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Transatlantic Theatrical Traces: 
Oceanic Trade Routes and Globe-Trotting Amusement Explorers

by Nic Leonhardt

Prologue: Ephemera of the Ephemeral — a “Theatrical Route Sheet”

In the spring of 2013, while conducting extensive research at the Shubert Archive for my book on Transatlantic Theatrical Networks (1900-1929), I came across one particular object that I felt encapsulated my entire study: A nearly 110-years old Theatrical Route Sheet for the 1905-1906 Season, manufactured in Chicago by the National Printing and Engraving Company. Most likely used by Sam S. Shubert as a journal and address book, in its own small way, it crystallizes time, space, and the historical practice of theatre.

The route sheet is a petite, oblong notebook; the imprint “Theatrical Route Sheet” is barely legible. Its inner section consisting of a monthly calendar – one page per month, starting with July 1905 and ending with June 1906 – lists the weekdays in addition to columns entitled “Hold,” “Booked,” “Contract,” and “Terms.” Sam wrote sparingly in the Route book leaving most of its pages blank. However, he filled the inside front and back covers and the pages for July through August with names, addresses, and telephone numbers indicating that he used the notebook not only as a route sheet, but as an address book. In any case, the data, though spare, provides insight into the parameters that theatrical managers like the Shuberts had to be mindful of constantly: theatrical business is not possible without knowing people, having contacts, building up networks, and systematically organizing and keeping track of all of these elements.

From my perspective as a theatre historian, I would have benefited had Sam been able to use the book more thoroughly to document his routes, negotiations, and business transactions for the season. Yet what I find even more fascinating, perhaps, is the very fact that the National Printing and Engraving Company in Chicago produced and sold this sort of book for people working in the theatre business. During this period, when the Shubert brothers were building their “Theatrical Empire,” conducting theatre business on an international scale was the trend. Theatrical agents, managers, and impresarios from the United States and Europe dealt in theatre, opera, vaudeville, and variety. They always kept an eye out for the latest hit, best-selling performers and plays, novelties, and sensations. Their “trade” did not remain within national borders, but
rather had a truly transnational dimension. A handy theatrical route sheet like Sam Shubert's was quite a useful tool for the manager to keep track of his business: his holdings, bookings, contracts, terms, and the routes he had scheduled.

In his 2011 book, *A History of the World in 100 Objects*, British Museum director Neil MacGregor gathers one hundred objects as diverse as a credit card, a vase, a stone pillar, and a tea cup, and specifies its historical use, impact, and value. By doing so, he takes the reader on a journey through world history. Theatre by definition is an ephemeral art. What material objects remain of theatrical performance? Could you tell the story of world theatre in 100 objects?

What does Sam Shubert's route sheet reveal about the theatrical practices of the time? And what might it show, taken in the context of a world theatre history? The many types of *ephemera* – broadsides, advertisements, matchboxes, menus, stickers, tickets, invoices, to name only a few – were originally produced to be used fleetingly and are sometimes overlooked by both curators and researchers. In fact, however, they frequently retain rich traces of past cultures and their practices, and render the transitory less so. Those of us interested in the transnational aspect of theatre history are well advised to seek out such items at research institutions.
In the following pages, I would like to use the concept of the theatrical route sheet as my starting point for examining a few facets of transatlantic theatrical exchanges that occurred during the late-nineteenth and the first two decades of the twentieth century. These days we are very aware of the historical dimensions of globalization, yet this topic has been under-researched by both European and American theatre historians. Thus far, only a handful of individual and collaborative theatre history research projects have expanded their focus beyond regional or national lines. Having said that, the objective should not be to override any kind of national research, but to acknowledge its co-existence with trans-national/trans-regional practices and historiographies.

In my own study, which is embedded into the collaborative research project "Global Theatre Histories," I investigate transatlantic theatrical business conducted by agents, managers, and impresarios who either lived in Europe or the United States, and who did business on an international scale. My goal is to take the first steps in writing a “Connected Theatre History” of Europe and the United States between 1900 and 1930; I will consider the infrastructure and circumstances that enabled global exchanges, as well as the people who wove their international webs. Four of the key players on whom I focus are:

- **Play agent and producer Elizabeth Marbury** (1856-1933), who, as American impresario-turned-historian Robert Grau noted in 1910, “has been for more than twenty-five years the representative ‘play broker’ of this country, and her prestige in Europe is, if anything, even greater than here.”

- **Play agent Alice Kauser** (1872-1945), who grew up in Hungary, but relocated to the United States where she began her professional career as an assistant to Marbury. She acted as an agent for writers and theatrical playwrights such as Oscar Wilde, Bernard Shaw, Maurice Maeterlinck, and Gerhart Hauptmann.

- **The “globetrotting amusement explorer” Richard Pitrot** (1852-1929), who was born in Vienna and moved to the United States when still young. He worked as an impersonator before he moved to the profession of manager, impresario, and producer.

- **Theatrical agent H.B. Marinelli** (1864-1924), who was born as Hermann Büttner in Leipzig, Germany, into a family of touring artists. He worked and became popular as a contortionist before he opened his agency with offices in New York, Berlin, Paris, and London.

What these agents have in common is their cosmopolitan biographies, their frequent commutes between the U.S. and Europe, their international work, and their global reputations. What unites them in the context of theatre and cultural history is that, with the possible exception of Marbury, they are remarkably under-researched.
despite their business success and influence. In addition, all of them were in continuous contact with the Shuberts, which is why the Shubert Archive has turned out to be a port of call when it comes to correspondence and contracts executed by these most influential theatrical brokers. Indeed, the Shubert offices were a hub for internationally active managers, play agents, impresarios, and the theatrical industry in general.

The Archive's holdings contain thousands of valuable communications between the Shuberts and the global theatrical world, which have allowed me to delve into the theatrical practices of the time and to familiarize myself with the managers' concerns, interests, terms, resentments, cases, and disputes. What routes did theatrical managers take? What trends did they follow? What acts did they book, and with whom did they do business? The many letters, cablegrams, brochures, business cards, picture post cards, contracts, theatrical programs, newspapers, photographs, books, passenger lists, etc. that I consulted provide answers.

Manager, Agent, Impresario – Nomenclature of an Enigmatic Profession

When it comes to the field of theatrical entrepreneurship, differences between the United States and Europe are clear. Whereas managers are part and parcel of American theatre history and research, European history books on theatrical entertainments have long remained silent about this profession. One reason might be the lack of interest in, or even recognition of, the business of theatre. Theatre as an art, it would seem, does not need an agent, a manager, or a mediator; both the artist herself and the artifact are “cultural mediators.”

As far back as 1867, British author Walter Maynard tried to come to terms with the profession in the opening page of his book, The Enterprising Impresario:

What are we going to talk about? An Impresario! What can that be? Many may have a dim recollection of having somewhere met with one; all who take any interest in the question, and do not understand the meaning of the word, will, if their curiosity carry them so far, turn to the nearest Italian dictionary, and look it up. Ten to one if they find it – should they do so, the explanation will probably be as it is in Graglia’s, thus – Impresario, s.m., one who undertakes a public job – the manager of a theatre; – according to which definition our hero may be a Member of Parliament, a much-abused promoter – an undertaker pure and simple – or, in short, any individual who interests himself or is concerned in the management of (as Graglia elegantly says) ‘a public job’. It will, however, suit the present purpose to adopt the latter part of the definition as it stands, and acknowledge at once that our Impresario is neither more nor less than a theatrical manager, who is indebted to some good-natured critic for the flattering appellation which stands at the head of these pages. Maynard later goes on to say that “impresario” and “theatrical manager” are diverse titles for the same profession.

In his seminal study of 1910, The Business Man in the Amusement World, Robert Grau notes that between 1870, the early years of professional theatre brokerage, and the date of his book’s publication, the profession underwent tremendous changes:
The theatrical manager of 1910, as compared with his predecessor of 1870, is indeed a vigorous personage, for, in forty years of progress, [he] has advanced to a position, which places him on a level with the great magnates and financiers of the commercial and industrial world.

In the 70's, capital for amusement enterprises was not easily obtained; even the managers of reputable theatres and companies were unable to establish a credit basis in their business dealings, while eighty percent of the men who tempted fate with “the show business” were possessed of little more ammunition for the conduct of their operations, than an abundance of nerve and the proverbial “shoestring”!

System, as we understand the term today, was wholly lacking; managers and players alike would be seen on the public pavements, transacting their business; companies were organized in a day, and salaries were paid in dribs and drabs, while tales of stranded Thespians were so common as to occasion no comment.

Grau’s study turned out to be invaluable at the start of my project, as he listed the most successful agents, including those who worked internationally. In addition, he included influential female managers about whom hardly a word has been written in the annals of theatre scholarship.

A European equivalent to Grau’s work has not surfaced. Instead, one will find either polemics, or judicial theses on business contracts and their validity, both of which can reveal valuable information about the profession ex negativo. The judicial papers are particularly interesting for theatre historians, as they try to define the profession, its premises and working conditions, as well as discuss specific case studies.

From a transnational historical perspective, neither theatre as an art form nor as a business can work without the patronage of professional mediators. When world-renowned French actress Sarah Bernhardt (1844-1923) toured North and South America in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, she could not do so without good management. Who would arrange the contracts? Who would negotiate her royalties? Who would book her tickets for ship and train, her accommodation and support at the respective target destination? Who would put together her tour, her itinerary, and arrange for the transport of her costumes? The actress’ tours are well researched, but the logistics of her journeys are not. The same holds true for the management and organization of national, transnational, or global tours of other, less popular performers. Theatre historians are only gradually discovering such historical cultural mobility as a serious field of research.

Over the Ocean and Undersea: Ships, Cablegrams, and Theatrical Mobility

By the late nineteenth century, new communication technologies, media, and transportation systems made possible both the greater mobility of physical objects, and the worldwide diffusion of ideas. In the first decade of the twentieth century, the big cities in particular were full of goods, cultural products, and ideas from all parts of the world.

Scholar Stephen Greenblatt suggests some things to keep in mind when looking at this
“cultural mobility.” First, he feels that mobility needs to be taken in a truly literal sense as “the physical, infrastructural, and institutional conditions of movements, the available routes, the maps, [and] the vehicles.”14 Second we need to examine both hidden and conspicuous “movements of peoples, objects, images, texts, and ideas.”15 And finally, “contact zones,” where cultures intermingle and cultural goods are exchanged, have to be identified and analyzed.16

From my point of view, theatre and popular entertainment are particularly rich fields of study for tracking transnational exchanges and dynamic intermingling. I regard theatre as a contact zone because it gathers together performers, directors, choreographers, composers, and stage and costume designers from various cultural backgrounds and different parts of the world. For their part, theatrical managers and their staffs at international office branches act as mediators. Performers both make use of technological and cultural innovations and contribute to their proliferation.

International touring, which had always been part and parcel of the theatre business, reached its peak in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The global migration of artists and the spread of diverse theatrical formats would not have been possible without major advances in oceanic and rail travel, as well as in newer technologies such as telegraphy. So historians are well advised to examine the by-products of innovations such as cablegrams, passenger lists, and passport applications, in addition to the tried and true newspapers and trade magazines/journals.

Ocean liners were integral to the global exchange. Up until the 1920s, transatlantic ships were the only means of transport between the United States and Europe and many other parts of the world. Daily newspapers published announcements of the comings and goings of noteworthy travelers, and the public showed interest. Actors, producers, film crews, and theatrical managers, along with the customary businessmen and well-heeled travelers, comprised a significant segment of the passengers aboard the big ocean liners.17

In November 1894, for example, New York theatre manager F. F. Proctor crossed the Atlantic, and The New York Times reported:

Manager F.F. Proctor, with his wife and daugher [sic], sailed for Europe on the Lucania yesterday, and will be absent about two months. Mr. Proctor will visit London, Vienna, and Berlin, to obtain new ideas in connection with his half-million dollar theatre, now being erected on the upper east side.18

But more on Proctor, later.

The typical transatlantic journey took several days and could be burdensome and monotonous. The major forms of entertainment were singing, deck games, and gambling. With this in mind, it is no surprise that international producer Charles Frohman encouraged his colleagues to take advantage of the situation. On October 21, 1907, The Times of India quoted him as saying: “We have daily newspapers at sea; we have Marconigrams [wireless radio messages]; why
should not we have aboard the biggest transatlantic liners theatrical plays?” He suggested that the big ocean liners such as the Cunard Company’s Lusitania and Mauretania, and the White Star Line’s Adriatic, Baltic, Cedric, and Celtic, should have stages. His aim would be:

*to make London and New York mere suburbs in a theatrical sense, and to have a constant interchange of plays and players. But the expense of taking a theatrical company across the Atlantic is very great, and this, it is suggested, might be more easily borne if plays were produced during the journey. “First night” in mid-ocean would have an element of romance, and in the case of a sea play an element of reality with which theatres ashore are unable to compete.*

The huge dining-saloon could easily be re-arranged for a theatrical setting. Passengers from both sides of the Atlantic would benefit, and the ship companies would profit from it.

In his biography of his late brother Charles, Daniel Frohman discusses this further and makes it clear that Charles never brought it to fruition:

> Like most of his distinguished fellow-voyagers, and they included Charles Klein, Elbert Hubbard, Justus Miles Forman, and Alfred G. Vanderbilt, Frohman had frequently traveled on the Lusitania. By a curious coincidence he had once planned to use her sister ship, the Mauretania, for one of his daring innovations. He had a transatlantic theatre in mind. In other words, he proposed to produce whole plays on shipboard. He took over a small company headed by Marie Doro to try out the experiment. Early on the voyage Miss Doro succumbed to seasickness and the project was abandoned.

