

## **LOUIS N. JAFFE ART THEATER (YIDDISH ART THEATER/YIDDISH FOLKS THEATER) INTERIOR,**

consisting of the main entrance lobby on Second Avenue, the lobby on 12th Street, the stairways leading to the mezzanine balcony, and the stair landing alcoves (which lead to the basement stairs) beneath these stairs; the mezzanine balcony and upper part of the 12th Street lobby, and the stairways which lead from the mezzanine balcony to the auditorium; and the main auditorium, with its proscenium, side boxes, and ceiling and dome; and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces, including but not limited to, wall and ceiling surfaces, doors, stair railings, chandeliers, exit signs, and attached decorative elements; 181-189 Second Avenue, Manhattan. Built 1925-26; architect Harrison G. Wiseman; Willy Pogany, consultant for interior decoration.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 467, Lot 31.

On December 12, 1989, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as an Interior Landmark of the Yiddish Art Theater, first floor interior consisting of the outer vestibule, lobby, the auditorium, the stage, the staircases leading from the first floor to the balcony floor and all connecting entrance areas; the balcony floor interior consisting of the balcony, the upper part of the lobby, the upper part of the auditorium and ceiling; and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces, including but not limited to, wall and ceiling surfaces, doors, stair railings, and attached decorative elements; and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 29). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. A representative of the owner and lessee appeared and stated that they were not opposed to the designation. Three speakers testified in favor of designation. The Commission had previously received letters in support of this designation.<sup>1</sup>

### **DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS**

#### Summary

The Louis N. Jaffe Art Theater (Yiddish Art Theater/Yiddish Folks Theater) Interior was commissioned in 1925 by Louis N. Jaffe, a Brooklyn lawyer and prominent Jewish leader, who intended it as a permanent home for the Yiddish Art Theater, one of the leading Yiddish "art theater" companies, under the direction of preeminent Yiddish actor Maurice Schwartz. Although the Yiddish Art Theater company performed in the Jaffe Art Theater for only four seasons, this theater remained a Yiddish playhouse (most often as the Yiddish Folks Theater) nearly the entire time between its opening in 1926 and 1945, and was also the site of Yiddish theater revival productions in the 1970s and '80s. The Jaffe Art Theater is one of the most tangible reminders of the heyday of Yiddish theater in New York City in the early twentieth century, particularly along the "Yiddish Rialto" of lower Second Avenue, when this form of entertainment was a significant part of the rich cultural heritage of the Jewish Lower East Side of Manhattan. The elaborate "exotic" design of the theater interior, by the prolific theater architect Harrison G. Wiseman in collaboration with the noted artist and designer Willy Pogany, who served as consultant for interior decoration, incorporates polychromatic ornamentation with a variety of motifs inspired by Moorish, Islamic, and Alhambraic sources, with Judaic references. The interior design reflects contemporary architectural trends of the 1920s, including the search for an appropriate stylistic expression for synagogues and other Jewish institutions, as well as the use of "exotic" styles for theaters. After its initial Yiddish heyday, the theater, under a variety of names, continued to have an incredibly rich cultural history, presenting many different forms of entertainment, including off-Broadway dramatic and musical productions (many of which moved to Broadway), burlesque, dance, concerts, and movies, and was particularly renowned as the off-Broadway Phoenix Theater from 1953 to 1961. In addition, the theater presented the work of many of the most important figures of the twentieth-century Yiddish and English-language stages, including actors, directors, writers, and designers. Today, despite the reconfiguration of some of the interior spaces in its conversion into a complex of movie theaters, the Jaffe Art Theater Interior remains one of the most notable "exotic" polychrome theater interiors in New York City, and displays, particularly in the auditorium ceiling, some of the most remarkable plaster craftsmanship in the city.

### The Lower East Side and Yiddish Theater in New York City<sup>2</sup>

Political events in Eastern Europe and in the so-called Pale of Settlement in western Russia, resulting in pogroms and repressive legislation, led to a massive exodus of Jews (by some estimates one-third of the Eastern European Jewish population) beginning in the early 1880s. In a large wave of immigration to the United States which reached its peak just prior to World War I, nearly two million Jews arrived here; most settled in New York City, and the majority of these immigrants lived at least for a time on the Lower East Side of Manhattan -- the area generally defined as that bordered by the East River, Catherine Street, the Bowery, and East 14th Street. After the turn of the century, New York City had the largest Jewish population of any city in the world, and by 1920 it was estimated that between 25 and 30 percent of the city's population was Jewish. In effect, the Lower East Side was also one of the world's largest ghettos, due to the extremely crowded living conditions of the area's tenements. The Jewish community's center was originally in the vicinity of Canal and Essex Streets, but after the turn of the century the population spread southward, eastward, and northward to Houston Street. After World War I, Second Avenue between Houston and East 14th Streets was considered the heart of the Jewish community in New York.

In contrast to earlier, more established Jewish immigrants, mostly from Central Europe (particularly Germany), these recent Eastern European immigrants assimilated less easily due to economic and social circumstances, customs, and language. Yiddish was the shared language of these Jewish immigrants; a spoken dialect related to middle-high German, with borrowings from other languages, Yiddish is written in the Hebrew alphabet. Once considered a "jargon," Yiddish began to achieve respectability with its usage by European intellectuals in the mid-nineteenth century. In New York City, Yiddish acquired a new status and vigor, especially as related to two of the Jewish community's most important cultural institutions outside the synagogues -- the Yiddish press and the Yiddish theater. The influential Yiddish press, epitomized by the socialistic *Jewish Daily Forward*,<sup>3</sup> played major roles not only in the politics and culture of the community, but also in the development of American Yiddish.

The origins of the modern Yiddish theater can be traced to Jassy, Rumania, around 1876, and slightly later to Odessa, Russia; after a ban by the czar in 1883, Yiddish theater companies accompanied Jewish emigration. By the end of the 1880s, most of the major figures within the Yiddish theater had immigrated to New York City which, by the turn of the century, was established as the world's center for Yiddish theater. Most sources list the first Yiddish theatrical presentation in New York City as *Koldunye* ("The Witch"), a play by Avrom (Abraham) Goldfaden which featured a young Russian actor, Boris Thomashefsky, at the Turnverein at 66 East 4th Street on August 12, 1882. Goldfaden (1840-1908), considered the "father of Yiddish theater," was a Russian poet, playwright, and composer who came to New York City in 1887. Soon after Thomashefsky (1868-1939) formed his own Yiddish theater company, he was joined in competition with companies built around fellow Russian actors Jacob Adler (1855-1926) and David Kessler (1860-1920). Author Nahma Sandrow has stated that "the history of Yiddish theater in New York is the story of the crazy competition between companies";<sup>4</sup> over the years actors were to change companies, companies would often change theaters, and theaters frequently changed names.

New York's Yiddish theaters were first located around the Bowery and Canal, Grand, and Houston Streets, but from the 1920s into the 1940s the Yiddish theater flourished on Second Avenue (between Houston and East 14th Streets), which became known as the "Yiddish Rialto."<sup>5</sup> Lulla Rosenfeld, granddaughter of Jacob Adler, wrote:

*Other managers wondered if the Bowery was not played out. They began to look toward Second Avenue, a wide, clean, prosperous street with no elevated tracks overhead and without the derelicts and saloons of the Bowery. Within a few years, half a dozen theatres had gone up, and Second Avenue, alive and twinkling with the lights of marquees, had become the center of Yiddish theatre in New York.<sup>6</sup>*

At its height in the late 1920s, there were some dozen Yiddish theaters in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and the Bronx, as well as several houses specializing in Yiddish vaudeville. Among the more prominent theaters were the National (111-117 East Houston

Street, demolished); the People's (199 Bowery, demolished); the Grand (Grand and Chrystie Streets, demolished), said to be the first theater built as a Yiddish theater in New York (c. 1903), and soon after was the home of Jacob Adler's company; the Second Avenue (14-22 East 1st Street, demolished), built for David Kessler's company (c. 1909); and the Public (later the Phyllis Anderson, 66 Second Avenue).

The majority of Yiddish theater entertainment was geared to the vast audience of the Lower East Side. Particularly popular in the 1880s and 1890s were unsophisticated melodramas, comedies, and operettas with familiar Jewish character types in stories related to the immigrant experience, as well as vaudeville revues. Much of this theater was referred to as "shund" (roughly translated by Sandrow as "trash"), which was centered around star performers. Periodic attempts were made, similar to those in theater in general elsewhere, to reform and elevate the Yiddish theater. Jacob Gordin (1853-1909), a Ukrainian writer/ playwright who arrived in New York in 1891, had an influence on those seeking a more realistic and educational theater. Adler's company, for example, announced in 1892 that it

*has been reorganized with the aim of driving from the Yiddish stage all that is crude, unclean, immoral, and with the purpose of lifting the Yiddish theatre to a higher level. ... [We] will present to the public only beautiful operas and dramas giving truthful and serious portrayals of life.<sup>7</sup>*

The European "art theater" movement, which began in the 1880s, and particularly, the formation of the Moscow Art Theater in 1898, had a direct influence on both the English-language and Yiddish theaters in the United States, and by the beginning of World War I, American theater had "caught up" with the European theatrical avant-garde. Among the tenets of the "art theater" were realism, ensemble acting, serious dramatic intent, and the crucial roles of the writer and director. The Yiddish theater produced many of the creative figures of the twentieth-century American stage, including actors, directors, writers, and designers, and had a major influence on theatrical form and content. New York was, as well, the source of the majority of the most popular and successful Yiddish plays in the world during the heyday of the Yiddish theater.

### Louis N. Jaffe and his Art Theater Building<sup>8</sup>

In April of 1925, Louis N. Jaffe purchased six lots on the southwest corner of Second Avenue and East 12th Street. Built up with mid-nineteenth-century town houses when this section of the avenue was particularly fashionable, this site had once been part of the estate of Peter Gerard Stuyvesant and had remained in the Stuyvesant/Rutherford family. Stuyvesant's house (1845), located just to the south at No. 175 Second Avenue, was later home to Lewis Morris Rutherford, a lawyer and noted astronomer; Rutherford's son, Stuyvesant Rutherford, had inherited these lots after Stuyvesant's death and after changing his name to Rutherford Stuyvesant. Jaffe bought the houses intending their demolition and the construction of a theater building.<sup>9</sup>

Louis Nathaniel Jaffe (c. 1884-1944) was a Brooklyn lawyer and prominent Jewish civic leader. Born in Russia, he immigrated to the United States around 1899, and received a law degree from New York University and was admitted to the bar in 1906. He represented or served on the boards of numerous Jewish organizations and institutions, including the American Jewish Congress administrative committee, Jewish Memorial Conservatory of Jerusalem, Brooklyn Jewish Center, Center Academy of Brooklyn, Hebrew Free Loan Society of Bensonhurst, Zionist Organization of America, and Congregation of the Sons of Israel. Jaffe organized the Jaffe Art Film Corporation, which made but one Yiddish film, *Broken Hearts* (released in March 1926); this film was directed by and featured Maurice Schwartz, a prominent Yiddish actor who was a founder and director of the Yiddish Art Theater company.

