

Landmarks Preservation Commission
August 6 , 1985; Designation List 182
LP-1306

ALVIN THEATER (now Neil Simon Theater), first floor interior consisting of the ticket lobby, the entrance lobby, the auditorium, the stage, the staircases leading from the first floor to the balcony floor and all connecting entrance areas; the balcony floor interior consisting of the balcony, the upper part of the auditorium and ceiling; and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces, including but not limited to, wall and ceiling surfaces, doors, stair railings, and attached decorative elements; 244-254 West 52nd Street, Manhattan. Built 1927; architect, Herbert J. Krapp.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1023, Lot 54.

On June 14 and 15, 1982, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as an Interior Landmark of the Alvin Theater, first floor interior consisting of the ticket lobby, the entrance lobby, the auditorium, the stage, the staircases leading from the first floor to the balcony floor and all connecting entrance areas; the balcony floor interior consisting of the balcony, the upper part of the auditorium and ceiling; and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces, including but not limited to, wall and ceiling surfaces, doors, stair railings, and attached decorative elements; 244-254 West 52nd Street, Manhattan, and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 2). The hearing was continued to October 19, 1982. Both hearings had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Eighty-three witnesses spoke in favor of designation. Two witnesses spoke in opposition to designation. The owner, with his representatives, appeared at the hearing, and indicated that he had not formulated an opinion regarding designation. The Commission has received many letters and other expressions of support in favor of this designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The Alvin Theater interior survives today as one of the historic theater interiors that symbolize American theater for both New York and the nation. Built in 1926-27, the Alvin was one of the relatively small number of post-World War I theaters built not by the Shubert or Chanin organizations, but rather for a special client. The Alvin was designed by prolific theater architect Herbert J. Krapp to house the productions and the offices of producers Alex Aarons and Vinton Freedley, from whose abbreviated first names the acronym "Alvin" was created.

Herbert J. Krapp was the most prolific architect of the Broadway theater district. Having worked in the offices of Herts & Tallant, premier theater designers of the pre-war period, Krapp went on to design theaters for the two major builders of the post-war era, the Shubert and Chanin organizations. He was occasionally retained by independent theater builders, however, as in the case of the Alvin. For the Alvin he designed

an unusually handsome neo-Georgian facade with Adamesque detailing, more than matched by an exceptionally elegant Adamesque style interior, perhaps his finest.

The Alvin was built to showcase the musical comedies of Aarons and Freedley, and has had a consistently outstanding history of long-running shows, beginning with Funny Face, featuring the young Fred Astaire. For half a century the Alvin Theater interior has served as home to countless numbers of the plays through which the Broadway theater has come to personify American theater. As such, it continues to help define the Broadway theater district, the largest and most famous concentration of legitimate stage theaters in the world.

The development of the Broadway Theater District

The area of midtown Manhattan known today as the Broadway theater district encompasses the largest concentration of legitimate playhouses in the world. The theaters located there, some dating from the turn of the century, are significant for their contributions to the history of the New York stage, for their influence upon American theater as a whole, and in many cases for their architectural design.

The development of the area around Times Square as New York's theater district at the end of the 19th century occurred as a result of two related factors: the northward movement of the population of Manhattan Island (abetted by the growth of several forms of mass transportation), and the expansion of New York's role in American theater. The northward movement of Manhattan's residential, commercial, and entertainment districts had been occurring at a steady rate throughout the 19th century. In the early 1800s, businesses, stores, hotels, and places of amusement had clustered together in the vicinity of lower Broadway. As New York's various businesses moved north, they began to isolate themselves in more or less separate areas: the financial institutions remained downtown; the major retail stores situated themselves on Broadway between 14th and 23rd Streets, eventually moving to Herald Square and Fifth Avenue at the turn of the century; the hotels, originally located near the stores and theaters, began to congregate around major transportation centers such as Grand Central Terminal or on the newly fashionable Fifth Avenue; while the mansions of the wealthy spread farther north on Fifth Avenue, as did such objects of their beneficence as the Metropolitan Museum of Art.¹

The theater district, which had existed in the midst of stores, hotels, and other businesses along lower Broadway for most of the 19th century, spread northward in stages, stopping for a time at Union Square, then Madison Square, then Herald Square. By the last two decades of the 19th century, far-sighted theater managers had begun to extend the theater district even farther north along Broadway, until they had reached the area that was then known as Long Acre Square and is today called Times Square.

A district of farmlands and rural summer homes in the early 1800s, Long Acre Square had by the turn of the century evolved into a hub of mass transportation. A horsecar line had run across 42nd Street as early as the 1860s, and in 1871, with the opening of Grand Central Depot and the

completion of the Third and Sixth Avenue Elevated Railways, it was comparatively simple for both New Yorkers and out-of-towners to reach Long Acre Square. Transportation continued to play a large part in the development of the area; in 1904 New York's subway system was inaugurated, with a major station located at 42nd Street and Broadway. The area was then renamed Times Square in honor of the newly erected Times Building.² The evolution of the Times Square area as a center of Manhattan's various mass transit systems made it a natural choice for the location of legitimate playhouses, which needed to be easily accessible to their audiences.

The theater business that invaded Long Acre Square at the end of the 19th century consisted of far more than a few playhouses, for at that time New York was the starting-point for a vast, nationwide entertainment network known as "the road." This complex theater operation had its beginnings in the 1860s when the traditional method of running a theater, the stock system, was challenged by the growing popularity of touring "combination" shows. In contrast to the stock system, in which a theater manager engaged a company of actors for a season and presented them in a variety of plays, the combination system consisted of a company of actors appearing in a single show which toured from city to city, providing its own scenery, costumes, and sometimes musical accompaniment. Helped by the expansion of the nation's railroads after the Civil War, the combination system soon killed off the majority of stock companies.³ By 1904 there were some 420 combination companies touring through thousands of theaters in cities and towns across the country.⁴

Of crucial importance to the operation of the combination system was a single location where combination shows could be cast, rehearsed, tried out, and then booked for a cross-country tour. Since New York was already regarded as the most important theater city in America, it is not surprising that it became the headquarters for the combination system. In addition to the many theaters needed for an initial Broadway production for the combinations before they went on tour, New York's theater district encompassed rehearsal halls, the headquarters of scenery, costume, lighting, and makeup companies, offices of theatrical agents and producers, theatrical printers and newspapers, and other auxiliary enterprises. Close to the theater district were boarding houses catering to the hundreds of performers who came to New York in the hope of being hired for a touring show or a Broadway production.

As theaters were built farther uptown, the auxiliary enterprises also began to move north. By the turn of the century,

the section of Broadway between 37th Street and 42nd Street was known as the Rialto. Theater people gathered or promenaded there. Producers could sometimes cast a play by looking over the actors loitering on the Rialto; and out-of-town managers, gazing out of office windows, could book tours by seeing who was available.⁵

The theater district that moved north to Long Acre Square in the 1890s was thus a vast array of business enterprises devoted to every facet of theatrical production.

The movement of the theater district north along Broadway had proceeded at a steady pace during the latter part of the 19th century. The Casino Theater was opened on the southeast corner of Broadway and 39th Street in 1882. A year later, it was joined by a most ambitious undertaking--the construction of the Metropolitan Opera House on Broadway between 39th and 40th Streets. In 1888, the Broadway Theater was erected on the southwest corner of Broadway and 41st Street. Five years later, the American Theater opened its doors at Eighth Avenue between 41st and 42nd Streets, as did Abbey's Theater at Broadway and 38th Street and the Empire Theater at Broadway and Fortieth Street.

It remained for Oscar Hammerstein I to make the move into Long Acre Square itself. At the close of the 19th century, Long Acre Square housed Manhattan's harness and carriage businesses, but was little used at night, when it seems to have become a "thieves' lair."⁶ In 1895 Hammerstein erected an enormous theater building on Broadway between 44th and 45th Streets. The original plan for the Olympia called for a "perfect palace of entertainment--which would have included three theaters, a bowling alley, a turkish bath, cafes and restaurants."⁷ Only part of this visionary plan ever became a reality. On November 25, 1895, Hammerstein opened the Lyric Theater section of the building, and a little over three weeks later he inaugurated the Music Hall section. Never a financial success, the Olympia closed its doors two years after it opened. Nevertheless, it earned Hammerstein the title of "Father of Times Square."

