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A Preliminary Survey of the Historic Plays and Players Theatre: Preservation Issues to Be Addressed

Sarah M. Hyson
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Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Historic Preservation 2005.

Advisor: Roger W. Moss

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Comments

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A Preliminary Survey of the Historic Plays and Players Theatre:
Preservation Issues to Be Addressed

Sarah Maxime Hyson

A THESIS

in

Historic Preservation

Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

2005

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This thesis is dedicated to my husband,
Christopher FitzRandolph Hyson

Thank You for Enduring

I would like to thank the following people for their assistance:

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Linda Gryn
Bruce Laverty
Randall Mason
Roger W. Moss
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Introduction

The challenge addressed here is that of integrating modern theatre technology into an historic theatre while maintaining the historic fabric of the theatre and preserving it for future generations. To do this, a theatre in need of restoration is selected. If a theatre is operating successfully with older equipment it may not need to update, and if restoration work has been completed, or none is needed, then disturbing the historic fabric of the theatre to modernize the systems may not be advisable.

Once the theatre is selected, it must be researched and its needs assessed. The interior will be examined for restoration needs, with particular attention to the auditorium, referred to hereafter as the house. The house is the section of the theatre where the audience spends the most time, and is also most effected by modernization of theatre equipment.

Any past proposals for restoration efforts will be taken into consideration. Recommendations made by any consultants will be used in determining the best course for the theatre.

Finally, the technology in use at the theatre will be evaluated for its impact on the historic fabric of the theatre. If equipment has been modernized it may have been done in a way that can damage the historic fabric. Various options for modernization with minimal impact will be addressed.

Site Identification

This study will focus on the Plays and Players Theatre, located at 1714 Delancey Street in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (Fig. 1). The theatre is situated in the Rittenhouse

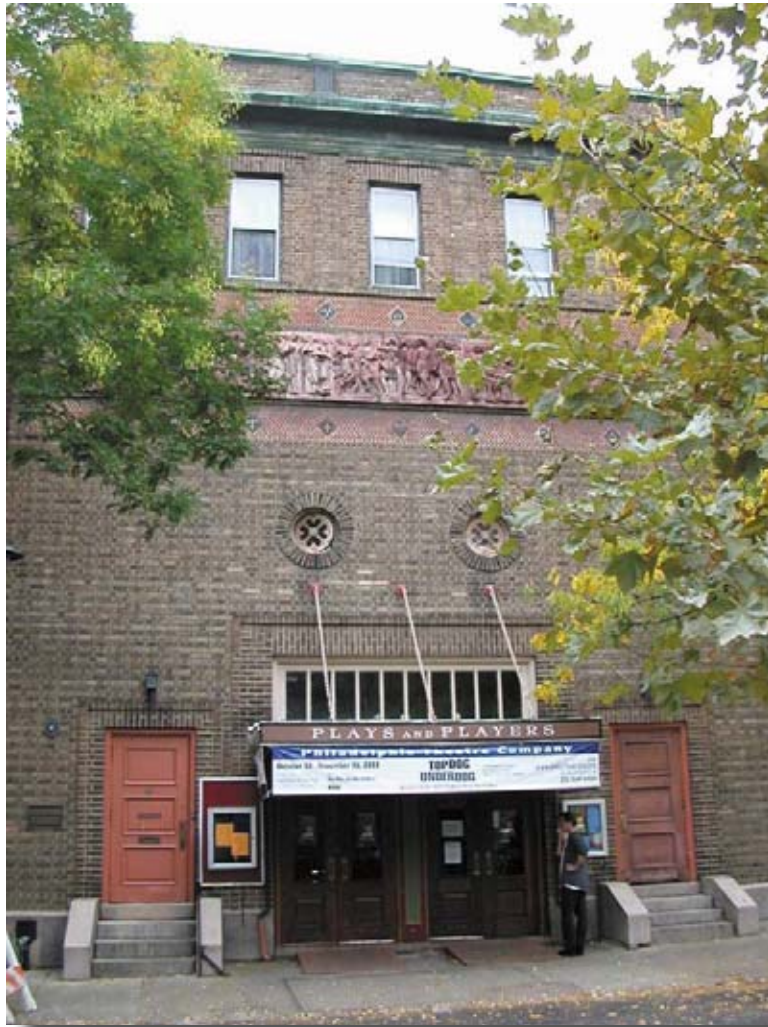


Fig. 1, The Plays and Players Theatre, 1712 Delancey Street

Historic District, less than two blocks south and one block east of Rittenhouse Square. The theatre is in a primarily residential neighborhood, though shops and galleries are located within only a couple of blocks to the north and east.

The Avenue of the Arts, home of the majority of Philadelphia's theatres and entertainment venues, is three blocks east on Broad Street. This places The Plays and Players Theatre close to the main concentration of theatres and thus it enjoys access to various parking facilities, restaurants, and shops, while maintaining a quiet atmosphere not possible to find on busy Broad Street. The theatre is currently in operation as a live

theatre venue and an educational facility for children.

Methodology

The Plays and Players Theatre was selected for this study after viewing several items in the Glazer Collection at the Athenaeum of Philadelphia. The Plays and Players Theatre was chosen for many reasons. There was available archival material on the theatre. Both original blueprints and a wealth of newspaper articles were available. The theatre was in need of restoration work and the owners of the theatre were amicable to the study being conducted. The Plays and Players Organization had already taken the first steps towards restoration of the theatre. They had two separate proposals for the restorations the murals by Edith Emerson and are actively raising funds for the preservation.

Investigation of the theatre began with a visit to the structure. General photographs of the interior spaces were taken at that time to record observations and The Plays and Players organization provided research material including a set of blueprints, two proposals, dated 1989 and 1992, for restoration of the murals, and a building appraisal conducted in 1995. A second visit to the theatre was used for more detailed photography and assessment of conditions of the house.

Subsequent visits involved a brief inspection of other areas of the theatre and further assessment of house conditions with decorative elements more visible due to lighting placement. The lower level and third floor were compared to the original blueprints to determine what, if any, changes had been made to the structure.

Repositories in the Philadelphia area unfortunately yielded little more material than was originally uncovered at the Athenaeum of Philadelphia. The Historic Society

of Pennsylvania, Free Library of Philadelphia, Philadelphia City Archives, and The University of Pennsylvania Architectural Archives were all searched without success. Temple University Archives had a number of articles in their clippings collection; unfortunately, the sources of these articles were generally obscured. The Philadelphia Historical Commission had a series of exterior photographs taken in the 1960s.

History of the Plays and Players Theatre

Little Theatre

To understand the concept of Little Theatre it is important to first understand the theatre of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Two major types of theatres existed, the grand theatres that showed opera and other large scale productions, and the vaudeville houses. The vaudeville houses were the only venue available for the short play with a small ensemble; even then it was shown as a curtain opener and was almost always farcical.

Little Theatre began in France in the late nineteenth century with a small experimental theatre at 37 Elysee des Beaux Arts established by Andre Antoine. The Theatre Libre, or Free Theatre, was not a for-profit undertaking. Antoine started a movement where theatre would be free of commercialization and open to experimentation. The first naturalistic plays were shown at his theatre. A second Little Theatre opened in France, and from there the movement spread to Eastern Europe, England, and in the early twentieth century found its way to America.¹

Controversial theatre was on the rise. Henrik Ibsen and August Strindberg both saw their work banned by their country's police. In Russia, Stanislavski introduced the concept of a director to the stage and founded the Moscow Art Theatre where the works of Anton Chekhov premiered. Shakespeare was performed as always, though sometimes in the form of *Ubu Roi*, Alfred Jarry's parody of *Macbeth*. Oscar Wilde, George Bernard Shaw, Frank Wedekind, and Eugene O'Neill were among the playwrights of the time, the Little Theatre the home for their new forms of theatre. The artistic community saw the rise of DADA, surrealism, and the theatre of the absurd.²

Little Theatres can vary in size. They can have a seating capacity as small as seventy, or a larger one of three hundred. However, intimacy is important in all Little Theatres, and exceeding an audience far beyond three hundred would threaten to dissolve that intimacy between performer and audience. The crucial defining element of a Little Theatre is experimentation. Little Theatre was run almost entirely by amateurs or amateurs on their way to becoming professionals.³

In general, the organization of Little Theatres was consistent. There was a Board of Directors, consisting of a general director, secretary, treasurer, technical director play reader, business manager, stage manager, and actors. Usually, the general director was the main financial contributor to the group, but that is not necessary.⁴

Experimental theatre has been much more prominent in late twentieth century and early twenty-first century America than it was in the early twentieth century. The musical *Hair*, first produced in 1967, broke the theoretical 'fourth wall' of the theatre that separated the audience from the performers by involving the audience in the show. In the 1980s *Angels in America* addressed the issues of homosexuality and AIDs on stage. While Little Theatre continues to exist, it is not the popular exceptionality it once was, and many Little Theatres have faded into history.

