

Landmarks Preservation Commission
December 8, 1987; Designation List 197
LP-1348

LONGACRE THEATER, 220-228 West 48th Street, Manhattan. Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1019, Lot 50. Built 1912-13; architect, Henry B. Herts.

On June 14 and 15, 1982, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Longacre Theater and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No.44). 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. One witness 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 Longacre Theater survives today as one of the historic playhouses that symbolize American theater for both New York and the nation. Constructed in 1912-13, the Longacre was built to house the productions of Broadway producer and baseball magnate Harry H. Frazee. Designed for Frazee by Henry Herts, prominent theater architect, the Longacre is among the earliest surviving Broadway theaters, and has an exceptionally handsome facade.

Like most Broadway playhouses built before World War I, the Longacre was designed by a leading theater architect to house the offices and theatrical productions of its owner. Though known as a baseball magnate, and at one time the owner of the Boston Red Sox, Frazee was also an influential Broadway producer who, besides building the Longacre theater, at one time also owned two other Broadway houses (the Harris and the Lyric).

Henry B. Herts, the architect of the Longacre, earned a reputation as one of New York's most skilled theater architects, first in partnership with Hugh Tallant and later practicing alone. His facade for the Longacre is an exceptionally handsome neo-French Classic style design, based on classical sources and employing polychromatic effects.

For three-quarters of a century the Longacre Theater has served as home to countless numbers of the plays through which the Broadway theater has come to personify American theater. As such, it continues to help define the Broadway theater district, the largest and most famous concentration of legitimate stage theaters in the world.

The development of the Broadway Theater District

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

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

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

A district of farmlands and rural summer homes in the early 1800s, Long Acre Square had by the turn of the century evolved into a hub of mass transportation. A horsecar line had run across 42nd Street as early as the 1860s, and in 1871, with the opening of Grand Central Depot and the completion of the Third and Sixth Avenue Elevated Railways, it was comparatively simple for both New Yorkers and out-of-towners to reach Long Acre Square. Transportation continued to play a large part in the development of the area; in 1904 New York's subway system was inaugurated, with a major station located at 42nd Street and Broadway. The area was then renamed Times Square in honor of the newly erected Times Building.² The evolution of the Times Square area as a center of Manhattan's various mass transit systems made it a natural choice for the location of legitimate playhouses, which needed to be easily accessible to their audiences.

The theater business that invaded Long Acre Square at the end of the 19th century consisted of far more than a few playhouses, for at that time New York was the starting-point for a vast, nationwide entertainment network known as "the road." This complex theater operation had its

beginnings in the 1860s when the traditional method of running a theater, the stock system, was challenged by the growing popularity of touring "combination" shows. In contrast to the stock system, in which a theater manager engaged a company of actors for a season and presented them in a variety of plays, the combination system consisted of a company of actors appearing in a single show which toured from city to city, providing its own scenery, costumes, and sometimes musical accompaniment. Helped by the expansion of the nation's railroads after the Civil War, the combination system soon killed off the majority of stock companies.³ By 1904 there were some 420 combination companies touring through thousands of theaters in cities and towns across the country.⁴

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

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

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

The theater district that 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."⁶ In 1895 Hammerstein

erected an enormous theater building on Broadway between 44th and 45th Streets. The original plan for the Olympia called for a "perfect palace of entertainment--which would have included three theaters, a bowling alley, a turkish bath, cafes and restaurants."⁷ Only part of this visionary plan ever became a reality. On November 25, 1895, Hammerstein opened the Lyric Theater section of the building, and a little over three weeks later he inaugurated the Music Hall section. Never a financial success, the Olympia closed its doors two years after it opened. Nevertheless, it earned Hammerstein the title of "Father of Times Square."

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

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

(MMK)

Evolution of Theater Design

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

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

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

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

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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.¹¹

The Longacre Theater, as one of the Broadway playhouses 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.

Harry H. Frazee

When Harry Frazee opened the Longacre Theater in 1913, he was thirty-three years old. Debonair, quick-witted and extravagant, he had risen from humble beginnings in the Midwest to become one of the most influential men in American theater.

Frazee began his theatrical career as an usher, and then a box-office attendant in Peoria, Illinois. By the time he was sixteen he was on the road as an advance agent for a small musical troupe. Six years later he produced Uncle John Perkins, the first of Frazee's many entertainments and the foundation of his later fortune. He acquired in rapid succession a series of touring shows and soon controlled musical comedy outside the large western cities.

In 1909 Frazee opened his first playhouse in Chicago. He named it for theater magnate John Cort who had befriended and encouraged the once-struggling young agent. In the same year Frazee took advantage of the swelling interest in a boxing match between the undefeated champion Jim Jeffries and his black challenger Jack Johnson. Frazee cast the former in an immensely profitable athletic program, which he scheduled for a world tour. Plans were cancelled, however, when the champion unexpectedly lost his title. This was the first of Frazee's lucrative, but ill-fated, involvements in professional sports.

Frazeo rebounded with the musical sensation Madame Sherry which he co-sponsored with George W. Lederer in a short-lived partnership. Frazeo used his share of its half-million-dollar profits to build the Longacre Theatre in 1913. The theater was foreclosed, however, the following year, after which he temporarily restricted his theater involvements to production. He then turned to professional sports.

In 1917, while continuing to produce Broadway plays, Frazeo purchased the Boston Red Sox (reputedly for \$400,000). Unhappily, most of his new musicals failed, leaving him in financial straits. Frazeo's expedient, if unpopular solution, was the sale of his baseball players to the rival New York team. In so doing he reduced the once powerful Red Sox to little more than a Yankee fief. In the course of his six-year ownership, Frazeo sold over a dozen athletes to New York, the most notable being Babe Ruth in 1920. The latter fetched \$125,000 which Frazeo promptly applied to his purchase of the Harris Theater (renamed the Frazeo) from the widow of Titanic victim Henry B. Harris. He is also reported to have acquired the Lyric Theater.¹

Frazeo retired from baseball in 1923, receiving \$1,500,000 for his interests. During his remaining five years, he was divorced and remarried, and generally lived a high life in New York society. He hosted Charles Lindbergh and his mother on their triumphant visit to New York in 1927, and was the frequent companion of the flashy New York senator, and later mayor, Jimmie Walker.

Frazeo's last big success on Broadway was No, No, Nanette in 1925 which is reported to have made him millions. He attempted a companion piece two years later with the trite play Yes, Yes, Yvette. It was an abysmal failure, and hastened Frazeo's retirement from Broadway in 1928. The forty-eight-year old producer died of Bright's Disease while vacationing in France in 1929. His once vast estate was valued at less than \$300,000.²

(JA)

Notes

1. "H.H. Frazeo Dies Suddenly at 48," New York Times, June 5, 1929.
2. "H.H. Frazeo Left \$286,680," New York Times, August 23, 1933.

Henry Beaumont Herts

Many of Broadway's finest theaters owe their design in part or in whole to Henry Beaumont Herts (1871-1933). As both a technical innovator and an inventive designer, Herts earned a reputation as one of New York's (and America's) most skilled theater architects. Although his career in theater design was made in partnership with another theater specialist, Hugh Tallant (1869-1952), Herts continued to contribute to the stock of fine Broadway theaters even after the break-up of the partnership.

