

Landmarks Preservation Commission  
November 17, 1987; Designation List 196  
LP-1334

FORTY-SIXTH STREET THEATER (originally Chanin's Forty-Sixth Street Theater), first floor interior consisting of the auditorium, the stage, the staircases leading from the first floor to the balcony floor; 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; 226-236 West 46th Street, Manhattan. Built 1924; architect, Herbert J. Krapp.

Landmark Site: Tax Map Block 1017, Lot 48.

On June 14 and 15, 1982, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as an Interior Landmark of the Forty-Sixth Street Theater, first floor interior consisting of the outer lobby, the inner 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, the upper part of the stage-house; and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces, including but not limited to, wall, ceiling, and floor surfaces, doors, stair railings and attached decorative elements; and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 30). The hearing was continued to October 19, 1982. Both hearings had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Eighty-one witnesses spoke or had statements read into the record 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 Forty-Sixth Street Theater Interior survives today as one of the historic theater interiors that symbolize American theater for both New York and the nation. Built during the mid-1920s, the Forty-Sixth Street was among the half-dozen theaters constructed by the Chanin Organization, to the designs of Herbert J. Krapp, that typified the development of the Times Square/Broadway theater area.

Founded by Irwin S. Chanin, the Chanin organization was a major construction company in New York. During the 1920s, Chanin branched out into the building of theaters, and helped create much of the ambience of

the heart of the theater district. The Forty-Sixth Street Theater was the organization's first Broadway venture.

Herbert J. Krapp, who designed all the Chanins' theaters, 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.

As the Chanins' first Broadway theater, the Forty-Sixth Street incorporated a number of his ideas for the improvement of theater design, including a single entrance for all ticket-holders, and an interior designed in the "stadium" configuration. The auditorium is overlaid with the Adamesque ornament with which Krapp adorned so many of the Broadway theaters.

For half a century the Forty-Sixth Street Theater Interior has served as home to countless numbers of the plays through which the Broadway theater has come to personify American theater, with a special reputation for musical comedy hits. 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 after 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.<sup>1</sup>

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.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> By 1904 there were some 420 combination companies touring through thousands of theaters in cities and towns across the country.<sup>4</sup>

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.<sup>5</sup>

The theater district that began to move 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."<sup>6</sup> 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."<sup>7</sup> 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 just west of Eighth Avenue to Sixth Avenue, and from 39th Street to Columbus Circle.<sup>8</sup>

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.<sup>9</sup> 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.<sup>10</sup>

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### 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.<sup>11</sup>

The Forty-Sixth Street Theater Interior, as one of the Broadway theater interiors 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., 1973), 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.

## The Chanins

During the middle of the 1920s, the Chanin organization became the second major entrepreneurial builder of Broadway theaters, joining the Shuberts who had been established in the field for two decades. Unlike the Shuberts, however, the Chanins were builders rather than producers, and their six theaters represent a three-year chapter in a long and distinguished career in the building of New York.

The firm was founded by Irwin Salmon Chanin (b.1892), a native of Bensonhurst, Brooklyn. Soon after his birth the family returned to its native Ukraine, remaining there until 1907 when they moved back to Bensonhurst. Chanin graduated from Cooper Union in 1915 having studied engineering and architecture. His earliest employment was as an engineer working on subway construction in New York and Philadelphia. During World War I he participated in the construction of a poison gas factory for the U.S. Army. In 1919, upon leaving the army, Chanin began his building activities by constructing two houses in Bensonhurst. The success of this modest venture led to the construction of other one- and two-family houses in Bensonhurst as well as the formation of the Chanin Construction Company, in which he was joined by his brother Henry I. Chanin (1893-1973). The firm branched out into apartment buildings in Brooklyn, and erected an office building in downtown Brooklyn. Extending their activities to Manhattan in 1924, they constructed the Fur Center Building.<sup>1</sup> That same year the Chanins expanded into the theater business.

In a 1928 interview with Mary Mullett, Irwin Chanin recalled always having been interested in the theater. As a student at Cooper Union,

that was my one diversion. But I was so poor that all I could afford was an occasional fifty-cent seat in the top gallery. To reach this, I had to go to a separate door. I wasn't allowed to use the main entrance, and this always humiliated me.<sup>2</sup>

In 1924, with the Broadway theater industry booming, Chanin took the opportunity to enter the theater building field. He had no theater organization, but he had a number of friends in the theater and had secured the services of the Shuberts' theater architect, Herbert J. Krapp. Mindful of his early experience, Chanin resolved to develop a new type of plan in which "the girl from the five-and-ten and the richest aristocrat in town enter by the same door."<sup>3</sup> He envisioned an orchestra level with a steep slope towards the rear; the single entrance lobby would be below the slope of the rear orchestra. There would be one large balcony instead of the traditional two smaller ones, thus eliminating the distant second balcony. Krapp told Chanin that the Shuberts wouldn't like such a theater, but Chanin said he did not care what the Shuberts would like. He also insisted on wider seats, more space between rows, and more comfortable dressing rooms.<sup>4</sup>

Chanin's first theater was called Chanin's Forty-Sixth Street Theater (now the Forty-Sixty Street Theater),<sup>5</sup> and in it he and Krapp incorporated Chanin's novel interior arrangement.<sup>5</sup> It was a large theater, especially designed to accommodate musicals. The Forty-Sixth Street was followed by



the construction of the Biltmore and the Mansfield (now the Brooks Atkinson) in 1925. In 1926, Chanin undertook a major mixed-use multiple building project which doubled the number of his Broadway theaters and gave final form to what was to become the theater district's traditional heart. On the block bounded by West 45th and West 46th Streets, between Seventh and Eighth Avenues, the Shuberts had already built the paired Shubert and Booth Theaters behind the Astor Hotel, along the narrow lane which became known as "Shubert Alley" (1911-12), and the similar adjoining pair of the Broadhurst and Plymouth (1916-18). Chanin completed the redevelopment of the block by building the Majestic Theater on West 44th Street, the Theater Masque (today the John Golden) and the adjoining Royale Theater on 45th Street, and the Hotel Lincoln (now the Milford Plaza Hotel) along the Eighth Avenue frontage, all as one interconnecting development. By completing the block's complement of theaters, and by using Herbert J. Krapp, who had already designed the Plymouth and Broadhurst theaters for the Shuberts, Chanin contributed greatly to the cohesiveness of Shubert Alley.

