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The Winter Garden, Al Jolson and the Shuberts

By Paul A. Bowers

In 2011, the Winter Garden Theatre on New York’s Great White Way celebrated its 100th year of incredibly rich history. From humble beginnings as a horse stable, the playhouse would emerge as the Shubert’s primary home for revues and musicals and quickly become synonymous with New York City glamour. Its stellar list of musical performers and productions guaranteed its status as a Shubert legacy and an enduring symbol of show business itself.

Moving to Upper Manhattan

The Winter Garden sits upon land that originally comprised part of a Dutch farm owned by the Hopper family. William K. Vanderbilt purchased the property and erected the American Horse Exchange there in 1880. A disastrous fire in June 1896 destroyed much of the building, but by February 1897, a newly rebuilt Exchange was up and running. The site, however, was destined for a more imaginative use than stabling horses.

The early twentieth century found the New York theatre district slowly moving uptown. The public’s appetite for entertainment was insatiable and several new amusement houses and restaurants were planned for the Times Square neighborhood. The area had been the center of the horse and carriage trade, but by the first decade of the twentieth century the horse and buggy era was giving way to the automobile.

The Shuberts were in the midst of this entertainment boom and were hatching a plan to build a showplace similar to the music halls of Europe. On January 7, 1910, Lee and J.J. signed a lease for the Horse Exchange property and announced plans to convert the premises to a theatre. The resulting venue has been under the Shubert aegis since, meaning that it has been part of the Shubert Empire longer than any other extant theatre.

From Horse Stable to Booming Showplace

When plans for the house were initially announced, it was reported that the Shuberts intended to sub-lease the theatre to impresario/comedian Lew Fields, who struggled for control of the theatre through 1910, but eventually lost the battle. In the end, J.J. would supervise the completion of the Winter Garden.

The Brothers had hired architect William Albert Swasey, whose first Shubert commission had been the Garrick Theatre in St. Louis in 1905, to transform the old Exchange into the new amusement palace. Swasey set out to design a fashionable theatre with the ambiance and continental atmosphere that he thought his clients desired. J.J. Shubert, however, had
Andrew Hopper's house, built in 1758, stood on the site of the Winter Garden for 123 years before being demolished for the American Horse Exchange. It was part of the old Dutch Hopper family farmstead which stretched diagonally from 48th to 55th Streets, east and west of Broadway (Bloomingdale Road), and along the Hudson River from 50th to 55th Streets. This engraving shows the house in 1868 when it was occupied by the heirs of Andrew's widow.
something else in mind. He was determined to make the theatre his own, a venue where he could stage revues and prove his value to his brother and the powerful Theatrical Syndicate.4

J.J. and his architect found their inspiration in the classic idea of the European winter garden--a plant-filled conservatory--and modeled the auditorium along the lines of the Wintergarten in Berlin. The new theatre's interior was designed to resemble an English garden. Latticework, trellises, garlands, and flower boxes twined under a sky-blue canvas ceiling covered with extensive grillwork. The principle color scheme was ivory and gold. Unlike other New York playhouses, the Winter Garden was designed to be exceptionally wide and not very deep. It boasted a proscenium broader than any theatre in New York, except for the Hippodrome on Sixth Avenue, and thereby provided each audience member with an intimate connection to the stage. The New York Times remarked, "New York's latest plaything, is a very flashy toy, full of life and go and color, and with no end of jingle to it."5 With a capacity of over 1500 seats, the new Winter Garden became the Shubert's largest theatrical house.

Although the Winter Garden was impressive, it wasn't just the structure that captured the American imagination. The theatre's very first production featured Broadway newcomer Al Jolson. From that point on, much of the early Winter Garden history paralleled his spectacular
The young Al Jolson in 1899, twelve years before his Winter Garden debut. (bottom) Lew Dockstader as Teddy Roosevelt at an Actors' Benefit, 1908. [Both photographs, author's collection]
Klein had the clout to open the doors to some of New York's most notable vaudeville theatres. When Dockstader's Minstrels closed for the 1909 season, Klein signed Jolson to a seven-year management contract. During the minstrel troupe's summer hiatus, he immediately booked Jolson into a variety of East Coast houses. Jolson scored well in all of his performances but in August he was contractually bound to return to Dockstader. Unfortunately, Jolson's performance contract with Lew Dockstader extended through mid-1913.

Dockstader Teams Up with the Shuberts

Lew Dockstader had not been satisfied with his troupe's bookings through the monopolistic Theatrical Syndicate, which dominated the booking of vaudevillians throughout the country. Performers and producers who failed to co-operate found great difficulty in playing the best theatres, obtaining desirable touring schedules, and gaining satisfactory billing. The Syndicate could end an actor's professional career.

The Shubert brothers were not intimidated by the Syndicate's rough-handed policies and were prepared to do battle with it. Lee and J.J. had expanded their theatrical holdings and needed to schedule new acts to fill their empty theatres. James H. Decker, a former Dockstader manager, had become a booking agent for the Shuberts who were interested in adding Dockstader's troupe to their holdings. Decker was positioned to offer his former boss an attractive contract for the next season. Lured by the Shubert's offer of access to better schedules and venues, Lew signed a new booking contract with them.

Meanwhile, Klein had been maneuvering to gain Jolson's release from the Dockstader agreement. Now that Dockstader's appearances were being handled by the Shuberts, Klein approached these new and powerful producers with the idea of bringing Jolson to Broadway. He had little trouble selling Jolson's talents and potential to them, but the

(top) Advertisement for one of Jolson's vaudeville appearances, 1909. (bottom) Jolson's first contract with the Shuberts, 1911.
complication was Jolson’s existing contract with Dockstader. Lee Shubert cleverly persuaded Lew Dockstader to release Jolson from his five-year commitment. Considering that Dockstader could ill afford any bad Shubert bookings, his decision to release Jolson was understandable. He later explained his submission to Lee’s arm-twisting by saying, “I didn’t want to stand in Jolson’s way.”

Big Time Vaudeville

With Jolson at liberty, Klein had him return to vaudeville where he was a hit at New York’s Colonial Theatre and soon thereafter made a successful debut at Hammerstein’s Victoria. This was big-time vaudeville which meant a jump in earnings and better billing. Though Lee Shubert was eager to place Jolson in a touring show, he and Klein could not agree on terms, so Klein encouraged Jolson to remain in vaudeville for the time being. He explained that Broadway would continue to be an option and reasoned that waiting a year would result in a better deal and a higher salary.

So Jolson continued playing in several East Coast theatres. His status continued to grow and he garnered top notices from several respected critics. In July 1910, he was contracted to play on the upscale Orpheum Circuit. The tour was a success in theatres stretching from the Midwest to the Pacific coast. With his reputation securely established, he returned to New York in 1911.

When the performer did sign his first Shubert contract in 1911, the Winter Garden was still under construction. Jolson agreed to appear at the theatre in a revue (still to be written) for $325 per week. This was less than his vaudeville salary but Arthur Klein insisted that it was a good move. Rehearsals were scheduled to begin on or around March 15, 1911.
The Musical Review of 1911

J.J.’s notion of “the Continental idea of Variété” was reflected in the Winter Garden’s very first show, The Musical Review of 1911 which premiered on Monday, March 20, 1911. The audience included “those from high society, the old guard of first nighters and many of the younger generation of theatregoers.” The opening of the new playhouse was a stylish event. The New York World reported:

Last night, as is usual on such occasions, the show was not altogether the thing. The people in the audience came to be seen, quite as much as to see what took place on the stage. They swooped down upon the Broadway entrance in a flock of taxi-cabs that jammed the avenue as far north as Columbus Circle....The theatre ticket speculators offered the extravagant amusement seekers in fur-lined overcoats front chairs at the trifling price of $25 a pair.

The gay world and its wife—let it be hoped that in every case it was its wife—turned out last night in extravagant finery and a great nudging, struggling, good-natured mob to christen the newest amusement place on Broadway and to celebrate the closest approach New York has yet made to the style of entertainment that is supposed to be most popular in the giddy centres of Continental Europe.

The opening fare consisted of various parts, and began with an overture directed by Oscar Radin, followed by Manuel Klein’s one act “Chinese” opera, Bow Sing. This musical drama centered on the tragedy of Bow Sing, a Chinese servant sold into bondage, and her adored English master who left her deserted and brokenhearted when he returned to his native England. The drama was J.J.’s nod to high culture, something he felt necessary to match his European rivals. Reviews of the light opera were somewhat mixed. Klein was congratulated for his tuneful score and the authors received praise for a “worthy” libretto. The opera’s sets were described as “exceedingly Oriental, beautiful and effective” and the cast received reasonable acclaim for their singing and acting skills. However, the New York American described the piece as “sounding like ‘Mme. Butterfly,’ only not as much,” and then added, “Better still, it wasn’t very long.”

“Bow Sing” was followed by a dance sequence interlude performed by Tortajada and her 16 Moorish maidens. The act received praise for its costuming, but the New York American offered: “Tortajada talked in pure Spanish and threw lots of kisses, but didn’t let herself loose in the dance. Large and lovely was Tortajada—also statuesque—but she was too wintry for last night.”

Finally, the curtain rose for La Belle Paree, the evening’s final segment, which combined variety, comedy, and music in an assortment of vaudeville sketches loosely structured around a common theme. The plot centered on a lonely American widow visiting Paris for her health. “A jumble of jollity in two acts and eleven scenes,” as the opening night program described it. La Belle Paree featured the full company of players and twenty-two musical numbers.
The *New York Herald* reported:

Some of them were so liked that the audience demanded several encores…Miss Mayhew and Mr. Jolson have two capital Negro songs. Miss Gordon has a like quota of catchy musical numbers and Miss Aylwin has at least two songs, one with a Scotch chorus that scored a decided hit.17

The reviewer for the *New York World* detailed the performance this way:

The trip was a long one and it was marked by rough places. Though a good-natured, rollicking, semi-vaudeville show, it proved to be half an hour too long. Surgical operations might be performed on almost any part of it to its great improvement.”….But Miss Stella Mayhew, as a Seventh Avenue colored queen, and Al Johnson (sic), as her fickle sweetheart, who meet unexpectedly on the Paris boulevard, cannot be spared. They were the hits of the show.18

Alan Dale of the *New York American* approached the show with a dose of reality:

This was the real Continental issue. You took what you liked, and you left the rest. And whatever you liked there was lots to have.

Some of the features of ‘La Belle Paree’ were excellent, particularly the scene in the modiste’s establishment. In this there was some novel stage business, and some perfectly scrumptious gowns. In this appeared Miss Kitty Gordon in a lissome harem skirt, surrounded by a dozen lovely maidens with bare and glossy backs. Miss Gordon, realizing that she was the ‘star,’ did her best to maintain that position. It is but fair to the others to say that she was not rapturously received. Still, she sang
nicely, and she looked adorable. It is not necessary, nor is it possible, to describe ‘La Belle Paree.’ It was everything just as much as it was nothing. It was songs, and dances, and choruses, and vaudeville, and ‘effects,’ and a few bits of dialogue, and an occasional—very occasional joke. It was food for the eye rather than the intelligence. But—as the management has announced—you can drop in at any time and feel quite at home. You certainly will not miss any plot.”

Scenically it was a luminant display. No expense seemed to have been spared. It was as ‘rich’ as it could be, and it was all in good taste. Women will like to revel in the splendor of the costumes that made all the musical shows in town look sick. But there was too much of it. One grew weary. 19

Enough Major Headliners for Two Shows

The show’s advertising reveals that the production was quite large, even for its day. Promotional material named thirty featured performers and a cast of 250 supporting players. Many well known headliners contributed to the show; more than enough to complete the casts of two typical Broadway productions. Mitzi Hajos charmed audiences by leaping from the stage to lead the orchestra while show girls in trimmed harem skirts paraded across the apron. The Hess Sisters did Russian dances; internationally acclaimed Mademoiselle Dazie danced; and Kitty Gordon displayed her ballyhooed back and sang “Monte Carlo Moon.” Opera diva
Dorothy Jardon provided a lively rendition of “Trovatore,” and Jean Allwyn, Arthur Cunningham, Josephine Jacoby and Lenard Kirtley also had singing numbers. The act of Marion Sunshine and Florence Tempest contributed a notable dance number, and Mademoiselle Dazie and Grace Washburn took part in a convincing duel scene.

Popular international vaudeville artist Stella Mayhew was at the height of her career in 1911. In La Belle Paree, she played the part of the Widow’s maid. The first act found her and Jolson performing a bouncy duet entitled “Paris Is a Paradise for Coons.” Written by a young Jerome Kern the song professed the freedoms African-Americans enjoyed living in Paris rather than in “Yankee Land.” In addition to the duet, she introduced two solo numbers, “De Devlin’ Tune” and “What Kind of Place Is This?” Mayhew would perform in several Shubert productions over the next few years.

