

Landmarks Preservation Commission  
December 15, 1987; Designation List 198  
LP-1375

ST. JAMES THEATER (originally Erlanger Theater), first floor interior consisting of the auditorium, the stage, the staircase leading from the first floor to the first balcony floor; the first balcony floor interior consisting of the first balcony, the upper part of the auditorium; the second balcony floor interior consisting of the second 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; 246-256 West 44th Street; built 1926-27; architects, Warren & Wetmore.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1015, Lot 54.

On June 14 and 15, 1982, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as an Interior Landmark of the St. James Theater (originally Erlanger Theater), first floor interior consisting of the auditorium, the stage, the staircases leading from the first floor to the first balcony floor and all connecting entrance areas; the first balcony floor interior consisting of the first balcony, the upper part of the auditorium, the upper part of the stage house, the staircases leading from the first balcony floor to the second balcony floor and all connecting entrance areas; the second balcony floor interior consisting of the second balcony, the upper part of the auditorium and ceiling, and 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. 71). 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 interior of the St. James (built as the Erlanger) Theater survives today as one of the historic theater interiors that symbolize American theater for both New York and the nation. Built in 1926-27, the St. James was designed by the prominent firm of Warren & Wetmore as the last Broadway theater erected for Abraham Erlanger.

Abraham Erlanger had been a principal in the infamous Klaw & Erlanger Theatrical Syndicate, which had dominated the American theater industry for several decades on either side of the turn of the century. After the break-up in the Syndicate, Klaw and Erlanger went their separate ways, and each built theaters named for themselves.

The Erlanger was the first theatrical commission of Warren & Wetmore, one of New York's most prominent architectural firms. This commission demonstrated Erlanger's determination to make the house that bore his name a handsome theater.

The St. James, as an unusual theater design by the architects of Grand Central Terminal, and the last Broadway venture of Abraham Erlanger, represents a special and important aspect of the nation's theatrical history. Beyond its historical importance, its interior is an unusual design, based on a restrained Beaux-Arts classicism, unlike most of its contemporaries which featured Adamesque plasterwork.

For half a century the St. James 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.<sup>1</sup>

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(MMK)

## Evolution of Theater Design

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

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

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

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

(MMK)

## The Broadway Theater in American Theatrical History

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

It was in the Broadway theaters that the beginnings of a distinctly American drama could be seen in the Western melodramas of David Belasco, the social comedies of Clyde Fitch and Langdon Mitchell, and the problem

plays of Edward Sheldon and Eugene Walter. With the rise of the "little theater" movement in the second decade of the century, it seemed that theatrical leadership had passed from Broadway to such experimental "art" theaters as the Provincetown Playhouse and the Neighborhood Playhouse. Before long, however, the innovations of the little theaters infused Broadway with new life. Beginning with the production of Eugene O'Neill's first full-length play, Beyond the Horizon, on Broadway in 1920, the playhouses of Broadway presented the work of a new generation of playwrights, including, in addition to O'Neill, Maxwell Anderson, Philip Barry, S.N. Behrman, Rachel Crothers, Sidney Howard, George S. Kaufman, George Kelly and Elmer Rice.

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

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

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

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

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

(MMK)

## Notes

1. The discussion of the northward movement of Manhattan's business and theaters is based on Mary Henderson, The City and the Theatre (Clifton, N.J.: James T. White and Co., 1973), pp. 130-131, 168-170.
2. W.G. Rogers and Mildred Weston, Carnival Crossroads: the Story of Times Square (New York: Doubleday, 1960), pp. 39-78; Howard B. Furer, New York: A Chronological and Documentary History 1524-1970 (Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.: Oceana Publications, 1974), p. 34 ff.; The New York Subway (New York: Interborough Rapid Transit Co., 1904; reprint ed., New York: Arno Press, n.d.).
3. Alfred L. Bernheim, The Business of the Theatre (New York: Actors Equity Association, 1932; reprint ed., New York: Benjamin Blom, 1964), p. 26.
4. Jack Poggi, Theater in America: The Impact of Economic Forces, 1870-1967 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968), p. 6.
5. Brooks Atkinson, Broadway, rev. ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1974), p. 11.
6. Philip Paneth, Times Square, Crossroads of the World (New York: Living Books, 1965), p. 20.
7. Henderson, p. 263.
8. Henderson, p. 195-196.
9. The discussion of the developments in American theater architecture is based upon: Ned A. Bowman, "American Theatre Architecture: the Concrete Mirror Held Up to Yankee Nature," The American Theatre: The Sum of its Parts (New York: French, 1972), pp. 199-233; Burr C. Cook, "Twenty Years of Theatre Building," Theatre, 36 (August 1922), 98-99; Arthur S. Meloy, Theatres and Picture Houses (New York: Architects' Supply and Publishing Co., 1916), p. 29.
10. See, for example, the discussion of various theaters in Randolph Williams Sexton and Ben Franklin Betts, eds., American Theaters of Today, 2 vols. (New York: Architectural Book Pubs., 1927, 1930; reprint ed., New York: Vestal, 1977).
11. Stanley Buder, "Forty-Second Street at the Crossroads: A History of Broadway to Eighth Avenue," West 42nd Street: "The Bright Light Zone" (New York: Graduate School and University Center, CUNY, 1978), p. 62.

## Abraham Erlanger

Abraham Lincoln Erlanger (1860-1930) was a principal figure in the Theatrical Syndicate, formed with Marc Klaw, which emerged around the turn of the century as the most powerful theatrical agency in the country,

dominating the theater industry for several decades.

Erlanger took his first theatrical job at age fifteen as a coat-room attendant at Cleveland's old Academy of Music, where he eventually worked his way up to the position of stage manager. Later he became business manager of the Euclid Avenue Opera House in the same city, under the ownership of Senator Mark Hanna. In the 1880s he became a co-manager of the George S. Knight Company, managing their seasonal tours. In 1884 his experience led to his being hired to manage the tour of Shadows of a Great City, for famous actor Joseph Jefferson III.<sup>1</sup>

Marc Klaw (1858-1936), originally a lawyer in Kentucky, turned to part-time work reviewing plays for the local papers in order to make ends meet. His theatrical connections expanded when the Frohmans, major New York producers, retained him to handle litigation involving the pirating of plays. His success in the case of an illicit production of a Frohman play, Hazel Kirke, led to Klaw's being offered the position of legal counsel in the Frohmans' New York office.<sup>2</sup>

Klaw and Erlanger met in 1887; their first venture involved the co-management of Joseph Jefferson and Effie Ellsler. Their partnership was formed the following year, when the two men took over operation of the Taylor Exchange. Out of this operation emerged what has been described as "the first booking office and the first formalized booking procedures in America."<sup>3</sup> Among their innovations were centralized booking, legally binding contracts, and the use of pictures of actual stage productions, instead of posed photos, for publicity prints.<sup>4</sup> By 1895, the Klaw & Erlanger agency was the second largest in the nation, controlling nearly 200 theaters.