In addition to their six legitimate Broadway playhouses, the Chanins also built three movie palaces, the Loew's Coney Island (1925), the fabulous 6,000-seat Roxy (1927; popularly known as the "Cathedral of the Motion Picture; demolished), and the Beacon Theater, on Broadway between 74th and 75th Streets (1927-28; a designated New York City Interior Landmark). The Beacon, like the Shubert Alley group, was also an unusual mixed-use development, incorporating a movie palace with a hotel.

Chanin's interest in the theater was such that when, in 1927-29, he built the Chanin Building (a designated New York City Landmark), the company's 56-story headquarters located at the corner of Lexington Avenue and East 42nd Street, he included within it a 192-seat theater on the 50th floor (the theater no longer exists). Yet, despite Chanin's interest in theaters, and his construction of some of the city's most notable examples, his company left the theater construction field barely four years after entering it. Chanin's last involvement with the New York theater world was in 1930, when, in exchange for his interest in the Theater Masque and the Royale and Majestic theaters, he acquired from the Shuberts the Century (formerly New) Theater on Central Park West at 62nd Street and replaced it with the twin-towered, Art Deco style Century Apartments.<sup>6</sup>

After leaving the field of Broadway theaters, Chanin's firm moved into the building of luxury apartment houses on Central Park West, including the Century (a designated New York City Landmark) and the Majestic. Extensive suburban building activity, such as Green Acres in Valley Stream, Long Island, occupied much of the firm's time during the 1930s and 1940s. During World War II the firm built 2000 pre-fabricated dwellings in Newport News, Virginia, five hangars at National Airport in Washington, D.C., the Naval Ordnance Laboratory in White Oak, Maryland, and five Navy powder magazine buildings in Indian Head, Maryland. The firm has also built numerous manufacturing buildings in the New York City area and the impressive Coney Island Pumping Station for the City of New York. By 1952, when Irwin S. Chanin was profiled in the National Cyclopaedia of American Biography, the Chanin Organization was composed of approximately 25 firms and corporations engaged in architecture, engineering, and construction, and in the ownership and operation of real estate.<sup>7</sup> Yet despite the relatively brief span of time spent by the firm in the construction of

Broadway theaters, its importance to Broadway's development was disproportionately great. In his Broadway theaters, all of which survive to date, Chanin championed a democratic approach to theater design, created theaters considered among the best today for theatrical performances, and helped complete the development of "Shubert Alley," the heart of the theater district.

(FD, ASD)

#### Notes

1. Landmarks Preservation Commission, Chanin Building Designation Report (LP-0993), November 14, 1978, report prepared by Marjorie Pearson, p. 1. Also, Diana Agrest, ed., A Romance with the City: Irwin S. Chanin (New York: Cooper Union Press, 1982), pp. 16-17.
2. Mary B. Mullett, "The Chanins of Broadway," American Magazine 106 (August 1928), 126.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. For the Chanin theaters see Agrest, pp.13, 22-45; The Chanin Theaters: A Renaissance in Theatre Craft (New York: Chanin Theatres Corporation, n.d.).
6. Interview with Irwin Chanin by Andrew Dolkart, June 26, 1985.
7. "Chanin, Irwin Salmon," National Cyclopedia of American Biography, vol. H, pp. 254-255. For the later projects see also Agrest, pp. 86-94.

#### 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),<sup>1</sup> fourteen of which are in active theatrical use, as well as five that have been demolished.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup>

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;<sup>5</sup> 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 style<sup>6</sup>, 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."<sup>7</sup> All three were constructed of yellow brick and adorned with areas of decorative terra-cotta pilasters, twisted columns, arches, parapets, and columned loggias.<sup>8</sup>

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.<sup>9</sup>

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.<sup>10</sup> 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 Forty-Sixth 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, Forty-Sixth 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, Billy Rose Theater Collection, Lincoln Center Branch, New York Public Library.
7. Royale Theater, Souvenir Program of the dedication, January 11, 1927, 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.

#### Chanin's Forty-Sixth Street Theater

Chanin's Forty-Sixth Street Theater, built in 1924,<sup>1</sup> was Irwin Chanin's first venture into the Broadway theater business, and he apparently saw it as an opportunity to put his notions about theaters into physical form. Acquiring a site on West 46th Street, between Broadway and Eighth Avenue, Chanin hired Herbert Krapp, whom he knew to have been the architect of the Shuberts' theaters.

Krapp and Chanin took special care in the design of the theater's exterior, which was given an elaborate "Renaissance" style brick and terra-cotta facade. That this was Chanin's first theater may explain the unusually elaborate treatment.