Herts, son of Henry B. Herts of the Herts Brothers firm of decorators, left college to work in the office of Bruce Price, a well-established New York architect with a national reputation. Price, impressed with his abilities, encouraged him to attend the Columbia School of Mines, forerunner of the Columbia School of Architecture. While a student, he entered and won a competition to design the Columbus Memorial Arch. From there he went on to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, where he met his future partner Hugh Tallant.¹ Tallant had come to Paris after graduating from Harvard College, where he had studied engineering.² The two worked on many student projects together in Paris, and in 1897, after returning to New York, joined in a partnership which lasted until 1911.³

Although Herts and Tallant accepted commissions for various building types, they became best known as specialists in theater design. Their career spanned the gradual change in the American theater from the 19th- to the 20th-century pattern. Consequently their theater commissions ranged from a repertory house for a 19th-century impresario (the Lyceum for Daniel Frohman, 1903, a designated New York City Landmark), and theaters for the infamous Klaw & Erlanger Theatrical Syndicate (the New Amsterdam, 1903, a designated New York City Landmark and Interior Landmark, and the Liberty, 1904), to houses for the Shubert organization, the classic embodiment of the 20th-century theatrical entrepreneur (the Shubert and the Booth theaters, 1912-13, Herts alone). Other New York theaters included the Gaiety (at Broadway and 46th Street, 1907-09, demolished), the remodeling of the old Lenox Lyceum into the German Theater (Madison Avenue at 59th Street, 1908, demolished), the Brooklyn Academy of Music (1908, in the Brooklyn Academy of Music Historic District), the Folies Bergere (later the Helen Hayes, 210 West 46th Street, 1911, demolished), and the Longacre (1912-13, Herts alone).

Practicing in a period of great theater expansion, Herts and Tallant were able to bring to their new theaters a propitious combination of design talent and technical expertise. Tallant became quite knowledgeable in the field of theater acoustics, and published on the subject, as well as on the history of theater design, in contemporary architectural periodicals.⁴ Herts's understanding of structural techniques led him to invent the cantilever arch method of theater balcony construction (first used at the New Amsterdam Theater, 1903), which eliminated the need for supporting pillars and thus improved auditorium sight lines.⁵ Together Herts and Tallant brought back from Paris a familiarity with modern French design which they applied to great effect in all the theaters they built on Broadway.⁶

Herts & Tallant's earlier theaters (the Lyceum, New Amsterdam, Liberty, and German), in a theatrical version of the Beaux-Arts style, brought an elaborate, elegant and ornamental look to New York's stock of playhouses. The Lyceum is probably the finest surviving Beaux-Arts theater in the country.⁷ Besides their Beaux-Arts training, Herts and Tallant brought to New York their first-hand knowledge of the Art Nouveau style current in Belgium and France, and in the New Amsterdam created an outstanding Art Nouveau interior.⁸ Herts, although trained as an architect,⁹ was also a painter, and while in Paris had several works exhibited.⁹ His interests may have been the source for the elaborate paintings and reliefs with which so many of the firm's theaters were

adorned. Similarly elaborate and eminently theatrical were their designs for the German Theater,¹⁰ and, though on a smaller scale, also the Liberty.

The firm's later theaters, including the Gaiety, Folies Bergere, Longacre, and the Shubert and Booth, were equally elaborate in detail, but tended to a more restrained classicism in keeping with changing architectural tastes. Interior ornament ranged from the intimate Jacobean paneling of the smaller Booth, to the grand cycle of paintings in the larger Shubert. The double exterior of the latter two was said to be based on Venetian precedents, and relied for its effect on contrasts between brick and terra-cotta adorned with a polychromatic sgraffito ornament.¹¹

Non-theatrical commissions by the firm included a new facade at 232 West End Avenue for Abraham Erlanger's house (in 1903-04, the same years in which they designed Klaw & Erlanger's New Amsterdam and Liberty Theaters); the City Athletic Club (50 West 54th Street, 1909); a new grandstand for the Polo Grounds in Manhattan (1912, Herts alone, demolished); and a number of buildings for New York's Jewish community, including a remodeling of the old Harmonie Club (45 West 42nd Street, 1897-1898, demolished), the Aguilar Free Library (110th Street, 1898, and alterations 1904-05), the Guggenheim Mausoleum (1900) at Salem Fields Cemetery, Brooklyn, the cemetery of Temple Emanuel, the Isaac L. Rice Mansion (346 West 89th Street, 1901-03, a designated New York City Landmark) and the synagogue of Congregation B'nai Jeshurun (257 West 88th Street, 1917, Henry Herts and Walter S. Schneider).

After the partnership was dissolved in 1911, Tallant joined the firm of Lord & Hewlitt (which became Lord, Hewlitt & Tallant), while Herts continued on his own. Herts is not known to have designed any theaters after World War I, but he remained active as an architect. An expert in fireproofing (an important component of theater design), he aided New York's Fire Department in drafting the City's building code. He also served as architect for the Playground Commission of New York.¹²

Herts and Tallant designed theaters together for just over a decade, and Herts did only a few more in the years immediately following, but they produced the finest surviving theaters in New York. Moreover, they influenced the architecture of the theater district well beyond their own few surviving structures by training Herbert J. Krapp, an architect in their office who went on to design numerous other Broadway theaters.

(EH, AWR)

Notes

1. Abbot Halstead Moore, "Individualism in Architecture: The Work of Herts & Tallant," Architectural Record, 15 (January 1904), 66. See also Henry B. Herts, obit., New York Times, March 28, 1933, p. 19.
2. Ibid.

3. The date of the establishment of the partnership has been ascertained through examination of Trow's Business Directories for the period. Because of an error in Herts's New York Times obituary, it often has been stated that the partnership was established in 1900.
4. Hugh Tallant, "Hints on Architectural Acoustics," The Brickbuilder, 19 (May 1910), 111-116; (July 1910), 155-158; (Aug. 1910), 177-180; (Sept. 1910), 199-203; (Oct. 1910), 221-225; (Nov. 1910), 243-247; (Dec. 1910), 265-270. Also, "Architectural Acoustics," The Brickbuilder, 22 (Oct. 1913), 225-228. On theater history: "The American Theater: Its Antecedents and Characteristics," The Brickbuilder, 23 (Dec. 1914), 285-290; 24 (Jan. 1915), 17-22.
5. Moore, p. 66, and Herts obituary.
6. It is not known which of the two partners was chiefly responsible for design, but only Herts is known to have continued designing theaters after the dissolution of the partnership.
7. Landmarks Preservation Commission, Lyceum Theatre Designation Report (LP-0803), prepared by Marjorie Pearson, November 26, 1974.
8. Landmarks Preservation Commission, New Amsterdam Theater Interior Designation Report (LP-1027), prepared by Marjorie Pearson, October 23, 1979.
9. Moore, p. 66.
10. See H.W. Frohne, "The German Theatre in New York," Architectural Record, 24 (December 1908), 408-416.
11. "Shubert Theater," The American Architect, 104 (November 19, 1913) n.p.
12. Herts obituary.

