

Landmarks Preservation Commission
January 5, 1988; Designation List 199
LP-1381

ED SULLIVAN THEATER (originally Hammerstein's Theater), first floor interior consisting of the inner entrance vestibule, the outer lobby, the inner lobby, the auditorium, the stage area, the staircases leading from the first floor up to the balcony floor; the balcony floor interior consisting of the balcony, the upper part of the auditorium and ceiling; and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces, including but not limited to, wall, ceiling, and floor surfaces, doors, stair railings, and attached decorative elements; 1697-1699 Broadway, Manhattan; built 1927; architect, Herbert J. Krapp.

Landmark Site: Tax Map Block 1025, Lot 43 in part consisting of the land beneath the described interior.

On June 14 and 15, 1982, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as an Interior Landmark of the Ed Sullivan Theater, first floor interior consisting of the outer entrance vestibule, the inner entrance vestibule, the outer lobby, the inner lobby, the auditorium, the stage area, the staircases leading from the first floor down to the basement, the staircases leading from the first floor up to the balcony floor and all connecting entrance areas; the balcony floor interior consisting of the balcony, the upper part of the auditorium and ceiling, the upper part of the stage area; 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. 77). The hearing was continued to October 19, 1982. Both hearings had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Eighty witnesses spoke in favor of designation. Four witnesses spoke in opposition to designation. The owner was among those speaking in opposition. The Commission has received many letters and other expressions of support in favor of this designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The interior of the Ed Sullivan Theater, originally called "Hammerstein's," survives today as one of the historic theater interiors that symbolize American theater for both New York and the nation. Designed by architect Herbert Krapp, it was built in 1927 by Arthur Hammerstein as a monument to Arthur's impresario father, Oscar Hammerstein I, who pioneered the establishment of Times Square as New York's Rialto.

Herbert J. Krapp was the most prolific architect of the Broadway theater district. Having worked in the offices of Herts & Tallant, premier theater designers of the pre-war period, Krapp went on to design theaters for the two major builders of the post-war era, the Shubert and Chanin organizations, as well as for independent producers like Hammerstein.

Designed in a free interpretation of the Gothic style in order better to convey its memorial purpose, the house was, and still is, unique among New York's theaters. Its sumptuous detail and rich invention represent some of the latest, and certainly some of the finest work of Herbert Krapp.

For half a century the Ed Sullivan Theater has presented a full range of entertainment from musical comedy and night club cabaret to radio and television broadcasting, and has been associated with such theater notables as Schwab & Mandel, Billy Rose and Ed Sullivan. The latter's policy of innovative programming won for him the theater's dedication, and distinguished the house as the first theater in the history of entertainment to be named after a television personality.

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,³ 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

(MMK)

The Broadway Theater in American Theatrical History

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The interior of the Ed Sullivan (originally Hammerstein's) 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.

Arthur Hammerstein¹

Arthur Hammerstein (1872?-1955) today is less well known than either his father Oscar Hammerstein I or his nephew Oscar Hammerstein II, but still remains a significant figure in American theater. Oscar Hammerstein I, a German immigrant, began his career in the cigar manufacturing business in New York shortly after the Civil War, then branched out into Harlem real estate development in the 1880s. In 1869 he unsuccessfully co-produced his first opera season at the Stadt Theater, and in 1880 he built the Harlem Opera House for the production of operas in English.² It was not until the

1890s that he ventured into theatrical production on a full-time basis, building his first Manhattan Opera House in 1892 on 34th Street; it later became Koster & Bial's New Music Hall. Hammerstein subsequently built the Olympia in 1895 on Broadway between 44th and 45th Street, which began the move of theater to Times Square, and the Victoria in 1899 at 42nd Street and Seventh Avenue, which became a major vaudeville house. Two other Hammerstein theaters were also on 42nd Street, the Republic of 1900 and Lew Field's (currently the Anco) of 1904.

Arthur Hammerstein, Oscar's second son, influenced by his father's real-estate ventures, received training in the building trades and established a business as a contractor. In 1904, Oscar commissioned Arthur to redecorate the interior of the Victoria. That same year Oscar was making plans to proceed with his long-time dream of building "an opera house in which he would present his own company in his own productions,"³ an enterprise which would be in direct competition with the Metropolitan Opera. Arthur was asked to build the opera house, which he did, and it opened on December 3, 1906, with Bellini's I Puritani. Moreover, Oscar pressed Arthur into service as his chief assistant, and they worked together as impresarios. Two years later, in 1908, Oscar expanded his opera ventures, building the Philadelphia Opera House with Arthur serving as contractor. Meanwhile the competition with the Metropolitan was proving extremely costly, and the Hammerstein resources were severely strained. Arthur, who had no great love for opera, sought a solution which would save his father from ruin. In 1909 he began negotiations with Otto Kahn of the Metropolitan for a merger of the two companies. A \$1,250,000 settlement was reached in April 1910, and Oscar and Arthur were barred from opera production in New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, and Boston until 1920.⁴

Arthur was now free to begin an independent career as a producer of operettas and musical comedies. His first show (1910)⁵ was Victor Herbert's Naughty Marietta, followed by Rudolf Friml's The Firefly in 1912. As a theatrical producer, Arthur Hammerstein brought twenty-six productions to the Broadway stage, working with such composers (in addition to Herbert and Friml) as George Gershwin, Jerome Kern, Sigmund Romberg, Herbert Stothart, and Vincent Youmans, and such lyricists as his nephew Oscar Hammerstein II and Otto Harbach. The younger Oscar Hammerstein had begun his theatrical career with Arthur in 1917, and his first two Broadway shows, Always You and Tickle Me, were both produced by Arthur Hammerstein in 1920. A major success for both was Wildflower (1923), in collaboration with Otto Harbach, Vincent Youmans, and Herbert Stothart. Arthur continued to produce many of Oscar II's shows throughout the 1920s.⁶

Upon the success of Wildflower, which ran for sixteen months on Broadway, and his marriage to the actress-film star Dorothy Dalton, Arthur commissioned architect Dwight James Baum to design his "Wildflower" mansion in Beechhurst (Queens), NY. It was built in 1924, the same year that Hammerstein opened his production of Rose-Marie. This show, the most popular musical of the 1920s provided Arthur with the funds to immortalize his father by the construction of the Hammerstein theater and office building.

Arthur's luck, unfortunately, then began to change for the worse. A series of failures at the Hammerstein Theater, difficulties brought on by the stock market crash, and a disastrous venture into movie-making with

United Artists in 1931⁷ eventually led to bankruptcy, and Hammerstein retired from the stage. He re-emerged briefly in 1937, but thereafter devoted his time to writing and to invention, one of his most prized ideas being for a clog-resistant saltshaker.⁸

Arthur Hammerstein died of a heart attack in his Palm Beach, Florida home on October 12, 1955. He was 83 years old.