The interior of the theater received an equally notable treatment. Recently built theaters had generally been smaller than the large pre-War houses. The Forty-Sixth Street, however, according to the contemporary architectural press:

...with a seating capacity of 1,500...is a considerably larger theatre than has been employed in recent years for the production of musical comedies.<sup>2</sup>

Smaller theaters had come into vogue in prior decades because of the problems of sight-lines and acoustics of large houses, but the new "stadium" type was "an improvement" in these regards:

The stadium type is an improvement and its form of construction is also economical of lot space as it employs the lot area apparently to the maximum. In plan, the lobby is depressed so that the rear row of seats in the first floor are above the lobby. This increases the depth of the house and the auditorium seats are arranged on two slopes. For about half the depth the slope is gradual. The rear half has the seats arranged on a steep pitch with each row two steps higher than the one below, thus bringing the rear row of seats up to the level above the lobby where the orchestra foyer is placed. The pitch of the balcony is similar. The house is designed with two aisles with a cross aisle on either side, giving additional access to the front and centre rows of seats. The same scheme is employed in the balcony. As the balcony is designed on the cantilever principle, there are no columns interfering with the sight lines of the house.<sup>3</sup>

Krapp laid out the interior of the 46th Street in the stadium-type plan in a manner that Chanin believed would democratize theater seating. All seats were reached through the same lobby, whether in the front of the orchestra, the rear ("stadium"), or the balcony. The large auditorium was then overlaid with the handsome Adamesque-style plasterwork typical of almost all Krapp's Broadway theaters.

The Adamesque style takes its name from the brothers Robert and James Adam, 18th century British architects. Robert Adam (1728-1792), following English tradition, went to Italy to study the monuments of classical antiquity, but unlike his predecessors was attracted not to the great public monuments but rather to ancient domestic buildings. He took inspiration from these works to develop a highly ornamental and refined style of low-relief plasterwork with which he adorned a succession of English town and country houses.<sup>4</sup>

Adam's works were equally notable for their plans: the rooms in his houses were often circular, or oval, or rectangular with curved ends. A typical Adam room might be a long rectangular hall with a curved apse at one end, with walls articulated by shallow ornamental pilasters and bands of swags, and a ceiling covered with delicate plaster fan-light shaped tracery and murals of rustic scenes.<sup>5</sup>

Robert Adam became quite influential in his time, and his work was widely imitated, making the "Adamesque" something of a generic 18th century style. When English architecture crossed the Atlantic with the colonists in the 18th century, versions of the Adamesque became the style of Federal America. An early 20th-century revival of interest in the Georgian and Federal periods in this country brought with it a revival of the Adamesque for interior decor.

Several early Broadway theaters were designed in the neo-Georgian or neo-Federal styles (e.g. the Little Theater, 1912, and the Henry Miller Theater, 1917-18), and their red-brick Georgian exteriors were complemented by Adamesque plasterwork ornament in their interiors. In the 1920s, the style became very popular, and was used freely, particularly by theater

architects such as Herbert Krapp and Thomas Lamb, in theaters whose exteriors had nothing to do with the neo-Georgian.

The auditorium of Krapp's Forty-Sixth Street Theater is a handsome adaptation of the Adamesque to the needs of a theater. Like Adam's rooms, the auditorium is a rectangle with differently shaped ends, in this case with a proscenium arch at the front. The walls are lined with shallow pilasters and shell moldings forming arches, the double-level curved box fronts are decorated with wave moldings and friezes, while the technique of highly ornamental, low relief plasterwork has been used to produce a handsome ceiling.

Following the Forty-Sixth Street Theater, Krapp designed one more Adamesque-style interior for the Chanins, the Biltmore Theater, before turning, for the remaining four Chanin theaters, to a more eclectic "modern Spanish" style.

(AR)

#### Notes

1. New York City Department of Buildings, Manhattan, New Building Permit 171-24.
2. "Chanin 46th Street Theatre, New York City," Architecture and Building, 57 (May 1925), p. 42, pls. 105-106.
3. Ibid., p. 42.
4. This brief account of the work of Robert Adam is based on Margaret Whinney, "The Adam Style," in Home House: No. 20 Portman Square (Feltham, Middlesex: The Hamlyn Publishing Group Ltd, 1969), pp. 15-17.
5. See for instance the Back Parlour of Home House, 20 Portman Square, London, designed by Robert Adam and built about 1775.

#### The Forty-Sixth Street Theater as a Playhouse

The Forty-Sixth Street Theater has had a distinguished history of musical comedy productions. The theater opened on February 7, 1925, with Is Zat So?, a long-running comedy about boxing that moved here from the Thirty-ninth Street Theater.<sup>2</sup> One of its biggest hits came three years later with Good News, by Laurence Schwab and B.G. De Sylva, which ran for 551 performances. Opening in September 1927, it was called the "quintessential musical of the 1920s."<sup>3</sup> Walter Winchell welcomed the show as "flip, fast, furious, free and flamingly festive."<sup>4</sup> Hit songs from the show included "Varsity Drag" and "The Best Things In Life Are Free." It was followed in 1929 by Follow Thru, by the same authors, with Jack Haley and Eleanor Powell (401 performances). Described in its program as "a musical slice of country club life," the show included the hit songs



"Button Up Your Overcoat" and "My Lucky Star."<sup>5</sup> The Forty-Sixth Street Theater rounded out its 1920s roster of shows with Top Speed, starring Ginger Rogers.

The first hits of the 1930s at the Forty-Sixth Street Theater were Sweet and Low with Fanny Brice and George Jessel (opened November 17, 1930; 184 performances) and You Said It with Lou Holtz (opened January 19, 1931; 190 performances).<sup>6</sup> She Loves Me Not, by Howard Lindsay, opened on November 20, 1933, and played 367 performances, with John Beal, Burgess Meredith and Polly Walters. The following year, Henry Fonda starred in The Farmer Takes a Wife. After a number of short runs during the later 1930s, Ole Olson and Chic Johnson's Hellzapoppin, one of Broadway's most successful reviews, opened at the Forty-Sixth Street Theater in September of 1938, and played a total of 1,404 performances. It moved on to another theater later in 1938, and in 1939 Cole Porter's Du Barry Was A Lady opened at the Forty-Sixth Street; starring Ethel Merman and Bert Lahr, it played 408 performances.