By the turn of the century Hammerstein had built two more theaters in the Long Acre Square area, and in the years 1901-1920 a total of forty-three additional theaters appeared in midtown Manhattan, most of them in the side streets east and west of Broadway. Much of this theater-building activity was inspired by the competition between two major forces in the industry, the Theatrical Syndicate and the Shubert Brothers, for control of the road. As each side in the rivalry drew its net more tightly around the playhouses it owned or controlled, the other side was forced to build new theaters to house its attractions. The result was a dramatic increase in the number of playhouses, both in New York and across the country. After World War I, as the road declined and New York's theatrical activity increased, the general economic prosperity made possible the construction of thirty additional playhouses in the Times Square area, expanding the boundaries of the theater district so that it stretched from west of Eighth Avenue to Sixth Avenue, and from 39th Street to Columbus Circle.⁸

The stockmarket crash of 1929 and the resulting Depression caused a shrinkage in theater activity. Some playhouses were torn down, many were converted to motion picture houses, and later to radio and television studios. From the time of the Depression until the 1960s no new Broadway playhouses were constructed. Fortunately, the theaters that survive from the early part of the century represent a cross-section of types and styles, and share among them a good deal of New York's rich theatrical history.

(MMK)

Evolution of Theater Design

The frenzy of theater construction that occurred in New York during the first thirty years of this century brought with it an evolution in

architecture and decoration.⁹ At the close of the 19th century American theaters were still being built in the style of traditional European opera houses, with high proscenium arches, narrow auditoriums, two or three balconies built in a horseshoe configuration, and dozens of boxes, some set into the front of the first balcony. Although contemporary notices of the theaters attributed specific (though often vague) styles or periods to them, their interiors were more often than not a melange of styles and colors.

With the increase of theater construction after the turn of the century came a new attitude toward theater architecture and decoration as firms such as Herts and Tallant, Thomas W. Lamb, and others, began to plan the playhouse's exterior and interior as a single, integrated design. The Art Nouveau style New Amsterdam Theater, which opened in 1903, signalled this new seriousness in theater design.

Perhaps influenced by such European experiments as Wagner's Festival Theater at Bayreuth, American theater architects after the turn of the century began to structure their playhouses along different lines. Proscenium openings were made lower and wider, auditoriums were made shallower, seating was planned in a fan shape, and the number of balconies was usually reduced to one. Boxes were cut back to a minimum. The theaters that were built just before and after World War I for the most part shared this new configuration.

Because many of New York's extant playhouses were built during the period in which New York was serving as the starting-point for nationwide tours, they represent a style of theater architecture that is characteristic not only of New York but also of other cities across the United States, for a show which was originally produced in a New York theater would require similar conditions in the theaters in which it toured, and theater owners often hired the same architects to design and build theaters in several cities. Thus, New York's theaters set the standard for theater construction across the United States, as an inspection of designs for theaters in various cities will show.¹⁰

(MMK)

The Broadway Theater in American Theatrical History

The playhouses still standing in the Broadway theater district share among them over eighty years of American theatrical history. In the early years of the century, when American theater was still heavily influenced by Europe, the theaters played host to such great international stars as Sarah Bernhardt, Eleonora Duse, and Mrs. Patrick Campbell, and to adaptations of such European successes as The Merry Widow and Floradora.

It was in the Broadway theaters that the beginnings of a distinctly American drama could be seen in the Western melodramas of David Belasco, the social comedies of Clyde Fitch and Langdon Mitchell, and the problem plays of Edward Sheldon and Eugene Walter. With the rise of the "little theater" movement in the second decade of the century, it seemed that theatrical leadership had passed from Broadway to such experimental "art" theaters as the Provincetown Playhouse and the Neighborhood Playhouse. Before long, however, the innovations of the little theaters infused

Broadway with new life. Beginning with the production of Eugene O'Neill's first full-length play, Beyond the Horizon, on Broadway in 1920, the playhouses of Broadway presented the work of a new generation of playwrights, including, in addition to O'Neill, Maxwell Anderson, Philip Barry, S.N. Behrman, Rachel Crothers, Sidney Howard, George S. Kaufman, George Kelly and Elmer Rice.

The Depression of the 1930s brought with it a new concern with political and social issues, and the dramas presented in the Broadway playhouses reflected that concern. Commercial producers gave us plays by Lillian Hellman, Robert E. Sherwood, and Thornton Wilder, while the Group Theater and other new organizations introduced such writers as Clifford Odets and Sidney Kingsley. The Broadway theaters continued to house challenging plays during the 1940s and 1950s, when new talents such as Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, and William Inge first began writing for the theater.

Meanwhile, musical comedy had blossomed from the adaptations and imitations of European operetta popular at the turn of the century to a uniquely American art form. By the 1940s and 1950s the works of Rodgers and Hammerstein, Cole Porter, Irving Berlin, Jerome Kern, and many others, were being exported from the stages of Broadway to theaters around the world.

The 1960s and 1970s were decades of ferment and change, both in and out of the theater. As in the 1920s, the impetus for theatrical experimentation came from outside of Broadway, and as in the 1920s, the experimentation helped to revitalize the Broadway theater. Today, the playhouses of Broadway are showcases for the best plays of the Off- and Off-Off Broadway theaters, as well as for exciting productions from theatrical workshops, regional theaters, and outstanding foreign companies.

Having moved gradually northward all during the 19th century, New York's theater district finally came to rest at Times Square, where it has remained for almost ninety years. The economic Depression of the 1930s discouraged speculative ventures such as the construction of new theaters, while after prosperity returned in the wake of World War II, the cost of renting land and constructing a theater was prohibitively high. The northward movement of the theater district may also have been discouraged for a number of years by the existence of the Sixth Avenue Elevated Railway, which crossed from Sixth to Ninth Avenues at 53rd Street, thereby providing a natural northern boundary for the theater district.¹¹

The Alvin Theater, as one of the Broadway theaters surviving today in the theater district, contributes to the totality of the district's history by virtue of its participation in that history.

(MMK)

Notes

1. The discussion of the northward movement of Manhattan's business and theaters is based on Mary Henderson, The City and the Theatre

(Clifton, N.J.: James T. White and Co., 1983), pp. 130-131, 168-170.

2. W.G. Rogers and Mildred Weston, Carnival Crossroads: the Story of Times Square (New York: Doubleday, 1960), pp. 39-78; Howard B. Furer, New York: A Chronological and Documentary History 1524-1970 (Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.: Oceana Publications, 1974), p. 34 ff.; The New York Subway (New York: Interborough Rapid Transit Co., 1904; reprint ed., New York: Arno Press, n.d.).
3. Alfred L. Bernheim, The Business of the Theatre (New York: Actors Equity Association, 1932; reprint ed., New York: Benjamin Blom, 1964), p. 26.
4. Jack Poggi, Theater in America: The Impact of Economic Forces, 1870-1967 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968), p. 6.
5. Brooks Atkinson, Broadway, rev. ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1974), p. 11.
6. Philip Paneth, Times Square, Crossroads of the World (New York: Living Books, 1965), p. 20.
7. Henderson, p. 263.
8. Henderson, p. 195-196.
9. The discussion of the developments in American theater architecture is based upon: Ned A. Bowman, "American Theatre Architecture: the Concrete Mirror Held Up to Yankee Nature," The American Theatre: The Sum of its Parts (New York: French, 1972), pp. 199-233; Burr C. Cook, "Twenty Years of Theatre Building," Theatre, 36 (August 1922), 98-99; Arthur S. Meloy, Theatres and Picture Houses (New York: Architects' Supply and Publishing Co., 1916), p. 29.
10. See, for example, the discussion of various theaters in Randolph Williams Sexton and Ben Franklin Betts, eds., American Theaters of Today, 2 vols. (New York: Architectural Book Pubs., 1927, 1930; reprint ed., New York: Vestal, 1977).
11. Stanley Buder, "Forty-Second Street at the Crossroads: A History of Broadway to Eighth Avenue," West 42nd Street: "The Bright Light Zone" (New York: Graduate School and University Center, CUNY, 1978), p. 62.

