

Landmarks Preservation Commission
December 8, 1987; Designation List 197
LP-1365

EUGENE O'NEILL THEATER (originally Forrest Theater), first floor interior consisting of the auditorium, the stage, the staircases leading from the first floor to the balcony floor; the balcony floor interior consisting of the balcony, the upper part of the auditorium and ceiling; and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces, including but not limited to, wall and ceiling surfaces, doors, stair railings and attached decorative elements; 230-238 West 49th Street, Manhattan. Built 1925-26; architect Herbert J. Krapp.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1020, Lot 53.

On June 14 and 15, 1982, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as an Interior Landmark of the Eugene O'Neill Theater (originally the Forrest Theater), first floor interior consisting of the lobby, the auditorium, the stage, the staircases leading from the first floor to the balcony floor and all connecting entrance areas; the balcony floor interior consisting of the balcony, the upper part of the auditorium and ceiling, the upper part of the stagehouse; 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. 60). The hearing was continued to October 19, 1982. Both hearings had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Eighty-three witnesses spoke 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 Eugene O'Neill (originally the Forrest) Theater survives today as one of the historic theater interiors that symbolize American theater for both New York and the nation. Built during the 1920s, the O'Neill was among the numerous theaters constructed by the Shubert Organization, to the designs of Herbert J. Krapp, that typified the development of the Times Square/Broadway theater district.

Founded by the three brothers Sam S., Lee and J.J. Shubert, the Shubert organization was the dominant shaper of New York's theater district. Beginning as producers, the brothers expanded into the building of theaters as well, and eventually helped cover the blocks east and west of Broadway in Midtown with playhouses.

Herbert J. Krapp, who designed almost all the Shuberts' post-World War I theaters, was the most prolific architect of the Broadway theater district. Having worked in the offices of Herts & Tallant, premier theater

designers of the pre-war period, Krapp went on to design theaters for the two major builders of the post-war era, the Shubert and Chanin organizations.

The O'Neill represents a typical and important aspect of the nation's theatrical history. Significant also is the importance of the theater and its adjacent hotel as the first playhouse-residential complex to be built in Times Square. The theater is also remarkable for its early use of a structural steel skeleton. Beyond its historical importance, its interior is an excellent example of the elegant Adamesque style in which Herbert Krapp worked.

For half a century the O'Neill 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 development of the Broadway Theater District

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Evolution of Theater Design

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

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

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

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

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The Broadway Theater in American Theatrical History

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The interior of the Eugene O'Neill Theater (originally the Forrest 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.

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Notes

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

The Shuberts

Sam S. Shubert (d.1905), Lee Shubert (c.1873-1953), and Jacob J. Shubert (c.1877-1963) formed perhaps the most powerful family Broadway has ever seen. Children of an immigrant peddler from Czarist Lithuania,¹ the Shuberts rose to become the dominant force in legitimate theater in America. By 1924 they were producing 25 percent of all the plays in America,² and controlled 75 percent of the theater tickets sold in this country.

The Shuberts' career in the theater actually began in front of a theater: Lee Shubert sold newspapers outside Wieting's Opera House in Syracuse. Soon his brother Sam began to help him. The manager of Wieting's then made Lee his personal errand boy. Sam Shubert was the first in the family actually to work in a theater: soon after his brother's promotion to errand boy he was given a small role in a Belasco production at Wieting's. Belasco was to remain Sam Shubert's idol throughout his career.³

Sam Shubert was the driving force behind the family's rise in the theater industry. From a first job as program boy at the Bastable Theater in Syracuse, he moved to Syracuse's Grand Opera House as assistant treasurer (ticket seller) and then treasurer. At eighteen he returned to Wieting's Opera House as treasurer.⁴ In 1894 he assembled enough money to buy the road rights of Charles Hoyt's A Texas Steer, and took the play on a tour of inexpensive houses. The tour was a success and the next season he repeated it with Hoyt's A Stranger in New York.⁵ In 1897 the Shuberts used the money of local backers to build their own theater in Syracuse, the Baker, with Jacob Shubert serving as manager.

Their success upstate convinced the Shuberts that they were ready to enter the theater world in New York City. In 1900 Sam and Lee Shubert obtained the lease of New York City's Herald Square Theater at Broadway and 35th Street (demolished 1915), while Jacob managed their upstate business. The Herald Square Theater at that time was unpopular with theatergoers, but the Shuberts changed that with a successful production of Arizona by Augustus John. They proceeded to engage the well-known actor Richard Mansfield, and he appeared at the Herald Square in 1901 in a popular production of Monsieur Beaucaire.⁶ The success of these productions encouraged the Shuberts to expand their activities in New York City. In 1901 Sam Shubert leased the Casino Theater on 39th Street; he secured the American rights to the London hit A Chinese Honeymoon and in 1902 it opened at the Casino to rave revues. The show ran for more than a year, and three companies presented it on the road.⁷

The Shuberts followed the success of A Chinese Honeymoon with further expansion in New York City. In 1902 they acquired the lease of the old Theater Comique on 29th Street and Broadway, remodeled the interior and reopened it as the Princess. As an opening attraction they brought Weedon Grossmith and his English company to America in their popular production of The Night of the Party. The following year, 1903, the Shuberts leased the New Waldorf Theater in London and the Madison Square Theater in New York City. They also sold a property on 42nd Street to the composer Reginald DeKoven, who built the Lyric Theater there as a home for the American School of Opera and leased it back to the Shuberts.⁸ The Shuberts then

signed a ten-year agreement with Richard Mansfield to open each season at the Lyric, to be followed by DeKoven's productions with the American School of Opera.

By this time the Shuberts were outgrowing the financial means of their upstate backers. Lee Shubert found two new financial backers, Samuel Untermyer and Andrew Freedman. Untermyer was a New York attorney with connections to many New York bankers and investors. Freedman was the owner of the New York Giants baseball team, had extensive New York real estate holdings as well as associations with the Morgan Bank, and was among the small group building New York's first subway. With the political influence and capital made available to the Shuberts by Untermyer and Freedman, they were able to expand their theater holdings in cities across the country, including Chicago, Boston, New Haven, St. Louis, and Philadelphia.

By 1905 the Shuberts controlled thirteen theaters. They had also found two additional backers who enabled the growing Shubert empire to expand still further, George B. Cox of Ohio and Joseph L. Rhinock of Kentucky. Cox was the immensely wealthy political boss of Cincinnati and Rhinock was a member of Congress who had extensive race track and real estate holdings. In May of that year, however, Sam Shubert was killed in a train wreck. He had been the driving force behind the Shubert empire, and many in the theater industry thought the Shuberts' dramatic rise would now end. Lee Shubert, however, took over his brother's role and within six months of the latter's death had quadrupled the Shubert chain and planned five memorial theaters to Sam.⁹

The Shuberts' success in acquiring and building theaters across the country and in booking and producing shows brought them into conflict with the central booking agency controlled by Marc Klaw and A.L. Erlanger. In 1905 Klaw and Erlanger's Syndicate managed most of the roughly one thousand lucrative theaters of the approximately 3000 theaters in the country.¹⁰ Every touring company had to pass through the Syndicate's stage doors. The Shuberts began to fight in earnest with Klaw and Erlanger in 1904 when they learned that their musical The Girl From Dixie wouldn't be able to get a road booking unless the brothers stopped renting their own theaters. Following his brother's death, Lee Shubert announced to the press that Harrison Fiske, David Belasco and the Shuberts were joining forces and were inviting "other independent producers" to join them in an "open door" independent circuit. The need for such a circuit was emphasized in November 1905 when Mme. Sarah Bernhardt arrived in New York for a Shubert tour. Klaw and Erlanger denied her the use of any of their theaters thinking that this action would force the Shuberts to accept their terms. The idea backfired and created enormous public support for the Shuberts as Mme. Bernhardt played in tents and town halls across the country. The struggle for control of theatrical bookings between the Shuberts and Klaw and Erlanger continued through the 1910s. By 1920, after countless lawsuits, the Shuberts gained supremacy.