(JA, MP)

Notes

1. Biographical information on Arthur Hammerstein is taken from Landmarks Preservation Commission, Arthur Hammerstein House Designation Report (LP-1282), prepared by Marjorie Pearson (New York: City of New York, 1982), pp. 1-2; Vincent Sheean, Oscar Hammerstein I: The Life and Exploits of an Impresario (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956); and Arthur Hammerstein, obituaries, New York Herald Tribune, October 13, 1955, New York Times, October 13, 1955.
2. "Oscar Had Wonderful Life as Cigar and Music Impresario," New York Evening Mail, July 30, 1919, p. 16.
3. Sheean, p. 112.
4. Ibid., pp. 302-303.
5. Oscar Hammerstein I was officially listed as the producer but his biographer, Vincent Sheehan (p. 309), credits the show to Arthur.
6. These include: Daffy Dill (1922), Mary Jane McKane (1923), Rose Marie (1924), Song of the Flame (1925), The Wild Rose (1926), Golden Dawn (1927), Good Boy (1928), and Sweet Adeline (1929).
7. Hugh Fordin, Getting to Know Him: A Biography of Oscar Hammerstein II (New York: Random House, 1977), pp. 108, 112-113.
8. "Arthur Hammerstein at 80 Turns Inventor," New York Times, December 22, 1952.

Herbert J. Krapp

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

Herbert Krapp's career coincided with the rise of the Shubert organization as the major force in the New York theater. Upon his

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

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

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

Krapp's earliest theaters, the Plymouth (1916-17) and Broadhurst (1917), were built as a pair located immediately to the west of Henry Herts's earlier Shubert pair, the Shubert and Booth. The designs of the Plymouth and Broadhurst echo those of the earlier theaters. Like the Shubert and Booth, Krapp's houses have rounded corners that face towards Broadway (the direction from which most audience members arrived). Each corner is accented by an entrance with a broken pedimented enframement and by an oval cartouche. These forms imitate, in a simplified manner, the ornamental forms on Herts's buildings. In addition, Krapp's theaters are

faced with bricks separated by wide, deeply inset mortar joints in a manner favored by Herts. The Plymouth and Broadhurst facades are simpler than their neighbors, but they were clearly designed to complement Herts's theaters and create a unified group of Shubert houses.

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

After building a large number of new theaters between 1916 and 1923 the Shuberts undertook very little construction in the Times Square area from 1924 through 1927. During these years the Chanin Construction Company emerged as the major theater builder in the area. The Chanins also turned to Krapp for their theater designs. Major New York City builders, the Chanins considered theaters to be sound financial investments from which they could not fail to profit. The six theaters that Krapp designed for the Chanins are more ornate than those he designed for the Shuberts. One reason may be that the Chanins, new to the theater world, decided that their theaters should project an elegant image; another, that as a building company, they were more concerned than the Shuberts about the exterior appearance of their buildings. Still another factor may have the greater availability of money in the middle of the 1920s as compared to the years during and immediately following World War I when most of the Shubert theaters were erected.

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

Following his work for the Chanins, Krapp designed three independent houses, all of which were stylistically unusual. The Waldorf (1926, demolished) which stood on West 50th Street was an ornate French neo-Classical-style structure; the Alvin (1927, now the Neil Simon) an impressive neo-Federal style red brick building; and the Hammerstein (now the Ed Sullivan) a neo-Gothic theater housed in a tall office building.

The latter two were commissioned by theatrical impresarios, hence their more elaborate design as compared to Krapp's work for the Shubert and Chanin theater chains.

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

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

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

(ASD)

Notes

1. Krapp's sixteen theaters are the Alvin (now the Neil Simon), Ambassador, Brooks Atkinson, Ethel Barrymore, Biltmore, Broadhurst, 46th Street, Golden, Imperial, Majestic, Eugene O'Neil, Plymouth, Ritz, Royale, and Ed Sullivan (originally Hammerstein). The Central (1567 Broadway at 47th Street) is now a movie house and all but its cornice is covered with billboards.
2. The five theaters designed by Krapp that have been demolished are the Bijou (209 West 45th Street), Century (932 Seventh Avenue between 58th and 59th Streets), 49th Street (235 West 49th Street), Morosco (217 West 45th Street), and Waldorf (116 West 50th Street).

3. Interview with Mrs. Peggy Elson, Herbert Krapp's daughter, by Janet Adams, November 16, 1984.
4. Herbert Krapp papers, currently in the possession of Mrs. Peggy Elson, New York City.
5. The 49th Street Theater (1921) was an exception. This building had a terra-cotta facade articulated by fluted pilasters.
6. Brooks Atkinson Theater, Souvenir Program of the dedication (as Mansfield Theater), February 15, 1926, n.p. Billy Rose Theater Collection, Lincoln Center branch, New York Public Library.
7. Royale Theater, Souvenir Program of the dedication, January 11, 1927, n.p. Billy Rose Theater Collection.
8. The use of restricted areas of very ornate detail set against an otherwise unornamented facade is reminiscent of Spanish Baroque or Churrigueresque architecture.
9. This theater is often overlooked because the present rectilinear marquee cuts the facade in half, hiding the ornate base and destroying the subtle juxtaposition between the top and bottom sections of the building.
10. Herbert Krapp papers, and interview with Mrs. Peggy Elson.

Hammerstein's Theater

Arthur Hammerstein built "Hammerstein's" in 1927 as a long-sought memorial to his impresario father (d. 1919). Arthur had entertained the idea since 1920 when he negotiated unsuccessfully with Lee Shubert to honor the elder Hammerstein with a playhouse on Eighth Avenue. Three years later Arthur proposed "Hammerstein's" as a name for the Shubert's new Imperial Theater, promising to assume full responsibility for its operation. Although his offer was rejected, the Imperial quite literally paid tribute to the Hammerstein name. It honored the late producer by featuring his Mary Jane McKane as its premier attraction, followed in 1925 by the presentation of Oscar Hammerstein's Rose Marie.¹ The latter was one of the most successful shows in Broadway history, netting Arthur some \$3,000,000. He used most of the proceeds to realize his father's memorial theater.

Arthur had originally intended to call the house "Hammerstein's Temple of Music," but shortened the name when he found it impractical to accommodate so many words on electric signs and playbills.² This was the only economy admitted to the sumptuous theater.

With the aid of Mayor Walker, George Jessel, Otto Kahn and scores of other Broadway notables, Arthur laid the cornerstone on September 30, 1927.³ Encased within it were memorials of Oscar Hammerstein, including his legendary silk top hat and a hand rolled cigar. The contents were

removed in 1977 on the fiftieth anniversary of the Hammerstein's opening.⁴ Construction of the theater-office building continued in earnest, opening with great fanfare on November 30, 1927.