While ocean liners moved physical bodies over the seas, transnational correspondence and contract negotiations between the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries relied on the technology of telegraphy, in particular, the transatlantic cable that allowed for almost instantaneous communication between the U.S. and the European continent.

Theatrical managers made their global presence known through the marketing side of their business. The more international they wanted to appear, the more they focused on keywords and visual icons of internationalization. For example, they often used their stationery to advertise their global reach and cutting-edge trading methods.

Richard Pitrot, for example, called himself “The Globe Trotter,” a well-deserved title if, as Grau writes, “his many voyages all over the world would give that designation. Pitrot’s influence is very great and in Europe no man connected with the variety stage is more respected.” One of
his New York business cards from 1910 tells us that he is an “International Amusement Explorer Representing the Entire Amusement World.”

H.B. Marinelli’s letterhead, too, reflected his international scope by showing the image of a globe surrounded by telegraph poles and wires. Hanging from one set of wires are placards resembling cablegrams that list the addresses of Marinelli’s offices in Paris, London, Berlin, and New York.

The Multifunctional Showplace

When we think historically of cultural exchanges between New York and major European cities, what often comes to mind first is the so-called “Roaring Twenties,” or the “années folles,” after the First World War, when jazz, the Charleston, flapper fashion, and sophisticated cocktail bars were all the rage. But the seemingly inter-connected metropolitan cultures of the Roaring Twenties had their roots in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

As mentioned above, on November 3, 1894, F.F. Proctor, accompanied by his family, set sail on the Lucania, bound for Europe. His primary purpose was to visit Paris, Vienna, and Berlin for inspiration for a new theatrical venue that he was building on Manhattan’s Upper East Side. As The New York Times of November 4, 1894, reported:

*With entrances from four thoroughfares – Third and Lexington Avenues and Fifty-Seventh and Fifty-Eighth Streets – this will be the largest place of amusement in the*
United States. It will combine a theatre, roof garden, two large cafés, an open-air garden, bowling alley, archery, rifle, and pistol ranges, and an artificial ice-skating rink. The performances will include opera, vaudeville, burlesque and circus, all for one price of admission. The walls are now above the street level, and the house will be ready to open next Summer.

Noteworthy here is both the range of theatrical/entertainment formats planned for this new multi-functional venue, and the fact that the American Proctor ventured abroad to get ideas for what to mount on the various stages of his new theatre. The playhouse’s multi-functionality calls to mind that of the ever growing phenomena of the shopping arcade and department store, both of which were popular urban contact zones connecting streets with combinations of shops, restaurants, theatres, cabinets of curiosity, media shows, etc., usually under one roof. The arcade, an early form of today’s shopping-mall, had spread over Europe by the 1880s and become a status symbol of the “world city” or metropolis; architects in Germany drew inspiration from arcades in France and Belgium. European department stores, on the other hand, imitated recent commercial developments in the U.S. These establishments offered products from all parts of the world to a group of people who were “mixed” in terms of social class and nationality.

They showcased goods of different kinds in a manner that was well thought through; the products were put on stage, so to speak. Decor might resemble, for example, a French Salon, an Egyptian Temple, a semi-tropical refuge, or a Japanese garden. The “Thousand and One Nights” was a never-ending source of design inspiration. In addition, consumers could often do more than purchase and gaze at things; they could indulge in free exhibitions, music, and performances which made the shopping experience more pleasurable.

The similarities between these “cathedrals of consumption,” as social critic Walter Benjamin termed them, and multifunctional performative venues like the one Proctor envisioned, are evident. And in her book, When Broadway was the Runway, theatre historian Marlis Schweitzer does, in fact, discuss in detail the close intersection of theatre, the department store, and the so called popular/consumer culture.

Der Admiralspalast (Berlin)

No other institution better illustrates the idea of the multifunctional entertainment venue than Berlin’s Admiralspalast, which opened with great success in April 1911, and went on to exert a significant influence over the New York theatre scene.

The Shubert Brothers, as evidenced both in countless letters and cablegrams housed in the Shubert Archive, and also in the print media of the time, had regular contact with Berlin’s theatre culture; they themselves traveled frequently, and they commissioned local managers or their representatives to watch out for the latest stars and novelties in the theatrical sector, to arrange contracts, and to negotiate conditions and royalties. H.B. Marinelli was one of these agents. In a note to the Shuberts dated March 13, 1911, for example, he clearly offers his expertise: “There are
ever so many other high class European attractions which I could offer you and I sincerely hope we will be able to do some business together. Yours very truly, H. B. Marinelli Ltd. (INC).

On July 16, 1911, a *New York Times* article entitled “Shubert Sees New Shows – With Lew Fields He Inspects Berlin’s Latest Amusement Resorts” reported on Shubert’s and Fields’ scouting trip to Germany’s capital:

> Two novelties which have sprung up in gay Berlin since Mr. Shubert was last here are the Ice Palace in the Friedrichstrasse and the Palais de Danse, both of which the New York theatrical men inspected last night.

> Mr. Shubert says that the Palais de Danse is about the swaggiest [sic] thing of the kind in Europe and far outstrips similar resorts which have been the glory of Parisian night life. Americans, he finds, have become the best customers of the gay resorts in Berlin, as they long have been in Paris.

As far back as 1909, Lee Shubert had been in talks with managers and theatre impresarios in Berlin and Vienna about the possibility of opening European branches of the Manhattan Hippodrome, which he and J.J. managed. The idea was never realized, however, most likely because the opening of the Admiralspalast rendered it redundant. The Admiralspalast was one of many venues for public entertainment – theatre, music, dance, etc. – that had been established in the new German capital post 1871. It was located in one of the most vibrant neighborhoods of those days, the Friedrichstrasse, where a railway station of the same name, the Bahnhof Friedrichstrasse, had opened in 1882, immediately making the area one of the most important hubs for regional and national trains.

The Admiralspalast offered a variety of leisure activities and arts under one roof. It housed a café, a “Japanese Salon,” a public bath and spa, an ice rink, restaurants, and stages for music.
(left) Postcard, c. 1912.
(below) Three postcards illustrating scenes of Flirt in St. Moritz at the Admiralspalast, 1912. [author's collection]
Illustrations from the souvenir program of Flirting at St. Moritz at New York’s Hippodrome Theatre, 1915.
performances, ice ballets, and revues. Later, after 1912, a cinema was also integrated into the building. In the 1920s, the venue became known for the so-called Haller Revues, directed by Hermann Haller, which became world renowned.

In terms of its structure, the mammoth Admiralspalast did indeed resemble New York’s Hippodrome Theatre on Broadway, between 43rd and 44th Streets, which could seat up to 6,000 spectators. Built in 1905 by Frederick Thompson and Elmer Dundy, the founders of Coney Island’s Luna Park, and taken over by the Shuberts during the years 1906-1915, the Hippodrome was said to be the world’s largest theatre.

In the 1912/1913 season, a three-act ice ballet called *Flirt in St. Moritz* premiered at the Admiralspalast and would, in fact, eventually make its way to the Hippodrome. Directed by Leo Bartuschek with music by Julius Einödshofer, choreography by B. Bernar, and costumes from the workshop of Hugo Baruch & Co., it is considered to be the first ice ballet with a plot. Its simple story allowed for various physical effects on stage, while the diverse cultural backgrounds of the characters provided an excuse for the display of colorful costumes and representations of national stereotypes. The main character was Kitty Goldberg, the young and beautiful widow of an American millionaire, who travels to St. Moritz, Switzerland. There she meets Oti, a Japanese Marquis, and Oluf Jacobsen, a Norwegian sportsman, who both fall for her – the American socialite becomes the talk of the town. The show was a huge success. Picture postcards featuring characters and scenes from the ballet were used for promotion and are still in great demand by collectors on both sides of the Atlantic.

Three years after its Berlin premiere, *Flirt in St. Moritz* finally opened on September 30, 1915 under the title *Flirting at St. Moritz* at the New York Hippodrome as part of producer Charles Dillingham’s first show as the huge venue’s new manager. Billed as coming “direct from Admiral’s Palace, Berlin,” the ice ballet served as the "epilogue" to the two-act musical, *Hip-Hip-Hooray!* that preceded it. The show played 425 performances and served as a model for the first motion picture with skating as a theme, *The Frozen Warning* (1916/1917).

Another of the Admiralspalast’s ice ballets followed a similar trajectory. On October 27, 1913, a little more than a year after the premiere of *Flirt in St. Moritz*, H.B. Marinelli’s Berlin office sent a note to the Shuberts recommending another ice ballet, *The Merry Doll*, again by Leo Bartuschek and Julius Einödshofer:

Saturday night with TIEBER, STEINER and family, to the ADMIRALS PALAST for the premiere of their new Ice Ballet "The Merry Doll" arranged by LEO BARTUSCHEK with music by Einodshofer. I must say that the whole thing is really very beautiful. It is done exactly the same lines as an ordinary ballet which one sees danced, with the exception that there, everything is done on ice-skates. B[artuschek] has now got a troupe of 30 girls together who are all excellent skate-dancers. The scenery represents a Carnival in Venice, and the principal people are a PIERROT and a DOLL – the Doll is played by CHARLOTTE, who is undoubtedly the finest girl skater they have over here – she has grown a bit now, but the work...
she does is phenomenal. The first and second scenes are a little too long. This can be easily remedied however. But the third was wonderful – a fantastic garden with luminous fountains, the jets of water reaching to the ceiling. The dresses, etc., are by Baruch, and are all perfectly done. It is incredible how they have worked up these Ice-Ballets in so short a time. To my idea something on this style would create a sensation In New York.

The Shuberts did not take the recommendation. Instead, as was the case with Flirt in St. Moritz, it would be Dillingham who would bring The Merry Doll to the Hippodrome in August 1916.

And there was in fact, at least one exchange going in the other direction: A newspaper noted in 1912, for example, that “Alan K. Foster of the Hippodrome will produce a big girl act at the Admiralspalast Music Hall, Berlin, to open Aug. 20. He will take sixteen American girls to Germany with him, […] The Admiralspalast will copy the Hippodrome policy.”
The success of the ice shows at the Admiralspalast reverberated beyond the Hippodrome as well. As early as March 1912, Variety reported that plans were afoot for an ice palace in New York: “According to the plans announced by the man behind the project, F.J. Godsol (a.k.a. Godsol and Godsoll) the new Ice Palace is to be built back of the Astor Theatre on Forty-Fifth Street as soon as possible. The Ice Palace will be fashioned after the Berlin palaces and will have two balconies and a restaurant, seating 2,000.” In April 1912 the New York Times likewise noted that a new Ice Palace was “to be erected immediately back of the Astor Theatre, in Forty-fifth Street.” On May 8, 1912, the New York Sun provided more details:

F.J. Goldsoll, who has planned to build an ice palace in West Forty-fifth Street, sailed this morning on the Lusitania to complete arrangements in Berlin for its equipment and to secure a big ballet which is now appearing at the Admiralspalast in that city. The ballet will be “danced” on skates, and the drama given is called “Montreal.”

Mr. Goldsoll has been in this country for three months securing a site and sufficient capital to build the palace. The capital, it was said last night, is now subscribed and the place selected is 209-223 West Forty-fifth Street, just back of the Astor Theatre and opposite the Astor Hotel, on a plot whose lease is owned by the Shuberts and which faces the abandoned New Theatre site. The plans will not be filed until Mr. Goldsoll returns with the plans of the Berlin Ice Palace. An American architect will adapt them to the location and will design a roof garden, which will be on the Forty-fifth Street side of the building. The palace, it is said, will cost $300,000.

The ground floor will be the rink proper and will be made as large as the lot permits. Its dimensions will be approximately 130 by 100. Surrounding this rink will be a cafe where refreshments will be served to the skaters. The main dining room will be in the balcony overlooking the skating rink.

In the basement will be the dressing rooms, locker rooms, and the private clubrooms of the International Skating Club. Ground will be broken for the building on August 1 and it is expected that the ice palace will be opened sometime in January.

Lee Shubert said last night that Mr. Goldsoll was to build the ice palace, but that the Shuberts were not interested with him in the project. With his brother, J.J. Shubert, he had leased the plot to Mr. Goldsoll, he said.

Evidently, architect Henry B. Herts, who would go on to design the Shubert and Booth Theatres that same year, was to work on the project. In a letter to businessman and Shubert-investor Andrew Freedman, dated May 10, 1912, Herts agreed to “render all services necessary for the erection of a Palais de Glas or Ice Palace ... for the sum of Seventy Five Hundred ($7500.) Dollars and One Thousand ($1000.) honorarium fee to be used towards my expenses on my European trip of investigation.”

Frank J. Godsoll himself was a would-be global theatre impresario. Born in Cleveland, OH in 1873, he moved at the turn of the century to Paris where he was naturalized in 1911. It was around this time that he became involved in the entertainment industry. In 1912, aside from his plans to open an ice palace in New York, he secured for Lee Shubert the rights to a new cinematic projection device called the Kinoplastikon. With American producer Al Woods, he also invested
in a number of theatres in Germany in 1913 with the aim of presenting vaudeville and motion pictures. For reasons yet to be ascertained, however, Goldsall’s New York ice palace never materialized. Instead, in June, 1912, the New York Tribune reported that the Shuberts were planning to open an ice palace:

The Shuberts are to open an ice palace in New York modelled after the Admirals Palast in Berlin. The new building will be erected in Forty-fourth and Forty-fifth Streets adjacent to the Booth and Shubert theatres, and will be of the same size as the Hippodrome. It will be called the Continental Ice Palace.

