

Landmarks Preservation Commission  
November 17, 1987; Designation List 196  
LP-1347

LITTLE THEATER (now Helen Hayes Theater), first floor interior consisting of the inner lobby, 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; 238-244 West 44th Street, Borough of Manhattan. Built 1912; architects, Ingalls & Hoffman; remodeled 1917-20, architect Herbert J. Krapp.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1015, Lot 51.

On June 14 and 15, 1982, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as an Interior Landmark of the Little Theater first floor interior consisting of 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. 43). The hearing was continued to October 19, 1982. Both hearings had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Eighty 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 building of the Little Theater marked a new direction in the history of the Broadway stage, and in the design of Broadway theaters. Designed by Ingalls & Hoffman and built in 1912, the Little Theater's neo-Colonial styling lent an air of charm and mild eccentricity to a Broadway then accustomed to a more formal Classical or Beaux-Arts design. Commissioned by Winthrop Ames, an independently wealthy producer with an architectural background and unusual ideas about drama, the Little Theater was designed to house the new, detailed type of drama called "intimate theater."

Ames had observed and listened to intimate drama in the United States and particularly in Europe where he traveled extensively; he had seen the architectural prototypes, such as London's Little Theater and Berlin's Chamber Theater, for what he envisioned would be his own Broadway showcase

for this alternative theater. "The purpose," he stated referring to his new house, "is the production of plays which can be rendered by the most delicate shade of expression."<sup>1</sup>

Drawing on European models, Ames and his architects created an auditorium with no boxes or balcony, and an unobtrusive proscenium, adorned with paneled walls, tapestries, and Adamesque style plaster ornament. The resulting interior was thoroughly suggestive of an elegant drawing room, which Ames considered an appropriate atmosphere for his intimate dramas. In fact, the Little Theater seated only 299 when it opened on March 11, 1912.

The theater was unable to succeed financially. Five years after its opening the Little's auditorium had to be enlarged. A new balcony almost doubled its seating capacity. The alterations, designed for Winthrop Ames by Herbert J. Krapp, soon to be known as Broadway's most prolific architect, triggered provisions in the building code that required redecoration of the theater's walls in fire-proof materials. The basic configuration of the theater, however, and the elegant ornamental Adamesque ceiling, remained intact. Krapp's new design for the walls of the auditorium matched the design of the surviving original ceiling, and blended sensitively with the rest. Despite these alterations, and the increased capacity, today the Little Theater is still the "littlest" theater on Broadway.

As one of the theaters in the Broadway theater district, the Little Theater has participated for three-quarters of a century in the history of both Broadway and the American theater. As one of the pre-World War I theater buildings, it is among the oldest group of theaters surviving in New York. As a manifestation of the theatrical and architectural theories of Winthrop Ames, its interior represents a special aspect of the nation's theatrical history. This interior, based on intimacy of scale and European innovations in form, remains, despite early alterations, an unusual and special design. The Little Theater Interior survives today as one of the historic Broadway theater interiors that symbolize American theater for both New York and the nation.

(PD)

#### Notes

1. Melvin Maddocks, "Mr. Ames' Revolving Stage," Christian Science Monitor, October 16, 1963.

#### 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.<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 1878, with the opening of Grand Central Terminal 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 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."<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 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 Little Theater Interior, 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.

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#### 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, The City and the Theatre, p. 263.
8. Henderson, pp. 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 to Eighth Avenue," West 42nd Street: "The Bright Light Zone" (New York: Graduate School and University Center, CUNY, 1978), p. 62.

### Winthrop Ames

Although Winthrop Ames (1871-1937) would become one of Broadway's most prominent producers and an important force in the development of the American theater, he did not formally begin his theatrical career until the age of 34.<sup>1</sup> As a drama major at Harvard University, Ames had fallen in love with the amateur theater and written a show entitled Proserpina for the notorious Hasty Pudding Ensemble. His wealthy, socially prominent North Easton, Massachusetts family, however, strongly advised him against pursuing his theatrical interest, and instead urged him to follow the family tradition and join the Ames Shovel & Tool Company. Ames had also studied architecture at Harvard, so as a compromise, the young Ames worked with the Boston firm of Bates & Guild, publishers of art and architecture books and the periodical The Architectural Review.

Despite his family's concerns, Ames's passion for the theater was relentless. After six years of publishing and following a lengthy sojourn in Europe where he immersed himself in studying the continental stage, Winthrop Ames associated himself with Loren F. Deland in 1904 to manage Boston's Castle Square Theater. Together they produced a wide range of shows including musicals, classical and modern drama, light opera, and farces.

In 1907, Ames toured Europe once again with the intention of learning about all the technical intricacies of modern theater design, new acting techniques, and the many original approaches being made in the art of play writing. While traveling, he maintained an extensive--and today, invaluable--journal with drawings and descriptions detailing everything from new lighting innovations to the complexities of proper house management and stage mechanics. With this knowledge, Ames felt he could build his own theater in Boston and start a repertory company modeled after the finest ones in Europe.

Indeed, soon after his return from Europe, Ames's ambitious plans and the previous successes of the Castle Square Theater attracted the attention of a group of New York millionaires who decided that their city, and not

Boston, should be the proper home of a national performance company. In 1908 Ames accepted the directorship of the New Theater to carry out what he had originally intended for Boston: to give America a repertory company patterned after the subsidized state theaters of Germany and Austria, and the Comedie Francaise in Paris. Unfortunately, the whole plan proved to be too expensive and the New Theater, a large, elaborately designed building designed by Carrere & Hastings at the corner of Central Park West and 62nd Street, was closed in 1912.<sup>2</sup>

Ames's experience with the New Theater apparently convinced him that large theaters were problematic; the two theaters he built for his own productions over the next two years were small, intimate houses. In 1912, Ames built the Little Theater, financing most of its construction with his inheritance from the Ames Shovel & Tool Company. Like the New Theater, the Little Theater represented an experiment in the dramatic arts based on European precedents; this time, however, Ames wanted to present small productions that would not ordinarily have been suitable for the larger Broadway houses. The Little Theater originally seated only 299 playgoers, and its success was said to have been "one of the chief stimulants of the little-theater movement that was to flourish in other cities."<sup>3</sup>

In 1912-13 Ames built the Booth Theater at 222 West 45th Street in association with Lee Shubert. The Booth was built as one of a pair with the Shubert Theater, creating "Shubert Alley" at the rear of the Astor Hotel. The larger Shubert Theater was intended as a memorial to Sam S. Shubert, but the Booth was designed to Ames's specifications as a small, intimate house.