The theater that Herbert Krapp designed for Hammerstein was and remains unique not just in Krapp's oeuvre, but among all theaters in New York and perhaps in the country. Unlike the other Broadway playhouse interiors of the late 1920s, almost invariably adorned with Adamesque or neo-classical style plasterwork, Hammerstein's was an extraordinary extravaganza of Gothic:

The interior of the new playhouse resembles a Gothic Cathedral--it is done throughout in a free variation of that type of architecture, which in its adaptation to theatrical purposes still retains its simplicity.⁵

The theatre vestibule and lobby, some 25 feet wide, is finished in imitation Travertine stone with bronze finished grilles and a ceiling in Gothic vaulting with panels illuminated with heraldic designs in bright colors....In the decoration of the house Gothic ornament is used in a rather free way with mullions of ornamented design in plaster reaching up to the point of the dome where a great lantern is the central source of illumination. The intervening panels are finished in the effect of gold and colored mosaic.⁶

While it is not known why this style was chosen for Hammerstein's, it is likely that, as an experienced theater builder and decorator, Arthur had some say in the selection. His association with Herbert Krapp was completely sympathetic. Not only was Krapp the leading theater architect in New York, he was also an avid Gothicism who had designed his own residence in the Gothic style.⁷ It is also likely that they were encouraged by the resuscitated Gothic Revival which, under the leadership of Ralph Adams Cram, gained great popularity in the 1920s. It is quite possible that the two men decided upon Gothic as an expressive vehicle for solemnifying Hammerstein's memorial. Whatever the reason for its selection, the Gothic style unified the theater from its traceried facade to its rib-vaulted auditorium.

Arthur spared no expense, covering the floors with rich marbles and thick Czechoslovakian rugs which were brilliantly offset by the gold and colored mosaic vaults above. He lined the auditorium walls with ten stained glass panels depicting scenes from his father's greatest operas, and installed a \$50,000 organ in the center of the retractable orchestra pit. He equipped the house with innovative climatic and ventilating systems and installed in the central foyer a life-sized figure of Oscar Hammerstein (sculpted by Pompeo Coppini).⁸ He later explained his feelings about the project:

It represents more than bricks and mortar--it represents the affection I had for my father and the idea I had for years to show the pride I had in his memory and his name by building the finest possible theatre as a memorial--the sort of house he would have proud himself to have built. In

1927, after the success of "Rose-Marie," I was in a position to do it.⁹

Critics were unanimous in their praise for the new playhouse. Burns Mantle of the Daily News, noting that "this one is a vaulted temple in free Gothic," marveled that there was "still something to be done with a theatre in New York to give it both beauty and distinction."¹⁰ Robert Coleman of the Daily Mirror wrote that "the magnificent new theater...dedicated to the memory of Oscar Hammerstein is just such a playhouse as the father of American grand opera would have loved." He added:

Its towering arches and lofty dome, its sedately opulent decor, its stained glass windows, its pipe organ, all suggest the cathedral -- the cathedral of music.¹¹

Arthur's attempt to immortalize his father cost more than \$2,000,000. Unfortunately, the Hammerstein Building's twelve floors of office space proved difficult to rent because of noise from the busy Broadway elevated line.¹² Arthur's first production at the new theater, Golden Dawn, lost money, and a subsequent hit, Sweet Adeline, had its run cut short by the stock market crash of 1929.¹³ Matters only worsened with the failure of two more shows staged in the Hammerstein, Luana and Ballyhoo (both in 1930).¹⁴

By 1930 Arthur was forced to sell his celebrated Beechhurst mansion. He invested its \$400,000 purchase price into "Hammerstein's," just as he did the profits from the sale of his inherited Republic Theater. He felt it was important to keep this memorial to his father as long as he had "a cent to put into it." He succumbed in the following year, however, when his bank balance totaled a mere \$5.77.¹⁵ The theater was sold at auction in April 1931.¹⁶

In June, Hammerstein's theater was leased to Lawrence Schwab and Frank Mandel who were among the most successful producers of musical comedy in the city. Under their direction the Hammerstein's orchestra pit was enlarged and the auditorium's stained glass windows were removed. The new tenants also removed the statue of Oscar Hammerstein in the lobby and rechristened the house the "Manhattan Theater."¹⁷ Unfortunately, Schwab & Mandel had no more success than their predecessor and in April 1932, after only ten months' occupancy, they relinquished their two-year lease. Subsequently Norman S. Carroll took over the theater with a five-year lease, intending to showcase the productions of his famous brother Earl. But after only a half year he too terminated his contract.¹⁸

Dark for the better part of its six-year existence, the ill-fated playhouse was converted into the "Manhattan Casino" in early 1934. The repeal of prohibition in the previous year had popularized continental music halls where guests could enjoy stage reviews while drinking and dining. This new form of entertainment was especially attractive to mobsters like Lucky Luciano who were now forced to find legal outlets for their former bootlegging activities. They legitimized their operations by associating with the celebrated producer-songwriter Billy Rose. Under his direction the long-dormant New Yorker Theater (originally the Fortune Gallo opera house and currently Studio 54) on 54th Street was transformed into the "Casino de Paree" in 1933. Its enormous success led in the

following year to a takeover of the Manhattan Casino, renamed "Billy Rose's Music Hall."

According to its new namesake, the casino would be offer "honky tonk on a cosmic scale...the apotheosis of popular priced amusement. It will be the nuts."¹⁹ To accommodate its new function the house's floor was leveled and its orchestra seats replaced by movable restaurant tables and chairs. A platform was built over the orchestra pit on top of which was a bank of illuminated glass steps leading to the stage where guests danced between shows. A restaurant kitchen was constructed under the lobby.²⁰

Two 40-foot bars were installed, one in modern chrome at the rear of the auditorium and another in the lower lounge. The latter had a "Barbary Coast" theme, replete with the old Carson City custom of paving its floor with silver dollars. Paintings by Charles Russell and William Remington advanced the "Old West" ambience. One of the casino's most sensational features was a wishing well on the main floor. Equipped with an intricate system of mirrors, guests could peer into the well "and see water nymphs going through their luxurious manoeuvres."²¹ Clark Robinson (decorator of Radio City Music Hall and of the Casino de Paree) was largely responsible for transforming the vast Gothic interior into a nightclub.²² He covered the auditorium with large ornamental tapestries but followed Billy Rose's directive that "the beauty of the [original] interior...be left untouched."²³

The Casino immediately established itself as one of the hottest night spots in New York. To insure its continued success Billy Rose summered in Europe in search of fresh acts for the upcoming season. But during his eight-week absence the quality of food, service and entertainment declined under the profit-seeking mobsters. A major confrontation ensued (involving even J. Edgar Hoover) and in autumn 1934 Rose dissociated himself from the Casino.²⁴

By November 1934 the Casino had become "The Manhattan Music Hall," but without Billy Rose it faltered.²⁵ During the next two years the house was used briefly by the WPA's "Popular Price Theater"²⁶ before being leased to the Columbia Broadcasting System in August 1936 as one of a growing number of radio playhouses. It was renovated by the well-known architect William Lescaze who was largely responsible for the development of the broadcasting studio as a new building type in twentieth-century architecture.²⁷ He curtained the theater's Gothic walls near the proscenium with streamlined control booths.²⁸

After a short-lived attempt to return the house to the legitimate stage in 1945,²⁹ the theater was converted for television use by CBS in 1949. Camera runways were installed in 1949 to facilitate braodcasting of Ed Sullivan's popular show "Toast of the Town" which had made its debut in the previous year.³⁰ In the following decades additional camera runways were installed,³¹ the theater's doorway enlarged, and its stage and control booths rebuilt.³¹

Throughout the 1950s and '60s the theater continued to house the Ed Sullivan Show. In recognition of its success and more particularly of the man who made it possible, "CBS Playhouse, Studio 50" was rechristened "The Ed Sullivan Theater," during a broadcast of his show on national television

on December 10, 1967. It was the first time in entertainment history that a Broadway theater was renamed after a television personality.³²

Distinguished as the longest-running program in T.V. history, the twenty-three year old Ed Sullivan Show was cancelled in 1971. The theater, however, continues to bear his name and was used by CBS until the termination of its lease ten years later. The Shuberts and Nederlanders both expressed their interest in returning the theater to the legitimate stage,³³ but the house was eventually leased to its current tenant, Reeves Teletape, Inc.