On May 28, 1925, Jaffe filed an application for the construction of a 1252-seat theater building, which also included stores and offices, to the designs of architect Harrison G. Wiseman at an estimated cost of \$325,000.<sup>10</sup> The theater was intended to be the home of Schwartz's Yiddish Art Theater. Jaffe was quoted as saying that he "had once watched a performance at the old Garden Theatre and was so impressed that he promised to build a permanent home for Schwartz's company."<sup>11</sup> Demolition of the town houses was begun in June. The Department of Buildings issued a series of objections including the building's location "partly... within a residence district," the lack of a construction setback eight feet from the property line along Second Avenue, and the necessity of exits along the western side of the

auditorium. After a variance was received, the setback requirement was waived by Second Avenue property owners, and the purchase of an additional lot to the west for the creation of an exit alley, the cornerstone was laid at a ceremony on May 23, 1926, by Olga Rabinovitch, the widow of the Yiddish writer/playwright Sholom Aleichem.<sup>12</sup> Author/playwright Herman Bernstein while chairing the event noted that it was

*of magnitude for Jews in America... . The Yiddish Art Theatre has suffered and fought against heavy odds, but it has to its credit a record of achievement that ranks it easily with the finest theatrical organizations in the world.*<sup>13</sup>

During construction of the theater building, the *New York Times* noted that it was "intended to be the most elaborate art temple of lower New York,"<sup>14</sup> that it was to house the Jaffe Art Film Corporation, a major theater library, and a gymnasium, and that the location was "in a district where beautiful theatres are uncommon enough to excite talk among the citizenry."<sup>15</sup>

Although the theater building was not yet fully completed (the official date was January 8, 1927), the opening performance took place on November 17, 1926. The opening had been postponed a day from that originally planned, and preparations were still being made inside at the scheduled time of the performance. Arriving invited ticketholders found the doors locked and a rather sizable, jostling crowd; but after a half hour, the audience succeeded in opening a door and entering the theater. Together with a host of Jewish dignitaries,<sup>16</sup> they beheld, aside from the splendid new theater, the most elaborate production thus far of the Yiddish Art Theater. *The Tenth Commandment*, Schwartz's musical adaptation of Goldfaden's *Thou Shalt Not Covet* with a cast of seventy-five, featured a ballet by Fokine, avant-garde scenery and costumes by Boris Aronson, and an orchestra conducted by Lazar Weiner. The program notes further delineated one of Louis Jaffe's goals for his theater:

*Of the many reasons which prompted my building the Yiddish Art Theatre, one strikes me as the most significant. It had occurred to me that a certain phase of Jewish life in America was disintegrating. Every one admits that the intimate contact*

*between the Old World and the New as seen in the United States is gradually disappearing. Those Jews who immigrated to this country find themselves vastly separated from their sons and daughters and their grandchildren. The theatre, usually recognized as a bond in the community, has certainly not been a factor in establishing contact between father and son, mother and daughter. It is my hope that the Yiddish Art Theatre will in a certain sense reconcile the new and old generation.*<sup>17</sup>

Later programs included the statement that "this building is owned and was erected by Louis N. Jaffe and leased to Maurice Schwartz, as a home for Yiddish Art and Drama." The lease was reported to have been at a nominal rent, and the completed theater was said to have cost around a million dollars.

#### The Designers and Design of the Jaffe Art Theater Interior

Harrison G. Wiseman (1878-1945), architect of the Louis N. Jaffe Art Theater Building, was born in Springfield, Ohio, and is known to have practiced in New York City from around 1910 to 1939. "Harry G." Wiseman (presumably the same person) had designed Our Lady of Vilna R.C. Church, 568-570 Broome Street, in 1910. Wiseman worked in association with a number of other architects, including Arthur G. Carlson, from around 1915 to 1926, and Hugo Taussig, in the mid-1920s and early 1930s; original Buildings Department drawings and application for Jaffe's building also list the names of [Hugo E.] Magnuson & [Edward W.] Kleinert. Wiseman designed the William Fox Motion Picture Studios (c. 1919-20) at 800 Tenth Avenue. All of Wiseman's other known commissions, over two dozen, were for theaters, many of them neighborhood movie theaters in Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx, including a number for the Loew's chain. His earliest known theater was the Penn (1910), a nickelodeon at 409 Eighth Avenue (demolished). Wiseman's other Manhattan theater commissions included the Union (1913), 505 West 42nd Street (demolished); the Bluebird (1920), 1763 Amsterdam Avenue; the Delancey (1922), 62 Delancey Street; the conversion of Oscar Hammerstein's Manhattan Opera House (1906-07) into the Scottish Rite Temple (c. 1923), 311 West 34th Street; the Loew's Commodore (later the Fillmore East, 1925-26), 105



Second Avenue; the Hollywood (1926), 98 Avenue A; the first John Golden Theater (1926), 202 West 58th Street (demolished); and the Waverly (1937), 325 Sixth Avenue.<sup>18</sup>

Wiseman's design for the exterior of the Jaffe Art Theater Building in a 1920s Moorish Revival style incorporating Alhambraic motifs and Judaic references, consists of a three-story block along Second Avenue faced in cast stone and a taller brick auditorium block behind it to the west along 12th Street. The design of the Jaffe Art Theater Interior (as well as the building's exterior) reflects several different architectural trends of the 1920s. The first of these was the search for an appropriate stylistic expression for synagogues and other Jewish institutions; this exploration turned away from the neo-classical, which had been employed at the turn of the century, and towards those styles that were considered to reflect Jewish origins, such as the Moorish, Byzantine, and Oriental. Another trend expressed in this interior was the interest in "exotic" styles for the design of both theaters and clubs with auditoriums for fraternal organizations. Examples of the former included the numerous lavish movie palaces built across the United States, while an example of the latter was the Shriners' Mecca Temple (later City Center 55th Street Theater) (1922-24, H.P. Knowles, 131 West 55th Street, a designated New York City Landmark), built in a Moorish-inspired design.

Contemporary accounts of the Jaffe Art Theater Building included the *New York Times*' comments that "the facade is fashioned after an old Jerusalem design; the architecture throughout is to be Oriental"<sup>19</sup> and "it is of Palestinian and American architecture, having the appearance of an Oriental temple rather than that of a theatre."<sup>20</sup> Theater critic Brooks Atkinson called it "a pleasing and commodious playhouse, compact in architecture, and decorated inside with Oriental orders. Without being in the least ostentatious, it is strikingly beautiful in its design and realization."<sup>21</sup>

The theater interior as originally built consisted of the rectangular main entrance lobby in the commercial block portion of the building on Second Avenue, a long, narrow lobby on 12th Street flanked by stairways leading to a mezzanine balcony, and the large 1252-seat auditorium with a full balcony. The interior wall surfaces, which evoke a similarity to the cast-stone exterior, are mostly buff-colored painted

faux travertine or textured plaster, and ceilings and certain other surfaces are polychrome and highly ornamented with a variety of motifs inspired by Moorish, Islamic, and Alhambraic sources, with Judaic references. The entrance lobby ceiling has a wide border of ornamented panels with a central medallion, while the long 12th Street lobby ceiling has an extremely intricate mosaic-like diaper pattern of connected circles and floral motifs. Above the exit doors are elaborate trefoil arches with arabesque ornament and central medallions. In the auditorium, the ornamented square proscenium arch is flanked by boxes with vermiculated pointed-arched surrounds inset with colonnettes supporting lambrequin arches. The most outstanding feature of the theater interior is the auditorium ceiling: in the center is a shallow dome with an elaborate wide circular surround, a central medallion with a six-trefoil-pointed "star" within which is set a Star of David and a rosette, and a large, elaborate, double-tiered chandelier; the rest of the ceiling is lavish, intricate, polychromatic plaster honeycomb work composed of strapwork with bossed pendants, faceted eight-pointed stars and rosettes, with a decorative tile-like border along the walls. Most of the designated interior incorporates the original color scheme.

The involvement of noted artist and designer Willy Pogany as a consultant for the interior decoration of the Jaffe Art Theater is cited in the *New York Sun*, the day after the theater opened:

*The Oriental beauty of the interior... was worth a trip downtown. Harrison G. Wiseman, architect, and Willy Pogany, consultant and advisor to Louis N. Jaffe for the decorations, have worked a colorful fantasy of silver, blue, rose, gold and cream into the massive lines of the auditorium. The East Side can match the tastefulness of its own theater against any about Longacre Square.*<sup>22</sup>

Willy (William Andrew) Pogany (1882-1955) was born in Szeged, Hungary, studied engineering and art in Budapest, Paris, and Munich, and immigrated to the United States in 1914 (and later became an American citizen). Pogany first worked as a scenic and costume designer for, among others, the Metropolitan Opera, Fokine's ballet company, and various Broadway productions, but he became widely known as a highly versatile artist for his murals, book and magazine illustrations, portraits, sculpture,

and architectural designs. Beginning in the 1920s, Pogany also became associated as an art director for several of the leading motion picture companies in Hollywood. Murals by Pogany, located in a number of prominent theaters, hotels, and estates, included those at the Ziegfeld Theater (1927, Joseph Urban, demolished); Hecksher Children's Theater (c. 1921, Fifth Avenue and 104th Street), called "Cinderella" and "Sleeping Beauty"; People's House; Royale Theater (1926-27, 250 West 45th Street, a designated New York City Interior Landmark), called "Lovers of Spain"; the Ritz Towers Hotel; the Park-Central (Sheraton) Hotel, called "Arabian Nights"; the Niagara Falls Power Company (c. 1928), called "The Birth of Power"; Ca' d'Zan (John Ringling estate), Sarasota, Florida (1922-26, Dwight James Baum); and Cinderella and Bear Houses at Wynton (William Randolph Hearst estate, 1932-33, Julia Morgan) near McCloud, California. Pogany designed the swimming pool room at the St. George Hotel (located in the Brooklyn Heights Historic District), considered one of the finest in the world at the time. He received the New York Society of Architects' Medal of Honor in 1922, and was considered one of the leading authorities on the color effects of lighting.<sup>23</sup>

During the conversion of the Jaffe Art Theater into a complex of movie theaters in 1990, the orchestra floor level of the auditorium was removed and a new floor level inserted at the height of the stage; two new double stairways were installed to connect this level with the balcony level -- this is now the main movie theater in the complex. The entrance lobby on Second Avenue was substantially rebuilt, with only the original ceiling remaining. Most other aspects of the designated interior remain essentially intact [See Description below]. The plasterwork of the ceiling of the auditorium had been extensively damaged by the partial collapse of the concrete roof above it in 1989, but this has been successfully restored.<sup>24</sup> Today, despite the reconfiguration of some of the interior spaces, the Jaffe Art Theater remains one of the most elaborate "exotic" polychrome theater interiors in New York City, due to the collaboration of Harrison G. Wiseman and Willy Pogany. It displays, particularly in the auditorium ceiling, some of the most remarkable plaster craftsmanship in the city.

#### Maurice Schwartz and his Yiddish Art Theater<sup>25</sup>

[See Appendix]

Maurice Schwartz (1890-1960) was born in the

Ukraine, came to New York City in 1901, lived on the Lower East Side, and began his professional Yiddish acting career in Baltimore. After performing in Cincinnati, Chicago, and Philadelphia, he became a featured actor in David Kessler's Second Avenue Theater. In 1918 Schwartz joined a group of talented young Yiddish actors, including Jacob Ben-Ami, Celia Adler, and Ludwig Satz, in establishing the Yiddish Art Theater. The theater's "manifesto," consistent with the aims of the "art theater" movement and published in 1918 in the *Forward*, included the following goals:

1. *The theater must be a sort of holy place, where a festive and artistic atmosphere will always reign;*
2. *A company of young artists who love beauty must strive to bring the Yiddish theater to a beautiful fulfillment;*
3. *To play good dramas, fine comedies, worthy farces, and nice operettas. If a melodrama must be played, it must have interest and logic;*
4. *Every play must be put on as it should be, and the author should also have something to say about his play. ...*<sup>26</sup>

The Yiddish Art Theater company began at the Irving Place Theater, formerly Amberg's Theater (1888), a German-language theater located at Irving Place and East 15th Street (demolished). Its production of Peretz Hirschbein's *A Favorn Vinkel* ("The Forsaken Nook") in October of 1918 is considered the first performance in New York of a Yiddish "art theater" piece. Ben-Ami broke away from the company the following year and attempted to form another "art theater," the Jewish Art Theater, though it was short-lived. And despite periodic attempts to form other Yiddish "art theaters" over the years, Schwartz's Yiddish Art Theater company was the only one which had a lasting success; it was, as well, one of the longest surviving Yiddish theater companies in the world.