The entire lower floor will be covered with ice for skating. Spectacular ballets on skates, of the same size of the ballets that used to be a feature of the Hippodrome productions, will be given, and during intermissions the public will be permitted to indulge in their favorite sport.

The second and third floors will be devoted to restaurants and cafes. Special attention will be given to the dinner preparations. It will be possible to enjoy the performance on the ice while dining in a box in a tier above.

The building is to seat about 4,000 people and the prices for admission will range from 25 cents to $1.50. Construction will begin at once, and it is expected that everything will be complete by fall.

A second article in the same newspaper on the following day stated that “preliminary plans have been prepared by a European architect, and the building will be modelled after the Admiral’s Palatz, in Berlin.”

For one reason or another, the project stalled, perhaps because the Shuberts were preoccupied with the construction of the Shubert and Booth Theatres, which opened in the Fall of 1913. Meanwhile, in the spring of 1914, the New York Herald reported that Isaac Irving Brokaw, president of the International Skating Association, was proposing the erection of a winter sports palace on the east side of Park Avenue between Forty-fifth and Forty-sixth Streets. Five or six stories high, the building would house a “monster ice skating rink, hockey and curling rinks, lawn tennis courts, a restaurant, dance pavilion and all requisites of a well-appointed club. Carnivals in costume with lighting effects, theatrical performances on skates and other mid-winter amusements might be held in the palace.” Brokaw noted that it would be necessary to enroll 2,500 members into the Association before the plan could become a reality.

Brokaw’s dream never came to fruition, but in 1915 the Shuberts’ ice palace plans seem to have resurfaced. The Archive has three sets of architectural drawings for the venue, to be located on the western plot adjacent to the recently opened Shubert and Booth Theatres — dated September, November, and December, 1915; but they show the architect as Herbert J. Krapp, not Henry Herts. Krapp had been an associate in Herts’ firm, but left to work on his own in 1915.

Krapp’s plans present a bit of a puzzle, however, because it was announced in the press in September, 1915, that the Shuberts were adding a skating rink to their rooftop nightclub, Castles in the Air, located in their Forty-fourth Street Theatre — to be sure, a much scaled down version of their scheme to build a separate full-sized venue:
Two of Herbert Krapp's architectural drawings for the proposed Ice Palace, 1915.
The Shuberts have arranged to open an ice palace Thursday night on the roof of the Forty-fourth Street Theatre. This will be at Castles in the Air. The stage there has been turned into a frozen lake and there the skaters will appear. There will also be a ballet on skates.

The professional skaters to be seen will be Norval Baptie, Gladys Lamb, Victor Saran, and Florence Irving and others. The scene on the stage will represent an Alpine landscape.

Frederic McKay and A. Baldwin Sloane, who are now the managers of Castles in the Air, will also have a force of professional dancers for the ballroom floor. Marion Morgan will dance with Mr. Sloane.

The New York Tribune went on to add that this venture “will be New York’s first glimpse of this species of entertainment.”

Perhaps the rooftop rink was a dry-run for the larger “Palace.” The novelty was successful enough to last through the summer of 1916. In the Fall, however, the venue adapted a Spanish theme and the rink was converted into another European-style entertainment, a “Bull Ring” where Spanish dancing was performed. Ice skating, it seems, was not as “hot” a commodity as had been hoped: at least not hot enough to justify a 4,000-seat venue dedicated to it, right next to the Shuberts’ new flagship Theatre, no less. Instead, in 1917, Lee and J.J. would erect the Broadhurst and Plymouth Theatres on the proposed site of the Ice Palace.

The Admiralspalast’s influence on the popular entertainment of New York is but one example of the interweaving of culture between Europe and the United States in the first decades of the twentieth century. The enormous “traffic” of people and objects and of concepts and artworks that enriched the transatlantic exchange was so great that it sometimes becomes difficult to differentiate clearly between what is “American” and what is “European.” The so-called “Old” and “New” Worlds share a rich theatrical tradition/history, and we should consider their histories not as divided, but as connected.

The First World War would not immediately interrupt the transatlantic theatrical trade, but it certainly made doing business more complicated and difficult. “My various foreign branches were open and thriving until 1914. The London office has never been closed,” remembered Elizabeth Marbury in 1923. Between 1914 and 1915, Gustav Amberg, who brought European plays and actors to the United States and vice versa, traveled abroad and reported on the burdens of transportation and communication. In a note dated 1915 he writes to J.J. Shubert:

“Dear J.J.:
I wrote four weeks ago two important letters from Berlin and one from Vienna asking you to cable me but received no answer. Please answer. I am going from here to Vienna – a new operette from Oscar Strauss, will report. At the Post Office they told me that it is better to write instead postal cards, so I do it. From Vienna I leave again for Berlin.
These are terrible times.

Regards, your old Gustav.”
Delineating the extent of the pre-war transatlantic theatre business remains an ambitious effort. But I am convinced that doing so will help rewrite the theatre record, which consists not of divided, but of shared, histories.

Endnotes
1. I would particularly like to thank the team of the Shubert Archive – Maryann Chach, Sylvia Wang, and Mark E. Swartz – for their generous assistance and support, and for fruitful conversations. Research for this article was supported by the Reinhart-Koselleck project, Global Theatre Histories (DFG) based at LMU Munich.
2. Sam Shubert died in a train accident in May, 1905, which accounts for the fact that the book went largely unused.
4. I would like to refer here particularly to the research project “Global Theatre Histories: Modernization, Public Spheres and Transnational Theatrical Networks (1860-1960)” at the LMU Munich in Germany, funded by the German Research Foundation, DFG. www.gth.theatrewissenschaft.uni-muenchen.de.
6. As Marbury would recall in her 1923 autobiography: “Another conspicuous influence in the theatrical world is Alice Kauser, who came to me for her first position, acting for several years as my private secretary. She was living in Florida, and had sent me her photograph. She understood and spoke many languages. I felt that provided she had the intelligence which was indicated by her letters, that she was just the young woman I wanted. My confidence in the experiment was justified, but this was my initial experience in creating a future rival. It was with me that Alice Kauser had her early training. Her knowledge of contracts was acquired in my office. Her introduction to the managers came through me. Therefore, I have every right to be proud of the success she has made in establishing her own agency. She is a brilliant woman and I have always rejoiced in the fact that I was instrumental in aiding her towards the founding of her subsequent career, now of many year’s standing.” Elizabeth Marbury, My Crystal Ball. Reminiscences (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1923), 136.
7. I recently came across a reference, George Speaight’s A History of the Circus, in which the author attributes to Marinelli another identity and name – J.H. Walter: “The modern term, contortionist, came into use in the middle of the century. The most famous of these was Marinelli, who seems actually have been an Englishman called J.H. Walter and who caused a sensation in the 1880s; he was known as the Serpent-man, for he sometimes opened his act disguised in a snake’s skin and his sinuous movements were certainly serpentine. He could bend backwards with his head looking out between his ankles, and a development of his posture in which the artiste lifts his feet off the ground and supports his body by clenching a mouth grip between his teeth is known as the Marinelli bend to this day. […] He became a well known artistes’ agent in America.” George Speaight, A History of the Circus (San Diego and New York: A.S. Barnes and Co., 1980), 63.
9. I am using the word “broker” here to point to the role of theatrical agents and managers as mediators between different parties driven by economic interests and calculation.
Among them are “Mrs. Fernandez,” Loïe Fuller, Jenie Jacobs, Alice Kauser, Helen Lenoir/Helen Carte, Elizabeth Marbury, and F. H. Snyder (according to Grau, the “most successful woman manager in America.”) For more on Loïe Fuller as an impresario, see the article by German-Russian Japanologist, Stanca Scholz-Cionca, “Japanesque Shows for Western Market: Loïe Fuller and Early Japanese Tours Through Europe (1900-1908),” in Christopher Balme and Nic Leonhardt, eds., Theatrical Trade Routes (in preparation).

Robert Grau also writes regularly to the Shubert brothers as Archive files reveal. Cf., for example, Shubert Archive, General Correspondence, 1910-1926, Box 226, Folder 221, Oct 1910-June 1916.

Cf., e.g. Jakob Klaes, Der Impresario-Vertrag (1921), or Karl Stadelmann, Der Impresariovertrag nach bürgerlichem Recht (1909). I cannot go much into detail here, but it is important to point out that this scholarly asymmetry and diverse evaluation of the same profession in the U.S. and on the Continent reflects a cultural discrepancy in contemporary scholarship dealing with historical theatrical practice. This elucidates the existing “discursive imbalance” that has to be taken into consideration when looking at studies of transatlantic exchanges. The mere similarity of historical practices in American and European theatre of those days, does and did not result in an equipollent (academic) negotiation.


Greenblatt goes on to note that “Mobility often is perceived as a threat- a force by which traditions, rituals, expressions, beliefs are de-centered, thinned out, de-contextualized, lost. In response to this perceived threat, many groups and individuals have attempted to wall themselves off from the world, or, alternatively, they have resorted to violence.” Ibid., 252.


Times of India, Oct 21, 1907.


The first land cables were laid in the 1840s, and the first transatlantic cable, covering a distance of 1950 miles, was laid in 1858. As Ben Dibner wrote in his 1959 study, The Atlantic Cable (Norwalk, CT: The Burndy Library, 1959), “The electric cable was the first important and large-scale practical application of the new electrical force. It shrank distances across continents to almost nothing, for it took no longer to transmit a message across a continent than it did across a street.”

No less a figure than P. T. Barnum (1810-1891) immediately identified the public reach and advertising effectiveness of the first transatlantic cable. In The Fabulous Showman: The Life and Times of P. T. Barnum (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959), author Irving Wallace notes that Barnum offered 5000 dollars “for the privilege of sending the first twenty-word message from London to his Museum in New York by this cable.” His request was denied, although, as he affirmed afterwards, he had meant it seriously: “There would have been no especial value in the message itself, but if I had secured the notoriety of sending the first words through the cable, instead of five thousand dollars the message might have been worth a million to me.” Wallace, 135.

Throughout Europe and North America, in the second half of the nineteenth century, but particularly in the 1880s and 1890s, department stores sprang up like mushrooms. Examples: In France: Bon Marché (1852), Le Grand Magasin du Louvre (1855), Printemps (1865), Samaritaine (1870); in England: Whittles (1863), John Lewis (1864), Harrods (1834/1894); in Belgium: Grands Magasin de la Bourse, Brussels (1876), Innovation (1896); in Italy: Bocconi (1877, Mailand); in Germany: Tietz/Hertie (1882), Karstadt (1881), Wertheim (1852/1880); in the USA: Stewart (1848), Wanamakers (1861), Macy's, (1858), Bergdorf & Goodman (1899/1901), etc. Department stores, their artful displays, and social relations (salespersons and customers) provided an array of plot points and settings for theatrical and musical plays. As H.J. Dam, author of the musical play The Shop Girl, performed at West End Stage, London, put it: “The stores formed an excellent sphere to make the basis of a musical piece.” Predominantly performed between 1894-1896, this musical comedy's lyrics, music and plot links consumption with performance. The set of the first act is modeled after Whitley’s Department Store.

Other plays are the satirical play Selfrich's Annual Sale (1910) – a parody on Selfridge and his department store – that he himself strategically used for advertising his department store.

It is worth noting that by the last third of the nineteenth century in both Europe and North America, theatre managers and impresarios had already begun to mimic strategies from non-art-related businesses in order to foster their standing and success, locally as well as transnationally and globally. P.T. Barnum was among the first impresarios to act not only as a theatre and showman, but also as a businessman. In his book, The Art of Money Getting, or Golden Rules for Making Money, many a good idea on opening up new markets and maximization of profit may still be found.

Marlis Schweitzer, When Broadway Was the Runway. Theater, Fashion, and American Culture, 4. It is worth noting here that when the Shuberts opened their Winter Garden Theatre, which was to focus on J.J. Shubert's notion of “the Continental idea of Variété, in March 1911, they used the name Palais de Danse for the venue's nightclub space.

See Jost Lehne, Der Admiralspalast. Die Geschichte eines Berliner “Gebrauchs” Theatres (Berlin: be.bra Verlag, 2006). The venue survives and is still used for cabaret and musical shows. See http://www.admiralspalast.de/geschichte/ (last retrieved 19 December, 2013).

Henry B. Herts to Andrew Friedman, 10 May 1912, General Correspondence 1910-1926, File 852, The Shubert Archive. Also worth noting here is that Herts' letterhead listed a Paris office in addition to his New York location.

Marbury, 132.

Gustav Amberg Papers, Shubert Archive, Box 2, Folder 9, 1914-1915.
Nic Leonhardt’s academic specialty is the theatre history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Her work is notable for its strong interdisciplinary and transnational approach. She has studied Theatre Studies and Audiovisual Media, German Philology, Art History, and Musicology. After earning her M.A. and Ph.D. at the Universities of Erlangen-Nuremberg and Mainz, she worked on research projects at the University of Music in Cologne, the University of Music and Theatre in Leipzig, was a guest lecturer at Barnard College and Columbia University in New York City, and at the Cluster of Excellence Asia and Europe in a Global Context in Heidelberg. Since 2010 she has been the associate director of the DFG (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft) project, Global Theatre Histories (www.gth.theaterwissenschaft.uni-muenchen.de), and a lecturer at Theatre Studies Munich. Since 2013 she has served as project leader of the start-up endeavor theatrescapes. Mapping Global Theater Histories (LMUexcellent). www.http://www.theatrescapes.theaterwissenschaft.uni-muenchen.de Other research interests include media history and historiography, urban studies, visual culture, and digital humanities. Besides her academic work, Nic Leonhardt is also active as a writer.