Many of the original buildings that housed the original Little Theatre companies still stand, and some have become traditional playhouses. The Plays and Players Theatre in Philadelphia has retained the philosophy original to Little Theatres, while also leasing the theatre space to a traditional theatre company.

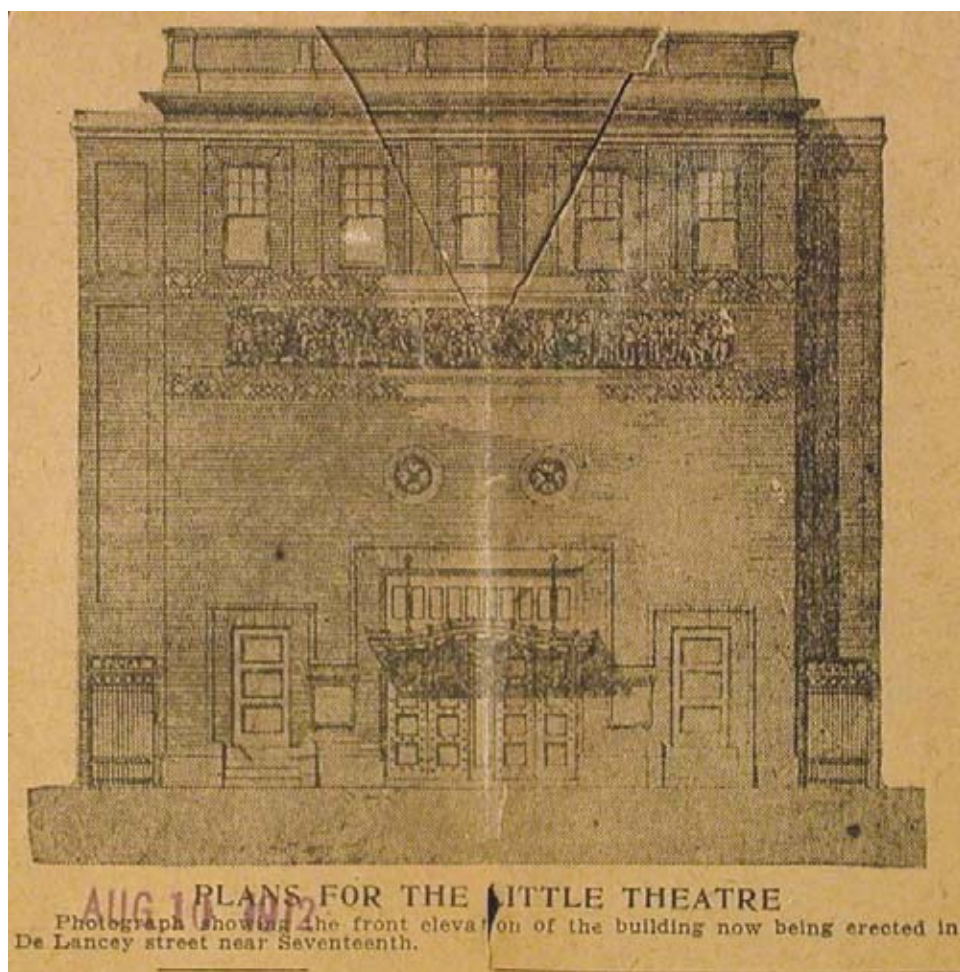


Fig. 2, Original Facade Drawing of the Plays and Players Theatre
Available from the Temple University Urban Archives Clipping Collection

The Construction of the Theatre

The Plays and Players Theatre was originally constructed as the Metropolitan Dramatic School by Mrs. Beulah E. Jay in 1912 (Fig. 2). She purchased three residential properties, 1712, 1714, and 1716 Delancey Street and erected the theatre on the combined lots⁵. It was also known at the time as The Little Theatre, inspired by the 'Little Theatre' movement. Mrs. Jay, however, intended to allow the production of plays by any

playwright who had a play that the theatre deemed worthy, not just those works of the popular writers. This presented a fantastic opportunity for new writers. The extent to which this policy was carried out is unknown. One article prior to the opening of the theatre, quoting Mrs. Jay, proclaimed it would present "unusual" dramatic works and plays for children.⁶

We are not going in particularly for the literary works, as perhaps has been the aim of the Toy Theatre, in Boston, in which the plays of Sudermann, Shaw, Bordeaux, De Musset and Schnitlen, Davis, Herford, Peabody and MacKaye have been given, although the Toy Theatre is a private institute, not a public one run on commercial lines. In Chicago the small theatre enterprise of last winter running plays much as "The Lady from the Sea," "The Learned Ladies," "Gold," "The Stranger," "The Passing of the Torch," "The Maternal Instinct," "The Coffee House" and "June Madness" is said to have dropped \$40,000. This is scarcely my desire.

What I aim to give will be the [good] plays without touching any of the extremes. Any one who thinks he or [she] has a play that is good enough is... welcome to submit it for our [examination] with the assurance of... production if we [approve].⁷

The Plays and Players Theatre opened in March of 1913, then referred to as The Little Theatre, and one year later direction of the theatre was transferred by a lease from Mrs. Jay to actress and director Annie Russell.⁸ Some confusion over a telegraph bill in 1917 led to the advertisement of a sheriff's sale of the theatre's property.⁹

In the 1917 publication *The Little Theatre in the United States*, Constance D'Arcy Mackay identified those theatres in the country that she qualified as Little Theatres. Two theatres from Philadelphia were mentioned, The Little Theatre of Philadelphia and the association Plays and Players, which was in the planning process of building a permanent theatre venue. According to Mackay, "No Little Theatre in the United States has clung more tenaciously to the idea for which it was established than has the Little Theatre of

Philadelphia."¹⁰ She also commented on the already established connection between the Plays and Players and the Philadelphia School of Design.¹¹

Five years after the opening, the murals of Edith Emerson, depicting the Greek myth of Dionysus and Ariadne, were presented to the theatre. In 1922 Plays and Players purchased the theatre. They intended to use the third floor of the theatre as club rooms and boasted an extensive dramatic library. A workshop on experimental theatre where actors took on unusual roles and tested various scenic and lighting environments was to take place almost immediately. The club's previous repertoire of one-act plays would expand to include dramas of multiple acts. The organization also intended to allow other local groups access to the theatre for their performances.¹²

The Plays and Players Organization was founded in 1911 as an amateur theatrical group. Before their acquisition of the Plays and Players Theatre they presented their productions on the second floor of 43 South 18th Street. That facility only provided seating for one hundred and four. All technical work, including direction and design, is done by members of the club. Plays and Players has been in continual operation since its founding, presenting over four hundred plays and continuing to hold classes that introduce children to the theatrical world.¹³ These classes are held in the theatre and enrollment is available to any child who wishes to attend.

Members of the Plays and Players Organization pay an annual membership fee and may attend all Plays and Players functions and productions. They additionally have use of the Bar and Corporation's rooms within the boundaries of the established rules and regulations. The Plays and Players Organization is managed by a board of directors consisting of twelve members.¹⁴ The theatre is currently leased by the Philadelphia Theatre Company to produce a series of performances each year, focusing on contemporary plays and American playwrights.

Amos W. Barnes - The Architect

The designer the Plays and Players Theatre was Amos Warren Barnes (1867 - 1953), architect and engineer in Philadelphia. Barnes was a native of Brooklyn, New York, and received his education, a B.S. and Civil Engineering degree, in 1885 from New York University. His first work was as a civil engineer in New Jersey in the firm of Charles B. Brush. That work was followed by positions with railroad companies in Brooklyn, Michigan, and Chicago. Barnes moved to Pennsylvania to work with the Bridge and Construction Department of Pencoyd Iron Works in Pencoyd, Pennsylvania. In 1893 Barnes opened his own engineering office in Philadelphia. Though he was not listed as an architect in the city directory until 1905, the *Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders Guide* described architecture attributed to Barnes in earlier years. He designed a wide variety of structures, including dwellings, churches, theatres, factories, and office buildings. As a member of the Masonic Temple, Barnes designed both the Roxborough and Manayunk Masonic Halls. He designed at least five theatres in the Philadelphia area, including the Forrest Theatre in 1906, most of which are now closed.¹⁵

Edith Emerson - The Mural Artist

Edith Emerson (1888 - 1981) was a student at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, attending a class taught by Violet Oakley. Oakley was a founding member of the Philadelphia Art Alliance of which Emerson was also a member. The impetus behind designing a series of murals for the Plays and Players Theatre, then known as The Little Theatre, was a preservation effort to keep the theatre operating in the slow economy

brought on by World War I, and most likely a marketing effort to attract theatre patrons. In the spring of 1916 Emerson's plans for the mural were accepted and the paintings were begun and first displayed at the Academy's annual exhibit.¹⁶