The Yiddish Art Theater performed up until 1950, with an additional attempted revival of the company in 1955. Author David Lifson considers Schwartz "the leading figure in the professional Yiddish theatre in New York from 1918 to 1950";<sup>27</sup> Schwartz remained devoted throughout his career to the Yiddish language and theater despite his occasional forays into film and Broadway. The Yiddish Art Theater, despite its name and original

goals, actually steered a course between traditional Yiddish theater and "art theater"; it was after all a company built around the figure of Maurice Schwartz, who not only remained the star actor of the company, but frequently produced and directed its productions. The company staged more than 150 productions, many of them original Yiddish contemporary works, as well as adaptations and translations, and it was noted for its seriousness of purpose and variety of presentations.

The Yiddish Art Theater moved many times from theater to theater throughout its existence, and also toured around the world. The company performed in the Jaffe Art Theater, essentially built as its permanent home, during only four theater seasons: the inaugural two seasons of the new building from 1926 to 1928, and two later seasons in 1932-34. It is unclear exactly why Schwartz and his company left, but it appears that either Schwartz and Louis Jaffe had a disagreement, or that the company was not doing well enough financially to support this large new theater, or a combination of the two. The *New York Times* noted in 1932 that "it had scarcely grown accustomed to its dressing rooms when a reversal of fortune and lean years followed. The company had to move out of its home and take up fugitive residences...,"<sup>28</sup> while the *Boston Transcript* in 1929 caustically commented:

*The edifice that was constructed especially for his troupe, a few seasons ago, on Second Avenue in New York opened with a flourish of trumpets and subsided to the elegy of muted violins. It was a rococo venture at best, in which business offices smothered the stage; within the auditorium curved the garishness of cinematic splendor, undecided whether to remain Moorish or be frankly converted to a business-like eclecticism. The throngs came, and asked not architecture but a play; a number of indifferent answers, and backstage disagreement, wrote the epitaph. To paraphrase an excellent Jewish proverb, Schwartz returned the engagement ring and was heart-whole and fancy free once more.*<sup>29</sup>

Jaffe conveyed his property to the 189 Second Avenue Realty company in May of 1928, after the end of the theater's second season.

#### Yiddish Theater at the Jaffe Art Theater 1926-45<sup>30</sup>

[See Appendix]

Yiddish theater was performed at the Jaffe Art Theater for nearly the entire period between its opening in 1926 (at the height of Yiddish theater in New York) and 1945 (at the end of the Yiddish theater heyday). The theater changed its name numerous times and housed as many different Yiddish theater companies. Many of the biggest stars and honorable veterans of the New York Yiddish stage, many of them once associated with the Yiddish Art Theater, appeared here: Joseph Buloff, Celia Adler, Bina Abramowitz, Lazar Freed, Berta Gersten, Isidor Cashier, Luba Kadison, Anna Appel, Ludwig Satz, Molly Picon, Tillie Rabinowitz, Misha and Lucy German, Menasha Skulnick, Gustav Schacht, Anna Hollander, Jacob Mestel, Ola Lillith, Edmund Zayenda, and Jacob Ben-Ami. Performances spanned the range of Yiddish theater, from serious dramas by some of the leading Yiddish playwrights, to musical comedies, operettas, and revues.

After the first two seasons of the Yiddish Art Theater's performances, the theater apparently remained vacant for a year. By May of 1929, the theater was known as the Yiddish Folks Theater, and in 1929-30 Ludwig Satz starred in and directed a number of musical plays. Satz (1891-1944) was born in Polish Galicia, arrived in America around 1911, and was one of the original founders of the Yiddish Art Theater in 1918 with Maurice Schwartz. In June of 1930 comedienne Molly Picon (1898-1992), one of the biggest stars of the Yiddish stage, leased the theater and changed the name to the Molly Picon's Folks Theater; she appeared there for the next season, despite the fact that in August of 1930 foreclosure proceedings were initiated on the building; in February, 1931, the property was conveyed to the Prosper Realty Corporation. During the 1931-32 season the theater was leased by Misha and Lucy German, and was called the Germans' Folks Theater. Misha German (d. 1947) was a Russian-born actor/producer who came to the U.S. during World War I and later worked with the Yiddish Art Theater.

Maurice Schwartz and the Yiddish Art Theater returned to their "home" during the two theater seasons from 1932 to 1934. Their first production, I.J. Singer's *Yoshe Kalb*, became one of the greatest successes in the history of the Yiddish theater,

playing some 300 performances over the course of the two seasons, and later traveled to Broadway in an English-language version. Brooks Atkinson, in his review of the play, remarked

*After drifting from pillar to post during the past five years... Maurice Schwartz is back at the Yiddish Art Theatre on Second Avenue, and a Saturday evening in his company is like a house-warming.*<sup>31</sup>

When Schwartz's company vacated the theater in April of 1934, its name reverted back to the Yiddish Folks Theater (as Schwartz retained the sole rights to the name Yiddish Art Theater), and another group finished out the season here. In 1934 the "New York Art Troupe at the Yiddish Folks Theater," another attempt to establish a Yiddish "art theater," was formed

*for the purpose of carrying on the traditions of the better things in the Yiddish theatre and to create a permanent home for our finer artists and a haven for the discriminating theatre-patron... [in] one of the most beautiful and convenient theatres in New York.*<sup>32</sup>

The New York Art Troupe, which lasted only one season, was directed by Joseph Buloff, along with fellow actors Lazar Freed and Jacob Mestel. Buloff (1899-1985) was born in Lithuania, began acting with the famous Vilna Troupe, and was brought to New York by Schwartz to perform with the Yiddish Art Theater in 1926 in its new home; Buloff's career nearly spanned the entire history of Yiddish theater in this building, with his performances here as late as 1975.

The Yiddish Folks Theater was leased in April, 1935, by Menasha Skulnick and Joseph M. Rumshinsky for the following fall season, for musical comedies. Skulnick (1898-1970) was a very popular Yiddish comedian who had first appeared with the Yiddish Art Theater in 1919, and had performed with many companies across the country, including that of Misha and Lucy German in this theater in 1932; Rumshinsky (c. 1882-1956) was a popular and prolific Russian-born composer who created over 100 Yiddish operettas, a number of which were performed in this theater by various companies. A newspaper announcement in May of 1935 claimed that the theater was to become the first all-Yiddish motion picture theater in the world; it is not known

whether or not this occurred, even for a short period, or whether this usage overlapped with Skulnick's two seasons in the theater.

In April of 1937 the theater was leased to the Saulray Theatres Corporation; foreclosure proceedings were initiated in September, the building being held by the Greater New York Savings Bank, and it became a movie theater known as the Century. Despite the effects of the Depression, this theater had been successful thus far in attracting Yiddish theater companies and patrons; the Yiddish theater was, however, going through a period of decline in the 1930s. Commentators have variously attributed this decline to the end of the era of massive Jewish immigration to New York in 1924; the decline in usage of the Yiddish language; the association of Yiddish theater with older generations of Jews and the assimilation of the younger generations into American culture; the move of many Jews from the Lower East Side to other areas such as Harlem, Brooklyn, and the Bronx; and the influence of the movies, and the closings and subsequent conversions of Yiddish theaters into movie theaters (the Public and Second Avenue Theaters were converted around 1930).

During and at the end of its years as the Century Theater, two more seasons of Yiddish theater were produced here. In June of 1940 the theater was leased for the 1940-41 season, again as the Yiddish Folks Theater, under the direction of Jacob Wexler, a noted Yiddish actor and founder of the Hebrew Actors Union (who died soon after in January, 1941), and the management of actress Ola Lillith; they were joined by actors Edmund Zayenda and Ludwig Satz. Molly Picon returned to appear with them in *60 Years of Yiddish Theater* and Maurice Schwartz returned for a special performance of *A Favorn Vinkel*, as a tribute to Satz's career. The Century Theater was "remodelled" and reopened around April of 1941, with *Gone With the Wind*, as a first-run single-feature movie theater. In September of 1944 the theater was purchased by the M.H.R. Realty Corporation under Julius Raynes. Its final season as a Yiddish theater during this period was in 1944-45 as the New Jewish Folk Theater, under the direction of Jacob Ben-Ami (1890-1977), a prominent Russian-born actor of both the Yiddish and English-language stages, who had been one of the original founders of the Yiddish Art Theater in 1918. Ben-Ami, profoundly affected by the wartime



destruction of the European Jewish peoples and their culture and theaters, decided to return to the Yiddish stage because

*I feel very strongly moved to do my part in the perpetuation of Jewish drama and culture... I believe that by producing the best Jewish plays in the Jewish idiom, our theatre can likewise contribute its share to the world's theatrical culture.*<sup>33</sup>

The New Jewish Folk Theater performed two plays, H. Leivick's *The Miracle of the Warsaw Ghetto* and David Bergelson's *We Will Live*, the latter the first Russian play on Jewish life there. By March of 1946 the theater again became a movie theater, now known as the Stuyvesant Theater; it remained the Stuyvesant until 1953.

#### The Phoenix Theater 1953-61<sup>34</sup> [See Appendix]

In the fall of 1953 the Stuyvesant Theater (by then vacant) was leased by a newly created off-Broadway theater company which was to become one of the most important, prolific, and creative companies of the time; both the company and the theater were named the Phoenix Theater. The founders were Norris Houghton, who had experience in theater design and direction, and T. Edward Hambleton, descendant of a wealthy Maryland banking family who had theater management/production experience; Houghton became the artistic director and Hambleton the manager of the Phoenix. Formed initially as a limited partnership company, its partners included such theatrical luminaries as Richard Rodgers, Elia Kazan, Mildred Dunnock, William Inge, and Peggy Wood. The Phoenix Theater was planned as an "art theater"/repertory company, modelled in part after the Lyric Hammersmith Theater in London, which would be freed from the restrictions, both artistic and economic, of the Broadway stage. In their statement of purpose, the theater's founders expressed their desires "to release actors, directors, playwrights, and designers from the pressures forced on them by the hit-or-flop patterns of Broadway," and to give theater patrons "a playhouse where they can see top-flight productions of fine plays with professional casts within the limitations of their budgets."<sup>35</sup> The search for a theater away from the Times Square area led them to this vacant house; Houghton touted the attractiveness of the 1100-seat theater, which was newer than nearly all of the Broadway houses, and its

advantages of location, in terms of transportation and proximity to the 30,000 residents of Stuyvesant Town and Peter Cooper Village. The goal of presenting serious theater with tickets costing only \$1.20 to \$3.00 was to be met through union concessions, a salary ceiling for performers at \$100 a week, and a limited engagement schedule of four weeks per production.