Klaw & Erlanger's first independent production was The Great Metropolis, followed by The Country Circus.<sup>5</sup> Their productions ranged widely, including among others "aerial ballet," and presentations of German opera conducted by Walter Damrosch.<sup>6</sup>

In 1896 Klaw and Erlanger joined with Charles Frohman, Al Hayman, Samuel F. Nixon, and J. Frederick Zimmerman to organize the Theatrical Syndicate. Operating along the lines of a trust, the Syndicate grew to control theater bookings nationwide. From just over thirty theaters, the Syndicate expanded until it controlled between seven and eight hundred houses, said to represent at least one in every American city with a population of 5000 or more.<sup>7</sup>

The Syndicate avowed its intention of bringing about needed reforms in the booking of shows, but in the process created a monopoly with exclusive control of bookings for its hundreds of theaters. The firm of Klaw & Erlanger was made responsible for all attractions presented in Syndicate-controlled theaters.

The monopolistic practices of the Syndicate eventually resulted in a number of other producers, both individuals like David Belasco and larger organizations like the Shuberts, uniting to fight its influence. The growth of the Shubert organization, especially, beginning about 1910, represented a serious challenge. The Syndicate was finally dissolved in 1916. Klaw & Erlanger retained its dominant position as a booking agency;

the partners continued their roles as managers and producers, and eventually collaborated with both Belasco and the Shuberts. Following a quarrel, Klaw and Erlanger parted company in 1919, each continuing independently in the theatrical field.<sup>8</sup>

It was in the role of producer that Klaw & Erlanger commissioned two theaters to be built on the south side of 42nd Street: the New Amsterdam, and the Liberty. The New Amsterdam was actually a multi-use building incorporating two theaters and a ten-story office tower to house their booking and producing enterprises.<sup>9</sup> The Liberty was intended to be a home for the comedy team of the Rogers Brothers, whom Klaw & Erlanger managed. For the designs of their two new theaters, Klaw & Erlanger turned to the prestigious architectural firm of Herts & Tallant, renowned specialists in the architecture of theaters.

After their split, in 1921, Klaw built his own theater, the Klaw Theater (later the Avon Theater; demolished) at 251 West 45th Street, in the heart of the Shubert Alley theater cluster. That same year Erlanger followed suit with plans for his Erlanger Theater (although it was not completed until 1927) also in the Shubert Alley cluster. Herts & Tallant were no longer in business and Herbert Krapp, from their office, was engaged building theaters for the Shuberts; Klaw hired theater architect Eugene DeRosa to design the Klaw Theater, while Erlanger turned to the nationally prominent firm of Warren & Wetmore.

(AR, MP)

#### Notes

1. Milo L. Smith, "The Klaw-Erlanger Bogeyman Myth," Players 44 (January 1969), 70-71.
2. Ibid, p. 71.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid, p. 72.
5. Abraham L. Erlanger, obituary, New York Times March 8, 1930, p. 10.
6. Ibid.
7. Mary Henderson, The City and the Theatre (Clifton, N.J.: James T. White and Co., 1973), p. 189.
8. Abraham L. Erlanger, obituary, p. 10.
9. See New York Landmarks Preservation Commission, New Amsterdam Theater Designation Report (LP-1026), prepared by Marjorie Pearson (New York: City of New York, 1979).

## Warren & Wetmore

When Abraham Erlanger commissioned the architects Warren & Wetmore to design a new theater for him, the firm had already established a reputation as one of the country's preeminent designers of commercial and public buildings, especially in New York City. Although the office is best remembered today for its work on Grand Central Terminal, and a number of hotels including the Biltmore, the Vanderbilt, the Commodore, and the Ritz in New York City, their work also included several theaters and halls in the northeast, of which Erlanger's theater was the first.

Charles Delevan Wetmore (1866-1941) received an A.B. degree from Harvard University in 1889, and in 1892 graduated from the Harvard Law School. He had also studied architecture, and before joining the law firm of Carter, Ledyard & Milburn, had designed three dormitory buildings on the Harvard campus--Claverly, Westmorly and Apley Court. Wetmore first met his future partner when he consulted with him concerning the design of his own house. Warren, impressed by his client's architectural ability, suggested he leave law, and Warren & Wetmore was established in 1898.

Whitney Warren (1864-1943), after attending Columbia briefly, continued his studies at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, the pupil of Daumet and Girault from 1885 to 1894. Upon his return to this country, Warren entered the offices of McKim, Mead & White, where he remained until the formation of his own firm. Warren & Wetmore's first major commission was for the New York Yacht Club of 1899, an exceptionally fine example of Beaux-Arts design, but it was not until the Grand Central Terminal commission that the firm's reputation was fully established.<sup>1</sup> Grand Central was the first of a number of railroad stations, including those built for the Michigan Central, the Canadian Northern and the Erie Railroads. The Biltmore Hotel, designed in association with Reed & Stem, as was the Terminal, as part of the development of the Grand Central area, was the first in a long series of grand hotels by Warren & Wetmore. The Vanderbilt, the Commodore, the Ritz-Carlton, the Ambassador, and the Linnard were all constructed within the Grand Central district. The firm also received commissions for hotels outside New York, among them the Hotel Ambassador in Atlantic City, the Belmont in Newport, Rhode Island, the Royal Hawaiian in Honolulu, and the Bermudiana in Hamilton, Bermuda. The firm's best known office tower, the New York Central Building of 1928, now known as the Helmsley Building, is located just north of the Terminal.

Warren was an intense Francophile, a founder of New York's Society of Beaux-Arts Architects, an officer in the French Legion of Honor, and a member of the Institut de France. He was appointed architect for the reconstruction of the Louvain Library in Belgium after World War I. Warren's family ties and his own secure social footing made Warren & Wetmore a favorite of New York's rich and socially prominent. They received commissions for town houses and commercial structures from members of the Vanderbilt, Goelet and Gould families.<sup>2</sup>

The Erlanger Theater, preliminary drawings for which were completed in 1922, was Warren & Wetmore's first theatrical commission. They went on to design a second theater for Erlanger in his hometown of Buffalo, New York. The Buffalo Erlanger Theater, like the New York City version, also opened in 1927; in style it resembled a three-story Federal era house, with a box

office and marquee at the front. (The interior has since been converted into office space.)<sup>3</sup> Warren & Wetmore also designed the Warren Theater in Warren, Pennsylvania, and were responsible for alterations and additions to the New National Theater in Washington, D.C.

