



DOCUMENTS OF AMERICAN THEATER HISTORY

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Famous American Playhouses
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The man's head became motion as though he had been born with it, and was full of all that artistic grace and representation as to eyes, nose and mouth. There was, in fact, an amazing showing of the things that mechanical skill could accomplish.

The result was a representation that in many ways charmed and delighted the senses of the audience, though it was, from a certain point of view, as if it were a mechanical and artificial thing, nothing was left undone; nothing was omitted that could be included in the act; the act was completely delighted with the richness of Macbeth's hair mass. For a moment or if the imagination were not utterly shocked in the highest sense by the trick and optical display, and that Shakespeare's own poetry and profound story were somehow forced forward it. The audience was very large, and gave frequent manifestations of pleasure and admiration, more frequent than, perhaps, it is accustomed.

Mr. Goodwin at the close of the third act came before the curtain and made a brief speech, in which he said that he thought the audience warranted his confidence of the principle he held that an actor ought not to come before the audience during a performance in private garments. He thanked the audience warmly for the interest they had shown in the performance. People had been saying that there was need of a typical American theatre in New York, he thought they had it in the New Amsterdam. The proprietors of that theatre had been spoken of as speculators, but, he said, all knew to their cost if such a theatre as that was the result of their speculation. To which the audience reacted with a polite outbreak of applause.

The New Amsterdam Theatre is presented as being the first complete carrying out of the idea of the "Art Theatre" throughout a whole building. The aim had been in the intention to produce a "panel effect," in which vines and flowers

were the chief motives. Each of the boxes, for instance, with its decorative representation a flower—a heliotrope, a hellebore, etc., and the same idea is carried out on the curtain. The color scheme is of green, relieved by touches of gold and brown.

The decorations include a large composition over the proscenium arch by the late Robert Blair and A. B. Wenzel, depicting the drama. There has been a liberal use of sculptured decoration in the lobby. There are the two side walls representing scenes respectively from Shakespeare's plays and from Wagner's "Siegfried" drama. On the end are panels depicting Greek drama and "Faust." The front entrance has a lobby on the side walls representing the old and new cities of New Amsterdam with great realism, also in a panel depicting "Progress."

In the grandstand there masses of vines and flowers, with animals, are installed into the balconies, and here, too, is another panel and relief subject. The general reception room shows a rich group effect, with two large decorative panels, "Imagination" and "Creative," and an extremely elaborate display of Carr marble and Irish marble. Smoking and reading rooms are ample in size, and show the same consistency in carrying out the scheme of decoration.

3. HUDSON THEATRE

New York City

Opened October 19, 1903

Ethel Barrymore opened the Hudson Theatre in 1903 with *Cousin Kate*, a play that did not present her to her greatest advantage as an actress, but was mildly successful. This playhouse has had a long and interesting history, and, at the writing of this volume, is still standing on Forty-fourth Street, west of Sixth Avenue. During its history it has been used as a television theater and for radio broadcasting, as well as for commercial theater productions. At the time it was built it was praised for its beauty and practicality.

3. Hudson Theatre

3:1 MISS ETHEL BARRYMORE IN "COUSIN KATE"

A Teacup and Saucer Romeo and
Juliet Play by H. H. Davies.

A Pleasantly Successful Opening of the
Beautiful New Hudson Theatre.

"There certainly are compensations in being old!" exclaimed Miss Ethel Barrymore as Cousin Kate last night at the beautiful new Hudson Theatre. Her hair was braided in a coronet about the top of her head, in a way that was positively middle-aged, though she was only meant to be twenty-nine, but the spirit of girlish well-being was so flush and obvious in her that that shamelessly and admirably friendly first-night audience did nothing but laugh and applaud, and ended by quite breaking up the dialogue, just as they had done at the first night of "Her Own Way," (Miss Barrymore assisting,) when Georgie Lawrence, combing out Miss Maxine Elliott's hair, paid her that pretty compliment about her particular good looks.

It was pretty and cheerful as could be, but when the green and orange and old ivory curtain rang down on the play the saying came back to mind with a new connotation. There certainly are compensations in being old, and when Miss Barrymore has come into them she will give a fuller, more rounded, and far deeper interpretation to such roles as Cousin Kate. And let us hope—indeed, we know!—she will only be more beautiful. . . .

It is impossible to close without a word of rapture on the new playhouse. Its verd-antique, in Graeco-Roman marble, silk plush and metal trimmings, harmonizes admirably with the dull old ivory of the proscenium arch, tricked out with the tridescence of fevile glass. The masked

lights in the golden house coffers and the moons of opulescent luminaries of the foyer ceiling, the constellations of dull incandescence in the ceiling of the auditorium; all combined to suffuse the house with a rich brilliancy never to be forgotten. No richer and more tasteful auditorium is to be found short of the splendid Hofburg Theater in Vienna, with its old crimson, ivory and gold.