In the five years following Sam Shubert's death the family continued to expand their holdings in New York City. In 1908 they hired Ben Marshall of Marshall & Fox, Chicago, to design a playhouse on West 39th Street. In what was to become a common Shubert practice, they named the theater after one of their stars, calling it Maxine Elliott's Theater (demolished). This was the first theater that the Shuberts built themselves, neither

remodeling nor leasing an existing theater. In 1909 they were involved, along with a number of other investors, in the building of the New (later Century) Theater on Central Park West at 62nd Street (demolished). At the same time they were building a second theater of their own in New York on West 41st Street, the Comedy Theater, designed by architect D.G. Malcolm (demolished). In 1910 the Shuberts hired architect Albert Swasey to design a small playhouse on West 39th Street, named Alla Nazimova's 39th Street Theater (demolished).

During the 'teens the Shuberts continued to expand their control of New York's theaters. Lee Shubert became the business director of the Century Theater on Central Park West. There he met Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt who owned the American Horse Exchange on Broadway at West 50th Street. The Shuberts acquired the Exchange from Vanderbilt and hired Swasey to remodel it as a theater. It opened in 1911 as the Winter Garden Theater with Jacob Shubert as manager. The Shuberts also bought the Astor Theater on Broadway and 45th Street (demolished) as well as an interest in three Manhattan theaters owned by the Selwyn brothers, and continued to build their own New York theaters. In 1913 they opened two theaters designed by Henry B. Herts, the Sam S. Shubert Memorial Theater on West 44th Street and the connecting Booth Theater (with Winthrop Ames as a partner) on West 45th Street. The Shubert Theater building also became home to the family's corporate offices.

Over the following decade the Shuberts proceeded to cover the Times Square area with Shubert theaters, all designed by architect Herbert J. Krapp, formerly of the Herts & Tallant office. In 1917 three new Shubert houses opened: the Morosco on West 45th Street (demolished), named for West Coast producer Oliver Morosco; and a second adjoining pair, the Broadhurst on West 44th and the Plymouth on West 45th, just east of the Shubert-Booth pair. The Broadhurst was initially managed by playwright George Broadhurst and the Shuberts, while the Plymouth was built in partnership with producer Arthur Hopkins. In 1918 the Shuberts built the Central Theater on Broadway and 47th Street (it survives today as the Forum 47th Street movie theater).

In the 1920s the Shuberts continued their fast-paced expansion both in New York and in other cities across the country. In 1920 they acquired complete ownership of the Century Theater on Central Park West.¹¹ That same year, they announced plans for six new theaters on West 48th and 49th Streets, all to be designed by Herbert J. Krapp. Of the four of these theaters eventually built, three opened in 1921: the Ritz on West 48th Street, and the Ambassador and the Forty-Ninth Street (demolished) on West 49th. The Edwin Forrest (today called the Eugene O'Neill) on West 49th Street opened in 1925.

While the Shuberts were building and acquiring theaters for use as legitimate houses they were also involved in other aspects of the entertainment business, many of them in competition with the legitimate stage. Lee Shubert at one time owned one-third of Samuel Goldwyn's motion picture company, and later sat on the boards of both Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and United Artists.¹¹

The Shuberts also became involved in vaudeville. In 1910 in Syracuse the Shuberts had reached an agreement with B.F. Keith, who virtually

controlled vaudeville in the East. They agreed to stay out of vaudeville for ten years in return for a share in Keith's Syracuse profits.¹² With the agreement's expiration in 1920, Lee Shubert announced plans to produce vaudeville shows, making inevitable a battle with Keith's United Booking Office (UBO) and its monopoly of the eastern vaudeville circuit. The booking battle with Keith caused intense competition for stars and control of theaters. Eventually, however, it became clear that vaudeville was no competition for the growing popularity of motion pictures, and the Shuberts abandoned the enterprise.

In 1924 the Shuberts issued four million dollars worth of Shubert theater stock. The prospectus detailed the assets owned by the Shuberts, not the least of which was their control or ownership of 86 "first class" theaters in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston and 27 other major cities. The 30 theaters they owned or controlled in New York City represented half of the seating capacity on Broadway. The Shuberts owned seven of Chicago's fifteen theaters, and they booked three of the others. They went on to announce in their prospectus that the producers who booked through their organization included the Theater Guild, Winthrop Ames, Brady, Comstock, Gest, Hopkins, Sam Harris, William Morris and 40 others. Finally the Shuberts noted that 20 percent of the total time on their circuit was devoted to their own productions.¹³ The stock sold out.

In addition to the four theaters on 48th and 49th Streets announced in 1920, the Shuberts built Krapp-designed theaters throughout the Times Square area. In 1921 Jolson's 59th Street Theater opened (demolished). The Shuberts named it for Al Jolson who opened it but never appeared in it again. In 1923 they opened the Imperial Theater on West 45th Street and in 1928 the Ethel Barrymore on West 47th Street. In addition to building their own theaters, the Shuberts owned or leased at various times many other New York theaters including the Belasco, the Billy Rose (now the Nederlander), the Cort, the Forty-Fourth Street, the Harris, the Golden, the Royale and the St. James.

While the Shubert Organization continues to function today (the sole survivor among the early 20th century theater entrepreneurs), its contribution to the stock of Broadway theaters ended with the Depression. That contribution, however, was of enormous importance for the creation of the Broadway theater district, and the surviving Shubert-built theaters today bear witness to the productivity of one of the most active and influential families in American theater history.

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Notes

1. Jerry Stagg, The Brothers Shubert, (New York: Random House, 1968), p. 3.
2. Stagg, p. 217.
3. Stagg, p. 12.
4. Ibid.

5. Sam S. Shubert, obituary, New York Dramatic Mirror, May 20, 1905, p. 13.
6. Reviewed in The Theatre, January, 1902.
7. Sam S. Shubert obit., p. 13.
8. Stagg, p. 208.
9. Stagg, p. 75.
10. Stagg, p. 98.
11. Stagg, p. 165.
12. Stagg, p. 164.
13. Stagg, p. 230.

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 enframing and by an oval cartouche. These forms imitate, in a simplified manner, the ornamental forms on Herts's buildings. In addition, Krapp's theaters are faced with bricks separated by wide, deeply inset mortar joints in a manner favored by Herts. The Plymouth and Broadhurst facades are simpler than their neighbors, but they were clearly designed to complement Herts's theaters and create a unified group of Shubert houses.

The Plymouth and Broadhurst are not adorned with a great deal of applied stone or terra cotta. This lack of architectural ornament is typical of Krapp's designs for the Shuberts;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 been 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 Forty-Sixth Street Theaters, are counted among the most successful and sought-after on Broadway.

(ASD)

Notes

1. Krapp's sixteen theaters are the Alvin (now the Neil Simon), Ambassador, Brooks Atkinson, Ethel Barrymore, Biltmore, Broadhurst, Forty-Sixth Street, Golden, Imperial, Majestic, Eugene O'Neil, Plymouth, Ritz, Royale, and Ed Sullivan (originally Hammerstein). The Central (1567 Broadway at 47th Street) is now a movie house and all but its cornice is covered with billboards.
2. The five theaters designed by Krapp that have been demolished are the Bijou (209 West 45th Street), Century (932 Seventh Avenue between 58th and 59th Streets), 49th Street (235 West 49th Street), Morosco (217 West 45th Street), and Waldorf (116 West 50th Street).
3. Interview with Mrs. Peggy Elson, Herbert Krapp's daughter, by Janet Adams, November 16, 1984.
4. Herbert Krapp papers, currently in the possession of Mrs. Peggy Elson, New York City.
5. The 49th Street Theater (1921) was an exception. This building had a terra-cotta facade articulated by fluted pilasters.
6. Brooks Atkinson Theater, Souvenir Program of the dedication (as Mansfield Theater), February 15, 1926, 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.