The theater opened in December, 1953, with Sidney Howard's *Madam, Will You Walk*, starring Jessica Tandy and Hume Cronyn. Over the course of eight full seasons in this house, the Phoenix Theater presented an impressive array of American and European theatrical talent, from both the stage and motion pictures; the credits are nearly a "who's who" of 1950s theater. Directors of Phoenix productions included John Houseman, Howard da Silva, Sidney Lumet, Oscar Homolka, Tyrone Guthrie, Michael Redgrave, Eric Bentley, Tony Richardson, and George Abbott. The numerous distinguished actors and actresses with the company included Robert Ryan, Mildred Natwick, Kaye Ballard, Montgomery Clift, Maureen Stapleton, Geraldine Fitzgerald, Nancy Walker, Farley Granger, Viveca Lindfors, Uta Hagen, Siobhan McKenna, Eva LeGallienne, Irene Worth, Eli Wallach, Joan Plowright, June Havoc, Jacob Ben-Ami, Lillian Gish, and Mildred Dunnock. Despite the company's emphasis on established actors, it also formed a reputation for assisting the careers of talented newcomers, some of whom included Tammy Grimes, Joel Grey, Charlotte Rae, Larry Storch, Jerry Stiller, Peter Falk, and Fritz Weaver. The company tended toward classic dramas (by Shakespeare, Chekhov, Shaw, Ibsen, Brecht, Schiller, Eliot, O'Casey, etc.), but it became as well known for its innovative musicals.

The Phoenix Theater was never a profitable venture here after its first critically successful season (which included *The Golden Apple*), and it had periods of failure, success, and change. The second season saw its first major popular hit, the musical revue *Phoenix '55*, and the installation of air conditioning for the very first time so that the house could still be used during the warmest months. Following the fourth season the company was reorganized both as a nonprofit organization and as a permanent repertory company under artistic director Stuart Vaughan. The theater's least successful season (1958-59) was followed by its greatest success, the musical comedy *Once Upon a Mattress* which

launched the career of Carol Burnett. The company later was acclaimed for its productions of Shakespeare's *Henry IV (Parts I and II)* and *Hamlet*, the latter, starring Donald Madden, one of the most successful American presentations of that play to date. After years of deficits, the Phoenix Theater considered its large house to be a burden for its type of theater company, and it moved to a smaller house on East 74th Street in the fall of 1961. The company survived until 1982.

#### Later Incarnations of the Jaffe Art Theater

1961-present<sup>36</sup> [See Appendix]

Following the departure of the Phoenix Theater company in 1961, live theater performances, of widely differing types, were presented in the Jaffe Art Theater for over twenty-five more years, the name of the theater still changing frequently. As the Casino East Theater, it opened in December of 1961 with an Israeli Yiddish revue called *Gezunt un Meshuga*. Changing format, the theater presented the most popular show in its entire history: Ann Corio in *This Was Burlesque*, which lasted here for a full three years and over 1500 performances between March, 1962, and March, 1965 (prior to its move to Broadway). The success of this show apparently inspired the theater's next incarnation as the Gayety Theater, which was Manhattan's only burlesque house at the time (1965-69). Burlesque was followed by nudity, with the opening in June of 1969 of the then-controversial musical *Oh! Calcutta!*; this played at the Eden Theater (again re-named) for over a year and a half, before traveling to Broadway and becoming one of the longest-running shows in New York theater history. *Grease*, the next successful musical production (which opened in February, 1972), also went on to Broadway.

For the next three years the Eden Theater was the home of a number of successful Yiddish theater productions, appropriately so given the origins of the theater (which by that time was one of the few extant Yiddish theater buildings in New York). *Yoshe Kalb*, which had been performed in this same theater to such acclaim in 1932-34 by the Yiddish Art Theater troupe, was revived in October, 1972, and featured Jacob Ben-Ami in his last stage appearance. Jewish Nostalgic Productions, Inc., followed this with three more Yiddish plays (all successful): Sholom Aleichem's *Hard To Be a Jew* and *Dos Groyse Gevins*, and the musical *The Fifth Season*, which were performed by veteran Yiddish actors Joseph

Buloff, Miriam Kressyn, David Opatoshu, Jack Reichzeit, and Bruce Adler. In March of 1975, the building's ownership was officially transferred to the Senyar [Raynes] Holding Company, under Martin Raynes; the Raynes family interests thus have held the property continuously since 1944.

After a brief interlude in 1977 as the 12th Street Cinema, the theater was renamed the Entermedia Theater. The Entermedia company was formed initially with the goal of producing dance, experimental theater, films, and other events. It opened in October of 1977 with Pearl Lang's dance version of *The Dybbuk*, called "The Possessed." Two musicals which had success on Broadway following their stay at the Entermedia were *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas* in 1978 and *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* in 1981. *Taking My Turn* opened in June, 1983, with Margaret Whiting, Cissy Houston, and Marni Nixon, and was fifth in terms of total number of performances at this theater.

M Square Productions leased the theater in 1985 and renamed it the Second Avenue Theater. One last Yiddish revival occurred with *The Golden Land*, performed 295 times beginning in November of 1985, and the musical, *The Chosen*, in November, 1987. In between were the musicals, *Have I Got a Girl for You!* and *Staggerlee*, the latter with Ruth Brown and Allen Toussaint. The theater was closed in 1988 and the interior subsequently was converted into a complex of seven movie theaters by John Averitt Associates, architects; it re-opened in 1991 as the Village East City Cinemas.

The Jaffe Art Theater Building was listed on the National and New York State Registers of Historic Places in 1985 as the "Yiddish Art Theatre."

#### Description

The Jaffe Art Theater Interior as originally built consisted of the rectangular main entrance lobby in the commercial block portion of the building on Second Avenue; a long, narrow lobby on 12th Street flanked by stairways leading to a mezzanine balcony; and the large 1252-seat auditorium with a full balcony. During the conversion of the Jaffe Art Theater into a complex of movie theaters in 1990, the orchestra floor level of the auditorium was removed and a new floor level inserted at the height of the stage (this is now the largest movie theater in the complex with 440 seats), and the entrance lobby on

Second Avenue was substantially rebuilt. Most other aspects of the designated interior remain essentially intact. Interior wall and ceiling surfaces are highly ornamented in a polychromatic scheme (the original colors -- blue, rose, cream, silver, and gold -- have been either restored or re-painted in various sections) with a variety of geometric and floral motifs inspired by the Alhambra and other Moorish and Islamic sources, with additional Judaic references.

The Second Avenue entrance lobby ceiling has a wide border of square and rectangular ornamented panels, a central medallion, and a corbelled frieze. The long 12th Street lobby has painted buff-colored walls of faux travertine, while the ceiling has an extremely intricate mosaic-like diaper pattern of connected circles and floral motifs (re-painted according to the original color scheme), and three circular metal chandeliers. Above the five pairs of new exit doors are original exit signs, elaborate trefoil arches with arabesque ornament and central medallions, and corbels (all re-painted according to the original color scheme). The flanking stairways to the mezzanine balcony, as well as the balcony itself, have wrought-iron railings; beneath these stairs are stair landing alcoves (which lead to the basement stairs) entered through segmental arches. The underside of the balcony has an ornamental border and three medallions of a stylized six-pointed arabesque motif (with new inset canister lights in the center). A new wall (with movie poster boards and entrance to the auditorium) and refreshment counter were installed at the south side of the lobby. Another exit door with its original exit sign is located on the west wall of this lobby. The curved mezzanine balcony ceiling has bordered panels with corner cartouches (four are rectangular and one is square). Four new light fixtures were placed on the balcony fascia to light the ceiling and mezzanine. Small stairways with wrought-iron railings, located at either end of the mezzanine, lead to the auditorium. The walls are faux travertine, while the floors and stairways are carpeted.

In the auditorium, the square proscenium arch is surrounded by panels of geometric and floral ornament; the original stage opening within the proscenium contains a movie screen and is flanked by decorative moldings with blocks and Judaic references. The proscenium is flanked by boxes with pointed-arched surrounds with vermiculated quoins and voussoirs, inset with colonnettes supporting

lambrequin arches. The fascias of the boxes and balcony carry the same design with round-arched ornamental panels and rosettes. The top edge of the box fascias have been extended, and the balcony fascia has been extended with a new parapet, topped by a new railing. The textured plaster walls of the auditorium are mottled bluish-grey, although they were apparently originally buff-colored; the proscenium and boxes have also been re-painted. The seating arrangement within the balcony area, and the parapets separating the upper and lower balcony sections, are original, although the railings are new; this area is flanked by two exit doors on each side, with their original surrounds and exit signs. Exit doors to the mezzanine balcony are new. The new floor level between the balcony and the stage has new seating areas, two new double stairways that intersect the balcony fascia and lead to new aisle ramps, a new north wall below the balcony fascia that has a doorway leading to the 12th Street lobby, and a center ramp that connects with that doorway. The most outstanding feature of the theater interior is the auditorium ceiling: in the center is a shallow dome with an elaborate wide circular surround, plaster fascia grilles alternating with plain panels, a central medallion with a six-trefoil-pointed "star" within which is set a Star of David and a rosette, and a large, elaborate, double-tiered metal chandelier. A projection port and ventilation grilles have been inserted into the fascia panels of the dome. The rest of the ceiling is lavish, intricate, polychromatic plaster honeycomb work with its original colors, composed of strapwork with bossed pendants, faceted eight-pointed stars, and rosettes, with a decorative tile-like border along the walls. New ducts with lighting have been installed at the juncture of the side walls and ceiling.

The plasterwork of ceiling of the auditorium had been extensively damaged by the partial collapse of the concrete roof above it in 1989, but in 1990 the ceiling was successfully restored, cleaned, and re-painted in part. Analysis of the ceiling by the Composition Group, Ltd., revealed that the original ceiling was composed of, over the cast plaster, a complex layering of shellac, yellow ochre paint, silver-colored (probably aluminum) metal leaf, and additional painting and glazing; gold-colored leaf was employed in the dome.<sup>37</sup>