Ames's own architectural background, both in architectural studies at Harvard and in architectural publishing, enabled him to contribute to the design of his theaters. In his European travel journal his meticulous notes extended to architectural innovations in the theaters he visited.<sup>4</sup> He was impressed by the proportions of the proscenium at the Neues Schauspielhaus in Munich. Also in Germany he noted the development of auditoriums with no boxes, steeply raked floors, and curved seating lines. At the Gewandhaus concert hall in Leipzig he found wood paneling being used for its acoustical properties. He later brought wood paneling to both the Booth and the Little, and at the Little did away with boxes.

Always intent on presenting quality to his audiences at both the Little and the Booth, Ames produced, and occasionally directed, plays by such writers as Maeterlinck, Ibsen, Bernard Shaw, A.A. Milne, Arthur Pinero, George S. Kaufman and Edna Ferber. He also sponsored a \$10,000 prize for the best play by an American author in 1913. The winning entry was submitted by Alice Brown, a little-known playwright, and the play, entitled Children of the Earth, opened at the Booth in 1915.

During World War I, Ames was asked by military authorities to provide entertainment for American and Allied troops. After surveying the situation, he organized the "Over There League" which sent some three hundred actors and vaudeville performers to France.<sup>5</sup> Beginning in 1925, Ames also revived a series of Gilbert & Sullivan operettas including Iolanthe, The Pirates of Penzance and The Mikado. Despite predictions of failure in theater circles and among critics, each revival turned out to be a smashing success with the public. Two years later, what the New York



Herald Tribune called "one of Mr. Ames' most important contributions to the theater"<sup>6</sup> came when a series of shows regarded as obscene threatened the stage with censorship. Ames led a committee of producers in an effort to stop the proliferation of such shows, and generally cleaned up the stage. Ames also wrote one play during his professional career, for children, entitled Snow White.

Ames retired in 1929. Although much of his time was devoted to his country estate in Massachusetts, he continued writing, adapting a French play for a 1930 Broadway production with Edward G. Robinson, and publishing in 1935 "What Shall We Name the Baby?," a study of "a familiar family problem" handled with "scholarship and sympathy."<sup>7</sup>

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#### Notes

1. The following account of Winthrop Ames's career is based on obituaries from the New York Evening Post, November 3, 1937; New York Herald Tribune, November 4, 1937; and New York Times, November 4, 1937, p. 25; as well as various clippings from the Winthrop Ames Clipping File, in the Billy Rose Theater Collection, Lincoln Center Branch, New York Public Library.
2. Following its closing, the theater was taken over by the Shuberts and reopened as the Century Theater. The building was torn down in 1930 to make room for the Century Apartments which took their name from the former theater.
3. Winthrop Ames, obit., New York Herald Tribune.
4. John H. Jennings, "Winthrop Ames's Notes for the Perfect Theater" Educational Theatre Journal, March 1960, p. 11.
5. Winthrop Ames, obit., New York Times.
6. Winthrop Ames, obit., Herald Tribune.
7. Winthrop Ames, obit., New York Times.

#### Ingalls & Hoffman

The Little Theater commission provided the firm of Ingalls & Hoffman with its first widely publicized design, and a corresponding level of prominence which led to a number of important commissions.

Francis Burrall Hoffman, Jr. (1882-1980) and Harry Creighton Ingalls (1876-1936) both studied at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. Ingalls had previously been at M.I.T. Hoffman, born in New Orleans, graduated from Harvard in 1903, and from the Ecole in 1907.<sup>1</sup> Following his return to New York, Hoffman joined the prestigious firm of Carrere & Hastings, and worked on the design of the New Theater which Ames directed from 1909 until its closing. When, in 1910, Hoffman left Carrere & Hastings to form a

partnership with Ingalls, Ames approached him with the idea for a small theater. The producer was impressed with Hoffman's work, but also recognized that a newly formed firm would charge smaller fees and keep costs down for his first venture.

The success of the Little Theater led to further theater designs for the firm, including the Neighborhood Playhouse (now the Henry Street Settlement's Playhouse) at 466-470 Grand Street (1913), erected for the encouragement of drama among neighborhood people to a design very similar to the Little; Henry Miller's Theater (1917-18, in collaboration with Paul Allen) at 124-130 West 43rd Street; the Renaissance Casino and Theater (1921-22, Ingalls alone) at 2341-2357 Adam Clayton Powell Boulevard; and the Plaza Theater (1929, Ingalls alone), a small movie theater in the Tudor style at 42 East 58th Street.

Ingalls & Hoffman's most dramatic and famous commission came shortly after their completion of the Little Theater. John Deering, the co-founder of the International Harvester Company, had hired Paul Chatlin, an interior decorator, to help design a large villa near Miami that would house Deering's vast art collection. Chatlin, however, had little architectural training, and advised Deering to turn to the young Hoffman and his partner. The Villa Vizcaya, designed primarily by Hoffman, was a romantic composition based on Mediterranean motifs. Four distinct facades surrounding a central court each incorporated elements corresponding to the widely divergent periods and styles of art and architectural artifacts in Deering's collection. Upon its completion in 1916, the building, along with the architects and the client, attracted world-wide notice.<sup>2</sup>

Besides Villa Vizcaya and their theater commissions, both Ingalls and Hoffman, working independently, designed a number of residences. Their large estates and townhouses of the decade immediately following the Little Theater are particularly interesting for their style, the same sedate but elegant neo-Georgian that was so popular in that era for residential work but quite unusual for a theater. Both Ingalls and Hoffman designed Long Island estates<sup>3</sup>, and Hoffman did a number of New York townhouses; his neo-Georgian style house at 17 East 90th Street (1919) is a designated New York City Landmark. He also worked in Miami, after the success of Villa Vizcaya, and in Paris.