The Lure of “Lady Luxury”:
A Musical Gem That Was Lost and Found

by John James Hickey

Searching for a Lost Score

Not too long ago, I was given the challenge of locating a lost Broadway musical score that had been missing for nearly a century. The show, Lady Luxury, was an overlooked theatrical treasure written by famed lyricist and book writer Rida Johnson Young (Naughty Marietta, Brown of Harvard, Maytime). Successful on the road, both pre-and post-Broadway, in the United States and Canada during 1914, 1915, and 1916, it also had a short run on the Gay White Way at the Shubert-managed Casino (12/25/1914 – 1/09/1915) and Comedy (1/11/1915 – 1/23/1915) Theatres. Written during a pivotal point in theatre and world history and dealing with several topical themes, the show was certainly worth a reappraisal. What follows is my adventure to find this rare theatrical nugget.
Correspondence in the Shubert Archive shows that Rida Johnson Young first approached the Shuberts in May 1913 about producing a new musical she had written. She asks J.J. Shubert:

Have you read “My Lady Luxury” yet? If not, won’t you make an appointment and let me read it to you soon? I am moving up to the country on Friday but will come in at any time you appoint. If it is not convenient for you to hear it at the office, I wish you would motor out to my place some Sunday soon and let us read the book and play the music for you there. In that way we would have no interruption, and I should be so delighted to have you come.1

Young had already done five shows with the Shuberts, the most recent being *The Red Petticoat* with a score by Jerome Kern (1912-13), and was clearly on good terms with the Brothers. Still, it would seem that Lee and J.J. couldn’t decide about Lady Luxury because the author writes again sometime later:

My Dear Mr. Shubert:

Won’t you give me a decision soon on “My Lady Luxury”? I want to place it before I go abroad, but don’t wish to take it to any other management while you are considering it. Please make an appointment to hear the music soon.2

In the end, the Shuberts decided not to produce the show. Instead the undertaking fell to Fred C. Whitney, an impresario who managed the Whitney Opera Company. Whitney was an independent producer, but a close ally of the Shuberts, who generally advised him and provided him theatres for his productions. One 1911 letter to Lee Shubert from H. G. Snow, an associate of Whitney’s, indicates the level of the Whitney/Shubert relationship: “...you know that Mr. Whitney is one of your strongest advocates and he says he would rather go broke or out of the business before he would ever go back to the Syndicate again.”3 And in that same year, letterhead for the Whitney Opera Company gave the location of its “executive offices in America” as being at the Casino Theatre, New York, and added “All initial productions by special arrangement with Messrs. Shubert.”4

The first newspaper mention of *Lady Luxury* was in the August 16, 1914 edition of *The New York Press*:

Fred C. Whitney last week began rehearsals of his first new production for the present season and announced plans for extensive operations. His first production will be a new musical comedy, entitled “Lady Luxury,” the book of which was written by Rida Johnson Young and the music by William Schroeder. The cast will be headed by Dorothy Webb, who has signed a five years’ contract, under which she will become a Whitney star. Others in “Lady Luxury” are Rita Phillips, Helen May, Irmgard von Rottenthal and Thomas A. Conkey, Charles Compton, George Pauncefort, Pilade Sinagra, Royden Keith and Milton Dawson. Edward MacGregor is conducting the rehearsals. “Lady Luxury” will have its premiere in Toronto September 14, and will come to Broadway two weeks later.

In actuality, *Lady Luxury* skipped Toronto and instead premiered at the Detroit Opera
House on September 23, 1914. It then enjoyed several weeks of critical and popular success touring to His Majesty's Theatre in Montreal and the Providence Opera House in Rhode Island.

Although the Shuberts were not officially producing the show, their relationship with both Rida Johnson Young and Fred Whitney meant that they kept close tabs on the production. In fact, immediately after the show's Detroit opening, Young telegrammed Lee Shubert:

*I am wiring you Ben Teal's opinion of “Lady Luxury.” He says book good, score melodic, both above average with an adequate cast and otherwise. Thoroughly produced the piece would appeal to lovers of polite musical comedy. For complete preparation, about four weeks required.*

The following day, Lee replied: “I am glad that your piece is a success, and as soon as you are ready to come to New York, I will be only too happy to arrange a theatre for yourself and Mr. Whitney.”

Making the show ready for Broadway evidently involved several major changes. Whitney hired J.H. Benrimo, a well-respected director, writer, designer, and performer to retool the show. The first thing Benrimo did was to recast it, keeping only seven of the original actors. Rising Broadway star Ina Claire took on the leading role of Eloise, and comic actor Harry Conor played her uncle, Edward Van Cuyler. The remainder of the new cast consisted of performers known for their singing, dancing, and comedic ability, such as Forrest Huff, Arthur Albro, Alice Moffat, Emily Fitzroy, Emilie Lea, Alan Mundie, Frank Andrews, Francis Bryan, and E. H. Crawford.

Just prior to its Christmas Day opening at the Casino Theatre in New York, Young telegrammed Lee Shubert twice from Providence, where the show was playing. In the first wire she noted: “Play went over splendidly. Was disappointed that no one from the Shubert office was here. Wanted your advice and suggestions. Try to come on for one performance.” The next day she added, “Please come and look show over or send representative. Notices Excellent.” Lee wired back immediately assuring her that he would come up to see the show the following night.

There is no further correspondence to indicate what Lee thought of the show or exactly what his involvement was during the Broadway run. We do know that the show opened as planned at the Casino on December 25, 1914. Reviews were mixed, and the Broadway run was fairly brief, ending on January 23, 1915. But although the Shuberts seem to have had no further association with *Lady Luxury*, it had a healthy life post-Broadway on the road during the 1914-1915 and 1915-1916 seasons. Then it was as if the show vanished into thin air.
The Search

The origin of my own present-day search for Lady Luxury’s book and score goes back to Nita Dippel, a talented theatre director in Baraboo, Wisconsin. The year was 1965 and the Al. Ringling Theatre in Baraboo was about to celebrate its 50th anniversary. The Ringling was in dire need of repairs, however, so a state committee had been formed to explore ways to raise money to save the venue. At the Sauk County Historical Society in Baraboo, Nita saw the playbill from the official opening celebrations of the Ringling Theatre on November 17, 1915. The feature entertainment that night had been Lady Luxury. Ringling had read about the family-friendly musical comedy, and insisted upon its performance for his premiere. Nita’s idea was to have the citizens of Baraboo band together and recreate the theatre’s opening night as a special event to raise awareness of the playhouse and its plight, a first step in the fundraising process. She reasoned that people of Baraboo could show their appreciation for the Ringling Theatre by collaborating on building the sets, making the costumes, and populating the cast and the orchestra. It was an exciting idea, but before she could pitch it, she faced a real challenge: would she be able to locate the book and score?

Searching for a printed copy of the script proved difficult, as Lady Luxury was never published. However, upon further investigation Nita did find a rare typewritten script in the Mills Music Library at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. What made the script remarkable was that it was Leo Stark’s original prompt script, and contained his notes from when he stage-managed the show on Broadway, and from when he directed the show a year later.

Her search for the score, however, was another matter. Neither the Library of Congress nor any other U. S. library had listed it as a part of their collections. Nevertheless, armed with only the script, Nita presented to the Ringling Theatre Anniversary Committee her idea of a community-made production of Lady Luxury. She recalled in a recent telephone interview, “I must not have presented my idea well, because the Committee rejected my idea.” She ended up locking the script away in an old trunk “until the conditions were more suitable.”

In this case, unfortunately, forty years passed before conditions became “more suitable.” Michael Brophy, then the Dean of the University of Wisconsin-Baraboo/Sauk County and on a steering committee for the Ringling’s 90th Anniversary, heard about the script and approached Nita. She was thrilled with the renewed interest in mounting the show, but at 76 and with some health issues, she felt she was not strong enough to direct the show herself. This left Michael with the task of finding someone to helm the project. That’s when I received a call from him asking if I knew anyone who would be interested in directing and choreographing a 1914 musical that was set in an historic mansion in the Hudson Valley and had a main character from Yale University.

I was intrigued. I had grown up near Clermont, an eighteenth-century mansion in the
Hudson Valley; had gone to Yale; and was fascinated by the world of the 1910s. So without ever having read the script, I agreed to do the project. It was then that Michael mentioned that there existed one major challenge to mounting the show—the score was missing. There were, however, plans afoot to have a local musician compose new music to the extant lyrics. While that was a sensible solution, it did not sit well with me. I felt if we were going to go through this enormous effort to remount the show for the 90th anniversary and to make it as near identical to the original production as possible, then it was imperative we find the original score. Unfortunately, time was not on our side. There were over twenty songs (some enormously long) that needed to be written, and our composer would need as much time as possible to finish writing the music before rehearsals began. I asked for a two-week grace period to find the original score. If at the end of that grace period I failed to locate it, I would (reluctantly) acquiesce to using the newly written music. Deep down I was hoping it would never come to that.

As Nita Dippel had done, I began my search at the Library of Congress. Many Rida Johnson Young scores were listed in the Library’s catalogue, but Lady Luxury was not among them. I continued searching in library collections all over the country, beginning with libraries belonging to the alma maters of Young and her composer, Brooklyn-native William Schroeder. I also double-checked the libraries in Wisconsin, because I was led to believe that Baraboo was the last town where Lady Luxury was performed.¹⁵ All of these searches turned up nothing.

Next I checked to see if any of the songs had been published. At the time, Tin Pan Alley publishers in New York City typically printed the most popular songs of many Broadway musicals. Pairing up Lady Luxury with the names of the various music publishers of the day, such as Leo Feist, Inc.; T.B. Harms & Francis, Day & Hunter, Inc.; Shapiro, Bernstein & Co, Inc.; Watterson, Berlin & Snyder, Inc.; and M. Witmark & Sons, proved successful. Witmark had published about a dozen songs from our show.¹⁶
If M. Witmark & Sons had published some of the music, I began to wonder if they might be in possession of the entire score. While that company was no longer in business, I did find contact information for Tams-Witmark, which currently licenses the rights to American musicals and songs. It turns out that the Arthur W. Tams Music Library (established 1870) merged with Witmark Music Library (established 1886) in 1925, and that they did indeed have old scores in their archives. But by “old scores” they meant as old as the 1950s. Musicals that predated this had been given away to the University of Madison in Wisconsin. This perplexed me, because my earlier searches at Madison had failed to produce any results.

I flew to Wisconsin to investigate. There I was lucky enough to receive generous assistance from Geraldine Laudati, Director of the University of Wisconsin-Madison’s Mills Music Library and an enthusiastic supporter of the preservation of historic music through study and performance. Geri instantly became intrigued with my project and pledged her support. She confirmed that the Mills Music Library was indeed host to the Tams-Witmark archive, but that after thorough examination of the inventory, she was unable to find the score for *Lady Luxury* in their half of the archives. It turns out that the Tams-Witmark collection had been split in two, and Princeton University had the other half! This exciting news made me feel that the score was well within our reach.

The phone call to Princeton, however, produced a shocking disappointment. They said that while they had had the *Lady Luxury* score at one point, that was no longer the case. Apparently, twenty-five years prior they gave it and the rest of their Tams-Witmark music archives away to the Library of Congress, the precise place where I had begun my search. I felt like I was trapped inside a Mobius strip!

Geri instantly read the disappointment on my face, and reassured me that she was confident the score was indeed at the Library of Congress. She explained that because of the overwhelming amount of material the Library receives, coupled with budget cuts, staff members were probably years behind on their cataloguing. It was very likely that the score was sitting in a warehouse and awaiting processing. She had a friend named Robin Rausch who worked at the Library of Congress as a music specialist. We rang the Library and managed to get Robin straight away. We briefed her, and she agreed to help us, but said that it might take a couple of weeks to locate the score. This worried me as I only had six days left before my deadline. Robin promised to do her best. Meanwhile, just before my leaving for New York City to do some additional research, Madison had another surprise in store for me. At the library I discovered an earlier version of the *Lady Luxury* script, one that included songs and scenes missing from the copy that Nita Dippel held. For our production at the Ringling we would insert the missing songs and scenes into the Leo Stark script.

In NYC I continued my search at the Billy Rose Theatre Collection at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center. There I found a key-sheet containing twenty production photographs from the Broadway production of *Lady Luxury* that showed what the set
and costumes looked like.\textsuperscript{18} Aside from these photos, I was unable to turn up any other additional information at the Billy Rose.\textsuperscript{19}

Around this time I also received an exciting phone call from Syracuse University. Early in my research I had discovered that one of the show’s songs (“It’s Written In The Book of Destiny”) had been recorded on an Edison Blue Amberol wax cylinder. It is a very rare recording, and I could only find two extant copies: one in California and one in New York. While the wax cylinder at University of California at Santa Barbara was too fragile to play, the one at Syracuse was not and had recently been digitized into an MP3 audio file. Even though this recording was not sung by the original actors (instead it was sung by two popular singers of the day – Helen Clark and Joseph A. Phillips), it was recorded in 1915 and offered important insight into how the song might have been originally orchestrated. The song is a funny “cat and mouse” duet between our heroine Eloise and Sam, her brother’s Yale classmate who falls in love with her. Listening to this humorous recording made me ever more determined to find the score.

Two days later I received a phone call from Robin Rausch of the Library of Congress. In her hands (she told me slowly, trying to contain her excitement) was the 200-page, handwritten piano vocal score to \textit{Lady Luxury}. It was, as Geri Laudati had suspected, in an unmarked box in a

My veritable Holy Grail: the original manuscript score for \textit{Lady Luxury}, now housed at the Library of Congress.
warehouse of the Library of Congress awaiting cataloguing. I eagerly ordered a copy.