Report prepared by Jay Shockley  
Deputy Director of Research

## NOTES

1. The Commission had previously held public hearings on this interior (LP- 1570) on December 10, 1985 (Item No. 8) and March 11, 1986 (Item No. 6).
2. This section was compiled from the following sources (for the Lower East Side): Ronald Sanders, *The Lower East Side: A Guide to its Jewish Past in 99 Photographs* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1979); Gerard R. Wolfe, *The Synagogues of the New York's Lower East Side* (New York: Washington Mews Books, 1978); and LPC, *Forward Building Designation Report* (LP-1419) (New York: City of New York, 1986), report prepared by Shirley Zavin. (For the Yiddish theater): John W. Frick, *New York's First Theatrical Center: The Rialto at Union Square* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1985); David S. Lifson, *The Yiddish Theatre in America* (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1965); *Manhattan Landbook* (New York: G.W. Bromley, c. 1940s); Fremont Rider, ed., *Rider's New York City: A Guide-book for Travelers* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1923), 88-89; Lulla Rosenfeld, *Bright Star of Exile: Jacob Adler and the Yiddish Theatre* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1977); Nahma Sandrow, *Vagabond Stars: A World History of Yiddish Theater* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977); and *Yiddish Art Theatre, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form* (1985), prepared by Albert J. Winn.
3. Established in 1897, the *Forward* reached a paid circulation of 250,000 in the 1920s.
4. Sandrow, 78.
5. New York's "Rialto," its first major theater district from the 1870s to about 1900, was located just to the northwest, around Union Square and 14th Street.
6. Rosenfeld, 338.
7. Rosenfeld, 263-264.
8. This section was compiled from the following sources: J. Hoberman, *Bridge of Light: Yiddish Film Between Two Worlds* (New York: Schocken Books, 1991); NYC Dept. of Buildings, Plans, Permits and Dockets; New York County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances; *New York Evening Herald*, Nov. 6, 1926; *NYT*: "Theatre Building on Second Avenue" (June 28, 1925), II, 1; "Yiddish Art Theatre for Second Avenue" (Aug. 23, 1925), X, 1; "New Yiddish Art Theatre" (May 10, 1926), 19; "Lay the Cornerstone for Yiddish Theatre" (May 24, 1926), 19; "A New Yiddish Theatre" (Nov. 7, 1926), VIII, 4; and Louis N. Jaffe obit. (Aug. 2, 1944), 15; *Photographic Views of New York City 1870s-1970s* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms Intl., 1981); and "Yiddish Art Theater," *New York Sun*, Nov. 18, 1926.
9. Among the demolished houses, No. 181 Second Avenue was home for many years to George H. Peabody, noted businessman and philanthropist.
10. New Building permit 329-1925.
11. *NYT* (Nov. 7, 1926).
12. Placed inside the cornerstone were a portrait of Abraham Goldfaden and of Peter Stuyvesant. The inclusion of the latter portrait may have been related to a comment Jaffe made, in the article "Plans Yiddish Art Theatre on Site of Peter Stuyvesant's Home" in the *The Real Estate Record & Guide* (Sept. 26, 1925), that Governor Stuyvesant had declared that "the Jews should not be permitted to infest this country." *I thought a Jewish theatre on this very place would be a permanent monument to prove that the Jewish immigrant to this country is a useful citizen and makes a definite contribution to the country. I have answered Peter Stuyvesant 300 years too late, but my answer is none the less conclusive.*
13. *NYT* (May 24, 1926).



14. *NYT* (Aug. 23, 1925).
15. *NYT* (Nov. 7, 1926).
16. These included banker Otto Kahn, financier Felix Warburg, theatrical producer Daniel Frohman, writer Fanny Hurst, playwright Ossip Dymov, musician/conductor Hugo Riesenfeld, Herman Bernstein, editor of the *Jewish Tribune*, Owen Davis, and Robert Milton.
17. Yiddish Art Theater, *The Tenth Commandment* Program (Nov., 1926).
18. The information on Wiseman was compiled from the following: Wiseman obituary, *NYT* (Jan. 14, 1945); Michael Miller, Theater Historical Society; LPC files; and James Ward, *Architects in Practice New York City 1900-1940* (New York: COPAR, 1989).
19. *NYT* (Aug. 23, 1925).
20. *NYT* (Nov. 7, 1926).
21. Atkinson, "New Yiddish Theatre," *NYT* (Nov. 18, 1926), 27.
22. *New York Sun* (Nov. 18, 1926).
23. The information on Pogany was compiled from the following: Rose Henderson, "Willy Pogany Paints Youth," *American Magazine of Art* 19 (1928), 446-449; LPC, *Royale Theater Interior Designation Report* (LP-1373) (New York: City of New York, 1987); "Willy Pogany," *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography* 44 (New York: James T. White & Co., 1962), 88-89; and Pogany obit., *NYT*, July 31, 1955.
24. The repair and re-casting of the plasterwork was performed by Vincent Colletti; cleaning and necessary re-painting was done by Composition Group, Ltd.
25. This section was compiled from the following sources: Weldon B. Durham, ed., *American Theatre Companies, 1888-1931* (New York Greenwood Press, 1987); Lifson; Sandrow; Marjorie D. Candee, ed., "Maurice Schwartz," *Current Biography Yearbook (1956)* (New York: H.W. Wilson Co., 1956), 555-557; and Yivo Institute for Jewish Research files.
26. Cited in Sandrow, 262.
27. Lifson, 313.
28. William Schack, "A Yiddish Group Makes a Comeback," *NYT* (Nov. 6, 1932), IX, 2.
29. "A Wandering Jew and His Yiddish Plays," *Boston Transcript* (May 4, 1929), 12.
30. This section was compiled, in addition to those listed for the Appendix, from the following sources: *Manhattan Address Telephone Directory* (New York: New York Telephone Co., 1929 to 1953); Molly Picon (with Jean Grillo), *Molly! An Autobiography* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1980), 56; Molly Picon Scrapbook, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Billy Rose Theatre Collection; *New York Herald Tribune*, Jan. 9, 1941, and "The Twelfth Street Muse" (Oct. 7, 1953); *New York Morning Telegraph*, Feb. 14, 1941; *New York Post*: "Ludwig Satz Engaged" (June 11, 1940); "Returns to Yiddish Stage" (June 29, 1940); Hyman Goldberg, "'Sunrise' Musical with Ludwig Satz" (Nov. 9, 1940); Dec. 7, 1940; and Apr. 10, 1941; *New York Post*, Mar. 29 and Apr. 11, 1934; *NYT*: William Schack, "The Yiddish Theatre in Travail" (Mar. 30, 1930), VIII, 2; "Molly Picon's Plans" (June 26, 1930), 26; Schack, "Facing a New Season" (Sept. 30, 1930), IX, 2; "Folks Theatre Leased" (May 23, 1931), 13; "7 Yiddish Theatres Open Their Seasons" (Oct. 3, 1932), 15; July 13, 1933; "Prospects for the Yiddish Theatre" (Sept.

17, 1933); Jan 4, 1934; Apr. 25, 1935; Schack, "Second Avenue Comics" (Dec. 1, 1935), XI, 7; "Yiddish Theatre Leased" (June 10, 1940); Ludwig Satz obit. (Sept. 1, 1944); Misha German obit. (Sept. 27, 1947), 15; and Joseph Buloff obit. (Feb. 28, 1985); *New York World-Telegram*, "Soviet Drama at the Yiddish" (May 20, 1935); and Jacob Wexler obit., *Variety* (Jan. 22, 1941).

31. Atkinson, *NYT* (Dec. 18, 1932), 3.
32. New York Art Troupe letter (n.d., c. 1934), Yivo Institute.
33. Ben-Ami, "A New Jewish Theatre," *NYT* (Oct. 1, 1944), II, 2.
34. This section was compiled, in addition to those listed for the Appendix, from the following sources: Richard A. Cordell and Lowell Matson, ed., *The Off-Broadway Theatre: Seven Plays* (New York: Random House, 1959); Weldon R. Durham, ed., *American Theatre Companies, 1931-1986* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989); Michael Feingold, "The Phoenix Theater 1953-1982," *Village Voice* (Dec. 21, 1982), 117, 130; Norris Houghton, "The Phoenix Rises," *NYT* (Nov. 29, 1953), II, 1, 3; Stuart W. Little, *Off-Broadway: The Prophetic Theater (A Documentary History from 1952 to the Present)* (New York: Coward McCann & Geoghegan, Inc., 1972); and Stuart Vaughan, *A Possible Theatre: The Experiences of a Pioneer in America's Resident Theatre* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1969).
35. Little, 54.
36. This section was compiled, in addition to those listed for the appendix, from the following sources: *Daily News*, Apr. 3, 1967; *New York Newsday*, David Firestone, "The Yiddish Rialto's Saddest Farewell" (Aug. 2, 1988), II, 2-5, 24; *New York Observer*, "From Yiddish Shows to 'Andy Warhol'" (Feb 25, 1991); *NYT*: "Theatre: Israeli Revue; 'Gezunt un Meshuga' Opens at the Casino" (Dec. 11, 1961), 42; and "New Role for Gayety" (Mar. 26, 1969); *Variety*: Dec. 13, 1961; July 4, 1973; Oct. 16, 1978; Oct. 9, 1985; and July 22, 1987; *Village Voice*, Jan. 9, 1978; and *Women's Wear Daily*, Sept. 30, 1977, 32.
37. Composition Group, Ltd., "Examination of Interior Painted Ornamentation: the Yiddish Theatre" (Feb. 1989).

## FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and other features of this Interior, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Louis N. Jaffe Art Theater (Yiddish Art Theater/Yiddish Folks Theater) Interior, consisting of the main entrance lobby on Second Avenue, the lobby on 12th Street, the stairways leading to the mezzanine balcony, and the stair landing alcoves (which lead to the basement stairs) beneath these stairs; the mezzanine balcony and upper part of the 12th Street lobby, and the stairways which lead from the mezzanine balcony to the auditorium; and the main auditorium, with its proscenium, side boxes, and ceiling and dome; and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces, including but not limited to, wall and ceiling surfaces, doors, stair railings, chandeliers, exit signs, and attached decorative elements; has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City, and that the Interior or parts thereof are thirty years old or more, and that the Interior is one which is customarily open and accessible to the public, and to which the public is customarily invited.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the Louis N. Jaffe Art Theater (Yiddish Art Theater/ Yiddish Folks Theater) Interior was commissioned in 1925 by Brooklyn lawyer and prominent Jewish leader Louis N. Jaffe and was intended as a permanent home for the Yiddish Art Theater, one of the leading Yiddish "art theater" companies, under the direction of preeminent Yiddish actor Maurice Schwartz; that although the Yiddish Art Theater company performed in the Jaffe Art Theater for only four seasons, this theater remained a Yiddish playhouse (most often as the Yiddish Folks Theater) nearly the entire time between its opening in 1926 and 1945, and was also the site of Yiddish theater revival productions in the 1970s and '80s; that the Jaffe Art Theater is one of the most tangible reminders of the heyday of Yiddish theater in New York City in the early twentieth century, particularly along the "Yiddish Rialto" of lower Second Avenue, when this form of entertainment was a significant part of the rich cultural heritage of the Jewish Lower East Side of Manhattan; that the elaborate "exotic" design of the theater interior, by the prolific theater architect Harrison G. Wiseman in collaboration with the noted artist and designer Willy Pogany, who served as consultant for interior decoration, incorporates polychromatic ornamentation with a variety of motifs inspired by Moorish, Islamic, and Alhambraic sources, with Judaic references; that the interior design reflects contemporary architectural trends of the 1920s, including the search for an appropriate stylistic expression for synagogues and other Jewish institutions, and the use of "exotic" styles for theaters; that after its initial Yiddish heyday, the theater, under a variety of names, continued to have an incredibly rich cultural history, presenting many different forms of entertainment, including off-Broadway dramatic and musical productions (many of which moved to Broadway), burlesque, dance, concerts, and movies, and was particularly renowned as the off-Broadway Phoenix Theater from 1953 to 1961; that, in addition, the theater presented the work of many of the most important figures of the twentieth-century Yiddish and English-language stages, including actors, directors, writers, and designers; and that despite the reconfiguration of some of the interior spaces in its conversion into a complex of movie theaters, the Jaffe Art Theater Interior remains one of the most notable "exotic" polychrome theater interiors in New York City, and displays, particularly in the auditorium ceiling, some of the most remarkable plaster craftsmanship in the city.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as an Interior Landmark the Louis N. Jaffe Art Theater (Yiddish Art Theater/Yiddish Folks Theater) Interior, consisting of the main entrance lobby on Second Avenue, the lobby on 12th Street, the stairways leading to the mezzanine balcony, and the stair landing alcoves (which lead to the basement stairs) beneath these stairs; the mezzanine balcony and upper part of the 12th Street lobby, and the stairways which lead from the mezzanine balcony to the auditorium; and the main auditorium, with its proscenium, side boxes, and ceiling and dome; and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces, including but not limited to, wall and ceiling surfaces, doors, stair railings, chandeliers, exit signs, and attached decorative elements; 181-189 Second Avenue, Borough of Manhattan, and designates Manhattan Tax Map Block 467, Lot 31, as its Landmark Site.