(JA)

Notes

1. "Reaching Rainbow's End," New York Telegraph, November 24, 1927.
2. Ibid.
3. "Cornerstone Laid at Hammerstein's," New York Times, October 1, 1927. Construction began on March 21, 1927, a half year before the ceremonial laying of the cornerstone. The building was completed on January 7, 1928, one month after the theater's premiere: New York City Department of Buildings, Manhattan, New Building Permit 271-1926.
4. "Notes on People," New York Times, December 1, 1977 p. C 3.
5. "New Hammerstein Theatre Dedicated," New York Times, December 1, 1927, p. 32.
6. "Hammerstein's Theatre, New York City," Architecture and Building, 60 (February 1928), 38-39.
7. Interview with Mrs. Peggy Elson, Herbert Krapp's daughter, by Janet Adams, November 16, 1984.
8. "Hammerstein's Theatre, New York City"; "New Hammerstein Theatre Dedicated."
9. "Hammerstein has \$5 Left of Millions," New York Times, March 27, 1931, p. 27.
10. Burns Mantle, "The Golden Dawn in a Gothic Cathedral," New York Daily News, December 1, 1927.
11. Robert Coleman, "'Golden Dawn' Opens Brilliantly at Hammerstein's," Daily Mirror, December 2, 1927.
12. Hugh Fordin, Getting to Know Him: A Biography of Oscar Hammerstein II (New York: Random House, 1977), pp. 108.
13. Arthur Hammerstein, obituary, New York Herald Tribune.

14. Fordin, pp. 108, 112-113.
15. "Hammerstein Has \$5 Left."
16. "Theatre Sold At Auction," New York Times, April 9, 1931, p. 46.
17. New York City Department of Buildings, Manhattan, Alteration Permit 2724-31, and "New Name is Given to Hammerstein's," New York Times, August 5, 1931, p. 17.
18. "N.S. Carroll Leases Manhattan Theatre," New York Times, April 4, 1932, p. 13, c. 5, and "Carroll Gives up the Manhattan," New York Times, October 26, 1932, p. 23, c. 4.
19. "Master of His Own House," New York World Telegram, May 19, 1934.
20. Alteration Permit 860-34. See also "Theater Leased for New Casino," New York Times, November 1, 1933, p. 41, c. 4.
21. "Hearken, Folks! The Erstwhile Hammerstein Theater is about to become a Music Hall," New York Evening Post, 5/9/1934.
22. "Music Hall to Open Soon," New York Herald Tribune, May 6, 1934.
23. "Hammerstein's Theater Becomes Rose's Music Hall," New York Post, March 13, 1934.
24. Earl Conrad, Billy Rose, Manhattan Primitive (New York: World Publishing Co., 1968), pp. 75-78.
25. "Music Hall Bill Changed," New York Times, November 29, 1934, p. 33, c. 3.
26. "Popular Price Theater Announces Opening," New York World Telegram, February 7, 1936.
27. Dennis P. Doordan, "William Lescaze and CBS: A Case Study in Corporate Modernism," Syracuse University Library Association Courier, v. 19, no. 1 (Spring 1984), 43-55. Lescaze's alterations are illustrated on p. 44 (fig. 1) where the theater is incorrectly dated (1934) and identified (Avon Theater). The theater was correctly identified by Anthony W. Robins.
28. Alteration Permit 2412-36.
29. "Hammerstein's a Theater Again," New York Herald Tribune, December 28, 1945.
30. New York City Department of Buildings, Manhattan, Building Notice 3112-49.
31. Building Notice 2316-52 (new vestibule); Building Notice 1334-53 (camera runways); Building Notice 2916-54 (entrance enlargement); Building Notice 2902-56 and Alteration Permit 1539-56 (stage and sound booths rebuilt).

32. "Broadway Theater Named After Our Ed Sullivan," New York Daily News, November 18, 1967.
33. "Shubert, Nederlander Dicker to Acquire Sullivan Theatre, N.Y.," Variety, January 28, 1981, p. 81.

The Ed Sullivan as a Playhouse¹

Arthur Hammerstein intended to open his new theater with a production as spectacular as the house itself. For the script he hired his nephew Oscar Hammerstein II together with Otto Harbach, and commissioned Herbert Stothart and Viennese composer Emmerich Kalman to create its score. Their joint efforts came together on November 30, 1927, with the premiere of Golden Dawn, starring Metropolitan Opera singer Louise Hunter. The operetta provided the Gothic theater with a curious inauguration: it centered around a European girl who became the unwilling wife of an African god while the stage pulsed with tribal dances, sacrificial reenactments and fetish worship.² A sumptuously colorful, but ponderous production, it was dubbed "the Golden Yawn" by Walter Winchell. Its most memorable features were the first woman to appear topless on an American stage and the American debut of Cary Grant.³ The quarter-million dollar extravaganza closed after 184 performances.

Hammerstein had better luck, at least temporarily, with his new production of Sweet Adeline which opened on September 9, 1929. Despite the stock market crash several weeks later, the show managed to survive through 234 performances. The theater then went dark until September 17, 1930, when Hammerstein opened his latest musical Luana. It was a disaster and closed after only 16 performances, leaving the new theater vacant once more. In a sink or swim attempt to survive, the now desperate Hammerstein raced into production of Ballyhoo, starring W.C. Fields. When it closed after only 68 performances, the bankrupted owner was forced to sell "Hammerstein's," having enjoyed only the briefest success within its Gothic walls.

In September 1931 Schwab & Mandel attempted to reverse the theater's ill fate with their production of "Free For All." A drama about Communism written by their silent partner (Oscar Hammerstein II), it had little appeal for the distraction-seeking Depression audience. It closed after only 15 performances; when East Wind repeated this now too common pattern, Schwab & Mandel terminated their lease.

The house reverted to its all too familiar state of darkness until November, 1933 when it featured a cabaret program under the new name of Manhattan Casino. Its takeover by Billy Rose two months later provided the six-year-old house with its first great success.