The Longacre Theater

Times Square, and the surrounding district, was originally called Long Acre Square because, as New York's horse and carriage district, it served a function parallel to London's Long Acre Street. The name came into use after 1872, when Manhattan's leading carriage manufacturer relocated from Broome Street to Broadway between 47th and 48th Streets.¹ Brewster & Company still occupied that site in 1912 when Harry H. Frazee began construction of the nearby Longacre Theater.²

Although Oscar Hammerstein I built the first Times Square theater as early as 1895, the district was slow to change. Its new playhouses were situated among horse exchanges, and later among automotive factories, and were flanked by "rows of drab apartment houses and dingy dwellings."³ Four of these three-story residences were razed to make room for the Longacre.⁴

Like David Belasco and other Broadway independent producers, Frazee built his theater in order to stage his own musical productions. Construction began on May 20, 1912, at an estimated cost of \$150,000.⁵ It was completed one year later, more than \$275,000 over budget.⁶ This miscalculation prefigured the many financial losses which Frazee was to suffer at the Longacre. Indeed, after a theatrically disappointing first season, foreclosure proceedings were initiated against him.⁷ In 1914 the Longacre passed to the L.A.T. Realty and Construction Corporation which had granted Frazee a \$90,000 mortgage two years prior.⁸ He continued to produce (largely unsuccessful) shows at the Longacre until 1916, by which time the theater had been resold. The Shuberts took it over in 1925 and increased its seating.⁹ The necessary alterations to the orchestra were executed by Herbert J. Krapp, the Shuberts' preferred architect and former assistant to the Longacre's original designer.¹⁰

Like most Broadway theaters, the Longacre barely survived the Depression. In 1942, after almost a decade of disastrously short runs, it was leased to WOR for use as a radio broadcasting studio. The Longacre returned to legitimate theater in 1953 when a renewed interest in live entertainment created an acute shortage of Broadway playhouses.¹¹

In marked contrast to the Longacre's checkered history is its architectural success. When the theater opened in 1913 it was applauded for its innovative auditorium, progressive stage design and completely fireproof construction of steel, terra cotta and reinforced concrete. The Longacre was considered "the most complete building for the purpose that would seem possible for the architect to design and the contractor to erect."¹²

The Longacre is Henry Herts's last known theater design. Reflecting its designer's French training and preferences, the theater's facade is an exceptionally handsome example of the neo-French Classic style. The piano nobile, its major portion, is arranged as five bays framed by six fluted pilasters. The outer bays frame large, round-headed niches while each of the three center bays frames an enormous casement window, set within ornate terra-cotta embrasures. This formal classical facade is enlivened with a variety of unusual ornament. The pilasters are especially inventive: growing from the base of each, and extending a third of its height, is an ornately carved fountain surrounded by feathery acanthus. At the top of each fountain is a personification of drama enframed by strapwork almost Palladian in character. Each pilaster is completed by a lush capital at the center of which is an Assyrian-inspired winged genius. Other ornament includes ornamental panels, a foliate cornice with projecting carved lion heads, foliate vases, strapwork escutcheons, and the inscription "THE LONGACRE THEATRE" in clear Roman letters.

According to early descriptions, the Longacre's facade was of "colored terra-cotta."¹³ Vintage photographs suggest that the original ground floor was faced in polychromatic tile, now hidden under a layer of concrete, painted to match the two terra-cotta-faced stories above. It is also possible that other ornamental features were likewise colored, much as they were on the Eltinge (now Empire) Theater (236-242 West 42nd Street), built to architect Thomas Lamb's design in the same year of 1913.

The opening of eight other Broadway theaters in the same unprecedented year as the Longacre may have helped reduce the publicity accorded to each.¹⁴ The Longacre's neo-French Classic style facade did not receive much notice in the press. The New York Times, however, described the Longacre as adding "a Cheerful touch of snap and cheer...to the old time structures formerly characteristic of the block."¹⁵

(JA)

Notes

1. H.S. Mott, The New York of Yesterday, (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1908), p. 3.
2. G.W. Bromley & Co., Atlas of the City of New York, 1908, pl. 23, and 1912 edition, pl. 91.
3. Mary Henderson, The City and the Theatre (Clifton, N.J.: James T. White and Co., 1973), p. 187.
4. Demolition of these buildings was anticipated as early as 1909 when (unexecuted) plans were filed for a five-story, thirty-one unit tenement on the site (New York City, Department of Buildings, Manhattan, New Building permit 279-1909). The would-be developers were L. & A. Pincus who owned considerable real estate in the area, including the site upon which the Longacre was built in 1913. Alex Pincus built the Alvin Theater in 1927; see Landmarks Preservation Commission, Alvin Theater Designation Report (LP-1305), New York: City of New York, 1985.
5. New Building Permit 46-1912.
6. George Freedley, "Broadway Playhouses: The Longacre," Playbill, c. 1957-58, p. 13, in the Longacre Theatre Clippings File, Billy Rose Theatre Collection, Lincoln Center Branch, New York Public Library.
7. "Frazee's Theatre is Ordered Sold," New York Telegraph, April 17, 1914.
8. New York County, Office of the Register, Mortgages, Section 4, Liber 225, p. 487.
9. Mortgages, Section 4, Liber 3421, p. 219.
10. New York City, Department of Buildings, Building Notice 1957-1926.
11. "Decision Awaited on Hit's Transfer" New York Times, August 26, 1953.
12. "Frazee Ready to Open Theater," New York Telegraph, April 20, 1913.
13. "Building of Theaters Still Continues," New York Times, September 8, 1912, sec. 7, p. 2.
14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

The Longacre as a Playhouse¹

During its sixty-four years as a legitimate theater, the Longacre has presented some 185 productions ranging from serious drama and farce to the musical comedies for which Harry Frazee had the playhouse constructed. To its credit are memorable performances by such actors as Hal Holbrook, Ethel Barrymore and Jean Stapleton and pre-Hollywood appearances by Clarke Gable, Thelma Ritter and New York favorite Fay Wray.

The Longacre opened its doors on May 1, 1913, with Frazee's production of Are You A Crook? Intended as a parody on "crook shows" then in vogue, it closed after only twelve performances. The theater's first hit came in August with Adele, a delightful French comedy featuring William Danforth and Georgia Caine.

Following Adele, The theater suffered several failures before showcasing Frazee's production of A Pair of Sixes in March 1914. This hilarious farce by Edward Peple entertained 207 different audiences. In 1915, the opera world was the setting for Fred and Fanny Hutton's hit comedy The Great Lover, which ran 245 performances. The following year, William Collier "convulsed audiences" in James Montgomery's Nothing But the Truth.² This enduring comedy became a favorite among stock companies and spawned several movie versions, including one starring Bob Hope. Nothing But the Truth was Frazee's last and greatest production at the Longacre.

Nothing But the Truth found a worthy successor in Leave It to Jane, a college musical with a witty book by P.G. Wodehouse and Guy Bolton and songs by Jerome Kern "at his winsome best."³ Bolton and his collaborator George Middleton provided the Longacre with another hit in 1919 with Adam and Eva starring Otto Kruger and Ruth Shepley.

In 1922 Ethel Barrymore leased the Longacre for a series of three plays. The first was Gerhard Hauptman's tragedy Rose Bernd for which the actress received rave reviews. Critics were less tolerant of her performance in Romeo & Juliet, preferring instead Jane Cowl's triumphant Juliet of the same season. Miss Barrymore subsequently redeemed herself in 96 performances of The Laughing Lady in 1923.

The Longacre's next success and one of its greatest, running 385 performances in 1923-24, was the musical farce Little Jesse James, with Miriam Hopkins and Winifred Harris. In 1925, the Longacre featured the jazz musical Mercenary Mary and George S. Kaufman's show-business comedy, The Butter and Egg Man. In 1926 Morgan Farley, Katherine Wilson and Miriam Hopkins starred in a distinguished adaptation of Theodore Dreiser's An American Tragedy which ran 216 performances. The sophisticated German comedy The Command to Love with Basil Rathbone played 236 performances in 1927-28. Later in 1928 Richard Bennett and his daughter Joan appeared in the hard-hitting drama Jarnegan. A long period of flops followed, notwithstanding the frequently brilliant performances of Sylvia Sydney in Nice Women (1929), Clark Gable in Hawk Island (1927), Jessica Tandy and

Constance Collier in The Matriarch (1930) and Fay Wray in Niki (1931). Finally in February 1932, the Longacre had a hit with the aptly named Blessed Event with Roger Pryor starring as an egotistical Broadway columnist generally thought to have been modeled on Walter Winchell.