The Edwin Forrest Theater

By 1920, the Shuberts owned fifteen theaters in the greater Times Square area and had leases or partial control over several others. They opened five additional playhouses in as many years, and intended to erect yet another three. By 1925, however, the Shuberts had stalled their expansion policy, and abandoned plans for the construction of two large theaters on West 49th Street. They sold the intended eight-lot site to the 224-238 West 49th Street Corporation, which erected the fifteen-story Forrest Hotel, and the adjacent Forrest Theater with its stage house, on it. The new owner granted the Shuberts a 21-year lease on the theater building.¹

The theater and hotel were named for Edwin Forrest (1806-1872), one of the greatest classical actors of the 19th century and the first American actor to achieve an international reputation. The numerous theaters that bore his name provide some measure of the high regard in which he was held. Herbert Krapp designed another Edwin Forrest Theater for the Shuberts, in Philadelphia, in 1928.² The New York Forrest Theater paid rather anomalous tribute to the 19th-century tragedian, as Krapp designed it primarily to house Shubert musicals.

By combining residential and entertainment facilities in a single complex, architect Krapp established a new building type, and fulfilled a "long felt want" for both permanent and temporary accommodations in Times Square.³ The project was thus a predecessor for his more ambitious three theater (Theater Masque, Royale and Majestic) and hotel (Lincoln, now Milford Plaza) project for the Chanins. He also broke new ground in the theater by introducing a steel skeleton, this type of construction previously having been reserved for skyscrapers and large apartment buildings.⁴ Krapp also installed the most up-to-date stage curtain (a non-flammable asbestos and steel sandwich) and an innovative system for moving stage scenery by electricity.⁵

Krapp designed the Forrest auditorium in the handsome Adamesque manner typical of most of his Shubert and Chanin theaters. The Adamesque style takes its name from the brothers Robert and James Adam, 18th century British architects. Robert Adam (1728-1792), following English tradition, went to Italy to study the monuments of classical antiquity, but unlike his predecessors was attracted not to the great public monuments but rather to ancient domestic buildings. He took inspiration from these works to develop a highly ornamental and refined style of low-relief plasterwork with which he adorned a succession of English town and country houses.⁶

Adam's works were equally notable for their plans: the rooms in his houses were often circular, or oval, or rectangular with curved ends. A typical Adam room might be a long rectangular hall with a curved apse at one end, with walls articulated by shallow ornamental pilasters and bands of swags, and a ceiling covered with delicate plaster fan-light shaped tracery and murals of rustic scenes.⁷

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

Several early Broadway theaters were designed in the neo-Georgian or neo-Federal styles (e.g. the Little Theater, 1912, and the Henry Miller Theater, 1917-18), and their red-brick Georgian exteriors were complemented by Adamesque plasterwork ornament in their interiors. In the 1920s, the style became very popular, and was used freely, particularly by theater architects such as Herbert Krapp and Thomas Lamb, in theaters whose exteriors had nothing to do with the neo-Georgian.

The auditorium of Krapp's Forrest Theater is a handsome adaptation of the Adamesque to the needs of a theater. Like Adam's rooms, the auditorium is a rectangle with differently shaped ends, in this case with a proscenium arch at one end. Bands of Adamesque plasterwork are used to outline the chief elements of the auditorium's configuration, including the proscenium arch, the boxes, and the ceiling. The great variety of plaster ornament includes series of panels with classical scenes, cartouches with classically-robed figures, and theatrical masques, all of which combine to produce an unusually striking effect.

In spite of its handsome interior, and its many advances, the Forrest Theater received only limited publicity when it opened in November 1925. Doubtless some of the silence was due to the numbing effect of the 739 other theaters already existing in New York (192 playhouses and 548 motion picture houses),⁸ as well as to an ongoing feud between the Shuberts and major New York newspapers.⁹ What publicity it did command was extremely favorable. "Spacious [and] comfortable,"¹⁰ the Forrest was considered "most artistic in every way," each of its 1016 seats (currently 1101) providing easy viewing of the stage.¹¹

The Forrest Theater had only a few years before the Depression, which forced it almost immediately into a fight for survival. Many theaters were in the same situation and tried to attract audiences with a wide variety of promotions including free coffee, cigarettes and perfume, as well as the free services of silhouette artists, mind readers, jazz musicians and more.¹² Despite these ploys Broadway faltered: 87% of its legitimate shows failed in 1930.¹³ Some playhouses closed while others were slotted for conversion into swimming pools.¹⁴ Many went into receivership. The Forrest survived until 1934, but this was largely due to the fact that it was the only Broadway theater with access to a bar. A door in the rear of the orchestra led to the well-stocked lobby of the Forrest Hotel.¹⁵ Eventually not even this was enough to combat the financial pressures of

the Depression. The theater, in default on its mortgage, was auctioned in August, 1934.¹⁶

The new owners of the Forrest Theater granted a year's lease to the producers of Tobacco Road, never expecting that the show would last an unprecedented seven and a half years.¹⁷ Following Tobacco Road's 3812nd and final performance, the Forrest was leased to the Shuberts.¹⁸ Unfortunately they had no luck in booking the house and after a series of flops leased it to the Mutual Broadcasting Company for six months in 1944.¹⁹ Rescue finally came in 1945 when Louis Lotito, President of City Playhouse Theaters, Inc., took over the house.

Under the direction of Lotito, City Playhouses managed the Martin Beck and owned the Bijou, Fulton, Morosco and 46th Street theaters.²⁰ Unlike most theater executives, he believed in pleasing the customer and creating an environment of "relaxed cheerfulness."²¹ Concerned that the dark, somber-colored auditoriums of the Depression era imparted a mood of "deep encircling gloom," he had City Playhouse theaters painted in light tones "accented with gayer colors."²² A crew of painters, carpenters and repair men were retained to work throughout the year in City Playhouses' six theaters.²³

When Lotito bought the Forrest in 1945, he gave it a new identity, renaming it the Coronet and erasing its long reputation as a "jinx house."²⁴ He also refurbished it both inside and out spending almost as much on its remodeling as its \$265,000 purchase price.²⁵ The auditorium was repainted in tones of light blue and gray, new seats were installed, and the orchestra draped in silks and satins. The dressing rooms were rebuilt, a new freon cooling system was installed, and the facade was transformed into a replica of a brightly painted and shuttered New Orleans house with an iron balcony.²⁶

Fourteen years later plans were once again undertaken to remodel the theater. It had been bought in 1953 by investment broker-Broadway producer Lester Osterman, who renamed it the "Eugene O'Neill Theater" after his favorite dramatist. To Osterman's surprise, the playwright's widow objected (mostly because of Broadway commercialism). Only in the eleventh hour, after numerous pleas, did Mrs. O'Neill lend the name of her Nobel- and four-time Pulitzer-prize winning husband to the theater. The "Eugene O'Neill" thus became the first Broadway theater named in honor of a playwright.²⁷ It opened on October 6, 1959, with O'Neill's The Great God Brown. Osterman commissioned a portrait of O'Neill in etched glass for installation on the theater's exterior.²⁸

The playhouse was sold for a third time in 1964 to David Cogan and Neil Simon, the latter assuming sole control three years later.²⁹ Simon used the theater primarily to showcase his comedies. Under the direction of his actress wife, Marsha Mason, who helped to manage the theater, the house was repainted and brought "back to its original Georgian splendor" with a new floor, carpets, draperies, and crystal chandeliers.³⁰

After six tremendous successes at the Eugene O'Neill, Simon suffered two flops. A California resident since 1975, he decided to sell the house

to the Jujamcyn Organization, operator of four other Broadway theaters. The latter took possession in 1982.³¹

(JA)