The New York *Tribune* devoted an entire article to a description of the playhouse.

3:2 NEW HUDSON THEATRE

Henry B. Harris's Hudson Theatre, the latest addition to New-York's handsome playhouses, will be opened to-morrow night with Miss Ethel Barrymore in "Cousin Kate." The main entrance of the Hudson Theatre is on the north side of Forty-fourth-st., between Broadway and Sixth-ave., the theatre proper extending to Forty-fifth-st., with the stage entrance in that street. The facade of the Forty-fourth-st. building, which is four stories in height, is simply treated in the Renaissance style; the design of the Forty-fifth-st. facade is carried out on severely classic lines.

Simplicity is the architectural keynote of the new theatre. Its special feature is an exceptionally spacious lobby and foyer, a hundred feet in depth and thirty feet wide, the largest of any theatre in the city. Four entrance portals lead to the tiled vestibule, thirty-six feet wide and sixteen feet deep, with a wainscoting of Verde antique marble, twelve feet in height. A frieze in tones of green rises to a domed ceiling illuminated by a unique scheme of concealed electric lights that is introduced in all parts of the theatre. This system was designed by the late Luther B. Steiringer, who devised and executed the illumination of the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo.

The lobby, access to which is gained through four sets of massive double

doors, is Graeco-Roman in its architectural lines. Its walls are treated with a wainscoting of Verde antique marble similar to that of the vestibule. A low relief frieze in green and old bronze colorings is surmounted by a coffered ceiling of stucco elaborately modelled after a design suggested by the wall surfaces in the Baths of Titus at Rome. The ceiling gives forth a flood of light, for in each of the 264 coffers is an electric bulb of sixteen candle power, the frame work being ingeniously arranged so as to give the maximum of reflection. The brilliancy of this exposed lighting is designed as a contrast to the concealed illumination that prevails elsewhere throughout the building.

The box office at the right of the lobby is notable. The marble wall surface formed by the wainscoting is divided into three panels bearing bronze tablets. Supporting a classic entablature are four bronze headed Hermae, the figures simplified to shafts, a motif frequently introduced in Greek temples and early classic buildings.

The foyer, which is divided from the lobby by massive doors of bronze and brass, is more markedly Roman in character and more elaborate in treatment. A low wainscoting of wood forms pedestals for ornate pilasters that support the entablature and domed ceiling, all designed and colored in mellow combinations of old ivory, green and orange, after the manner of Perlezi, one of the first to discover the architectural value of old buildings and tombs of early Roman days and to apply them to the palaces of his period. There are six archways between the pilasters, one forming the entrance to the balcony stairway. These arches are treated with subdivided mirrors in the style of the salon of glass at Versailles. Midway in the left wall is a carved mantle bearing bronze antiques and flanked at either side with torches of carved wood and bronze. An effect of airiness and height is gained by a triple domed ceiling of Tiffany glass and

bronze framed by conventional ivy leafed bands.

The first impression gained on entering the theatre proper is of the absence of pillars—the balconies being supported by cantilevers. The elliptical formation of the auditorium and the manner in which the boxes are arranged gives an unobstructed view of the stage from any seat in the theatre. Every part of the stage, including the top of the proscenium arch, can be seen from the rear of the auditorium. There are four boxes on each side, the facings of the lower tier being formed by a continuation of the Verde antique marble surbases. They form a part of the proscenium vault, which rests on Roman columns and is laid out in low relief panels copied from the Golden House of Nero. Its coloring is subdued, to serve as a mellow reflecting surface for the concealed lighting. The proscenium arch, or stage frame, is of an unconventional architectural pattern, composed of relief frets, bay leaf bands and mosaic panels studded with iridescent glass. The ceiling is worked out in flowing lines, direct lights being sunk in the stucco to emphasize the design. The coloring, although in a lighter tone, is uniform with that of the mural surfaces of the auditorium. A vivid note in the color scheme is furnished by the use of Tiffany glass mosaics in the fronts of the balconies and upper boxes. The drop curtain is of silk velours, similar to that used in the upholstery of the theatre, with ornamentations in green and yellow.

In addition to the main doorways there are twenty-eight exits, a number so unusual as to be worthy of note. This not only guarantees the safety of the patrons of the Hudson Theatre, but provides for their speedy egress at the close of a performance.

A NEW LYCEUM THEATRE

New York City

Opened November 2, 1903

The "old" Lyceum Theatre had been