Al Jolson assumed the role of Erastus Sparkler, “a colored aristocrat from San Juan Hill, cutting a wide swath through Paris,” otherwise stated: “a phony from New York’s notorious Hell’s Kitchen.” The evening’s program indicates that he performed a speciality number, comedy and song, in the second act. Most likely this is where Aubrey Stauffer’s “That Lovin’ Traumerei” was introduced into the show. Not listing a specific song for the scene in the program allowed Jolson and the management some flexibility in choosing what number to perform on a given evening. Several songs probably shared this spot during the show’s run.

La Belle Paree’s book was written by Edgar Smith; Edward Madden wrote the lyrics, Jerome
Kern and Frank Tours the music. Arthur Voegtlin was credited with scene design and special-effects, and Melville Ellis with costuming. J.C. Huffman and William J. Wilson directed. Over the course of the production's run, music from a variety of composers was interpolated into the revue.

After an intermission of five minutes, the evening's final routine was presented. Arranged by Ottokar Bartic of the Metropolitan Opera, The Ballet of Pierrots and Harlequins featured dance numbers by Mlle. Dazie and Signor Bonfiglio. The New York Herald's reviewer noted that the dance sequence was "worth going long city miles to see."

A finale performed by the entire cast closed out the night's entertainment.

**Frustration and Disappointment**

Many problems plagued the show's opening night. The production's complexity, illness in the cast, and multiple postponements had taken their toll on all involved. Audience response was spotty, and the show dragged on for four hours. A few acts received encores while others wilted. It was nearly one o'clock when the curtain finally came down.

Jolson expressed his frustration and disappointment to his manager. He thought he was a failure who would soon be dismissed from the cast. Arthur Klein commented on the occasion several years later:

> Opening night he didn't have his heart in his work. That night he was an absolute failure. I never saw a great artist with such personality and magnetism have such a tremendous loss for his ability… and he came out there the next day like a shot out of a cannon and I thought he was a tremendous performer.\(^{22}\)

However, the New York Times saw things differently as they reported the next day:

> Mr. Huffman has staged the show, and staged it very well, with some amazingly effective chorus dances, and as much dash and go as appears possible under rather trying circumstances.

> Last night there were places where the performances lagged where by all the rules it should have moved most briskly. But a tired overworked company, on the nervous edge, with everybody else, from musical director to the stage hands, in much the same condition, cannot be trusted too implicitly to get the best results….A few more performances and these defects will no doubt be amended, the tiresome cross-fire talk, introduced while the drops are down and the more elaborate scenes being set, will be eliminated or improved, and there will be no occasion for any of New York's grown-up babies to quarrel with their newest toy….Among the very best features were those provided by the two unctuous ragtime comedians, Miss Stella Mayhew and Mr. Al Jolson, both of whom had good songs and dialects and the acting ability to deliver every bit of good that was in them.\(^{23}\)

**The Show Hits the Century Mark**

The revue's feeble plot easily allowed for additions and subtractions, so J.J. and his staff immediately went to work adjusting the show. Musical numbers and specialty acts were trimmed, cues were refined, and performances were polished. Tuesday's matinee was better and
improvements continued. There was an attempt to move Jolson’s specialty to the beginning of the first act, but a delay in timing due to problems with the preceding dance routine meant that Jolson’s comedic specialty lost much of its punch. Variety noted that “Jolson’s ten minute turn passed in good shape—but no more.”

As the show ripened, Jolson’s confidence grew and a critical change took place in his performance. Pearl Seiben, Jolson’s friend in later years, described the occasion that Jolson directly addressed the Winter Garden audience. “Lots of brave folks out there,” he said. “Either that, or you can’t read. Come to think of it, after the reviews we got, there’s a lot of brave folks up here on the stage.” Jolson’s infectious camaraderie with his audience began to take hold and the “magic” that newspapers would later describe in his performances, emerged.

Jolson’s style was fresh and unexpected. Broadway audiences were unaccustomed to being personally addressed from the stage. By breaking the illusion of the theatre and stepping out of character, he bedazzled the show’s patrons and made them feel that each performance was singularly theirs. It wouldn’t be long before he honed this folksy style into a mature and sharpened wit. The following Sunday would see the Winter Garden’s first Sunday Night Concert. Jolson would appear, sans makeup, singing, ad-libbing, and ingratiating himself to the show’s ticket buyers.

The Musical Revue of 1911 hit the “Century Mark” of 104 performances which prompted Variety to call the show a success and a “double sockeroo.” During the weeks that followed, Jolson became a devilishly popular attraction in the Winter Garden Company. Lee and J.J. were anxious to sign him to a new contract for the next season, and on May 23, 1911, Jolson accepted the terms of the new agreement. He would receive a bump in salary to $425 per week and an option to renew at $500 per week for the 1912–13 season. J.J., ever frugal, attempted to place a clause into the agreement that allowed for a layoff, without pay, during Christmas and Holy Week, but Jolson stood up to him and had the condition crossed out.

Two weeks after signing the agreement, Jolson unexpectedly left La Belle Paree without notice. This angered the Shuberts and derailed their plan to star him in a huge show the following September. Jolson had slipped away to California with his wife. He later claimed illness as his alibi, but his early and unexpected departure from the show was a harbinger of things to come. It marked the beginning of the wariness and suspicion that would often affect his relationship with the Shuberts.

The Musical Revue of 1911 closed on June 10 for the season’s summer hiatus and reopened the following September, playing in various eastern cities. The show’s concluding performance took place in Philadelphia on November 4, 1911.

Dissension in the Ranks

Al Jolson appeared in Shubert productions exclusively for the next sixteen years. From
(clockwise from top left) A Night with the Pierrots/Whirl of Society (1912); performing in blackface, on bended knee, n.d.; backstage in his dressing room, probably in the Winter Garden, n.d. [author's collection] (opposite page) J.J. Shubert and Jolson, n.d.
his opening in *La Belle Paree* (1911) until he left to make Warner Brothers’ *The Jazz Singer* (1927), Jolson performed in Shubert shows. His commitment would be longer than any other entertainer the Shuberts engaged. J.J.’s son, John, stated in an interview, “Jolson was the only performer who could stick with my father and uncle because he was as strong as they were, emotionally and money-wise.”

Assertive, tenacious, and confrontational, Jolson and the Shuberts were a good match. Their long-lasting association endured, but it also provided fertile ground for mistrust and suspicion to become a periodic roadblock to their relationship. Lyricist Irving Caesar recalled, “Jolson could stand up to them because he was as tough and distrusting as they were.” Jolson’s powerful position within the Shubert Empire gave him the ability to drive a hard bargain and engage Lee and J.J. at their own game. Numerous notes and letters exchanged between him, the Shuberts and the Shuberts’ attorney, William Klein, display persistent quibbling and resentment over contracts, salary, billing, and profit percentages that would continue throughout their spirited association.

In many ways these forceful personalities shared a common bond and many of the same anxieties. However, the Shuberts and Jolson also had a no-nonsense mutual respect for each other. Jolson’s popularity with the audience as well as his financial stability and assertive temperament empowered him to stand up to Lee and J.J. on every issue. In the end, their conflicts often found resolution with everyone left at least marginally satisfied. The assertiveness and difficulty present in the partnership may have actually contributed to its success.

**Making a Mark**

Al Jolson’s second Winter Garden show was *Vera Violetta* (1911), which marked the bona fide beginning of his career as a Broadway headliner. Here, he was able to establish himself in a way that was not possible within the assortment of specialty numbers that made up *La Belle Paree*. Jolson would co-star with the European sensation and new Shubert import, Gaby Deslys, who received top-billing in the production. But it was Jolson who plainly stole the show. Deslys often complained to J.J. that Jolson would seduce the audience and leave her playing second fiddle. Jolson, in turn, made clear his unhappiness with the leading lady’s enormous salary and top-billing. These back-stage difficulties took their toll on the Shuberts, as well as on the cast and crew. (The matter was not resolved until mid-run of the two performers’ next show together, *The Honeymoon Express* (1913), when Deslys left the production and the electric sign on the Winter Garden marquee would finally read “*The Honeymoon Express with Al Jolson.*”)

During the months that followed, Al Jolson’s self-assurance on stage grew and he convincingly endeared himself to the theatre’s patrons. Eagerly partaking in the Winter Garden Sunday Night Concerts, he cultivated a new audience of show business folk on their night off. The Shuberts recognized that they had a talented money machine on their hands. By the winter of 1913, they offered Jolson a third contract that reflected his new-found value. In it, J.J. would
ensure that Jolson would continue to fill the Winter Garden’s seats: The star received a five-year
 guarantee of $1000 per week, a $5,000 signing bonus, and twenty-five percent of the net profits
 while the show was on tour.31

 Nevertheless, the persistent squabbles with J.J. continued. In one instance, Al blew
 his stack when he found J.J. Shubert hard-pressed to show any earnings for a road tour. J.J. had
 instructed his road manager, Ed Bloom, not to show a profit for the show. Bloom and Lee Shubert,
 eventually were able to soften J.J.’s hard-nosed position.32 But these disagreements marked their
 relationship, right up to the making of Columbia Picture’s The Jolson Story in 1946.

 In the five years after La Belle Paree, the Shuberts would feature Al Jolson in five notable
 musical revues; Vera Violetta (1911), The Whirl of Society (1912), The Honeymoon Express (1913)
 and Dancing Around (1914). With each production the producers recognized his escalating value
to their business empire. For his part, Jolson discovered, and capitalized on, the clout he wielded
 as a major force in the entertainment world.

 **Decades of Success**

 The Winter Garden became the Shuberts most profitable house. A number of theatrical
 innovations that were popular with the show-going public were launched there over the years.
 In one instance, a tank was positioned on stage for the Australian swimming champion and
 vaudeville artist, Annette Kellerman, for The Passing Show of 1912.33 In another, a runway that
 extended from the stage to the rear of the house was installed for Al Jolson’s, The Whirl of Society
 (1912). The idea was inspired by a Kabuki styled ramp featured in Max Reinhardt’s production of
 Sumurun (1912). Indeed, Jolson sang “My Sumurun Girl,” a parody of the Reinhardt show, from
 the ramp while Winter Garden show girls paraded beside him. The long runway soon established
 itself as a Winter Garden convention, and became known as “The Bridge of Thighs.”

 Jolson continued to enhance his reputation for ensuing generations through his
 subsequent Winter Garden triumphs in Robinson Crusoe, Jr. (1916), Sinbad (1917), and Big Boy
 (1925). In addition, he enjoyed success at several other Shubert venues. Bombo, one of his biggest
 hits was originally scheduled to open at the Winter Garden, but previous bookings there compelled
 the Shuberts to put the production into their new theatre on 59th Street. Jolson was reluctant to
 make the switch until Lee offered to rename the house in his honor. Bombo inaugurated Jolson’s
 Fifty-ninth Street Theatre on October 6, 1921. And despite departing Broadway for stints in
 Hollywood, Al Jolson returned to perform in J.J.’s production of The Wonder Bar (1931) at the
 Nora Bayes Theatre, and in his independent production of Hold On To Your Hats (1941) at the
 Sam S. Shubert Theatre. These performances concluded his professional association with the
 Shuberts.

 Fate smiled on the Winter Garden throughout its history. The theatre’s early beginnings
 with enormously popular revues and musicals provided the foundation for the growth and
(clockwise from top left) advertising flyer, 1912; Winter Garden exterior, 1912 [author’s collection]; advertising flyer for post-Gaby Deslys edition of The Honeymoon Express, 1914; advertising flyer for Dancing Around (1914) that extolls the Winter Garden.
(clockwise from top left) Robinson Crusoe, Jr., advertising flyer; newspaper advertisement for the show on tour; Jolson in a scene from Sinbad; Jolson (center) and the cast of Big Boy [author’s collection]; and newspaper cartoon for Sinbad.
prosperity of both the Shuberts and Jolson. In 1923, the Shuberts, who had controlled the theatre from its beginning, finally purchased the building and site from Vanderbilt. They engaged Herbert J. Krapp to transform the theatre into what we continue to see today.\textsuperscript{34}

The Winter Garden continued its successful standing for most of the twentieth century. Except for a short spell as a movie theatre--From 1928 to 1933, the theatre was leased to Warner Brothers to present Vitaphone pictures, and then leased again from 1945–46 to United Artists.--the showplace has housed some of Broadway's greatest stage successes including \textit{The Passing Shows} (1912-1924 editions), \textit{Ziegfeld Follies} (1934, 1936, 1943, and 1957 editions), \textit{Hellzapoppin'} (1938), \textit{Mexican Hayride} (1944), \textit{Top Banana} (1951), \textit{Peter Pan} (1954), \textit{West Side Story} (1957), \textit{The Unsinkable Molly Brown} (1960), \textit{Funny Girl} (1964), \textit{Follies} (1971) \textit{Gypsy} (1974), \textit{Pacific Overtures} (1976) and more recently the phenomenally long run of \textit{Cats} (1982), and the wildly popular \textit{Mamma Mia!} (2001). [See the complete chronology of Winter Garden productions on pages 52-65.]