Notes

1. "Novel Combination of Playhouse and Hotel," Real Estate Record and Guide 116 (September 11, 1925), 9.
2. The Philadelphia house replaced an earlier Forrest Theater on the same site: "Shuberts Open Theater," New York Times, May 2, 1928, p. 18, col. 2.
3. "Novel Combination of Playhouse and Hotel in Theater Zone," p. 9.
4. "The New Forrest Theater is a Shubert Playhouse," The Sun, November 25, 1925, p. 10, cols. 3-4.
5. Ibid.
6. This brief account of the work of Robert Adam is based on Margaret Whinney, "The Adam Style," in Home House: No. 20 Portman Square, (Feltham, Middlesex: The Hamlyn Publishing Group Ltd, 1969), pp. 15-17.
7. See for instance the Back Parlour of Home House, 20 Portman Square, London, designed by Robert Adam and built c.1775.
8. "Theaters in the City Now Number 740," New York Times, November 15, 1925, Sec. II, p. 1, col. 3.
9. "Shuberts Still Rowing with Capital Dailies," Variety, November 18, 1925, p. 24.
10. "The Stage," The World, November 25, 1925, p. 13, col. 4.
11. "Mayflowers Opens the New Forrest Theater," New York Post, November 25, 1925, p. 6, col. 2.
12. "The Ballyhoo in Modern Dress," New York Times, August 3, 1930, sec. 8, p. 4, col. 2.
13. "87% of Shows Rated as Failures in Year," New York Times, September 3, 1930, p. 36, col. 5.
14. Proponents of the scheme noted the benefits of the theaters' sloping floors. "Plan to Use Theatres As Swimming Pools," New York Times, June 20, 1929, p. 19, col. 1.
15. "Show's a Flop, But Bar's a Hit," Variety, May 8, 1934.
16. "Two Theaters Sold on Auction Block," New York Times, August 4, 1934, p. 23, col. 5. See also "Theatre Mortgage Suit," New York Times, January 28, 1933, p. 9, col. 6.

17. "'Tobacco Road' to Move," New York Times, September 8, 1934, p. 18, col. 3; "'Tobacco Road' Producers Take 5-Year Lease on Theater for Their Show," New York Herald Tribune, August 18, 1936.
18. "News of the Stage," New York Times, June 4, 1941, p. 217.
19. Sam Zolotow, "\$3,000,000 Is Asked for 'Turtle' Rights," New York Times, March 24, 1944, p. 16.
20. For Lotito see Maurice Zolotow, "He Thinks The Customer Is Always Right." New York Times, October 10, 1948, sec. 8, pp. 1, 3; Louis A. Lotito, "Investment in Good Will," Theater Arts, January 1951, p. 38.
21. Lotito, p. 38.
22. Ibid.
23. Helen Ormsbee, "Theater Rolled Back Roof Before Air Cooling Era." New York Herald Tribune, July 9, 1950.
24. "A Magic Wand Waved Over the Old Forrest Theater," New York Herald Tribune, February 10, 1946.
25. For the renovations see "He Thinks the Customer..." sec. 8, p. 3; "Two On the Aisle," New York Post, October 29, 1945, p. 19; R.M. Garland, "Melodrama at the Coronet," New York Journal American October 29, 1945, p. 7; "Inside Stuff - Legit," Variety, December 19, 1945, p. 44.
26. For these alterations by Walker and Gillette (Job no. 710) see New York City Department of Buildings, Manhattan, Alteration Permit 1472-45.
27. "News and Gossip of the Rialto," New York Times, September 29, 1959, sec. 2, p. 1, col. 4.
28. The current enamelled portrait and signature were evidently executed as substitutes for the etched glass.
29. "O'Neill Theater is Sold to Cogan," New York Times, December 21, 1964, p. 43, col. 4. "Neil Simon Buys O'Neill Theater," New York Times, November 17, 1967, p. 59, col. 1.
30. Untitled clipping from the New York Daily News of January 3, 1980 in the Eugene O'Neill Theater Clippings File, Billy Rose Theater Collection, Lincoln Center Branch, New York Public Library.
31. "Jujamcyn Co. Buys the O'Neill Theatre from Neil Simon," Variety, March 3, 1982, p. 89.

The O'Neill as a Playhouse¹

When the Shuberts opened the Edwin Forrest on November 24, 1925, they doubtless hoped to enjoy some of the success of the theater's namesake. Unfortunately, their premier production of Mayflowers was only the first of an unbroken series of "lame musicals" and forgettable dramas. The few happy exceptions included Women Go On Forever which played 117 performances in 1927 and featured exceptional performances by Mary Boland, James Cagney, and Osgood Perkins, and Edgar Wallace's "tender English mystery drama"² On The Spot with Crane Wilbur and Anna May Wong, which played 167 performances in 1930-31 and briefly caused the playhouse to be known as "Edgar Wallace's Forrest Theater." A revival of Rachel Crothers' As Husbands Go also scored a modest hit, playing 144 performances in 1933.

Then, in 1934, Tobacco Road, which had begun life as a "minor tragedy"³ of a backwoods family in Georgia and had been played increasingly for comedy as time went on, came to the Forrest for a marathon 3,182 performance run, breaking every previous Broadway record. Brilliantly acted by Henry Hull and his successors (James Barton, James Bell, Eddie Garr and Will Geer) who starred as family patriarch Jeeter Lester, the show had Forrest audiences roaring for almost seven years.

With Tobacco Road's closing the Forrest's ill luck returned. Although the management attempted to reverse the trend with revivals of Tobacco Road and the long-running farce Three Men On a Horse, the house jinx prevailed. Briefly leased as a radio studio in 1944, the Forrest was finally taken over by City Playhouses, Inc. in July 1945.

Extensively renovated and renamed the Coronet, the theater reopened in October 1945 with Theodore Reeve's The Beggars are Coming to Town. An unremarkable play, it was soon succeeded by Elmer Rice's much more successful Dream Girl. This fantasy, written for Rice's wife Betty Field, was among the biggest hits of 1945, playing 348 performances. In January 1947 Arthur Kennedy, Ed Begley and Karl Malden starred in Arthur Miller's All My Sons. His first hit, this distinguished drama of war-profiteering and family conflict went on to win the New Drama Critics Circle Award for 1946-47. Christmas 1947 brought Coronet audiences another treat, Paul and Grace Hartman and Elaine Stritch in the delightful revue Angel in the Wings. Mae West provided the Coronet's next sensation as she wriggled through Diamond Lil in a "triumph of nostalgic vulgarity."

The following season the Hartmans returned to the Coronet for another winning revue, Tickets, Please!, which played 245 performances in 1950. The theater then returned to the absorbing drama The Autumn Garden. It was the first of Lillian Hellman's two productions at the Coronet. Her second, a revival of The Children's Hour, was brilliantly acted in 1952 by Patricia Neal, Kim Hunter and Iris Mann. June Walker, Ed Begley and John Kerr continued the run of dramatic performances in All Summer Long (1954), as did Van Heflin in Arthur Miller's A View from the Bridge in 1955.

A lighter but equally noteworthy performance was given by Burgess Meredith in Liam O'Brien's The Remarkable Ms. Pennypacker of 1953-54. In addition the Lunts made two appearances at the Coronet during the fifties: in 1954 in Noel Coward's Quadrille, with Brian Aherne, and in 1956 in Lindsay and Crouse's The Great Sebastians. Other highlights of the decade

were the Producers Theatre presentation of Waltz of the Torreadors, with Ralph Richardson and Mildred Naturick (1957), and the 1958 production of Budd Schulberg and Harvey Breit's The Disenchanted with Jason Robards Senior and Junior, George Grizzard and Rosemary Harris.

In 1959, during a Phoenix Theater production of The Great God Brown, the Coronet was rechristened the Eugene O'Neill Theater. Thereafter it featured numerous comedies with such stars as Shirley Booth, Jack Lemmon, Sandy Dennis, George Gobel and Carol Channing, as well as Jason Robards, Jr., in 492 performances of A Thousand Clowns (1962). Another great success was the musical She Loves Me starring Jack Cassidy, Barbara Cook and Barbara Baxley.