Ingalls died in 1936, but Hoffman lived until 1980. Among his last works was the 1966 addition to Gracie Mansion.

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#### Notes

1. Harry Creighton Ingalls, obituary, New York Times, July 12, 1936, sec. 2, p. 6; Francis B. Hoffman obituary, New York Times, November 28, 1980, sec. 2, p. 12.
2. An entire issue of the Architectural Review, was devoted to Vizcaya. See "Vizcaya the Villa and Grounds," Architectural Review 8 (July 1917), 120-167.

3. A striking house in Southampton by Hoffman is illustrated in The Brickbuilder, 23 (Feb 1914), plates 26-28.

### The Little Theater

Winthrop Ames built the Little Theater to house his productions of intimate drama, in the belief that such a Broadway showcase could be of great importance for the development of the dramatic arts in the United States. Ames's work at the Little Theater is regarded as pioneering, and greatly influenced the subsequent "Little Theater" movement.<sup>1</sup>

Ames had seen small theaters both in Europe and America that had proven to be financial as well as artistic successes. As methods in stage direction, scenery and theater design developed and became more refined, so too did the art of acting. Whereas acting had formerly been a presentative art relying on rhetorical skills and sweeping exaggerated gestures, towards the end of the 19th century it became a representative art more intent on imitating all the subtleties of real life and expression.<sup>2</sup>

Playwrights in turn reacted to the changing notions of theater, and theater designs then reinforced the trend toward intimacy. Gertrude Kingston's Little Theater in London and Max Reinhardt's Chamber Theater in Berlin were two of the most renowned "intimate" showcases in Europe, while Maxine Elliott's Theater at West 39th Street in New York City gained a reputation for presenting good quality alternate drama. A number of other small houses, many intended for amateur productions, existed in New York prior to Ames's Little Theater. The Shuberts, for example, had erected a series of "bijou playhouses" in the late 19th century, including the Comedy Theater on West 41st Street and the Princess Theater at 29th Street and Broadway.<sup>3</sup>

Making use of his independent wealth, Ames leased the land for his theater from the trustees of the John Jacob Astor estate.<sup>4</sup> The site, on the south side of 44th Street between Broadway and Eighth Avenue, was surrounded by brownstone-faced rowhouses. Ames then hired Ingalls & Hoffman to transform his theories into reality.

Working with Ingalls & Hoffman, Ames used his knowledge of European examples to create what was called by his contemporaries an experimental theater. The Little Theater was literally a small building, noticeable as such among the larger, more ornate theaters for which Broadway was famous. Its exterior gave little indication of its theatrical function, resembling instead a Colonial or Federal style house of the sort one would expect to find in New England (a location, incidentally, connected to Ames's origins, and a style which Ingalls and Hoffman used for their many residential commissions). Inside, borrowing from German models, Ames's auditorium had no balcony or boxes; theoretically, every seat was as good as another. He limited the seating capacity to 299, thus avoiding a Fire Department regulation requiring ten-foot alleys on either side of auditoriums seating 300 or more, as well as a considerable addition to his real estate investment.

The elegant neo-Georgian styling of the exterior was matched by an equally elegant Adamesque treatment in the handsome lobbies and lounges,

similar in style to Adamesque treatments in other Broadway theaters. The auditorium, however, while carrying through the Adamesque motifs in the elaborate plaster ceiling, was altogether different from other theaters, with elaborate paneled wainscoting halfway up the walls and elaborate tapestries above enframed by paired fluted Corinthian pilasters supporting an architrave. The paneling served both to provide the aesthetic suggestion of a drawing room and to create the acoustical effects that Ames had observed in the Gewandhaus concert hall in Leipzig.

The suggestion of an elegant house was not unintentional: it symbolized Ames's playing the host to a group of guests seated in a large drawing room, listening to intimate dramas, and taking tea and refreshments before and after in comfortable lounges, with fireplaces to warm those coming in from the cold. The theater was a reflection of Ames and of his idea of what theater might be. This idea was immediately understood by contemporary observers, one of whom wrote:

This is the house of Mr. Winthrop Ames; the patrons are his guests for the nonce, in an old colonial house behind a garden wall.... The auditorium is most unusual. It is as though a high and spacious room in a private house had been converted into a theater, by putting in an inclined floor and cutting a proscenium opening in the further wall.<sup>4</sup>

Other critics were also impressed with its scale and style:

It condenses in small space so much good architecture and well designed decoration as to make it one of the most, if not the most, successful artistically of the numerous playhouses that have recently been built in this city.<sup>5</sup>

Ironically, Ames's intention of creating an intimate theater where all seats had equally good sight lines and acoustics and cost the same was criticized in some quarters as elitist. Ticket prices of \$2.50 were relatively expensive for the times, prompting the remark that "his productions are set beyond the means of those all important members of the theater going public who can afford to pay only about \$1...."<sup>6</sup> The same critics characterized its architectural styling as aristocratic: "its chaste facade is suggestive of an old New England Green."<sup>7</sup> Aristocratic or not, however, the Little Theater embodied the special theatrical aspirations of Winthrop Ames, and expressed those aims in a distinctive, elegant and unusual architectural design.