## **APPENDIX: PARTIAL PRODUCTION HISTORY OF THE LOUIS N. JAFFE ART THEATER<sup>1</sup>**

### **YIDDISH ART THEATER 1926-28**

*The Tenth Commandment*, by Abraham Goldfaden; adapt./dir. Maurice Schwartz; design, Boris Aronson; music, Joseph Achron; ballet, Michel Fokine; cond., Lazar Weiner; with Schwartz, Joseph Buloff, Celia Adler, Bina Abramowitz, Lazar Freed (Nov. 17, 1926)

*Mendele Spivak*, by Simeon Yuskewitz (Dec. 23, 1926)

*Her Crime*, by Moissaye J. Olgin; dir. Maurice Schwartz; sets, Boris Aronson; with Schwartz, Berta Gersten, Joseph Buloff, Lazar Freed, Isidor Cashier (c. Feb. 20, 1927)

*Reverend Doctor Silver*, by Sholem Asch (Mar. 3, 1927)

*Yoske Musicanti*, by Ossip Dymov; dir. Joseph Buloff; sets, Boris Aronson; with Maurice Schwartz, Buloff, Berta Gersten, Luba Kadison, Bina Abramowitz, Anna Appel, Isidor Cashier (Mar. 17, 1927)

*Wolves*, by Romain Rolland; adapt. L. Blumenfeld; dir. Maurice Schwartz; with Schwartz, Isidor Cashier, Joseph Buloff, Lazar Freed (c. Mar. 20, 1927)

*Menschen Shtoib*, by Ossip Dymov (Mar. 25, 1927)

*Greenberg's Daughters*, by M. Aderschleger; dir. Maurice Schwartz; with Schwartz, Anna Appel, Berta Gersten, Lazar Freed, Bina Abramowitz (Sept. 5, 1927)

*The Gardener's Dog*, by Lope de Vega; adapt./dir. Boris S. Glagolin; trans. Harry Bransky; with Maurice Schwartz, Lazar Freed, Berta Gersten, Wolf Goldfaden, Abraham Teitelbaum, Ben Zion Katz (Oct. 20, 1927). First U.S. production of Glagolin's "Moscow Revolution Theater."

*The Gold Diggers*, by Sholom Aleichem; adapt. D. Berkowitz; dir. Maurice Schwartz; with Schwartz, Bina Abramowitz, Berta Gersten, Lazar Freed, Anna Appel, Wolf Goldfaden (Dec. 2, 1927)

*On Foreign Soil*, by Areas des Santos [Saint Andrea]; dir. Maurice Schwartz; with Schwartz, Berta Gersten, Bina Abramowitz, Lazar Freed, Wolf Goldfaden (Dec. 23, 1927)

*Alexander Pushkin*, by Valestino Carrera; trans. Abraham Armband; dir. Maurice Schwartz; with Schwartz, Berta Gersten, Anna Appel, Lazar Freed, Wolf Goldfaden, Jechiel Goldsmith (Jan. 26, 1928)

*American Chasidim*, by Chone Gottesfeld; with Maurice Schwartz; Jechiel Goldsmith, Abraham Teitelbaum, Bina Abramowitz, Lazar Freed (Mar. 16, 1928)

[vacant during 1928-29 season] ?

### **YIDDISH FOLKS THEATER 1929-30**

*His Wife's Lover*, by Sheine Rochel Semkoff; music, Abe Ellstein; lyrics, Boris Rosenthal; dir. Ludwig Satz; with Satz, Fanny Lubritzky, Miriom Belavsky, Regina Zuckerberg, Peter Graff, Rebecca Weintraub (Oct. 20, 1929)

*If the Rabbi Wants*, by Nahem Stuchkoff; music, Abe Ellstein; dir. Ludwig Satz; with Satz, Dinah Goldberg (Dec. 22, 1929)

### **MOLLY PICON'S FOLKS THEATER 1930-31**

*The Girl of Yesterday*, by Harry Kalmanowich & Jacob Kalish; music, Joseph Rumshinsky; with Molly Picon, Tillie Rabinowitz, Sam Kasten, Paul Burstein, Leon Gold, Lucy Levin (Sept. 26, 1930)

*The Love Thief*, by Benjamin Ressler; music, Joseph Rumshinsky; lyrics, Nahem Stuchkoff; dir. Jacob Kalish; with Molly Picon, Harry Feld, Sam Kasten, Tillie Rabinowitz, Leon Gold (Jan. 18, 1931)

### **GERMANS' FOLKS THEATER 1931-32**

*One Woman*, by Menachem Baraisho; dir. Misha German; with Misha and Lucy German; Isidor Cashier, Mark Schweid, Sonia Nadolsky (c. Dec. 12, 1931)



*In a Tenement House*, by Harry Kalmanowich; with Misha and Lucy German, Menasha Skulnick, Celia Budkin, Isidor Cashier, Mark Schweid (c. Jan. 23, 1932)

*Pioneers*, by Peretz Hirshbein; with Misha and Lucy German, Menasha Skulnick, Celia Budkin (Feb. 25, 1932)

*Wedding Chains*, by Harry Kalmanowich; dir. Misha German; with Misha and Lucy German, Menasha Skulnick, Isidor Cashier, Celia Budkin, Mark Schweid, Goldie Lubritzky (c. Mar. 26, 1932)

#### **YIDDISH ART THEATER 1932-34**

*Yoshe Kalb*, by I.J. Singer; dir. Maurice Schwartz; sets, Alex Chertov; with Schwartz, Helen Zelinska, Gustav Schacht, Isidor Cashier, Michael Rosenberg, Lazar Freed, Noach Nachbush, Anna Appel, Charlotte Goldstein, Judith Abarbanel (Oct., 1932 - Mar. 1934) (c. 300 perf.)

*Chayim Lederer*, by Sholem Asch; with Maurice Schwartz, Lazar Freed, Anna Appel, Gustav Schacht, Michael Rosenberg, Morris Silberkasten (Nov. 14, 1932)

*Legend of Yiddish King Lear*, by Maurice Schwartz (Nov. 30, 1932)

*Bread*, by Ossip Dymov; with Maurice Schwartz, Isidor Cashier, Wolf Goldfaden, Noach Nachbush, Zelda Gould, Wolf Merkur, Anatole Winogradoff (Dec. 13, 1932). Special performance in honor of Dymov.

*Revolt*, by I.B. Zipor [Tzipur]; dir. Maurice Schwartz; with Schwartz, Isidor Cashier, Morris Silberkasten, Lazar Freed, Leah Naomi, Gustav Schacht, Charlotte Goldstein, Michael Rosenberg, Wolf Goldfaden, Anatole Winogradoff (Jan. 11, 1933)

*Wise Men of Chelm*, by Aaron Zeitlin; dir. Maurice Schwartz; with Schwartz, Lazar Freed, Michael Rosenberg, Anna Appel, Helen Zelinska, Isidor Cashier, Julius Adler, Wolf Goldfaden (Oct. 17, 1933)

*Josephus*, by Lion Feuchtwanger; dir. Maurice Schwartz; with Schwartz, Lazar Freed, Isidor Cashier, Helen Zelinska, Anatole Winogradoff, Wolf Goldfaden, Michael Gibson (Nov. 30, 1933)

*Modern Children* (Jan., 1934)

#### **YIDDISH FOLKS THEATER 1934**

*All in a Lifetime*, by Harry Kalmanowich; with Nathan & Rose Goldberg, Isidore & Anna Hollander (Apr., 1934)

#### **NEW YORK ART TROUPE AT THE YIDDISH FOLKS THEATER 1934-35**

*The Verdict*, by Sophia Levitina; adapt. Z. Fishberg; dir. Joseph Buloff; with Buloff, Luba Kadison, Anna Hollander (Sept. 21, 1934)

*Mechutonim* ("In-Laws"), by Chone Gottesfeld; dir. David Herman; with Joseph Buloff, Anna Appel, Lazar Freed, Jacob Mestel, Judah Bleich, Leah Naomi (c. Oct. 23, 1934)

*Jealousy*, by M. Artzibasheff; adapt. Mark Schweid; dir. Joseph Buloff; with Buloff, Luba Kadison, Judah Bleich, Leib Kadison, Ben Basenko (Dec. 19, 1934)

*60,000 Heroes*, by Benjamin Ressler; dir. Joseph Buloff; with Buloff, Luba Kadison, Lazar Freed, Ben Basenko, Jacob Mestel (c. Jan. 26, 1935)

*Parnosseh* ("Business"), by Chone Gottesfeld; dir. Leon Kadison; with Joseph Buloff, Jacob Mestel, Anna and Isidore Hollander, Leah Naomi, Ben Basenko (Feb. 15, 1935)

*The Power That Builds*, by David Pinski; dir. Leib Lapson; with Joseph Buloff, Lazar Freed, Luba Kadison, Ben Basenko, Helen Bley (Mar. 8, 1935). Benefit for Jewish Folk Schools and Jewish National Workers Alliance.

*Motke Ganef*, by Sholem Asch; with Joseph Buloff, Luba and Leib Kadison, Wolf Barzel, Anna Hollander, Leah Naomi, Helen Bley, Helen Appel, Chaim Schneyur (Mar. 17, 1935)

*Kibbetzers, Inc.* (revue), with Joseph Buloff, Luba Kadison, Judah Bleich, Zvi Scooler, Jacob Bergren, Wolf Barzel, Ben Basenko, Leon Hoffman (May 12, 1935)

**YIDDISH FOLKS THEATER 1935-37**

Yiddish movie theater May - [?] , 1935

*Fishel der Gerutener* ("The Perfect Fishel"), by Louis Freiman; music, Joseph Rumshinsky; with Menasha Skulnick, Ola Lillith, Dinah Goldberg, Irving Grossman, Paul Burstein (c. Sept. 28, 1935)

*Schlemiehl*, by Harry Kalmanowich; music, Joseph Rumshinsky; with Menasha Skulnick, Fania Rubina, Tillie Rabinowitz, Leon Gold, Goldie Eisman, Paula Kleida, M. Feder (c. Sept. 18, 1936)

*Straw Hero*, by Louis Freiman; music, Joseph Rumshinsky; with Menasha Skulnick, Tillie Rabinowitz, Paula Kleida, Leon Gold (Nov. 23, 1936)

*The Galician Rabbi*, by Louis Freiman & Steinberg; music, Joseph Rumshinsky; with Menasha Skulnick, Tillie Rabinowitz, Goldie Eisman (Feb. 12, 1937)

**CENTURY THEATER 1937-40**

Movies (Sept. 9, 1937)

**YIDDISH FOLKS THEATER 1940-41**

*Sunrise*, by Abraham Blum; music, Joseph Rumshinsky; with Ola Lillith, Ludwig Satz, Edmund Zayenda (Oct., 1940)

*60 Years of Yiddish Theater*, with Ola Lillith, Ludwig Satz, Edmund Zayenda, Molly Picon (Jan., 1941)

*A Favorn Vinkel* ("The Forsaken Nook"), by Peretz Hirschbein; dir. Maurice Schwartz; with Schwartz, Ludwig Satz, Celia Adler, Samuel Goldenburg (Feb. 1941). Special performance as testimonial to Satz.