In March 1935, the revolutionary Group Theater took over the Longacre for two Clifford Odets one-act plays Waiting for Lefty and Till the Day I die. Starring Odets, Lee J. Cobb and Eliz Kazan, these achieved a respectable 135 performance run. In December, the Group returned with Odets' Paradise Lost played by an outstanding cast that included Stella Adler, Morris Carnovsky and Sanford Meisner.

A happier note was struck by Paul Osborn's On Borrowed Time with Dudley Digges as a grandfather who chases Death up a tree so he can have more time with his grandson. Selected by Burns Mantle as one of the Best Plays of the Year, it went on to play 321 performances. Unfortunately Osborn's Mornings At Seven with Dorothy Gish and Effie Shannon did not meet with equal success, closing after 44 performances in 1939, only to be revived in 1980, when it was greeted as an American classic and awarded a Tony.

In 1944, following the long-running production of Phoebe and Henry Ephron's wartime domestic comedy Three's a Family (497 performances) the Longacre was leased to Radio Station WOR. Among the shows originating there was Broadway Talks Back in which a panel of drama critics and theater people argued the merits of current productions.

The Longacre returned to legitimate use in October, 1953 with Armand d'Usseau and Dorothy Parker's Ladies of the Corridor. Other notable productions from the 'fifties include Lillian Hellman's adaptation of Jean Anouilh's The Lark (1955) with Julie Harris; Sam Locke's comedy Fair Game (1957) with Sam Levene and a promising young actress, Ellen McRae, who was to become better known as Ellen Burstyn; and Sam Taylor and Cornelia Otis Skinner's The Pleasure of His Company (1958) with Cyril Richard, Walter Abel, Dolores Hart and Charles Ruggles.

In 1961, Zero Mostel won a Tony for his performance in Ionesco's Rhinoceros. Later that year Ossie Davis' Purlie Victorious moved to the Longacre from the Cort for a long and successful run. Van Heflin and Sidney Blackmer appeared in A Case of Libel based on the Westbrook Pegler-Quentin Reynolds case in 1963. Gabriel Dell and Rita Morena starred in Lorraine Hansberry's The Sign in Sidney Brustein's Window in 1964 and Hal Holbrook gave notable performances in Mark Twain Tonight in 1966 and I Never Sang For My Father in 1968.

In 1975, Moreno returned to the Longacre in the hilarious comedy The Ritz, appearing for 400 performances with Jack Weston and Jerry Stiller. Julie Harris followed in 1976 with her one-woman show, The Belle of Amherst, playing Emily Dickinson for 116 performances. Two notable productions had revivals in 1977: David Rabe's The Basic Training of Pavlo Hummel with Al Pacino, and Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice's Jesus Christ Superstar. The Fats Waller revue Ain't Misbehavin' opened in May 1978, garnering a Tony for Best Musical, before moving to the Plymouth. In 1980 the Longacre presented Mark Medoff's Children of a Lesser God, which received Tony Awards for best play, best actress (Phyllis Frelich) and best

actor (John Rubinstein). Its 887 performances established an all-time record at the theater. Subsequent productions have included a revival of Joe Egg with Jim Dale and Stockard Channing.

(JA, GH)

Notes

1. This production history of the Longacre 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. Botto, p. 52.
3. Boardman, p. 324.

Description¹

The Longacre Theater has a symmetrically-organized neo-French Classic facade which is wider than it is high. The ground floor is of terra cotta, now stuccoed and painted, above a granite water table. Three central pairs of metal and glass entrance doors, each approached by a low step, are set below transoms and placed within deep reveals. Paired metal exit doors are set in reveals in the outer bays. Modern display boxes flank the door openings. At this ground floor level the wall rises from a projecting stone base. Decorative bands surmount the base. The ground floor is surmounted by a frieze adorned with foliate ornament. A modern marquee, suspended from metal tie-rods joined to original metal fasteners on the wall above, spans the three central doorways. Decorative lions-heads adorn the corners of the marquee. A molding with faceted blocks sets off the major portion of the facade which is faced with white terra cotta. This facade section is divided into five bays by fluted pilasters with stylized Corinthian capitals incorporating flowers and small winged figures. The base of each pilaster takes the form of a stylized plant holding an urn from which rises a niche filled with a female figure representing Drama. She holds a scroll in her left hand and a mask in her right. The two outer bays are paneled; each contains a central niche (which is empty) carried on a corbel. The three central bays have double-height window openings, each with a tripartite window below a tripartite transom, now painted. The window sills are carried on brackets above reeded panels. Each window

surround has an eared architrave supporting a flower-adorned band and segmental-arch pediment filled with foliate ornament. The central window is now covered by projecting signs with the name of the theater. A wide frieze spans the five bays; each segment of it contains a central panel flanked by round indented forms filled with stylized masks set on scallops. An entablature consisting of a frieze with fluted panels and the inscription, "THE LONGACRE THEATRE," a dentil course, and a modillioned cornice with stylized foliation and lions-heads, sets off the uppermost story. Each of the five bays contains two window openings with three-over-three double-hung sash set in deep reveals. The reveals are enhanced by stylized foliation and medallions. Pilasters with sculpted urns from which grow plant forms flank the bays. A simple architrave and slightly stepped parapet terminate the facade. The side walls of the theater are visible from 48th Street. These are of plain brick and contain randomly placed window openings and fire escapes.

(MP)

Notes

1. Architecturally significant features are underlined.

Conclusion

The Longacre Theater survives today as one of the historic playhouses that symbolize American theater for both New York and the nation. Built for Broadway producer Harry H. Frazee, and among the earliest surviving Broadway theaters, it helped shape the character of the Broadway theater district. Designed for Frazee by Henry B. Herts, among the most prominent designers of Broadway theaters, the Longacre represents a special and important aspect of the nation's theatrical history. Its facade is an exceptional neo-French Classic style design, including a wealth of Renaissance-inspired terra-cotta ornament.

For three-quarters of a century the Longacre Theater has served as home to countless numbers of the plays through which the Broadway theater has come to personify American theater. As such, it continues to help define the Broadway theater district, the largest and most famous concentration of legitimate stage theaters in the world.

Report prepared by
Janet Adams
Research Department

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 Eugenie Hoffmeyer (EH). Gale Harris (GH) 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 building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Longacre Theater 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.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the Longacre Theater survives as one of the historic playhouses that symbolize American theater for both New York and the nation; that, built in 1912-13, it survives today as one of the oldest theaters in New York City; that it was constructed to house the office and theatrical productions of Harry H. Frazee, a prominent Broadway producer; that its neo-French Classic style facade by Henry B. Herts is an exceptionally handsome design; that among its significant architectural features is a wealth of Renaissance-inspired ornament including five bays formed by Corinthian pilasters, stylized floral forms and figures, friezes, and theatrical masques; that for three quarters of a century the Longacre Theater has served as home to countless numbers of 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 a Landmark the Longacre Theater, 220-228 West 48th Street, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 1019, Lot 50, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.

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APPENDIX

The following production history of the Longacre 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.