Alex Aarons and Vinton Freedley

Aarons and Freedley, who commissioned the Alvin Theater, were prominent and successful Broadway producers, who mounted some of Broadway's most legendary shows.

Vinton Freedley (1891-1969) was said to be the only Broadway producer whose name was listed in the social register.¹ Born of a prominent family in Philadelphia, Freedley was educated at Groton, Harvard, and the

Pennsylvania Law School. While still at Harvard, Freedley gained his first show business experience writing the music for two Hasty Pudding shows and playing the leading lady in both. After passing the bar examination, he left Pennsylvania for New York in search of a career, not in law but on the stage.

Freedley's first job was with William A. Brady's company where, from 1917 to 1922, Freedley learned and absorbed as much as he could about the theater business: writing, direction, lighting, production, script burying, casting, and acting.

In 1924, Freedley, feeling confident enough to launch his own productions, formed an association with Alex Aarons (1891-1943), also from Philadelphia and already a known and successful manager.² Aarons had produced For Goodness Sake in New York in 1921 and subsequently taken it to London under the new title of Stop Flirting where it became one of the reigning successes of the new season. Knowledge of the theater business had come early to Aarons. His father, Alfred E. Aarons, spent fifty years in the theater, principally in association with the production and booking team of Klaw and Erlanger; Aarons senior was said to have originated the modern system of booking road shows.

Aarons and Freedley's partnership lasted nine years. Their first smash hit came in 1924 with George and Ira Gershwin's Lady Be Good, which brought to prominence Fred and Adele Astaire. A number of hits followed, many of them on the Alvin stage. In 1933, however, the Aarons-Freedley partnership came to an end, probably as a result of financial losses incurred during the Depression. Although no longer active as a Broadway producer, Aarons nonetheless became involved in various theatrical endeavors, most of them having a Hollywood connection. His last project was with Warner Brothers in Los Angeles assisting in the filming of Rhapsody in Blue, George Gershwin's biography.³ Aarons died in 1943 at the age of 52.

After the team's dissolution, Vinton Freedley moved his offices to the RCA Building where he continued to coordinate the production of hit Broadway shows. These included Anything Goes (1934), Red, Hot and Blue (1936), Leave it to Me (1938), Let's Face It (1941), and Dancing in the Streets (1943). Great to be Alive (1950) was the last play Freedley produced. In addition to his production activity, Freedley became president of the Actors Fund of America, and president of the Episcopal Actors Guild of America. He was also president of the American National Theater and Academy (ANTA).

When Aarons and Freedley disassociated themselves from the Alvin Theater, the management reverted to the building's original owner, A.H. Pincus, and his nephews Norman and Irvin Pincus. Under their guidance, a period followed when Theater Guild productions were moved into the Alvin Theater from the Guild Theater, across the street, to continue their long runs. Usually content to book the shows of other producers, the Pincuses began creating their own projects in 1938. They soon left the legitimate theater business and by 1946 had become associated with the young television industry.⁴

(AM, PD)

Notes

1. Biographical summary from Vinton Freedley, obituary, New York Times, June 6, 1969; Hazel Canning, "Hit He Made in Harvard Show....," undated clipping from Boston Sunday Post, in Alvin Theater, clippings file, Billy Rose Theater Collection, Lincoln Center branch, New York Public Library.
2. Biographical summary from Alex Aarons, obituary, New York Times, March 16, 1943.
3. Ibid.
4. Norman Pincus, obituary, Variety, November 1, 1978.

Herbert J. Krapp

The character of today's Broadway theater district owes more to architect Herbert J. Krapp (1883-1973) than to any other architect. He designed sixteen of the extant Broadway theaters (almost half the total),¹ fourteen of which are in active theatrical use, as well as five that have been demolished.² Despite his enormous output, however, little is known today of his life and work.

Herbert Krapp's career coincided with the rise of the Shubert organization as the major force in the New York theater. Upon his graduation from Cooper Union, Krapp joined the office of noted theater architects Henry Herts and Hugh Tallant, who had designed some of the handsomest early twentieth-century theaters in New York, including the Lyceum (1903), New Amsterdam (1902-03), Helen Hayes (1911, demolished), and Longacre (1912-13). According to Krapp's daughter, the partners were becoming increasingly debilitated by morphine addiction, and gradually entrusted Krapp with responsibility for design and office operations.³ Be that as it may, when the Shuberts next decided to build new theaters, in 1916, they turned to Krapp for designs, and proceeded to commission from him a dozen theaters in Times Square in as many years (1916-1928). Throughout his professional career Krapp remained the preferred Shubert architect. He designed their theaters in New York, Boston, Philadelphia and elsewhere, supervised Shubert theater alterations nationwide, and was even the architect for their private residences.⁴

Besides his twelve Shubert theaters, Krapp designed nine other Times Square houses. Six, built between 1924 and 1927, were for the Chanin Construction Company. Only three, the Alvin, the Hammerstein (now the Ed Sullivan), and the Waldorf (demolished) were designed for independent interests. A brilliant acoustician and gifted architect of great invention, Krapp was responsible for scores of theaters throughout New York City and State (including three movie houses in Queens: the Sunnyside in Woodside and the Jackson and the Boulevard in Jackson Heights) and others stretching from Palm Beach to Detroit. His office records document alterations to literally hundreds of theaters across the country.

Krapp's Broadway theaters closely reflect the interest and needs of a new breed of theatrical entrepreneur, the large-scale speculative owner/builder. Prior to the rise of the Shuberts as major theater owners, most theaters had been erected for independent impresarios, including Oscar Hammerstein who built the first Times Square theater and whose Victory Theater (1899) still stands on 42nd Street, Daniel Frohman who built the Lyceum (1903), Charles Dillingham who built the Lunt-Fontanne (1910), and David Belasco and John Cort who built the theaters that bear their names (1907 and 1912). At the turn of the century, Klaw and Erlanger's Theatrical Syndicate dominated most of the Times Square theaters, but did not sponsor a unified building campaign as the Shuberts eventually did. Since the Shuberts were building theaters largely as financial ventures, most of their buildings tended to be simpler than those designed for the impresarios who were attempting to draw attention both to their theaters and to themselves. The theaters that Krapp designed for the Shuberts are relatively restrained on both the exterior and interior, but they reflect Krapp's mastery of theater layout, as well as the general stylistic trends established by the earlier and more elaborate theater designs in the Times Square theater district.

Krapp's earliest theaters, the Plymouth (1916-17) and Broadhurst (1917), were built as a pair located immediately to the west of Henry Herts's earlier Shubert pair, the Shubert and Booth. The designs of the Plymouth and Broadhurst echo those of the earlier theaters. Like the Shubert and Booth, Krapp's houses have rounded corners that face towards Broadway (the direction from which most audience members arrived). Each corner is accented by an entrance with a broken pedimented enframing and by an oval cartouche. These forms imitate, in a simplified manner, the ornamental forms on Herts's buildings. In addition, Krapp's theaters are faced with bricks separated by wide, deeply inset mortar joints in a manner favored by Herts. The Plymouth and Broadhurst facades are simpler than their neighbors, but they were clearly designed to complement Herts's theaters and create a unified group of Shubert houses.

The Plymouth and Broadhurst are not adorned with a great deal of applied stone or terra cotta. This lack of architectural ornament is typical of Krapp's designs for the Shuberts;⁵ the facades of these theaters are generally enlivened by diaper-patterned brick and occasionally by the use of ornamental iron balconies. The use of diaper-patterned brick can be seen on the Plymouth and the Broadhurst, but it is most evident on the Morosco (1917, demolished), Ritz (1921), Ambassador (1921), and the 46th-Street facade of the Imperial (1923). Krapp's use of diaperwork might have been inspired by Herts & Tallant's use of an ornate diaper pattern of terra cotta on their Helen Hayes Theater (1911).