The murals were based on the myth of Dionysus, the Greek god of wine and the theatre, and Ariadne, the daughter of King Minos. They were painted in a combination of Greek/Minoan, Eastern, Chinese, and Japanese styles. The legend told of the conquering of the Minotaur by the hero Theseus, who in exchange received Ariadne as his bride. After Theseus abandoned her, the god Dionysus found her and took her as wife. The worship of Dionysus was told to bring about such a frenzy that his followers, the Bacchae, could not differentiate between fantasy and reality.¹⁷

The murals were unveiled at the theatre in 1918 with a grand ceremony. The murals were said to bring the auditorium to equal the actors, making it as grand and decorated as the plays themselves. At the ceremony, Violet Oakley was quoted as saying the murals "set the mood, illuminate the walls, reveal a fine idea, and present a message of art eloquently in a manner novel to theatres in this country."¹⁸

After the commission of the murals for The Plays and Players Theatre, Edith Emerson became Violet Oakley's partner in her studio. Emerson went on to serve as vice-president, president, and curator of the Woodmere Art Museum, her tenure lasting from 1940 to 1978. Her work can be seen at Bryn Mawr College (a portrait of Cornelia Otis Skinner) and at the Haverford School (the sundial panel).¹⁹

Significance

The Plays and Players Theatre represents a mix of two distinct architectural styles. The Arts and Crafts movement is seen in the tile work and simple design of the exterior

and in the lobbies (Fig. 3). The auditorium was designed in the Classical Revival style (Fig. 4). It is one of few remaining continually operating theatres in Philadelphia, staying faithful to the Little Theatre Movement that sparked its construction. The brick and tile exterior, combined with the classical interior create an unusual marriage of two separate schools of architecture.



Fig. 3, Lobby Interior of the Plays and Players Theatre



Fig. 4, House Interior of the Plays and Players Theatre

The Plays and Players Theatre was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on March 14, 1973, and on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places on October 27, 1970 and February 8, 1995, as an individual structure and as part of the Rittenhouse Historic District respectively (Appendix B).²⁰

When the Plays and Players organization purchased The Little Theatre it merged the only two organizations for Little Theatre in Philadelphia, and now remains as the sole surviving example of Little Theatre in the city.

Description of Theatre

Physical Description of Theatre, Both Exterior and Interior

The Plays and Players Theatre is a three-story, three-bay tapestry-brick structure, constructed in English bond with alternating course of headers and stretchers above a granite base. The main doors, a pair of double doors are located at the center of the facade. The original doors had four wooden panels, though now they only retain the lowest panel and the upper three have been replaced by a single glass panel. Above the main doors is a ten light transom. Between the transom and main doors, a marquee is suspended by three chains affixed to ornamental lion heads. On either side of the main



Fig. 5, Exterior of the Plays and Players Theatre

doors are symmetrical side doors, reached by four granite stairs. The side doors are three panel wooden doors (Fig. 5).

The second story has two round windows that open into the office; each window with glass in a four leaf clover design. Above the windows, separating the second and third stories, are two decorative bands of brick in a herringbone pattern with diamond shaped ornamental tiles. The bands sit below and above a bas relief terra cotta frieze with figures in a Greek style (Fig. 6). The artist of this sculpting is unknown.

The third story contains three one over one double-hung sash windows. Above the windows is a pressed metal entablature showing extensive patina. The entablature leads to a flat roof.



Fig. 6, Exterior, Frieze, decorative tile work, and circular windows

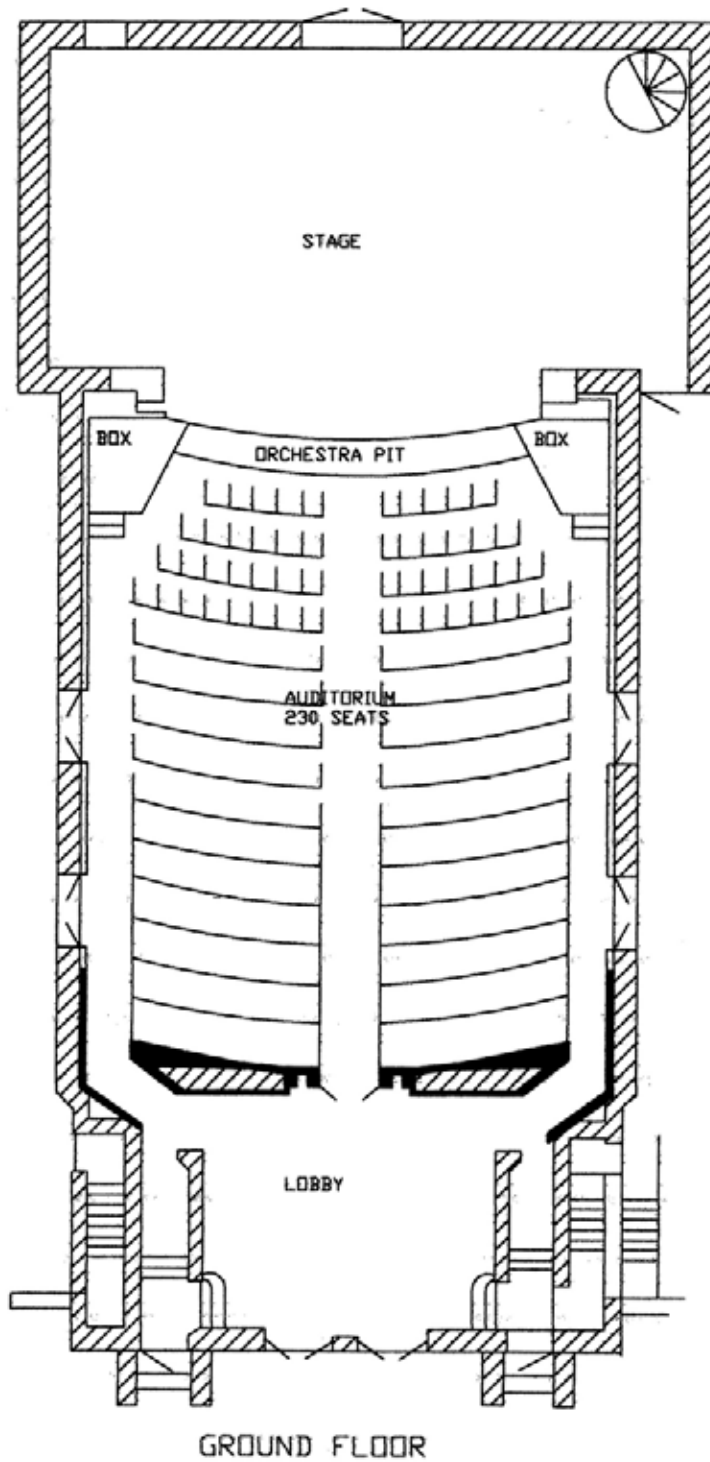
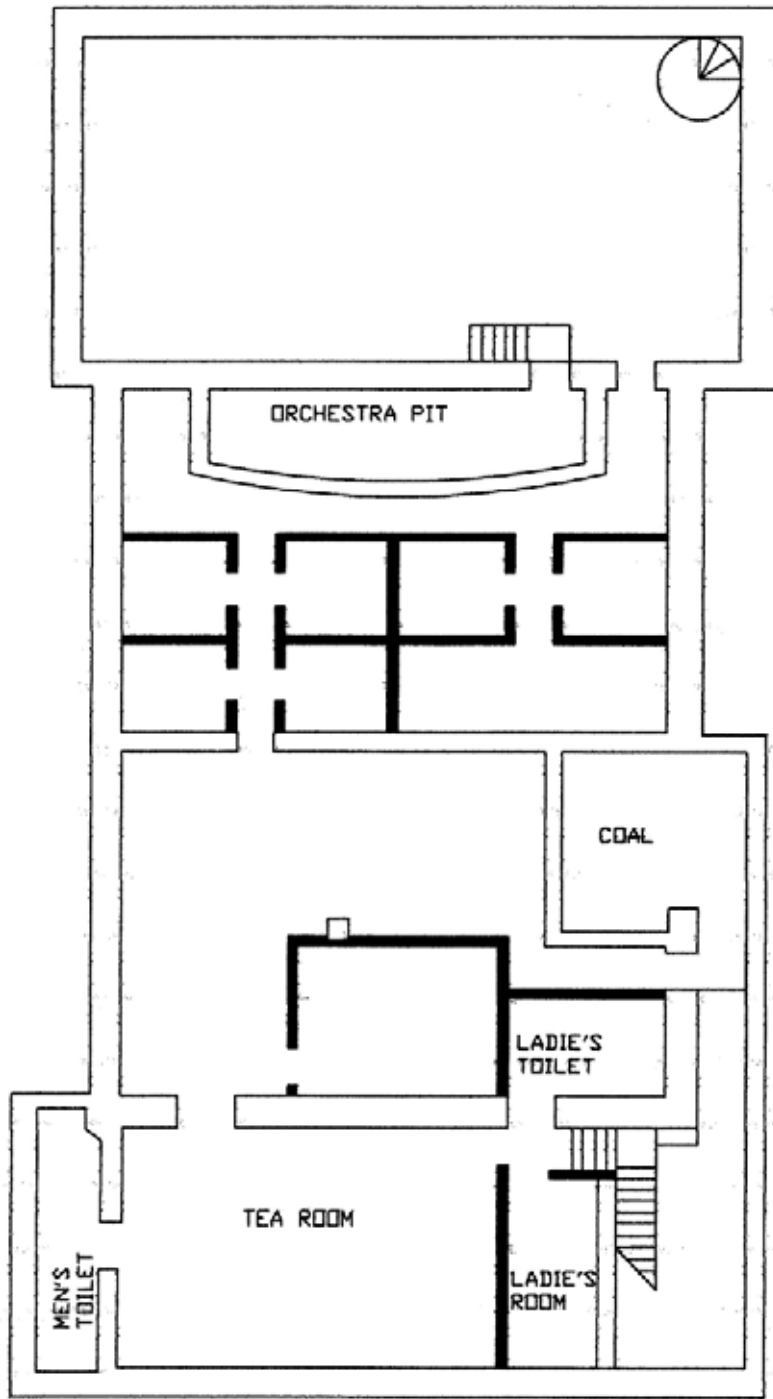