Although the Shubert brothers, Al Jolson, and their like have long departed, there is no reason to doubt the continued vitality of the Winter Garden. Their presence lingers with visionary managers who are determined to insure the theatre's vigor and passion for delighting audiences for years to come.

\textbf{Endnotes}
\begin{enumerate}
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\item Armond Fields and L. Marc Fields, \textit{From the Bowery to Broadway} (New York, Oxford University Press, 1993), 280–283.
\item ”Winter Garden Open with Dazzling Show,” \textit{New York Times}, 21 March 1911.
\item Rae Samuels to Herbert G. Goldman (Personal interview).
\item J.J. Shubert to Al Jolson, 7 February 1911, General Correspondence 1910–1926, The Shubert Archive.
\item ”The Winter Garden Opens Brilliantly with Opera, Vaudeville, and Ballet,” \textit{New York Herald}, 21 March 1911.
\item ”Big, Gay, Crowd Opens New Winter Garden,” \textit{New York World}, 21 March 1911.
\item Ibid.
\item ”Alan Dale Finds the New Playhouse an Ingenious Place for a Picnic,” \textit{New York American}, 21 March 1911.
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The Winter Garden Program, 20 March 1911, 9.
Ibid., 17.
17 The Winter Garden Opens Brilliantly with Opera, Vaudeville and Ballet.”
18 “Big, Gay, Crowd Opens New Winter Garden.”
19 “Alan Dale Finds the New Playhouse an Ingenious Place for a Picnic.”
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21 Herbert G. Goldman to Paul Bowers, January 2011.
23 “Winter Garden Open with Dazzling Show.”
27 Winter Garden Management to Al Jolson, 23 May 1911, General Correspondence 1910–1926, The Shubert Archive.
28 Foster Hirsch, 81.
29 John Shubert to Howard Teichmann, 5 April 1960.
30 Foster Hirsch, 85.
31 Winter Garden Company to Al Jolson, 19 February 1913, General Correspondence 1910–1926, The Shubert Archive.
32 Ed Bloom to J.J. Shubert, 10 June 1922, General Correspondence 1910–1926, The Shubert Archive.
34 Ibid., 268–271. In 2001, the theatre underwent a major restoration, returning to its 1920s splendor. [See related article on page 28]

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The American Horse Exchange

By Mark E. Swartz

For most of the 19th century the horse was the lifeblood of New York City. These animals hauled carts loaded with goods across the city; transported average and not-so-average New Yorkers by private coach, public streetcars, and carriages of all sizes; and pulled fire-wagons so that volunteer firemen could put out the conflagrations that only too often ravaged so many parts of the metropolis. Various forms of equestrianism were common leisure activities, and the sport of horse-racing grew in popularity throughout the century and proved to be quite a lucrative industry. It is estimated that in 1880 the combined horse populations of New York City and Brooklyn were between 150,000 and 175,000.

The center of the horse and carriage trade was the Longacre Square area, that section of midtown Manhattan extending roughly from 40th Street to 53rd Street bounded by 6th Avenue to the east, and 8th Avenue to the west. Named after a similarly purposed area in London, it was renamed Times Square in 1904 when the New York Times erected their new headquarters on W. 43rd St. By then, however, the era of the horse was coming to a close due to the rapid spread of cars and other motorized vehicles as well as electrically powered trolleys and streetcars.

The opening of the American Horse Exchange in November, 1880 represented a major advancement in New York City’s equestrian scene. Financed and operated by such prominent (and wealthy) citizens, all of them serious horsemen, as William K. Vanderbilt (who purchased the land on which the new Exchange would sit in April, 1880), August Belmont, Jr., James R. Keene, and George P. Wetmore, it was to be New York’s version of London’s Tattersalls, the world’s premier bloodstock auctioneers. The new Exchange was a large state-of-the-art building that occupied the entire block bounded by Broadway, Seventh Avenue, Fiftieth, and Fifty-first Streets. A brief article in Harper’s Weekly, May 7, 1881 described it vividly:

Entering the principal or Broadway side, we pass business offices on either hand, and step into the ‘sale yard,’ with stabling on the south and east, box stalls on the north, and opposite the entrance the auctioneer’s stand, which each Tuesday is the centre of interest to those who have come to buy or talk horse; the entire scene, including the gallery for spectators, suffused in light intensified by its passage through the glass roof, together with the shout of the auctioneer, the prancing of the horses, the excitement of the crowd, the shuffling to and fro of the capped, muffled, and legginged cockney grooms and jockeys, whose odd physiognomy and contempt of the letter h make one feel, when they appear nibbling their whip-stocks or crested with horse collars, as if an ocean rolled between him and the scream of the eagle. Here, during the week, private sales are in progress, and hurdle-jumping, team-breaking, and other exercises incidental to equine life are of daily occurrence.

On these days ladies and children may be seen selecting their saddle-horses, while drags, dogcarts, and other fashionable turn-outs are changing ownership in the
carriage loft on the south side of the “yard,” and one story above the latter. On this floor also are the rooms of Mr. William Easton, the manager (with whom the idea of the Exchange originated), the club-room, the directors’ rooms, and business offices; and in the eastern section the feed loft and additional stabling directly over the blacksmith’s shop. The employees have their quarters in the tower.

The structure is of Philadelphia brick throughout, and the wood-work is varnished Georgia pine. The ventilation, lighting, steam-heating, drainage, and precautions against fire are admirable, and the walls and floors of the stables absorb neither moisture nor disease.

The Exchange was a great success and became the “go-to” destination for the best equine stock. Evidently, however, the fire precautions that the Harper’s article mentioned were not admirable enough. On June 12, 1896, a terrible fire broke out destroying most of the building and numerous animals. A New York Times article gives us a firsthand account of the tragedy:

HORSES PREY TO FLAMES
NEARLY ONE HUNDRED PERISH IN A BROADWAY FIRE.

Property of American Horse Exchange
Destroyed, with a Loss of $225,000
—Great Crowds Make a Scene of Disorder—Piteous Plight Of the Animals Which Were In the Burning Building—Those in the Street Add Much to the Confusion.
The American Horse Exchange, which occupied the greater part of the block bounded by Broadway, Seventh Avenue, Fiftieth, and Fifty-first Streets, was destroyed by fire last night. Nearly 100 horses perished in the flames, and about 100 vehicles, many of them fancy carriages, were burned up. The fire started about 8 o'clock, and in less than three hours, according to the estimate of the police, property worth $225,000 was destroyed.

The Exchange extended along Fiftieth Street and covered about three-quarters of the block. It surrounded a court 100 feet square, on each side of which there was a depth of structure of about twenty-five feet, three stories high on three sides and two stories high on Fiftieth Street. The first floor on Broadway was occupied by the offices of dealers. On the second floor on Broadway were the offices of the exchange, and on the inner side part of each floor was devoted to saddlery.

Besides offices on the second floor of the Broadway front, there were special stalls at the Fiftieth Street corner for valuable horses. Most of the remaining Broadway section was filled with carriages. Along the Fiftieth Street and Seventh Avenue sides there were horses on each floor, the upper stories on Seventh Avenue and Fiftieth Street containing principally hay and feed. The court was covered over at the top story.

There had been a sale of horses going on for two days, and the animals in the stables were owned by dealers not only in all parts of the city, but by many in Virginia and Kentucky.

On the discovery of fire, the stable hands, twenty-five in number, set about releasing the horses. Before the firemen were summoned the flames had gained such headway that the building was already doomed.

Each of the 187 box stalls was occupied, and there were many more horses besides, for which special stabling had been arranged. The exact number is not known. It was over 200.

A man rushed up and told two employees of the stables sitting in a doorway at the Seventh Avenue side that there was fire in the building. Arthur Cavanagh, one of them, investigated and found that a volume of smoke was issuing from the second story on the Fiftieth Street side into the court. He notified Superintendent H. G. Stevens, who was sitting in his office, and all hands got to work to open the stall gates. Some little time elapsed before an alarm was sent in.

The stable gang was reinforced by policemen, the stable force of the Broadway and Seventh Avenue line car stables, across the way on Seventh Avenue, and also by many persons drawn to the scene by curiosity. The fire, sweeping along the hay lofts, burst out through the roof of the court, sending up great tongues of flame and filling the place with smoke. The horses were seized with fright, and, as the gates of their stalls were released, rushed headlong about the place, neighing and snorting. Some of them, reaching the inclined planes by which the court is reached, plunged headlong to the bottom, where they were blocked by crowds of men who had lost their heads.

Battalion Chief Gicquel, the first of the department to arrive, found the streets blocked by crowds and strings of cars reaching for blocks on Broadway and Seventh Avenue. Conductors, drivers, and gripmen and throngs of passengers augmented the gathering. Coach horses, freed from the building, were running about wild in Fiftieth Street, swaying the crowds hither and thither as they pranced and plunged.

Police reserves had been called out from the Twenty-second Precinct by this time, and that force was being rapidly increased by platoons of reserves from neighboring precincts. Chief Gicquel immediately rang a third alarm, which brought Deputy Chief Reilly, who sent in a fourth alarm, bringing in all to the first fourteen engines, four trucks, Water Towers Nos. 2 and 3, and five battalion chiefs.

Out of chaos came order to the crowds which were held back by double fire lines, but pandemonium still reigned in the stables, where, at the risk of their own lives, police,
firemen, and stablemen labored to drive the horses from the raging furnace.

Smoke and flames so filled the court that it was nearly impossible to reach the main exit on Broadway, and resort was had to the minor exits in Fiftieth Street. The fire had spread to every part of the building, and the leaping flames cast a lurid glare through the smoke that filled adjacent streets.

The noise of the terrified animals caged within could be heard above the roar of the fire and the din about the scene. The crazed animals could be seen through the upper windows dashing blindly about in their terror. One horse, which had reached the court, rushed through the cafe at the Broadway corner, where the stablemen take their meals. A gang of firemen lost considerable time trying to pry out a door on the Fiftieth Street side, which, after awhile, they discovered was a sliding door. It was slid open without difficulty, but as it was some distance above the street, a dry goods box was placed before it as an intermediate step. One horse broke through it and fell on a stableman named Baker, breaking his leg.

One stableman, James Weil, fell with a horse he was driving out through a balcony surrounding the first story. Neither was crippled by the fall. Two other stablemen were said to have fallen at the same time. The supports of the balcony had by that time burned away.

It was reported about 9:30 that two boys had been lost. They were James Reilly of 332 West Forty-seventh Street and James Lyons of 456 West Forty-seventh Street. They went into the stable with two brothers named Goday of 317 West Forty-seventh Street, who subsequently said that they had lost them, and they thought they had not got out. The Goday boys, named William and Paul, escaped by jumping one story to the ground. Many of the stable hands resorted to the same method to effect their escape.

It was subsequently learned that Policeman Thompson of the West Forty-seventh Street Station and Detective Barrett of the Central Office rescued Lyons and Reilly who were found overcome with smoke, and had to be carried out.

Private Lewis of the Insurance Patrol reported that, while standing at the south-east corner of the building, he saw a man in shirt sleeves through a window of the second floor. The man suddenly disappeared. He feared he must have been lost. The police do not believe that any person was burned to death.

Before an hour had elapsed from the time the fire started about half of the horses had been taken out of the building. Not a sign of life remained within the walls, if there may be excepted a lone rat, which long after 10 o’clock appeared on a windowsill of the first floor and remained there, apparently as much afraid of the crowd as of the flames.

A westerly wind drove flying sparks over the stables of the Broadway and Seventh Avenue car line and excited fears that they too would catch fire, but due caution prevented this.

The building to the north, extending along Fifty-first Street from Broadway to Seventh Avenue, was damaged to the extent of about $5,000. It is owned by Daniel Dull and occupied by the Jacobson Manufacturing Company and the Upright Cycle Company.

The exchange was owned by a company of which W.K. Vanderbilt is President. Col. William Jay is Chairman of the Board of Directors, George Peabody Wetmore, General Manager, Frank Ware Treasurer, and W.G. Grand auctioneer. The police estimated the damages as follows: Building, $100,000 insured; horses, $84,000, partially insured; carriages and harness, $41,000, partially insured; and damages to adjoining Building, $5,000, covered by insurance.

Some of the losers, many of whom had offices in the stables, gave estimates of their losses and of others, as follows:

Strauss & Hexter, twenty-five horses, valued at $15,000; Mabrick & Hudson, three
horses, valued at $1,800; Thomas J. Gordan, twenty horses, $20,000; James B. Deyo, Jackson, Mich., twenty horses, $18,000; Isaac Strauss, ten horses, $6,000; John Proctor, five horses, $3,000; T. Mullen, four horses, $1,800; John Tichnor, Chicago, ten horses, $6,000; John Bradley, Kentucky, twenty horses, $12,000.