When I finally had the 200-page score in my hands, I notified Nita Dippel that we now had: the complete script, the original production photos, a wax cylinder recording of one of the songs, and the piano vocal score – in short, everything we needed to mount the show. Her gratitude and joy were immeasurable.

The Revival for the 90th Anniversary

*It may take a village to raise a child,*

*but it took an entire town to revive Lady Luxury.*

To produce a musical is no easy task. For those unfamiliar with the process, there is a period of pre-production during which the theatre space is rented, all of the creative staff (director, designers, choreographer, conductor, cast, musicians, and crew) are hired, and the sets and costumes are built while the cast rehearses. Our production of *Lady Luxury* had a large cast (ten principals and twenty-one chorus), each of whom had several costume changes. The 1910s is not the most popular time period for revived theatrical works, so very little could be rented; nearly sixteen costumes would need to be constructed from scratch. The set itself was large and elaborate. There were four ancestral portraits on the wall that needed to “come to life” and sing. To accomplish this illusion would require creating a scrim reveal (painting the portraits on scrim, an open weave fabric, so that a shift in lighting from the front to the back would reveal the actor dressed like the portrait). The plot also required a special secret hiding spot behind a large painting above the mantle that character Edward Van Cuyler could hide in. It was only accessible by pressing a secret button, which would make the large painting slide open like a pocket door. A staircase to the second floor meant the walls would have to be at least fifteen feet tall. Complex crown moldings and wainscoting needed to adorn the walls. In essence, we were going to need a volunteer army of skilled craftsmen and artists to help get this show on its feet. Thankfully, the entire community of Baraboo was behind the task.

A big motivation for everyone in the town working on the show was the knowledge that they would be among the first people to see *Lady Luxury* in performance since it disappeared from the stage ninety years ago. Among those most excited by the prospect of seeing it, was Baraboo resident Fran Kelly, who generously lent us some period items to use as props from her antique-filled home that she gave tours of and nicknamed “Frantiques – House of History.” Kelly said for her it was akin to “that rush that scavenger crews must have felt when they brought up Titanic artifacts from the ocean bed 85 years after she sank in 1912, or like the thrill Lord Carnarvon must have experienced when he gazed upon King Tutankhamun’s tomb after it had been sealed for over 2,000 years.”

In honor of Nita Dippel's original vision of having the town collaborate on the production, I drew from every segment of the community to help bring the show to life. Local amateur and professional carpenters worked together with university students to build the set. And because the
15-foot walls were taller than the University of Baraboo’s scene shop could handle, the set had to be built in pieces and then assembled at nearby Circus World Museum, which had the only public space large enough to fit the entire set. Owners of local antique stores lent tens of thousands of dollars worth of furniture, carpets, silver, and crystal to use on our set. Volunteers emerged to construct the sixty-plus costumes for the show. A local printer offered to print reproductions of the original Ringling Theatre playbill. I also thought it would be nice for audience members to receive a souvenir reprint of the 1915 Baraboo Daily News announcing the opening of the theatre. The local newspaper (The Baraboo Republic) not only complied, but seeing that we needed period newspapers as props in the show, printed a run of those as well. Baraboo’s Turtle Island Bead Store donated several hundred dollars worth of crystal beads and jewelry fittings to make the diamond necklace that is stolen in the play. They also made reproduction necklaces from the 1910s to raffle off at intermission. Other local businesses and organizations—a bakery, a bookstore, a café, art galleries, gift shops, drug stores, banks, the lumber company, the University of Baraboo, the local historical society, private citizens—all donated or provided services in some way. Nita Dippel’s vision of uniting a town to honor their landmark playhouse was working.

The celebrations surrounding the revival of Lady Luxury extended beyond just the theatre. Schools did special research projects about life in Baraboo in 1915. Their completed works were displayed at the Ringling Mansion around the corner from the theatre.

The Mansion would also host an Opening Night Gala where townspeople would arrive in period garb, and be treated to live music of the 1910s, as well as food inspired by recipes of the day. Historic Ringling carriages pulled by a team of horses would take distinguished guests from the Mansion around the town square and drop them off at the Ringling Theatre for the premiere. Descendants of the Ringlings sat in the same box that Al. Ringling had occupied at the opening. And then the speech that (Baraboo native) Governor Phillipp had made at the 1915 opening was read aloud. The Governor’s speech praised Al. Ringling and his family for their generous gift of the theatre to the town. Our opening-night performance and all subsequent performances sold out, which is a powerful tribute to what happens when a community takes full ownership of the Arts.

The Play Itself

All of my experiences with Lady Luxury would be little more than an exercise in historic reconstruction and local boosterism had I not felt the show to be an overlooked gem of popular theatre that cannily reflected the socio-cultural change and turmoil that was afoot in the years leading up to the First World War.

Rida Johnson Young’s goal in 1914 was to write a thoroughly modern musical. So she set her comedy in the present and incorporated into her script such popular-culture references as Kewpie Dolls, exotic social dances, and the latest fashion trends. America, like the rest of the
world, was rapidly modernizing industrially, socially, and artistically, and she wanted her plot to reflect modern views especially of the new roles women and African-Americans were assuming in society. Composer William Schroeder supported her vision by writing not only stunning operetta-style arias, but also lively contemporary ragtime rhythms and syncopated melodies.21

The heroine of *Lady Luxury* is Eloise Van Cuyler, a young American heiress, whose fortune has been held in trust for her by her uncle, Edward Van Cuyler, until the hour the play opens. To celebrate her coming-of-age, she has planned an elaborate party that will strip away the old-fashioned life she has led thereby helping her become a modern new Lady of Luxury. She begins by instructing her beloved family servant Harper to arrange for the removal of all the heavy, dark ancestral 18th and 19th century furniture and to replace them with lighter more streamlined Art-Nouveau pieces. Then she purchases for herself an entirely new wardrobe containing exquisitely expensive gowns reflecting Society's latest tastes in couture.

Attending the festivities will be some of the most renowned (fictional) celebrities of the day, such as Tenor Count Piniaselli and Madame Mischkowa and Monsieur Ivan of the Ballets Russes. The fates of the Count and Mischkowa become intertwined, when they both arrive at the party with identical jewelry cases – Piniaselli’s case containing a simple throat spray and Mischkowa’s case containing a priceless diamond necklace. When the Russian prima ballerina asks Van Cuyler to secure her necklace in the mansion’s safe for the duration of her stay, her host unwittingly mixes up the two cases, locking up the throat spray and handing the case containing the diamond necklace over to the Count.

In addition to these luminaries, Eloise has invited an English chaperone named Mrs. Draper-Cowles and her daughter Maude. Mrs. Draper-Cowles has come to teach Eloise how to be a socialite, but she also hopes Maude will fall in love with Eloise’s older brother, Jimmy, so that she can marry into his wealth. Unbeknownst to her mother, however, Maude has secretly fallen in love with Count Piniaselli, whom she met on the passage over to America and whom her mother has invited to the fête.

As for Jimmy, he has been enjoying his inheritance by traveling around Europe with his football buddies from Yale and has just returned home on the same ship as Piniaselli, Maude and her mother. Among Jimmy’s companions is his best friend Sam, a salt of the earth Texan, who falls in love with Eloise, but who is put off by her supercilious behavior. Sam confesses this unhappiness to Eloise’s uncle, who has taken a liking to Sam. He cooks up a scheme that will humble his niece, rid the house of freeloaders, and help her see who her real friends are.

He writes a note to Eloise explaining how he lost her entire fortune a few years ago in speculation, and how she can no longer be his “Lady Luxury.” Ashamed to be the cause of her misfortune, he tells her he is leaving the house forever, and all of her guests must do the same now that she is penniless. He then conceals himself in a secret hiding chamber behind a large portrait hung over the mantle, and convinces Sam to bring him food and clothing while he hides out. His disappearance is
poorly timed, however, because it coincides with Mischkowa’s discovery of her missing jewels. She believes either Van Cuyler stole them before he left or there is a thief in the house, a theory made more plausible when food and clothing also start disappearing.

When Eloise catches Sam in possession of her missing Uncle’s clothes and some of the stolen food, she fears that he is not only a thief, but also a murderer. Eloise faces the crisis with sang-froid and maturity, when she decides that honor is more important than money, and therefore if the necklace cannot be found, she will surrender any inheritance to Mischkowa. She then hires Detective Scatro to help resolve the mystery surrounding the disappearance of her uncle and Mischkowa’s diamonds.

Even though Eloise may face social and financial ruin, Sam’s love for her never waivers. As for Van Cuyler, impressed at how well his niece is handling this crisis, he now emerges from hiding, explains about the jewel case mix-up, clears Sam’s name, and confesses that he did not lose her fortune. With the return of the jewels, Eloise’s reputation and fortune are once again secure. At last she recognizes Sam’s love and loyalty, providing audiences with the romantic ending they were hoping for.

In her book Young included lots of comedy, incorporating references to new fads and trends, but she also addressed deeper issues of the day. When she wrote Lady Luxury in 1913-14, civilizations around the world were experiencing revolutionary changes politically, socially, and culturally; indeed, Europe would become embroiled in world war in July, 1914. And just as Eloise plotted to come of age by throwing out the old to make way for the new, many countries were about to do the same and emerge as powerful modern forces to be reckoned with.

By creating four strong female characters (Eloise, Mischkowa, Maude, and Mrs. Draper-Cowles), Young was perhaps letting the world
know that women were the newest force to be reckoned with. Our heroine, Eloise, is smart, rich, and strong willed – in other words, a good role model for the modern woman. Once she comes of age and is no longer under her uncle’s guardianship, she makes bold plans to reinvent herself and chart her own future. (Ironically Eloise’s extravagant parties, sober ruin, and sensible reform would foreshadow America’s upcoming boom and bust period: the Roaring Twenties followed by the sobering Stock Market Crash. And just like FDR, Eloise would find a way to resolve the crisis and restore order.) While Mischkowa is rich and strong like Eloise, she is also world famous. The inspiration for Mischkowa may have been Anna Pavlova, prima ballerina of the Russian Imperial Ballet and the Ballets Russes, who became the first ballerina to tour ballet around the world.

Members of polite society would certainly have found Maude’s independence bold, and her choice of mate rather peculiar. She not only refuses to consider an arranged marriage that would elevate her station and class, but also chooses an opera singer as her mate. Contemporary audiences would certainly have been shocked (just as Van Cuyler was) to see her mother Mrs. Draper-Cowles drinking whiskey and smoking cigarettes in public. While it was common for men to be seen smoking, it was not customary for ladies to smoke in public until the 1920s.

Lady Luxury was also the ideal vehicle for the playwright to capitalize on changes that were afoot in the culture at-large. The character of Monsieur Ivan, for example, was no doubt based on Russian Impresario Sergei Diaghilev with his Ballets Russes. Known for bringing together the greatest minds in modern music (Stravinsky, Debussy, Ravel, Prokofiev, Satie), dance (Nijinsky, Fokine, Pavlova, Karsavina, Dalcroze), and art/design (Picasso, Matisse, Braque, de Chirico, Chanel, Roerich, Bakst, Benois) he helped modernize dance by presenting works like “Rite of Spring” and “Parade.” Audiences were enthralled, and his productions even inspired fashions of the day, both onstage and off. Witness the article about Lady Luxury that appeared in the February 1915 edition of Vogue magazine containing a photo of Alice Moffat as Mischowa in an exotic dance costume most certainly inspired by the Ballets Russes.\(^23\)

Meanwhile, social dances of the 1910s threw away antiquated dance holds and ballroom rules to give birth to the Animal Dances craze: the Grizzly Bear, the Chicken Scratch, the Kangaroo, the Turkey Trot, the Bunny Hug and the Fox Trot (popularized by Vernon and Irene Castle). Passionate, exotic dances like the Argentine Tango and the Brazilian Maxixe became increasingly popular. Traditional waltzes and marches were being replaced by the excitingly new syncopated rhythms of ragtime. Using the plot device of throwing a party enabled Young to include some of these trendy new social dances, i.e. the maxixe, tango (“The Tango Glide”), Turkey Trot, Bunny Hug, and the Grizzly Bear (“Whoopla” and “[Oh, My How He Loves] That Rag Tag Dance”). In the opening number of the show, the singing ancestral portraits warn Van Cuyler that he will be “shocked by the Turkey Trot bold, or the Texas Tommy Fly.” The Van Cuyler
Mansion has always stood for the highest ideals and Eloise's uncle himself confesses to Harper his anxiety about decadent dances such as “Bunny Hugs and Turkey Trots.” One of the more cryptic stage directions concerns itself with one of the dances Eloise has arranged for Mischkowa to do as part of the evening's festivities. Mrs. Draper-Cowles announces, “Mischkowa will now give us the Futurist Twirl.” It is unclear if this meant she would dance Loïe Fuller's twirling and mesmerizing “Serpentine Dance” (1891), or that she would do the ragtime tango of the same name from Edwin Burch's The Marriage Market (1913).

In addition, when Young penned Lady Luxury opera stars were popular weekly attractions in theatres. It is therefore no surprise that Young and Schroeder included a show-stopping number for Piniaselli (“When I Sing In Grand Opera”).