1913

ARE YOU A CROOK? 5/1/13 (12 perfs.) by William J. Hurlbut and Frances Whitehouse; with Marguerite Clark, Elitz Proctor Otis, Joseph Kilgour and George Fawcett.

THE SILVER WEDDING 8/11/13 (16 perfs.) by Edward Locke.

ADELE 8/28/13 (196 total perfs.) by Paul Herve; with William Danforth, Natalie Alt and Georgia Caine. (Moved to the Harris Theater 12/29/13.)

IOLE 12/29/13 (24 perfs.) by Robert W. Chambers and Ben Teal.

1914

THE HOUSE OF BONDAGE 1/19/14 (8 perfs.) by Joseph Byron Totters; with Elitz Procto Otis.

THE LAST RESORT 3/2/14 (16 perfs.) by George Scarborough; with George Fawcett.

A PAIR OF SIXES 3/27/14 (207 perfs.) by Edward Peple; with Jack Deveraux, Ann Murdock, Hale Hamilton and Maude Eburne.

TIPPING THE WINTER 9/23/14 (13 perfs.) by George Rollit.

KICK IN 10/15/14 (188 total perfs.) by Willard Mack; with John Barrymore, Lionel Adams, Katherine Harris and Maidel Turner. (Moved to the Republic Theater 11/16/14.)

WHAT IT MEANS TO A WOMAN 11/19/14 (12 perfs.) by E.H. Gould and F. Whitehouse; with Rita Jolivet and Joseph Kilgour.

SO MUCH FOR SO MUCH 12/2/14 (30 perfs.) by Willard Mack; with Willard Mack and Julia Woolcott.

SECRET STRINGS 12/28/14 (24 perfs.) by Kate Jourdan; with Hamilton Revelle.

1915

INSIDE THE LINES 2/9/15 (103 perfs.) by Earl Derr Biggers; with Anne Sutherland, Carroll McComas and Robert McWade.

GHOSTS 4/20/15 (2 matinees) by Henrik Ibsen; with Robert Whittier and Alberta Gallatin.

A FULL HOUSE 5/10/15 (112 perfs.) by Fred Jackson with Claiborne Foster, Ralph Morgan and May Vokes.

THE GREAT LOVER 11/10/15 (245 perfs.) by Frederick and Fanny Hatton; with Leo Ditrichstern, Cora Witherspoon and Beverly Sitgreaves.

1916

THE SILENT WITNESS 8/10/16 (52 perfs.) by Otto Hauerbach.

A PAIR OF QUEENS 8/29/16 (15 perfs.) by Otto Hauerbach, A. Seymour Brown and Harry Lewis.

NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH 9/14/16 (332 perfs.) by James Montgomery, based on a novel by Frederick Isham; with William Collier and Ned A. Sparks.

1917

LEAVE IT TO JANE 8/28/17 (167 perfs.) book and lyrics by Guy Bolton and P.G. Wodehouse, based on a play by George Ade, music by Jerome Kern; with Edith Hallor, Robert G. Pitkin, Oscar Shaw, Georgia O'Romey and Olin Howard.

1918

YES OR NO 1/21/18 (147 total perfs.) by Arthur Goodrich; with Janet Beecher. (First opened at the 48th Street Theater 12/21/17.)

THE BLUE PEARL 8/8/18 (36 perfs.) by Anne Crawford Flexner.

NOTHING BUT LIES 10/8/18 (135 perfs.) by Aaron Hoffman; with Olive Wyndham, William Collier and Frank Monroe.

1919

JUST AROUND THE CORNER 2/5/19 (13 perfs.) by George V. Hobart and Herbert Hall Winslow.

GHOSTS 2/7/19 (1 perf.) by Henrik Ibsen.

THREE FACES EAST 2/17/19 (335 total perfs.) by Anthony Paul Kelly; with Violet Heming and Cora Witherspoon. (First opened at the Cohan & Harris Theater 8/13/18.)

ADAM AND EVA 9/13/19 (312 perfs.) by Guy Bolton and George Middleton; with Berton Churchill, Reginald Mason, Roberta Arnold, Otto Kruger, Ferdinand Gottschalf and Ruth Shepley.

1920

THE CAVE GIRL 8/18/20 (40 perfs.) by George Middleton and Guy Bolton.

PITTER PATTEN 9/28/20 (111 perfs.) by Will M. Hough, music and lyrics by William B. Friedlander; with William Kent.

1921

THE CHAMPION 1/3/21 (176 perfs.) by Thomas Loudon and A.E. Thomas; with Rosalind Fuller, Ann Andrews, Grant Mitchell and A.P. Kaye.

NOBODY'S MONEY 8/17/21 (29 perfs.) by William Le Baron.

THANK YOU 10/3/21 (257 perfs.) by Winchell Smith and Tom Cushing; with Harry Davenport and Edith King.

1922

GO EASY, MABEL 5/8/22 (16 perfs.) by Charles George; with Margaret Dumont.

THE WOMAN WHO LAUGHED 8/16/22 (13 perfs.) by Edward Locke; with William Powell, Martha Hedman and Gilda Leary.

ROSE BERND 9/26/22 (87 perfs.) by Gerhart Hauptmann; with Ethel Barrymore, Dudley Digges, Doris Rankin and McKay Morris.

ROMEO AND JULIET 12/27/22 (29 perfs.) by William Shakespeare; with Ethel Barrymore and McKay Morris.

1923

EXTRA 1/23/23 (23 perfs.) by Jack Alicoate; with Chester Morris.

THE LAUGHING LADY 2/12/23 (97 perfs.) by Alfred Sutro; with Ethel Barrymore, McKay Morris and Cyril Keightley.

FOR VALUE RECEIVED 5/7/23 (48 perfs.) by Ethel Clifton; with Augustin Duncan and Eleanor Griffith.

LITTLE JESSIE JAMES 8/15/23 (385 perfs.) by Harlan Thompson; with Miriam Hopkins, Winifred Harris, Nan Halperin and Jay Velie.

1924

MOONLIGHT 1/30/24 (174 perfs.) by William LeBaron; with Ernest Glendenning.

THE DESERT FLOWER 11/18/24 (31 perfs.) by Don Mullally; with Robert Cummings and Mildred Southwick.

THE MONGREL 12/15/24 (34 perfs.) by Herman Bahr; with Rudolph Schildkraut and Ernita Lascelles.

1925

TWO MARRIED MEN 1/13/25 (16 perfs.) by Vincent Lawrence.

THE DARK ANGEL 2/10/25 (64 perfs.) by H.B. Trevelyan; with Patricia Collinge and Reginald Mason.

MERCENARY MARY 4/13/25 (136 perfs.) by William B. Friedlander and Con Conrad; with Sam Hearn and Winnie Baldwin.

THE DAGGER 9/9/25 (5 perfs.) by Marian Wightman; with Ralph Morgan and Sara Sothern.

THE BUTTER AND EGG MAN 9/23/25 (241 perfs.) by George S. Kaufman; with Robert Middlemass, Lucille Webster, Sylvia Field and Gregory Kelly.

1926

POMEROY'S PAST 4/19/26 (188 perfs.) by Clare Kummer; with Ernest Truex, Laura Hope Crews and Osgood Perkins.

SOUR GRAPES 9/6/26 (40 perfs.) by Vincent Lawrence; with Alice Brady, Frank Conroy and John Halliday.

AN AMERICAN TRAGEDY 10/11/26 (216 perfs.) by Patrick Kearney, based on the novel by Theodore Dreiser; with Miriam Hopkins, Frank Moran, Olive Mercer, Syndey Coburn, Morgan Farley and Philip Carey Jones.