None of these horses could be found after the fire. It is supposed that they were burned. Among other gentlemen who had stock in the building, but who accounted for the majority of their stock, were Myrick & Hutchinson, 10 horses; John Spratley, Lewis Paresett, 15 horses; Nicholas Houseman, 10 horses; W.C. Bryan, 10 horses; J.B. Sheldon, 5 horses; H.J. Stevens, 12 horses.

A sale of horses Wednesday included many owned by Stephen B. Elkins. Some of these still in the stable were lost. William C. Whitney purchased seven coach horses yesterday afternoon at $1,000 each. They had all been removed. The rescued horses were gathered in the railroad stables at Tattersalls, and in a fenced vacant lot opposite the fire, in Broadway.

The most expensive horse lost was said to be Alde G., with a trotting record of 2:19, valued at $7,500. The name of the owner could not be learned.

Within a week of the blaze, the Exchange’s directors announced their plans to rebuild. The New American Horse Exchange was back in business by February, 1897. But by then, the era of the horse was already quickly coming to an end. Between 1888 and 1892 almost every street railway in the United States was electrified. In 1906, motor buses replaced horse-drawn omnibuses on 5th Avenue. By the following year, many salespersons, doctors, and other urban professionals who had previously relied on horses adopted cars, and motorized cabs were becoming common. Traffic counts in 1912 showed more cars in the city than horses for the first time. Although horseracing would remain popular and lucrative, it was becoming clear that, on the
whole, the horse was becoming increasingly unprofitable. It should come as no surprise, then, that an astute businessman like William K. Vanderbilt would sell the property to the Shuberts who were rapidly expanding their New York real estate holdings.

Endnotes
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid., 124.

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Ready for the 21st Century

By Francesca Russo

When the Shubert Organization retained my firm in 1999 to develop a restoration plan for the interior of the Winter Garden Theatre, the hit musical Cats had only recently vacated the theatre after a run of eighteen years. Much of the auditorium’s original detailing and color scheme had been obscured by the “junkyard” that was Cats’s set. My plan for the venue included the restoration of finishes, fixtures and decorative plaster as well as recreation of furnishings, decorative painting, drapery, carpet, lighting and theatre seating. In addition, I would make modifications to improve the quality of the separation between the auditorium and lounge areas.

My work began with studying historical material including drawings and photographs documenting architect William Albert Swasey’s transformation of the old American Horse Exchange into the Winter Garden; photographs showing Herbert Krapp’s major renovation of 1923; newspaper articles; and playbills. The Shubert Archive proved to be an invaluable resource. I also reviewed The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission’s designation of the theatre—the Winter Garden was designated a New York City Landmark in 1988—which described in detail the special features that defined the character of the playhouse.

As completed by Herbert Krapp in 1923, the theatre’s interior design consisted of a single balcony with a fascia simulating boxes in a series of curves. A reduced proscenium took the form of an elliptical arch, flanked by two tiers of boxes, three in each tier, with curved fronts. The Adam-Style ornamentation included decorative relief plaster and paneling. A significant feature was the elliptical proscenium arch detailed with rosettes, foliared swags, and figures. Also distinctive were the two tiers of boxes curving out beyond bands of moldings, adorned with rosettes and oval
panels, stylized pilasters, griffins, and cartouches. A unique original feature consisting of stylized Corinthian column capitals embellished with rams’ heads separated the theatre orchestra from the promenade area.

Newspaper and magazine articles from the 1923 re-opening noted that the walls and surrounding ornament were painted in hues of gold and ivory. Design highlights included scagliola—faux marble created with plaster—and silk damask set into decorative wall panels. The stage curtain, of the same damask fabric, featured a swagged valance and an under-valance with legs set inside freestanding candelabra panels. The seating, wall-covering and drapery fabric had the same gold and ivory palette of the theatre, but added touches of mulberry as a dramatic accent. The original carpet depicted leaves in an arabesque pattern. Historic photographs show the ornate chandeliers and sconces of crystal and brass, many of which were still extant at the start of the project.

When I began my work, the following key features of the theatre’s 1923 renovation had been modified:

- The attachments for the Cats set and technical systems for the production had damaged sections of decorative plaster.

- Areas of ornamental plaster relief had been painted in neutral tones to obscure the classic decor.

- The boxes closest to the stage had been altered.

- The seating was not original although the style of the decorative end-standards remained from the 1923 renovation. The in-situ gray seating fabric was drab and utilitarian.

Two of Francesca Russo’s sketches showing her proposed color palette for the Winter Garden renovation, 2000.
There was no house curtain or box drapery.

The carpet was of a contemporary design—its industrial, basic-red coloration did not complement the Adam Style interior.

Show lighting had replaced many of the original lighting fixtures.

The classically designed partition between the seating and the rear circulation aisles had been replaced with utilitarian plywood partitions.

Ladies’ and gentlemen’s toilet facilities had been built within and adjacent to the space of the 1911 café foyer.

The technical booth at the rear of the mezzanine had been extended. Ornament-free columns supported the extension.

Prototypical images of Georgian and Adam-Style color palettes, motifs, finishes, lighting and furniture provided inspiration for the design plan that I developed. My intent was to restore the refined Adam-Style decor created by Herbert Krapp, because it was this interior that had been landmarked. In addition, it better fit contemporary theatre production. I proposed a decorative scheme that enhanced the extant elements of Krapp’s original. Code requirements developed after 1923 led to opportunities to create vintage-looking details using modern materials. New design elements would incorporate the classic vocabulary and original color palette.

The Results

The renovated lobby features marble paneled walls, a patterned terrazzo floor and an ornamental plaster ceiling. Lighting set in a cove highlights the ceiling details.

Decorative relief plaster that had been damaged by production sets or had

Four sketches by Francesca Russo showing proposed plans for the Winter Garden renovation. (clockwise from bottom left) Box restoration with curtain; carpet design; lounge and bar; and first floor vestibule and women’s toilet.
failed due to age was restored. Molds were taken of extant details, and the missing components were re-created.

- The original color scheme was re-created in shades of gold, cream and mulberry. The auditorium’s walls and ceiling were painted in a base color of cream. A variety of glazing techniques were applied, and the glazing was wiped to bring out the dimension of the bas-relief and panel moldings. In addition to the variety of application and wiping techniques, the glaze was developed utilizing a range of hues and densities. This approach resulted in a painted interior with a palette of Adamesque colors resembling that of 1923.

- Krapp’s house curtain was distinctive in its elegant damask fabric of mulberry and gold with valance and swagged over-valance. I designed a curtain made with custom Adam-Style damask similar to the original in pattern and color, but the silk fabric was replaced with inherently fire-retardant fabric. The pleated curtain was topped with a matching valance, and the box drapery utilized the same damask and trimmings.

- Code restrictions and functional considerations prevented me from replacing the silk damask wall panels of 1923. Instead, a durable, code-compliant vinyl wall covering was used. Similar in pattern and color to the newly designed drapery, it even mimicked the texture of cloth.

- Although in appearance the new seating resembled that of the 1923 model, we developed a state-of-the-art ergonomic design. The antique end standards were restored and repainted in colors that complemented the new color palette, and custom upholstery of gold and mulberry in an ogee pattern was used.

- I incorporated another custom detail of Krapp’s design, a leaf motif in arabesque form, into the new carpeting which utilized a four-color palette comprised of a gold background with mulberry patterns and deep brown accents.

- All of the extant 1923 lighting fixtures were restored, and period-style fixtures were added where necessary. The overall lighting design took into consideration current requirements for theatre systems as well as current laws for the disabled.

- On the orchestra level, a classic standee partition replaced a utilitarian plywood one that separated the seating and circulation aisles.

- Limited space for refreshments called for a sound-retardant enclosure at the bar area. I employed traditionally styled, operable, sound-retardant shades, finished with the same classically patterned vinyl fabric of the auditorium’s wall panels.

- Sound-control doors at the east side of the theatre were installed to enhance the acoustics.

- On the mezzanine level, a partition detailed with wood-framed drapery panels, similar to the playhouse’s other design elements, replaced a simple plywood partition that provided a low rear wall for the upper seat platforms.
• I revised the mezzanine seating to eliminate unnecessary aisles. The full height plywood partition that separated the seating from the mezzanine lounge areas was redesigned, rebuilt and re-aligned with the decorative beam above it so as to mimic the wall opposite and to make it harmonize with the house's other Adam-Style ornamentation. This served to preserve Krapp’s symmetrical articulation of the theatre and balanced nicely with the detailing of the adjacent theatre support-spaces. It also made possible sound isolation between the auditorium proper and patron lounge areas.

• I designed a new classically ornamented mezzanine lounge complete with a bar and furnishings.

• I incorporated patron restrooms into the area adjacent to the lounge, behind the wall that separates the auditorium from the support-spaces. Restroom entrances were carefully integrated into the design and ornamentation of the surrounding space.

Renovations in progress showing color scheme, decorative details, and new bar area. Photographs by Francesca Russo.
• A new loft, built for production use, was set above the patron lounge and restrooms, and nestled within the existing structure.

• Also on the mezzanine, the functional columns that support the later-date technical booth extension were embellished with appropriate Adam-Style capitals.

Although every project is unique, my firm’s experience with the restoration of other historic Herbert Krapp theatres certainly informed my work here. In turn, my exploration of the use of modern materials to mimic those of the early twentieth century at the Winter Garden would go on to influence my approach to subsequent projects including the restoration of other Shubert Organization theatres including the Barrymore, Belasco, and Booth.

References
1. Shubert Archive.

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Francesca Russo directs a small design oriented architectural firm. With a portfolio of built work ranging from multi-million dollar to smaller budget projects, the firm is well versed in detailing, sensitive to client needs and experienced in projects for restoration and new construction. FRA was the restoration architect for the recent interior restoration of the Booth Theatre. Prior to that, the firm provided architectural services for twelve additional historic theatres including the Belasco, Barrymore, Winter Garden and Music Box Theatres. Several of these projects have received awards. The shared goal of these projects was to develop restoration plans for the theatres while responding to contemporary production needs. The firm’s current projects include the interior restoration of the classic Golden and Cort Theatres.
Welcome to the Cabaret

by Mark E. Swartz

The restaurant space currently occupied by Applebee's in the Winter Garden building is one of the oldest cabaret/restaurant locations in Manhattan. It has seen numerous incarnations in its 100-year history, but detailed information can be difficult to come by. Frequently changing decor and menus to reflect popular trends, rarely did any one incarnation last more than a few years.
In 1911, the elegant Palais de Danse inaugurated the space and fed the craze for ballroom dancing. In 1914, Maurice and Florence Walton, “exponents of modern ballroom dancing” who had danced before the King and Queen of England, took over the club and re-christened it Chez Maurice. It was re-decorated in what the New York Times described as a “Bulgarian color scheme” and featured a large new dance floor.

By 1916, nightclub impresario Clifford C. Fischer assumed management and re-named the place Doraldina’s Montmartre, a curious connotation of French chic and Hawaiian novelty—Doraldina was a dancer who made a sensation performing the hula in the show The Road to Mandelay (1916) and helped usher in a fad for things Hawaiian. Over the next few years the nightclub morphed into the Bal Tabarin which featured violinist Jack Harris and comic Joe Frisco, and the Folies Bergère.

From 1921 to 1926, one of the space’s most successful incarnations, the Plantation Club, presented Broadway’s first “all-colored” revue. Among the stars who appeared there were Ethel Waters, Florence Mills, Will Vodery’s band, Paul Robeson, and a very young Josephine Baker.

Over the next two decades many other clubs occupied the space. Among these were the Ross-Fenton Club, Les Ambassadeurs where Jimmy Durante and the novice Ethel Merman performed, Chez Fischer, Casa Lopez, Club Rendezvous, the New Montmartre, the Frolic, the Midnight Sun, the Beachcomber, the New Beachcomber, Mother Kelly’s, the Mardi Gras, Benny Davis’s Frolics, and Café Zanzibar.

In 1962, the space became home to Hawaii Kai, one of the seminal large-scale theme restaurants. First opened under the name of Lanai in 1961, it was the project of restaurateur/Broadway producer Monte Proser and businessman/Broadway producer Joe Kipness. In the late 1930s into the early 1940s, Proser had been the man behind the Beachcomber which was another tropical-themed club in the Winter Garden space. It was there that he helped popularize the cocktail known as the Zombie. When Proser found himself in some financial difficulties in 1962, he moved to Las Vegas and allowed Kipness to buy him out. It was Kipness that changed the venue’s name to Hawaii Kai. Scenic designer Frederick Fox designed the elaborate interiors. The menu promised an immersive environment: “As you cross our threshold, you become part of the romantic Polynesian world jealously guarded by the Tiki Gods. Delight your senses with lyrical waterfalls and glorious lava rock gardens. Inspect our bamboo huts flown in from the distant Islands. See our captive Manu birds display their colorful plumage as they `serenade’ you with a cacophony of song.” The Hawaii Kai thrived for about 25 years, setting the record for longevity in that location.

