the Denishawn Studios. His first big one-man show took place in New York in 1923. His work is represented in the Brooklyn Museum, the Phillips Memorial Gallery, the Pennsylvania Museum of Art, and other institutions.

In the powder room of the third mezzanine, a mural by Henry Billings hangs on the southern wall. Executed in warm earth tones, the mural depicts a crouching panther. Billings was born in New York in 1901. He trained at the Art Students League in 1918-20 and had his first one-man show at the Daniel Gallery in 1928. His work was also exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art mural show of 1932. The eastern wall of this powder room is faced in floor-to-ceiling mirrors, with narrow, cylindrical light fixtures set at either side of each mirror panel. Small glass tables are located beneath these lights. On the western wall, which is covered in tokko, is a large circular mirror above a table. The light fixtures at either side of this mirror cast a warm glow on the room. In the center of the ceiling is a large metal grille.

The series of handsome powder and smoking rooms in the Music Hall are skillfully decorated; the distinguished art work and wall-coverings, furniture, lights and floor-coverings are all completely integrated into the total composition. Each of the rooms has its own special character. Very little of the original interior design has been altered. When an element of the interior has been replaced, the new element has been copied from the original, thereby preserving the effect of the total interior composition. The extensive collaboration of the many artists involved in the design of the Music Hall gives its interior great distinction. Although a number of artists contributed to the interior, the total effect is well-unified due to the expertise of the coordinator of the interior design features, Donald Deskey. Today the interior of the Music Hall is the only surviving Art Deco theater in the country which incorporates so great a variety of artistic and decorative features.<sup>15</sup>

I think the great auditorium is beautiful, soul-satisfying, inspiring beyond anything I have dreamed possible...The lobby is as distinguished and unusual and truly impressive as the theater itself... We visited the various galleries and withdrawing rooms on each floor. These rooms are all of them interesting, unusual and distinguished to an extraordinary degree. There is a style and chic about the whole building which is impressive in the extreme.<sup>16</sup>

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### The Opening of Radio City Music Hall

Radio City Music Hall opened on December 27, 1932. The entertainment for the gala opening night had been meticulously planned by Roxy. It was an important social event. Tickets were sold well in advance, and thousands of people waited in the rain hoping to get in at the last minute. Among the prominent guests in the opening night audience of the Music Hall were John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and his son Nelson, former Governor Alfred E. Smith, Amelia Earhart, Mrs. William Randolph Hearst, Walter P. Chrysler, Noel Coward, and Irving Berlin. The Mayor-elect of New York, John O'Brien, hailed the opening of the Music Hall as "the greatest achievement of the theatrical world" and said it marked "a new era in the history of New York."<sup>17</sup>

In keeping with Roxy's plans, the opening night program combined sophisticated entertainment with less serious acts. Twenty different numbers comprised the first program which included the famous American dancer Martha Graham, Harold Kreutzberg and his ballet, the contralto Vera Schwartz as well as the Tuskegee Negro Choir, the comedy team of Weber and Fields, and the Wallenda Troupe. These numbers and many more were interspersed with performances by the resident company of the Music Hall which was made up of 80 singers, a 60-member ballet and 48 "Roxyette" precision dancers, who later became known as the Rockettes.

The opening number featured the young ushers dressed in gray uniforms, being heralded by trumpeters outfitted in red satin. The ushers marched down the center aisle, onto the stage, where they saluted the audience and were warmly applauded. This unusual performance was followed by an equally original one. Called the "Symphony of Curtains," it was simply the folding and unfolding of the large contour stage curtain. After an endless series of acts, Roxy's program terminated at 2:30 in the morning. The critics were either very negative or rather indifferent about the performance; however, they were impressed by the design of the theater itself. Percy Hammond of the New York Herald Tribune wrote:

The least important item in last evening's event was the show itself....It has been said of the new Music Hall that it needs no performers; that its beauty and comforts alone are sufficient to gratify the greediest of playgoers.<sup>18</sup>

The technical achievements of the new theater were particularly admired. The intricate lighting system and its spectacular effects on the great arched expanse of the auditorium was considered one of the theater's many noteworthy features. In addition to the revolving section of the stage, the movable orchestra pit, or "bandwagon," was cited as an exceptional device. The "bandwagon" was intended to add an extra dimension to stage performances, since it was designed to move above, below, or behind the stage without interrupting the 75 musicians seated upon it. Despite the great size of the theater, its design was viewed as highly successful, since "...the worst seat in the house is better from the point of acoustics

and visibility, and is actually closer to the stage than many balcony seats in houses of much smaller capacity."<sup>19</sup> The unusual and impressive features of the interior of the Music Hall made its opening night a successful event. The design of the Music Hall was also recognized internationally. In Art et Décoration (April, 1933) an article on the theater hailed it as a remarkable success.<sup>20</sup>