Predictably, the trend toward comedy became much more pronounced in 1967 when Neil Simon bought the theater. A boy from the Bronx who began his career writing gags for a Catskills comedian, he had already convulsed Broadway with Barefoot in the Park and The Odd Couple. Simon continued his awesome success at the Eugene O'Neill with the first of 706 performances of The Last of the Red Hot Lovers in 1969. He followed this in 1971 with the even more popular The Prisoner of Second Avenue. Tony Awards were given to its director Mike Nichols and co-star Vincent Gardenia. Before Simon sold the theater in 1982, he presented hits almost annually at the Eugene O'Neill including Tony Award-winning The Good Doctor in 1973 (which starred Simon's wife, Marsha Mason, together with Christopher Plummer), God's Family in 1974, California Suite in 1976, Chapter Two in 1979, and in the following year, I Ought to be in Pictures. Simon's last two shows at the O'Neill were Fools in 1981 and Little Me in 1982, both of which failed and hastened his sale of the theater to the Jujamcyn Company. The O'Neill opened under the new management in October of 1982 with The Wake of Jame Foster. The Tony Award-winning musical The Big River opened in the spring of 1985.

(JA, GH)

Notes

1. This production history of the O'Neill 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. Freedley, p. 138.
3. Ibid.
4. Brooks Atkinson, "Mae West Back in Town as 'Diamond Lil,'" New York Times, February 7, 1949, p. 16, col. 2.

Description¹

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 flanked by boxes, an orchestra pit in front of the stage, an orchestra promenade, a ceiling, a stage opening behind the proscenium arch, and the sloping floor extending towards the proscenium arch.

Orchestra: The side walls splay in towards the proscenium arch.

Proscenium: The proscenium has a five-centered arch.

Balcony: There is single balcony divided into two tiers by a crossover aisle.

Boxes: Three boxes on each side of the proscenium step up towards the balcony front.

Staircases: At the corners of the orchestra promenade, staircases lead up to the balcony.

Ceiling: The ceiling is coved.

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.²

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

Promenade: A promenade is located at the rear of the orchestra and separated from the orchestra by columns.

2) Ornament:

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

Proscenium arch: The proscenium arch is outlined by rope moldings framing a wide band with fruit and flower motifs. The arch spandrels are filled with shield motifs surrounded by foliation.

Orchestra: The side walls are paneled plasterwork. Doors are set below decorative friezes.

Orchestra promenade: The rear wall has a paneled wainscoting and is divided into sections by fluted pilasters. The ceiling above the promenade is divided into sections by bands decorated with wave moldings and guilloche moldings.

Boxes: At each side of the proscenium is a set of boxes framed by an elliptical arch. Three smaller arches opening onto the boxes are set within the larger arch. The larger arch is outlined with rope moldings framing a band with fruit and flower motifs, the same detail as seen on the proscenium arch. The arch spandrels are decorated like those of the proscenium arch. The smaller arches rest on engaged pilasters with spiral moldings. The center arch is framed with a foliate band. The spandrel above the three arches contains a latticework pattern. The box fronts are decorated with swags and cameo panels.

Balcony: The side walls of the balcony contains elliptically arched panels, and segmental arches framing the exit doors. The segmental arches are formed by pilasters with Adamesque ornament supporting a foliate band. A decorative medallion with a classical figure is placed on the latticework above the doors. The arch is surmounted by seated female figures in profile flanking a panel. Just below the ceiling level is a frieze with panels containing Adamesque foliation and lamps. The decoration of the balcony front is a continuation of that seen on the box fronts. The underside of the balcony is divided into panels by decorative moldings. The panels contain decorative medallions.

Ceiling: The ceiling cove is decorated with panels containing medallions with classical figures separated by panels with Adamesque foliation. The main portion of the ceiling is outlined with a wide band containing octagonal panels and rosettes. The centerpiece is circled by a band containing a motif of swags and theatrical masks. Cartouche panels with figures link the band and the centerpiece.

3) Attached fixtures:

Railings: At the corners of the orchestra promenade, staircases with decorative wrought-iron railings lead up to the balcony. Similar railings line the crossover aisle in the balcony.

Light fixtures: Existing non-original light fixtures throughout the auditorium are stylistically compatible with its Adamesque style. Five crystal chandeliers are suspended from the ceiling. Crystal light fixtures are placed on the underside of the balcony. Candelabra-type wall sconces are placed on the side and rear walls.

4) Known alterations: The ground floor boxes have been removed. Air conditioning vents have been installed in the ceiling. A modern technical booth has been installed below the ceiling above the balcony. A

light rail has been placed on the front of the balcony. The current color scheme enhances the effect of the ornamental detail.

(MP)

Notes

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

Conclusion

The interior of the Eugene O'Neill Theater (originally the Forrest Theater) survives today as one of the historic theater interiors that symbolize American theater for both New York and the nation. One of the group of theaters constructed for the Shubert Organization during the early decades of this century, it helped shape the character of the Broadway theater district. Designed for the Shuberts by Herbert J. Krapp, the most prolific architect of the Broadway theater district, the O'Neill represents a typical and important aspect of the nation's theatrical history. Its interior is an excellent example of the elegant Adamesque style with which Herbert Krapp adorned the Broadway theaters he designed.

For half a century the O'Neill 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 preparation of this report has involved the work of a number of consultants supervised and edited by Anthony W. Robins (AR), Deputy Director of Research. Individual authors are noted by initials at the ends of their sections. The consultants were Margaret Knapp (MMK), Andrew S. Dolkart (ASD), and Eugenie Hoffmeyer (EH). Janet Adams (JA) of the Research Department wrote several sections. Gale Harris (GH) of the Research Department verified the

citations and sources, and provided editorial assist-ance. 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.

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 Eugene O'Neill Theater (originally the Forrest Theater), first floor interior consisting of the auditorium, the stage, the staircases leading from the first floor to the balcony floor; the balcony floor interior consisting of the balcony, the upper part of the auditorium and ceiling; and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces, including but not limited to, wall and ceiling surfaces, doors, stair railings and attached decorative elements; has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City, New York State, and the nation, and the Interior or parts thereof are thirty years old or more, and that the Interior is one which is customarily open and accessible to the public, and to which the public is customarily invited.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the O'Neill 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 1925-26, it was among the group of theaters constructed for the Shubert Organization during the early decades of this century which helped shape the character of the Broadway theater district; that it was designed for the Shuberts by Herbert J. Krapp, the most prolific architect of the Broadway theater district; that as a Shubert theater designed by Herbert Krapp it represents a typical and important aspect of the nation's theatrical history; that its interior is an excellent example of the elegant Adamesque style with which Herbert Krapp adorned the Broadway theaters he designed; that its significant architectural features include its single-balcony configuration and such Adamesque ornament as panels with classical scenes, cartouches with classically-robed figures, and theatrical masks, all of which combine to produce an unusually striking effect; that for half a century the O'Neill Theater has served as home to countless numbers of the plays through which the Broadway theater has come to personify American theater; and that as such it continues to help define the Broadway theater district, the largest and most famous concentration of legitimate stage theaters in the world.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 21, Section 534, of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 8-A of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as an Interior Landmark the Eugene O'Neill Theater (originally the Forrest Theater), first floor interior consisting of the auditorium, the stage, the staircases leading from the first floor to the balcony floor; the balcony floor interior consisting of the balcony, the upper part of the auditorium and ceiling; and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces, including but not limited to, wall and ceiling surfaces, doors, stair railings and attached decorative elements; 230-238 West 49th Street, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 1020, Lot 53, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.

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APPENDIX

The following production history of the O'Neill Theater is based on listings compiled by Actors Equity and submitted as testimony at the Landmarks Preservation Commission's public hearings of June and October, 1982. Their submission has been checked by Gale Harris and Susan Strauss of the Research Department staff against George Freedley, "Broadway Playhouses," bound typescript of the "Stage Today," 1941-43, Billy Rose Theater Collection, Lincoln Center Branch, New York Public Library; The Best Plays of.... [annual] (New York: Dodd Mead and Co., 1899-present); Theatre World [annual] Daniel Blum, editor (New York: Theatre World, 1946-present), The Biographical Encyclopedia & Who's Who of the American Theater, Walter Rigdon, editor (New York: James H. Heinman, Inc., 1966); Play Statistics File, Billy Rose Theater Collection, Lincoln Center Branch, New York Public Library; Programmes, Billy Rose Theater Collection, Lincoln Center Branch, New York Public Library.