By 1990, Hawaii Kai had finally called it quits. The space was vacant for about a decade and then reopened in February 2000 as the Manhattan satellite of Brooklyn’s famed seafood restaurant, Lundy’s. Lundy’s, however, failed to attract Manhattanites and tourists alike and closed in June 2003. Current resident, a branch of the Applebee’s chain opened there in December 2003.
(opposite page) Detail of the Winter Garden Theatre exterior, Broadway frontage, showing signage for the Plantation Club, 1926. (This page, top to bottom) Newspaper advertisement heralding Clifton Webb and partner Gloria Goodwin as the "greatest ball room dancers of them all," New York Herald, March 7, 1917; signage for the Club Rendezvous with appearances of the vaudeville and radio musical-comedy team of Lou Clayton, Eddie Jackson and Jimmy Durante, 1928; letterhead, 1940; and menu, mid-1960s.

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The Winter Garden at the Movies

by Mark E. Swartz

The Winter Garden departed from featuring legitimate stage productions twice in its long history. From 1928 to 1933, J.J. Shubert leased the theatre to Warner Bros./First National to present Vitaphone Talking Pictures there. *The Singing Fool*, the opening Warner Bros. presentation, featured longtime Winter Garden favorite, Al Jolson. Some of the films that played the Winter Garden during this period include *Noah’s Ark* (1928) with Dolores Costello; *On With the Show* (1929) starring Betty Compson, Joe E. Brown, and Ethel Waters; *Show of Shows* (1929) featuring John Barrymore and Frank Fay; *Courage* (1930) with Belle Bennett; *Her Majesty, Love* (1931) starring Marilyn Miller; *The Millionaire* (1931) with James Cagney; *They Call it Sin* (1932) featuring Loretta Young and George Brent; *Scarlet Dawn* (1932) with Douglas Fairbanks, Jr.; and *The King’s Vacation* (1933) with George Arliss and Dick Powell.

Later, from 1945-1948, United Artists leased the Winter Garden as a venue for UA films as well as those of British producer, J. Arthur Rank. Among the films that premiered at the Winter Garden were *Caesar and Cleopatra* (1945) starring Vivian Leigh and Claude Rains; *Blithe Spirit* (1945) with Rex Harrison and Constance Cummings; *Tomorrow is Forever* (1946) with Claudette Colbert, Orson Welles, and George Brent; *Something in the Wind* (1947) and *I’ll Be Yours* (1947) both starring Deanna Durbin; *Buck Privates* (1947) featuring Abbott and Costello; and *River Lady* (1948) with Yvonne DeCarlo and Dan Duryea.

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Of their many venues, Lee and J.J. Shubert publicly celebrated major anniversaries of only one, the Winter Garden. This is likely due to the fact that this playhouse had such a unique identity and had consistently played host to some of the brother’s most successful musical productions and biggest stars. In any case, the Shubert Archive’s Winter Garden files include press releases, newspaper clippings, flyers, and other miscellany marking the venue’s tenth (1921), fifteenth (1926), twenty-fifth (1936), thirtieth (1941), and thirty-fifth (1946) anniversaries. One can only wonder what amazing event the Brothers would have planned for the theatre’s 100th!
**An Interesting Scenario**

Among the more interesting items in the Archive’s Winter Garden files is the following un-attributed and undated typed scenario titled simply, “The Winter Garden.” Most likely it is a treatment for a fictional Winter Garden/Al Jolson-themed motion picture that never came to fruition. It is impossible to know for certain whether the Shuberts commissioned it, or whether someone submitted it for the brothers’ consideration, but some other information in the files may provide a clue. A transcript of a WHN radio entertainment-themed show dated March 20, 1946 includes a brief discussion between announcer, Bill Lang, and host, actress Adrienne Ames, of the Winter Garden’s 35th anniversary. After outlining some of the theatre’s glorious past, Lang comments that all of that show-business history “sounds like swell material for a book.” To which Ames replies, “Or a movie--maybe Warners will do it some day.” For decades it had been customary for the Shubert Press Department to feed material to reporters, and in fact, the Archive’s files are filled with press releases whose text is repeated verbatim in published newspaper columns. So it is likely that Ames is merely spouting copy that Shubert provided to the press. Worth noting, too, is that Warner Brothers was not only the studio behind Jolson’s two biggest movie successes, *The Jazz Singer* (1927) and *The Singing Fool* (1928), but that J.J. Shubert leased the Winter Garden to the studio from 1928-1933 for motion picture exhibition.

It is probably no coincidence that in March of 1946, production was wrapping on Columbia Pictures Corporation’s official Al Jolson biography, *The Jolson Story*, which would be released in October of that year. Neither Shubert nor Warner Brothers had a financial stake in that project, and they may have been looking to make money with their own Jolson project. In fact, on October 15, 1946, the *New York Times* reported that Lee and J.J. had filed a Supreme Court suit attempting to restrain Columbia from exhibiting the film. Seeking, in addition, $500,000, the brothers asserted that they had employed Jolson for many years, and that he had enjoyed some of his greatest successes under their management. They wanted to prevent any interior or exterior shots of the Winter Garden from appearing in the film, and did not want their names or the theatre’s name to be used to market the movie “except with the consent of the plaintiffs and the payment of a valuable consideration.”

But whatever its reason for being, the treatment is interesting. With its flashback structure and generous use of montage, it is quite cinematic. Also, while there is no doubt about Jolson’s shining talent and his rapid rise to stardom, there is no hint of the large ego that he was reported to have evidenced in his life off stage. Here he is depicted as humble, vulnerable and insecure—a real good guy. Meanwhile, there is the story of the classic stage mother and her daughter who gets her big break when, at the last minute, she takes over the role of a “minor principal” who has just been fired. The world of the theatre is depicted as precarious—it can lead
to stardom and happiness, or to ruin--but essential for those who have it in their blood. Also worth noting is the character of Martin Douglas, whom the scenario indicates is based on Melville Ellis, a sometimes performer who was credited as costume designer for many Winter Garden and other Shubert musicals. Described in the text variously as “a good-natured piano player and designer of costumes for the shows,” “gossipy,” “voluble,” “a confessor to whom everyone goes with his or her troubles,” and someone who, in one instance, behaves like a “fussy old duenna with a debutante niece,” it is fairly clear that he is the flamboyant gay man who would become a fixture in many backstage show business tales. Finally, the prescient comments about the changing face of Times Square--the Astor Hotel was actually demolished in 1968--strike a chord with anyone who has followed its history over the last few decades. Thankfully, the expected demise of the Winter Garden mentioned in the first sentence, turned out to be pure science fiction.

THE WINTER GARDEN

On a May morning in 1970, the New York newspapers announce the passing of one of the city’s oldest landmarks, the Winter Garden, which is to be torn down to be replaced by a Government television building. People discuss the end of the Winter Garden over their breakfasts, on the street, in office buildings.

Up Broadway comes an elderly man, white-haired, but curiously erect of bearing. People point at him as he passes, looking curiously at vanished landmarks he once knew....the Astor Hotel, which has disappeared. ...the Times Building and on up Seventh Avenue. He pauses in front of what was once the Palace Theatre....and is immediately “touched” by a decrepit man who hails him as “Al” and seeks to recall himself to the pedestrian with comments on vaudeville of generations before. Walking on, he looks across the street at the rows of windows from which the Winter Garden beauties once stared out....crosses the street,...enters the stagedoor, speaks to the watchman who greets him as “Mr. Jolson” and wanders out on the empty stage. He drags a chair out on to the stage on which there is a pilot light and stares out at the dim auditorium. As he sits there he thinks of the years before, hums a little of “Paris is a Paradise for Coons”, his first song in La Belle Paree, and from the shadows emerge the famous personalities that once illuminated this stage... Gaby Deslys, Ed Wynn, James Barton doing his drunk dance, Rose Quinn singing “Pretty Baby”, Fred and Adele Astaire, Nora Bayes, Fanny Brice, Irene Franklin, Stella Mayhew, Marie Dressler, Charlotte Greenwood, the Dolly Sisters each doing a snatch of song or dance....down the aisle comes a scrub-woman, mop in hand, pausing to watch the pageant on the stage...he goes forward to the footlights, kneels, does a bit of “Mammy” and finally the whole turns into one of the spectacular finales of a Winter Garden show with himself in blackface, calling out “Ellen”
to a chorus girl, who comes forward and does a tap dance in which he joins, the two of them the centre of the stage...smiling at each other, as the music crashes louder and louder and the whole dissolves into.......... An office corridor in the same building in 1911. Maggie Mahoney, scrub-woman for theatrical offices, who once had been a singer in small-time vaudeville under the billing of “Maggie Cline The Second,” a good-natured, dominating woman, notices as she passes down the hallway that office doors are open...couples sitting at pianos, wardrobe women looking over costumes, conferences in other rooms. On the stairway leading up to the offices she finds nearly 70 girls of all sizes and ages. Learning that a call has been issued for chorus girls for the first Winter Garden shows, she drops her mop and pail, rushes out to a cheap store, buys a huge, feather-trimmed hat, hurries to a cold-water flat on Tenth Avenue and drags out of bed her oldest daughter, Bridget, who is still asleep although it is the middle of the morning. She forces her to dress hurriedly...jams the hat on her head...rushes her back to the theatre...climbs on the stage and bumps into a youth who is dancing by himself and practicing a song, “Paris is a Paradise for Coons.” He laughs at her assertion that she is going to get a job for the daughter until an unexpected gesture of the mother’s knocks off the monstrous hat and Al Jolson, the youth, is fascinated with the girl’s blonde beauty. He rushes her up the back stairs, storms into the Shubert offices and insists they engage her. The producer, seeing the girl’s beauty, agrees to engage her as a showgirl and renames her Gertrude Gould.

The runway, with its “bridge of thighs” is one of the sensations of the spectacle and Gertrude is one of the most attractive of the girls, soon becoming one of the most talked-of members of the ensemble. Mrs. Mahoney, in whom there is an undying love for the Theatre and who is ambitious to have all her children--the younger brother Paul, who is always practicing dance steps and who is as dark in coloring as his two sisters, the older Gertrude and the baby of the family, Ellen, are fair--embark on stage careers. She is disappointed in Gertrude’s lack of ambition and broken-hearted when she moves away from home to live with two other chorus girls. Watching the performances before she starts her night’s work of scrubbing the theatre, Mrs. Mahoney appeals for help to Martin Douglas (Melville Ellis), good-natured piano player and designer of costumes for the shows. He fails to get Gertrude to change her way of living--by this time she is one of the notorious party girls of the Winter Garden--but he takes an interest in Paul and finally gets him a job in the male dancing chorus. Douglas is a gossip, voluble and the confessor to whom everyone goes with his or her troubles.

At Sunday night concerts, Jolson is a tremendous hit and his specialty with Stella Mayhew in the first show results in his being starred with Gaby Deslys in Vera Violetta. When the famous French actress (Deslys) reaches New York, she is without her dancing partner who has refused to leave Paris. Mrs. Mahoney goes to Jolson and pleads with him to use his influence, and
he recommends Paul for the position. The youth makes good at once, is highly successful, and his head is turned by praise and adulation. For a second time, Mrs. Mahoney is disappointed in her children. When the run of *Vera Violetta* ends, Paul goes back to Paris with the French actress and forgets any obligations to the family, writing seldom and dropping them out of his life. He becomes the dancing sensation of Paris, but when his feminine star dies, he goes into eclipse and ends up as a gigolo for a rich, elderly American woman in Cannes.

Thru this run flashes of the various Winter Garden spectacles with such artists as Charlotte Greenwood, Nora Bayes, Fanny Brice, James Barton, Fred and Adele Astarie, the Howard Brothers, the Dolly Sisters, (and Diamond Jim Brady) and glimpses of the various Jolson shows *Whirl of Society*, *Honeymoon Express*, *Dancing Around*, *Sinbad*, *Robinson Crusoe, Jr.* and *Bombo*. Thru these episodes, Jolson appears most of the time in blackface.

Gertrude, meanwhile, has remained in the chorus and her beauty has kept her in the front rank of the chorus girls. Jolson falls in love with the girl, but she will have nothing to do with him, telling him that he is only a blackface comedian and that she can have her choice of a dozen or more wealthy men who can give her more luxury than he ever will be able to do. One of these men is named Delahanty and she becomes infatuated with him. When Delahanty is sent to prison for a year for a crooked real-estate deal, she lives with various men in order to provide him with money after his release. She is indifferent about her work, seldom sees her mother, but is passively fond of her young, blonde sister Ellen, who works in a cleaning establishment on Ninth Avenue.

By this time the producers are tired of Gertrude, whose beauty is beginning to fade, and who has become notorious for her escapades. Unknown to her, Jolson intercedes for her several times in order to protect her job. Gertrude's Winter Garden career, however, reaches a crisis when she is missing for two performances. Martin Douglas and Jolson warn Mrs. Mahoney that if the girl does not turn up that night she will be given her notice. Ellen goes in search of her sister and finds her in Delahanty's apartment, is insulted by Delahanty, but finally succeeds in getting away and in taking Gertrude, who is too drunk to know what is happening, back to the theatre. As ill luck would have it, the producer comes backstage as they are entering the stage-door, sees the condition Gertrude is in, and fires her on the spot, offering the place to the younger and now more beautiful sister.