The firm's largest and most ambitious theater project came three years after the completion of Erlanger's Theater in New York. The Paramount Theater and Convention Hall complex in Asbury Park, New Jersey, not only boasted an auditorium seating approximately 2000, but also a skylit convention hall with a capacity upwards of 3000, both under the same roof. The exterior of this enormous structure was largely red brick, with extensive polychromatic terra-cotta ornament and trim.<sup>4</sup> The firm also designed the Casino Building in Asbury Park, which not unlike Grand Central Terminal consisted of three huge windows on each of the two sides.<sup>5</sup>

(PD, NG)

#### Notes

1. Biographical information is based on Landmarks Preservation Commission, Grand Central Terminal Interior Designation Report (LP-1099), prepared by Nancy Goeschel (New York: City of New York, 1980), p. 6; Charles D. Wetmore, obituaries, New York Times, May 9, 1941, p. 21 and New York Herald Tribune, May 10, 1941.
2. Biographical information is based on Grand Central pp. 6-7; and Whitney Warren, obituaries, New York Herald Tribune, January 25, 1943 and New York Times, January 25, 1943, p. 13. On the firm see also Dennis McFadden, "Warren & Wetmore," entry in the Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects.
4. Dan Harter, "Erlanger Theatre: Buffalo, N.Y.," Marquee 4 (2nd quarter, 1972), 20.
5. "Paramount Theatre and Convention Hall, Asbury Park, N.J.," Architecture and Building, 62 (August 1930), 244-245, 249.
6. Ibid, p. 246.

#### The Erlanger Theater

Although Abraham Erlanger had already built two theaters jointly with Marc Klaw -- the New Amsterdam in 1902-03 and the Liberty in 1902-05-- problems plagued Erlanger when he attempted to erect his own playhouse following the dissolution of the Theatrical Syndicate and the Klaw & Erlanger partnership in 1919. More than six years of planning, delays and changes elapsed before Erlanger finally opened his own theater in 1927. Originally commissioned in 1921 as the Model Theater, it was to have been "of simple design with seating for 1200 and ready for occupancy by the beginning of 1922."<sup>1</sup> But Erlanger became embroiled in litigation with his

former partner and the Shuberts, and court proceedings and injunctions temporarily halted any plans to go forward with the new playhouse, despite the completion of Warren & Wetmore's preliminary drawings in early 1922. By the end of that year, Erlanger appeared ready to complete the theater when it was announced in December that he had signed exclusive contracts with the vaudeville team of Bernard & Collier to star in a musical revue for the new house. Under the agreement, the two would appear only in New York, while the name of the Model Theater would be changed to the Bernard & Collier Music Hall and become a permanent home of revues similar to the new Music Box Theater.<sup>2</sup>

For unknown reasons, the Bernard & Collier plans never materialized; instead, another three years elapsed before Erlanger announced for a third time his intentions to build a theater. "The new house," it was said, "will be constructed along the lines of the New Amsterdam and be equal to that theater in capacity... the cost will be one million dollars."<sup>3</sup> Finally, on September 26, 1927, more than six years after the original plans to build had been drawn, and \$500,000 over the estimated cost, Erlanger's Theater opened with George M. Cohan's critically acclaimed production of The Merry Malones.

In 1921, when Erlanger first began plans to build his theater, the cluster of theaters on 44th and 45th Streets now known collectively as Shubert Alley was already largely in place. Adjoining the site on the west was Winthrop Ames's Little Theater, while the Shuberts' Broadhurst and Shubert Theaters were across the street; on West 45th Street stood the Booth and the Plymouth, with Marc Klaw's new theater nearby. By the time the Erlanger had been completed in 1927, the western edge of the block had been rebuilt with the Theatre Masque (today the Golden), Royale, and Majestic Theaters together with the adjoining Lincoln (today Milford) Hotel. The Erlanger was the last theater to be built of the the two-block cluster which has become the symbolic heart of the theater district in New York.

Why Erlanger chose Warren & Wetmore to design his theater remains a matter of conjecture. It can only be surmised that Erlanger wanted the best for his project and, with Herts & Tallant out of the field, turned not to any other theater architect but instead to a firm with a major national reputation.

The Erlanger Theater replaced an unassuming row of three-story brownstones on the 125 x 100 foot site; when completed, it towered 98 feet, or eight stories, above West 44th Street, making it one of the taller Broadway theaters. Its very large, simply designed facade was architecturally conservative compared to earlier, pre-War theaters, but the architects' skillful use of proportion and material secured for it a clear and dignified presence.

The interior of the Erlanger was among the largest built on Broadway, a large two-balcony house equivalent in seating capacity to Klaw & Erlanger's New Amsterdam Theater of twenty years earlier.<sup>4</sup> Compared either to the New Amsterdam, or to the other theater interiors of the mid- to late-1920s, however, the design of the Erlanger seems relatively simple. Reviews typically described the theater as "the least ornate of all the

theatres recently added to the Times Square district":

Although the structure was erected at a cost of \$1,500,000, its entire effect, both on the exterior and interior, is one of simplicity. In the auditorium there has been a studied attempt to create an intimate rather than a theatrical atmosphere. <sup>5</sup>

Warren & Wetmore's design represented a marked departure from contemporary approaches to theaters in that it relied more on spatial organization and less on ornament for its effects. In particular, there was none of the painted and gilded Adamesque plasterwork so beloved of Herbert Krapp, designer of most of the 1920s Broadway theaters:

The interior design is Georgian, the color scheme coral and antique gold. All the materials used have been chosen to harmonize with these colors. Ornamentation, other than the proscenium boxes, has been done with painting rather than plaster decoration. Murals decorate the side walls and the proscenium arch. <sup>6</sup>

The major ornamental features of the interior are the side boxes (known as the "President's" and the "Governor's" boxes; Governor Al Smith and his family sat in the latter on opening night), projecting out and slightly below the balcony. Each box is framed by tall, slender fluted Corinthian columns supporting a projecting section of the entablature that runs the length of the auditorium's walls, topped in turn by a lunette. The lunette is adorned with murals, while the sounding board that arches above is adorned with trompe-l'oeil painted coffering. The walls of the auditorium below the balcony level had the appearance of ashlar blocks. Murals adorned the side walls. The proscenium arch is composed of concave and convex moldings; two urns, with gold highlights, are placed on each side of the first balcony just behind the boxes. Trompe-l'oeil paintings of swags and musical instruments decorates the ceiling, whose large circular medallion (with a modern chandelier) is adorned with acanthus leaves.

The slightly unusual configuration, and the simplicity of ornament, were commented on in the architectural press:

The interior of the auditorium is broad and shallow with the balcony very near the stage as the edge of the balcony is over the tenth row of seats in the orchestra. There is a box slightly below the balcony level at either side of the house. The interior decoration, while more elaborate than the exterior bears out its simplicity with broad expanses of plain wall surfaces and decoration largely confined to the ceiling areas.... The lighting fixtures are marked because of their unobtrusiveness. <sup>7</sup>

The auxiliary spaces of the theater received similar treatment:

The main entrance is through wide doors to a spacious marble lobby extending all the way across the building. The ladies' lounge, painted in antique green, is luxuriously

furnished, as is a men's smoking room, done in the old English style. Back of the curtain line most of the devices known to up-to-date stagecraft have been installed. <sup>8</sup>

The overall effect of the design was of a large, effective theatrical space, adorned with a subdued, Beaux-Arts classicism serving as a tasteful backdrop for the drama.