1925

MAYFLOWERS 11/24/25 (81 perfs.) by Clifford Grey, music by Edward Kunneke; with Ivy Sawyer, Joseph Santley, Nancy Carroll and David Higgins.

1926

THE MATINEE GIRL 2/1/26 (24 perfs.) by McElbert Moore and Bide Dudley, music by Frank Grey; with Olga Steck and James Hamilton.

MAMA LOVE PAPA 2/22/26 (25 perfs.) by Jack McGowan and Mann Page; with Lorin Raker and Sara Southern.

RAINBOW ROSE 3/16/26 (55 perfs.) by Walter DeLeon lyrics by Walter DeLeon and Owen Murphy, music by Harold Levey and Owen Murphy; with Jack Squire and Jack Whiting.

THE WOMAN DISPUTED 9/28/26 (87 perfs.) by Denison Clift; with Louis Calhern, Ann Harding and Robert Cummings.

HANGMAN'S HOUSE 12/26/25 (4 perfs.) by Willard Mack; with Walter Abel and Katherine Alexander.

1927

LACE PETTICOAT 1/4/27 (15 perfs.) by Stewart St. Clair, lyrics by Howard Johnson, music by Emil Gerstenberger and Carl Carlton; with Tom Burke and Vivian Hart.

LADY ALONE 1/20/27 (45 perfs.) by Laetitia McDonald; with Alice Brady.

THE HEAVEN TAPPERS 3/8/27 (9 perfs.) by George Scarborough and Annette Westbay; with Charles Waldron and Margaret Lawrence.

THE CROWN PRINCE 2/23/27 (45 perfs.) by Zoe Akin; with Basil Sydney and Mary Ellis.

THE ROAD TO HAPPINESS 5/2/27 (2 perfs.); in repertory; by Martinez Sierra and Eduardo Marquina; THE ROMANTIC YOUNG LADY (1 perf.)/ THE GIRL AND THE CAT/THE BLIND HEART/THE CRADLE SONG/ANGELA MARIA/THE ROYAL PEACOCK/PYGMALION.

WOMEN GO ON FOREVER 9/7/27 (118 perfs.) by Daniel N. Rubin; with Mary Boland, James Cagney, Dwight Deane Wiman, William A. Brady, Jr, Osgood Perkins and Elizabeth Taylor.

BLESS YOU SISTER 12/26/27 (24 perfs.) by John Meehan and Robert Riskin; with Alice Brady and Robert Ames.

1928

MIRRORS 1/18/28 (13 perfs.) by Milton Herbert Gropper; with Sylvia Sidney, Hale Hamilton, Marie Nordstrom and Patricia Barclay.

THE CLUTCHING CLAW 2/14/28 (23 perfs.) by Ralph Thomas Kettering; with Alex McLeod, Robert Middlemass, Ralph Morgan and Minnie Dupree.

VEILS 3/13/28 (4 perfs.) by Irving Kaye Davis, music by Donald Heywood; with Elsa Shelley.

SATURDAYS CHILDREN 4/9/28 (16 perfs.) by Maxwell Anderson; with Ruth Gordon and Humphrey Bogart.

THE SKULL 4/23/28 (96 perfs.) by Bernard J. McOwen and Harry E. Humphrey; with Allan Davis and C.W. Van Voorhis.

THE COMMON SIN 10/15/28 (24 perfs.) by Willard Mack; with Millicent Hanley, Thurston Hall and Lee Patrick.

THE SQUEALER 11/12/28 (66 perfs.) by Mark Linder; with Robert Bentley and Ruth Shepley.

1929

CAFE DE DANSE 1/14/29 (31 perfs.) by Leontrovitch Mitchell and Clarke Silvernail; with Trini and Alison Skipworth.

THE WHISPERING GALLERY 2/11/29 (81 perfs.) by Percy Robinson and Terence de Marney; with Hugh Miller, Charles Warburton and Harry McNaughton.

PAOLO AND FRANCESCA 4/1/29 (17 perfs.) by Stephen Phillips; with Jane Cowl, Philip Merivale, Guy Standing and Katherine Emmett.

CARNIVAL 4/24/29 (20 perfs.) by William R. Doyle; with Norman Foster and Anne Forrest.

CHINESE O'NEILL 5/22/29 (12 perfs.) by Capt. Cushing Donnell; with Douglass R. Dumbrille and Hugh Buckler.

NOW-A-DAYS 8/5/29 (8 perfs.) by Arthur F. Brash; with Melvyn Douglas and Mayo Methot.

THE CROOKS' CONVENTION 9/18/29 (13 perfs.) by Arthur Somers Roche; with J. Carroll Naish and Stuart Fox.

DIVIDED HONORS 9/30/29 (40 perfs.) by Winnie Baldwin; with Guido Nadzo, Doris Freeman and Glenda Farrell.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN 10/21/29 (8 perfs.) by John Drinkwater; with Frank McGlynn and Edith Spencer.

HEADQUARTERS 12/4/29 (13 perfs.) by Hugh Stange; with William Farnum and Mildred Mitchell.

1930

BIRD IN HAND 1/6/30 (500 total perfs.) by John Drinkwater; with Freda Bruce Lockhart and Denis Mantelli. (First opened at the Booth 9/3/29, moved to the 49th Street Theater 3/10/30).

THE BLUE GHOST 3/10/30 (112 perfs.) by Bernard J. McOwen and J.P. Riewerts; with Bernard J. McOwen, King Calder and Douglas Cosgrove.

THE STEPPING SISTERS 8/25/30 (327 total perfs.) by Howard Warren Comstock; with Theresa Maxwell Conover, Helen Raymond and Clair Devin. (First opened at the Waldorf Theater 4/22/30; moved to Jolson's Theater 10/27/30.)

ON THE SPOT 10/29/30 (167 perfs.) by Edgar Wallace; with Anna May Wong, Crane Wilbur, Glenda Farrell and Alan Ward.

1931

IN THE BEST OF FAMILIES 3/30/31 (141 total perfs.) by Anita Hart and Maurice Braddell; with David Morris and Joan Bourdelle. (First opened at the Bijou Theater 2/2/31.)

LEAN HARVEST 10/13/31 (31 perfs.) by Ronald Jeans; with Nigel Bruce, Leslie Banks and Patricia Calvert.

THE DEVIL'S HOST 11/19/31 (36 perfs.) by Carl Glick; with Gilbert Douglas.

SUGAR HILL 12/25/31 (11 perfs.) by Charles Tazewell, music by Jimmy Johnson; lyrics by Jo Trent; with Broadway Jones.

1932

NEW YORK TO CHERBOURG 2/19/32 (3 perfs.) by H.G. Buller; with Taylor Holmes and Natalie Schafer.

A FEW WILD OATS 3/24/32 (4 perfs.) by Arthur Hoerl; with Mildred Van Dorn and Robert Allen.

1932(cont'd.)

ANGELINE MOVES IN 4/19/32 (7 perfs.) by Hale Francisco; with Suzanne Caubaye and Gerald Kent.

OL' MAN SATAN 10/3/32 (24 perfs.) by Donald Heywood; with A.B. Comatheire, Georgette Harvey and Phyllis Hunt.

THE GOOD FAIRY 11/17/32 (72 perfs.) by Ferenc Molnar; with Ada-May.

1933

AS HUSBANDS GO 1/19/33 (144 perfs.) by Rachel Crothers; with Alice Frost, Leslie Denison, Sue Keller and Ben McQuarrie.

TOMMY 8/7/33 (24 perfs.) by Howard Lindsay and Bertrand Robinson; with Janel McLeay and Charles Eaton.