Ellen, who is ambitious, takes the engagement after failing in her efforts to have her sister reinstated. Gertrude goes back to Delahanty, but as she can bring him no more money, he gets rid of her, and she drifts about from one touring company to another, finally ending up as an entertainer in a fourth-rate Kansas City night club.

Mrs. Mahoney keeps a zealous watch over Ellen--seeing in her the fulfillment of her ambition and feeling that she will make up for the disappointment she has suffered from the others. Ellen, who has inherited her mother's love of the stage, likes the new life. They move to a little
better apartment, but Ms. Mahoney keeps her job as a scrubwoman.

Like all beautiful showgirls of that period, Ellen, known on the stage as Meryll Madden, has her invitations, but she keeps her sense of proportion. Much of her success is due to the guidance or Martin Douglas, who is impatient with incompetence and who gives her music lessons and behaves like a fussy old duenna with a debutante niece. He manipulates affairs until Ellen becomes The Girl On The White Horse in the spectacular scene in which the chorus marches up and down the steps of the capitol. She is also one of the leaders on the famous runway.

Jolson, who at first pays little attention to the girl, finds himself attracted to her by her beauty and her Irish wit. He says nothing, however, as he has not forgotten being called a “blackface ham” by her older sister. After the performance, he occasionally invites her out...but they go to hamburger stands and chili joints, and sometimes he comes home with her to the little flat where Mrs. Mahoney has supper waiting for them.

Ellen meets the usual number of theatre hangers-on and playboys and does not take them seriously. One of them who seems to like her better than the others is Jim Sawyer, a wealthy Wall Street broker and a member of an established Manhattan family. Jim, good-natured and likeable, makes the usual proposition to Ellen, offering her an apartment, but when she refuses, he discovers she is not the ordinary girl of her type, and this awakens a real interest in her that develops into love. Her evenings after the performances alternate between Jack's and Delmonico's with Sawyer and little side restaurants with some of the girls of the chorus or with Jolson, or sometimes home to cup of tea with her mother. One day Jolson takes her to Coney Island, where they go swimming and doing all the childish loops and swings. Jolson is falling in love with the girl, but she thinks of him only as a friend, and she hesitates to go places with him because he is the star of the Winter Garden, and she is only a chorus girl. Jolson confides his feelings for Ellen to Mrs. Mahoney but pledges her to secrecy.

Ted Darcy, the singing juvenile of the show and the “Apollo of Broadway” tries to force his attentions on Ellen. Darcy is notorious as a heartbreaker, and Jolson follows Darcy into the latter's dressing room one night and beats him up. Ellen does not know what has happened, but Darcy ceases to make her life miserable.

Meanwhile, Jim Sawyer is continuing his attentions and is determined to marry her. Ellen likes him but does not know whether or not she loves him. He proposes to Ellen, but having seen much of theatrical life and considering the average showgirl can be had by anyone, he stipulates that with marriage she must leave the theatre and forget her present friends. With well-intentioned but dull reasoning, he tells her that he wants to take her away from what he considers an undesirable environment.

On the 10th anniversary of the Garden, Martin Douglas arranges a party on the stage in honor of Mrs. Mahoney and the other scrubwomen of the theatre, and which is attended by
the company. To test Sawyer, who has never met her mother, Ellen gets Douglas to have him invited. Mrs. Mahoney is the queen of the party and favors them with her singing of “Throw Him Down McCluskey.” Jolson sings “Mammy.” Sawyer is appalled by the dominating Irishwoman, but is clever enough not to let Ellen know this, but he determines to take her as far away from her mother as possible, and Mrs. Mahoney instinctively distrusts him.

Ellen is told by Sawyer that she must come to a decision as he is impatient to wed her and take her to Europe for a honeymoon. She knows that she likes him a great deal but she is not certain it is love. She goes home to her mother and tells her of the proposal. Maggie Mahoney is horrified. She feels that it will be a disgrace if Ellen marries outside the profession. “Your father was the stage carpenter, I was in the line, you were cradled in a dressing room trunk, you belong in the theatre,” she tells Ellen. “Live in luxury and you’d rot from boredom. The theatre is in your blood and you should never leave it.” She admits her bitter disappointment with the two older children and her hopes for Ellen’s career. “Besides,” she adds, “there’s a real guy that loves you... the finest that ever stood in leather...well, in soft-shoe leather.” Ellen asks her mother who it is, but the mother keeps her promise to Jolson and refuses to tell.

Ellen goes to the theatre confused and bewildered. She has told Jim that she will let him know her decision that night.

At the theatre, she is met by Martin Douglas, who tells her that one of the minor principals--song in the first act, dance specialty in the second--is being given her notice and that he has persuaded Shubert to give Ellen the job. This will be her first step up. Ellen is thrilled by the news. To her it means the beginning of a real career.

In her dressing room she finds a huge bouquet from Sawyer and in the centre of the bouquet a Star Sapphire. A note from him states that if she wears it during the performance, he will know what her decision is as he will be sitting in the third row next to the runway.

Ellen goes to Jolson’s dressing room, tells him the news of her promotion, receives the congratulations, and then shows him the Sapphire and informs him of Jim’s proposal. He keeps his own feelings hidden and congratulates her, but, as did her mother, he tells her he is sorry to see her leave the theatre in which she apparently has a real place.

As Ellen starts to leave the dressing room, she catches sight of Jolson’s face reflected in the mirror—it is contorted with despair and longing. She pauses puzzled—he picks up the makeup stick and starts smearing on the burnt cork. He doesn’t know she has seen the reflection in the mirror. Ellen looks down, sees his dancing shoes on the floor—shoes of soft leather. “Soft leather”—her mother’s words. There is realization. Impulsively she rushes across the dressing room, throws her arms around him, kisses him, and runs out of the dressing room without a word, a large smear of black grease paint on her cheek. Jolson does not understand this, nor does Ellen who is by now thoroughly bewildered and upset.
On her first entrance Ellen wears the sapphire ring. On her second appearance it is missing. Both Sawyer, in the third row, and Jolson, keep an eye on her. In some scenes she wears the ring, and in others she doesn’t. Sawyer is kept alternately hopeful and despondent.

Between the acts, her mother, who has been told by Douglas of Ellen’s promotion, steals backstage to congratulate her. For answer Ellen shows the sapphire. For answer Maggie points to the plain little cameo that was her engagement ring. “That’s what you should be wearing,” she says.

The show is nearing the finale, and Jolson and the girls parade out on the runway. Despite his best efforts, Jolson is not up to his usual performance—he is abstracted, conscious only that he is losing Ellen. The spotlight from the balcony picks out each girl in turn.

As Ellen nears Sawyer, she leans forward, takes the ring from her finger and drops it in his lap. He registers acknowledgment of the significance of the act. Jolson sees it also and his spirit changes instantly. The girls march back to the stage, and Jolson, as is his habit each night just before the final number, calls on some member of the chorus to do a little specialty.

Tonight he calls for “Merryl” and Ellen (Merryl) comes forward, gives a startled look at Jolson, then starts a tap dance which arouses applause. Her teaching under Douglas has not been wasted. Douglas watches with pride from the wings. Maggie with pride from the back of the theatre. Suddenly Jolson seizes her hand and goes into the routine with her. Back and forth they dance—the orchestra crashes into the finale—and as the curtain starts to come down Ellen throws her arms around Jolson, looks up at him with a look that can have but one meaning, and kisses him, blackface make-up and all. They will be together in the theatre forever—her job a minor one now, but with every chance for the future—and the orchestra goes into the strains of “Swanee.”

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No history of the Winter Garden would be complete without special mention of the various Passing Show revues that Lee and J.J. produced almost yearly at the theatre from 1912 to 1924. Conceived as competition for Florenz Ziegfeld’s Follies, today they are mostly forgotten. Many theatre historians have traditionally regarded them as lesser imitations of their popular rival. In reality, upon close scrutiny, most editions of the Passing Show were quite lavish, featuring big stars, large choruses, witty and topical satire, colorful sets and costumes, and often innovative stage techniques. They were a big draw with audiences, and although they became synonymous with the Winter Garden, they generally toured successfully around the U.S after their Broadway engagements.

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(left) Advertising flyer; (opposite page, clockwise from top left) Designer Homer Conant’s costume sketch for the parody, “Capulet’s Garden,” Act II, Scene 6, of The Passing Show of 1916. In the scene, Juliet stands by her man, Romeo (pictured here), as he is tried in court for his debts to Shylock. Conant notes in pencil specific instructions for the costume’s construction: “Cape of dark rose and gold brocade, edged with band of gold cloth. Tights of silk, same color, & leather shoes same color. Coat of plain gold-metal-cloth with piping on belt of rose. Vest, sleeves, & white in trunk of soft white silk.” This is followed by the words “Gold sword-Black wig” which are crossed out and replaced with “music instead.” Next to the left leg is written: “Have tights woven this way—not painted as they will not run straight on leg.” A final note pencilled in the upper right corner of the sketch instructs, “Change all of this red to peacock blue.” And indeed, swatches of blue fabric are attached to the drawing; advertising copy announcing the first sale of tickets for The Passing Show of 1916; a scene from The Passing Show of 1921; William Weaver’s design for a “Nose Gay” for The Passing Show of 1921. The pencil sketch on the right of the drawing shows what the costume would have looked like with the flower in horizontal position—the chorus girl would have entered the scene this way, and then revealed the flower in its upright position at just the right moment; and Conant’s sketch for a chorus of witches in the scene, “Back in Salem, During the Puritanical Days” (Act I, Scene 3) for The Passing Show of 1919.
The Passing Show

SEATS THURSDAY, APRIL 26. MAIL ORDERS NOW.

The Passing Show of 1916

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Production Chronology

The following list of productions includes shows that opened at the Winter Garden and ones that opened elsewhere but later transferred to the house. The number of performances reflects a production's entire Broadway run.

1911


VERA VIOLETTA 11/20/11 (112 perfs.) by Leonard Liebling and Harold Atteridge and Edmund Eysler; with Al Jolson, Mae West, Gaby Deslys and Stella Mayhew.

UNDINE by Manuel Klein with Annette Kellerman.

1912

WHIRL OF SOCIETY/A NIGHT WITH THE PIERRUOTS 3/5/12 (136 perfs.) by Harrison Rhodes, Harold Atteridge and Louis A. Hirsh; with Al Jolson and Stella Mayhew.


BROADWAY TO PARIS 11/20/12 (77 perfs.) by George Bronson-Howard, Harold Atteridge and Max Hoffman; with Louise Dresser and Irene Bordoni.

1913

THE HONEYMOON EXPRESS 2/6/13 (156 perfs.) by Joseph W. Herbert, Harold Atteridge and Jean Schwartz; with Al Jolson and Gaby Deslys.

PASSING SHOW OF 1913 7/24/13 (116 perfs.) by Harold Atteridge and Jean Schwartz; with Charles King, Bessie Clayton, John Charles Thomas and Charlotte Greenwood.

THE PLEASURE SEEKERS 11/3/13 (72 perfs.) by Edgar Smith and E. Ray Goetz; with Hugh Cameron and Dorothy Jardon.

1914

THE WHIRL OF THE WORLD 1/10/14 (161 perfs.) by Harold Atteridge and Sigmund Romberg; with Willie and Eugene Howard, May Boole and Lester Sheehan.

PASSING SHOW OF 1914 6/10/14 (133 perfs.) by Harold Atteridge, Harry Carroll and Sigmund Romberg; with Marilyn Miller.

DANCING AROUND 10/10/14 (145 perfs.) lyrics by Harold Atteridge, Harry Carroll and Sigmund Romberg; with Al Jolson and Clifton Webb.

1915

MAID IN AMERICA 2/18/15 (108 pens.) by Harold Atteridge, Sigmund Romberg and Harry Carroll; with Blossom Seeley, Nora Bayes and Mlle. Dazie.


A WORLD OF PLEASURE 10/14/15 (116 perfs.) by Harold Atteridge and Sigmund Romberg; with Clifton Crawford, Lew Holtz and Sydney Greenstreet.

1916

ROBINSON CRUSOE, JR. 2/17/16 (139 perfs.) by Harold Atteridge and Edgar Smith, Sigmund Romberg and James Hanley; with Al Jolson and Kitty Doner.

PASSING SHOW OF 1916 6/22/16 (140 perfs.) by Harold Atteridge, Sigmund Romberg and Otto Motzan; with Ed Wynn and Herman Timberg.

THE SHOW OF WONDERS 10/26/16 (209 perfs.) by Harold Atteridge, Sigmund Romberg, Otto Motzan, and Herman Timberg; with Marilyn Miller, Eugene and Willie Howard, and John T. Murray.