Rose's entertainment theme was a restoration of the "Gay Nineties" and the "good old spirit of Broadway."⁴ Rose hired 100 waiters with handlebar moustaches who periodically mounted the stage in their long white aprons for choruses of songs like "The Sidewalks of New York." The nostalgic

spirit was also captured by an authentic revival of vaudeville, featuring among other acts a pair of hoofers, a juggler, tumbler and female Atlas as well as "six monstrously fat women dressed as little girls...[who danced as] their tons of flesh quivered an inglorious protest."⁵ The nostalgic review left not a dry eye in the audience.

When Billy Rose became estranged from the theater in late 1934, vaudeville continued in the renamed "Manhattan Music Hall." It was soon replaced, however, by a short revival of legitimate theater under the WPA (February, 1936) and subsequent use by CBS. As a radio playhouse it opened with Major Bowes' Amateur Hour, succeeded by the classic Fred Allen Show⁶. Its television debut came on June 20, 1948, with Talk of the Town. An outgrowth of the 1947 Madison Square Garden Harvest Moon Ball, hosted by the young Ed Sullivan, this variety show became an immediate hit. Seven years later it was renamed for its host.

For twenty-three years the Ed Sullivan Show broke new ground in television entertainment. It pioneered the recognition of black performers and of rock-and-roll acts. It also featured on its stage the American television debuts of such talents as Dean Martin, Jerry Lewis, Humphrey Bogart, Jackie Gleason, Maria Callas, Elvis Presley, Anna Maria Alberghetti, Rudolph Nureyev and the Beatles, among others.

Having shattered every programming record in television history, "The Ed Sullivan Show" was cancelled in 1971. CBS used the theater for other programs, including the Merv Griffin Show, until the expiration of its lease in 1981, at which time the theater was taken over by Reeves. Today's audiences at the Ed Sullivan Theater can watch the television show Kate and Allie being filmed there.

Notes

1. This production history of the Ed Sullivan (originally Hammerstein's) 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. John Anderson, "The Play," New York Evening Post, December 1, 1927, p. 18.
3. Hugh Fordin, Getting to Know Him: A Biography of Oscar Hammerstein II (New York: Random House, 1977), p. 83.

4. Arthur Ruhl, "Second Nights," New York Herald Tribune, July 8, 1934.
5. Archer Winsten, "In the Wake of the News," New York Post, 6/23/1934.
6. "Theatre-Studio to Open," New York Times, September 16, 1936; "Shubert Nederlander Dicker to Acquire Sullivan Theatre, N.Y.," Variety, January 28, 1981, p. 81.
7. Ed Sullivan, obituary, New York Times, October 14, 1974, p. 36.

Description¹

Inner Entrance Vestibule:

The vestibule is a small irregularly shaped space with side walls relieved by shallow arched recesses. The walls rise to a corbel-supported rib vault in the center of which is a rectangular flat ceiling panel. Doors on the east wall lead into the vestibule from the street; doors on the west wall lead into the outer lobby.

1) Ornament: Decorative ornament includes but is not limited to the following:

Walls: The walls are cast stone ashlar panels, now painted, above a continuous veined marble baseboard.

Ceiling: The corbels are a foliate design. The ribs are articulated with foliate moldings and bosses. A foliate molding with bosses outlines the center ceiling panel.

Floor: The floor is covered with marble slabs set in a diamond pattern.

2) Attached fixtures:

Doors: Four pairs of bronze and glass doors lead into the vestibule from the street. The doors have Gothic motifs in their upper portions and handsome door pulls. Six similar doors, but with non-original crystallized glass rather than clear glass, lead into the outer lobby.

Walls: The north wall is spanned by an iron radiator grille, pierced by decorative Gothic arcades.

3) Known Alterations: The doors leading into the outer lobby originally had leaded stained glass panels.

Outer (Ticket) Lobby:

The outer lobby is an L-shaped space; the north and south walls are divided into three bays each by projecting paired piers. A ticket booth is located in the second bay on the south wall. The third bay on this wall

opens into the base of the "L." On the north wall corbels support the arched terminations of the paired transverse ceiling ribs. The entire ceiling is articulated by transverse ribs, double transverse ribs alternating with single transverse ribs that project directly from the side walls and arch slightly upwards at the center. The transverse ribs are intersected by two ribs running the length of the lobby which divide the ceiling into a grid of deeply recessed coffers. Doors on the east wall lead from the vestibule into the outer lobby. Service doors at the west end of the lobby provide access to an alley. Doors at the end of the "L" open into the inner lobby.

1) Ornament: Decorative ornament includes but is not limited to the following:

Walls: The walls are covered with cast stone ashlar panels above a veined marble baseboard. The ticket booth is articulated by buttresses and topped by finialed cresting. Elaborate plaster tracery fills the openings.

Ceiling: The ceiling ribs are covered with foliate moldings and small rosette bosses. Large foliate bosses mark the intersections of the ribs. The corbels are covered with foliation. The inner coffer walls are lined with a pattern of Gothic arcades. Diagonal ribs intersect on the ceiling sections of the coffers.

Floor: The floor is covered with marble slabs set in a diamond pattern.

2) Attached Fixtures:

Doors: The doors leading from the vestibule are described above. The four doors leading into the inner lobby are similar. The service doors are all metal and adorned with a motif of Gothic arcades.

Walls: The bays on the north walls contain iron radiator grilles with Gothic motifs.

3) Known Alterations: The panels of the doors from the vestibule were originally filled with leaded stained glass panels.

Inner Lobby:

The inner lobby is a rectangular space which is placed perpendicular to the outer lobby and parallel to the auditorium. The east and west walls are divided into three bays by clustered shafts which rise to a rib vaulted ceiling. The ceiling vaults are intersected by coved sections. On the north wall, doors lead from the outer lobby. On the western wall a partially open central bay leads into the auditorium flanked on either side by a double staircase leading to the balcony. The ceilings above the staircase are corbel-supported rib vaults.

1) Ornament: Decorative ornament includes but is not limited to the following:

Walls: The first bay of the east wall has paneled wood wainscoting and a cast stone wall above. The second bay of this wall is subdivided into three parts: a central section ornamented with elaborate Gothic tracery (in front of which originally stood a memorial statue of Oscar Hammerstein I), flanked on either side by sections of cast stone wall above wood wainscoting. The support walls of the staircases on the west wall are faced with paneled wood wainscoting. The clustered shafts are articulated with foliation and terminate in foliate capitals. The doorways on the north wall are flanked by slender columns with foliation and foliate capitals. A large arched panel above the doorways is filled with Gothic tracery.

Ceiling: The ribs of the ceiling vaults are adorned with foliate moldings intersected by bosses. The coves contain latticework panels with quatrefoil motifs. The ceilings above the staircases are covered with polychromatic tiles, now painted.

Floor: The floor is covered with marble slabs set in a diamond pattern.

2) Attached Fixtures:

Doors: The doors leading from the outer lobby have been described above. A similar door on the east wall leads to the ticket booth and theater office.

Staircases: Wrought-iron railings with Gothic arches and bosses line the staircases leading to the balcony.