After building a large number of new theaters between 1916 and 1923 the Shuberts undertook very little construction in the Times Square area from 1924 through 1927. During these years the Chanin Construction Company emerged as the major theater builder in the area. The Chanins also turned to Krapp for their theater designs. Major New York City builders, the Chanins considered theaters to be sound financial investments from which they could not fail to profit. The six theaters that Krapp designed for the Chanins are more ornate than those he designed for the Shuberts. One reason may be that the Chanins, new to the theater world, decided that their theaters should project an elegant image; another, that as a building

company, they were more concerned than the Shuberts about the exterior appearance of their buildings. Still another factor may have the greater availability of money in the middle of the 1920s as compared to the years during and immediately following World War I when most of the Shubert theaters were erected.

Krapp's first two theaters for the Chanins, the Forty-Sixth Street (1924) and the Biltmore (1925), are neo-Renaissance style structures with extensive terra-cotta detail that includes rusticated bases, monumental Corinthian pilasters, and ornate cornices and balustrades. Krapp's next commission, the Brooks Atkinson (1926), has a facade with the Mediterranean flavor that came to be favored by the Chanins. Referred to at the time as "modern Spanish" in style⁶, the Brooks Atkinson is a brick building articulated by three Palladian openings supported by twisted columns. Roundel panels and a Spanish-tiled parapet are additional Spanish forms on the facade. Krapp's largest commission from the Chanins was a trio of theaters, the Golden, Royale, and Majestic, all built between 1926 and 1927 in conjunction with the Lincoln Hotel (now the Milford Plaza Hotel). Like the Brooks Atkinson, these three theaters were described as being "modern Spanish in character."⁷ All three were constructed of yellow brick and adorned with areas of decorative terra-cotta pilasters, twisted columns, arches, parapets, and columned loggias.⁸

Following his work for the Chanins, Krapp designed three independent houses, all of which were stylistically unusual. The Waldorf (1926, demolished) which stood on West 50th Street was an ornate French neo-Classical-style structure; the Alvin (1927, now the Neil Simon) an impressive neo-Federal style red brick building; and the Hammerstein (now the Ed Sullivan) a neo-Gothic theater housed in a tall office building. The latter two were commissioned by theatrical impresarios, hence their more elaborate design as compared to Krapp's work for the Shubert and Chanin theater chains.

In 1928 the Shuberts commissioned their final theater from Krapp. The Ethel Barrymore is among Krapp's finest and most unusual designs. The theater is a monumentally scaled structure combining an extremely ornate rusticated Beaux-Arts-style base with a superstructure boldly modeled after the windowed facade of a Roman bath.⁹

Like the exteriors of his buildings, Krapp's interiors are stylistically varied, reflecting the design eclecticism of the first decades of the twentieth century. On many occasions the style of the interior has little to do with that of the exterior. Most of the theater interiors designed for the Shuberts have Adamesque style ornament, a style deriving from the neo-Classical designs originated by the eighteenth-century English architect Robert Adam. Krapp's Adamesque interiors display the refined, elegant forms common to the style, and such features as delicate garlands, rosettes, and foliate bands. The "Spanish" theaters that Krapp designed for the Chanins have interior details such as twisted columns, arcades, and escutcheons that match the style of the exteriors. All of Krapp's interiors were designed to create a relaxing and comfortable environment for the theatergoer. The decor of the auditoriums is simple yet elegant, and generally complemented by similarly designed lobbies and lounges.

Although Krapp lived to the age of 86, he apparently designed no theaters during the last forty years of his life. Because of the theater glut caused by financial problems during the Depression, theaters ceased being a lucrative architectural specialty. Krapp survived as a building assessor for the City of New York, and turned increasingly to industrial design. A twentieth-century Renaissance man, he supplemented his architectural practice with the patterning of silver- and flatware and especially with his design of mechanical couplings.¹⁰ The theaters he designed in the early decades of this century, however, remain a lasting legacy, and many of his buildings, such as the Majestic, Imperial, Plymouth, and 46th Street Theaters, are counted among the most successful and sought-after on Broadway.

(ASD)

Notes

1. Krapp's sixteen theaters are the Alvin (now the Neil Simon), Ambassador, Brooks Atkinson, Ethel Barrymore, Biltmore, Broadhurst, 46th Street, Golden, Imperial, Majestic, Eugene O'Neil, Plymouth, Ritz, Royale, and Ed Sullivan (originally Hammerstein). The Central (1567 Broadway at 47th Street) is now a movie house and all but its cornice is covered with billboards.
2. The five theaters designed by Krapp that have been demolished are the Bijou (209 West 45th Street), Century (932 Seventh Avenue between 58th and 59th Streets), 49th Street (235 West 49th Street), Morosco (217 West 45th Street), and Waldorf (116 West 50th Street).
3. Interview with Mrs. Peggy Elson, Herbert Krapp's daughter, by Janet Adams, November 16, 1984.
4. Herbert Krapp papers, currently in the possession of Mrs. Peggy Elson, New York City.
5. The 49th Street Theater (1921) was an exception. This building had a terra-cotta facade articulated by fluted pilasters.
6. Brooks Atkinson Theater, Souvenir Program of the dedication (as Mansfield Theater), February 15, 1926, n.p. Billy Rose Theater Collection, Lincoln Center branch, New York Public Library.
7. Royale Theater, Souvenir Program of the dedication, January 11, 1927, n.p. Billy Rose Theater Collection.
8. The use of restricted areas of very ornate detail set against an otherwise unornamented facade is reminiscent of Spanish Baroque or Churrigueresque architecture.
9. This theater is often overlooked because the present rectilinear marquee cuts the facade in half, hiding the ornate base and destroying the subtle juxtaposition between the top and bottom sections of the building.

10. Herbert Krapp papers, and interview with Mrs. Peggy Elson.

The Alvin Theater interior

The Alvin Theater was built for Alexander H. Pincus to house the musical comedy productions of Alex Aarons and Vinton Freedley. "Alvin" is an acronym of their abbreviated first names. One of the last theaters built in the Broadway district, it is located a few blocks north of the earlier concentrations in the West 40s, on the mid-block of West 52nd Street, just opposite the Guild Theater (later ANTA, now Virginia).

Opening in 1927, just as the Broadway theater reached a zenith in popularity, it was the last of seven new theaters to open in that year, and, of those, one of five designed by Herbert Krapp. Unlike the other four Krapp theaters of that year, however, the Alvin was designed not for the Shubert or Chanin organizations, but to house the theater and offices of Aarons and Freedley.

Krapp's design for the theater, both inside and out, is among his most elaborate and elegant. The handsome neo-Georgian facade, with Adamesque detailing, is more than matched by the exquisite Adamesque interior design. The ceiling, boxes, walls, and balconies are adorned with Adamesque plasterwork, cameos inside gold and plaster reliefs, sunbursts, wreaths and urns, all set within a neo-classical framework of paired fluted pilasters, architraves, and segmental arches. Beyond its ornamental distinction, the Alvin was held to have "excellent acoustics."¹ The plan with a single balcony divided into tiers and walls that curve in towards the proscenium also are characteristic of Krapp's theaters.

On the opening of the Alvin in 1927, Brooks Atkinson wrote in the New York Times that the theater had

...all the best features of the modern playhouse.... The auditorium is decorated in pastel shades of blue and gray, with ivory and old gold decorations. The Alvin can serve 1,400 drama gluttons at one sitting. If "Funny Face" had been less engrossing the audience might have had more time to appreciate the new theater.²

Of the many Adamesque style interiors designed by Herbert Krapp, the Alvin may be the finest survivor.