1917

PASSING SHOW OF 1917 4/26/17 (196 perfs.) by Harold Atteridge, Sigmund Romberg and Otto Motzan; with Irene Franklin, DeWolf Hopper and Jefferson De Angelis.
Advertising flyer.
Homer Conant’s sketch for Peter Pan, one of several fairy-tale themed characters in Cinderella On Broadway (1920); advertising flyer for Make It Snappy (1921) with Eddie Cantor, the production that inaugurated the new Herbert Knapp re-design of the Winter Garden’s interior.
DOING OUR BIT 10/18/17 (130 perf.) by Harold Atteridge, Sigmund Romberg and Herman Timberg; with Ed Wynn, Mabel Kelly and Ada Lewis.

1918
SINBAD 2/14/18 (164 perf.) by Harold Atteridge, Sigmund Romberg and Al Jolson; with Al Jolson and Kitty Doner.
PASSING SHOW OF 1918 7/25/18 (124 perf.) by Harold Atteridge, Sigmund Romberg and Jean Schwartz; with Sam White, Lou Clayton, Fred and Adele Astaire, Charles Ruggles, Frank Fay, Eugene and Willie Howard and Nita Naldi.

1919
MONTE CRISTO, JR. 2/12/19 (254 perf.) by Harold Atteridge, Sigmund Romberg and Jean Schwartz; with James Davey, Clem Bevins and Rose Rolanda.
SHUBERT GAIETIES OF 1919 10/06/19 (87 prefr.) by Ed Wynn, Edgar Smith, Harold Atteridge, Alfred Bryan and Jean Schwartz; with Ed Wynn.
PASSING SHOW OF 1919 10/23/19 (280 perf.) by Harold Atteridge and Jean Schwartz; with Blanche Ring, Charles Winninger, Walter Woolf and James Barton.

1920
CINDERELLA ON BROADWAY 6/24/20 (126 perf.) by Harold Atteridge, Bert Grant and Al Goodman; with George Price.
PASSING SHOW OF 1921 12/29/20 (191 perf.) by Harold Atteridge and Jean Schwartz; with Willie and Eugene Howard, Marie Dressler and J. Harold Murray.

1921

1922
MAKE IT SNAPPY 4/13/22 (96 perf.) by Harold Atteridge, Jean Schwartz and Eddie Cantor; with J. Harold Murray, Georgia Hale and Eddie Cantor.
PASSING SHOW OF 1922 9/20/22 (95 perf.) by Harold Atteridge and Alfred Goodman; with Willie and Eugene Howard, and Fred Allen.

1923
THE DANCING GIRL 1/24/23 (142 perf.) by Harold Atteridge and Sigmund Romberg with Trini and Cyril Scott.
PASSING SHOW OF 1923 6/14/23 (118 perf.) by Harold Atteridge, Sigmund Romberg, and Jean Schwartz; with Walter Woolf, George Jessel.
TOPICS OF 1923 1/14/24 (80 perf.) by Harold Atteridge, Harry Wagstaff Gribble and Jean Schwartz; with Alexis Kosloff.
ARTISTS AND MODELS OF 1923 3/24/24 (64 perf.) by Jean Schwartz et al.; with Rollo Wayne and Harry Kelly.

1924
INNOCENT EYES 5/20/24 (119 perf.) by Harold Atteridge, Tot Seymour, Sigmund Romberg and Jean Schwartz; with Mistinguett, Lew Hearn and Edythe Baker.
PASSING SHOW OF 1924 9/23/24 (106 perf.) by Harold Atteridge, Sigmund Romberg and Jean Schwartz; with James Barton.

1925
BIG BOY 1/7/25 (48 perf.) by Harold Atteridge, James F. Hanley, Joseph Meyer and Bud DeSylva; with Al Jolson.
SKY HIGH 3/19/25 (112 perfs.) by Harold Atteridge, Harry Graham, Carlton Kelsey and Robert Stolz; with Willie Howard.


1926

GREAT TEMPTATIONS 5/18/26 (197 perfs.) by Harold Atteridge, Maurie Rubins and Clifford Grey; with Florenz Ames, Jack Benny and Arthur Treacher.


1927

THE CIRCUS PRINCESS 4/25/27 (192 perfs.) by Harry Smith, Julius Brammer, Alfred Gruenwald and Emmerich Kalman; with Guy Robertson and Poodles Hanneford and his family of bareback riders.

A NIGHT IN SPAIN 10/10/27 (40 perfs.) by Harold Atteridge, Alfred Bryan, and Jean Schwartz; with Phil Baker, Xavier Cugat, Ted Healy, Shemp Howard and Ann Sothern.


1928


1933

HOLD YOUR HORSES 9/25/33 (88 perfs.) by Russel Crouse and Corey Ford, music and lyrics by Russell Bennett, Robert A. Simon, Lois Alter, Arthur Swanstrom and Ben Oakland; with Joe Cook, Ona Munson and Frances Upton.

1934
LIFE BEGINS AT 8:40 8/27/34 (238 perfs.) by Ira Gershwin, E.Y. Harburg and Harold Arlen; with Ray Bolger, Brian Donlevy, Luella Gear, Bert Lahr and Dixie Dunbar.

1935
AT HOME ABROAD 9/19/35 (198 perfs.) by Howard Dietz and Arthur Schwartz; with Beatrice Lillie, Ethel Waters, Eleanor Powell, Eddie Foy, Jr., and Reginald Gardiner.

1936
ZIEGFELD FOLLIES 1/30/36 (115 perfs.); by Vernon Duke, Ira Gershwin and David Freedman; with Bob Hope, Josephine Baker, Fanny Brice and Eve Arden.
ZIEGFELD FOLLIES OF 1936 9/14/36 (112 perfs.) with Gypsy Rose Lee, Bobby Clark, Fanny Brice and Jane Pickens.

1937
HOORAY FOR WHAT! 12/1/37 (200 perfs.) by E.Y. Harburg, Howard Lindsay, Russel Crouse, and Harold Arlen; with Vivian Vance, Ed Wynn, and Jack Whiting.

1938
YOU NEVER KNOW 9/21/38 (78 perfs.) by Cole Porter and Roland Leigh; with Clifton Webb, Rex O'Malley, Lupe Velez.
HELLzapoppin' 12/26/38 (1,404 total perfs.) by Ole Olsen and Chic Johnson, Sammy Fain and Charles Tobias; with Olsen and Johnson.
MESSRS. SHUBERT
(With association with John Shubert)

present

Clifton
Webb
Lupe
Libby
Yelez
Holman

in Cole Porter’s New Musical

with THE HARTMANS
"YOU NEVER KNOW"
with TOBY WING
CHARLES KEAPIER
THE DEBONIERS
and REX O’MALLEY
Music by
Coli PORTER and ROBERT KATZCHER
Book Adapted and Directed by
ROWLAND LEIGH
Produced, Designed by
ALBERT JOHNSON and WATSON BARRATT
Dancers by
ROBERT ALTON

WINTER GARDEN
MATS. THURS. & SAT. NOW

OLSEN & JOHNSON’S
HELLZAPOPPIN

"Audience Bashed, Rolled and
Rushed all over from floor to
Loupin’ while spoted pulifing!!
—WALTER KINCAID

SEATS NOW ON SALE
FOR HOLIDAY MATINEES

3 Matts. Election Week:
3 Tuesday, Nov. 2, 6:30 p.m.

3 Mattses BOTH
Thanksgiving Week

9 Thursday, Nov. 26, 8:45 p.m.

9 Saturday, Nov. 28, 6:45 p.m.

9 Sunday, Nov. 29, 3:45 p.m.

Daily Matinees
Christmas Week:
Monday, Dec. 13, 8:45 p.m.

Tuesday, Dec. 14, 3:15 p.m.

Wednesday, Dec. 15, 6:15 p.m.

3 Mattses New Year’s Week:
3 Thursday, Jan. 1, 8:45 p.m.

3 Thursday, Jan. 8, 6:15 p.m.

3 Thursday, Jan. 15, 3:15 p.m.

50c, 75c, 1.00, 1.25, 1.50, 1.75

SEATS also for All Other Performances
at Next 11 Weeks

WINTER GARDEN
314 W. 42nd Street, New York City
MATINEES WEDNESDAY & SATURDAY
1941
SONS O' FUN 12/1/41 (742 perf.) by Ole Olsen, Chic Johnson, Hal Block, Jack Yellin and Sammy Fain; with Chic Johnson, Ella Logan, Carmen Miranda and Ole Olsen.

1943

1944
MEXICAN HAYRIDE 1/28/44 (479 perf.) by Herbert and Dorothy Fields and Cole Porter; with Bobby Clark, George Givot and June Havoc.
LAFFING ROOM ONLY 12/23/44 (22 perf.) by Ole Olsen, Chic Johnson, Eugene Conrad and Burton Lane; with Olsen and Johnson.

1945
MARINKA 7/18/45 (165 perf.) by George Marion Jr., Karl Farkas, and Emmerich Kalman; with Edith Fellows, Jerry Wayne and Harry Stockwell.

1948

1949
ROLAND PETIT'S LES BALLET DE PARIS 10/6/49 (116 perf.) with Roland Petit and Renee Jeanmarie.

1950
ALIVE AND KICKING 1/17/50 (46 perf.) by Paul Francis Webster, Ray Golden, music by Hal Borne, Irma Jurist, Sammy Fain and Harold Rome; with Gwen Verdon, Jack Gilford, Jack Cassidy and Jack Cole and his dancers.
GREAT TO BE ALIVE 3/23/50 (52 perf.) by Sylvia Regan, Walter Bullock, Robert Russell Bennett and Abraham Ellstein; with Bambi Linn, Janice Rule and Vivienne Segal.

1951
MAKE A WISH 4/18/51 (102 perf.) by Preston Sturges and Hugh Martin; with Nanette Fabray and Phil Leeds.
TOP BANANA 11/1/51 (350 perf.) by Hy Kraft and Johnny Mercer; with Phil Silvers and Joey Faye.

1952
MY DARLIN' AIDA 10/27/52 (89 perf.) by Charles Friedman based on Verdi's Aida; with Elaine Malbin.

1953

1954
PETER PAN 10/20/54 (152 perf.) by James M. Barrie, Mark Charlap, and Carolyn Leigh; with Mary Martin and Cyril Ritchard.

1955
PLAIN AND FANCY 8/1/55 (301 perf.) by Joseph Stein, Will Glickman, Arnold B. Horwitt and Albert Hague; with Barbara Cook and David Daniels.
THE VAMP 11/10/55 (60 perf.) by John Latouche, Sam Locke and James Mundy; with Carol Channing, Steve Reeves and Will Geer.

1956
TAMBURLAINE THE GREAT 1/19/56 (20 perf.) by Christopher Marlowe; with Anthony Quayle, William Shatner and Colleen Dewhurst.
BUS STOP 2/13/56 (478 perf.) by William Inge; with Kim Stanley and Elaine Stritch.
Advertising flyer, 1951; (right) window card, 1951. (opposite page, top) Rosalind Russell in the “Conga” number from Wonderful Town; (bottom) Winter Garden exterior showing West Side Story on the marquee. West Side Story actually played three separate engagements at the Winter Garden. It first premiered on September 26, 1957 and ran until February 28, 1959. It transferred to the Broadway Theatre for a little over two months, but was back to the Winter Garden for another seven weeks. After a national tour, the production returned to the Winter Garden for one final time, April 27, 1960 to October 22, 1960, before it moved to the Alvin Theatre where it played its final performance on December 10, 1960.
The Passing Show
SHANGRI-LA 6/13/56 (21 perfs.) by James Hilton, Jerome Lawrence, Robert E. Lee and Harry Warren; with Dennis King, Jack Cassidy, Alice Ghostley and Carol Lawrence.

RICHARD II/ROMEO AND JULIET/MACBETH/TROILUS AND CRESSIDA 10/23/56 (95 perfs.) by William Shakespeare; with The Old Vic Company.

1957
MADELEINE RENAUD--JEAN-LOUIS BARRAULT REPERTORY COMPANY 1/30/57 (30 perfs.)
ZIEGFELD FOLLIES OF 1957 3/1/57 (123 perfs.) by Howard Dietz, Sammy Fain, Carolyn Leigh et al.; with Beatrice Lillie, Carol Lawrence and Billy DeWolfe.
WEST SIDE STORY 9/26/57 (732 perfs.) by Arthur Laurents, Leonard Bernstein and Stephen Sondheim; with Larry Kert, Ken LeRoy, Carol Lawrence and Chita Rivera.

1959
JUNO 3/9/59 (16 perfs.) by Joseph Stein (based on a play by Sean O'Casey) and Marc Blizstein; with Shirley Booth and Melvyn Douglas.
BALLET ESPAÑOL 9/22/59 (16 perfs.) with Roberto Iglesias and his company.
BAYANIHAN: PHILIPPINE NATIONAL FOLK DANCE CO. 10/13/59 (16 perfs.).
SARATOGA 12/7/59 (80 perfs.) Johnny Mercer, Harold Arlen and Morton DaCosta; with Carol Lawrence and Howard Keel.