3) Known Alterations: The lobby entrance to the auditorium has been reduced by the introduction of a modern wall. A modern office has been installed in the third bay on the eastern wall.

Auditorium:

1) Configuration: The configuration of the auditorium consists of a space wider than it is deep with a single balcony with a crossover aisle, an orchestra, a proscenium, an orchestra promenade, a ceiling, a stage opening behind the proscenium arch, and a floor which slopes slightly towards the proscenium arch.

Orchestra: The walls of the orchestra curve in towards the proscenium arch and contain apsidal recesses instead of boxes.

Proscenium: The proscenium is an elliptical arch.

Balcony: There is a single balcony with a crossover aisle.

Ceiling: The ceiling takes the form of a grand rib vault with 30 ribs which converge at the center to form a dome.

Stage: The stage, which is now only slightly raised above the orchestra floor, has been extended into the auditorium.

Promenade: A promenade is located at the rear of the orchestra.

2) Ornament:

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

Proscenium arch: The arch is supported by clustered shafts with foliation and foliate capitals. The arch itself is a concave panel outlined by foliate moldings. Flanking the shafts are Gothic arches filled with tracery.

Orchestra: The side walls of the orchestra are divided into bays by four floating corbels. Exit doors placed beneath pointed arches.

Orchestra Promenade: The rear wall of the orchestra promenade is faced with wood wainscoting (carved with heraldic shields) with cast stone above. It is divided into three bays by clustered shafts with foliation and foliation rising to a rib-vaulted ceiling above.

Balconies: The side walls of the balcony are divided into bays by clustered shafts with foliation and foliate capitals which rise to the ceiling ribs. Within the central bays are multi-light windows, grouped under a single arch and filled with geometric stained glass and Gothic tracery, only the top third of which is currently visible. The flanking bays contain exit doors, surmounted by pointed arches containing polylobed oculi with stained glass. The underside of the balcony contains ribs with foliate moldings and three web-like ceiling panels, originally with lanterns.

Ceiling: The ribs are covered with foliate moldings intersected by bosses. The dome is pierced at mid-height by a corona of latticework grilles. Additional latticework is placed between the ribs as they converge into the central lantern (see below, under attached fixtures).

3) Attached fixtures:

Railings: Railings with Gothic arched motifs are placed in the orchestra promenade and in the balcony by the crossover aisle and by the stairs linking the upper and lower sections of the balcony.

Light fixtures: The only surviving original light fixture is in the center of the ceiling. It is a lantern with stained-glass panels and ten tabernacle-like pendants.

4) Known alterations: Many modifications have been made to the auditorium to accommodate its current use. These include: modern partitioning, the extension of the stage, the modification of the slope of the floor, the introduction of modern curving side walls covering the apsidal recesses and niches which flank the proscenium and the traceried windows at balcony level, and the extension of a temporary ceiling grid out from the front of the balcony. Original light fixtures have been removed,

and the entire auditorium painted in monochrome. Most notably the gold leaf mosaics and intricately painted foliate panels between the ceiling ribs have been covered with white paint.

(MP)

Notes

1. Architecturally significant features are underlined.

Conclusion

The Ed Sullivan Theater, originally Hammerstein's Theater, survives today as one of the historic theater interiors that symbolize American theater for both New York and the nation. Built by producer Arthur Hammerstein as a memorial to his father Oscar Hammerstein I, it helped shape the character of the Broadway theater district. Designed for Hammerstein by Herbert J. Krapp, the most prolific architect of the Broadway theater district, the Ed Sullivan represents a special and important aspect of the nation's theatrical history. Its interior is an extraordinary Gothic-inspired design, unique among Herbert Krapp's Broadway theaters, and, despite a number of alterations, most of the design survives intact.

For half a century the Ed Sullivan Theater has served as home to a variety of entertainment including legitimate stage theater, night club cabaret, radio and television. 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 Andrew S. Dolkart (ASD). Gale Harris of the Research Department 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, Virginia Kurshan, Susan Strauss, and Jay Shockley.

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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 Ed Sullivan Theater (originally Hammerstein's Theater), first floor interior consisting of the inner entrance vestibule, the outer lobby, the inner lobby, the auditorium, the stage area, the staircases leading from the first floor up to the balcony floor; the balcony floor interior consisting of the balcony, the upper part of the auditorium and ceiling; and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces, including but not limited to, wall, ceiling, and floor 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 Ed Sullivan Theater Interior survives today as one of the historic theater interiors that symbolize American theater for both New York and the nation; that, built in 1927, it was designed for prominent Broadway producer Arthur Hammerstein as a memorial to his father Oscar Hammerstein I; that it was designed for Hammerstein by Herbert J. Krapp, the most prolific architect of the Broadway theater district; that the Gothic-style interior that Krapp created for Hammerstein, including leaded glass light-fixtures and polychromatic ceramic tile, is a unique design among the Broadway theaters and as such represents a special aspect of the nation's theatrical history; that despite a number of alterations the interior retains most of its original character and configuration; that for over half a century the Ed Sullivan Theater has served as home to a full range of entertainment including the productions of Billy Rose and the innovative and long-running Ed Sullivan television show; and that as such it continues to help define the Broadway theater district, the largest and most famous concentration of legitimate stage theaters in the world.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 21, Section 534, of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 8-A of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as an Interior Landmark the Ed Sullivan Theater, first floor interior consisting of the inner entrance vestibule, the outer lobby, the inner lobby, the auditorium, the stage area, the staircases leading from the first floor up to the balcony floor; the balcony floor interior consisting of the balcony, the upper part of the auditorium and ceiling; and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces, including but not limited to, wall, ceiling, and floor surfaces, doors, stair railings, and attached decorative elements; 1697-1699 Broadway, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 1025, Lot 43 in part consisting of the land beneath the described interior, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.

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APPENDIX

The following production history of the Ed Sullivan 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 GOLDEN DAWN 11/30/27 (184 perfs.) by Otto Harbach and Oscar Hammerstein II, music by Emmerich Kalman and Herbert Stothart; with Louise Hunter, Paul Gregory, Robert Chisholm and Archie Leach (Cary Grant).

1928

GOOD BOY 9/5/28 (253 perfs.) by Otto Harbach, Oscar Hammerstein II, and Henry Myers, music and lyrics by Herbert Stothart, Bert Kalmar and Harry Ruby; with Eddie Buzzell, Helen Kane, Effie Shannon, and Charles Butterworth.

1929

SWEET ADELINE 9/3/29 (234 perfs.) by Oscar Hammerstein II, music by Jerome Kern; with Helen Morgan and Robert Chisholm.

1930

LUANA 9/17/30 (21 perfs.) by Howard Emmett Rogers, music Rudolph Friml, lyrics J. Kiern Brennan; with Ruth Altman and Joseph Macaulay.

BALLYHOO 12/22/30 (68 perfs.) by Harry Ruskin and Lieghton K. Brill, music by Louis Alter; with W.C. Fields, Don Tomkins and Grace Hayes.

