



Sanctuary of downtown Los Angeles Metropolitan Community Church, which was formerly the Belasco Theatre.

## STAGE WATCH

# THEATER FOR SALE—AND IT'S A JEWEL

**W**anna kick off 1985 in style? Have we got a theater for you! The Los Angeles Metropolitan Community Church building at 1050 S. Hill St. downtown is for sale. In an earlier incarnation, it was none other than the Belasco Theatre—then and now a jewel of a proscenium house.

Built in 1926 (a very good year for new theaters), it was described by Times Theater Critic Edwin Schallert on its opening night as "architecturally satisfying . . . rich and replete with an old gold luxuriance . . ." and having "an ample breadth and an adequate degree of intimacy. Nothing ostentatious, though with quality bedecked."

The quality still bedecks.

The theater also can seat 1,000 between its orchestra and sharply banked balcony. It has excellent sight lines; a high, full stage; ornate dome ceiling (richly old gold); orchestra pit; greenroom; a flexible third-floor space (for a potential other theater); a spacious lobby (with the original carpeting still in excellent condition), and an assortment of dressing rooms, rehearsal halls and offices. The price: \$2.1 million.

"We've shown it to a couple of people, but no theater people yet," said Marcia Robbins, who is handling the sale for R. B. Augustine & Co.

That was Monday. Better hurry.

Among events crowding the end of

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Ornate seat detail on aisle reveals theatrical origins of present church.

1984 were a number of other real-estate exchanges and renovations, some still awaiting consummation.

The Center Theatre Group and UCLA, for instance, are "very close" to closing escrow on the Huntington Hartford.

"There are only one or two residual hurdles still to be overcome," the Taper's William Wingate said. "It should happen by the end of the month." The venerable Vine Street house will be renamed the James A. Doolittle Theatre, after its current owner, and Doolittle will retain a five-year option to fill the theater for seven weeks a year.

As for the close of escrow on the Pasadena Playhouse, "It's mechanical at this point," developer David Houk said, "about a week away—two at the most." Houk is committed to opening the Playhouse doors before the end of 1985.

Renovation on the new Henry Fonda Theatre (formerly the Pix) on Hollywood Boulevard is proceeding with only slight delays. The new name goes up in a week and formal dedication—a dinner on the premises with many Fonda friends—is targeted for Feb. 10.

The Plumstead Theatre Society, which has leased the Fonda in eight-week increments from Porman/Nederlanders (who are doing the renovating), hopes to open its first show later that month: Reginald Rose's "Twelve Angry Men," a well-known Fonda favorite.

"We've started casting," Plumstead's Martha Scott said, "and we're working on

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