Roxy's great dream for the entertainment program at the Music Hall quickly proved enormously unprofitable. Despite the variety in and scale of the performances, the type of program he had devised did not attract the crowds he had expected. Two weeks after its opening, the Music Hall had a \$200,000 operating deficit. The only solution was to change the entertainment format; on January 11, 1933, movies, combined with some live entertainment, were introduced to the Music Hall. The first movie to play in the theater was Frank Capra's "The Bitter Tea of General Yen."

The almost total change in the program at the Music Hall naturally affected Roxy's role as director. At about the same time that the movie format was instituted, Roxy left for a southern vacation. Although he officially remained the director of the Music Hall for another year, he was minimally involved with the theater and announced his formal resignation in January, 1934. His next project was the Mastbaum Theater in Philadelphia, but he was not successful there and the theater closed after only a few months under Roxy's management. Two years later, Roxy died of heart disease at the age of 53. At his funeral, he was eulogized as a man who "produced real beauty and dignity in the realm of human amusement."<sup>21</sup>

Roxy's theatrical career reached its peak of success with Radio City Music Hall. Although his dreams for the type of entertainment were miscalculated, he was instrumental in creating what was fast to become the "Showplace of the Nation." He wanted the Music Hall to be the ultimate in a palace of amusement for all Americans and in order to realize this ideal he sought perfection in every detail of the theater.

Radio City Music Hall has continued to hold the special place in American theater that Roxy envisioned for it. It remains one of the most impressive and innovative theater interiors in the country and it continues to be associated with entertainment for the millions rather than for the esoteric few. In the over forty years of the Music Hall, more than 230 million people have paid to see performances there. Although motion pictures have been introduced to the shows, the audience can appreciate the dancing of the famed Rockettes and music from the world's largest organ. During the Christmas and Easter seasons, large-scale pageants with elaborate scenery and costumes are staged. These shows attract enormous crowds from across the country. The Music Hall has been used for a variety of other types of events open to the public. In addition, the Music Hall is often opened to architectural history professors and their classes, so that the exceptional qualities of the architectural and artistic design may be studied first hand. The international reputation of the Music Hall has established it as one of the most important tourist sites in New York City.<sup>22</sup>

### Conclusion

The interior of Radio City Music Hall is one of the most impressive achievements in theater design in the country. Three highly prestigious architectural firms, many leading artists and designers, and "Roxy," one of the greatest impresarios in American theater, contributed to the creation of the interior of the Music Hall. This extensive collaboration in the design of a single building was exceptional. When the Music Hall was completed in 1932, it was immediately recognized both nationally and internationally for its artistic and technical excellence.

In the more than forty years of its existence, Radio City Music Hall has maintained its original character to a remarkable degree. It is the only surviving Art Deco theater in the United States which incorporates so great a variety of architectural, artistic and decorative features. The many interior elements of the theater are well-integrated and create a totality of design which is extraordinary. The interior spaces of the Music Hall were skillfully designed to enrich the experience of the audience in the theater and these spaces are among the most dramatically effective in the country. Since the opening in 1932, millions of members of the public have visited the Music Hall and have found enjoyment both in the events presented and in the outstanding designs of these interiors. As one of the principal achievements of the Art Deco style and as one of the finest theater designs in the country, the interior of Radio City Music Hall is of unique importance to the history of American architecture.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Ralph Flint, "Fine Architectural Grouping and Elegant Simplicity of Large Interiors Give Great Distinction to Radio City," Art News, 31 (Dec. 24, 1932), 3.
2. Winston Weisman, "Who Designed Rockefeller Center?," Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, 10 (March 1951), 16.
3. Material in this section is based on information in:  
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4. "Post in Radio City Accepted by Roxy," New York Times, April 10, 1931, p. 27.
5. Samuel L. Rothafel as told to John Cushman Fistere, "The Architect and the Box Office," Architectural Forum, 57 (September 1932), 195.
6. Material in this section is based on information in:  
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8. New York Times, August 15, 1934.
9. Douglas Haskell, "Roxy's Advantage Over God," The Nation, 136 (Jan. 4, 1933), 11.
10. Carol Krinsky, Rockefeller Center (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p.166. Material on design sources for auditorium and history of models from Carol Krinsky.
11. New York Times, Nov. 18, 1932, p.17.
12. Material in this section is based on information in:  
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14. Manuel Komroff, "Putting Modern Art in Its Place," Creative Art, 12 (Jan.1933), 42.
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17. New York Times, Dec. 28, 1932, p.1.
18. Quoted in:  
 "World's Biggest Playhouse Opens," Literary Digest, 115 (Jan. 14, 1933), 16.
19. Harold Burris-Meyer, "Building No. 10," Theatre Arts Magazine, 16 (Nov. 1932), 934.
20. J. Gallotti, "La Salle de Spectacle de 'Radio City' à New York," Art et Décoration, 62 (April 1933), 105-108.
21. Samuel L. Rothafel Clippings Scrapbook, New York Public Library Theater Collection.
22. Material in this section is based on information in:  
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## FINDINGS AND DESIGNATIONS