MANHATTAN THEATER

1930-1932

1931

FREE FOR ALL 9/8/31 (15 perfs.) by Oscar Hammerstein II and Laurence Schwab, music by Richard A. Whiting; with Jack Haley, Lillian Bond and Tamara.

EAST WIND 10/27/31 (23 perfs.) by Oscar Hammerstein II and Frank Mandel, music by Sigmund Romberg; with Charlotte Lansing and William Williams.

1932

THROUGH THE YEARS 12/28/32 (20 perfs.) by Brian Hooker based on SMILIN' THROUGH, music by Vincent Youmans; with Natalie Hall and Michael Bartlett.

BILLY ROSE MUSIC HALL
1934

MANHATTAN MUSIC HALL
1934-1935

MANHATTAN THEATER
1936

1936

AMERICAN HOLIDAY 2/21/36 (20 perfs.) by Edwin L. and Albert Barker; Federal Theater Project; with Whitner Bissell and Suzanne Caubaye.

MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL 3/20/36 (38 perfs.) by T.S. Eliot, music by A. Lehman Engel; Federal Theatre Project; with Harry Irvine, Harry Sothern, George Le Soir and Stephen Courtleigh.

CLASS OF '29 5/15/36 (50 perfs.) by Orrie Lashin and Milo Hastings; Federal Theater Project; with Henry Irvine, Jan Ulrich, Ben Starkie and Allen Nourse.

HELP YOURSELF 7/14/36 (82 perfs.) by John J. Coman based on a play by Paul Vulpius; with Curt Bois Walter Burke, Jenny Wren, George LeSoir and Stephen Courtleigh.