1927

HOUSE OF SHADOWS 4/21/27 (29 perfs.) by Leigh Huddy.

TWO GIRLS WANTED 5/30/27 (324 total perfs.) by Gladys Unger; with Nydia Westman, Grace Menken and Beverly Sitgreaves. (First opened at the Little Theater 9/9/26.)

THE COMMAND TO LOVE 9/20/27 (236 perfs.) by Rudolph Lothar and Fritz Gottwald; with Basil Rathbone, Henry Stephenson, Mary Nash, Violet Kemble Cooper and Anthony Kemble Cooper.

1928

- THE GOLDEN AGE 4/24/28 (6 perfs.) by Lester Lonegran and Charlton Andrews.
- JARNEGAN 9/24/28 (138 perfs.) by Charles Beahan and Garrett Fort, based on a novel by Jim Tully; with Joan Bennett, Richard Bennett and Robert Cain.

1929

- JUDAS 1/24/29 (12 perfs.) by Walter Ferris and Basil Rathbone; with Basil Rathbone.
- FLIGHT 2/18/29 (41 perfs.) by Susan Meriwether and Victor Victor; with Miriam Hopkins and Ernest Glendenning.
- MYSTERY SQUARE 4/4/29 (44 perfs.) by Hugh A. Anderson and George Bamman, based on Robert Louis Stevenson's "Suicide Club" and "TheRajah's Diamond"; with Gavin Muir and Thomas Holding.
- NICE WOMEN 6/10/29 (64 perfs.) by William A. Grew; with Sylvia Sidney and Warren McCollum.
- HAWK ISLAND 9/16/29 (24 perfs.) by Howard Irving Young; with Clark Gable, Olga Lee and Mary Fowler.
- HER FRIEND THE KING 10/7/29 (24 perfs.) by A.E. Thomas and Harrison Rhodes; with William Faversham and Ara Gerald.
- A PRIMER FOR LOVERS 11/8/29 (24 perfs.) by William Hurlbut; with Rose Hobart, Robert Warwick, Alison Skipworth and Dorothy Mortimer.
- DIANA 12/9/29 (8 perfs.) by Irving Kaye Davis; with Janet McLeay, Mary Nash and Charles Quigley.
- THE UNSOPHISTICATES 12/30/29 (8 perfs.) by Harry Delf; with John T. Doyle, Mollie Pearson, Vernon Rich, Nydia Westman and Helen Baxter.

1930

- RITZY 2/10/30 (32 perfs.) by Viva Tattersall and Sidney Toler; with Ernest Truex and Miriam Hopkins.
- MENDEL INC. 3/10/30 (216 total perfs.) by David Freeman; with Alexander Carr. (First opened at the Sam Harris Theater 11/25/29; moved to the George M. Cohan 3/17/30).
- THE MATRIARCH 3/18/30 (15 perfs.) by G.B. Stern; with Constance Collier, Jessica Tandy and Derick de Marney.
- THE LONG ROAD 9/9/30 (23 perfs.) by Hugh Stange; with Otto Kruger.
- ROADSIDE 9/29/30 (11 perfs.) by Lynn Riggs; with Ralph Bellamy.

THE TYRANT 11/12/30 (13 perfs.) by Rafael Sabatini.

OVERTURE 12/6/30 (41 perfs.) by William Bolitho; with Colin Clive, Barbara Robbins, Pat O'Brien, and Pat O'Brien.

1931

SHE LIVED NEXT TO THE FIREHOUSE 2/10/31 (24 perfs.) by William A. Grew and Harry Delf; with Clifford Jones, Victor Moore and William Frawley.

NAPI 3/11/31 (21 perfs.) by Julius Berstl, adapted by Brian Marlow; with Ernest Truex.

SCHOOL FOR VIRTUE 4/21/31 (7 perfs.) by Arthur Ebenhack; with Evelyn Wade and Shirley Booth.

NIKKI 9/29/31 (40 perfs.) by John Monk Saunders, music by Philip Charig; with Fay Wray and Archie Leach (Cary Grant).

IN TIMES SQUARE 11/23/31 (8 perfs.) by Dodson L. Mitchell and Clyde North; with Thelma Ritter, John S. Butler and May McCabe.

EXPERIENCE UNNECESSARY 12/30/31 (46 perfs.) by Wilhelm Sterck, adapted from German by Gladys Unger; with Verree Teasdale and Walter Woolf.

1932

BLESSED EVENT 2/12/32 (124 perfs.) by Manuel Seff and Forrest Wilson; with Lee Patrick, Jean Adair, Charles Brown and Roger Pryor.

1933

NINE PINE STREET 4/27/33 (29 perfs.) by John Colton and Carleton Miles; with Lillian Gish, Raymond Hackett and Helen Claire.

THREE AND ONE 10/25/33 (77 perfs.) by Denys Amiel, adapted from French by Lewis Galantieri and John Houseman; with Brian Donlevy, Paul McGrath, Lillian Bond and Ruth Shepley.

1934

WEDNESDAY'S CHILD 1/16/34 (56 perfs.) by Leopold Atlas; with Frank M. Thomas, Jr., Walter Greaza and Katherine Warren.

THE PURE IN HEART 3/20/34 (7 perfs.) by John Howard Lawson; with Dorothy Hall and James Bell.

BRAINSWEAT 4/14/34 (5 perfs.) by John Charles Brownell; with Billy Higgins and Rose McClendon.

STRANGERS AT HOME 9/14/34 (11 perfs.) by Charles Devine; with Eleanor Hicks and William Post, Jr.

GERANIUMS IN MY WINDOW 10/26/34 (27 perfs.) by Samuel Ornitz and Vera Caspary; with Thomas Ewell, Bruce MacFarlane and Audrey Christie.

AROMAN SERVANT 12/1/34 (9 perfs.) by Larry O'Connor; with Ernest Glendenning and Lillian Kemble Cooper.

PORTRAIT OF GILBERT 12/28/34 (3 perfs.) by Carlton Miles; with Ann Dere. William Harigan, Selena Royle and Ethel Wilson.

1935

THE DISTAFF SIDE 1/14/35 (154 total perfs.) by John Van Druten; with Sybil Thorndike, Estelle Winwood, Mildred Natwick and Viola Roache. (First opened at the Booth Theater 9/25/34, later moved to Barrymore 2/12/35.)

NOAH 2/13/35 (46 perfs.) by Andre Obey, music by Louis Horst; with Pierre Fresnay.

TILL THE DAY I DIE/WAITING FOR LEFTY 3/26/35 (135 perfs.) by Clifford Odets; with Elia Kazan, Clifford Odets and Lee J. Cobb.

KIND LADY 9/9/35 (20 perfs.) by Edward Chodorov, from a story by Hugh Walpole; with Grace George and Francis Compton.

STRIP GIRL 10/19/35 (33 perfs.) by Henry Rosendahl, music by Harry Archer, lyrics by Jill Rainsford; with Mayo Jane Methot, Ruth Abbott and Dick Wallace.

PARADISE LOST 12/9/35 (72 perfs.) by Clifford Odets; with Stella Adler, Elia Kazan, Morris Carnovsky and Sanford Meisner.

1936

AMONG THOSE SAILING 2/11/36 (7 perfs.) by Laura Walker; with Selena Royle and William Harrigen.

LOVE ON THE DOLE 3/24/36 (125 total perfs.) by Ronald Gow and Walter Greenwood; with Wendy Hiller, Dodson Mitchell and Brandon Peters. (First opened at the Shubert Theater 2/24/36.)