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that Radio City Music Hall, ground floor interior consisting of the ticket lobby and ticket booths, advance sales lobby and ticket booth, inner lobby, south entrance vestibule, curved staircase at south end, entrance foyer, grand foyer, grand staircase, exit lobby, elevator lobby and elevator cabs, auditorium, including the seats, side ramps, staircases, light control board, orchestra pit, the stage and stage wings; interior of the first level below the ground floor consisting of the main lounge and its staircases, elevator lobby and elevator cabs, men's lounge, men's washroom, men's toilet, foyer, women's lounge, powder room, women's washroom, women's toilet, orchestra pit, stage elevator; first mezzanine interior consisting of the upper part of the grand foyer, grand staircase and landing, lounge, curved staircase at south end, powder room, telephone alcove, women's toilet, smoking room, telephone alcove, men's toilet, promenade, foyer, north staircase connecting first and second mezzanines, elevator lobby and elevator cabs, first balcony including seats, upper part of the auditorium, upper part of the stage house; second mezzanine interior consisting of the upper part of the grand foyer, lounge, curved staircase at south end, powder room, telephone alcove, women's toilet, smoking room, telephone alcove, men's toilet, promenade, foyer, north staircase connecting second and third mezzanines, elevator lobby and elevator cabs, second balcony including seats, upper part of the auditorium, upper part of the stage house; third mezzanine interior consisting of the upper part of the grand foyer and ceiling, lounge, powder room, telephone alcove, women's toilet, smoking room, telephone alcove, men's toilet, promenade, foyer, elevator lobby and elevator cabs, third balcony including seats, upper part of the auditorium and ceiling, and upper part of the stage house and skylight; and the fixtures and the interior components of these spaces, including but not limited to all lighting fixtures, wall-coverings, murals, mirrors, floor-coverings, stage curtains, statues, attached furnishings, drinking fountains, lavatory fixtures, telephone booths, railings, metal grilles over ventilation ducts and fire hoses, doors, and signs, have a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City; have been customarily open or accessible to the public and are, or parts thereof are, more than thirty years old.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the Interior of Radio City Music Hall is one of the most impressive achievements in theater design in the country; that it is the only surviving Art Deco theater in the country to incorporate so great a variety of architectural, artistic, and decorative features; that the collaboration of the three prestigious architectural firms and the many distinguished artists and designers of the Music Hall was exceptional; that when the Music Hall was completed in 1932 it was rapidly recognized both nationally and internationally for its artistic and technical excellence and it was considered one of the finest designs in the history of modern theater; that the architects of the Music Hall were extremely prominent in the history of American architecture; that the art work in the Music Hall was executed in novel materials by the leading designers, sculptors, and artists of the period; that the interior design features of the Music Hall were skillfully coordinated by Donald Deskey so that the architectural, decorative, and artistic elements are successfully integrated and create a totality of design; that the auditorium of the Music Hall incorporates many unusual features, such as shallow balconies and side ramps, which were planned by "Roxy," a leading force behind Radio City Music Hall; that the great arched ceiling of the auditorium is an expert design which incorporates the complex lighting system as well as the air-conditioning and sound equipment; that the theater incorporates several technical achievements, including the movable orchestra platform, or "bandwagon," and the central revolving section of the stage; that the striking design of the sequence of spaces -- from the low, dark ticket lobby, to the tall, mirrored, elliptically-shaped grand foyer, to the impressive arched expanse of the auditorium -- is exceptional and highly effective; that it is the only theater of its kind in the country, making it a principal attraction for New Yorkers and tourists; and that the Interior of Radio City Music Hall is of unique importance to American architecture and design.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 63 of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 8-A of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as an Interior Landmark Radio City Music Hall, ground floor interior consisting of the