(PD)

Notes

1. George Freedley, "Broadway Playhouses," bound typescript of articles published under the title "The Stage Today" in the Morning Telegraph, 1941-43. For the Alvin, see September 8, 1941, p. 9.
2. Brooks Atkinson, "Astaire and Others," New York Times, November 23,

The Alvin as a playhouse

The now legendary George and Ira Gershwin opened the Alvin Theater on November 22, 1927, with Funny Face starring Fred and Adele Astaire. Ironically, this Aarons and Freedley production was such a success -- running for 250 performances -- that critics virtually ignored the new theater and its elegant design. Other hits soon followed; among the Aarons and Freedley productions that graced the Alvin stage in its early years were Heads Up, a Rodgers and Hart musical with Ray Bolger which ran 144 performances, and Girl Crazy, the Gershwin hit musical with Ethel Merman which ran 272 performances in 1930 and 1931. Girl Crazy was Merman's first major role, and she dominated the show singing "I Got Rhythm." Other early shows at the Alvin included Mary of Scotland, a Theater Guild production with Helen Hayes; Anything Goes, in 1934-35, again with Ethel Merman; DuBose Heyward's opera Porgy and Bess with music and lyrics by George and Ira Gershwin (1935-36); Red, Hot and Blue with Ethel Merman, Jimmy Durante, Bob Hope and Vivian Vance (1936-37); I'd Rather be Right with George M. Cohan in 1937-39; and There Shall be no Night, the 1940 Pulitzer Prize winning play starring Alfred Lunt, Lynn Fontanne, Sydney Greenstreet and Montgomery Cliff.

Although the Alvin was sold in 1946 by the Pincuses, its original owners, outstanding award-winning musicals and comedies continued at the theater under subsequent owners. Cyrano de Bergerac captivated theatergoers in 1946 and won Jose Ferrer the Tony Award for best actor in a play. That same year saw another outstanding performance at the Alvin: Ingrid Bergman played the title role in Joan of Lorraine. Two years later, the longest running show in Broadway history at the time closed at the Alvin: Life with Father ran a total of 3,224 performances, a record it maintained for many years. Mister Roberts featured another Tony Award winner, Henry Fonda, when it ran for 1,157 performances between 1948 and 1950. More recent award winners include the 1968 presentation of The Great White Hope starring James Earl Jones; Company, the hit musical which ran 1,050 times between 1975 and 1977; and Annie which opened at the Alvin on April 21, 1977, then moved across the street to the ANTA theater in 1981 before closing at the Uris Theater in 1983. Recently the Nederlander Organization has renamed the theater the Neil Simon, in honor of the playwright whose works, Brighton Beach Memoirs (1981) and Biloxi Blues (1984), have opened here.

(AM, PD)

Notes

1. This production history of the Alvin Theater, condensed from the fuller version in the Appendix, is based on listings compiled by Actors Equity and submitted as testimony at the Landmarks Preservation Commission's public hearings of June and October, 1982. Their submission has been checked by Landmarks Commission staff against The Biographical Encyclopedia & Who's Who of the American Theater, Walter

Rigdon, editor (New York: James H. Heineman, Inc., 1966).

Description¹

Ticket Lobby:

The ticket lobby is a small rectangular space faced with dark gray veined marble. Four bronze and glass doors open from the street. On the wall opposite are paneled wood doors exiting from the auditorium. On the short west wall are two ticket windows, while through a recessed niche on west wall a pair of wood and glass doors lead into the inner lobby. Large panels are placed above the street doors. Small sconces are placed on the wall of the recessed niche. The most notable feature of the space is the handsome plasterwork ceiling rising from a decorative cornice. The ceiling panels are executed in Adamesque designs and hold two crystal light fixtures.

Inner Lobby:

The inner lobby is a small rectangular space. One enters through the pair of wood and glass doors on the west wall. Three sets of bronze and glass double doors open onto the street on the north wall. On the opposite wall paneled wood doors lead into the auditorium. At the east end the space curves into a staircase leading up to the balcony. The ceiling is a particularly notable feature. It rises from a decorative cornice and is executed in Adamesque plasterwork. Two crystal chandeliers are suspended from the ceiling.

The Auditorium:

The auditorium is rectangular in plan, almost as wide as it is deep, with a single balcony and a flat-arched proscenium flanked by boxes. The stage opens behind the proscenium arch, and the floor slopes down towards the proscenium arch. The proscenium is composed of fluted pilasters with stylized Ionic capitals which support an entablature with a finely-detailed Adamesque frieze. A lunette above the proscenium holds a mural depicting mythological characters in a pastoral setting. At each side of the proscenium the wall curves in and contains three boxes framed by fluted pilasters with stylized Ionic capitals which support the continuation of the entablature above the proscenium. At orchestra level a large opening beneath each set of boxes is flanked by panels containing Adamesque detailing with cameos. The boxes step up, and the front and rear ones are curved. Each is adorned with Wedgewood-like bas relief panels, urns, swags, and moldings. The undersides have console brackets and small crystal light fixtures. Paneled piers flank the box openings and support an entablature surmounted by broken curved pediment with central urn. Thin engaged stylized colonnettes incorporating female grotesques rise from the pediment to meet the main entablature.

One enters the auditorium from the rear corner at the northeast through paneled wood doors from the inner lobby. Paneled wood exit doors are placed much of the length of north wall, while metal exit doors flanking paneled wall sections are on the south wall. All of these doors

are surmounted by a frieze with stylized griffins and lyres flanking the exit signs. The promenade area at the rear of the orchestra has paneled wall sections. Wall sconces are placed on both the side and rear walls. A decorative metal standing rail separates the orchestra seats from the promenade. Two faux marbre columns with stylized Doric capitals support the balcony. At the southeast corner a staircase with gilded metal railing leads up to the mezzanine lounge. At balcony level the side walls contain exit doors, the middle pair of which is at the level of the crossover aisle which divides the balcony into two tiers. This aisle is further defined by a decorative metal railing. The exit doors are surmounted by friezes like those at the orchestra level. The side walls are divided into sections by fluted flat pilasters with stylized Ionic capitals supporting the entablature which is the further continuation of that extending above the box sections. Stylized engaged colonettes link the lower pair of exit doors to the entablature. The rear balcony wall is paneled. Crystal and brass wall sconces further enhance these walls. The balcony front is decorated with urns, swags, and cameo panels, carrying on the motif of the box fronts. This is partially covered by a modern light box. The underside of the balcony is ornately paneled with Adamesque detail and contains crystal light fixtures.

Above the entablature the ceiling rises in groined vaults formed in part by fanlight-like lunettes to a central dome. The ribs of the groins have plasterwork ornament while the panels are adorned with a variety of Adamesque plasterwork detail. The dome is recessed and framed by ornamental bands. A large crystal chandelier hangs from the fluted centerpiece. A smaller recessed half-dome at the rear with ornamental banding contains openings for a technical booth.

Air conditioning vents and grilles have been installed in the ceilings and walls.

Mezzanine Lounge:

The mezzanine lounge is entered from staircases at each end. The paneled walls rise from a wainscoting and are adorned by wall sconces. The space is dominated by a shallow oval ceiling dome defined by bands of ornamental plasterwork. A crystal chandelier hangs from the center. An ornamental cornice intersects with the oval to create segmental panels with Adamesque detailing. The rectangular portions of the ceiling above the two staircases have a similar cornice treatment, and crystal chandeliers are suspended from their centers.

Notes

1. Architecturally significant features are underlined.

Conclusion

The Alvin Theater interior survives today as one of the historic theater interiors that symbolize American theater for both New York and the nation. One of the few post-War theaters not built for a large theater organization, the Alvin served as headquarters for the producer team of Alex Aarons and Vinton Freedley, making a special contribution to the

character of the Broadway theater district.

Designed by Herbert J. Krapp, the most prolific architect of the Broadway theater district, the Alvin's interior is an exceptionally handsome Adamesque style design. The elegance of its detailing creates a special architectural presence.

Beginning with Aarons & Freedley's major musical comedy successes, the Alvin Theater interior has, for half a century, served as home to countless numbers of the plays through which the Broadway theater has come to personify American theater. As such, it continues to help define the Broadway theater district, the largest and most famous concentration of legitimate stage theaters in the world.

The preparation of this report has involved the work of a number of consultants, supervised and edited by Anthony W. Robins (AR), Deputy Director of Research. Individual authors are noted by initials at the ends of their sections. The consultants were Margaret Knapp (MMK), Andrew S. Dolkart (ASD), Alice McGown (AM), and Peter Donhauser (PD). Marjorie Pearson (MP), Director of Research, wrote the description. Research Department staff who contributed to the report include Marion Cleaver, Gale Harris, and Jay Shockley.