**CENTURY THEATER 1941-44**

First-run English-language movies. *Gone With the Wind* (Apr., 1941)

**NEW JEWISH FOLK THEATER 1944-45**

*The Miracle of the Warsaw Ghetto*, by H. Leivick; dir. Jacob Ben-Ami; with Ben-Ami, Isidor Cashier, Menachem Rubin, Michael Goldstein, Abraham Teitelbaum, Berta Gersten, Dina Halpern, Jacob Mestel (Oct. 10, 1944)

*We Will Live*, by David Bergelson; dir. Jacob Rotbaum

**STUYVESANT THEATER 1946-53**

Movies

**PHOENIX THEATER 1953-61**

*Madam, Will You Walk*, by Sidney Howard; dir. Hume Cronyn & Norman Lloyd; with Cronyn, Jessica Tandy (Dec. 1, 1953) (48 perf.)

*Coriolanus*, by William Shakespeare; dir. John Houseman; with Robert Ryan, Mildred Natwick, Will Geer (Jan. 19, 1954) (48 perf.)

*The Golden Apple*, by John Latouche & Jerome Moross; dir. Norman Lloyd; with Kaye Ballard, Jonathan Lucas, Bibi Osterwald (Mar. 11, 1954) (48 perf.) Moved to the Alvin Theater. N.Y. Drama Critic's Circle Award, best musical.

*The Sea Gull*, by Anton Chekhov; adapt. Montgomery Clift, Kevin McCarthy, & Mira Rostova; dir. Norris Houghton; with Clift, McCarthy, Rostova, Maureen Stapleton, Will Geer, Sam Jaffe (May 11, 1954) (40 perf.)

*Sing Me No Lullaby*, by Robert Ardrey; dir. Paul Stewart; with Beatrice Straight, Richard Kiley, Jack Warden, Jessie Royce Landis (Oct. 14, 1954) (32 perf.)

*Sandhog*, by Earl Robinson & Waldo Salt (after Theodore Dreiser); dir. Howard da Silva; with David Brooks, Jack Cassidy, Alice Ghostley, Betty Oakes (Nov. 23, 1954) (48 perf.)

*The Doctor's Dilemma*, by George Bernard Shaw; dir. Sidney Lumet; with Geraldine Fitzgerald, Roddy McDowall (Jan. 11, 1955) (48 perf.)

*The Master Builder*, by Henrik Ibsen; adapt. Max Faber; dir. Oscar Homolka; design, Boris Aronson; with Homolka, Gene Saks (Mar. 1, 1955) (40 perf.)

*Phoenix '55* [musical revue], music, David Baker; lyrics, David Craig; sketches, Ira Wallach; dir. Marc Daniels; with Nancy Walker, Harvey Lembeck, Marge Redmond (Apr. 23, 1955) (97 perf.)

Marcel Marceau [U.S. debut] (Sept. 20, 1955)

*The Carefree Tree*, by Aldyth Morris; design/dir. Jack Landau; with Farley Granger, Blanche Yurka, Larry Gates (Oct. 11, 1955) (24 perf.)

*The Terrible Swift Sword*, by Arthur Steuer; dir. Fred Sadow; with Conrad Janis, Bud Heller, Richard Shepard (Nov. 15, 1955) (8 perf.)

*Six Characters In Search of an Author*, by Luigi Pirandello; adapt. Tyrone Guthrie & Michael Wager; dir. Guthrie; with Whitfield Connor, Katherine Squire (Dec. 11, 1955) (65 perf.)

*The Adding Machine*, by Elmer Rice; dir. Bill Butler; with Sam Jaffe, Margaret Hamilton, Ann Thomas (Feb. 9, 1956) (6 perf.)

*Miss Julie* and *The Stronger*, by August Strindberg; adapt./dir. George Tabori; with Viveca Lindfors, James Daly, Ruth Ford (Feb. 21, 1956) (33 perf.)

*A Month in the Country*, by Ivan Turgenev; dir. Michael Redgrave; with Uta Hagen, Luther Adler, Mary Morris, Alexander Scourby (Apr. 3, 1956) (48 perf.)

*The Littlest Revue*, by Ben Bagley (with contributions by Eudora Welty, Ogden Nash, Sheldon Harnick, etc.); dir. Paul Lammers; with Tammy Grimes, Charlotte Rae, Larry Storch, Joel Grey (debut) (May 22, 1956) (32 perf.)

*Saint Joan*, by George Bernard Shaw; dir. Albert Marre; with Siobhan McKenna, Dennis Patrick (Sept. 11, 1956) (77 perf.) Moved to the Coronet Theater.

*Diary of a Scoundrel*, by Alexander Ostrovsky; adapt. Rodney Ackland; dir. Alan Cooke; with Margaret Hamilton, Roddy McDowall, Jerry Stiller, Robert Culp, Howard da Silva, Blanche Yurka, Peter Falk (Nov. 5, 1956) (25 perf.)

*The Good Woman of Setzuan*, by Bertolt Brecht; adapt./dir. Eric Bentley; with Uta Hagen, Albert Salmi, Zero Mostel, Nancy Marchand (Dec. 18, 1956) (24 perf.) New York premiere.

*Measure for Measure*, by William Shakespeare; dir. John Houseman & Jack Landau; with Nina Foch, Richard Waring, Richard Easton, Jacqueline Brookes (Jan. 22, 1957) (32 perf.)

*Taming of the Shrew*, by William Shakespeare; dir. Norman Lloyd; with Nina Foch, Pernell Roberts (Feb. 20, 1957) (23 perf.)

*The Duchess of Malfi*, by John Webster; dir. Jack Landau; with Pricilla Morrill, Jacqueline Brookes, Earle Hyman, Hurd Hatfield, Pernell Roberts, Joseph Wiseman (Mar. 19, 1957) (24 perf.)

*Livin' the Life*, by Dale Wasserman & Bruce Geller (after Mark Twain); music, Jack Urbont; lyrics, Geller; dir. David Alexander; with Alice Ghostley, Richard Ide, Timmy Everett, Lee Charles (Apr. 27, 1957) (25 perf.)

*Mary Stuart*, by Friedrich Schiller; adapt. Jean Goldstone & John Reich; dir. Tyrone Guthrie; with Eva Le Gallienne, Irene Worth, Max Adrian (Oct. 8, 1957) (56 perf.)

*The Makropoulos Secret*, by Karel Capek; adapt./dir. Tyrone Guthrie; with Eileen Herlie, Karel Stepanek (Dec. 3, 1957) (34 perf.)

*The Chairs* and *The Lesson*, by Eugene Ionesco; dir. Tony Richardson; with Eli Wallach, Joan Plowright, Max Adrian (Jan. 9, 1958) (22 perf.)

*The Infernal Machine*, by Jean Cocteau; adapt. Albert Bermel; dir. Herbert Berghof; sets, Ming Cho Lee; with June Havoc, John Kerr, Jacob Ben-Ami (Feb 3, 1958) (40 perf.)

*Two Gentlemen of Verona*, by William Shakespeare; dir. Michael Langham; with Diana Maddox, Eric House, Lloyd Bochner (Mar. 18, 1958) (28 perf.)

*The Broken Jug*, by Heinrich von Kleist; adapt. Donald Harron; dir. Michael Langham; with Amelia Hall, Eric Berry (Apr. 1, 1958) (12 perf.)

*La Malade Imaginaire*, by Moliere; dir. Jean Gascon; with Le Theatre du Nouveau Monde of Montreal (Apr. 29, 1958) (8 perf.)

*An Evening of Three Farces*, by Moliere; dir. Jean Gascon & Jean Dalmain; with Le Theatre du Nouveau Monde (May 6, 1958) (8 perf.)

*The Family Reunion*, by T.S. Eliot; dir. Stuart Vaughan; with Florence Reed, Lillian Gish, Fritz Weaver (Oct. 20, 1958) (32 perf.)

*Britannicus*, by Jean Racine; with Le Theatre du Vieux-Colombier, Paris (Nov. 28, 1958) (4 perf.)

*The Power and the Glory*, by Graham Greene; adapt. Denis Cannan & Pierre Bost; dir. Stuart Vaughan; with Fritz Weaver, Eric Berry, Robert Gerringer, Jerry Stiller (Dec. 10, 1958) (71 perf.)

*The Beaux' Strategem*, by George Farquhar; dir. Stuart Vaughan; with June Havoc, Robert Gerringer, Patricia Falkenhain, Eric Berry, Barbara Barrie (Feb. 24, 1959) (16 perf.)

*Once Upon a Mattress*, by Jay Thompson, Marshall Barer, & Dean Fuller; music, Mary Rodgers; lyrics, Barer; dir. George Abbott; with Carol Burnett, Joe Bova, Jane White, Jack Gilford (May 11, 1959) (216 perf.). Moved to the Alvin Theater.

*Lysistrata*, by Aristophanes; adapt. Dudley Fitts; dir. Jean Gascon; with Nan Martin, Donald Madden, Gerry Jedd (Nov. 24, 1959) (24 perf.)

*Pictures in the Hallway*, by Sean O'Casey; adapt. Paul Shyre; dir. Stuart Vaughan; with Mildred Dunnock, Donald Madden, Gerry Jedd, Eric Berry (Dec. 26, 1959) (11 perf.)

*Peer Gynt*, by Henrik Ibsen; trans. Norman Ginsbury; dir. Stuart Vaughan; with Fritz Weaver, Joanna Roos (Jan. 12, 1960) (32 perf.)

*Henry IV, Part 1*, by William Shakespeare; dir. Stuart Vaughan; with Fritz Weaver, Eric Berry, Donald Madden, Edwin Sherin (Mar. 1, 1960) (65 perf.)

*Henry IV, Part 2*, by William Shakespeare; dir. Stuart Vaughan; with Fritz Weaver, Eric Berry, Gerry Jedd, Edwin Sherin, Patricia Falkenhain (Apr. 18, 1960) (32 perf.)

*H.M.S. Pinafore*, by Gilbert & Sullivan; adapt./dir. Tyrone Guthrie; with Douglas Campbell, Irene Byatt (Sept. 7, 1960) (55 perf.)

*She Stoops to Conquer*, by Oliver Goldsmith; dir. Stuart Vaughan; with Gerry Jedd, Donald Madden, Patricia Falkenhain (Nov. 1, 1960) (47 perf.)

*The Plough and the Stars*, by Sean O'Casey; dir. Stuart Vaughan; with Robert Blackburn, Gerry Jedd, Donald Madden (Dec. 6, 1960) (32 perf.)

*The Octoroon, or Life in Louisiana*, by Dion Boucicault; dir. Stuart Vaughan; with Robert Blackburn, Gerry Jedd, Juliet Randall (Jan. 27, 1961) (45 perf.)

*Hamlet*, by William Shakespeare; dir. Stuart Vaughan; with Donald Madden, Joyce Ebert, Patricia Falkenhain (Mar. 16, 1961) (102 perf.)

*The Pirates of Penzance*, by Gilbert & Sullivan; adapt. Tyrone Guthrie; dir. Guthrie & Norman Campbell; with Irene Byatt, Harry Mossfeld, Andrew Downie, Marion Studholme (Sept. 6, 1961) (55 perf.)

#### **CASINO EAST THEATER 1961-65**

*Gezunt un Meshuga* ("Hale and Crazy") (Israeli Yiddish musical revue), music/lyrics/sketches by Moses Nudelman; dir. Shimen Dzigan; with Dzigan, Shmuel Fisher, Shmuel Goldstein, Shifra Lehrer (c. Dec. 9, 1961)

*This Was Burlesque*, dir. Ann Corio; with Corio, Steve Mills (Mar. 1, 1962) (c. 900 perf.). New edition (Dec. 4, 1963) (609 perf.). Moved to the Hudson Theater in Mar., 1965.