ticket lobby and ticket booths, advance sales lobby and ticket booth, inner lobby, south entrance vestibule, curved staircase at south end, entrance foyer, grand foyer, grand staircase, exit lobby, elevator lobby and elevator cabs, auditorium, including the seats, side ramps, staircases, light control board, orchestra pit, the stage and stage wings; interior of the first level below the ground floor consisting of the main lounge and its staircases, elevator lobby and elevator cabs, men's lounge, men's washroom, men's toilet, foyer, women's lounge, powder room, women's washroom, women's toilet, orchestra pit, stage elevator; first mezzanine interior consisting of the upper part of the grand foyer, grand staircase and landing, lounge, curved staircase at south end, powder room, telephone alcove, women's toilet, smoking room, telephone alcove, men's toilet, promenade, foyer, north staircase connecting first and second mezzanines, elevator lobby and elevator cabs, first balcony including seats, upper part of the auditorium, upper part of the stage house; second mezzanine interior consisting of the upper part of the grand foyer, lounge, curved staircase at south end, powder room, telephone alcove, women's toilet, smoking room, telephone alcove, men's toilet, promenade, foyer, north staircase connecting second and third mezzanines, elevator lobby and elevator cabs, second balcony including seats, upper part of the auditorium, upper part of the stage house; third mezzanine interior consisting of the upper part of the grand foyer and ceiling, lounge, powder room, telephone alcove, women's toilet, smoking room, telephone alcove, men's toilet, promenade, foyer, elevator lobby and elevator cabs, third balcony including seats, upper part of the auditorium and ceiling, and upper part of the stage house and skylight; and the fixtures and the interior components of these spaces, including but not limited to all lighting fixtures, wall-coverings, murals, mirrors, floor-coverings, stage curtains, statues, attached furnishings, drinking fountains, lavatory fixtures, telephone booths, railings, metal grilles over ventilation ducts and fire hoses, doors and signs; 50th Street and Avenue of the Americas, Borough of Manhattan, and designates as its related Landmark Site that part of Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1266, lot 1 which contains the land on which the described building is situated.



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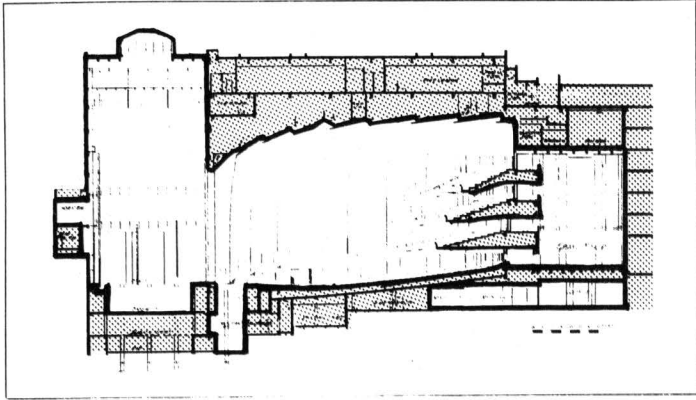
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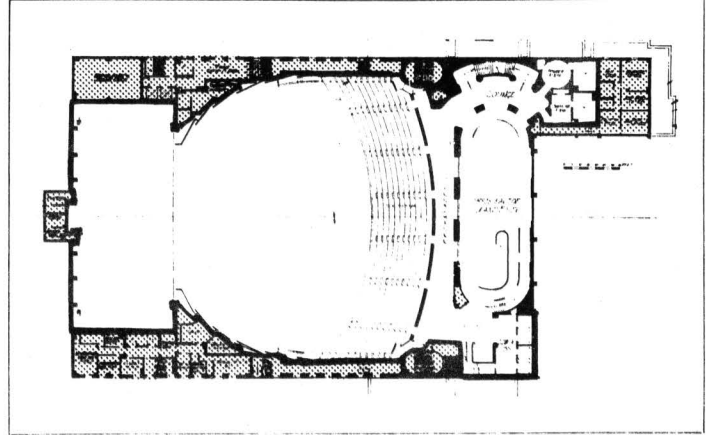
# INTERIOR