The tiny theater was not, unfortunately, able to succeed financially, despite the high ticket prices. The theater was forced into debt as early as 1915,<sup>8</sup> and in 1917 Ames hired Herbert J. Krapp to design a balcony for the theater bringing its seating capacity to 500.<sup>9</sup> Formerly on the staff of the prominent theater specialists Herts & Tallant, Krapp had recently gone out on his own and designed the Broadhurst and Plymouth theaters for the Shubert organization. Over the next decade, he would become Broadway's most prolific theater designer. At the Little, Krapp left the elegant lobby and lounge spaces intact, and in the auditorium he retained the handsome Adamesque plaster ceiling. Unfortunately he was forced to remove Ingalls and Hoffman's elaborate wainscoting and tapestry wall covering since these combustible materials no longer met Building Department

standards for the theater's increased capacity. The walls were refinished with paneled plasterwork incorporating Adamesque motifs. Krapp's alterations, however, left the auditorium's configuration untouched with walls curving in towards the proscenium and a purposeful lack of boxes. His insertion of the balcony and his use of Adamesque detailing, matching the original ceiling, were so sensitively designed as to make difficult the detection that the new auditorium was the product of two separate designers.

(PD, AR)

#### Notes

1. "Winthrop Ames," obituary, New York Times, November 4, 1937, p. 25; William C. Young, Documents of American Theater History. Volume 2. Famous American Playhouses 1900-1971 (Chicago: American Library Association, 1973), p. 26.
2. "Seen on Stage," Vogue, June 1, 1921, p. 45.
3. "Little Theaters Past and Present," The Billboard, December 19, 1914, p. 35.
4. The Astore Estate is listed as owner in two alteration permits: New York City Department of Buildings, Manhattan, Alteration Permit 2273-1912, and 1215-1917.
5. "The Little Theater," American Architect, 10 (April 17, 1912), 176.
6. "Seen on Stage," p. 45.
7. Ibid.
8. "May Lose Little Theater," New York Times, March 11, 1915, p. 11.
9. Alteration Permit 1215-1917, filed May 11, 1917. Because of disputes with the Buildings Department, work did not proceed until June 1919, and was completed in January 1920.
10. Alteration Permit 1215-1917, Objections, November 20, 1917, item no. 7; Amendments, December 13, 1917.

#### The Little Theater as a Playhouse<sup>1</sup>

Ames's productions at the Little Theater were the intimate dramas for which the theater was built. It opened on March 11, 1912 with John Galsworthy's play The Pigeon, praised by critic Ward Morehouse "as a thoughtfully written comedy that brought forth human and delightful characterizations from Fran Reicher and Russ Whytel."<sup>2</sup> Other notable shows from the theater's early years, all produced by Ames, include Arthur Schnitzler's The Affairs of Anatol with John Barrymore (1912), Laurence



Housman and Granville Barker's Prunella with Marguerite Clark and Ernest Glendinning (1913), and George Bernard Shaw's The Philanderer with Mary Lawton and Charles Maude (1913). The last was rehearsed in England by Shaw and Granville Barker, then produced in America by Ames.

Cyril Harcourt's comedy A Pair of Silk Stockings was the theater's first real hit, playing 223 performances during the 1914/15 season. During the next few seasons, as it became apparent that even hits lost money at the Little because of its small size, the house often went dark. In 1919 Ames arranged to lease the house to Oliver Morosco, and in that year a long-contemplated balcony was added to the auditorium.

Morosco's first production at the Little was the farce Please Get Married, with Ernest Truex and Edith Taliaferro (160 performances). In his next two productions at the Little, Morosco attempted to continue the tradition of presenting new and experimental drama established by Ames. Mamma's Affair, by Rachel Barton Butler, was the work of a novice playwright that had been selected, in a competition sponsored by Morosco, as the most promising work by a former Harvard drama student. Its successor, Beyond the Horizon, was Eugene O'Neill's first full-length play. Starring Richard Bennett, it ran 111 performances and won a Pulitzer Prize.

Late in 1920, the producer John Golden took over the Little, opening with one of his greatest hits, The First Year, a comedy by Frank Craven that ran 725 performances. In 1923 Golden produced two comedies by Guy Bolton at the Little that were destined to become hits: Polly Preferred, starring Genevieve Tobin, and Chicken Feed, with Roberta Arnold, the latter dealing with the right of wives to share in their husbands' incomes. Wallace Ford and Nydia Westman starred in Pigs, a comedy about a speculator in pigs, that ran 347 performances in 1924/25. Marc Connelly's The Wisdom Tooth, with Thomas Mitchell, was a popular success in 1926, playing 160 performances. In 1929, the theater featured Rachel Crothers' comedy about divorce, Let Us Be Gay. Running 132 performances, this was Crothers' second hit at the Little, her A Little Journey having been produced by Winthrop Ames in 1918.

The New York Times bought the Little Theater in 1931, intending to demolish it to create room for the delivery trucks servicing the adjacent New York Times Building. The public outcry that arose, however, stopped the proposed demolition.

From 1931 to 1941, the Times operated the Little as a theater. The first hit of the period was Elmer Rice's The Left Bank which ran 241 performances. In 1936, the long-running Pre-Honeymoon was transferred from the Lyceum to the little, which was renamed Anne Nichol's Little Theatre in honor of one of the play's authors. Other productions from 1936-37 include Henry Bernstein's Promise, with Cedric Hardwicke in his American debut; Sun Kissed, with Charles Coburn and Jean Adair; and a revival of Nichols' hit, Abie's Irish Rose, with Marian Shockley and Richard Bond. In December 1937, Cornelia Otis Skinner appeared in her one-woman show, Edna His Wife, at which time the theater's name was changed back to the "Little Theater."

From 1941 to 1951 the Little remained dark, opening only occasionally for concerts and lectures sponsored by the Times. In 1951 the theater was leased to ABC-TV and served as a television studio until 1963, when it was

sold to a private corporation headed by Roger Euster. Tambourines of Glory by Langston Hughes, a gospel-type spectacle, reopened the Little that year. In 1954 Frank Gilroy's The Subject Was Roses, which won a Tony award, moved to the Little, and Baby Want a Kiss with Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward also enjoyed success.