The role of African-Americans in theatre was evolving, too, if slowly. Minstrel shows, which stereotyped blacks in disparaging ways (lazy, buffoonish, superstitious, subservient, ignorant, and joyous) were in decline, and few remained in the mainstream by the start of the Great War. The African-American community especially wanted to see black characters and stories that were not rooted in caricature. Reflecting the changing attitudes toward this demographic, Young wrote the character of Harper, the Van Cuyler's black servant, rather sympathetically and beyond cliché. Eloise, her brother Jimmy, and their Uncle treated him as a well-loved member of the family. They trust him and respect his opinion. His dialogue is articulate, grammatically correct, and intelligent, and he is respectful without being obsequious. Still, the author reminds us in the song “Pick, Pick, Pickaninny” that even though progress has been made, much more needed to happen for complete equality. Due to the fact that many localities had ordinances prohibiting inter-racial casts, the role of Harper was always played by a white actor, but never in stereotypical blackface.

Women's fashion was also undergoing a metamorphosis at this time. For years dancers like Isadora Duncan and Loïe Fuller were displaying the feminine form sans corsets and bras, laying the roots of a movement toward less restrictive clothing in daily life. What helped distinguish Lady Luxury fashion-wise were the sumptuous costumes designed by Lady Duff Gordon, known professionally as Lucile. While the men in the audience may have been gawking at the females in the chorus for their beauty, the women may have spent their time admiring the gowns. In 1907 an editor of Play Pictorial observed, “Undeniably the stage nowadays is fashion’s hour-glass. The smart woman of today goes to the theatre not only to see the play, but to study the dresses and learn from them the fashion of tomorrow.” One of the leading fashion designers of these “fashions of tomorrow,” Lucile offered innovative gowns layered in expensive silk chiffons and organzas, beaded with crystal, and trimmed with intricate handmade velvet flowers. As Randy Bryan Bigham says in his biography Lucile − Her Life By Design, she was “a key transitional figure in the evolution of fashion, exemplifying luxe and liberation at the intersection of haute couture, merchandising, media, and the performing arts.” Also a shrewd business woman, she was the first to stage fashion
shows at her couture houses (the pre-cursor of the runway show), and by designing luxurious gowns for Broadway shows, she was able to have her designs presented daily to thousands of people. As it turned out, Lucile preferred designing for the stage. In a newspaper interview from 1911, she stated:

“The stage is the mirror of fashion as it is of life. It is not because actresses have diviner forms than their sisters in private, but these gifted women, appearing in dramas depicting the fashionable life of today, may be trusted to interpret my art with all the genius and fidelity that they give their own. To be frank and risking censure for being coldly practical, the stage is the ideal shop window. There I have said it! Not even the best-trained mannequin can equal the influence of the heroine of a top-notch modern drama or comedy.”

Because Lady Luxury was set in the present day, Lucile took full advantage to depict the fashions of the day. Naturally, she would advertise in the playbills for her shows that she and her company, Lucile, Ltd., were available for those who wished her to design something exclusively for them.

But the stage was not merely a display case for her designs. Lucile wanted her theatrical costumes to be relevant to the plot and appropriate for the character. In her autobiography Discretions and Indiscretions, she explained how she had extensive meetings with George Edwardes and Lily Elsie, the producer and star of The Merry Widow, before designing the gowns for that show. She even asked Elsie to demonstrate the various moves and dances she did in the show so that she could see how her dress would need to move. Dancer Florence Walton observed that Lucile’s ability to provide the best designs for dancers was because of her keen observation of dance steps and her understanding of how they caused a dress to move.
For a show as important as *Lady Luxury*, Lucile would have had similar consultations with the stars Ina Claire, Alice Moffat, and Emilie Lea. There is a funny anecdote worth mentioning about a costume mishap that occurred during a performance of *Lady Luxury* while it was at the Casino Theatre. It involved Emilie Lea, who was playing Russian prima ballerina Madame Mischkowa. When Emilie was seven years old, she travelled through Siberia with her parents and became enamored with everything Russian. That fascination never waned, and she was delighted when Lucile asked to consult with her about the design of her costume. Lea arrived at Lucile’s design studios with a bolt of Cossack army green cloth, Persian lamb trimmings, and very specific ideas about creating an authentic Cossack costume to her liking. Wanting total authenticity, Miss Lea asked for black patent leather boots, a fur cap, and a special pouch over her right breast, where Lea could, just like the real Russian soldiers, store some live cartridges. Her zeal for authenticity during her terpsichorean solo almost ended with deadly results:

One night, when she was dancing at the Casino in New York, one of the cartridges fell from its pouch and struck the stage with a resounding thump. It did not explode, but the horrified stage manager [Leo Stark] noticed the incident and forbade the acrobatic dancer to wear them any more.32

Of course the show, as staged, also followed some conventions of the day. Chief among these was its “chorus of beauties,” consisting of 22 female dancers (in contrast to 14 male chorus members), half a dozen more than had been in the show pre-Broadway. Reviews that mentioned the *Lady Luxury* chorus often contained phrases like: “The chorus, it is said, possesses both ability to sing and
Sidebar: LUCILE (LADY DUFF GORDON)

Lady Lucy Duff-Gordon was born Lucy Christiana Sutherland on 13 June 1863 in London, England. She was the daughter of a civil engineer named Douglas Sutherland and Elinor Saunders. After her father died in 1865 of typhoid fever, she, her mother and her sister (famed novelist, screenwriter, and actress Elinor Glyn) moved to Guelph, Ontario, Canada. Her mother remarried six years later to David Kennedy. The four of them moved to Saint Helier on the Isle of Jersey. It was around this time that Lucy had the first of three near misses at sea. After returning from visiting relatives in England (1875) the ship she and her sister were travelling on encountered a storm and was wrecked. She and her sister Elinor were among the survivors.

In 1881 at the age of 18 she married James Stuart Wallace with whom she had a daughter named Esmé. Wallace turned out to be a drunkard, and seven years later Lucy divorced him. In order to support herself and her daughter she opened her own dressmaking business.

By 1894 her shop Maison Lucile at 24 Old Burlington Street, London, was a success. Patrons flocked there to purchase Lucile's signature-style evening gowns made of layers of sheer beaded silk chiffons and lace, her tea gowns embellished with passementerie trims and hand-made sprays of silk flowers, and her sexy but chic line of lingerie. Her designs were daring (low necklines, sheer fabrics, slit skirts) and enormously creative, often taking inspiration from the fashions of previous centuries and giving them a modern twist. To add more drama and mystique to her designs Lucile (as she now called herself) gave the dresses poetical names like “Love in the Mist,” “Enrapture,” and “Twilight and Memories.” For the more daring, she offered gowns with racier names like “Passionate Thought,” “An Episode,” and “Climax.” These “personality” dresses were immediately popular.

Lucile’s innovation extended beyond just the designs. She is often credited as the being the first to stage fashion runway shows. The Smart Set magazine’s “About Town” fashion and society columnist attended several of Lucile’s “fashion parades,” and described what it was like for a potential patron to enter her “Temple of Dress.” They would notice an elegantly appointed room decorated with 3,000 hand-made scented silk roses. Mood lighting and live music from a string trio would help set the ambiance. Guests would then be presented with a grey-tinted programme and a souvenir gift. At the far end of the room was a small elevated stage with elegant draped curtains where mannequins (fashion models) would come out and model Lucile's newest line of clothing. The entire presentation was very theatrical and very effective.

While Lucile was a successful designer, she was not as skilled on the financial side. She took on Scottish landowner and sportsman Sir Cosmo Duff-Gordon as an investor and business partner. The business partnership soon turned romantic, and she wedded him in 1900. Being married to Sir Cosmo had its advantages. His title introduced Lucile to Court and helped her to expand her client list to include theatre stars, members of the aristocracy, and royalty. The growth of her business made it necessary to move into a larger shop at 23 Hanover Square. It wasn’t long before she would need to expand again, opening branches in New York City, Paris, and Chicago (in 1910, 1911, and 1915 respectively).

But gowns by Lucile did come at a premium. At the Fashion Institute of Technology are some of Lucile’s renderings of dresses she designed in 1914 labeled with price tags of $125 and $275, which would be the equivalent today of $2,000 and $6,400. It should be noted that Lucile was not one to exclude any portion of her potential market. Ina Claire’s dress from Lady Luxury was so popular that Vogue Pattern Service arranged a licensing agreement with Lucile. For the affordable price of $1 industrious women of modest income (and who wished to be au courant) could buy the Lady Luxury dress pattern to make their own version of the dress.
appear attractive in gowns of beauty.” And Young's book owed a lot of its comedic structure to playwrights like Molière and Sheridan.

**THE TOUR**

*Life Post-Broadway and the opening of the Al. Ringling Theatre*

Upon completion of her Broadway run on January 23, 1915, *Lady Luxury* took to the road. Road manager Charles H. Wuerz took over management of the show. Before heading North on the Vaudeville circuit, the production played a weeklong run at the Shubert-managed DeKalb Theatre in Brooklyn. Details of subsequent tour dates are sketchy. I was unable to find any of Wuerz’s booking contracts, so what I have pieced together about the tour results from scouring newspapers for booking announcements, advertisements, and reviews. This sleuthing has provided me with enough details to reconstruct the two tours of 1915 (with a summer hiatus in between) and the additional tour in 1916. But in all of *Lady Luxury*’s travels, nothing exceeded the grandeur of her engagement in Baraboo.

When the *Lady Luxury* company arrived at the brand new Al. Ringling Theatre in November of 1915, they were greeted by an elegant building of carved marble and polished granite designed by the famed architectural firm of Rapp and Rapp. The oval marble lobby had ivory-colored walls lined with pilasters and recessed panels crowned by an ornate terra-cotta frieze. Mounted in the ceiling was a fresco of seven cherubim (representing Al. Ringling and his brothers) floating amongst the clouds. One cherub proudly holds a cartouche bearing the AR monogram. The entry was enhanced by a decorative fountain placed against the west wall.

The view of the elliptical theatre as you entered was breathtaking. Ivory columns decorated with terra-cotta garlands and brushed with gold leaf surrounded the room. Suspended between the columns at mezzanine level was a single row of individual boxes with luxurious upholstered chairs and framed by red velvet drapes emblazoned with the Ringling cartouche. Beautiful chandeliers hung from a celestial dome ringed with luminous frescoes. Below, the first ten rows of audience seating in the orchestra featured seatbacks with the Ringling monogram richly embroidered on velvet upholstery. Rose-colored carpets ran throughout the theatre and complemented the silk shades of the wall sconces. The splendor may seem out of place for a small-town theatre. Ringling Theatre architect George Rapp explained his firm’s design policy:

> These are not impractical attempts at showing off. These are part of a celestial city – cavern of many-colored jewels, where iridescent lights and luxurious fittings heighten the expectations of pleasure. It is richness unabashed, but richness with a reason.\

Ringling had one other surprise, and a rather innovative one at that. He had a Hope-Jones Unit Wurlitzer Organ installed three stories above the stage. By being so close to the domed
(above) Program from the opening night of Lady Luxury at the Al. Ringling Theatre, November 17, 1915. (below) Exterior of the Ringling Theatre, c. 1921. (opposite page) Three interior shots of the Al. Ringling Theatre (clockwise from top left): The auditorium seen from the stage, c. 1915; house left as it looks today; the proscenium showing the butterfly stage curtain, c. 1915. Program courtesy of The Sauk County Historical Society; vintage photographs courtesy of the Al. Ringling Theatre; color photograph © Marian Krauss, courtesy of the photographer.
ceiling, the pipes distributed the sound evenly throughout the elliptical auditorium, giving the illusion that it was surrounding you. The organ was top-of-the-line and could produce special effects like “marching soldiers, cheering of crowds, and the calls of animals,” in addition to the full range of orchestral instrument sounds. This would come in handy for Lady Luxury’s premiere, since the production’s orchestra did not arrive in time to play. In a letter dated November 20, 1915 to a Mr. James Wingfield of Chicago, Illinois, Al. Ringling wrote:

The opening performance went off very well and I think gave very good satisfaction as far as could be expected without an orchestra. Altho [sic] the company had contracted to bring an orchestra with them they failed to supply same. To a certain extent our pipe organ filled this gap.
After Baraboo, Lady Luxury had three more performances, completing the 1915 tour at the Tremont Theatre in Boston. In the Autumn of 1916, the musical would hit the road one more time touring through a dozen cities including Montauk, Long Island. After that, there are instances of select songs being performed at concerts, but otherwise, the show seems never to have been performed again.

As the hundredth anniversary of the New York premiere approaches in December of 2014, it is easy to imagine a Broadway revival. The show’s comic plot is timeless and the narrative still has political and social relevance. Dances from this time period are rarely seen, so there would be a fun novelty to seeing them spring to life on the boards once again. And in speaking to staff and students at FIT, I found that Lucile has taken on legendary status in the design world. Nobody to date has reconstructed her designs for the stage. Doing so would cause much excitement in the international design communities.

It is rare to come across an American musical comedy that is both poignant and entertaining, while also boasting such a rich and interesting backstory. The Al. Ringling Theatre, with help from the Jeffris Family Foundation, has plans to restore the playhouse to its full glory in time for its 100th anniversary. When that happens, maybe it will in fact be possible to share Lady Luxury once again, but this time with a much larger audience.

Endnotes
1 Rida Johnson Young to Mr. Shubert, n.d., General Correspondence 1910-1926, File 470, The Shubert Archive.
2 Ibid.
3 H.G. Snow to Lee Shubert, April 21, 1911, General Correspondence 1910-26, File 681,
The Shubert Archive. The Syndicate referred to here is, of course, the booking/producing organization run by Marc Klaw and Abraham Erlanger that was Sam and Lee Shubert’s arch-rival in the theatre business.