The New York Landmarks Preservation Commission gratefully acknowledges the assistance rendered by many concerned citizens in studying the Broadway theaters. Special thanks are due the New York City Planning Commission; Community Planning Board 5, Manhattan; the New York Landmarks Conservancy; the Actors Equity Committee to Save the Theaters; and the individual theater owners.

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 the Alvin Theater, first floor interior consisting of the ticket lobby, the entrance lobby, the auditorium, the stage, the staircases leading from the first floor to the balcony floor and all connecting entrance areas; the balcony floor interior consisting of the balcony, the upper part of the auditorium and ceiling; and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces, including but not limited to, wall and ceiling surfaces, doors, stair railings, and attached decorative elements; has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City, New York State, and the nation, and the Interior or parts thereof are thirty years old or more, and that the Interior is one which is customarily open and accessible to the public, and to which the public is customarily invited.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the Alvin Theater interior survives today as one of the historic theater interiors that symbolize American theater for both New York and the nation; that it was designed for Alex Aarons and Vinton Freedley, producers of some of Broadway's most successful musical comedies; that the interior designed for the Alvin by Herbert J. Krapp, the most prolific designer of Broadway theaters, is an exceptionally handsome Adamesque style design; that its plan with a single balcony divided into two tiers and walls that curve in towards the proscenium is characteristic of Krapp's theaters; that this interior, with its elegant Adamesque detailing, distinguished the theater headquarters of Aarons and Freedley, and as such represents a special aspect of the nation's theatrical history; that for over half a century the Alvin Theater interior has served as home to countless numbers of the plays through which the Broadway theater has come to personify American theater; and that as such it continues to help define the Broadway theater district, the largest and most famous concentration of legitimate stage theaters in the world.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 21, Section 534, 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 the Alvin Theater, first floor interior consisting of the ticket lobby, the entrance lobby, the auditorium, the stage, the staircases leading from the first floor to the balcony floor and all connecting entrance areas; the balcony floor interior consisting of the balcony, the upper part of the auditorium and ceiling; and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces, including but not limited to, wall and ceiling surfaces, doors, stair railings, and attached decorative elements; 244-254 West 52nd Street, Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 1023, Lot 54, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.

APPENDIX

The following production history of the Alvin Theater is based on listings compiled by Actors Equity and submitted as testimony at the Landmarks Preservation Commission's public hearings of June and October, 1982. Their submission has been checked by Landmarks Commission staff against The Biographical Encyclopedia & Who's Who of the American Theater, Walter Rigdon, editor (New York: James H. Heineman, Inc., 1966).

1927

FUNNY FACE 11/22/27 (250 perfs.) by Fred Thompson and Paul Gerard Smith; lyrics by Ira Gershwin; music by George Gershwin; produced by Aarons & Freedley; with Fred and Adele Astaire, Betty Compton and Victor Moore.

1928

TREASURE GIRL 11/8/28 (69 perfs.) by Fred Thompson & Vincent Lawrence; lyrics by Ira Gershwin; music by George Gershwin; produced by Aarons & Freedley.

1929

SPRING IS HERE 3/11/29 (104 perfs.) by Owen Davis; lyrics by Lorenz Hart; music by Richard Rodgers; with Inez Courtney and Charles Ruggles.

HEADS UP 11/11/29 (144 perfs.) by John McGowan and Paul Gerard Smith; lyrics by Lorenz Hart; music by Richard Rodgers; produced by Aarons & Freedley; with Betty Starbuck, Ray Bolger, Victor Moore and Jack Whiting.

1930

GIRL CRAZY 10/14/30 (272 perfs.) by Guy Bolton and John McGowan; lyrics by Ira Gershwin; music by George Gershwin; produced by Aarons & Freedley; with Allen Kearns, Willie Howard and Ethel Merman.

1931

WONDER BOY 10/23/31 (44 perfs.) by Edward Chodorov and Arthur Barton; with Allen Jenkins, Sam Levine and David Burns.

TOM SAWYER 12/25/31 (4 perfs.) dramatization of Mark Twain novel by Paul Kester.

1932

ADAM HAD TWO SONS 1/20/32 (5 perfs.) by John McDermott; produced by Aarons & Freedley; with Paul Kelly and Raymond Hackett.

1932 (cont'd.)

MOURNING BECOMES ELECTRA 5/9/32 (12 perfs.) by Eugene O'Neill.

MUSIC IN THE AIR 11/8/32 (146 perfs.) by Oscar Hammerstein II;
music by Jerome Kern; with Al Sheen, Walter Slezak and
Natalie Hall.

1933

UNCLE TOM'S CABIN (revival) 5/29/33 (35 perfs.) by G.L. Aiken;
with Otis Skinner, Fay Bainter and Gene Lockhart.

MARY OF SCOTLAND 11/27/33 (236 perfs.) by Maxwell Anderson;
with Philip Merivale, Helen Hayes, Helen Menken.

1934

ANYTHING GOES 11/21/34 (415 perfs.) by Guy Bolton, P. G.
Wodehouse, Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse; lyrics and
music by Cole Porter; Freedley mgmt.; with Ethel Merman,
Victor Moore and William Gaxton.

1935

PORGY AND BESS 10/10/35 (124 perfs.) libretto by Du Bose Heyward;
lyrics by Ira Gershwin & DuBose Heyward; music by George
Gershwin; with John W. Bubbles, Georgette Harney, Todd Duncan,
Anne Wiggins Brown and Warren Coleman.

1936

DEAR OLD DARLING 3/4/36 (16 perfs.) by George M Cohan.

RED, HOT AND BLUE! 10/29/36 (181 perfs.) by Howard Lindsay and
Russel Crouse; music and lyrics by Cole Porter; with Ethel
Merman, Jimmy Durante, Bob Hope, Vivian Vance, Grace and
Paul Hartman.

1937

I'D RATHER BE RIGHT 11/2/37 (289 perfs.) by George S. Kaufman
and Moss Hart; lyrics by Lorenz Hart; music by Richard
Rodgers; with George M. Cohan.

1938

THE BOYS FROM SYRACUSE 11/23/38 (235 perfs.) by George Abbott;
lyrics by Lorenz Hart; music by Richard Rodgers; with
Ronald Graham, Jimmy Savo, Burl Ives, Eddie Albert, Teddy
Hart, Wynn Murray, Muriel Angelus and Murray Wescott.

1939

GEORGE WHITE'S SCANDALS 8/28/39 (120 perfs.) by Matt Brooks and
George White; lyrics by Jack Yellen; music by Sammy Fain;
with Ella Logan, Ann Miller, Ben Blue, Ray Middleton and The
Three Stooges.

1939 (cont'd.)

VERY WARM FOR MAY 11/17/39 (59 perfs.) book and lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II; music by Jerome Kern; with Jack Whiting, Grace McDonald, Max Showalter and Hiram Sherman.

1940

THE TAMING OF THE SHREW 2/5/40 (8 perfs.) by William Shakespeare; with Sydney Greenstreet, Francis Compton, Fay Baker, Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne.

THE FIFTH COLUMN 3/6/40 (87 perfs.) by Benjamin Glazer; with Franchot Tone and Lee J. Cobb.

THERE SHALL BE NO NIGHT 4/29/40 (181 perfs.) by Robert E. Sherwood; with Alfred Lunt, Lynn Fontanne, Sydney Greenstreet, Richard Whorf and Montgomery Clift.

1941

LADY IN THE DARK 1/23/41, returned 9/1/41 (total 467 perfs.) by Moss Hart; lyrics by Ira Gershwin; music by Kurt Weill; with Gertrude Lawrence and Danny Kaye.

1942

LAUGH, CLOWN, LAUGH! 6/22/42 (65 perfs.) by Ed Wynn; with Ed Wynn and Jane Froman.

1943

SOMETHING FOR THE BOYS 1/7/43 (422 perfs.) by Herbert and Dorothy Fields; lyrics and music by Cole Porter; with Ethel Merman, William Johnson, Allen Jenkins, Betty Garrett and Anita Alvarez.

1944

JACKPOT 1/13/44 (67 perfs.) by Guy Bolton, Sidney Sheldon and Ben Roberts; with Nanette Fabray, Jacqueline Susann, Benny Baker, Allan Jones, Wendell Corey and Betty Garrett.