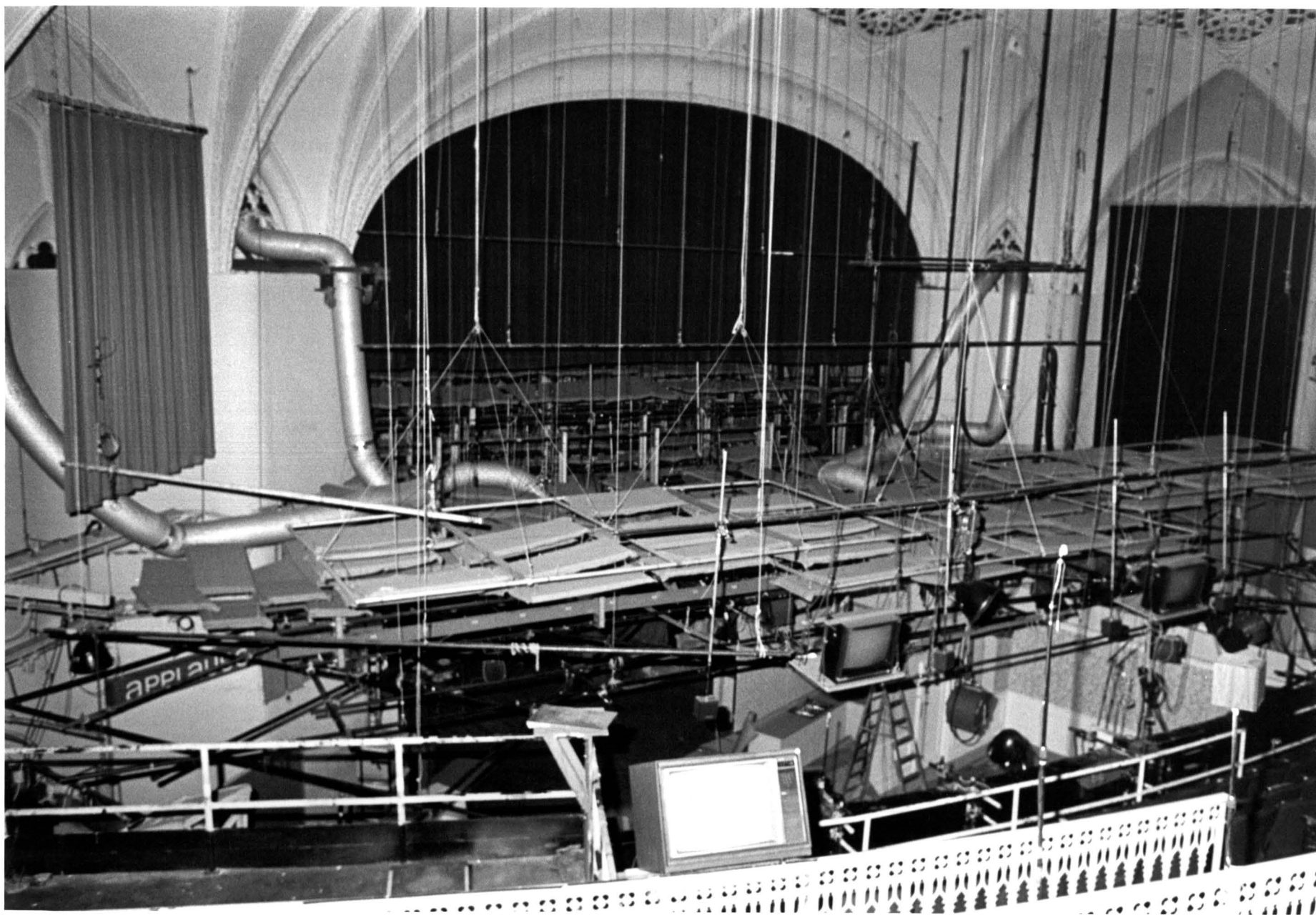
COLUMBIA RADIO PLAYHOUSE
1936-1967

ED SULLIVAN THEATER
1967 - Present



Ed Sullivan Theater Interior
1697-1699 Broadway
Manhattan

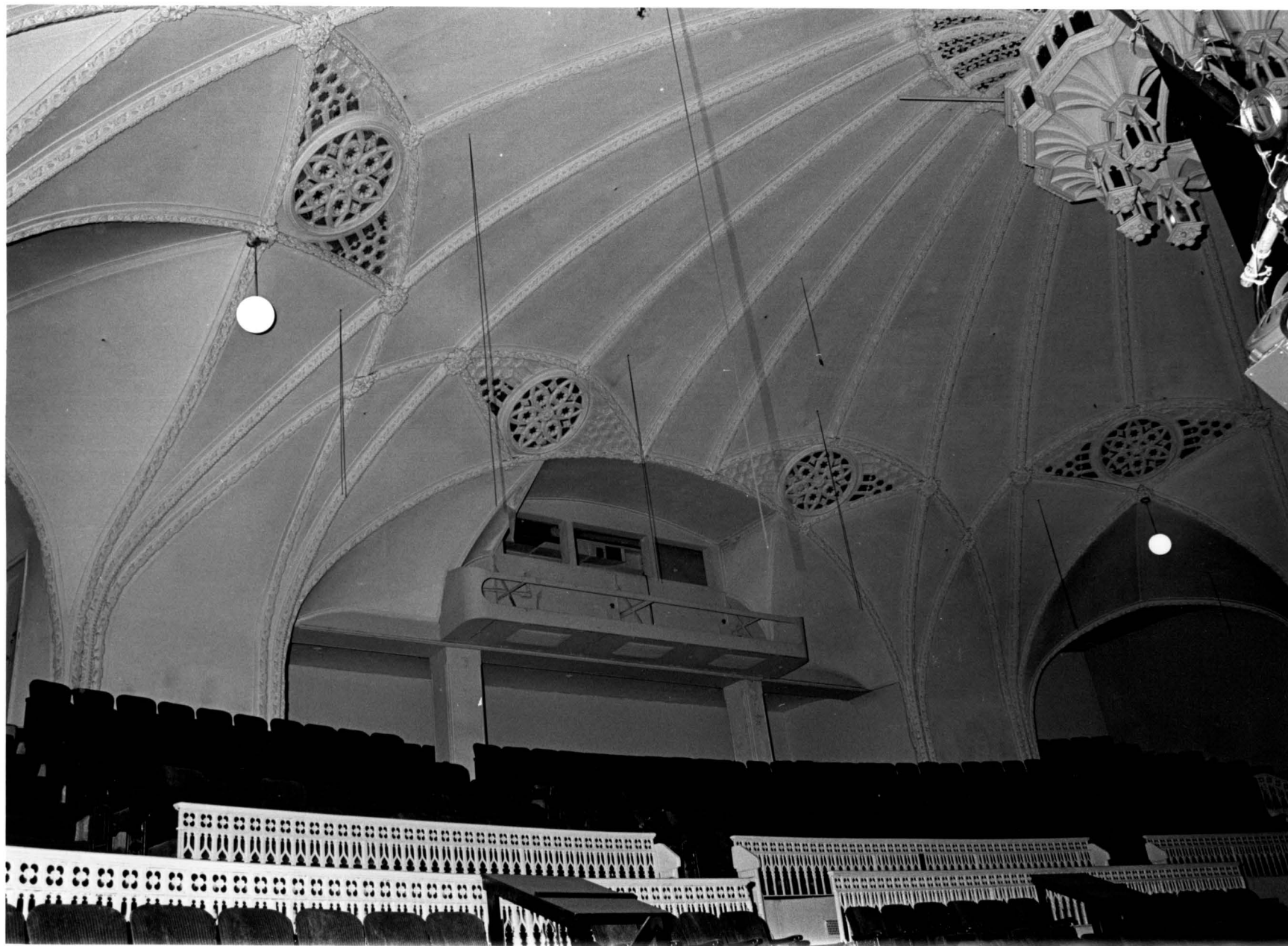
Built: 1927-28
Architect: Herbert J. Krapp



Ed Sullivan Theater Interior



Ed Sullivan Theater Interior



Ed Sullivan Theater Interior



Ed Sullivan Theater Interior



Ed Sullivan Theater Interior
Detail



Ed Sullivan Theater Interior
Ceiling

1982

Photo: Forster, LPC



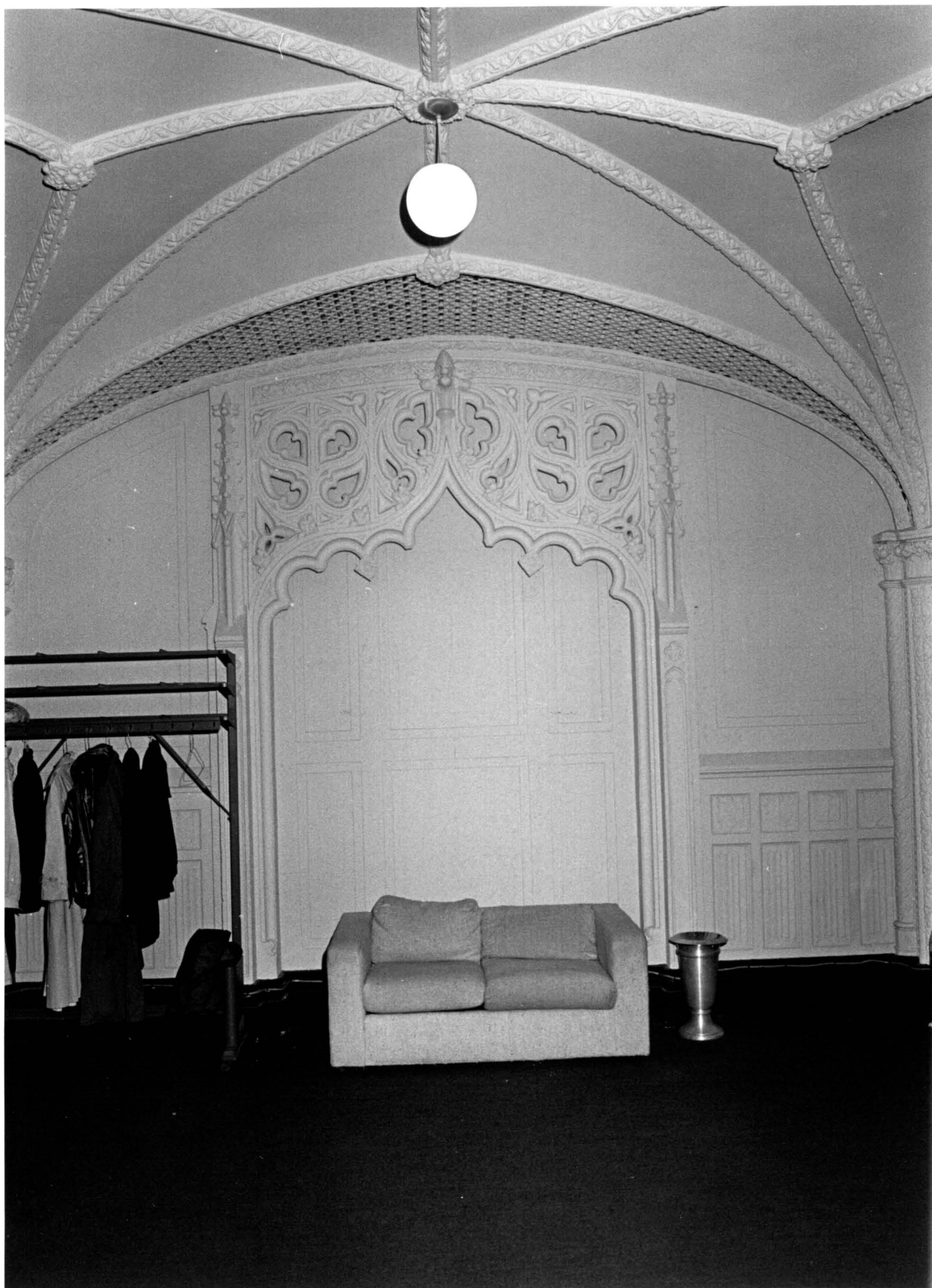
Ed Sullivan Theater Interior
Ticket Lobby

1982

Photo: Forster, LPC



Ed Sullivan Theater Interior
Inner Lobby



Ed Sullivan Theater Interior
Inner Lobby