Fig. 7, Ground Floor Plan. Drawing by Sarah Maxime Hyson based on original blueprints by Amos W. Barnes, available from the Plays and Players Theatre Archives.



BASEMENT PLAN

Fig. 8, Basement Plan. Drawing by Sarah Maxime Hyson based on original blueprints by Amos W. Barnes, available from the Plays and Players Theatre Archives.

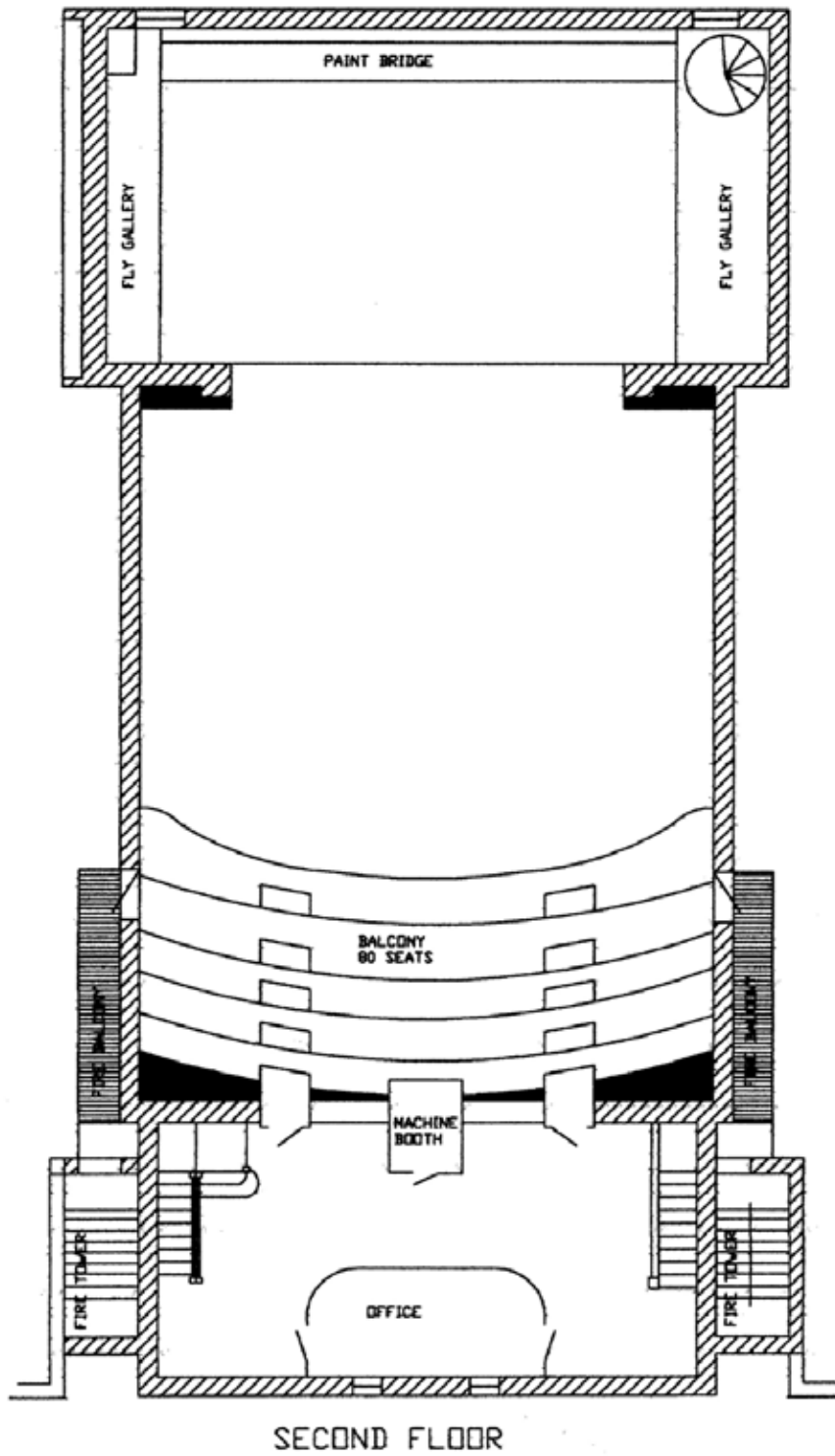


Fig. 9, Second Floor Plan. Drawing by Sarah Maxime Hyson based on original blueprints by Amos W. Barnes, available from the Plays and Players Theatre Archives.

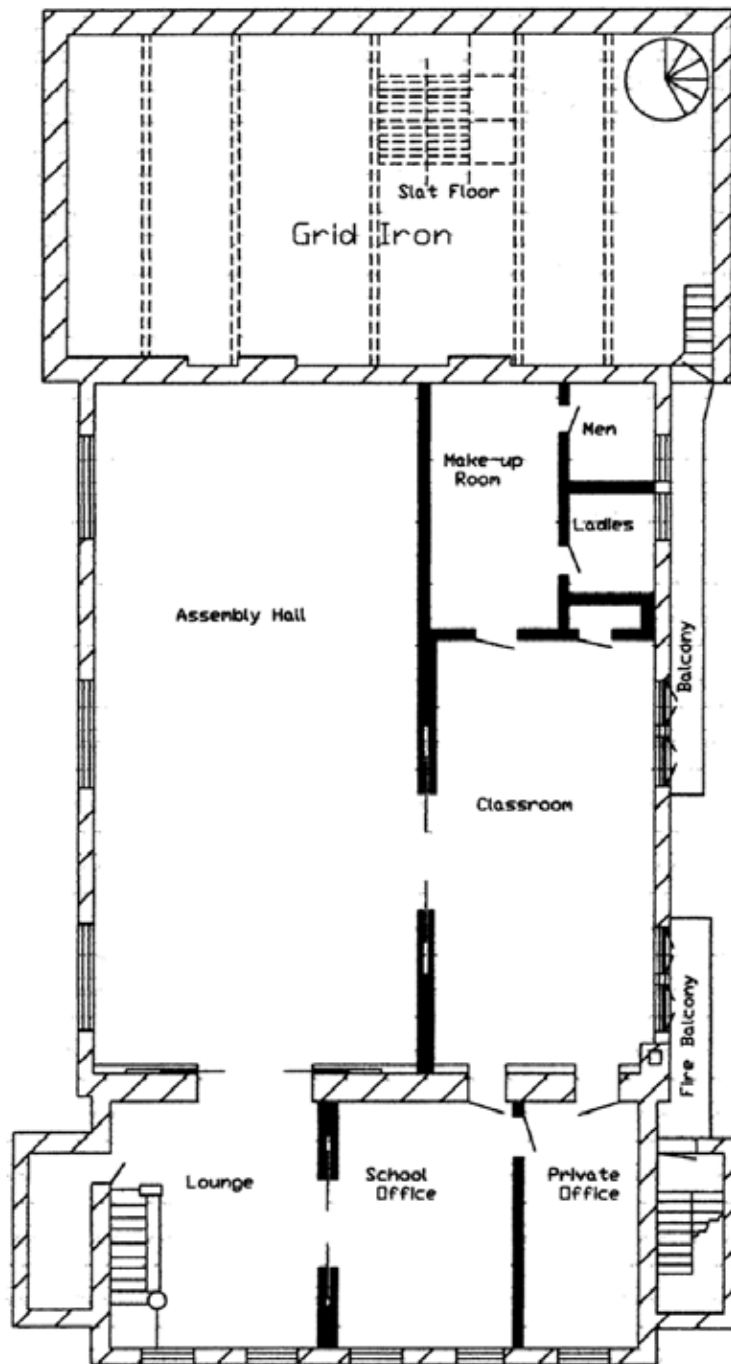


Fig. 10, Third Floor Plan. Drawing by Sarah Maxime Hyson based on original blueprints by Amos W. Barnes, available from the Plays and Players Theatre Archives.