The 1940s at the Forty-Sixth Street Theater opened with another Cole Porter show, Panama Hattie, with Ethel Merman, which played 501 performances. Described as "a brash brassy musical," it was also "the first book musical since the Depression to run more than 500 performances."<sup>7</sup> Another hit of that decade, Finian's Rainbow, ran 725 performances. One Touch of Venus opened in January 1944, product of an extraordinary collaboration: book by S.J. Perelman and Ogden Nash, lyrics by Nash, and music by Kurt Weill. It was considered among the "most literate and witty of American musicals,"<sup>8</sup> and ran for 567 performances. In 1948, the unusual collaboration of Allen Jay Lerner and Kurt Weill produced Love Life, starring Nanette Fabray.

On November 24, 1950, Abe Burrows and Jo Swerling's Guys and Dolls opened at the Forty-Sixth Street. Based on a story by Damon Runyon, and directed by George S. Kaufman, the musical about Broadway life went on to play 1,194 performances, and won the New York Drama Critic's Circle Award and six Tony awards. Jean Giraudoux's Ondine opened in 1954, directed by Alfred Lunt and starring Audrey Hepburn, both of whom, along with the set designer, won Tony Awards. Damn Yankees starring Gwen Verdon and Ray Walston, opened in 1955, and played over a thousand performances. Gwen Verdon also starred in New Girl in Town, which opened in 1957 and played 431 performances.

The 1960s saw a continuation of major musicals at the Forty-Sixth Street Theater. Frank Loesser's Pulitzer Prize-winning How To Succeed in Business Without Really Trying opened in 1961, played over 1400 performances, and won Tony Awards for Robert Morse and Rudy Vallee. In 1965, the Richard Rodgers/Stephen Sondheim musical, Do I Hear a Waltz? opened; 1966 saw the opening of I Do! I Do!, with Robert Preston and Mary Martin; it played 540 performances. The Tony-Award winning musical 1776, which opened in 1969, starring William Daniels, Howard Da Silva and Ken Howard, ran for 1217 performances.

In 1971, a revival of the 1925 hit, No, No, Nanette brought Ruby Keeler back to Broadway to star in her biggest smash, running 855 performances. Clare Booth Luce's The Women played the Forty-Sixth Street in 1973, followed by Raisin, a musical version of Lorraine Hansberry's

Raisin in the Sun that played 847 performances. It was followed by a revival of Noel Coward's Private Lives in 1975, and then Bob Fosse's Chicago, with Jerry Ohrbach, Gwen Verdon and Chita Rivera, which played 898 performances. Working, based on Stud Terkel's book, opened in 1978 with Susan Bigelow and Patti Lu Pone, but lasted only 25 performances. It was followed, however, by The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas, which moved from an off-Broadway house for a long run at the Forty-Sixth Street. Nine, starring Raul Julia, opened at the Forty-Sixth Street theater in May 1982, running until 1984.

(KP, PD)

### Notes

1. This production history of the Forty-Sixth Street 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 George Freedley, "Broadway Playhouses," bound typescript of the "Stage Today," 1941-43, Billy Rose Theater Collection, Lincoln Center Branch, New York Public Library; The Best Plays of...[annual] (New York: Dodd Mead and Co., 1899-present); Theatre World [annual] Daniel Blum, editor (New York: Theatre World, 1946-present); The Biographical Encyclopedia & Who's Who of the American Theater, Walter Rigdon, editor (New York: James H. Heinman, Inc., 1966); Edwin Bronner, The Encyclopedia of American Theater, 1900-1975 (New York: A.S. Barnes & Co., Inc., 1980); Gerald Bordman, Oxford Companion to American Theatre (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).
2. "Chanin's Forty-Sixth Street Theatre Opens," New York Times, February 8, 1925, sec. 1, p. 26.
3. "Good News," Boardman, Oxford Companion.
4. Quoted in "Good News," Boardman, Oxford Companion.
5. "Follow Thru," Oxford Companion.
6. Best Plays of the Year 1930-31, p. 481.
7. "Panama Hattie," Boardman, Oxford Companion.
8. "One Touch of Venus," Boardman, Oxford Companion.

## Description<sup>1</sup>

### Auditorium:

1) Configuration: The configuration of the auditorium consists of a large deep space with a single balcony with a cross-over aisle, an orchestra arranged on a "stadium" plan with a partial cross-over aisle, a proscenium flanked by boxes, a sounding board, an orchestra pit in front of the stage, orchestra and balcony promenades, a ceiling, a stage opening behind the proscenium arch, and the steeply raked floor extending towards the proscenium arch.

Orchestra: The orchestra is arranged on a "stadium" plan, in which the rear portion of the orchestra rises up over the theater's lobby. The "stadium" or rear, upper, portion is separated from the lower, front portion by side entry doors, a partial cross-over aisle, and a decorative railing, now partially concealed (see below, under fixtures).

Proscenium: The proscenium has an elliptical arch.

Sounding board: The sounding board is curved and rises from the proscenium.

Balcony: There is a large, deep single balcony with a cross-over aisle.

Boxes: The boxes have curved fronts.

Staircases: At the center rear of the orchestra level a double staircase leads up to the balcony level promenade.

Ceiling: The ceiling is subdivided into recessed panels and is dominated by a shallow center dome.

Floor: The floor is steeply raked.

Stage: The stage extends behind the proscenium arch and forms a stage picture (visible from the audience) framed by the proscenium arch.<sup>2</sup>

Orchestra Pit: The orchestra pit is placed in front of and below the level of the stage.

Promenades: There are promenades at the rear of the orchestra and the balcony.

### 2) Ornament:

The decorative ornament is low-relief plasterwork, which is integrated into the surfaces which define the configuration of the auditorium. Decorative ornament considered to be a significant architectural feature includes the following:<sup>3</sup>

Proscenium arch: The arch is outlined by a rounded molding adorned with a spiral leaf pattern and surmounted by a central cartouche.