Erlanger survived the opening of his theater by only three years. In 1932, when it appeared that Erlanger's estate might be insolvent, Vincent Astor, owner of the land under the Erlanger theater sued to protect his interest, forcing the Erlanger estate to dispose of the theater. <sup>9</sup> Soon after, Lodewick Vroom, formerly Gilbert Miller's manager, bought the theater and renamed it the St. James.<sup>10</sup>

Having been acquired by the Shubert Organization in 1941, the St. James later passed, in 1957, to Scarborough House, Inc., a real estate investment company. Scarborough, in turn, turned over the operation and management of the theater to the Jujamcyn Corporation.<sup>11</sup> Major interior renovations and alterations costing \$600,000 were undertaken soon after the purchase; the "new" St. James then reopened in December of 1958.

The renovations, designed by Frederick Fox, altered the lobby and lounge areas considerably. Part of the wall decorations in the auditorium were also lost, when the side-wall murals were covered over with fabric and wall paper. As described in a contemporary press account:

Gold-colored fabrics and huge murals cover the walls. The asbestos curtain and all seats and carpets are new, and a compact electronic switchboard and a high-capacity Freon air-conditioning unit have been installed.

The alley beside the theater has been turned into a brightly decorated smoking area. New rest rooms, tiled and greatly enlarged, are other features. Five sets of stereophonic speakers are hidden behind the proscenium as an auxiliary sound system.<sup>13</sup>

The proscenium arch remained intact, however, as did the sounding board and ceiling with their original trompe-l'oeil paintings.

Today the St. James stands on West 44th Street as one of the "Shubert Alley" houses that form the symbolic core of the Broadway theater district.

(PD)

#### Notes

1. "Erlanger's New Theater, the Model," New York Times, May 20, 1921, p. 18.
2. "Bernard and Collier to Have Music Hall," New York Times, December 9, 1922, p. 11.

3. "Erlanger to Build Theater in 44th Street," New York Times, February 17, 1926, p. 13.
4. "Cohan Play to Open Erlanger Theater," New York Times, July 16, 1927.
5. "New Erlanger's Design is Georgian," New York Times, September 27, 1927.
6. Ibid.
7. "The Erlanger Theater, New York City," Architecture and Building, 59 (September 1927), 312.
8. "New Erlanger's Design."
9. "Astor Files Suit to Dispossess Erlanger Firm," New York Herald Tribune, June 22, 1932.
10. "Erlanger Theater Now St. James," New York Times, August 6, 1932, p. 14.
11. Sam Zolotow, 'playhouse Here Sold by Shuberts," New York Times, July 30, 1957.
12. Gene Gleason, "St. James Theater All Spruced Up," New York Herald Tribune November 29, 1958. More redecoration and alterations worth \$50,000 equipped the St. James for the opening of Irving Berlin's musical Mr. President in 1962.
13. Ibid.

### The St. James as a Playhouse<sup>1</sup>

The Erlanger opened on September 26, 1927 with The Merry Malones, a musical comedy written by, scored by, produced by and starring George M. Cohan. A combination of musical dramas and revues followed, the most popular of which was Fine and Dandy, a musical with Eleanor Powell and Bobby Clark that introduced "Can This Be Love." The house was then leased to the Civic Light Opera Company which presented Gilbert and Sullivan in repertory as well as operettas by Lehar, Friml and Herbert.

Following that engagement the theater went dark, reopening as the St. James under the management of Lodewick Vroom in December, 1932. Bea Lillie, Bobby Clark and Paul McCullough starred in Vroom's first show, the sophisticated revue Walk A Little Faster. In the spring the Civic Light Opera returned with more Gilbert and Sullivan. December brought the American debut of the renowned Monte Carlo Ballet Russe with soloists Leonide Massine, Irina Baranova and Tamara Toumanova. Clark and McCullough returned in December 1934 with another revue, Thumbs Up, which introduced two standards, "Zing Went the Strings of My Heart," and "Autumn in New York." Then in February 1937, Maurice Evans opened in the first of a

series of noteworthy Shakespearean productions which included Richard II (1937) performed for the first time in this country since 1878, and Twelfth Night (1940) in which he co-starred with Helen Hayes.

With the acquisition of the St. James by the Shuberts in 1941, this tradition of fine dramatic and musical entertainment continued. Native Son, based on Richard Wright's powerful novel, brilliantly acted by Canada Lee and directed by Orson Welles, was a critical and popular success, playing 114 performances in 1941. Two years later, in March 1943, "a musical play that is perfection itself"<sup>2</sup> opened at the St. James and instantly became a landmark production in the history of the American Broadway musical. Oklahoma! is still considered Rodgers and Hammerstein's masterpiece and was one of the St. James's most popular shows (2248 performances).

Since Oklahoma the St. James has continued to house major musical hits. These have included Where's Charley? with Ray Bolger's show-stopping "Once in Love With Amy" (1948, 792 performances), Rodgers and Hammerstein's wonderful The King and I with Gertrude Lawrence and Yul Brynner (1951, 1,246 performances), Adler and Ross's The Pajama Game with Eddie Roy, Jr., John Raitt, and Janis Paige (1954, 1,061 performances), and Li'l Abner with Edie Adams, Peter Palmer and Stubby Kaye (1956, 693 performances).

Following the Shubert's forced divestment of the St. James, and the accompanying renovations, the house reopened with another Rodgers and Hammerstein hit, Flower Drum Song. Laurence Olivier and Anthony Quinn then starred in Jean Anouilh's Beckett in 1960. Two hit musicals followed, Do Re Mi with Nancy Walker and Phil Silvers, and Subways Are For Sleeping with Carol Lawrence, Orson Bean and Sydney Chaplin. More redecoration and alterations worth \$50,000 equipped the St. James for the opening of Irving Berlin's musical Mr. President in 1962. John Osborne's Luther with Albert Finney followed in 1963.

In January 1964 the St. James's longest running musical hit opened and did not close until 1970 after 2844 performances. Hello Dolly starring Carol Channing and directed by Gower Champion remains, along with Oklahoma, one of Broadway's most popular musicals. Michael Stewart, who wrote the book for Hello Dolly, continued his own success at the St. James with his lyrics to Barnum, a recent Tony Award-winning musical which opened in 1980. In 1983, the St. James's tradition for great musical productions continued with another Tony Award-winning musical, My One and Only. In the spring of 1987, the long-running musical Forty-Second Street transferred from the Majestic Theater.

(GH, PD)

## Notes

1. This production history of the St. James 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. Edgar Price, review of Oklahoma, The Brooklyn Citizen, April 12, 1943.

## Description<sup>1</sup>

### Auditorium:

1) Configuration: The configuration of the auditorium consists of a rectangular space, wider than it is deep, with two balconies; an orchestra; a proscenium flanked by boxes; a sounding board; an orchestra pit in front of the stage; a ceiling; an orchestra promenade; the stage opening behind the proscenium arch, and the sloping floor extending towards the proscenium arch.