1960
ONCE UPON A MATTRESS 2/24/60 (244 perfs.) by Dean Fuller, Jay Thompson, Marshall Barer, and Mary Rodgers; with Carol Burnett, Jack Gilford and Jane White.
WEST SIDE STORY (return engagement) 4/27/60 (253 perfs.) by Arthur Laurents, Leonard Bernstein and Stephen Sondheim; with Larry Kert and Carol Lawrence.

THE UNSINKABLE MOLLY BROWN 11/3/60 (532 perfs.) by Richard Morris and Meredith Willson; with Tammy Grimes and Harve Presnell.

1962
ALL AMERICAN 3/19/62 (80 perfs.) by Mel Brooks, Charles Strouse and Lee Adams; with Ray Bolger and Eileen Herlie.
NOWHERE TO GO BUT UP 11/10/62 (9 perfs.) by James Lipton and Sol Berkowitz; with Dorothy Loudon and Martin Balsam.
CARNIVAL! 12/20/62 (719 perfs.) by Michael Stewart and Bob Merrill; with Anna Maria Alberghetti, James Mitchell and Jerry Orbach.

1963
THE LADY OF THE CAMELIAS 3/20/63 (13 perfs.) by Giles Cooper based on the novel by Alexander Dumas; with Susan Strasberg and John Stride.
SOPHIE 4/15/63 (8 perfs.) by Phillip Pruneau and Steve Allen; with Libi Staiger and Art Lund.
PAJAMA TOPS 5/31/63 (52 perfs.) by Mawbey Green and Edward Allen Feilbert; with Richard Vath and June Wilkinson.
TOVARICH 10/07/63 (264 perfs.) by David Shaw, Anne Croswell, and Lee Pockriss; with Vivien Leigh, Jean Pierre Aumont and George S. Irving.

1964
FUNNY GIRL 3/26/64 (1,348 perfs.) by Isobel Lennart, Bob Merrill and Jule Styne; with Barbra Streisand, Sydney Chaplin and Danny Meenan.

1966
MAME 5/24/66 (1,508 perfs.) by Jerome Lawrence, Robert E. Lee, and Jerry Herman; with Angela Lansbury and Beatrice Arthur.
1969
JIMMY 10/23/69 (84 perfs.) by Melville Shavelson and Bill and Patti Jacob; with Frank Gorshin and Anita Gillette.

1970
GEORGY 2/26/70 (4 perfs.) by Tom Mankiewicz, Carole Bayer and George Fischoff; with Dilys Watling.
PURLIE 12/16/70 (688 perfs.) by Ossie Davis, Peter Udell, Philip Rose and Gary Geld; with Cleavon Little and Melba Moore.

1971

1972
NEIL DIAMOND: ONE MAN SHOW 10/5/72 (21 perfs.)
MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING 11/11/72 (116 perfs.) by William Shakespeare; with Sam Waterston, Kathleen Widdoes and April Shawhan.

1974
LIZA 1/6/74 (24 perfs.) with Liza Minnelli.
ULYSSES IN NIGHTTOWN 3/10/74 (69 perfs.) by Marjorie Barkentin; with Zero Mostel.
GYPSY 9/23/74 (120 perfs.) by Arthur Laurents, Stephen Sondheim and Jule Styne; with Angela Lansbury.

1975
DOCTOR JAZZ 3/19/75 (5 perfs.) by Buster Davis and Luther Henderson; with Bobby Van and Lola Falana.

1976
PACIFIC OVERTURES 1/11/76 (193 perfs.) by John Weidman and Stephen Sondheim; with Mako and Yuki Shimoda.

Two extremely rare window cards: GEORGY, the 1970 musical based on the hit 1966 film starring Lynn Redgrave and Alan Bates. The show opened to negative reviews and closed after only four performances. But even that short run was more than Daddy Goodness, the 1979 musical based on Richard Wright’s play of the same name, could manage. The $1 million production first tried out for a month at the Shubert’s Forrest Theatre in Philadelphia and then played the National Theatre in Washington, DC, where even extensive revisions couldn’t save it. It closed there on October 25, but not before window cards had been printed for its projected Winter Garden engagement.
CATS 10/7/82 (7,485 perfs.) by T.S. Eliot and Andrew Lloyd Webber; with Ken Page and Betty Buckley.

2001

MAMMA MIA! 10/18/2001 (still running as of press time) by Catherine Johnson, Benny Andersson and Björn Ulvaeus; with Louise Pitre, Judy Kaye and Karen Mason.
Coming and going: an invitation to the opening night party for Cats on October 7, 1982 (above left) and for the closing night performance and party almost eighteen years later on September 10, 2000 (right top and bottom); (bottom left) the Playbill marking the 10th anniversary of Mamma Mia in 2011.

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News From the Archive


Information was also sought out about many personalities. These included the performers Margaret Anglin, Ethel Barrymore, Marlon Brando, Eleanor Brown, Carol Channing, Imogene Coca, Tom Davies Trio, Dolly Sisters, Larry Fine, Morgan Freeman, Adrienne Gessner, Dorothy Gish, George Gobel, Ted Healy, Gertrude Hoffman, Shemp Howard, Boris Karloff, Betty Knox, Fritz Leiber Shakespeare Theatre Company, Marceline, Edna May, Henry Howard McCollum, Adele McHatton, Ethel Merman, Helen Morgan, Zero Mostel, Martha Raye, Lillian Roth, Laurette Taylor, George Voskovec, George W. Wessells, and Mae West; playwrights Elmer Rice and Wendy Wasserstein; gossip columnist Walter Winchell; producers/directors David Belasco, George Broadhurst, and Ned Wayburn; and Shubert investors/employees Beulah Chase Dodge, David Feinestone, Aaron Graff, Marcus Heiman, Joseph Jacobs, Jesse Oberdorfer, Joe Rosenthal, Robert Rubin, Margaret Olivia Slocum Sage, Gerald Schoenfeld, and Lee Silver.

Theatres that were the subject of inquiry were the Ambassador, Barrymore, Booth, Cort, Golden, Guild, Hippodrome, Bernard B. Jacobs, Lyceum, Majestic, Morosco, Music Box, New Amsterdam, Gerald Schoenfeld, Shubert (Chicago), Shubert (St. Louis), and Winter Garden.
General subjects researched were the history of the Actors Equity Association, the Actors Equity strikes, American musical theatre designers (1900-1925), the American Theatre Wing, the auditioning process at the turn of the 20th century, Bachelor Girls’ Club, the Belnord Apartments, Broadway's response to 9/11, Broadway show previews, fight directors, The Group Theater, the Hotel Lincoln, the "I Love NY" advertising campaign, the Landmarking of Broadway Theatres, the Little Theatre Movement, Motion picture special effects in theatrical productions, the Musicians' strike, the Shubert Stage and Costume Company, the Shubert Brothers’ Syracuse years, the Stage Door Canteen, Theatrical Managers, the Theatrical Syndicate, the TKTS booth, tourism on Broadway, and the United Booking Office.

Among the many visitors that the Archive staff welcomed recently was Lawrence Shubert Lawrence III and his family. Lawrence is the great grandnephew of the Shubert brothers. His father headed the Shubert Organization between J.J.’s death in 1963 and 1972, and he remembers well growing up around (and often in) the Shuberts’ playhouses. Not having lived in New York City for many years, he had never visited the Shubert Archive. We were happy to retrieve for him many items, including school yearbooks, related to his father and grandfather, who also had worked in the company—mainly as theatre manager for Shubert’s Philadelphia theatres.

In other news, Archivist Reagan Fletcher curated the exhibition, “Theatrical By Design: A Century of The Shubert Organization’s Theatre Interiors” which ran at the Gallery of the New York School of Interior Design (NYSID) from March 8 through April 27, 2012. Primarily comprised of materials from the Shubert Archive, the exhibition showcased the sumptuous interiors of each one of the Organization’s 17 Broadway playhouses. Special emphasis was given to the historic (and recent) renovations of the Barrymore, Belasco, Longacre, Shubert, and Winter Garden Theatres.

The opening night of "Theatrical By Design: A Century of The Shubert Organization’s Interiors," March 8, 2012. (above, left to right) Shubert Foundation President Michael I. Sovern; Shubert Foundation/Organization Chairman Philip J. Smith, and Shubert Organization President Robert E. Wankel; (right, left to right) Whitney Cox, many of whose photographs were featured in the exhibiton, and Shubert Organization Vice-President of Facilities John Darby. Photographs by Mathew Carasella Photography/Social Shutterbug.

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Mr. Broadway
Book Launch

On April 30th, 2012, The Shubert Organization hosted a book launch for longtime Shubert Chairman Gerald Schoenfeld’s memoir *Mr. Broadway: The Inside Story of the Shuberts, the Shows and the Stars*. The venue for the gala event was appropriately the Shubert’s own Broadway Theatre at 53rd Street. The packed lobby was filled with a throng of Broadway cognoscenti, which included Shubert personnel, theatre owners and producers, general managers, actors and friends. Pat Schoenfeld, Jerry’s widow who shepherded the manuscript to publication, greeted friends and well wishers with her daughter Carrie Schoenfeld. Robert E. Wankel, President of The Shubert Organization, who worked closely with Mr. Schoenfeld, introduced Pat who graciously thanked The Shubert Organization, her editors and publishers at Applause (Marybeth Keating, Carol Flannery and John Cerullo), Heidi Mathis and Madeline Austin (Mr. Schoenfeld’s close aides), The Shubert Archive, and Jeffrey Robinson, who helped edit the book. Mrs. Schoenfeld spoke of the encouragement and support that Jerry had received from Doris Kearns Goodwin, Frank McCourt and other friends who buoyed him in his endeavor. Unfortunately Mr. Schoenfeld passed away in November 2008 before the book reached publication and Pat, knowing how much effort Jerry had put into the book and how much it meant to him, dedicated herself to finding a publisher and steering the manuscript to publication. *Mr. Broadway* is filled with stories from Mr. Schoenfeld’s almost 60 years of history with The Shubert Organization and includes: dealing with the mercurial J.J. Shubert, defending Shubert in the U.S. Antitrust case, ousting the alcoholic Lawrence Shubert Jr. who brought the company to the brink of ruin, working with Bernard B. Jacobs to restore the financial health and integrity of the company, and presenting shows and working with the creative personalities behind those shows (*A Chorus Line, Dreamgirls, Pippin, Amadeus, Passion, Chess, Phantom of the Opera*). Jerry also details the behind-the-scenes problems of shows that were not hits.
The Passing Show

The array of politically-themed objects on these pages is drawn from The Shubert Archive collection with hopes of arousing some patriotic fervor for the upcoming presidential elections. One of the earliest items is a handwritten letter, dated May 18th, 1894, from then Governor William McKinley thanking, but declining, road manager Sam Shubert’s offer of tickets to Charles Hoyt’s play, A Texas Steer. Also on this page are two examples of our many costume sketches with a patriotic theme: designer Homer Conant’s Uncle Sam from the Passing Show of 1917 and a helmeted “Washington Girl” draped in stars & stripes by William H. Mathews (possibly from Hip, Hip Hooray or Century Girl).

On the following pages, among the playbills and flyers showing the range of plays and musicals that have been inspired by presidential politics are a few special items: 1.) A set design depicting The Lincoln Memorial for the show Gay Paree which played at the Winter Garden in 1926. The Act II scene “He Knew Lincoln” featured a reporter, Ben Holmes and an old Civil War veteran, played by Charles (Chic) Sale. Normally noted for comic roles, here Sale moved audiences with his remembrances of Lincoln, his friend from Springfield, IL and Washington. 2.) A set design detail – a painting of what appears to be FDR – for a Mayor’s Office. Both the designer and the show are unknown. 3.) George M. Cohan, as FDR and cast in I’d Rather Be Right (1937) 4.) An assortment of campaign pinback buttons for the 1940 presidential election. 5.) A flyer/ticket-order form for “New York’s Birthday Salute to President Kennedy” to take place at Madison Square Garden on May 19, 1962. This event is perhaps best remembered for Marilyn Monroe singing “Happy Birthday Mr. President.” 6.) A ticket to the June 23, 2011 performance of Sister Act at the Broadway Theatre, which was attended by President Obama.

The images of “democratic” donkeys and “republican” elephants come from archival materials ranging from letterhead (the Hippodrome elephant) to publicity materials for vaudeville animal acts.

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The Passing Show
The Passing Show was the original title for a number of lavish revues presented by J.J. Shubert at the Winter Garden Theatre. A rival to The Ziegfeld Follies, The Passing Show became a prototype of Shubert glamour, talent and panache.

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Illustration to the right and on front:
Lyceum Theatre façade as depicted on a souvenir card issued by Between the Acts Cigars, c. 1910s.

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Please send all correspondence to the Archive at the above address.

The Shubert Archive is a Project of the Shubert Foundation