CRUCIBLE 9/4/33 (8 perfs.) by D. Hubert Connelly; with Don Costello and Edwin Redding.

1934

RE-ECHO 1/10/34 (5 perfs.) by I.J. Golden; with Thurston Hall, George Walcott, Phyllis Povah and Charles Holden.

THEODORA THE QUEEN 1/31/34 (6 perfs.) by Jo Milward and J. Kerby Hawkes; with Elena Miramova and Minor Watson.

BROADWAY INTERLUDE 4/19/34 (12 perfs.) by Achmed Abjullah and William Almon Wolff; with Robert Emmett Keane, Sally Starr and Arthur Pierson.

LOVE KILLS 5/1/34 (15 perfs.) by Ida Lublenski Ehrlich; with Vivian Giesen and Marion Green.

CAVIAR 6/7/34 (20 perfs.) by Leo Randole lyrics by Edward Heyman, music by Harden Church; with Nanette Guilford and George Houston.

KEEP MOVING 8/23/34 (21 perfs.) by Newman Levy and Jack School; with Tom Howard and Harriet Hutchins.

TOBACCO ROAD 9/17/34 (3,182 total perfs.) by Jack Kirkland, based on a novel by Erskine Caldwell; with James Barton, James Bell, Eddie Garr and Will Geer. (First opened at the Theater Masque 12/4/33 and moved to the 48th St. Theater 1/15/34).

1941

WALK INTO MY PARLOR 11/19/41 (29 perfs.) by Alexander Greendale; with Silvio Minciotti and Nicholas Conte.

BROOKLYN, U.S.A. 12/21/41 (57 perfs.) by John Bright and Asa Bordages; with Victor Christian, Eddie Nugent and Sidney Lumet.

1942

CLAUDIA 11/8/42 (453 total perfs.) by Rose Franken; with Phyllis Thaxter and Richard Kendrick. (First opened at the Booth Theater 2/12/41.)

TOBACCO ROAD 9/5/42 (34 perfs.) by Jack Kirkland; with John Barton.

THREE MEN ON A HORSE 10/9/42 (28 perfs.) by John Cecil Holm and George Abbott; with William Lynn and Kay Loring.

1943

RICHARD III 3/24/43 (11 perfs.) by William Shakespeare; with George Coulouris, Mildred Dunnock and John Ireland.

BRIGHT LIGHTS OF 1944 9/16/43 (4 perfs.) by Norman Anthony and Charles Sherman; with James Barton, Joe Smith and Charles Dale.

MANHATTAN NOCTURNE 10/26/43 (23 perfs.) by Roy Walling; with Eddie Dowling and Wendell Corey.

LISTEN PROFESSOR! 12/22/43 (29 perfs.) by Alexander Afinegenov; with Dudley Digges and Susan Robinson.

1944

MEET A BODY 10/16/44 (24 perfs.) by Jane Hinton.

THE MAN WHO HAD ALL THE LUCK 11/23/44 (4 perfs.) by Arthur Miller; with Herbert Berghof.

DARK HAMMOCK 12/11/44 (2 perfs.) by Mary Orr and Reginald Denham; with Mary Orr, Arthur Hunnicutt and Charles McClelland.

1945

SIGNATURE 2/14/45 (2 perfs.) by Elizabeth McFadden; with Marjorie Lord and Anne Jackson.

THE OVERTONS 3/13/45 (175 total perfs.) by Vincent Lawrence; with Arlene Francis, Jack Whiting and Glenda Farrell. (Originally opened at the Booth Theater 2/6/45.)

CORONET THEATER

BEGGARS ARE COMING TO TOWN 10/27/45 (25 perfs.) by Theodore Reeves; with Herbert Berghof and Luther Adler.

DREAM GIRL 12/14/45 (348 perfs.) by Elmer Rice; with Betty Field and Wendell Corey.

1946

WONDERFUL JOURNEY 12/25/46 (9 perfs.) by Harry Segall; with Sidney Blackmer.

1947

LOVELY ME 1/5/47 (32 perfs.) by Jacqueline Susann and Beatrice Cole.

ALL MY SONS 1/29/47 (328 perfs.) by Arthur Miller; with Arthur Kennedy, Karl Malden and Ed Begley.

ANGEL IN THE WINGS 12/11/47 (308 perfs.) by Bob Hilliard and Carl Sigman; with Paul and Grace Hartman and Elaine Stritch.

1948

SMALL WONDER 9/15/48 (134 perfs.) music by Baldwin Bergersen and Albert Selden lyrics by Phyllis McGinley & Billings Brown; with Tom Ewell, Mary McCarty, Joan Diener and Jack Cassidy.

1949

DIAMOND LIL 2/5/49 (181 perfs.) by Mae West; with Mae West.

THE BROWNING VERSION/HARLEQUINADE 10/12/49 (69 perfs.) by Terence Rattigan; with Peter Scott-Smith and Maurice Evans.

1950

HAPPY AS LARRY 1/6/50 (3 perfs.) by Donagh MacDonagh, music by Mischa & Wesley Portnoff; with Burgess Meredith and Gene Barry.

THE BIRD CAGE 2/22/50 (21 perfs.) by Arthur Laurents; music by Alec Wildes; with John Shellie, Melvyn Douglas, Sanford Meisner and Maureen Stapleton.

TICKETS, PLEASE! 4/27/50 (245 perfs.) sketches by Harry Herrmann, Edmund Rice, Jack Roche, Ted Luce, music and lyrics by Lyn Duddy, Joan Edwards, Mel Tolkin, Lucille Kallen, Clay Warnick; with Paul and Grace Hartman, Jack Albertson, Tommy Wonder and Larry Kert.

HILDA CRANE 11/1/50 (70 perfs.) by Samson Raphaelson; with Jessica Tandy, John Alexander and Eileen Heckart.

1951

NOT FOR CHILDREN 2/13/51 (7 perfs.) by Elmer Rice; with Betty Field and Elliott Nugent.

1951(cont'd.)

THE AUTUMN GARDEN 3/7/51 (101 perfs.) by Lillian Hellman; with Joan Loring, Jane Wyatt and Fredric March.

FAITHFULLY YOURS 10/18/51 (68 perfs.) by L. Bush-Fekete and Mary Helen Fay; with Ann Sothorn and Robert Cummings.

1952

JANE 2/1/52 (100 perfs.) by S.N. Behrman; with Basil Rathbone, Edna Best, Sarah Marshall and Irene Browne.

SUNDAY BREAKFAST 5/28/52 (16 perfs.) by Emery Rubio and Miriam Balf; with Jada Rowland and Cloris Leachman.

THE CHILDREN'S HOUR 12/18/52 (189 perfs.) by Lillian Hellman; with Patricia Neal, Kim Hunter and Iris Mann.

1953

THE LITTLE HUT 10/7/53 (29 perfs.) by Andre Roussin; with Roland Culver, Colin Gordon and Anne Vernon.

THE REMARKABLE MR. PENNYPACKER 12/30/53 (221 perfs.) by Liam O'Brien; with Roger Stevens and Burgess Meredith.

1954

ALL SUMMER LONG 9/23/54 (60 perfs.) by Robert Anderson; with John Kerr, Ed Begley, John Randolph and Carroll Baker.

QUADRILLE 11/3/54 (150 perfs.) by Noel Coward; with Brian Aherne, Edna Best, Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne.

1955

A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE/A MEMORY OF TWO MONDAYS 9/29/55 (149 perfs.) by Arthur Miller; with J. Carrol Naish, Eileen Heckart and Van Heflin.

1956

THE GREAT SEBASTIANS 1/4/56 (174 perfs.) by Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse; with Lynn Fontanne and Alfred Lunt.

THE SLEEPING PRINCE 11/11/56 (60 perfs.) by Terence Rattigen; with Barbara Bel Geddes and Michael Redgrave.

ST. JOAN 12/24/56 (16 perfs.) by George Bernard Shaw; Phoenix Theater production with Siobhan McKenna, Earle Human and Ian Keith. (First opened at the Phoenix Theater.)