Sounding board: The sounding board is set off from the main portion of the ceiling and from the proscenium arch by two decorated elliptically-arched ribs.

Boxes: The two tiers of boxes at each side of the proscenium are framed by a segmental arch. The arch is surmounted by a swag-adorned medallion. The curved box fronts, two on each level, are decorated with wave moldings and foliate friezes.

Balcony: The balcony front is a continuation of the moldings and frieze seen on the box fronts.

Other decorative ornament, not considered to be a significant architectural feature, includes the following:

Orchestra: The entry side doors of the auditorium at orchestra level are set in panels. The side and rear walls of the auditorium at orchestra level are paneled plasterwork. Exit doors placed in panels are on the side walls of the balcony level. These walls are further defined by very shallow pilasters and shell moldings forming arches.

Orchestra promenade: The rear wall is paneled plasterwork; the ceiling is outlined by decorative bands.

Boxes: The underside of each box is outlined by a molding and contains a light fixture.

Balcony: The soffit of the balcony has plasterwork panels and decorative bands in low relief.

Balcony promenade: The walls of the balcony promenade are paneled plasterwork.

Ceiling: The shallow center dome of the ceiling is outlined by a decorative band. The panels into which the dome is divided also are outlined by decorative bands. Low-relief medallions and perforated grilles are set in the panels flanking the dome. A chandelier (see below, under fixtures) is suspended from a plasterwork centerpiece in the ceiling.

Sounding board: The sounding board has latticework panel and low relief ornament.

### 3) Attached fixtures:

Orchestra: The two levels of the orchestra (the upper level being the "stadium") are separated by decorative wrought-iron railings, now partially obscured, extending the length of the partial cross-over aisle.

Staircases: The stairway openings at the balcony level promenade, to which a double staircase leads from the center rear orchestra, are surrounded by decorative wrought-iron railings.

Light fixtures: A chandelier is suspended from the plasterwork centerpiece in the ceiling.

4) Known alterations: Air conditioning vents have been placed on the underside of the balcony and in the ceiling. A light rail has been placed on the balcony front. A modern technical booth has been installed at the rear of the balcony. Padded modern railings have been installed in front of the decorative wrought-iron railings by the partial cross-over aisles. The light fixtures are not original. The current paint scheme tends to obscure the effect of the ornament.

(MP)

Notes

1. This description identifies the spaces that are included in this designation. Specific elements are listed and architecturally significant features are underlined as explained in the "Guidelines for Treatment of Theater Interiors" as adopted by the Landmarks Preservation Commission on December 10, 1985.
2. For the purposes of this description, the stage shall include the enclosing walls and roof of the stage house and a floor area behind the proscenium arch, but not any fixture or feature of or within that space.
3. As above, in Note 1.

Conclusion

The Forty-Sixth Street 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 group of theaters constructed for the Chanin Organization during the 1920s, it helped shape the character of the Broadway theater district. Designed for the Chanins by Herbert J. Krapp, the most prolific architect of the Broadway theater district, the Forty-Sixth Street represents a typical and important aspect of the nation's theatrical history. Its interior design reflects Irwin Chanin's concern with theater design, as reflected in the novel "stadium" plan, and is a fine example of the elegant Adamesque style with which Herbert Krapp adorned the Broadway theaters he designed.

For half a century the Forty-Sixth Street Theater Interior has served as home to countless numbers of the plays through which the Broadway theater has come to personify American theater, particularly musical comedy hits for which it has become famous. 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), Felicia Dryden (FD), Karen Patteson (KP), and Peter Donhauser (PD). Gale Harris of the Research Department supplemented the research, verified the citations and sources, and provided editorial assistance. Marjorie Pearson (MP), Director of Research, wrote the description. Research Department staff who contributed to the report include Marion Cleaver, Virginia Kurshan, Susan Strauss, 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 Interior, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Forty-Sixth Street Theater, first floor interior consisting of the auditorium, the stage, the staircases leading from the first floor to the balcony floor; 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 Forty-Sixth Street Theater Interior survives today as one of the historic theater interiors that symbolize American theater for both New York and the nation; that, built in 1924, it was among the group of theaters constructed for the Chanin organization during the 1920s which helped shape the character of the Broadway theater district; that it was designed for the Chanins by Herbert J. Krapp, the most prolific architect of the Broadway theater district; that as a Chanin theater designed by Herbert Krapp it represents a typical and important aspect of the nation's theatrical history; that its design in the "stadium" plan was an innovation that reflected Irwin Chanin's concern for the democratization of the theater-going experience; that it is a fine example of the Adamesque design with which Herbert Krapp adorned so many of the Broadway theaters; that its significant architectural features include its domed ceiling, and the Adamesque plasterwork on its proscenium arch, boxes, balcony front, and sounding board arch; that for half a century the Forty-Sixth Street 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 Forty-Sixth Street Theater, first floor interior consisting of the auditorium, the stage, the staircases leading from the first floor to the balcony floor; 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; 226-236 West 46th Street, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 1017, Lot 48, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.

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## APPENDIX

The following production history of the Forty-Sixth Street 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 Gale Harris and Susan Strauss of the Research Department staff against George Freedley, "Broadway Playhouses," bound typescript of the "Stage Today," 1941-43, Billy Rose Theater Collection, Lincoln Center Branch, New York Public Library; The Best Plays of.... annual] (New York: Dodd Mead and Co., 1899-present); Theatre World [annual] Daniel Blum, editor (New York: Theatre World, 1946-present), The Biographical Encyclopedia & Who's Who of the American Theater, Walter Rigdon, editor (New York: James H. Heinman, Inc., 1966); Play Statistics File, Billy Rose Theater Collection, Lincoln Center Branch, New York Public Library; Programmes, Billy Rose Theater Collection, Lincoln Center Branch, New York Public Library.

