

THE NEW HUDSON THEATRE

Large Foyer, Triple-Domed Ceiling, and Diffused Lighting—
Stairway of Marble and Bronze at the Left of the Promenade—Balconies Supported by Cantilevers—French Tapestry Decorations.

So many theatres are either now being built or are just now finished in New York that it would be very strange if any one of them could have wholly original features and be different from the other new ones on which just as much energy and thought have been expended. But every one, it is noticed, has some one or two features that distinguish it from the rest. Probably the most prominent features of the Hudson Theatre, which has now been completed and is under the management of Henry B. Harris, are the unusually large foyer, the triple-domed ceiling, and the system of diffused lighting.

The large lobby and foyer together are 100 feet deep and 30 wide, larger than that of any other theatre in New York. Four entrance portals lead to the tiled vestibule, 36 feet wide, 16 feet deep, and 12 feet high. A frieze in green tones rises to a domed ceiling illuminated by the unique scheme of concealed electric lighting introduced with great effect in all parts of the auditorium. The system of lighting buildings in this way was designed by the late Luther B. Steiringer, who devised and carried out the illumination of the Pan-American Exposition at Buffalo. Several experts in concealed lighting have visited the Hudson Theatre in order to see how it was done, and all have expressed themselves as surprised at the thoroughness of the lighting arrangements.

The lobby, access to which is gained through four sets of massive double doors, is what the architects call Graeco-Roman in its general lines. The walls are treated with a wainscoting of verd-antique marble similar to that used in the vestibule. A low frieze in green and old bronze colorings is surmounted by coffered ceiling of stucco rather elaborately modeled after a design suggested by an old ruin in Rome. The ceiling gives forth a flood of light, because in each of the 264 coffers is an electric light of sixteen candle power, the framework being so arranged as to give the maximum of reflection. The brilliancy of this exposed lighting is meant to contrast with the concealed illumination of the auditorium.

The foyer is divided from the lobby by massive doors of bronze, and is more elaborate in treatment than is the lobby. A low wainscoting of wood forms pedestals for ornate pilasters that support the entablature and domed ceiling. All the pilasters are designed and colored in combinations of old ivory, green, and orange. There are six archways between the pilasters, one of them forming the entrance to the balcony stairway. These arches have subdivided mirrors in the style of the famed salon of glass at Versailles.

Midway in the wall on the left is a carved mantel bearing bronze antiques and flanked at both sides by torches of carved wood and bronze. The triple-domed ceiling of Tiffany glass and bronze, framed by conventional ivy bands, gives an effect of airiness and height. The domes are lighted by the concealed arrangement, the whole forming a striking contrast to the brilliancy of the lobby. The portières separating the foyer

from the auditorium are of green velvet trimmed with gold, and form a harmonious combination with the mural decorations.

The same material of which the portières are made is used in the upholstery of the lounges placed beneath the mirrored arches, in the seats of the auditorium, and in the draperies of the boxes. An almost invisible door in one of the panels gives access to a large cloakroom.

The walls of the wide promenade at the rear of the main part of the theatre are wainscoted with panels of stucco, ornamented with classic sculptures. The colors are old ivory, orange, and a luminous bronze green, these tones being the prevailing ones throughout the entire theatre. The promenade is lighted by disks of Tiffany glass set in the paneled squares of the ceiling. At the right beyond portières is the ladies' reception room, which, in its appointments and general appearance, is a distinct departure from the severity of line and ornamentation that characterize the auditorium and its approaches. It is a copy of the boudoirs of the Louis XVI. period, its walls being of mirrors, in which the feminine theatregoers may gaze at themselves from head to foot between every act, if they so wish. The furniture is decorated with French tapestry.

At the left of the promenade a stairway of marble and bronze leads to the balcony. Beneath is the entrance to the men's smoking room, which has walls and a beamed ceiling of Flemish oak, from which hangs a chandelier of iron and copper inlaid with glass. The tables and chairs are of Flemish oak.

As in the new Empire Theatre, the visitor gets a very pleasant impression of lack of obstruction. The balconies are not supported by posts, but by cantilevers. The elliptical formation of the auditorium enables the occupant of every seat in the house to see the stage and even the very top of the proscenium arch. There are four boxes on each side, the facings of the lower tier being formed by a continuation of the verd-antique marble sur-base. They form a part of the proscenium vault, which rests on Roman columns, and is laid out in low panels said to be copied from those in the Golden House of Nero.

The color of the vault is subdued in order to serve as a mellow reflecting surface for the concealed lighting. The ceiling of the proscenium arch is worked out in flowing lines, direct lights being sunk in the stucco to emphasize the design. The coloring is uniform with that of the mural surfaces of the auditorium. The drop curtain is of silk velvet, like that which is used in the upholstery of the theatre.

In addition to the regular main doorways there are twenty-eight exits a number rather larger than that of most theatres. These guarantee safety to the audience, and provide for speedy egress at the close of every performance. All the material in the building is fire-proof, and the whole building is covered by a sprinkler system. The ventilating apparatus is the result of much thought on the part of experts, and fresh air can be brought into the auditorium after having been warmed or cooled, according to the requirements of the weather. The flow of air is rendered well-nigh imperceptible by "mushrooms" under the floor.

As to the outside of the Hudson there is nothing very unusual, as Mr. Harris, according to his statement, thought the inside of much more importance to the public. The building is on the north side of Forty-fourth Street, between Sixth Avenue and Broadway, the theatre proper extending back to Forty-fifth Street. The stage entrance is on the latter street. The facade of the front of the building is four stories high, and is simply treated. The design of the facade in the rear is carried out in severely classic lines.