In 1964 the Little was sold again and became the home of both the Merv Griffin and David Frost television shows. It returned to legitimate theater production in 1974, with the play My Sister, My Sister. Gemini opened at the Little in 1977 and ran 1819 performances, closing in 1981. The Tony-award winning musical Torch Song Trilogy opened in 1982. In July 1983, the Little was renamed the Helen Hayes Theater.

(PD, GH)

### Notes

1. This production history of the Little 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); Louis Botto, At This Theatre: An Informal History of New York's Legitimate Theatres (New York: Dodd Mead Co, 1984).
2. Quoted in Botto, p. 33.

### Description<sup>1</sup>

The Lobby:

The inner lobby of the Little Theater survives almost completely intact as originally designed by Ingalls & Hoffman.

1) Configuration: The configuration of the lobby comprises a primary space directly adjacent to the auditorium, and a secondary space down one step with four sets of exits.

Primary space: This is a barrel-vaulted rectangular space, one long side of which is a wall with entrances to the auditorium; the opposite side

is open, comprising Ionic columns supporting the architrave from which the vault springs. At the east end of the space is a paneled door leading to the ticket lobby. At the west end of the space is an archway through which one passes to reach the staircase leading to the basement lounge (this end of the lobby was originally closed off, with two doors flanking a central fireplace; although the archway is a later addition, it matches the style and character of the original design).

Secondary space: Down one step through this open area is a secondary space with four sets of exits; the ceiling of this space is composed of inset panels.

Staircases: At the east end of the secondary space is a staircase leading up to the balcony, while at the west end is another staircase leading up to the balcony.

2) Ornament: The detailing of both primary and secondary spaces is comprised of elegantly designed Adamesque style plasterwork. Detailing includes but is not limited to the following:

Primary space: The arches at the west end spring from pilasters, while the architrave running around the vaulted space is supported on the wall with entrances to the auditorium by Ionic pilasters corresponding to the Ionic columns opposite them. The architrave is adorned with a frieze of urns and swags. The chandelier (see below under fixtures) in the vault is suspended from an elaborate Adamesque ornamental relief.

Secondary space: The panels of the ceiling are intricately recessed and adorned with Adamesque reliefs. The architrave over the four entrance doors (which are not original) is adorned with similar reliefs.

3) Attached fixtures:

Staircases: The staircase at the east of the secondary space has an ornamental metal railing composed of lyres.

Lighting fixtures: The existing non-original chandelier in the primary space is stylistically compatible with space.

#### The Auditorium:

1) Configuration: The configuration of the auditorium consists of a small-scaled intimate space with a single balcony, a proscenium, a ceiling, a balcony promenade, a stage opening behind the proscenium arch, and the sloping floor extending towards the proscenium arch.

Proscenium: The proscenium is flat-arched.

Balcony: There is a single balcony. The balcony front continues in a curve onto the side walls to simulate the character of boxes.

Balcony Promenade: A promenade is located at the rear of the balcony.

Ceiling: The ceiling is flat.

Floor: The floor is 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>

## 2) Ornament:

The decorative ornament is low-relief plasterwork, which is integrated into the surfaces which define the configuration of the auditorium. Decorative ornament includes, but is not limited to, the following:

Proscenium arch: The proscenium is composed of two bands of reeds framing panels set at an angle.

Orchestra: One enters the auditorium through two sets of doors (see below under "fixtures") leading from the inner lobby. At first floor level the side walls are of paneled plasterwork, Herbert Krapp's replacement for the original wood paneling. Flanking the proscenium the panels are angled and incorporate exit doors.

Balcony: The balcony walls are accentuated by two arched openings at each side. These are flanked by pilasters with fern-like capitals. The openings incorporate decorative fanlights. Two paneled columns set off the last two rows of the balcony. Panels flank the exit doors on either side. The rear wall is also paneled.

Balcony front: The balcony front is an Adamesque design in paneled plasterwork incorporating pilasters and urns with continuous decorative molding above and below the panels.

Balcony underside: The underside of the balcony is also of paneled plasterwork.

Balcony promenade: The rear wall of the balcony promenade is paneled above a wainscoting.

Ceiling: One of the major decorative elements of the auditorium is the plasterwork ceiling, part of the original Ingalls & Hoffman design. Adamesque in character, it incorporates a large oval outlined by bands of moldings. Within the oval are panels with cherubs topped by perfume burners and winged female figures, all linked by swags. Medallions within the oval are executed with a fan-like design. Triangular panels created by the intersection of the oval with the ceiling moldings, contain Roman comedic masks at the front near the proscenium and female figures holding mirrors at the rear. The entire ceiling is outlined with an elaborate series of paneled moldings with rosettes, urns, and swags. An equally elaborate cornice spans the side walls and continues across the proscenium arch. The cornice frieze incorporates swags, rosettes, and cartouches.

3) Attached fixtures:

Orchestra: Two sets of paneled wood doors lead from the inner lobby to the auditorium.

Light fixtures: Existing light fixtures are stylistically compatible with the Adamesque design of the interior. There are three brass wall sconces on each balcony side wall. From the centers of ceiling medallions are suspended beaded crystal chandeliers, which appear to be modified versions of the originals.

The underside of the balcony incorporates simple ceiling lights.

4) Known alterations:

Air-conditioning ducts and grilles partially obscure some of the ceiling detail. A light rail is placed on the balcony front. A current color scheme tends to obscure the perception of the architectural detail.

(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.