### 1925

IS ZAT SO? 2/7/25 (634 total perfs.) by James Gleason and Richard Taber; with James Gregson, Marie Chamber, Richard Taber and Victor Morley. (First opened at the 39th Street Theater 1/5/25.)

GREENWICH VILLAGE FOLLIES 12/24/25 (180 perfs.) lyrics and music by Harold Levey and Owen Murray; with Florence Moore, Frank McIntyre and Irene Delroy.

### 1926

IS ZAT SO? 3/15/26. Run resumes.

MY COUNTRY 8/9/26 (48 perfs.) by William J. Perlman; with Fredrick Burton, Marguerite Mosier and Roy R. Bucklee.

THE SHANGHAI GESTURE 9/6/26 (210 total perfs.) by John Colton; with Florence Reed and Mary Duncan. (First opened at the Martin Beck Theater.)

MOZART 12/27/26 (40 perfs.) by Sacha Guitry; with Yvonne Printemps.

### 1927

THE SPIDER 3/22/27 (100 perfs.) by Fulton Oursler & Lowell Brentano with John Halliday and Roy Hargrave.

BABYMINE 6/9/27 (12 perfs.) by Margaret Mayo; with Humphrey Bogart.

GOOD NEWS 9/6/27 (551 perfs.) by Laurence Schwab and B.G. DeSylva; with Mary Lawlor, Inez Courtney and John Price Jones and Zelma O'Neal.

1929

FOLLOW THRU 1/9/29 (401 perfs.) by Laurence Schwab and B.G. DeSylva; with Don Tomkins, Irene Delroy, Zelma O'Neal, Eleanor Powell and Jack Haley.

TOP SPEED 12/25/29 (104 total perfs.) by Guy Bolton, Bert Kalmar and Harry Ruby; with Irene Delroy and Ginger Rogers. (Moved to the Royale 3/10/30).

1930

WHO CARES 7/8/30 (30 perfs.) by Edward Clarke Lilley, Bertrand Robinson, Kenneth Webb and John Cantwell; with Peggy O'Neill, John Cherry, Maragaret Dale, Percy Helton and Florenz Ames.

SWEET AND LOW 11/17/30 (184 perfs.) by David Freedman, music by Billy Rose; with George Jessel, James Barton, Arthur Treacher and Fannie Brice.

1931

YOU SAID IT 1/19/31 (190 perfs.) by Jack Yellen and Sid Silvers, music by Harold Arlen, lyrics by Jack Yellin; with Benny Baker, Lou Holtz, Mary Lawlor, and Lyda Roberti.

HERE GOES THE BRIDE 11/3/31 (7 perfs.) by Peter Arno; with Grace Brinkley, Paul Frawley, Victoria Cummings, Bobby Clark and Paul McCullough.

1932

MARCHING BY 3/3/32 (12 perfs.) by Ernest Neubach.

HAPPY LANDING 3/26/32 (25 perfs.) by John B. Hymer and William E. Barry; with Russell Hardie and Margaret Sullavan.

1933

COUNSELLOR-AT-LAW 5/15/33 (16 perfs.) by Elmer Rice; with Paul Muni.

SHE LOVES ME NOT 11/20/33 (367 perfs.) by Howard Lindsay from a novel by Edward Hope; with John Beal, Burgess Meredith and Polly Walters.

1934

THE FIRST LEGION 10/1/34 (112 perfs.) by Emmet Lavery; with Charles Coburn, Bert Lytell, John Litel, Harold Moulton, Whitford Kane and Frankie Thomas.

THE FARMER TAKES A WIFE 10/30/34 (104 perfs.) by Frank Elser and Marc Connelly from a novel by Walter Edmonds; with Henry Fonda,

June Walker, Ruth Gillmore and Margaret Hamilton.

1935

ANYTHING GOES 9/30/35 (415 total perfs.) by Guy Bolton and P.G. Wodehouse, lyrics and music by Cole Porter; with William Garton, Victor Moore and Bettina Hall. (First opened at the Alvin Theater 11/21/34.)

WEEP FOR VIRGINS 11/30/35 (9 perfs.) by Nellise Child; with Art Smith, Evelyn Varden, Ruth Nelson, Paula Miller and J.E. Bromberg, and John Garfield.

1936

A ROOM IN RED AND WHITE 1/18/36 (25 perfs.) by Roy Hargrave; Laura Adair & Thomas Schofield; with Joshua Logan, Leslie Adams, Chrystal Herne and Richard Kendrick.

COME ANGEL BAND 2/18/36 (2 perfs.) by Dudley Nichols and Stuart Anthony.

SO PROUDLY WE HAIL 9/22/36 (14 perfs.) by Joseph M. Viertel; with Eddie Bracken and Richard Cromwell.

PLUMES IN THE DUST 11/6/36 (11 perfs.) by Sophie Treadwell; with Henry Hull, Charles Kennedy and Mary Morris.

1937

BLOW YE WINDS 9/23/37 (36 perfs.) by Valentine Davis; with Henry Fonda and Doris Dalton.

ROBIN LANDING 11/18/37 (12 perfs.) by Stanley Young; with Louis Calhern.

1938

RIGHT THIS WAY 1/4/38 (14 perfs.) by Marianne Brown Waters; with Tamara and Guy Robertson.

CENSORED 2/26/38 (9 perfs.) by Conrad Seiler and Max Marcin; with Frank Lovejoy and Percy Kilbride.

HELLZAPOPPIN 9/22/38 (1,404 total perfs.) written by & starring Ole Olson and Chic Johnson. (Moved to the Majestic 11/25/41).

BLOSSOM TIME 12/26/38 (19 perfs.) by Dorothy Donnell from the original by A.M. Willner & H. Reichert.

1939

MEXICANA 4/21/39 (35 perfs.)