THIRD FLOOR

Patrons enter the theatre through the pair of main double doors. Once in the lobby, there are two arched doorways to the right and left leading to the stairs (Fig. 7). The stairs to the right lead both down to the basement level and up to the balcony level (Fig. 8 and 9). The stairs on the left lead up to the balcony level, and then to the third floor (Fig. 10). Beyond the doorways are two windows. The left window opens into the box office. The right window is behind a concession counter. Another set of arched doorways lead to short hallways providing access to the box office and concession office and to small storage space. The lobby is faced in the same brick as the exterior with the same decorative tile that appears in the bands below and above the frieze (Fig. 11).

The entrance to the main auditorium, or house, is located directly opposite the main doors on the lobby level. The doors opening to the house mimic the main doors, though the outer two doors are false. Once in the house there are seating platforms



Fig. 11, Decorative Tile in Lobby



Fig. 12, *Above Theatre Aisle* Figure 13, *Below Proscenium Arch*



on either side that step down to a gently raked seating area. The floor is wood, with a commercial grade carpet runner down the center aisle (Fig. 12). The stage is directly ahead and has a wood paneled apron that projects out from the proscenium and angles back on either side to meet the proscenium arch. The arch is rectangular in shape with decorative moulding (Fig. 13).

The Emerson murals are numbered here according to the progression of the story of Dionysus as told in the murals (Fig. 14, 15, 16). Above the arch is Panel Five, one of the seven original Emerson murals on the same theme, depicting the marriage procession

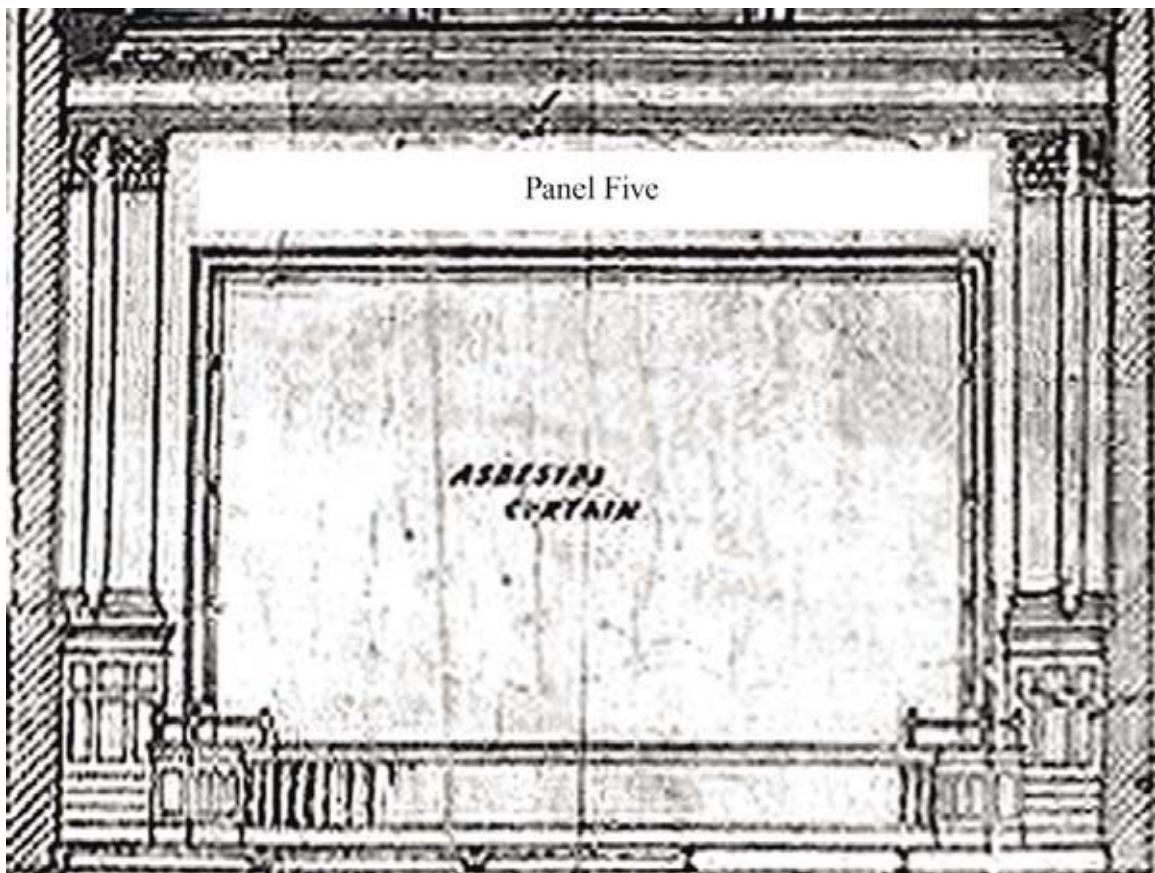


Fig. 14, Proscenium Arch Mural
Adapted from original blueprints available from the Plays and Players Theatre Archive

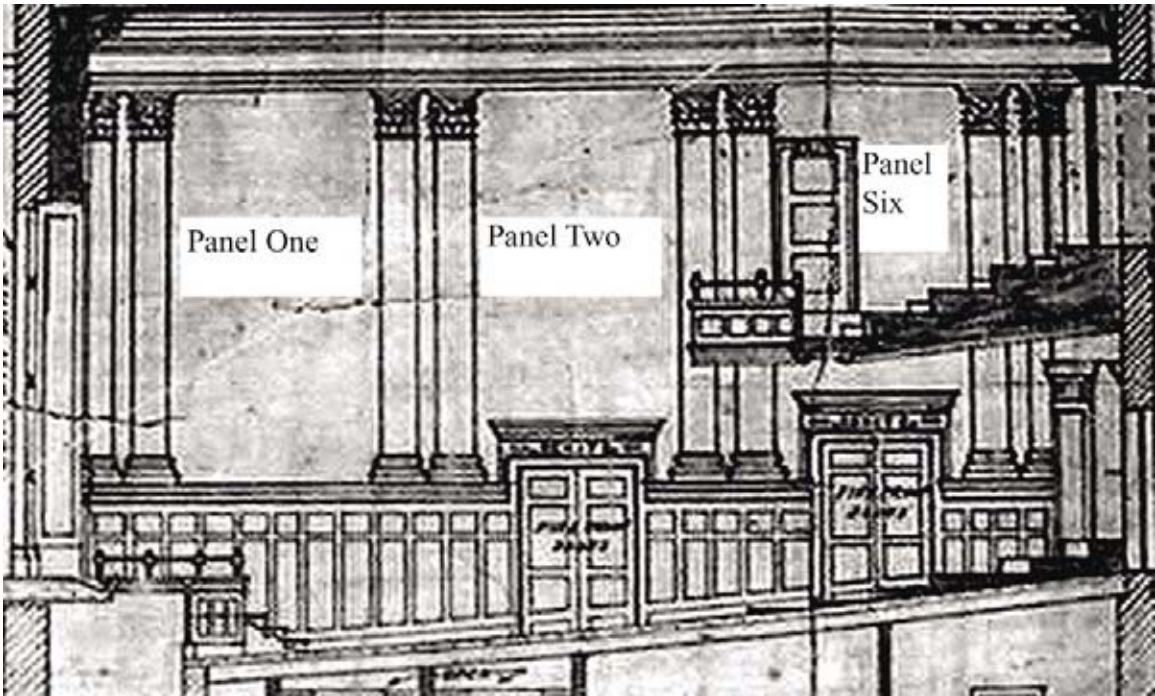


Fig. 15, *Above* House Right Panels Fig. 16, *Below* House Left Panels
 Adapted from original blueprints available from the Plays and Players Theatre Archive