4 William (Bill) A. MacMartin to Harry Munson, December 14, 1911, General Correspondence 1910-26, File 681, The Shubert Archive.

5 Ben Teal was one of the most respected and most feared directors of his day. Though he worked extensively on Syndicate productions throughout most of his career, he did direct the Shubert-produced *The Midnight Girl* in the early part of 1914.

6 Rida Young to Lee Shubert, September 23, 1914, General Correspondence 1910-1926, File 470, The Shubert Archive.

7 Lee Shubert to Rida Johnson Young, September 24, 1914, General Correspondence 1910-1926, File 470, The Shubert Archive.

8 Carl Porter, Dorothy Fitch, Georgia Dawson, James Whelan, Roscoe Saunders, William Klein, and E.H. Crawford. Three of these actors (Porter, Fitch, and Crawford) remained with the show for its entire run. E.H. Crawford was the Assistant Stage Manager and played Detective Scatro.

9 Rida Johnson Young to Lee Shubert, December 21, 1914, General Correspondence 1910-1926, File 470, The Shubert Archive.


11 Lee Shubert to Rida Johnson Young, December 22, 1914, General Correspondence 1910-1926, File 470, The Shubert Archive.

12 A theatre critic writing for the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (January 25, 1915) offered his opinion as to why some of the New York City press did not like *Lady Luxury*: “The production ran several weeks in Manhattan, but evidently had a hard time of it competing with the revues now monopolizing the lion’s share of Manhattan’s patronage and absorbing practically all of the floating supply of profits. But this is not to the discredit of ‘Lady Luxury.’ While Manhattan’s taste may be discriminating it is not always in favor of the best. Just now the ‘poor, tired business man’ across the river seems to favor revues, with the loosely put together scenarios designed to exploit ‘under one canvas and in three rings’ simultaneously a galaxy of vaudeville artists.”

13 *Lady Luxury* ran at the Casino until January 10, 1915. Two days later it transferred to the Shubert-owned Comedy Theatre. Although the Comedy had only half of the Casino’s seating capacity, the intimate size served the show well. When the musical played its last performance on January 23, it had run a total of 35 performances. This could be deemed a modest success at the time. In 1914, 154 shows opened on Broadway (three times the number today). With many more shows vying for stages and audiences, runs were typically shorter than they are today. Out of those 154 shows, half of them ran under thirty performances.

14 As the *New York Clipper*, September 25, 1915 clearly stated, “Lady Luxury is not a Shubert attraction as has been erroneously stated, but is presented by the La Lux Producing Co., Inc., and is under the personal direction of Charles H. Wuerz, with A.W. Bachelder, Business manager. The attraction plays K&E bookings.”

15 I later learned that it toured to additional theatres in 1915 and in 1916.


17 Sadly, Geri has since passed away. At her memorial service her directorship was described as “an unwavering commitment to exemplary service for all library clientele, a tireless pursuit of developing exceptional library collections in music and dance, and a vision of using emerging

18 The production photos were part of a larger collection of theatrical photographs from White Studios, Broadway’s preeminent stage photographers from 1905-1925. The Lady Luxury photos would have been taken at the height of the Studio’s popularity. The photo shoot was probably conducted by chief location photographer, George W. Lucas. Typically, Lucas would arrive during a dress rehearsal, set up his tripod and glass plate Kodak camera dead center in the 10th row of the orchestra, and take wide-angle views of the set and cast. Lucas would then prepare his flash-pan on the end of a long stick that he would hold up high above the camera. The flash-pan would produce an extremely bright flash of light, enough to illuminate (and temporarily blind) his subjects. He would then do additional setups on stage to capture close-ups of the stars. It should be noted that Lucas was one of the first theatrical photographers to use the flash-pan method of illumination, which was safer than the flash-lamp, where a mixture of magnesium and primer were ignited with a pistol hammer. Flash-pan photography, however, did require the subjects to remain motionless up to 45 seconds, which sometimes would result in photos that were slightly blurry. While the photos printed and published from the original glass plates are perfectly in focus, the details of the sepia-toned photos on the key-sheet are not particularly sharp, making it hard to distinguish details on the costumes. Be that as it may, one can easily observe in the photos printed from the original glass plates how extravagantly expensive were the women’s dresses designed by Lady Duff Gordon of Lucile, Ltd.

19 On a later visit to the Lincoln Center Library for the Performing Arts I managed to find additional information including five programs: two from the Broadway run (Casino and Comedy Theatres) and three from the tour. I also found multiple reviews of the show in scrapbooks with clippings about Ina Claire and Harry Conor.

20 Kelly, F. (October 18, 2005). Personal interview.

21 In an article dated April 18, 1915, William Schroeder explains how he got his start: “When I was a student attending ‘Poly Prep,’ Mr. Duncan, the dramatic coach there, requested me to write the music to a lyric he had just written. The song was to be sung in a Poly show the following week, and having never written anything of the kind before, I went at it rather desperately. It was a big hit. After leaving Poly I went to work for a broker, but never cared for the job as I always had longings to be a composer. I finally summoned the courage to leave one bright spring morning, and went to study harmony, counterpoint, and composition under Rubin Goldmark. While studying here, a fortunate thing happened to me—I met Mrs. Rida Johnson Young, who heard my work and gave me a chance to write music for a new book she had written for Lulu Glazer entitled, Just One of the Boys. This piece, although very successful in the West, never came East. The following year I wrote, When Love Is Young which ran in Chicago for two months. My first New York production came this year, when I wrote Lady Luxury for Ina Claire. It is still playing in the South and will stay on until May. … Although the life of a composer is not always a merry one I hope to keep on working. It’s the life for me, and I’m a great believer in doing that which one best likes to do.” [William Schroeder of Brooklyn, Composer and Coach, Tells of His Ambitions, Hopes Always to Be a Composer.” The Brooklyn Daily Eagle, April 18, 1915.]

22 Assistant Stage Manager E. H. Crawford played the role of Detective Scatro for the entire run of the show.

23 Vogue, February 15, 1915, 54

24 This song, although written for Harper, was always, strangely enough, sung by Eloise.
Further inroads would soon follow. April 5, 1917 marked a groundbreaking moment in American theatre history with the opening at the Garden Theatre of Three Plays for a Negro Theatre by Ridgely Torrence. Although neither the writer nor director were black, it was the first dramatic production to feature an all-black cast, and the first to portray African-American life beyond the cliché.


In 1917, the U.S. War Industries Board asked women to stop buying corsets to free up metal for war production. This step liberated some 28,000 tons of metal, enough to build two battleships. (http://web.mit.edu/invent/iow/jacob.html, retrieved Jan. 10, 2014) This led to women wearing instead a combination brassiere and girdle, which was more comfortable, and for the first time in hundreds of years, gave them a shape that felt more natural and free.

Play Pictorial (The Truth), vol. 60 (1907), 75


Colorado Springs Gazette, September 10, 1911.


“‘Lady Luxury’ Dancer Wears Cossack Costume.” Ithaca Daily News [Ithaca, NY] April 22, 1915 (Evening), 7. It might be interesting to note here that Lady Luxury was lucky to have Lady Duff Gordon as its designer, as she had recently recovered from a near death experience: She, her husband, and her personal assistant were among the lucky few who survived the sinking of the Titanic by escaping in lifeboat #1. Curiously enough, she would have relived a similar nightmare a few years later had she not cancelled her ticket on another cruise liner due to illness: the Lusitania, which was torpedoed by the Germans on May 7, 1915.


Bigham, 136.

Vogue, June 1, 1915.


Ening.

James Wingfield to Al. Ringling, November 20, 1915, Ringling Correspondence, Ringling Archives.

For example, the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle lists “Selection—Lady Luxury” amongst several pieces to be performed for a concert at the Public Market on June 22, 1917. Performances of the “Selection” (a medley of William Schroeder’s songs from Lady Luxury and arranged by George J. Trinkaus) was again announced in the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle on August 28, 1923 and again on August 20, 1933.
There is evidence that the show became available to summer stock producers even before the Fall 1916 tour commenced. Great Rorick's Company placed an advertisement in the Elmira's (NY) Morning Telegraph, July 10, 1916 announcing “Rorick's Week of July 10th First Time in Stock ‘Lady Luxury’ with Joe Scott Welsh and the Great Rorick's Company.” Matinees were Wednesdays and Saturdays with ticket prices ranging from 10 cents to 50 cents.

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The Heart of Broadway Still Beats Strong at 100

by Maryann Chach

The year 2013 marked the centennial of the Shubert and Booth Theatres, the twin theatres that bridge a city block from 44th to 45th Streets, west of Broadway, as well as the centennial of Shubert Alley. Originally a narrow, fifteen-foot-wide fire alley running along the east side of both theatres, it was conceived as a pedestrian walkway that would provide a shortcut between 44th and 45th Streets. No one dreamed that it would one day become the heart of Broadway.

Today, the concentration of twelve theatres on 44th and 45th Streets is the center of the Broadway theatre district, but in 1913 that block consisted of just four theatres and an alley – Winthrop Ames’ Little Theatre, Weber & Fields Music Comedy Hall, and the Shubert and Booth Theatres. Before that time, the two streets were largely residential, peppered with brownstone residences occasionally interspersed with businesses.

In 1912, a plot of land west of the Astor Hotel (which fronted on Broadway between 44th and 45th) was leased from the Astor Estate by the New Theatre. The New Theatre was both a corporate entity and a building established in 1909 when a group of wealthy and influential men
The Passing Show

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(including Lee Shubert and Winthrop Ames) proposed the creation of a subsidized playhouse devoted to the art of serious theatre. The resulting building was a magnificent Beaux-Arts creation designed by Carrère and Hastings and located on Central Park West and 62nd Street. That project, though, was unsuccessful: after only two years, the New Theatre building morphed into a more traditional Broadway house renamed the Century. Hopes of continuing the New Theatre concept in Times Square never materialized.

Instead, Lee Shubert and Winthrop Ames took over the New Theatre’s lease on the Astor property and built two venues: the larger would become the Shubert Brothers’ flagship; the smaller would be managed by Ames himself. Two brownstones were demolished to make way for construction. In the planning stage, the small theatre was generally referred to as the “Ames Theatre.” Then in September 1912, Ames’ assistant, Edward Lyons, wrote to J.W. Jacobs, General Manager for the Shuberts, that “Mr. Ames has decided to call the theatre, The Gotham.” Over the next year, it was sometimes referred to as the “Ames,” and sometimes (even as late as August 5, 1913) as the “Gotham.” But when the playhouse finally opened on October, 1913, the Ames/Gotham had been rechristened the “Booth,” in honor of the great American actor, Edwin Booth.

A 1913 photograph clearly shows the original narrow Shubert Alley from its northern end at the Booth Theatre, looking south to the Shubert Theatre. In the background, on the left, half of a pediment is faintly visible. It belongs to one of only two other playhouses on 44th Street – Weber and Fields Music Hall, which the Shuberts erected in January 1913. The other was Winthrop Ames' Little Theatre (now the Helen Hayes), which was built and opened in 1912. An early photo of the Little Theatre is noteworthy for capturing a long forgotten 44th Street: on the right of the photo, brownstones are visible including one featuring Mario’s Restaurant; on the left, hugging the eastern wall of the Little is another brownstone which would be replaced by the Sardi Building in 1927.

Beginning in the summer of 1912, construction on the Booth and Shubert took more than a year. From files in the Shubert Archive, Lee and J.J. may have asked several architects to submit design proposals for the twin theatres. In April 1912, Clarence Blackall was in negotiations with Ames and Shubert for the job, but by May 1912, the assignment had been given to architect Henry B. Herts. In an unsigned agreement dated May 10, 1912, Herts indicates his terms and outlines another proposition – construction of a “Palais de Glis” [sic] or “Ice Palace” on the site of what later became the Broadhurst and Gerald Schoenfeld Theatres. [For more information of the proposed Ice Palace, see Nic Leonhardt’s article in this issue.] The source for most of these details is the Shubert Archive’s General Correspondence 1910-1926 series which contains memos, letters, and bills regarding the construction of the theatres. Included here are several notes from Fleischmann Brothers, the General Contractor, complaining about inaccurate drawings and having to lay off workers because plans had not been checked and approved. Much of the
work disruption had to do with disputes over charges and cost. Fleischmann also warned that holdups might delay the project’s completion until closer to the arrival of winter. This could lead to even more setbacks because the sgrafitto effect on the buildings’ exterior could not be executed during the cold weather. In July 1912, Ames’s request for changes to the Booth’s design also resulted in delays. Herts asserted that the alterations were significant and would require completely redrawing the plans. J.J. Shubert, on the other hand, claimed they were all cosmetic and that Herts was magnifying the problem.

Herts’ design featured a facade with Venetian Renaissance influence. *American Architect* pointed out that, “the use of sgraffito has been resorted to for decoration since it gives a very elaborate effect in relief....The sgraffito panels have Renaissance ornament in light gray tone, executed on a background of purple gray. The trimmings, including the cornice, are of light terra cotta; the walls are buff colored, and the bricks are laid in alternate courses of headers and stretchers.” *Architecture and Building* noted that the sgraffito was accomplished “by carving through several layers of varied colored cements, producing the figured decoration of the panels which decorates both fronts.”

Another 1913 view of Shubert Alley looks north from the Shubert Theatre to the Booth. On the left, to the west of the theatre, is an empty lot where the proposed Ice Palace was to be erected. East of the Alley (right), is one of the remaining brownstones which survived until at least 1923. This photo was taken while the
theatre was still under construction and before any signage was erected. Shortly afterward, a vertical sign was added to the western corner on the 44th St. side for the Shubert's opening in 1913. The sign mimicked the design of the one on the Booth.