Conclusion

The Little Theater Interior survives today as one of the historic Broadway theaters that symbolize American theater for both New York and the nation. Built in 1912, it is among the oldest theaters surviving in New York City. Designed for the patrician producer Winthrop Ames, it was intended specifically to house the intimate drama that he pioneered and which greatly influenced the "Little Theater" movement. His architects, Ingalls & Hoffman, were able in the Little Theater to realize the intimate, genteel spirit of Ames's drama. Their elegant design, making use of European innovations, succeeded in suggesting architecturally the drawing-room nature of the theater that was performed on stage. Although the auditorium was partially redesigned in 1917, in one of the first theater designs by prolific architect Herbert J. Krapp, the additions sensitively reflect the original ornamental Adamesque design as seen in the surviving auditorium ceiling and grand foyer; the Little remains a handsome theater interior, still true to Winthrop Ames's original vision. Ingalls & Hoffman's grand foyer is among the most elegant such spaces in the theater



district today. For three quarters of a century, the Little Theater has provided an intimate setting for countless numbers of the plays through which Broadway has come to personify American theater.

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) and Peter Donhauser (PD). Gale Harris of the Research Department 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 Little Theater (now Helen Hayes Theater), first floor interior consisting of the inner lobby, 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, 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 Little Theater survives today as one of the historic theaters that symbolize American theater for both New York and the nation; that, built in 1912, it is among the oldest theaters surviving in New York City; that it was designed for producer Winthrop Ames, a pioneer in the development of "intimate drama" who greatly influenced the "Little Theater" movement; that the interior designed for Ames by the firm of Ingalls & Hoffman was an elegant manifestation of Ames's theatrical and architectural theories, and as such represents a special aspect of the nation's theatrical history; that this interior, based on intimacy of scale and European innovations in form, is an unusual and special design that was specifically intended to suggest the intimate drama presented by Ames on its stage; that the early balcony addition and ornamental alterations, by prominent theater architect Herbert J. Krapp, are sympathetic with other aspects of the theater's design; that for over three quarters of a century the Little Theater 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 Little Theater (now Helen Hayes Theater), first floor interior consisting of the inner lobby, 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; 238-244 West 44th Street, Borough of Manhattan, and designates Tax Map Block 1015, Lot 51, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.

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## APPENDIX

The following production history of the Little 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.

### 1912

- THE PIGEON 3/12/12 (64 perfs.) by John Galsworthy; with Russell Whytal, Louise Seymour, Pamela Gaythorne and A.M. Botsford.
- THE FLOWERS OF THE PALACE HAN by Ma Tcheu-Yeun/THE TERRIBLE MEEK 3/19/12 by Charles Rann Kennedy (39 matinee perfs.); with Edith Wynne Matthison.
- THE AFFAIRS OF ANATOL 10/14/12 (72 perfs.) by Arthur Schnitzler; with John Barrymore, Marguerite Clark, Doris Keane and Katherine Emmett.
- SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS 11/7/12 (72 perfs.) by Jessie Braham White; with Marguerite Clark, Elaine Inescort and Donald Gallaher.
- RUTHERFORD AND SON 12/24/12 (63 perfs.) by K.G. Sowerby; with Nroman McKinnel and Edyth Olive.

### 1913

- PRUNELLA 10/27/13 (104 perfs.) by Laurence Housman and Harley Granville Barker; with Marguerite Clark, Ernest Glendinning and Kathleen Comegys. (Moved to Booth Theater 12/8/13.)
- THE PHILANDERER 12/30/13 (103 perfs.) by George Bernard Shaw; with Mary Lawton, Charles Maude and Ernita Lascelles.

### 1914

- THE TRUTH 4/14/14 (55 perfs.) by Clyde Fitch; with Isabel Irving, Conway Tearle, Grace George and Zelda Sears.
- A PAIR OF SILK STOCKINGS 10/20/14 (223 perfs.) by Cyril Harcourt; with Cyril Harcourt and Mary Glynn.

1916

HUSH! 10/3/16 (39 perfs.) by Violet Pearn; with Estelle Winwood.

PIERROT THE PRODIGAL 11/6/16 (165 total perfs.) by Michael Carre.  
(Opened at the Booth Theater 9/6/16.)

1917

THE MORRIS DANCE 2/13/17 (23 perfs.) by Granville Barker; with Sidney  
Blackmer, Richard Bennett and Elizabeth Risdon.

1918

A LITTLE JOURNEY 12/26/18 (252 perfs.) by Rachel Crothers; with Jobyna  
Howland, Vera Fuller Mellish, Gilda Varesi and Estelle Winwood.

1919

PLEASE GET MARRIED 2/10/19 (160 perfs.) by James Cullen and Lewis Allen  
Browne; with Ernest Truex and Edith Taliaferro.

PAPA 4/10/19 (12 perfs.) by Zoe Atkins.

1920

MAMMA'S AFFAIR 1/19/20 (98 perfs.) by Rachel Barton Butler.

HE AND SHE 2/12/20 (28 perfs.) by Rachel Crothers; with Cyril Keightly  
and Rachel Crothers.

BEYOND THE HORIZON 3/9/20 (111 total perfs.) by Eugene O'Neill; with  
Richard Bennett. (First opened at the Morosco Theater 2/2/20.)

MARRY THE POOR GIRL 9/25/20 (18 perfs.) by Owen Davis; with Isabel Lovel  
and William Roselle.

THE FIRST YEAR 10/20/20 (725 perfs.) by Frank Craven; with Frank Craven,  
Roberta Arnold and Maude Granger.

1922

A SERPENT'S TOOTH 8/24/22 (36 perfs.) by Arthur Richman; with Marie Tempest,  
Howard Freeman, W. Graham Browne and Leslie Howard.

SPIKE CORNER 9/25/22 (124 perfs.) by Frank Craven; with Eva Condon, Madge  
Kennedy and Jason Robards.

1923

POLLY PREFERRED 1/11/23 (202 perfs.) by Guy Bolton; with Genevieve Tobin and William Harrigan.

MARCH HARES 3/11/23 (4 perfs.).

CHICKEN FEED 9/24/23 (146 perfs.) by Guy Bolton; with Stuart Fox and Roberta Arnold.

1924

PIGS 9/1/24 (347 perfs.) by Anne Morrison and Patterson McNutt; with Wallace Ford and Nydia Westman.