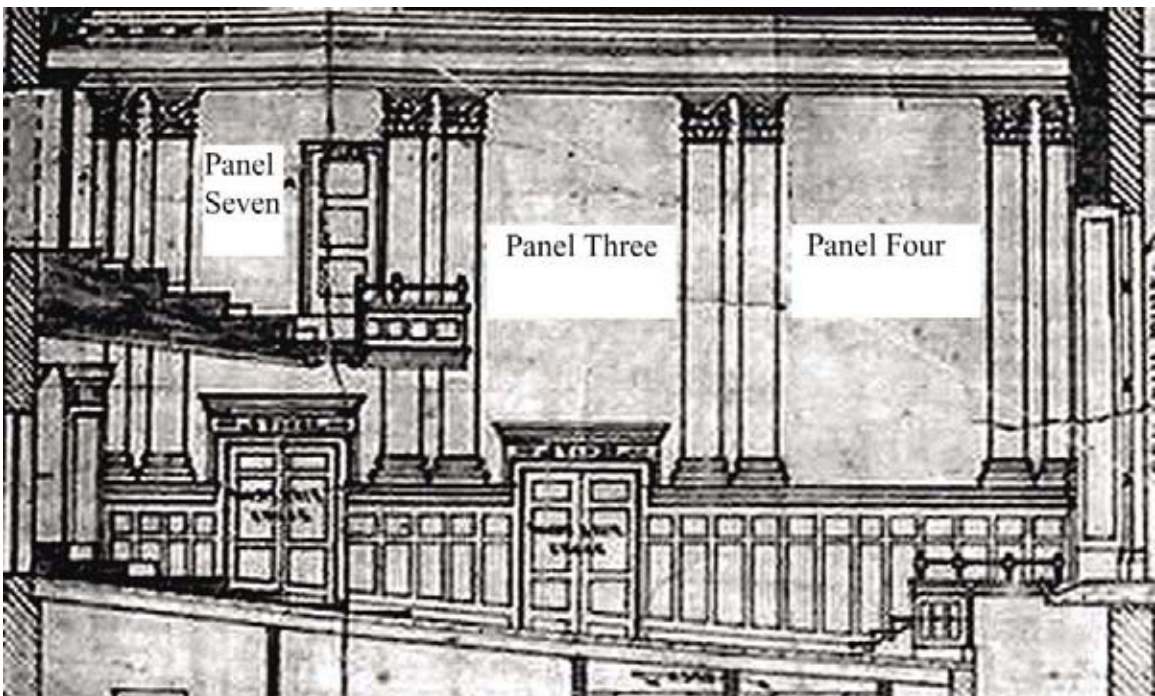




Fig. 17 Panel Five, Mural Above Proscenium

of Dionysus and Ariadne (Fig. 17). The murals are painted on canvas and glued to the plaster walls. On either side of the proscenium are plaster pilasters, topped by plaster Corinthian capitals, which rest on a plaster base atop wood paneling that circles the room. Between the proscenium and pilasters, the walls are covered in fabric tapestry, though the pattern and color have been almost entirely obscured by paint. Above Panel Five and the capitals is a full entablature that circles the room with acanthus leaves, egg and dart, dentils, and corbels.

In the corner leading to the house right wall is a pilaster topped with capital that leads to another pilaster which begins the framing of Panel One, depicting the arrival of Theseus in Minoa where he intends to fight the Minotaur (Fig. 18). A narrow fabric wall covering separates the framing pilasters of Panel One and Panel Two, depicting the labyrinth in which hides the Minotaur that Theseus fights (Fig. 19). The framing of an exit door cuts into the lower portion of this mural. The pilaster that frames the farthest edge of Panel Two meets the paneled wall of the balcony. In the area below the balcony the wall is covered in fabric with another pair of exit doors and the lower portions of pilasters. Above the balcony is Panel Six, with a map, writing, and symbols all associated with the legend of Dionysus and Ariadne (Fig. 20). The mural surrounds an exit door that is more plainly framed than the lower doors and leads to the next pilaster and capital. Up the steeply raked balcony and on the back wall are corner pilasters and capitals (Fig. 21).

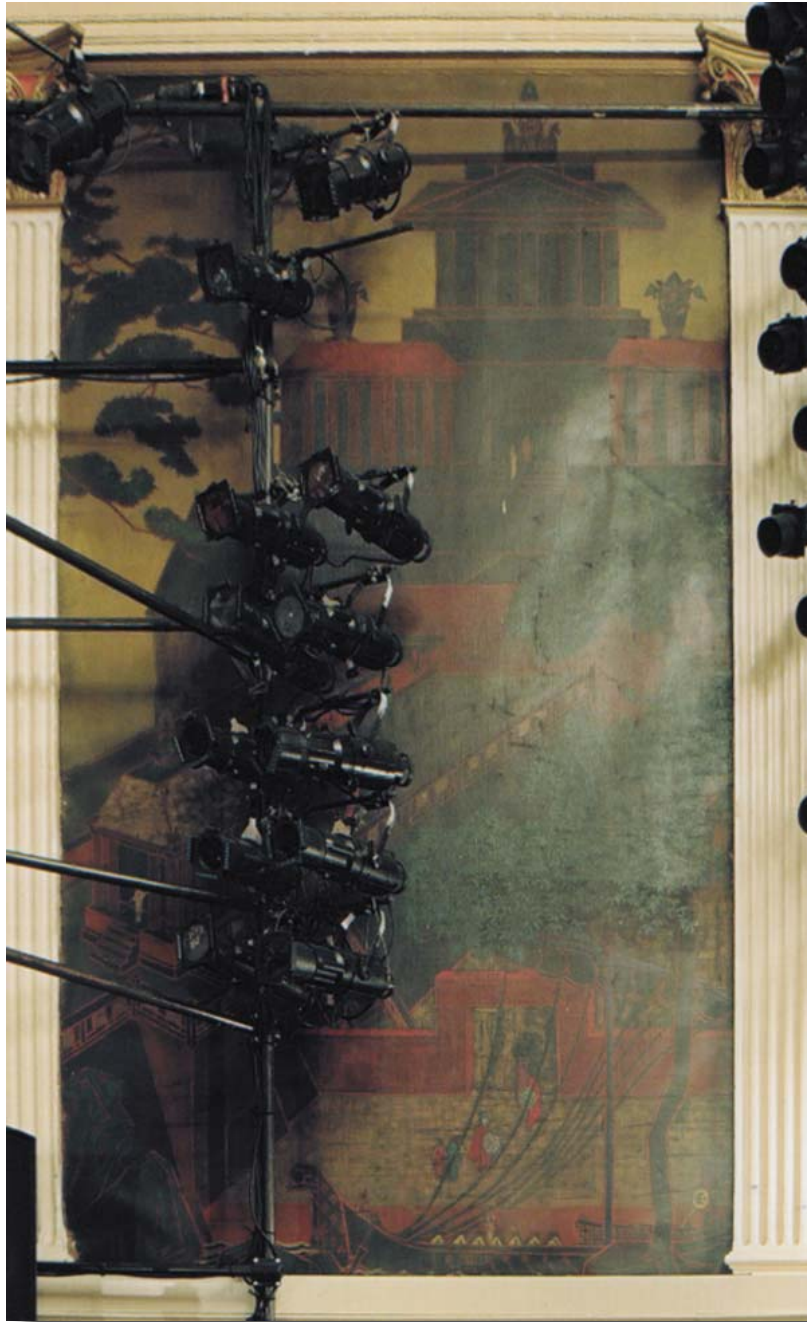


Fig. 18, Panel One, House Right



Fig. 19, Panel Two, House Right



Fig. 20, *Above*, Panel Six, Balcony Right Fig. 21, *Below*, Corner Columns





Fig. 22, Panel Seven, Balcony Left

The back wall, both below and above the balcony, has a large expanse of fabric wall covering. The orchestra level has a pair of exit doors in the corners under the pilasters. In the center of the wall on the orchestra level are the doors leading out to the lobby. On the balcony level the machine room projects into the seating area as far as one row. To house right of the machine room is the sound station and then a door leading to the second floor lobby. To house left of the machine room is a short row of seats followed by another door leading to the second floor lobby.

The house left wall mirrors the house right wall in all but the subjects of the murals. The balcony mural, Panel Seven, has more writing and symbols associated with the legend and a map of the island of Crete, where Minoa was located (Fig. 22). The



Fig. 23, Panel Three, House Left



Fig. 24, Panel Four, House Left

next panel in the house, approaching the stage, is Panel Three. It depicts the abandoning of Ariadne by Theseus and the suicide of Theseus's father thinking his son is dead (Fig. 23). Panel Four, closest to the stage, shows the discovery of Ariadne by Dionysus and Aphrodite (Fig. 24).

The other public areas of the theatre are accessible from the lobbies. Taking the stairs to the basement level, the patron is brought to a lounge area and restrooms, none of which are in their original condition. The electrical supply for the theatre is located in this area and is curtained off. A locked door leads to the dressing rooms and provides access to backstage left via a spiral stair that climbs to the fly gallery, paint rail, and grid.

Up the stairs and past the lobby onto the left hand stairs, a decorative gate is encountered at a landing mid-way. The second floor lobby is dominated by the office



Fig. 25, Second Floor Lobby Area and Office Enclosure

that curves out from the outer wall. The lower half of the office wall is paneled wood, while the upper half is windowed with textured glass for privacy, letting light in but not allowing patrons to see the interior. This level provides access to the machine room, or booth, and balcony level seating (Fig. 25).