DU BARRY WAS A LADY 12/6/39 (408 perfs.) by B.G. DeSylva and Herbert Fields, lyrics and music by Cole Porter; with Burt Lahr, Ethel Merman, Ronald Graham and Benny Baker. (Moved to the Royale 10/19/40.)

1940

PANAMA HATTIE 10/30/40 (501 perfs.) by Herbert Fields and B.G. DeSylva, lyrics and music by Cole Porter; with Ethel Merman, Pat Harrington, Betty Hutton, James Dunn, Joan Carroll and Arthur Treacher.

1942

PRIORITIES OF 1942 3/12/42 (353 perfs.) by Clifford C. Fischer; with Willie Howard, Paul Draper, Phil Baker and Hazel Scott.

NEW PRIORITIES OF 1943 9/15/42 (54 perfs.) by Clifford C. Fischer; with Bert Wheeler, Henny Youngman and Carol Bruce.

BEAT THE BAND 10/14/42 (67 perfs.) by George Marion, Jr. and George Abbott; with Jerry Lester, Jack Whiting and Susan Miller.

1943

ARMY-PLAY-BY-PLAY 6/14/43 (1 perf.) by:  
PFC John B. O'Dea (WHERE E'ER WE GO)  
CPL. Kurt S. Kasznar (FIRST COUSINS)  
PFC Irving Gaynor Neiman (BUTTON YOUR LIP)  
Air Cadet Ralph Nelson (MAIL CALL)  
PFC Alfred D. Geto (PACK UP YOUR TROUBLES); with PVT Jules Munshin,  
PVT Alfred Ryder.

MY DEAR PUBLIC 9/9/43 (44 perfs.) by Irving Caesar and Chuno Gottesfeld, music by Sam Lerner and Gerald Marks, lyrics by Irving Caesar; with Dave Burns, Nanette Fabray, Ethel Shutta and Willie Howard.

1944

ONE TOUCH OF VENUS 1/24/44 (567 total perfs.) by S.J. Perelman & Ogden Nash, music by Kurt Weill, lyrics by Ogden Nash; with Mary Martin, John Boles and Kenny Baker. (First opened at the Imperial Theater 10/7/43.)

1945

DARK OF THE MOON 3/14/45 (318 perfs.) by Howard Richardson and William Berney; with Richard Hart, Carol Stone and Conrad Janis.

THE RED MILL 12/24/45 (531 total perfs.) by Henry Blossom; with Charles Collins, Odette Myrtil, Dorothy Stone and Eddie Foy, Jr. (First opened at the Ziegfeld Theater 10/16/45.)

1947

FINIAN'S RAINBOW 1/10/47 (725 perfs.) by E.Y. Harburg and Fred Saidy, music by Burton Lane, lyrics by E.Y. Harburg; with Ella Logan, David Wayne and Albert Sharpe.

1948

LOVE LIFE 10/7/48 (252 perfs.) book and lyrics by Alan Jay Lerner, music by Kurt Weill; with Nanette Fabray, Ray Middleton and Lyle Bettger.

1949

REGINA 10/31/49 (56 perfs.) written and composed by Marc Blitzstein, based on "The Little Foxes" by Lillian Hellman; with Priscilla Gillette, Jane Pickens, Brenda Lewis and Russell Nype.

1950

ARMS AND THE GIRL 2/2/50 (134 perfs.) by Herbert and Dorothy Fields and Rouben Mamoulian, lyrics by Dorothy Fields, music by Morton Gould; with Pearl Bailey, Nanette Fabray and John Conte.

GUYS AND DOLLS 11/24/50 (1,194 perfs.) by Abe Burrows and Jo Swerling, based on a story and characters by Damon Runyon, music and lyrics by Frank Loesser; with Robert Alda, Isabel Bigley, Vivian Blaine, Sam Levene, Stubby Kaye and Pat Rooney, Sr.

1954

ONDINE 2/18/54 (156 perfs.) by Jean Giraudoux; with Audrey Hepburn, Mel Ferrer, Marian Seldes, Edith King and Anne Meacham.

ON YOUR TOES 10/11/54 (64 perfs.) book by Richard Rodgers, Lorenz Hart and George Abbott, music by Richard Rodgers, lyrics by Lorenz Hart, choreography by George Balanchine; with Vera Zorina, Bobby Van, Jack Williams and Elaine Strich.

THE BAD SEED 12/8/54 (334 perfs.) by Maxwell Anderson; with Nancy Kelly, Patty McCormack and Henry Jones.

1955

DAMN YANKEES 5/5/55 (1,019 perfs.) by George Abbott and Douglass Wallop, music and lyrics by Richard Adler and Jerry Ross; with Gwen Verdon, Ray Walston, Stephen Douglass, Nathaniel Frey, Russ Brown, Shannon Bolin, Rae Allen and Eddie Phillips.

1957

NEW GIRL IN TOWN 5/14/57 (431 perfs.) by George Abbott, music and lyrics by Robert Merrill; with Gwen Verdon, Thelma Ritter, G.D. Wallace, Cameron Prud'homme, Eddie Phillips and Mark Dawson.

1958

HOWIE 9/17/58 (5 perfs.) by Phoebe Ephron; with Peggy Conklin, Leon Ames, Albert Salmi and Gene Saks.

EDWIN BOOTH 11/24/58 (24 perfs.) by Milton Geiger: with Lorne Greene, Jose Ferrer, Richard Waring and Lois Smith.

AGES OF MAN 12/28/58 (40 perfs.) based on George Rylands' Shakespeare Anthology; with Sir John Gielgud.

1959

REDHEAD 2/5/59 (453 perfs.) by Herbert and Dorothy Fields, Sidney Sheldon and David Shaw; with Gwen Verdon, Richard Kiley, Leonard Stone and Buzz Miller.