## **GAYETY THEATER 1965-69**

### **Burlesque**

## **EDEN THEATER 1969-76**

*Oh! Calcutta!*, by Kenneth Tynan; dir. Jacques Levy; choreog. Margo Sappington (June 17, 1969) (704 perf.).  
Moved to the Belasco Theater in Feb., 1971.

*Grease*, book/music/lyrics by Jim Jacobs & Warren Casey; dir. Tom Moore; with Barry Bostwick, Adrienne Barbeau (Feb. 14, 1972) (128 perf.). Moved to the Broadhurst Theater.

*Yoshe Kalb*, by I.J. Singer; adapt./dir. David Licht; with David Opatoshu, Jacob Ben-Ami [last stage appearance], David Ellis, Miriam Kressyn, Jack Rechtzeit (Oct. 22, 1972) (95 perf.)

*Smith*, by Dean Fuller, Tony Hendra, & Matt Dubey; dir. Neal Kenyon; with Don Murray (May 19, 1973) (18 perf.)

*Hard To Be a Jew*, by Sholom Aleichem; adapt. Joseph Buloff & David Licht; dir. Licht; with Joseph Buloff, Jack Rechtzeit, Miriam Kressyn, Bruce Adler (Oct. 28, 1973) (161 perf.). Obie Award, Licht; Drama Desk Award, Buloff.

*Dos Groyse Gevins* ("The Big Winner"), by Sholem Aleichem; adapt./dir. David Opatoshu; with Opatoshu, Bruce Adler, Miriam Kressyn, Jack Rechtzeit (Oct. 20, 1974) (119 perf.)

*A Wedding in Shtetel*, by William Siegel; music, H. Wohl; dir. Pesach Burstein; with Burstein, Lillian Lux (Feb. 9, 1975) (12 perf.)

*The Fifth Season*, by Sylvia Regan; adapt. Luba Kadison; music, lyrics, Dick Manning; dir. Joseph Buloff; with Buloff, Miriam Kressyn, Stan Porter, Jack Rechtzeit (Oct. 12, 1975) (122 perf.)

## **12th STREET CINEMA 1977**

### **Movies**

## **ENTERMEDIA THEATER 1977-85**

*The Possessed* (dance version of *The Dybbuk*), choreog. Pearl Lang (c. Oct. 18, 1977). First production at the Entermidia.

*The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*, by Larry L. King & Peter Masterson; music/lyrics, Carol Hall; dir. Masterson & Tommy Tune; with Carlin Glynn, Henderson Forsythe, Joan Ellis (Apr. 17, 1978) (85 perf.). Moved to the 46th Street Theater. Tony Awards, Glynn and Forsythe; Drama Desk Awards, Tune and Hall.

*God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater*, by Howard Ashman (after Kurt Vonnegut); music/dir. Alan Mencken; lyrics, Ashman; with Frederick Coffin, Janie Sell, Jonathan Hadary (Oct. 14, 1979) (49 perf.)

*Black Elk Lives*, by Christopher A. Sergel (after John G. Neihardt); dir. Tom Brennan; with Manu Tupou (Mar. 12, 1981) (6 perf.)

*El Bravo!*, by Jose Fernandez & Thom Schiera; music/lyrics, John Clifton; dir./choreog. Patricia Birch; with Aurelio Padron (June 16, 1981) (48 perf.)

*Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, music, Andrew Lloyd Weber; lyrics, Tim Rice; dir./choreog. Tony Tanner; with Laurie Beechman, Bill Hutton (Nov. 18, 1981) (77 perf.). Moved to the Royale Theater.

*Looking-Glass*, by Michael Sutton & Cynthia Mandelberg; dir. David Bell (June 14, 1982) (11 perf.)

*Lennon*, by/dir. Bob Eaton; with David Patrick Kelly, Robert LuPone (Oct. 5, 1982) (75 perf.)

*Goodnight, Grandpa*, by Walter Landau; dir. Jay Broad; with Milton Berle (Mar. 2, 1983) (6 perf.)

*Taking My Turn*, concept/dir. Robert H. Livingston; music, Gary W. Friedman; lyrics, Will Holt; with Marni Nixon, Cissy Houston, Margaret Whiting (June 9, 1983) (255 perf.)

## **SECOND AVENUE THEATER 1985-88**

*The Golden Land*, by Zalmen Mlotek & Moishe Rosenfeld; dir. Jacques Levy; with Bruce Adler, Joanne Borts, Phyllis Berk, Marc Krause (Nov. 11, 1985) (295 perf.)

*Have I Got a Girl for You!*, by Joel Greenhouse & Penny Rockwell; music/lyrics, Dick Gallagher; dir. Bruce Hopkins; with Walter Hudson, Semina DeLaurentis, J.P. Dougherty (Oct. 29, 1986) (86 perf.)

*Staggerlee*, by/dir. Vernel Bagneris; music/lyrics, Allen Toussaint; with Toussaint, Ruth Brown, Adam Wade (Feb. 27, 1987) (150 perf.)

*The Chosen*, by Chaim Potok; music, Philip Springer; lyrics, Mitchell Bernard; dir. Mitchell Maxwell; with George Hearn, Rob Morrow, Richard Cray, Mimi Turque, Lynette Perry (Nov. 15, 1987) (58 perf.)

[Theater closed 1988-90]

## **VILLAGE EAST CITY CINEMAS 1991-**

Movies

### NOTES

1. The appendix was compiled, in part, from the following sources: *The Best Plays of [Annual]*, Louis Kronenberger, ed. (later Henry Hewes) (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1953 through 1987); *The Biographical Encyclopaedia and Who's Who of the American Theatre*, Walter Rigdon, ed. (New York: James H. Heineman, Inc., 1966); Lifson (Appendix A, 576-581); New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Billy Rose Theatre Collection; *New York Times Theatre Reviews 1920-70* (New York: Arno Press, 1971); *Theatre World [Annual]*, Daniel Blum, ed. (later John Willis) (New York: Greenberg Publisher, 1953 through 1987); and Yivo Institute for Jewish Research files.

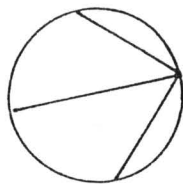
# AUDITORIUM

# MEZZANINE BALCONY


# LOBBIES

EAST 12TH STREET

SECOND AVENUE



LOUIS N. JAFFE ART THEATER  
(YIDDISH ART THEATER/  
YIDDISH FOLKS THEATER)  
INTERIOR  
181-189 SECOND AVENUE  
MANHATTAN

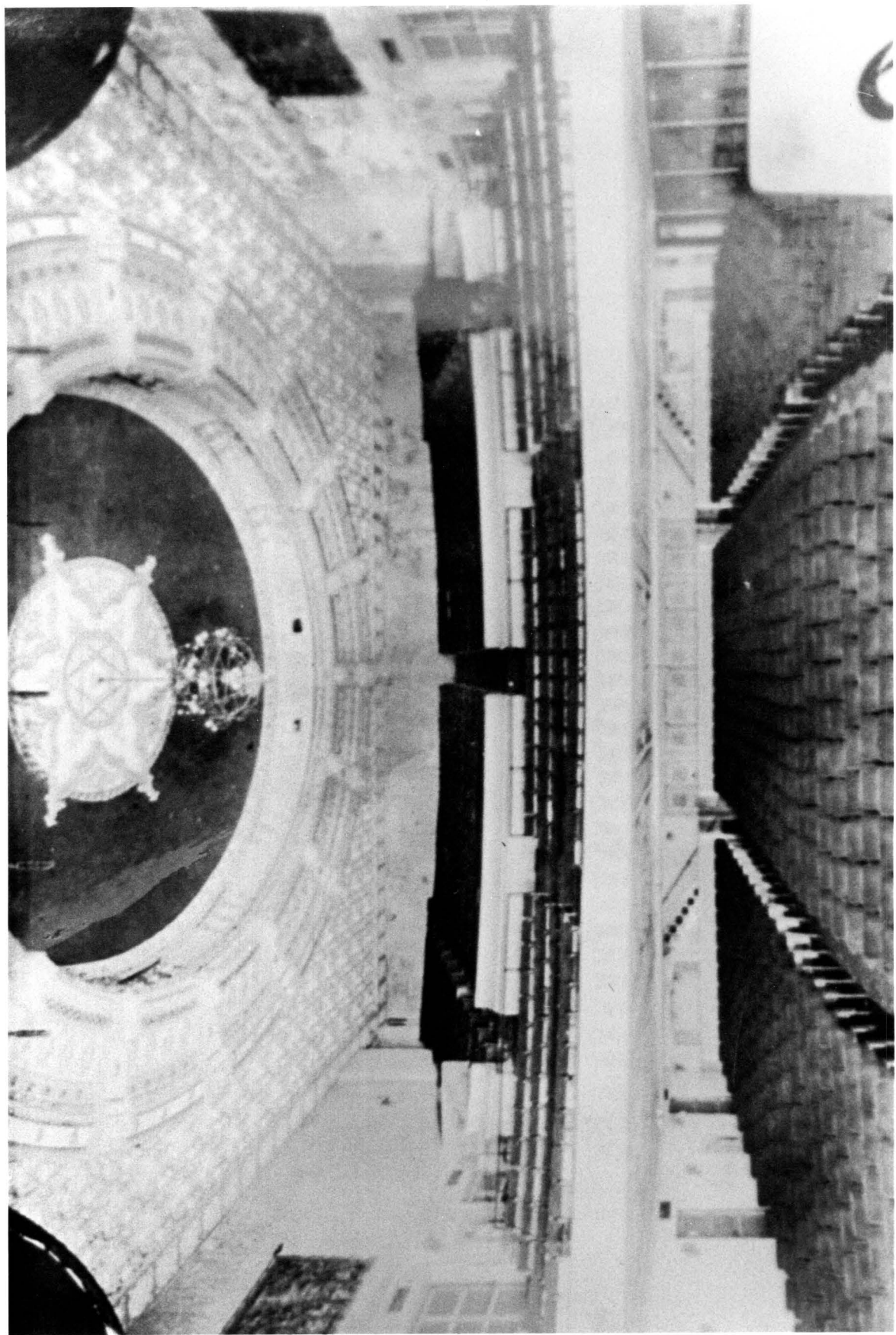
 = NOT PART OF THE  
INTERIOR LANDMARK  
DESIGNATION

NOTE: THIS DRAWING IS NOT TO SCALE

N.Y.C. LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION

DESIGNATED ON FEBRUARY 9, 1993





Louis N. Jaffe Art Theater Interior (c. 1926)  
White Studio Coll., NYPL, Billy Rose Coll.





Louis N. Jaffe Art Theater Interior (c. 1926)  
White Studio Coll., NYPL, Billy Rose Coll.



Proscenium and boxes, Louis N. Jaffe Art Theater Interior  
Photo credit: Carl Forster



Detail of ornament, 12th Street lobby

Auditorium ceiling



Louis N. Jaffe Art Theater Interior  
Photo credit: Carl Forster





12th Street lobby and ceiling detail  
Louis N. Jaffe Art Theater Interior  
Photo credit: Carl Forster



Mezzanine balcony, Louis N. Jaffe Art Theater Interior (c. 1926)  
White Studio Coll., NYPL, Billy Rose Coll.