Up the final flight of stairs to the third floor is a lounge, leading to either an office, or a classroom that once was an assembly hall. The physical layout of the space was not altered, and it is not known when the use changed. The classroom has theatrical lights set up for rehearsal (Fig. 26). Next to the classroom is the bar area with another entrance to the office and entrance to a storage area and kitchen, which was originally the make-up room (Fig. 27).



Fig. 26, Classroom Space on Third Floor



Fig. 27, Third Floor Bar/Lounge Area

Condition Analysis of Theatre

The current floor plan of the Plays and Players Theatre does not differ significantly from the original design. The basement level consists of two sections: one open to the public and one private. The public section has a lounge area and restrooms. One former restroom has been converted to storage space. The private section is comprised of dressing rooms for performers. The main lobby and house are located on the first floor, essentially unchanged from their original configuration. The second floor has an office space, indicated as such on the original plans and continuing to operate in that capacity, a machine booth, and the balcony seating level. The only area that has

seen great changes is the third floor. The lounge remains as intended. The assembly hall has been converted to a classroom and the classroom to a bar area. The former make-up room contains the kitchen facilities for the bar area and leads to bathrooms. The private office is used for storage and the school office continues to function as an office.

There is little written or pictorial evidence of the decoration for most of the historic interior. Without invasive study one must theorize as to what changes have occurred over time. While it appears that the rooms on the third floor and the basement level have been changed quite a bit, the stairwells and areas of the first and second floor still open to the public appear to be mostly in their original finishes. The main lobby areas are constructed in brick laid in an English bond, alternating rows of headers and stretchers, and embellished with decorative tile (Fig 28). The tile resembles that made



Fig. 28, Lobby Brick and Tile Work

by the Mercer Tile Works of Bucks County, Pennsylvania, but no evidence was found to either support or preclude that possibility. The office on the second floor is built out from the outer wall with wood paneling and glass, remaining in the same configuration as shown on the original blueprints.

The area that has changed the most, yet still has the most publicly visible quantity of historic fabric, is the house. One article published prior to the opening of the theatre stated, "The auditorium, of generally classical design, will avoid any garish effects of red and gold and will be finished rather in subdued tones."²¹ Following the opening of the theatre, one critic stated, "There has evidently been a conscious effort to get away from the conventional red plush and brass trimmings, and the result is singularly pleasing... The auditorium is finished in a classic Roman style in Circassian walnut and gobelin tapestry... the coloring soft and subdued."²² Mackay described the interior as "charmingly decorated in brown and old gold."²³ The coloring scheme mentioned in these articles has been changed over time. Currently the dominant colors of the auditorium are white and red.

The wood of the auditorium, the wood along the base of the seating, the wood as part of the seats themselves, and the wood paneling on the walls has been painted. The wood in the seating area has been painted red, and its red appears to be the only extant paint layer (Fig. 29). Physical examination of this wood shows that underneath the red paint the wood was finished with a stain darker than the natural color. The paint shows wear and the removal of a previous moulding along the upper edge of the raised seating platform (Fig. 30). On the seats there are gold accents to the red paint, in direct contrast to the descriptions of the theatre from the time of its opening. Both the gold and red paint is wearing and has some drips of white paint similar to that on the wall fabric panels (Fig. 31). The wood paneling on the walls is currently white, though visual inspection shows



Fig. 29, *Above*, Chipping Red Paint on Seating Platforms
Fig. 30, *Below*, Moulding Missing from Seating Platform





Fig. 31, Auditorium Stanchions with Red and Gold Paint and White Paint Drips

at least one prior painting campaign. The pilasters and their bases are painted white, with both red and gold paint visible where white has chipped away (Fig. 32). Evidence of earlier painting shows on the edge of some of the pilasters, where the white paint was not applied (Figure 33). The capitals of the columns are painted gold, with salmon accent (Fig. 34). Two different types of gold paint are visible on the balcony level capitals, one



Fig. 32, *Above*,
Pilaster Base with
Chipped Paint



Fig. 33, *Left*, Exposed
Paint on Side of
Pilaster



Fig. 34, *Above*, Capitals

Fig. 35, *Below*, Differing Gold Paints



of which has a more granular and reflective quality than the underlying layer (Fig. 35). There is chipping of paint on the pilasters, the wall paneling, but most significantly on the proscenium (Fig. 36).

The proscenium, of all the decorative elements, also shows the greatest amount of structural wear. There are chunks missing from the main framing of the proscenium, as well as from the moulding on both its inner and outer portions of the proscenium. The size of the missing pieces indicates damage by collisions (Fig. 37). Along the base of the proscenium there are splashes of paint in a wide variety of colors from several paintings of the stage floor. As it is common practice for theatres in general to paint the floor of a stage for each production as according to the needs of the scenic designer, the floor most likely receives a fresh coat of paint at least four times each year (Fig. 38).



Fig. 36, Chipping Paint on the Proscenium



Fig. 37, *Left*, Damage to Proscenium

Fig. 38, *Below*, Splattered Paint on Proscenium from Painting Stage Floor



Other physical damage to the decorative elements of the house appears in the wood paneling, the pilasters, the capitals, and the posts that support the balcony rail. Four panels on house right near the stage are cracked down their centers. The lower portions of many of the pilasters, just above where they meet the bases, show horizontal cracking (Fig. 39). The straight line and consistent location of the cracking indicates the meeting of materials, most likely sectioning of the pilasters, as the bases and main bodies of the pilasters both show plaster construction. There are chunks of plaster missing from multiple pilasters and their capitals, mostly due to damage from ladders during the



Fig. 39, Horizontal Cracking at Pilaster Bases

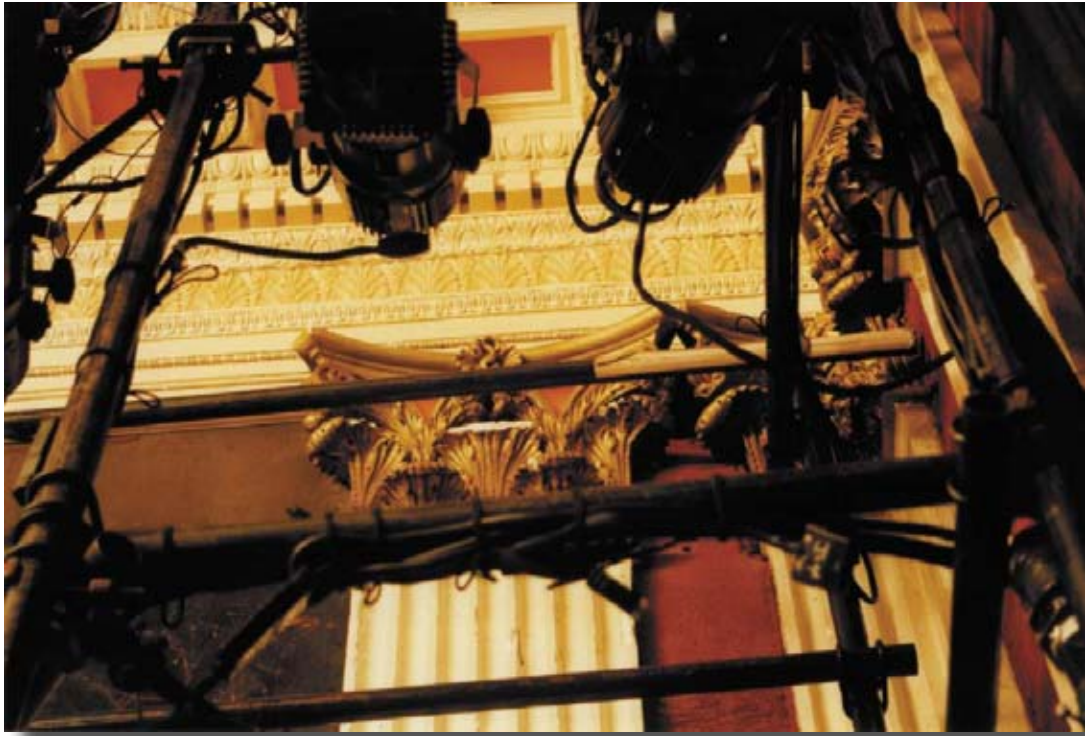


Fig. 40, Damage to Capitals

hanging of lighting instruments (Fig. 40). The damage was extensive enough to warrant the replacement of two pilasters with molded plastic reproductions. One balcony post has a significant amount of missing wood and exposed nails (Fig. 41). The ceiling of the house shows no structural damage to the decorative plaster work. The ceiling below the balcony seating area has some peeling paint.