HELEN GOES TO TROY 4/24/44 (96 perfs.) by Gottfried Reinhardt and John Meehan, Jr.; with Ernest Truex and Gordon Dilworth.

THE MAID AS MISTRESS 5/14/44 (2 perfs.) by Pergolesi and THE SECRET OF SUZANNE by Wolf-Ferri.

SADIE THOMPSON 11/16/44 (60 perfs.) by Howard Dietz and Rouben Mamoulian; with June Havoc.

1945

THE TEMPEST 1/25/45 (100 perfs.) by William Shakespeare; with Joseph Hardy, Frances Heflin, Vera Zorina and Canada Lee.
(Moved to the Broadway Theater 3/19/45.)

1945 (cont'd.)

THE FIREBRAND OF FLORENCE 3/22/45 (43 perfs.) by Edwin Justus Mayer and Ira Gershwin; music by Kurt Weill; with Earl Wrightson and Beverly Tyler.

HOLLYWOOD PINAFORE 5/31/45 (52 perfs.) revised by George S. Kaufmann; with Victor Moore, William Gaxton and Shirley Booth.

POLONAISE 10/6/45 (113 perfs.) by Gottfried Reinhardt and Anthony Veiller (moved to the Adelphi 12/3/45).

BILLION DOLLAR BABY 12/21/45 (220 perfs.) by Betty Comden and Adolph Green; with Joan McCracken, Mitzi Green, David Burns and William Tabbert.

1946

A FLAG IS BORN 9/5/46 (120 perfs.) by Ben Hecht; music by Kurt Weill; with Paul Muni, Marlon Brando and Celia Adler (moved to the Adelphi 10/5/46, the Music Box 10/22/46 and the Broadway 11/19/46).

CYRANDO DE BERGERAC 10/8/46 (193 perfs.) by Edmond Rostand; with Jose Ferrar, Frances Reid, Ralph Meeker, Hiram Sherman and Francis Compton.

JOAN OF LORRAINE 11/18/46 (199 perfs.) by Maxwell Anderson; with Ingrid Bergman, Sam Wanamaker, Romney Brent, Kevin McCarthy and Joanna Roos.

1947

LIFE WITH FATHER opened at the Alvin 6/16/47 (3,224 total perfs.); by Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse. (First opened at the Empire on 11/8/39, moved to the Bijou 9/9/45.)

MAN AND SUPERMAN 10/8/47 (294 perfs.) by George Bernard Shaw; with Maurice Evans, Josephine Brown, Carmen Matthews and Jack Manning (moved to the Hudson Theater 2/16/48).

1948

MISTER ROBERTS 2/18/48 (1,157 perfs.) by Thomas Heggen and Joshua Logan; with Henry Fonda, William Harrigan, Ralph Meeker and David Wayne.

1951

DARKNESS AT NOON 1/13/51 (186 perfs.) by Sidney Kingsley; with Claude Rains, Kim Hunter, Alexander Scourby and Lois Nettleton (moved to the Royale 3/26/51).

1951 (cont'd.)

A TREE GROWS IN BROOKLYN 4/19/51 (267 perfs.) by Betty Smith and George Abbott; with Shirley Booth, Johnny Johnston, Marcia Van Dyke and Nathaniel Frey.

A POINT OF NO RETURN 12/13/51 (364 perfs.) by Paul Osborn; with Henry Fonda, Leora Dana and Frank Conroy.

1952

TWO'S COMPANY 12/15/52 (91 perfs.) by Charles Sherman and Peter Devries; with Bette Davis, Tina Louise, Ellen Hanley, Hiram Sherman and David Burns.

1953

KIND SIR 11/4/53 (165 perfs.) by Norman Krasna; with Mary Martin, Charles Boyer, Margalo Gillmore, Dorothy Stickney, Frank Conroy and Robert Moss.

1954

THE GOLDEN APPLE 4/20/54 (173 total perfs.) by John Latouche; with Stephen Douglass, Kaye Ballard, Bibi Osterwald, Portia Nelson, Priscilla Gillette, Jerry Stiller and Jack Whiting. (First opened at the Phoenix 3/11/54.)

HOUSE OF FLOWERS 12/30/54 (165 perfs.) by Truman Capote; with Pearl Bailey, Diahann Carroll, Juanita Hall, Ray Walston, Geoffrey Holder, Ada Moore, Enid Moser and Frederick O'Neal.

1955

NO TIME FOR SERGEANTS 10/20/55 (796 perfs.) by Ira Levin; with Andy Griffith, Myron McCormick, Roddy McDowall, Don Knotts, Earle Hyman, Rex Everhart and Royal Beal.

1957

RUMPLE 11/6/57 (45 perfs.) by Irving Phillips; with Gretchen Wyler, Stephen Douglass, Eddie Foy, Jr., Barbara Perry and Elliott Gould.

1958

OH, CAPTAIN 2/4/58 (192 perfs.) by Al Morgan and Jose Ferrar; with Tony Randall, Jacquelyn McKeever, Susan Johnson and Abbe Lane.

JEROME ROBBINS' BALLETS: U.S.A. 9/4/58 (44 perfs.); with Maria Karlinova, Gene Gavin and Patricia Dunn.

1958 (cont'd.)

BELLS ARE RINGING 12/15/58 (925 total perfs.) by Betty Comden and Adolph Green; with Judy Holliday, Sydney Chaplin, Jean Stapleton, Buzz Miller, Dort Clar, Eddie Lawrence and George S. Irving. (First opened at the Sam S. Shubert on 11/29/56.)

1959

FIRST IMPRESSIONS 3/19/59 (92 perfs.) by Abe Burrows; with Hermione Gingold, Lauri Peters, Phyllis Newman, Polly Bergen, Donald Madden and Farley Granger.

THE GIRLS AGAINST THE BOYS 11/2/59 (16 perfs.) by Arnold B. Horwitt; with Bert Lahr, Shelly Berman, Nancy Walker, Dick Van Dyke and Martin Charnin.

ONCE UPON A MATTRESS 11/25/59 (464 total perfs.) by Jay Thompson, Marshall Barer and Dean Fuller; with Harry Snow, Joe Bova, Jane White, Jack Gilford and Carol Burnett. (First opened at the Phoenix 5/11/59, then the Alvin, moved to the Winter Garden 2/24/60.)

1960

GREENWILLOW 3/8/60 (97 perfs.) by Frank Loesser and Lesser Samuels; with Pert Kelton, Anthony Perkins, Grover Dale, Margery Gray, Cecil Kellaway, Lee Cass and Ellen McCown.

WEST SIDE STORY 10/24/60 (249 total perfs.) by Arthur Laurents; lyrics by Stephen Sondheim; music by Leonard Bernstein; with Larry Kert, Carol Lawrence, Allyn Ann McLerie, Pat Birch and George Marcy. (First opened at the Winter Garden 4/27/60.)

WILDCAT 12/16/60 (171 perfs.) by N. Richard Nash; with Lucille Ball, Paula Stewart, Edith King, Clifford David, Swen Swenson and Keith Andes.

1961

IRMA LA DOUCE 10/30/61 (524 perfs.); with Elizabeth Seal, Clive Revill, Keith Michell, Stuart Damon, Fred Gwynne, George S. Irving and Elliott Gould. (Originally opened at the Plymouth Theater on 9/29/60.)

1962

GIANTS, SON OF GIANTS 1/6/62 (9 perfs.) by Joseph Kramm; with Nancy Kelly, Claude Dauphin and Harry Greshan.

NEW FACES OF 1962 2/1/62 (28 perfs.) by June Carroll, Arthur Siegel and Ronny Graham; with Patti Karr, Marian Mercer and Jim Corbett.

1962 (cont'd.)

A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE FORUM 5/8/62 (964 perfs.) by Burt Shevelove and Larry Gelbert; with Zero Mostel, David Burns, Ruth Kobart, Brian Davies, Jack Gilford, John Carradine and Presly Marker.