Proscenium: The proscenium is elliptically arched. Within the elliptical arch is a flat arch with curved concave corners.

Sounding board: The sounding board rises from the box walls and extends across the ceiling.

Balconies: There are two balconies. The first balcony has a crossover aisle.

Boxes: The wall surfaces extending from the proscenium are curved and contain a single curved box at first balcony level on each side.

Staircases: At the rear in the orchestra promenade area, a staircase leads up to the first balcony level.

Ceiling: The ceiling is flat except where it curves down to meet the rear wall of the second balcony.

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>

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

Orchestra Promenade: A promenade is located at the rear of the orchestra in the side sections.

2) Ornament:

Much of the decorative ornament is plasterwork in relief, which is integrated into the surfaces which define the configuration of the auditorium. Other ornament is painted on flat surfaces to create the effect of relief. Decorative ornament includes, but is not limited to, the following:

Proscenium arch: The flat arch is outlined by ovolo moldings.

Sounding board: Articulated by convex plasterwork moldings of leaves criss-crossed by ribbons, the sounding board has two sections, each with its own decoration executed in **trompe-l'oeil** painting. The inner section, closest to the proscenium arch, has rectangular panels filled with swags, urns, and leaves. The outer section has lunettes above the boxes, each with a circular panel filled with musical instruments, and a similar panel in the center of the sounding board. The space between these panels is decorated with small square panels set in a diamond pattern, outlined with rope moldings and filled with rosettes. The effect is to simulate coffered.

Boxes: Rising from each box are fluted Corinthian half columns which support an entablature, part of an element which extends from the proscenium arch to the front of the second balcony. Moldings adorn the box fronts. On the wall surfaces in front of the boxes are oval niches filled with classically-inspired female busts. These elements are plasterwork.

Balcony: The first balcony front is a continuation of the curved front of the boxes; it is adorned with an urn at each end. The second balcony front is a continuation of the entablature of the boxes described above. The undersides of the balconies are plain plaster.

Ceiling: The chief adornment of the ceiling is a **trompe-l'oeil** centerpiece with swags and musical instruments. Circular grilles which originally provided ventilation for the theater surround the centerpiece.

3) Attached fixtures:

Staircases: The staircase leading from the orchestra promenade to the first balcony level has a decorative metal railing.

Light fixtures: Existing non-original light fixtures throughout the auditorium are stylistically compatible with the design of the space.

4) Known alterations: Air conditioning grilles and duct covers have been added to the ceiling and undersides of the balconies. Light boxes

have been placed on both balcony fronts and a modern technical booth added at the rear of the second balcony. The theater was extensively redecorated in 1957-58 and again in 1985. As part of the 1957 remodeling the rear wall of the orchestra was moved forward, reducing the area of the orchestra promenade, while enlarging the lobby. At the time of construction the interior decoration was noted for its simplicity "with broad expanses of plain wall surfaces and decoration largely confined to ceiling areas."<sup>3</sup>

(MP)

#### Notes

1. This description identifies the spaces that are included in this designation. Specific elements are listed and architecturally significant features are underlined as explained in the "Guidelines for Treatment of Theater Interiors" as adopted by the Landmarks Preservation Commission on December 10, 1985.
2. For the purposes of this description, the stage shall include the enclosing walls and roof of the stage house and a floor area behind the proscenium arch, but not any fixture or feature of or within that space.
3. "The Erlanger Theatre, New York City," Architecture and Building, 59 (September 1927), 312.

(MP)

#### Notes

1. Architecturally significant features are underlined.

#### Conclusion

The St. James Theater interior survives today as one of the historic theater interiors that symbolize American theater for both New York and the nation. Last of the theaters constructed for Abraham Erlanger, founding partner in the Theatrical Syndicate, the St. James helped shape the character of the Broadway theater district. Designed for Erlanger by the prominent firm of Warren & Wetmore, architects of Grand Central Terminal, the St. James represents an unusual and important aspect of the nation's theatrical history. Warren & Wetmore's interior design departed from the standard 1920s treatment of Adamesque plasterwork in favor of a more restrained Beaux-Arts classic style. Despite alterations carried out at the theater in 1957, the interior retains its original configuration and most of its original ornamentation.

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

The 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 (GH) of the Research Department expanded the research, verified the citations and sources, and provided editorial assistance. Marjorie Pearson (MP), Director of Research, wrote the description. Other Research Department staff who contributed to the report include Marion Cleaver, Nancy Goeschel (NG), 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 St. James Theater (originally the Erlanger Theater), first floor interior consisting of the auditorium, the stage, the staircase leading from the first floor to the first balcony floor; the first balcony floor interior consisting of the first balcony, the upper part of the auditorium; the second balcony floor interior consisting of the second balcony, the upper part of the auditorium and ceiling; and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces, including but not limited to, wall and ceiling surfaces, doors, stair railings and attached decorative elements; has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City, New York State, and the nation, and the Interior or parts thereof are thirty years old or more, and that the Interior is one which is customarily open and accessible to the public, and to which the public is customarily invited.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the St. James Theater interior survives today as one of the historic theater interiors that symbolize American theater for both New York and the nation; that it was built in 1927 to the designs of the prominent firm of Warren & Wetmore for producer Abraham Erlanger, a founding partner of the Theatrical Syndicate which controlled American theater in the decades around the turn of the century, and as such represents a special aspect of the nation's theatrical history; that the interior designed for Erlanger by the firm of Warren & Wetmore is unusual among the Broadway theaters of the 1920s, eschewing Adamesque plasterwork in favor of a restrained Beaux-Arts classicism; that despite alterations the interior retains its original configuration as well as much of its original ornamentation; that for over half a century the St. James Theater interior has served as home to countless numbers of the plays through which the Broadway theater has come to personify American theater; and that as such it continues to help define the Broadway theater district, the largest and most famous concentration of legitimate stage theaters in the world.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 21, Section 534, of the Charter of the City of New York and Article 25, Chapter 3, of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as an interior Landmark the St. James Theater (originally Erlanger Theater), first floor interior consisting of the auditorium, the stage, the staircase leading from the first floor to the first balcony floor; the first balcony floor interior consisting of the first balcony, the upper part of the auditorium; the second balcony floor interior consisting of the second 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; 246-256 West 44th Street, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 1015, Lot 54, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.

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## APPENDIX

The following production history of the St. James 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.

### 1927

THE MERRY MALONES 9/26/27 (192 perfs.) by George M. Cohan; with George M. Cohan.

### 1928

THE BEHAVIOR OF MRS. CRANE 3/20/28 (31 perfs.) by Harry Segal; with Margaret Lawrence and Walter Connolly.

THE MERRY MALONES 4/9/28 (26 perfs.) Return engagement.

SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER 5/14/28 (16 perfs.) by Oliver Goldsmith; with Fay Bainter, Mrs. Leslie Carter, Glenn Hunter and Lyn Harding.

DIPLOMACY 5/28/28 (32 perfs.) by Victorien Sardou; with Tyrone Power, Frances Starr and Charles Coburn.

BILLIE 10/1/28 (112 perfs.) by George M. Cohan; with Polly Walker and Joseph Wagstaff.

### 1929

VERMONT 1/8/29 (16 perfs.) by A.E. Thomas; with Allyn Joslyn, Phyllis, Povah, and John T. Doyle.

BUCKAROO 3/16/29 (9 perfs.) by A.W. and E.L. Barker and Charles Beahan; with Nydia Westman, James Bell and Ruth Easton.

HELLO, DADDY! 5/16/29 (196 total perfs.) by Herbert Fields, lyrics by Dorothy Fields, music by Jimmy McHugh; with Lew Fields. (First opened at the Mansfield Theater 12/26/28.)

MURRAY ANDERSON'S ALMANAC 8/14/29 (69 perfs.) book by Noel Coward, Rube Goldberg, Ronald Jeans, Paul Gerard Smith, Harry Ruskin, John McGowan, Peter Arno and Ed Wynn; music by Milton Agar and Henry Sullivan, lyrics by Jack Yellen; with Jimmie Savo, Roy Atwell, Fred Keating and Jack Powell.

LADIES OF THE JURY 10/21/29 (80 perfs.) by Fred Ballard; with Mrs. Fiske, C.W. Van Voorhis and Wilton Lackeye.

1930

JOSEF SUSS 1/20/30 (40 perfs.) by Ashley Dukes from a novel by Leon Feuchtwanger; with Maurice Moscovitch and Cyril Raymond.

GALA NIGHT 2/25/30 (15 perfs.) by Laurence Eyre; with James Rennie and Adele Klaer.

THE RIVALS 3/13/30 (20 perfs.) by Richard Brinsley Sheridan; with Mrs. Fiske, Pedro De Cordoba and Rollo Peters.

FINE AND DANDY 9/23/30 (246 perfs.) by Donald Ogden Stewart, music by Kay Swift, lyrics by Paul James; with Eleanor Powell, David Chasen and Joe Cook.

1931

CIVIC LIGHT OPERA COMPANY PRESENTS GILBERT AND SULLIVAN IN REPERTORY:

IOLANTHE 6/4/31 (8 perfs.), & 7/13/31 (24 perfs.)

THE MIKADO 5/4/31 (16 perfs.); 8/24/31 (32 perfs.); 10/26/31 (8 perfs.); 12/25/31 (12 perfs.)

H.M.S. PINAFORE 5/18/31 (16 perfs.)

THE GONDOLIERS 6/15/31 (16 perfs.)

PATIENCE 6/15/31 (16 perfs.)

H.M.S. PINAFORE/TRIAL BY JURY 7/27/31 (16 perfs.)

RUDDIGORE 8/10/31 (8 perfs.)

THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE 6/29/31 (24 perfs.) & 10/19/31 (8 perfs.)

THE MERRY WIDOW 9/7/31 (16 perfs.) by Victor Leon and Leo Stein, music by Franz Lehar; with the Civic Light Opera Company.

THE CHOCOLATE SOLDIER 9/21/31 (16 perfs.) by Rudolph Bernauer and Leopold Jacobson, music by Franz Lehar; with the Civic Light Opera Company.

THE GEISHA 10/5/31 (16 perfs.) by Owen Hall, music by Sidney Jones, lyrics by Harry Greenbark; with the Civic Light Opera Company.

THE CHIMES OF NORMANDY 11/2/31 (16 perfs.) by Robert Planquette; with the Civic Light Opera Company.

NAUGHTY MARIETTA 11/16/31 (8 perfs.) by Rida Johnson Young music by Victor Herbert; with the Civic Light Opera Company.

THE FIREFLY 11/30/31 (16 perfs.) by Otto Harbach, music by Rodolph Friml;  
with the Civic Light Opera Company.

1932

THE GONDOLIERS 1/11/32 (8 perfs.) by W.S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan;  
with the Civic Light Opera Company.

ROBIN HOOD 1/27/32 (29 perfs.) by Harry B. Smith, music by Reginald De  
Koven; with the Civic Light Opera Company.

THE ST. JAMES THEATER  
1932 - present

WALK A LITTLE FASTER 12/7/32 (121 perfs.) by S.J. Perelman and Robert  
MecGunigle music by Vernon Duke, lyrics by E.Y. Harburg; with Bobby  
Clark and Beatrice Lillie.

1933

HANGMAN'S WHIP 2/24/33 (11 perfs.) by Norman Reilly Raine and Frank  
Butler; with Montagu Love, Helen Flint and Ian Keith.

CIVIC LIGHT OPERA COMPANY PRESENTS GILBERT AND SULLIVAN IN REPERTORY:

THE MIKADO 4/17/33 (16 perfs.)  
YEOMAN OF THE GUARD 5/1/33 (8 perfs.)  
H.M.S. PINAFORE/TRIAL BY JURY 5/8/33 (16 perfs.)  
PATIENCE 5/22/33 (8 perfs.)

MONTE CARLO BALLET RUSSE 12/10/33 Produced by Sol Hurok.

1934

UNION PACIFIC 4/25/34 (4 perfs.) American ballet, libretto by Archibald  
Macleish, music by Nicolas Nabokoff.

CHOCOLATE SOLDIER 5/3/34 (13 perfs.) by Rudolph Bernauer and Leopold  
Jackson, music by Franz Lehar; with Charles Purcell.

LOST HORIZONS 10/15/34 (56 perfs.) by Harry Segall and John Hayden; with  
Jane Wyatt and Kathleen Comegys.

THUMBS UP 12/27/34 (156 perfs.) by H.I. Phillips, Harold Atteridge, Alan  
Baxter, Ballard MacDonald and Earle Crooker, music by James Hanley and  
Henry Sullivan; with Bobby Clark and Paul McCullough.

1935

PLAY, GENIUS, PLAY! 10/30/35 (6 perfs.) by Judith Kandel; with Hardie Albright, Judith Wood and Clarence Derwent.

MAY WINE 12/5/35 (212 perfs.) book by Frank Mandel from a novel by Eric von Stroheim and Wallace Smith, lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II, music by Sigmund Romberg; with Walter Slezak, Nancy McCord and Leo G. Carroll.

1936

TEN MILLION GHOSTS 10/23/36 (11 perfs.) by Sidney Kingsley; with Orson Welles, Barbara O'Neil and Martin Gabel.

1937

KING RICHARD II 2/5/37 (132 perfs.) by William Shakespeare; with Maurice Evans, Augustin Duncan, Ian Keith, Charles Dalton and Rhys Williams. (Repeated 9/15/37 for 38 additional performances.)