## RADIO CITY MUSIC HALL

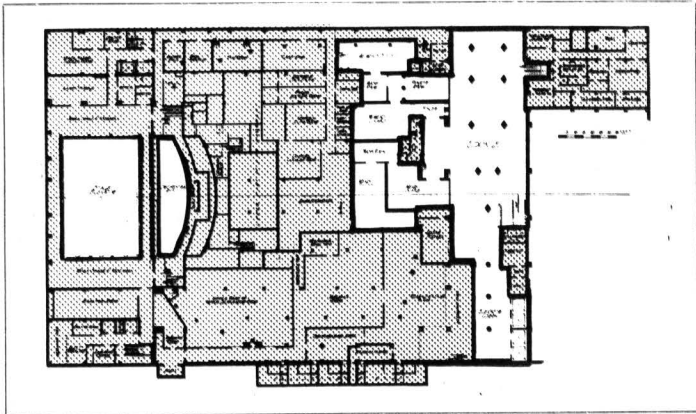
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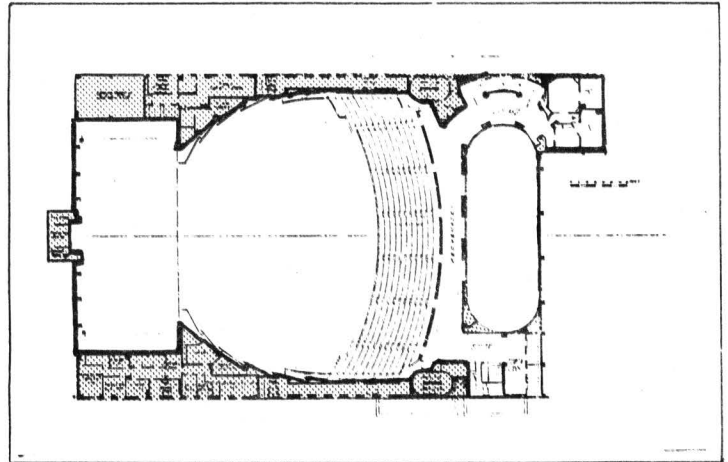
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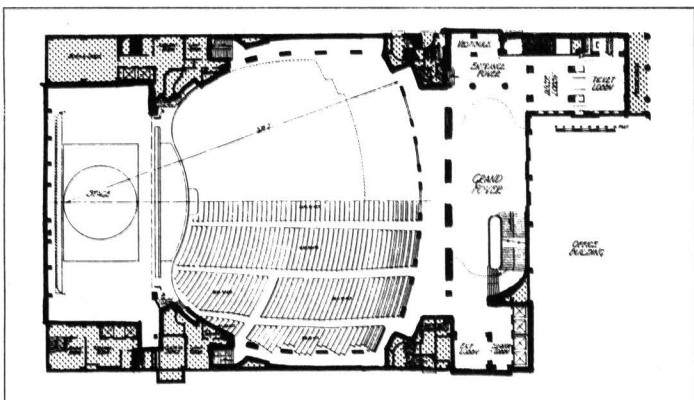
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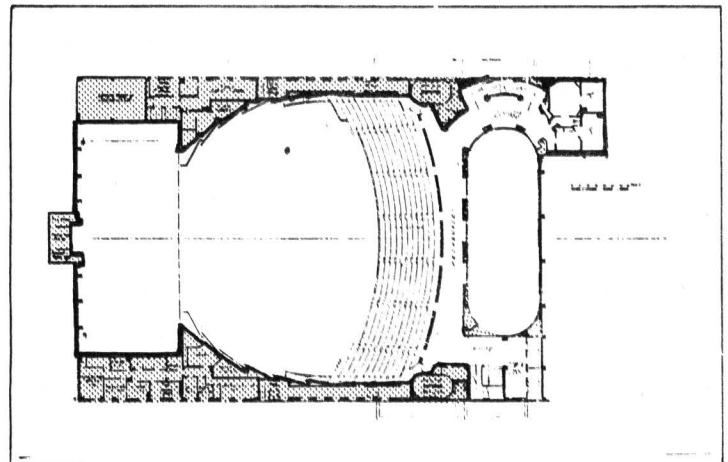
THE FIRST LEVEL BELOW THE GROUND



SECOND MEZZANINE



GROUND FLOOR



THIRD MEZZANINE