1957

THE WALTZ OF THE TOREADORS 1/17/57 (132 perfs.) by Jean Anouilh; with Mildred Natwick and Ralph Richardson.

NATURE'S WAY 10/16/57 (61 perfs.) by Herman Wouk; with Orson Bean, Robert Emhardt and Betsy Von Furstenberg.

1958

SUMMER OF THE 17TH DOLL 1/22/58 (29 perfs.) by Ray Lawler.

THE WALTZ OF THE TOREADORS 3/4/58 (31 perfs.) by Jean Anouilh; with Melvyn Douglas, Betty Field and John Stewart.

THE FIRSTBORN 4/29/58 (38 perfs.) by Christopher Fry; with Katharine Cornell, Kathleen Widdoes, Anthony Quayle and Mildred Natwick.

THE MAN IN THE DOG SUIT 10/30/58 (36 perfs.) by Albert Beich and William H. Wright; with Hume Cronyn, Jessica Tandy and Carmen Mathews.

THE DISENCHANTED 12/3/58 (189 perfs.) by Budd Schulberg and Harvey Breit; with Jason Robards, Jr., Jason Robards, Sr., George Grizzard and Rosemary Harris.

1959

THE GREAT GOD BROWN 10/6/59 (32 perfs.) by Eugene O'Neill; Phoenix Theater production with Robert Lansing and Fritz Weaver.

EUGENE O'NEILL THEATRE

A LOSS OF ROSES 11/28/59 (25 perfs.) by William Inge; with Betty Field, Warren Beatty, Michael J. Pollard and Carol Haney.

1960

A DISTANT BELL 1/13/60 (5 perfs.) by Katherine Morrill; with Martha Scott and Andrew Prine.

THE COOL WORLD 2/22/60 (2 perfs.) by Warren Miller and Robert Rossen; with Billy Dee Williams, Cicely Tyson and James Earl Jones.

A SECOND STRING 4/13/60 (29 perfs.) by Lucienne Hill from a novel by Colette; with Nina Foch, Jean Pierre Aumont, Cathleen Nesbitt and Shirley Booth.

FACE OF A HERO 10/20/60 (36 perfs.) by Robert L. Joseph; with Albert Dekker, Jack Lemmon, George Grizzard and Sandy Dennis.

SHOW GIRL 1/12/61 (100 perfs.) by Charles Gaynor; with Carol Channing, Jules Munshin and Les Quat' Jeudis.

1961

YOUNG ABE LINCOLN 4/25/61 (27 perfs.) by Richard N. Bernstein and John Allen; with Darrell Sandeen, Tom Noel, Dan Resin and Judy Foster.

LET IT RIDE! 10/12/61 (68 perfs.) by Abram S. Ginnes, music and lyrics by Jay Livingston and Ray Evans; with George Gobel, Paula Stewart and Barbara Nichols.

ROSS 12/26/61 (159 perfs.) by Terence Rattigan; with John Mills and John Williams.

1962

A THOUSAND CLOWNS 4/5/62 (428 perfs.) by Herb Gardner; with Jason Robards, Jr., Barry Gordon and Sandy Dennis.

1963

SHE LOVES ME 4/23/63 (302 perfs.) by Joe Masteroff music by Jerry Bock, lyrics by Sheldon Harnick; with Jack Cassidy, Barbara Cook, Daniel Massey and Barbara Baxley.

1964

NEVER LIVE OVER A PRETZEL FACTORY 3/28/64 (9 perfs.) by Jerry Devine; with Lawrence Pressman, Martin Sheen and Dennis O'Keefe.

SOMETHING MORE! 11/10/64 (15 perfs.) by Nate Monaster; with Arthur Hill and Barbara Cook.

1965

MATING DANCE 11/3/65 (1 perf.) by Eleanor Harris Howard and Helen McAvity;
with Van Johnson, Paul Sorvino, Richard Mulligan and Marian Hailey.

1966

THE GREAT INDOORS 2/1/66 (7 perfs.) by Irene Kamp; with Geraldine Page and
Curt Jurgens.

HAPPILY NEVER AFTER 3/10/66 (4 perfs.) by J.A. Ross; with Barbara Barrie,
Karen Black and Gerald S. O'Loughlin.

THE ODD COUPLE 8/1/66 (965 total perfs.) by Neil Simon; with Art Carney and
Walter Matthau. (First opened at the Plymouth Theater 3/10/65.)

1968

ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD 1/88/68 (421 total perfs.) by Tom
Stoppard; with John Wood, Brian Murphy, Paul Hecht and Ana Meacham.
(First opened at the Alvin Theater 10/16/67.)

1969

CANTERBURY TALES 2/3/69 (122 perfs.) by Martin Starkie and Nevill Coghill;
with Sandy Duncan, Ed Evanko, George Rose and Hermoine Baddeley.

LAST OF THE RED HOT LOVERS 12/28/69 (706 perfs.) by Neil Simon; with James
Coco, Marcia Rodd, Linda Lavin and Doris Roberts.

1971

THE PRISONER OF SECOND AVENUE 11/11/71 (788 perfs.) by Neil Simon; with
Vincent Gardenia, Peter Falk and Lee Grant.

1973

THE GOOD DOCTOR 11/27/73 (216 perfs.) by Neil Simon; with Christopher
Plummer, Marsha Mason, Francis Sternhagen and Barnard Hughes.

1974

GODS FAVORITE 12/11/74 (116 perfs.) by Neil Simon; with Vincent Gardenia
and Charles Nelson Reilly.

1975

YENTL 10/23/75 (223 perfs.) by Leah Napolin and Isaac Bashevis Singer; with Tovah Feldshuh.

1976

CALIFORNIA SUITE 6/10/76 (445 perfs.) by Neil Simon; with Tammy Grimes, Jack Weston, George Grizzard and Barbara Barrie.

1977

YOUR ARMS TOO SHORT TO BOX WITH GOD 11/14/77 (429 total perfs.) by Vinette Carroll, based on the book of Matthew, music and lyrics by Alex Bradford; with Delores Hall and Derek Williams. (First opened at the Lyceum 12/22/76).

1978

DIVERSIONS AND DELIGHTS 4/12/78 (13 perfs.) by John Gay; with Vincent Price.

1979

CHAPTER TWO 1/16/79 (857 total perfs.) by Neil Simon; with Judd Hirsch and Anita Gillette. (First opened at the Imperial Theater 12/4/77.)

1980

I OUGHT TO BE IN PICTURES 4/3/80 (341 perfs.) by Neil Simon; with Joyce Van Patten, Ron Leibman and Dinah Manoff.

1981

FOOLS 4/6/81 (40 perfs.) by Neil Simon; with John Rubinstein.

1982

LITTLE ME 1/21/82 (36 perfs.) by Neil Simon; with James Coco.

THE BEST LITTLE WHOREHOUSE IN TEXAS 5/31/82 (63 perfs.) by Larry L. King and Peter Masterson, music & lyrics by Carol Hall.

THE WAKE OF JAMEY FOSTER 10/14/82 (12 perfs.) by Beth Henley; with Susan Kingslay, Anthony Heald and Brad Sullivan.

MONDAY AFTER THE MIRACLE 12/14/82 (7 perfs.) by William Gibson; with Jane Alexander.

1983

MOOSE MURDERS 2/22/83 (1 perf.) by Arthur Bicknell

THE GLASS MENAGERIE 12/1/83 (92 perfs.) by Tennessee Williams; with Jessica Tandy, Amanda Plummer, Bruce Davison and John Heard.

1985

BIG RIVER 4/25/85 (1005 perfs.) book by William Hauptman based on "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn," music and lyrics by Roger Miller; with Daniel H. Jenkins and John Short.



Eugene O'Neill Theater Interior
230-238 West 49th Street
Manhattan

Built: 1925-26
Architect: Herbert J. Krapp



Eugene O'Neill Theater Interior



Eugene O'Neill Theater Interior



Eugene O'Neill Theater Interior
Detail