TIMBER HOUSE 9/19/36 (1 perf.) by John Boruff; with Ann Dere.

IRON MEN 10/19/36 (16 perfs.) by Francis Gallagher; with William Haade and Harold Moffet.

HEDDA GABLER 11/16/36 (32 perfs.) by Henrik Ibsen; with Alla Nazimova, Henry Ellerbe, McKay Morris and Edward Trevor.

ALL EDITIONS 12/22/36 (23 perfs.) by Charles Washburn and Clyde North;
with Walter N. Greaza.

1937

HOWDY STRANGER 1/14/37 (77 perfs.) by Robert Sloane and Louis Pelletier,
Jr.; with Frank Parker.

CALL ME ZIGGY 2/12/37 (3 perfs.) by Dan Goldberg; with Joseph Buloff and
Ralph Theadore.

THE LADY HAS A HEART 9/25/37 (90 perfs.) by Ladislaus Bush-Fekete; with
Vincent Price and Elissa Landi.

SIEGE 12/8/37 (6 perfs.) by Irwin Shaw; with Harold Moffet, Rose Hobart,
Sheldon Leonard and William Edmunds

1938

ON BORROWED TIME 2/3/38 (321 perfs.) by Paul Osborn; with Dudley Digges,
Dorothy Stickney, Jean Adair and Dick Van Patten.

LORELEI 11/29/38 (7 perfs.) by Jacques Deval; with Philip Merivale and
Doris Nolan.

WINDOW SHOPPING 12/23/38 (11 perfs.) by Louis E. Shecter and Norman Clark;
with George Sidney and George Spevlin.

1939

I MUST LOVE SOMEONE 2/7/39 (191 perfs.) by Jack Kirkland and Leyla
Georgie; with James Rennie, Martha Sleeper, Scott Colton and
Dorothy Libaire.

WUTHERING HEIGHTS 4/27/39 (12 perfs.) by Randolph Carter, adapted from a
novel by Emily Bronte; with Don Terry, Edith Barrett, Viola Roche,
Sterling Oliver and Peggy Converse.

THREE SISTERS 10/14/39 (9 perfs.) by Anton Chekhov, with Helen Wynn,
Katherine Emery, Anne Revere, Stepperd Strudwick and Hume Cronyn.

MORNINGS AT SEVEN 11/30/39 (44 perfs.) by Paul Osborn; with Dorothy Gish
and Enid Markey.

1940

THE MAN WHO KILLED LINCOLN 1/17/40 (5 perfs.) by Elmer Harris, from a
book by Philip Van Doren Stern; with Richard Waring.

LEAVE HER TO HEAVEN 2/27/40 (15 perfs.) by John Van Druten; with Edmond O'Brien and Bettina Cerf.

MORNING STAR 4/16/40 (63 perfs.) by Sylvia Regan; with Molly Picon, David Morris, Jeanne Greene and Sidney Lumet.

1941

THE DISTANT CITY 9/22/41 (2 perfs.) by Edwin B. Self; with Gladys George.

1942

THE FIRST CROCUS 1/2/42 (5 perfs.) by Arnold Sundgaard; with Hugo Haas, Jocelyn Brando, Clarence Nordstrom, Edwin Philips and Herbert Nelson.

HEDDA GABLER 1/29/42 (12 perfs.) by Henrik Ibsen; with Katina Paxinou, Ralph Forbes, Margaret Wycherly and Henry Daniell.

JOHNNY 2 X 4 3/16/42 (65 perfs.) by Rowland Brown; with Jack Arthur.

ALL THE COMFORTS OF HOME 5/25/42 (8 perfs.) by Carl Laufs; with Celeste Holm.

LET FREEDOM SING 10/5/42 (8 perfs.) by Sam Locke, music by Harold Rome, et al.

YANKEE POINT 11/23/42 (24 perfs.) by Gladys Hurlbut; with Edna Best and John Cromwell.

1943

NINE GIRLS 1/13/43 (5 perfs.) by Wilfred H. Pettitt; with Barbara Bel Geddes.

THIS ROCK 2/18/43 (36 perfs.) by Walter Livingstone Faust; with Billie Burke.

THREE'S A FAMILY 5/5/43 (497 perfs.) by Phoebe and Henry Ephron.

1944 - 1953

Theater leased to Radio Station WOR.

1953

THE LADIES OF THE CORRIDOR 10/21/53 (45 perfs.) by Dorothy Parker and Arnaud d'Usseau; with Edna Best, Betty Field and Walter Matthau.

1954

MADEMOISELLE COLOMBE 1/6/54 (61 perfs.) by Jean Anouilh, adapted from French by Louis Kronenberger; with Julie Harris, Eli Wallach, Sam Jaffe and Edna Best.

THE BURNING GLASS 3/4/54 (28 perfs.) by Charles Morgan; with Walter Matthau and Isobel Elson.

THE TENDER TRAP 10/12/54 (101 perfs.) by Max Shulman and Robert Paul Smith; with Ronny Graham, Robert Preston, Julia Meade and Kim Hunter.

1955

FESTIVAL 1/18/55 (23 perfs.) by Sam and Bella Spewack.

THE HONEYS 4/28/55 (36 perfs.) by Roald Dahl; with Dorothy Stickney, Jessica Tandy, Hume Cronyn, Mary Finney and Dana Elcar.

ALMOST CRAZY 6/20/55 (16 perfs.).

THE YOUNG AND THE BEAUTIFUL 10/1/55 (65 perfs.) by Sally Benson, from the writings of F. Scott Fitzgerald; with Lois Smith.

THE LARK 11/17/55 (229 perfs.) by Jean Anouilh, adapted by Lillian Hellman; with Christopher Plummer, Boris Karloff, Julie Harris and Theodore Bikel.

1956

SIXTH FINGER IN A FIVE FINGER GLOVE 10/8/56 (2 perfs.) by Scott Michel.

GIRLS OF SUMMER 11/19/56 (56 perfs.) by N. Richard Nash; with Shelley Winters and George Peppard.

1957

HOLIDAY FOR LOVERS 2/14/57 (100 perfs.) by Ronald Alexander; with Don Ameche, Carmen Mathews and Audrey Christie.

A BOY GROWING UP 10/7/57 (17 perfs.) stage reading arranged by Emlyn Williams from the stories of Dylan Thomas; with Emlyn Williams.

FAIR GAME 11/2/57 (217 perfs.) by Sam Locke; with Sam Levene and Ellen McRae (Ellen Burstyn).

1958

THE PLEASURE OF HIS COMPANY 10/22/58 (474 perfs.) by Samuel Taylor and Cornelia Otis Skinner; with Cyril Richard, Dolores Hart, Cornelia Otis Skinner, Walter Abel, Charles Ruggles and George Peppard.

1959

THE HIGHEST TREE 11/4/59 (21 perfs.) by Dore Schary; with William Prince, Natalie Schafer, Larry Gates and Robert Redford.

JOLLY'S PROGRESS 12/5/59 (9 perfs.) by Lonnie Coleman, based on his novel Adam's Way; with Ellis Rabb, Anne Revere, Wendell Corey, Eartha Kitt and Vinnette Carroll.

1960

THE DEADLY GAME 2/2/60 (39 perfs.) by James Yaffe; with Ludwig Donath, Claude Dauphin, Frank Campanella, Pat Hingle and Max Adrian.

VIVA MADISON AVENUE! 4/6/60 (2 perfs.) by George Panetta; with Buddy Hackett, William Windom, Frances Sternhagen, Jed Allan, Jan Miner, Fred Clark and Peggy Pope.