1925

DON'T BOTHER MOTHER 2/3/25 (3 perfs.) by E.B. Dewing and Courteney Savage; with E.B. Dewing and Mary Hall.

THE SEA WOMAN 8/24/25 (32 perfs.) by Willard Robertson; with Blanche Yurka, Rea Martin and Clyde Fillmore.

A SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL 10/22/25 (85 perfs.) by Richard Brinsley Sheridan; with Mrs. Samuel Insul.

THE MASTER OF THE INN 12/21/25 (41 perfs.) by Catherine Chisholm Cushing; with Vincent Sardi, Jr.

1926

THE LOVE CITY 1/25/26 (24 perfs.) by Hans Bachwitz; with Earle Larimore.

THE WISDOM TOOTH 2/15/26 (160 perfs.) by Marc Connelly; with Thomas Mitchell, Kate Mayhew, Mary Philips and Hugh O'Connell.

TWO GIRLS WANTED 9/9/26 (324 perfs.) by Gladys B. Unger; with Nydia Westman, Grace Menken and Beverly Sitgreaves. (Moved to the John Golden Theatre 11/1/26.)

SEED OF THE BRUTE 11/1/26 (72 perfs.) by Knowles Entrikin; with Doris Rankin, Robert Ames and Harold Elliot.

TWO GIRLS WANTED 11/22/26. (Returned from the John Golden Theater. Moved to th Longacre Theater May 30, 1927.)

## 1927

GRAND STREET FOLLIES (148 total perfs.) Book and lyrics by Agnes Morgan, music by Max Ewing; with Agnes Morgan and Dorothy Sands. (First opened at the Neighborhood Theater 5/19/27.)

LOVERS AND ENEMIES 9/20/27 (2 perfs.) by Artzybashell; with Eva Condon and Albert Carroll.

ROMANCIN' ROUND 10/3/27 (24 perfs.) by Conrad Westervelt; with Ralph Morgan and Helen MacKeller.

IF 10/25/27 (27 perfs.) by Lord Dunsany, music by Edmond Rickett; with Walter Kingsford.

TRIGGER 12/6/27 (27 perfs.) by Lula Vollmer; with Walter Connolly and Minor Watson.

## 1928

LA GRINGA 2/1/28 (21 perfs.) by Tom Cushing; with Claudette Colbert, Eva Condon and George Nash.

SPRING 3100 2/15/28 (29 perfs.) by Argyll Campbell and Willard Mack.

BOX SEATS 4/19/28 (28 perfs.) by Edward Massey; with Joan Storm and Patricia Barclay.

MARCH HARES 4/2/28 (20 perfs.); by Harry Wagstaff Gribble; with Josephine Hull, Dorothy Stickney and Vivian Tobin.

MARRIED-AND HOW! 6/14/28 (1 perf.) by Ray Hodgdon.

EVA THE FIFTH 8/28/28 (63 perfs.) by Kenyon Nicholson and John Golden; with Claiborne Foster.

GODS OF THE LIGHTNING 10/24/28 (29 perfs.) by Maxwell Anderson and Harold Hickerson; with Charles Bickford, Horace Braham, Eva Condon and Sylvia Sidney.

THE LADY LIES 11/26/28 (24 perfs.) by John Meehan.

THAT FERGUSON FAMILY 12/22/28 (129 perfs.) by Howard Chenery; with Jean Adair.

## 1929

HOUSE UNGUARDED 1/15/29 (39 perfs.) by Lenn D. Hollister and Lester Lonergan; with Jerome Daley, Frank Knight, Lester Lonergan and Leila Frost.

LET US BE GAY 2/21/29 (132 perfs.) by Rachel Crothers; with Francine Larrimore, Warren William and Charlotte Granville.

1930

MANY A SLIP 2/3/30 (56 perfs.) by Edith Fitzgerald and Robert Riskin; with Sylvia Sidney, Dorothy Sands and Douglass Montgomery.

HOUSE AFIRE 3/31/30 (16 perfs.) by Mann Page; with May Collins and Charles Laite.

DORA MOBRIDGE 4/19/30 (9 perfs.) by Adeline Leitzbach; with Jack Halliday, Louise Canter and Florence Gardner.

THE TRAITOR 5/2/30 (18 perfs.) by Charles H. Brown based on a story by Robert Louis Stevenson; with Fuller Mellish, Charles Peniman, Don Currie and Frank Henderson.

LONDON CALLING 10/18/30 (11 perfs.); by Geoffrey Kerr; with Geoffrey Kerr, Charles Lawrence and Helen Flint.

MR. SAMUEL 11/10/30 (8 perfs.); with Edward G. Robinson.

LIFE IS LIKE THAT 12/22/30 (32 perfs.) by Jo Milward; with Peggy Shannon.

1931

THE LEFT BANK 10/5/31 (241 perfs.) by Elmer Rice; with Katherine Alexander, Horace Braham, Donald MacDonald, Millicent Green and Merle Maddern.

1932

THE GIRL OUTSIDE 10/24/32 (8 perfs.) by John King Hodges and Samuel Merwin; with Horace Braham and Lee Patrick.

HONEYMOON 12/23/32 (73 perfs.) by Samuel Chotzinoff and George Backer; with Katherine Alexander and and Thomas Mitchell.

1933

TWO STRANGE WOMEN 1/10/33 (15 perfs.) by Edwin B. Self.

ONE SUNDAY AFTERNOON 2/15/33 (338 perfs.) by James Hagan; with Lloyd Nolan and Francesca Bruning.

THE WORLD WAITS 10/25/33 (29 perfs.) by George F. Hummel; with Blaine Cordner and Reed Brown, Jr.

OUR STAGE AND STARS 11/11/33 (6 perfs.) Wrtiten and performed by Dorothy Sands.

1934

FALSE DREAMS, FAREWELL 1/15/34 (25 perfs.) by Hugh Stange; with Clyde Fillmore, Frieda Inescort, Clarence Derwent and Glenn Anders.