FATHER MALACHY'S MIRACLE 11/17/37 (125 perfs.) by Brian Doherty from a novel by Bruce Marshall; with Al Shean, Frank Greene and Mary Wickes.

1938

EMPRESS OF DESTINY 3/9/38 (5 perfs.) by Jessica Lee and Joseph Lee Walsh; with Elissa Landi.

TROJAN INCIDENT 4/21/38 (26 perfs.) by Philip Davis, from Homer and Euripides; with Isabel Bonner.

HAMLET 10/12/38 (96 perfs.) by William Shakespeare; with Maurice Evans and Katherine Locke.

1939

HENRY IV 1/30/39 (74 perfs.) by William Shakespeare; with Maurice Evans, Edmond O'Brien and Wesley Addy.

SUMMER NIGHT 11/2/39 (4 perfs.) by Vicki Baum and Benjamin Glazer; with Violet Heming, Lionel Stander and Louis Calhern.

A HOLIDAY DANCE FESTIVAL 12/15/39 Holiday week dance program with Martha Graham and The American Ballet Caravan.

1940

EARL CARROLL VANITIES 1/13/40 (25 perfs.) lyrics by Dorcas Cochran and Mitchell Parrish, music by Charles Rosoff and Peter de Rose; with Jerry Lester.

RICHARD II 4/1/40 (32 perfs.) revival of 2/5/37 production; with Maurice Evans.

RUSSIAN BANK 5/24/40 (11 perfs.) by Theodore Komisarjevsky and Stuart Mims; with Josephine Houston, Tonio Selwart, Effie Shannon and James Rennie.

TWELFTH NIGHT 11/19/40 (129 perfs.) by William Shakespeare; with Maurice Evans, Helen Hayes and Wesley Addy.

1941

NATIVE SON 3/24/41 (114 perfs.) by Paul Green and Richard Wright; with Frances Bavier, Ray Collins and Canada Lee.

PANAMA HATTIE 6/30/41 (501 perfs.) by Herbert Fields and B.G. De Sylva, music and lyrics by Cole Porter; with Ethel Merman. (First opened at the 46th Street Theater 10/30/40.)

ANNE OF ENGLAND 10/7/41 (7 perfs.) by Mary Cass Canfield and Ethel Borden; with Flora Robson, Frances Tannehill, Jessica Tandy and Leo G. Carroll.

PAL JOEY 10/21/41 (104 total perfs.) by John O'Hara, music by Richard Rodgers, lyrics by Lorenz Hart; with George Tapps and Vivienne Segal. (First opened at the Shubert Theater 9/1/41.)

SUNNY RIVER 12/4/41 (36 perfs.) book and lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II, music by Sigmund Romberg; with Muriel Angelus, Bob Lawrence, Ivy Scott and Tom Ewell.

1942

THE BOSTON COMIC OPERA COMPANY AND JOOSS BALLET IN REPERTORY:

THE GREEN TABLE/H.M.S. PINAFORE 1/21/42 (18 perfs.)  
BALL IN OLD VIENNA/ THE BIG CITY/ THE MIKADO 2/3/42 (19 perfs.)  
THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE/THE PRODIGAL SON 2/17/42 (8 perfs.)  
IOLANTHE 2/23/42 (5 perfs.)  
THE GONDOLIERS 3/3/42 (3 perfs.)

CLAUDIA 5/24/42 (453 total perfs.) by Rose Franken; with Betty Field. (First opened at the Booth Theater, 2/12/41.)

WITHOUT LOVE 11/10/42 (110 perfs.) by Philip Barry; with Katharine Hepburn, Elliott Nugent and Robert Shayne.

1943

OKLAHOMA 3/31/43 (2,248 perfs.) book and lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II, music by Richard Rodgers; with Celeste Holm, Alfred Drake, Joan Roberts and Howard Da Silva.

1948

SLEEPY HOLLOW 6/3/48 (12 perfs.) by Russell Maloney and Miriam Battista, music by George Lessner; with Jo Sullivan.

WHERE'S CHARLEY? 10/11/48 (792 perfs.) book by George Abbott, music and lyrics by Frank Loesser; with Ray Bolger and Doretta Morrow.

1950

PETER PAN 10/8/50 (321 total perfs.) book by James Barrie, music and lyrics by Leonard Bernstein; with Jean Arthur and Boris Karloff. (First opened at the Imperial Theater 4/24/50.)

1951

THE D'OYLY CARTE OPERA COMPANY IN REPERTORY WITH MARTYN GREEN:

THE MIKADO 1/29/51 (8 perfs.)

TRIAL BY JURY 2/5/51 (8 perfs.)

THE GONDOLIERS 2/12/51 (4 perfs.)

IOLANTHE 2/15/51 (4 perfs.)

THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE/COX AND BOX 2/19/51 (8 perfs.)

H.M.S. PINAFORE 2/5/51 (8 perfs.)

THE KING AND I 3/29/51 (1,246 perfs.) music by Richard Rodgers, book and lyrics Oscar Hammerstein II; with Gertrude Lawrence, Yul Brynner and Doretta Morrow.

1954

THE PAJAMA GAME 5/13/54 (1,061 perfs.) book by George Abbott and Richard Bissell; lyrics and music by Richard Adler and Jerry Ross; with Eddie Foy, Jr., John Raitt, Janis Paige, Peter Gennaro and Shirley MacLaine.

1956

LI'L ABNER 11/15/56 (693 perfs.) book by Norman Panama and Melvin Frank music by Gene de Paul, lyrics by Johnny Mercer; with Peter Palmer, Edie Adams, Stubby Kaye, Charlotte Rae, Julie Newmar and Tina Louise.

1958

FLOWER DRUM SONG 12/1/58 (600 perfs.) by Oscar Hammerstein II & Joseph Fields, music by Richard Rodgers, lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II; with Juanita Hall, Larry Blyden, Pat Suzuki, Jack Soo, Miyoshi Umeki and Arabella Hong.

1960

BECKET 10/5/60 (193 perfs.) by Jean Anouilh; with Anthony Quinn and Laurence Olivier.

DO RE MI 12/26/60 (400 perfs.) book by Garson Kanin, lyrics by Betty Comden and Adolph Green, music by Jule Styne; with Nancy Walker and Phil Silvers.

1961

SUBWAYS ARE FOR SLEEPING 12/27/61 (205 perfs.) book and lyrics by Betty Comden and Adolph Green, music by Jules Styne; with Carol Lawrence, Orson Bean, Sydney Chaplin, Phyllis Newman and Michael Bennett.

1962

MR. PRESIDENT 10/20/62 (265 perfs.) book by Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse; music by Irving Berlin; with Robert Ryan and Nanette Fabray.

1963

LUTHER 9/25/63 (212 perfs.) by John Osborne; with Albert Finney, Kenneth J. Warren, John Moffatt, Peter Bull, Frank Shelley and Ted Thurston. (Moved to Lunt Fontanne 1/13/64).