1960

CHRISTINE 4/28/60 (12 perfs.) book by Pearl S. Buck and Charles K. Peck, Jr.; with Nancy Andrews and Maureen O'Hara.

FINIAN'S RAINBOW 5/23/60 (15 perfs.) by E.Y. Harburg and Fred Saidy, lyrics by E.Y. Harburg, music by Burton Lane; with Jeannie Carson, Anita Alvarez, Carol Brice, Biff McGuire and Howard Morris. (First opened at the New York City Center 4/27/60.)

TENDERLOIN 10/17/60 (216 perfs.) by George Abbott and Jerome Weidman, based on a novel by Samuel Hopkins Adams, music by Jerry Bock, lyrics by Sheldon Harnick; with Ron Husmann, Lee Becker, Margary Gray, Wynne Miller, Rex Everhart, Eddie Phillips, Maurice Evans and Eileen Rogers.

1961

DONNYBROOK! 5/18/61 (68 perfs.) by Robert E. McEnroe, music and lyrics by Johnny Burke; with Bruce MacKay, Philip Bosco, Joan Fagan, Eddie Foy, and Art Lund.



HOW TO SUCCEED IN BUSINESS WITHOUT REALLY TRYING 10/14/61 (1,417 perfs.)  
by Abe Burrows, Jack Weinstock and Willie Gilbert, music and lyrics by  
Frank Loesser; with Robert Morse, Rudy Vallee, Charles Nelson Reilly,  
Bonnie Scott and Virginia Martin.

1965

DO I HEAR A WALTZ 3/18/65 (220 perfs.) by Arthur Laurents, music by Richard  
Rodgers, lyrics by Stephen Sondheim; with Elizabeth Allen, Sergio  
Franchi, Carol Bruce, Madeleine Sherwood, Stuart Damon, Julienne  
Marie, Jack Manning and Fleury D'Antonakis.

PICKWICK 10/4/65 (56 perfs.) by Wolf Mankowitz; with Harry Secombe, Roy  
Castle and Charlotte Rae.

1966

THE WAYWARD STORK 1/19/66 (5 perfs.) by Harry Tugend; with Bob Cummings,  
Lois Nettleton, Arlene Golonka and Art Lund.

POUSSE CAFE 3/18/66 (3 perfs.) by Jerome Weidman; with Theodore Bikel and  
Charles Durning.

I DO! I DO! 12/5/66 (540 perfs.) book and lyrics by Tom Jones based on THE  
FOURPOSTER by Jan de Hartog, music by Harvey Schmidt; with Robert  
Preston and Mary Martin.

1968

THE PRICE 11/18/68 (425 total perfs.) by Arthur Miller; with Pat Hingle,  
Kate Reid, Arthur Kennedy and Harold Gray. (First opened at the  
Morosco 2/7/68.)

1969

1776 3/16/69 (1,217 total perfs.) by Peter Stone, music and lyrics by  
Sherman Edwards; with Howard Da Silva, Ken Howard, William Daniels,  
Paul Hecht, Clifford David, Roy Poole, Virginia Vestoff and Ronald  
Holgate. (Moved to the Majestic 4/26/71).

1971

NO, NO NANETTE 1/19/71 (855 perfs.) book by Otto Harbach and Frank Mandel,  
music by Vincent Youmans, lyrics by Irving Caesar and Otto Harbach;  
with Patsy Kelly, Jack Gilford, Ruby Keeler, Helen Gallagher, Bobby  
Van and Susan Watson.

1973

THE WOMEN 4/25/73 (63 perfs.) by Clare Boothe Luce; with Kim Hunter, Rhonda Fleming, Dorothy Loudon, Myrna Loy, Alexis Smith, Jan Miner, Leora Dana, Polly Rowles and Mary Louise Wilson.

RAISIN 10/18/73 (847 total perfs.) by Robert Nemiroff and Charlotte Zaltzberg; with Virginia Capers, Ernestine Jackson, Helen Martin, Joe Morton, Deborah Allen and Ralph Carter. (Moved to the Lunt-Fontanne Theater 1/14/75.)

1975

PRIVATE LIVES 2/6/75 (92 perfs.) by Noel Coward; with Maggie Smith.

CHICAGO 6/1/75 (923 perfs.) by Fred Ebb and Bob Fosse; with Gwen Verdon, Chita Rivera, Jerry Orbach, Barney Martin and Mary McCarty.

1977

BULLY 11/1/77 (8 perfs.) by Jerome Alden; with James Whitmore.

1978

DO YOU TURN SOMERSAULTS? 1/9/78 (16 perfs.) by Aleksei Arbuzov; with Mary Martin and Anthony Quayle.

WORKING 5/14/78 (25 perfs.) by Stephen Schwartz based on a book by Studs Turkel; with Susan Bigelow, Steven Boockvor, Rex Everhart, Arny Freeman, Bob Lewis and Patti LuPone.

THE BEST LITTLE WHOREHOUSE IN TEXAS 6/19/78 (1,584 perfs. at the 46th Street Theater) by Larry L. King and Peter Masterson, music and lyrics by Carol Hall; with Pamela Blair, Delores Hall and Henderson Forsythe and Carlin Glynn. (First opened at the Entermedia Theater 4/17/78.)

1982

NINE 5/9/82 (739 perfs.) by Arthur Kopit adapted by Mario Fritti, music and lyrics by Mawry Yeston; with Raul Julia, Taina Elg, Karen Akers, Shelly Burch, Liliane Montevecchi, Anita Morris, Stephanie Cotsirilos, Kate Dezina, Kathi Moss and Camille Saviola.



Forty-sixth Street Theater Interior  
226-236 West 46th Street  
Manhattan

Built: 1924-25  
Architect: Herbert J. Krapp



Forty-sixth Street Theater Interior

Photo: Forster, LPC