LITTLE MOON OF ALBAN 12/1/60 (20 perfs.) by James Costigan; with Robert Redford, Stefan Gierasch and Julie Harris.

1961

RHINOCEROS 1/9/61 (240 perfs.) by Eugene Ionesco; with Morris Carnovsky, Eli Wallach, Zero Mostel, Anne Jackson, Dolph Sweet and Jean Stapleton.

RHINOCEROS 9/18/61 (16 perfs.) Return engagement.

EVERYBODY LOVES OPAL 10/11/61 (21 perfs.) by John Patrick; with Eileen Heckart, Brenda Vaccaro, Stubby Kaye and James Coco.

PURLIE VICTORIOUS 11/20/61 (261 total perfs.) by Ossie Davis; with Ossie Davis, Ruby Dee, Godfrey Cambridge and Alan Alda. (Originally opened at the Cort Theater 9/28/61.)

1962

TIAO CH'AN OR THE BEAUTIFUL BAIT/PEH SHUH TCHUWAN OR THE WHITE SNAKE 11/12/62 (16 perfs.).

1963

HIDDEN STRANGER 1/8/63 (7 perfs.) by Maxwell Maltz; with Torin Thatcher and Marion Brash.

A CASE OF LIBEL 10/10/63 (242 perfs.) by Henry Denker; with Joel Crothers, Van Heflin, Lesley Woods, Sidney Blackmer and Larry Gates.

1964

THE SIGN IN SIDNEY BRUSTEIN'S WINDOW 10/15/64 (101 perfs.) by Lorraine Hansberry; with Gabriel Dell, Rita Moreno, Frank Schofield and Alice Ghostley.

1965

PETERPAT 1/6/65 (21 perfs.) by Enid Rudd; with Dick Shawn and Joan Hackett.

1966

SLAPSTICK TRAGEDY 2/22/66 (7 perfs.) by Tennessee Williams; with Kate Reid, Margaret Leighton, Tom Aldredge and Zoe Caldwell.

MARK TWAIN TONIGHT 3/23/66 (85 perfs.); with Hal Holbrook.

A HAND IS ON THE GATE 9/21/66 (21 perfs.) Poetry and folk music by black Americans; with Roscoe Lee Brown, James Earl Jones and Cicely Tyson.

GILBERT BECAUD ON BROADWAY 10/31/66 (19 perfs.).

MY SWEET CHARLIE 12/6/66 (31 perfs.) by David Westheimer; with Louis Gossett.

1967

THE NATURAL LOOK 3/11/67 (1 perf.) by Lee Thuna; with Brenda Vaccaro, Gene Hackman and Jerry Orbach.

DAPHNE IN COTTAGE D 10/15/67 (41 perfs.) by Stephen Levi; with Sandy Dennis and William Daniels.

1968

I NEVER SANG FOR MY FATHER 1/25/68 (124 perfs.) by Robert Anderson; with Hal Holbrook, Lillian Gish and Teresa Wright.

1969

FIRE 1/28/69 (7 perfs.) by John Roc.

THE NATIONAL THEATER OF THE DEAF 2/24/69 (16 perfs.).

THE MEGILLA OF ITZIK MANGER 4/19/69 (12 perfs.).

1970

CANDIDA 4/6/70 (8 perfs.) by George Bernard Shaw; with Paxton Whitehead and Celeste Holm.

LES BLANCS 11/15/70 (40 perfs.) by Lorraine Hansberry; with Cameron Mitchell, James Earl Jones and Earle Hyman.

1971

FRANK MERRIWELL, OR HONOR CHALLENGED 4/24/71 (1 perf.) by Skip Redwine, Larry Frank and Heywood Gould.

THE ME NOBODY KNOWS 9/15/71 (587 total perfs.) edited by Stephen M. Joseph from text of children 7-18 attending New York Public Schools, music by Gary Friedman, lyrics by Will Holt; with Northern Calloway, Paul Mace and Carl Thoma. (Opened at the Orpheum Theater 5/18/60; reopened at the Helen Hayes Theater 12/18/70.)

1972

THE SIGN IN SIDNEY BRUSTEIN'S WINDOW 1/26/72 (5 perfs.) by Lorraine Hansberry; with Hal Linden, Dolph Sweet, Zohra Lampert and Frances Sternhagen.

1975

THE RITZ 1/20/75 (400 perfs.) by Terrence McNally; with Jack Weston, Rita Moreno and Jerry Stiller.

1976

THE BELLE OF AMHERST 4/28/76 (116 perfs.) by William Luce; with Julie Harris.

CHECKING OUT 9/14/76 (15 perfs.) by Allen Swift; with Joan Copeland and Mason Adams.

NO MAN'S LAND 11/9/76 (47 perfs.) by Harold Pinter; with John Gielgud and Ralph Richardson.

1977

THE TRIP BACK DOWN 1/4/77 (70 perfs.) by John Bishop; with John Cullum, Carol Chanco, Edward Seamon and Andrew Jarkowsky.

THE BASIC TRAINING OF PAVLO HUMMEL 4/24/77 (107 perfs.) by David Rabe; with Al Pacino.

SOME OF MY BEST FRIENDS 10/25/77 (7 perfs.) by Stanley Hart; with Ted Knight, Lee Wallace and Alice Drummond.

JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR 11/23/77 (96 perfs.) by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice; with Patrick Jude, Barbara Niles and William Daniel Grey.

1978

AIN'T MISBEHAVIN 5/9/78 (1,604 total perfs.) by Richard Maltby, Jr.; with Nell Carter, Andre De Shields, Armelia McQueen, Ken Page and Charlaine Woodard. (Moved to Plymouth Theater 1/29/79 and then to Belasco 1/26/81.)

1979

FAITH HEALER 4/5/79 (20 perfs.) by Brian Friel; with James Mason.

BOSOMS AND NEGLECT 5/3/79 (4 perfs.) by John Guare; with Paul Rudd, Kate Reid and Marian Mercer.

BUT NEVER JAM TODAY 7/31/79 (7 perfs.) by Vinnette Carroll and Bob Larimer; with Lynne Thigpen and Reginald Vel Johnson.

LAST LICKS 11/20/79 (15 perfs.) by Frank D. Gilroy; with Ed Flanders, J.T. Walsh and Susan Kellermann.

1980

CHILDREN OF A LESSER GOD 3/30/80 (887 perfs.) by Mark Medoff; with Phyllis Frelich and John Rubinstein.

1982

ALMOST AN EAGLE 12/16/82 (5 perfs.) by Michael Kimberley; with James Whitmore.

1983

ANGELS FALL 1/22/83 (64 perfs.) by Lanford Wilson; with Fritz Weaver.

PASSION 5/15/83 (97 perfs.) by Peter Nichols; with Frank Langella.

1984

PLAY MEMORY 4/26/84 (5 perfs.) by Joanna M. Glass; with Jo Henderson, Donald Moffat and Valerie Mahaffey.

HARRIGAN AND HART 1/31/85 (5 perfs.) by Michael Stewart, music by Max Showalter, lyrics by Peter Walker; with Harry Groener and Mark Hamill.

JOE EGG 3/27/85 (101 perfs.) by Peter Nichols; with Jim Dale, Stockard
Channing and Joanna Gleason.

MUSICAL COMEDY MURDERS OF 1940 4/6/87.



Longacre Theater
220-228 West 48th Street
Manhattan

Built: 1912-13
Architect: Henry B. Herts