BROOMSTICKS, AMEN! 2/9/34 (41 perfs.) by Elmer Greenfelder; with Byron McGrath, Jane Seymour and Jean Adair.

ONE MORE HONEYMOON 3/31/34 (17 perfs.) by Leo F. Reardon.

A LADY FROM THE SEA 5/1/34 (15 perfs.) by Henrik Ibsen; with Mary Hone and Moffat Johnston.

KYKUNKOR 6/10/34 (65 perfs.) by Asadata Dafora.

CONTINENTAL VARIETIES 10/3/34 (78 perfs.); with Lucienne Boyer.

SLIGHTLY DELERIOUS 12/31/34 (8 perfs.) by Bernard J. Mc Owen and Robert F. Adkins; with Lee Patrick and Hall Shelton.

1936

PRE-HONEYMOON 9/28/36 (253 total perfs.) by Alford Von Ronkel and Anne Nichols; with Marjorie Peterson and Clyde Fillmore. (Opened at the Lyceum Theater 4/30/36.)

PROMISE 12/30/36 (29 perfs.) by Henry Bernstein; with Cedric Hardwicke, Irene Browne and Frank Lawton.

1937

BE SO KINDLY 2/8/37 (8 perfs.) by Sara Sandberg; with Jeanne Greene.

SUN KISSED 3/10/37 (53 perfs.) by Raymond Van Sickle; with Charles Coburn, Francesca Bruning, Jean Adair and Russell Hardie.

ABIE'S IRISH ROSE 5/12/37 (46 perfs.) by Anne Nichols; with Marian Shockley and Richard Bond.

THE BOUGH BREAKS 11/19/37 (3 perfs.) by James Knox Millen; with Cyrilla Dorne, Leon Janney and Eleanor Brent.

EDNA HIS WIFE 12/7/37 (32 perfs.) by Cornelia Otis Skinner from a book by Margaret Ayer Barnes; with Cornelia Otis Skinner.

1938

LONDON INTIMATE OPERA COMPANY 1/4/38 (11 perfs.).

THE HILL BETWEEN 3/11/38 (11 perfs.) by Lula Vollmer; with Philip Ober, Dorothy Patten and William Grimans.



GLORIANA 11/25/38 (5 perfs.) by Ferdinand Bruckner; with Blanche Yurka.

1939

SPRING MEETING 1/30/39 (98 perfs.) by M.J. Farrell and John Perry; with Gladys Cooper, A.E. Matthews and Robert Fleming. (First opened in the Morosco Theater 12/8/38.)

1940

REUNION IN NEW YORK 2/21/40 (89 perfs.) Revue produced by the American Viennese Group Inc.

1941

TANYARD STREET 2/4/41 (23 perfs.) by Louis D'Alton.

YOUR LOVING SON 4/4/41 (3 perfs.) by Abby Merchant; with Jay Fassett, Jessie Royce Landis and Frankie Thomas.

TWELFTH NIGHT 12/2/41 (15 perfs.) by William Shakespeare; with Yul Brynner.

1941 - 1959 Renamed New York Times Hall (no legitimate theater).

1959 - 1963 Became American Broadcasting Company Television Studio.

1963

TAMBOURINES OF GLORY 11/2/63 (24 perfs.) by Langston Hughes; with Clara Ward, Louis Gossett and Hilda Simms.

1964

HABIMA, NATIONAL THEATER OF ISRAEL 2/3/64

THE DYBBUK by Sansky (24 perfs.)

CHILDREN OF SHADOWS by Israel Becker (16 perfs.)

EACH HAD WINGS by Hanock Bartov (16 perfs.)

BABY WANT A KISS 4/19/64 (145 perfs.) by James Costigan; with James Costigan, Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward.

THE SUBJECT WAS ROSES 9/7/64 (832 total perfs.) by Frank Gilroy; with Jack Albertson, Irene Dailey and Martin Sheen. (Opened at the Royale Theater 5/25/64; moved to the Helen Hayes Theater 3/22/65.)

1965 - 1974

Theater leased to Westinghouse Broadcasting Company; again called Little Theater.

1974

MY SISTER, MY SISTER 4/30/74 (128 perfs.) by Ray Aranha; with Seret Scott, Barbara Montgomery and David Downing.

MEDEA AND JASON 10/2/74 (1 perf.) adapted from Euripides; with Maria Aho and Richmond F. Johnson.

1975

MAN ON THE MOON 1/29/75 (5 perfs.) book, music and lyrics by John Phillips; with Eric Lang and Monique Van Vooren.

LAMPOST REUNION 10/16 75 (76 perfs.) by Louis LaRusso II; with Danny Aiello and Frank Quinn.

1976

THE RUNNER STUMBLES 5/18/76 (198 perfs.) by Milan Stitt; with Stephen Joyce.

1977

UNEXPECTED GUESTS 3/2/77 (4 perfs.) by Jordan Crittenden; with Zorah Lampert and Jerry Stiller.

A PARTY WITH BETTY COMDEN AND ADOLPH GREEN 3/21/77 (92 total perfs.) (Opened at the Morosco Theater 2/10/77.)

GEMINI 5/21/77 (1,819 perfs.) by Alberto Innaurato; with Danny Aiello, Jessica James and Robert Picardo.

1981

NED AND JACK 10/31/81 (1 perf.) by Sheldon Rosen; with John Vickery.

1982

THE CURSE OF THE ACHING HEART 1/25/82 (32 perfs.) by William Alfred; with Faye Dunaway.

SOLOMON'S CHILD 4/8/82 (4 perfs.) by Tom Dulzck.

TORCH SONG TRILOGY 6/10/82 (1222 total perfs.) by Harvey Fierstein; with  
Harvey Fierstein and Susan Edwards.

1983

Renamed Helen Hayes Theater.



Little Theater Interior  
238-244 West 44th Street  
Manhattan

Built: 1912  
Architect: Inghalls & Hoffman



Little Theater Interior



Little Theater Interior  
Inner Lobby