1964

HIGH SPIRITS 4/7/64 (357 perfs.) by Hugh Martin and Timothy Gray; with Beatrice Lillie, Tammy Grimes and Edward Woodward.

1965

MAURICE CHEVALIER AT 77 4/1/65 (32 perfs.); with Maurice Chevalier.

FLORA, THE RED MENACE 5/11/65 (87 perfs.) by George Abbott and Robert Russell; with Liza Minelli, Bob Dishy, Cathryn Damon, Joe E. Marks and Gordon Dilworth.

THE YEARLING 12/10/65 (3 perfs.) by Herbert Martin and Lore Noto; with David Wayne, Carmen Matthews and Carmen Alvarez.

1966

IT'S A BIRD, IT'S A PLANE, IT'S SUPERMAN! 3/29/66 (128 perfs.) by David Newman; with Linda Lavin, Jack Cassidy, Bob Holiday and Patricia Marand.

DINNER AT EIGHT 9/27/66 (127 perfs.) by Edna Ferber and George S. Kaufmann; with Robert Burr, Mindy Carson, Ruth Ford, Arlene Frances, June Havoc, Jeffrey Lynn, Darren McGavin, Walter Pidgeon, Pamela Tiffin and Blanche Yurka.

1967

SHERRY 3/28/67 (71 perfs.) by James Lipton; with Clive Revill, Dolores Grey, Elizabeth Allen, John Cypher, Janet Fox, Cliff Hall and Eddie Lawrence.

ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD 10/16/67 (420 perfs.) by Tom Stoppard; with John Wood, Brian Murray, Paul Hecht, Anne Meacham and Alexander Courtney (moved to the Eugene O'Neill 1/8/68).

1968

THE EDUCATION OF HYMAN KAPLAN 4/4/68 (28 perfs.) by Benjamin Bernard Zavon; with Tom Bosley, Hal Linden, Nathaniel Frey, Dick Latessa and Donna McKechnie.

THE GREAT WHITE HOPE 10/3/68 (556 perfs.) by Howard Sackler; with James Earl Jones, Jane Alexander, Maria Tucci, Martin Wolfson, George Mathews.

1970

COMPANY 4/26/70 (705 perfs.) by George Furth; lyrics and music by Stephen Sondheim; with Dean Jones, Elaine Stritch, Barbara Barrie, Charles Kimbrough, John Cunningham, Teri Ralston, Beth Holand and Donna McKechnie.

1972

PROMENADE, ALL 4/16/72 (49 perfs.) by David V. Robison; with Anne Jackson, Eli Wallach, Hume Cronyn and Richard Backus.

TRICKS 1/8/72 (8 perfs.) by Jon Jory; with Rene Auberjonois and Ernestine Jackson.

1973

MOLLY 11/1/73 (68 perfs.) by Louis Garfinkle and Leonard Adelson; with Kaye Ballard, Swen Swenson, Eddie Phillips, Justine Johnston, Lee Wallace, Eli Mintz and Lee Rochelle.

1974

THE FREEDOM OF THE CITY 2/17/74 (9 perfs.) by Brian Friel, with Lenny Baker, Kate Reid and Henderson Forsythe.

1975

SHENANDOAH 1/7/75 (1,050 perfs.) by James Lee Barrett, Peter Udell and Philip Rose; with John Cullum (moved to the Mark Hellinger 3/29/77).

1976

KINGS 9/27/76 (4 perfs.); with John Cullum and Emily Frankel.

1977

ANNIE 4/21/77 by Thomas Meehan; with Dorothy Loudon, Reid Shelton, Andrea McArdle and Sandy Faison.

1981

MERRILY WE ROLL ALONG 11/16/81 (16 perfs.) by George Furth; lyrics and music by Stephen Sondheim; with Jim Walton, Ann Morrison, Lonny Price, Terry Finn and Sally Klein.

THE LITTLE PRINCE AND THE AVIATOR

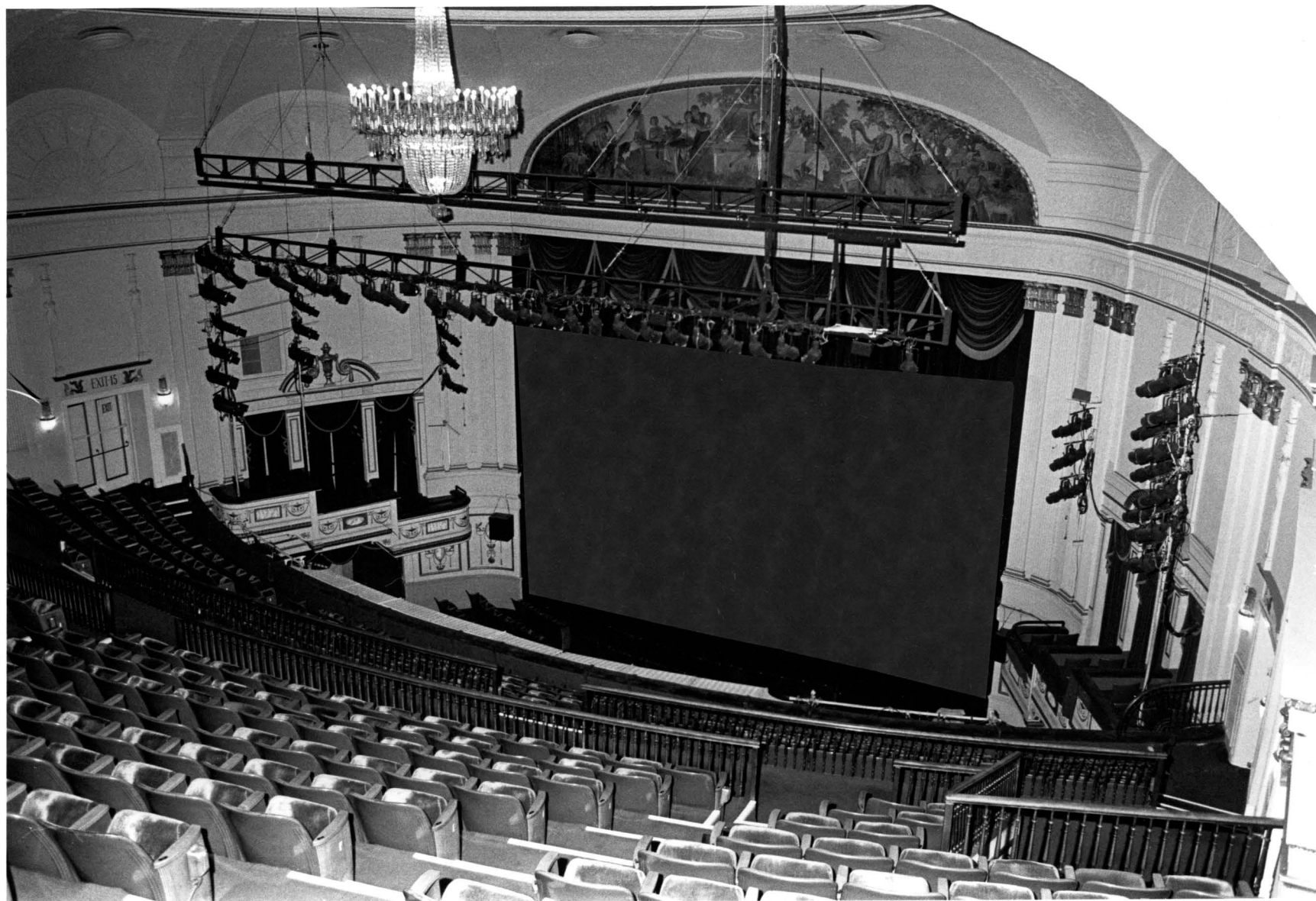
LITTLE JOHNNY JONES

DO BLACK PATENT LEATHER SHOES REALLY REFLECT UP? scheduled to open 5/27/82.

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Alvin Theater Interior
244-254 West 52nd Street
Manhattan

Built: 1927
Architect: Herbert Krapp

Photo: Forster, LPC



Alvin Theater Interior



Alvin Theater Interior

Photo: Forster, LPC



Alvin Theater Interior
Mezzanine Lounge



Alvin Theater Interior
Outer Lobby