1964

HELLO, DOLLY 1/16/64 (2,844 perfs.) book by Michael Stewart, music and lyrics by Jerry Herman; with Carol Channing, David Burns, Eileen Brennan, David Horton and Marilyn Mason.

1971

SCRATCH 5/6/71 (4 perfs.) by Archibald MacLeish; with Will Mackenzie, Roy Poole and Will Geer.

TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA 12/1/71 (613 perfs.) book by John Guare and Mel Shapiro based on Shakespeare's play; with Raul Julia, J. Allen and Alix Elias.

1973

A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE 10/4/73 (53 perfs.) by Tennessee Williams; with Lois Nettleton and Alan Feinstein.

1974

GOOD NEWS 12/23/74 (16 perfs.) by Lawrence Schwab, B.G. DeSylva and Frank Mandell; with Alice Faye and Stubby Kaye.

1975

THE MISANTHROPE 3/12/75 (94 perfs.) by Moliere; with Diana Rigg and Alec McCowen.

A MUSICAL JUBILEE 11/13/75 (92 perfs.) by Max Wilk; with Tammy Grimes, Cyril Ritchard, John Raitt, Dick Shawn and Lillian Gish.

1976

MY FAIR LADY 3/25/76 (384 perfs.) book and lyrics by Alan J. Lerner, music by Frederick Loewe; with George Rose, Ian Richardson and Christine Andreas. (Moved to the Lunt-Fontanne Theater 12/9/76.)

MUSIC IS 12/20/76 (8 perfs.) book by George Abbott; lyrics by Will Holt.

1977

VIEUX CARRE 5/11/77 (6 perfs.) by Tennessee Williams; with Sylvia Sidney.

1978

ON THE TWENTIETH CENTURY 2/19/78 (460 perfs.) book and lyrics by Betty Comden and Adolph Green, music by Cy Coleman; with Imogene Coca and Madeline Kahn.

1979

CARMELINA 4/8/79 (17 perfs.) by Alan J. Lerner & Joseph Stein, music by Burton Lane.

BROADWAY OPRY '79, A Little Country In the Big City 7/27/79 (6 perfs.) ; with Tanya Tucker, Waylen Jennings and Floyd Cramer.

1940's RADIO HOUR 10/7/79 (105 perfs.) by Walton Jones.

1980

FILUMENA 2/10/80 (32 perfs.) by Eduardo De Filippo; with Joan Plowright.

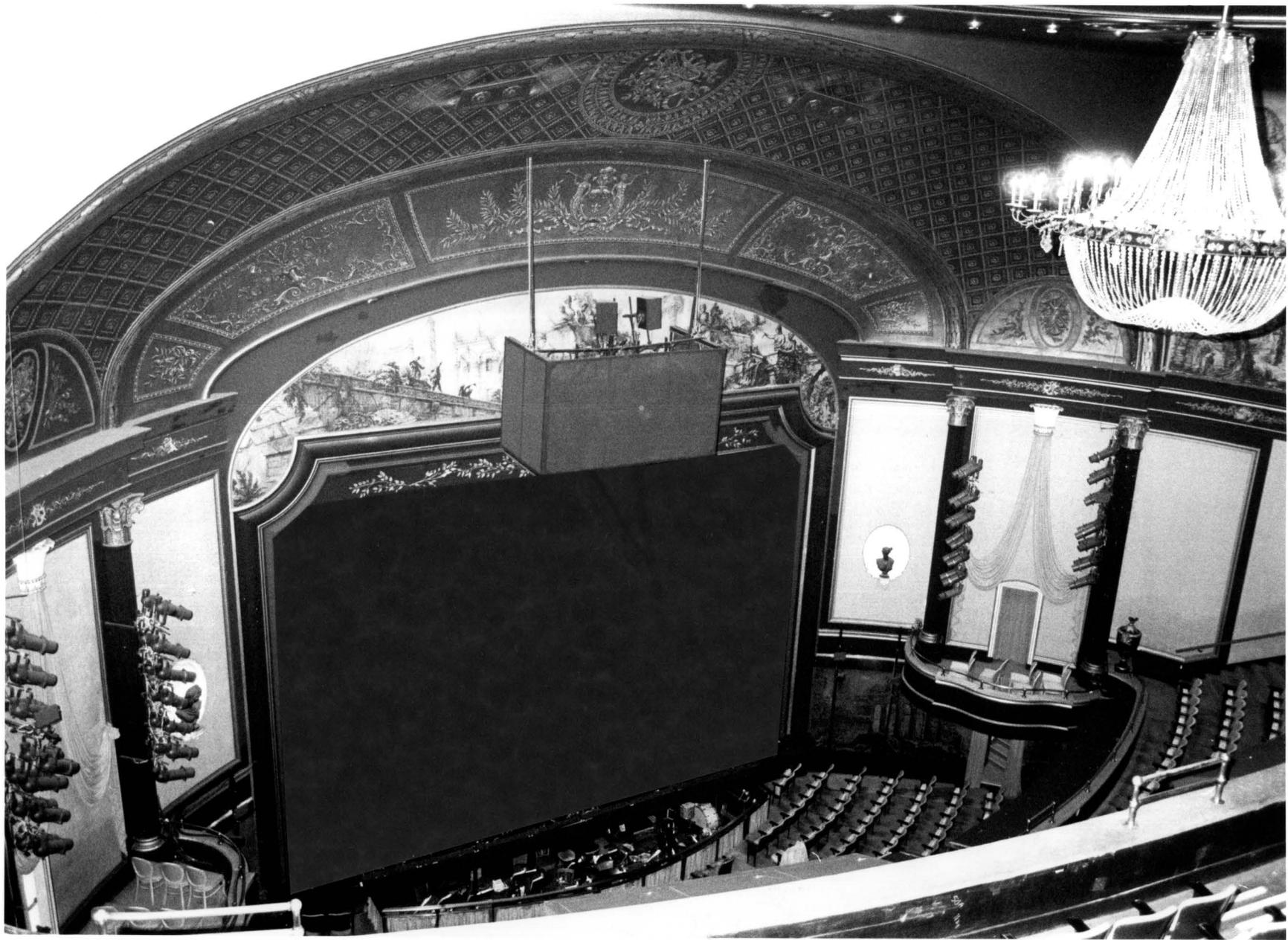
BARNUM 4/30/80 (854 perfs.) book by Mark Bramble, music by Cy Coleman,  
lyrics by Michael Stewart; with Jim Dale.

1982

ROCK 'N' ROLL THE FIRST 5000 YEARS 10/24/82 (9 perfs.) by Bob Gill and  
Robert Rabinowitz.

1983

MY ONE AND ONLY 5/1/83 (762 perfs.) by Peter Stone, Timothy Mayer, music  
by George Gershwin, lyrics by Ira Gershwin; with Tommy Tune and Twiggy.



St. James Theater Interior  
246-256 West 44th Street  
Manhattan

Built: 1926-27  
Architect: Warren & Wetmore



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