Opening the Shubert was Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson & Company playing *Hamlet* in repertory with *Othello*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Sacrament of Judas*, *The Passing of the Third Floor Back*, *Caesar and Cleopatra*, *The Light That Failed*, and *Mice and Men*. The program was billed as Forbes-Robertson's farewell tour, and his company alternated in the different plays from September 29th to December 29th, 1913. Openings were apparently more sedate in 1913 – the Shuberts hosted a tea to welcome Sir Johnston and his wife and to inaugurate the theatre. The celebrated performers E. H. Sothern and Julia Marlowe were among the invited guests. Sothern, however, was unable to attend, so Miss Marlowe delivered his welcoming remarks. There were also addresses by playwright Augustus Thomas and actor/producer DeWolf Hopper. All the participants had worked with the Shuberts and were either currently represented on Broadway or would shortly be represented there: Sothern and Marlowe were at the Manhattan Opera House, DeWolf Hopper was appearing in Miss Caprice at the Casino, and Augustus Thomas had a new play, *Indian Summer*, about to open.

The Shubert Theatre's canopy on 44th Street did not go up until two years later, in 1915. Herbert J. Krapp, an associate of Herts, designed it and supervised construction. Krapp would go on to become the Shubert Brothers' in house architect. One photo, taken in 1919, shows the canopy and the vertical Shubert Theatre sign which has been moved from the west to the east corner of the theatre. The show on the marquee, *Good Morning Judge*, was a musical based on Pinero's *The Magistrate*. The Broadhurst Theatre, built in 1917, can be seen on the left. Another photo looking east towards Broadway sometime around 1920, shows the canopy in detail; the last three letters of the vertical signage spelling out “Shubert” ("ERT") are
visible directly above the marquee. Just past the theatre is a brownstone, and beyond that, the Astor Hotel.

In the late 1910s and 1920s, all the remaining theatres on 44th and 45th Streets were constructed, making these two city blocks the hub of the theatre world: The Broadhurst and Plymouth (now the Gerald Schoenfeld) in 1917, the Music Box in 1921, the Imperial in 1923, the Martin Beck in 1924, the Majestic, Golden and Royale (now the Bernard B. Jacobs), and the St. James (formerly the Erlanger) in 1927. It was also in the year 1927 that Sardi’s Restaurant moved into the lower floors of the Shuberts’ newly built office building across from the south end of Shubert Alley. Sardi’s provided the capstone for this centralized theatre district.

Shubert Alley’s history for the next twenty-five years is more anecdotal than rich in detail. This is the period when it became the mythical Shubert Alley. Sometime during the Depression, an iron railing fence was constructed to separate the Shubert side from the Astor side. Meanwhile on the northern end, a narrow brick building containing a bus station waiting room was built. Here
New Jersey buses would pull in and pick up passengers. This was one of many bus stations around the city that served interstate commuters: It was not until the Port Authority Bus Terminal was erected between Eighth and Ninth Avenues and 40th and 41st Streets in 1950 that bus service was centralized in one location.

Other changes to the Alley took place over the years. In 1948, two neon-lit Benrus clocks, atop poles, were installed at both the north and south ends. Also that year, the first sign for the Alley itself went up: A painted wooden marker that read “In honor of all those who glorify the theater and who use this short thoroughfare, Shubert Alley.”

According to an article in the New York Herald Tribune (August 21, 1949), “All these monumental events occurred after the war. Before that no one dared to spotlight the famous area except in casual mentions in theater columns. As a rendezvous, Shubert Alley was, and undoubtedly will continue to be, as famous as the lobby of the Astor or the Biltmore. More than one producer...made his first business deals in The Alley. Press agents, drama editors and reporters, actresses and actors, have always considered the dark, cool and wind-swept path as peculiarly their own.”

Around the time of that article, an old extension building in back of the Astor Hotel was demolished. This led to the Alley's first major restructuring. A new edifice designed by Kenneth (clockwise from top left) Sometime during the Depression, a bus terminal occupied part of the Alley. Here, New Jersey buses would pull in and pick up passengers; [from right to left] John Shubert, Lee Shubert, an unidentified man, and Milton Shubert meet in the Alley. One of the neon-lit Benrus clocks, as well as the painted wooden marker, both of which were installed in 1948, are clearly visible; The Alley, looking south, c. 1960, showing architect Kenneth B. Morton’s “modernistic” two-story structure on the left.
B. Norton and described as a “gleaming, modernistic, two-story creation of glass and tile with a store at either end and a backdoor to the Astor in the middle” was scheduled to go up in September. It was to feature stores with show windows facing onto the Alley. The iron railing that had been constructed to divide the space was taken down, and the resulting “new” Alley doubled its width to thirty feet. It must have been around this time that the brownstone adjacent to the Alley’s northern end, which had been the residence of Astor Hotel head Frederick A. Muschenheim, was demolished. He had maintained his residence in the brownstone, the only private house among the many theatres near the Astor, until 1945.

On October 2, 1963, Shubert Alley was closed for a celebration in honor of its 50th anniversary. The event featured Richard Rodgers and Helen Hayes offering their personal memories of Shubert Alley, as well as remarks by Senators Jacob Javits and Kenneth Keating. Muriel (Mrs. J.J.) Shubert unveiled a bronze plaque that had been set into the Shubert Theatre building to replace the earlier painted wooden marker. The wording is almost the same as the original: “Shubert Alley, dedicated to all those who glorify the theater and use this short thoroughfare.” (It should be noted that when Muriel passed away in 1970, she left behind a request that her ashes be scattered in the Alley.)

In 1966 the developer Jerome Minskoff bought the Hotel Astor which he planned to demolish and replace with a new high-rise office tower. The new “Minskoff” building would incorporate a pedestrian arcade running through it (“Minskoff” Alley), a legitimate theatre, a movie theatre, restaurants, an office tower, and a widened Shubert Alley. When the Astor was demolished in 1967, the entire facades of the twin Shubert and Booth Theatres were exposed and visible from Broadway for the first time in history.
In March 1973, two bronze “Shubert Alley” markers (12” x 18”) were imbedded in the sidewalk at either end of Alley. And in 1988 The Shubert Organization hosted a special tribute honoring the 75th anniversary of the Alley and Shubert and Booth Theatres. Chairman Gerald Schoenfeld and President Bernard B. Jacobs presented to an invited audience several performers, including Mandy Patinkin, Patti Lupone, Michael Feinstein, Bernadette Peters, and the cast of Ain’t Misbehavin’. Beverly Sills hosted the event.

Over the years, Shubert Alley served as the location for many events, small and large. Since 1987 it has hosted the annual Broadway Flea Market to benefit Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS. Countless advertising campaigns have used it as background for their products, and numerous motion pictures and television shows have shot scenes there including the film version of Moss Hart’s Act One (1963), Mr. Buddwing (1966), Law & Order SVU, and Smash. From 1989-2007 “Stars in the Alley,” an annual free concert sponsored by the League of American Theatres and Producers (now The Broadway League), was held just before the Tony Award’s to honor that season’s productions. And on one day of each year, a Sunday in August, Shubert Alley closes completely to pedestrian traffic in order to preserve its status as a “private” street.

As Shubert Alley begins its second century, actors, dreamers, stars-to-be, tourists and ordinary pedestrians continue to traverse this street of dreams.
News From the Archive

Productions that Archive researchers have been interested in examining in recent months have included: Are You a Crook?; Ben Hur; The Butter and Egg Man; Cats; Dancin'; Doctor Social; Dreamgirls; Florodora; Fortune's Fool; Girls in Uniform; The God of Vengeance; The Heidi Chronicles; Hello Paris; Hellzapoppin'; The Homecoming; Indiscretions; The Inner Man; Irma La Douce; Jitta's Atonement; John the Baptist; Kiki; Kreutzer Sonata; Lady Luxury; The Light Eternal; Lost in the Stars; Love of Women; Ma Rainey's Black Bottom; Les Miserables; Mitzpah; The Nazarene; New Faces of 1956; Night Must Fall; Nina; Oklahoma!; Passing Shows (various editions); Porgy and Bess; Rose; The Rose of Stamboul; Seinfeld on Broadway; The Shepard King; Sly Fox; Tangerine; Tap Dance Kid; Trio; A Trip to Pressburg; Two Little Brides; The Waltz Dream; Whirl of Society; Winter Bound; Wise Tomorrow; The Witch; Your Arms Too Short to Box With God; Yes, Yes, Yvette; Youth, Ziegfeld Follies of 1934 and 1936.

Personalities that garnered our researchers' attention come from a wide range of the theatre business. Performers include Burnam Bodel, Ray Bolger, Emma Carus, William Davis, Josephine Earle, James Fallon, Minnie Maddern Fiske, Harriet Hoctor, Carolyn Jones, Bertha Kalich, the Three Keatons, Alexander Kotchetovsky, Jimmy Hollywood, Marilyn Miller, Carmen Miranda, Mona Mode, Rita Moreno, Helen Morgan, Helen Nelidova, Al Pacino, Genevieve Pitor, Trude Rittman, the Rocky Twins, Maggie Smith, Meryl Streep, and Leila Waddell. Others in the theatrical professions include producers/directors/choreographers such as Michael Bennett, David Belasco, Busby Berkeley, A.L. Erlanger, Harry Frazee, Charles Frohman, John Golden, Bernard B. Jacobs, Marc Klaw, Marion McClinton, Gerald Schoenfeld, and Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr.; production photographers Jack Buxbaum and Nathan Fine; businessmen the Chalin Brothers and Leo Leslie; costume designers Lou Eisele and William Weaver; theatrical agents Elizabeth Marbury and H.B. Marinelli; architects Benjamin Marshall and Charles D. Wetmore; cartoonist Winsor McCay; composers Arthur Schwartz, John Philip Sousa, and Max Steiner; artist Gerard Sekoto; and Shubert talent/business manager E.R. Simmons.

Among the theatres for which information was sought were the Ambassador, Brooks Atkinson, Ethel Barrymore, Belasco, Bijou, Biltmore, Booth, Broadhurst, Broadway, Coronet/Forrest/Eugene O'Neill, Cort, Maxine Elliott, Forrest (Philadelphia), 49th Street, Gaiety, Globe, Golden, Hippodrome, Hirschfeld, Imperial, Walter Kerr/Ritz, Little/Helen Hayes, Longacre, Lyceum, Majestic, Manhattan Opera House, Mansfield, Morosco, Music Box, National/Nederlander, Palace, Playhouse, Richard Rodgers, Royale/Bernard B. Jacobs, St. James, Shubert (Kansas City), Shubert (NY), Shubert (St. Paul), Neil Simon, Stephen Sondheim/Henry Miller's, Gallo/Studio 54, Wallack's, Virginia/August Wilson, Winter Garden (Club Mardi Gras and Zanzibar Club), and Ziegfeld.
Various topics examined were: the transatlantic aspects of the pre-war music business in Germany; global theatre histories; circus music; copyright law and the performing arts in the first half of the 20th century; E.F.G. Corporation; the Garrick Building Co.; Broadway musicals of the last 25 years; Hollywood adaptations of Broadway musicals; Actors Equity contracts; theatres and saloons on the Bowery; the Jewish community in Syracuse, NY; representations of the city of Paris in Broadway shows; Times Square history; and Yiddish theatre.

Several Classes/Groups visited the Archive for a presentation on our collection and on Shubert history. These included members of the Association for Preservation Technology International (AFTI) and the Broadway League; the cast and crew of A Night With Janis Joplin; and students from Barnard College, Columbia University, and Yeshiva University.

Archivist Reagan Fletcher retired from The Shubert Archive in Fall 2013 after twenty-nine years of service. In April 1985, Reagan was a graduate student in the Performance Studies Department at New York University when he joined the Archive’s internship program working under the supervision of archivist Brigitte Kueppers and director Brooks McNamara.

Reagan arrived just as the Archive was transitioning from ten years of processing and organizing materials, to opening its doors to researchers for the first time. Over the next several years, his responsibilities grew, and he was promoted to Archivist in 1999. His duties included helping researchers, providing information to various Shubert departments, co-teaching introductory classes to theatre students, writing articles for the Archive’s The Passing Show newsletter, and coordinating the decoration of numerous Shubert office spaces. With the Archive staff, he co-wrote the book, The Shuberts Present (Harry N. Abrams, in association with The Shubert Organization, Inc., 2001).

Reagan, who earned an MFA in theatre from Texas Tech University, served as production stage manager for Shubert Alley, a musical revue that celebrated the history of the Shubert Brothers and their shows, and launched the Archive’s opening to the public in 1986. He also acted as production coordinator for The 75th Anniversary Celebration of The Shubert Theatre, The Booth Theatre and Shubert Alley (1913-1988), on October 6, 1988 at the Shubert Theatre; and was the production liaison for Shubert productions of Tru (1989), Lettice and Lovage (1990), The Most Happy Fella (1992), and A Streetcar Named Desire. In addition, during the 1980s and 1990s, Reagan read and critiqued various scripts submitted to the Shuberts and scouted and attended productions, readings and workshops.

Outside of Shubert, Reagan directed several productions off-off-Broadway including 999 B.C., Blue Roads, By Jupiter, Four of a Kind, Mae Time, On the Middle Watch, and The Real Inspector Hound. As an adjunct, he also taught a course on American musical theatre at Brooklyn College and an online theatre-history course.

More than just co-workers, after so many years together Reagan and the rest of the Archive staff are something akin to a family. We miss having him around, but wish him a happy and healthy retirement.
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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