Above the wood paneling and between pilasters, the walls are covered in two types of fabric. There are the panels of Edith Emerson and another fabric. The pattern of the fabric lining the walls is difficult to distinguish, as layers of red paint have filled the crevices of the weave (Fig. 42). A few sections that most likely were covered during the painting have been subsequently exposed and evidence of the original pattern and coloring is visible. The fabric originally had a light neutral background color with a



Fig. 41, *Left*,
Damaged Balcony
Post

Fig. 42, *Below*,
Fabric Panels with
Red Paint





Fig. 43, *Left*, Exposed Fabric Pattern



Fig. 44, *Right*, Exposed Fabric Pattern

floral pattern of red, green, and gold (Fig. 43). As the sample that shows this partial exposure of the pattern is small, and the repeat large though unknown, it is possible that more colors exist (Fig. 44).

Many portions of the fabric panels, particularly in the rear of the house on the orchestra level, also have a considerable amount of white paint on them from painting other portions of the house (Fig. 45). In addition to the paint covering the original pattern and coloring of the fabric, there are many areas where the fabric is falling away from the walls, such as the rear wall of the house on the orchestra level and on the balcony level (Fig. 46). Furthermore, there is considerable wear on sections of the fabric wall covering in highly trafficked areas. The majority of the wear is on the balcony level, where the



Fig. 45, White Paint on Fabric Panels



Fig. 46, *Above*, Fabric Pulling Away from Wall



Fig. 47, *Left*, Fabric Wear

patrons in the rear row come into contact with the fabric and where the sound station in the balcony is located (Fig. 47). In several areas the trim that borders the fabric panels is missing.

The fabric panels of Edith Emerson have sustained damage over the years. The panels are numbered as per the description of the panels in the previous section. Panel One, orchestral house right, closest to stage, has drips of white paint. Painting is fading or cracking on some portions of the panel (Fig. 48). There is a small amount of peeling on the lower left portion of the panel. Panel Two, orchestral house right, furthest from the stage, has white paint drips. It is peeling on both the lower right and left corners and is wrinkling on the lower right (Fig. 49). There is a small hole on the left side of the panel. Panel Three, orchestral house left, furthest from the stage, has drips of white paint,

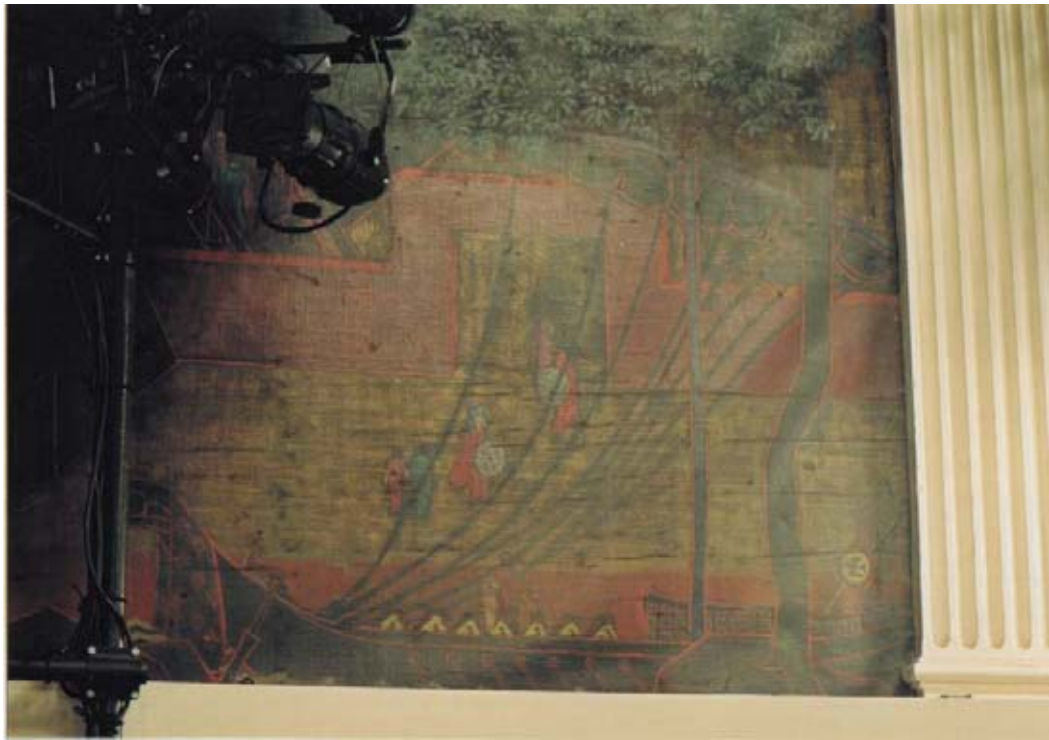


Fig. 48, Wrinkling and Cracking of Panel One



Fig. 49, *Left*, Wrinkling and Paint Damage to Panel Two

Fig. 50, *Right*, Paint Damage to Panel Three



one of which appears to be smudged from attempted removal at the time of the drip. There is wrinkling on the lower right portion of the panel and along the pilaster at the panel's left edge (Fig. 50). Panel Four, auditorium house left, closest to stage, has drips of white paint. There is significant wrinkling from the lower left corner extending up and to the right across the panel. The right side of the panel shows many missing chips of paint. There are scattered small holes across the panel (Fig. 51). Panel Five, above the proscenium arch, shows little to no damage. Panels Six and Seven, balcony level, left and right, show a minor amount of white paint damage and wear. In many places where the murals are pulling loose from the walls small tacks or nails have been used to try to cease the separation or reattach the canvas.



Fig. 51, Small Holes, Wrinkling, and Paint Damage to Panel Four

The Emerson paint panels and fabric panels that show the majority of the damage are those that are out of reach of the patrons of the theatre. This leads one to believe that the theatre employees are responsible for some of the damage, while environmental impact can be credited with the wrinkling of the murals. The most damage to the fabric wall covering is in the area for the sound technician, possibly from movement of the chair. This area also gives the largest sampling of the original fabric pattern and coloring, though the fabric is worn. The drips of white paint can be attributed to sloppy workmanship on the part of technicians, contractors, or Plays and Players members who refresh the white paint of the pilasters and trim. The structural damage to the capitals, the pilasters, and the proscenium most likely all resulted from careless placement of ladders or handling of tools while constructing and installing scenery and hanging and focusing lighting instruments.

Microscopic paint analysis should be undertaken to determine the original paint scheme of the theatre, with samples taken from the wood paneling, all portions of the proscenium, the bases, pilasters, and capitals, the seating area, and the doors. Samples should also be taken from the ceiling, even though it is in excellent condition. This documentation can prove to be of value when future repainting is desired or necessary. It is not recommended that paint analysis be conducted on the stage floor, as the color of the floor changes with each production, unless the theatre wishes to see a history of the scenic design through the floor coloring. With the exception of the Emerson murals, there is no indication that decorative paint work appeared on any of the surfaces but as a precaution multiple samples should be taken from several areas to eliminate this possibility.

Existing Proposals

Proposals for the restoration of the Emerson murals were conducted in 1978 and 1989 by Newman Galleries and Steven B. Erisoty Paintings Conservation respectively (Appendix C and D). The proposal by Newman Galleries called for cleaning, varnishing, and retouching of the balcony murals and the mural above the stage. For the orchestra level murals, Newman Galleries proposed to remove them, clean the backs of the murals and the walls, re-adhere the murals to the walls, and clean, varnish, and retouch the murals. The gallery's proposal was estimated to cost \$17,200, not including the cost of scaffolding or applicable sales taxes.²⁴

The process proposed by Erisoty for the restoration of the murals was much more extensive, with an estimated cost of \$44,000. While agreeing with Newman Galleries that the balcony murals and the mural above the stage solely required cleaning and retouching, he recommended much more work for the orchestra level murals as they were identified as having "serious structural problems, as well as cosmetic problems."²⁵ Erisoty determined that the adhesive holding the lower murals and the paint layer it was applied had deteriorated due to environmental impact, causing the murals to pull away from the walls and exhibit the wrinkling seen in the conditions assessment. The wrinkling, in part, may have contributed to the loss of paint. Erisoty called for the construction of false walls with air spaces to reattach the four lower murals to in hopes to avoid a repetition of the problems exhibited. Such walls would "reduce the visible depth of the pilasters, but would seem a change necessary for the preservation of the paintings," according to Erisoty²⁶.

The condition of the murals shows that the theatre acted on neither of the proposals. With the continuing temperature fluctuations natural to Philadelphia and the

continual seepage of moisture through the building's masonry, the condition of the murals will continue to deteriorate over time.

The two proposals for the restoration of the murals would correct the damage that has already occurred, but might not protect the murals from future damage. The only recommendation to the effect of prevention, made in the Eriosty proposal, was to build the murals out away from the walls and provide a pocket of protection from the elements. Unless the space built between the existing walls and the new proposed location for the murals was significant, this attempt at preservation would only delay the deterioration process, not halt it altogether. There are a number of conservation journals which address the issues the Plays and Players face regarding the murals, including the *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation* and *Art and Archaeology Technical Abstracts*.

The only feasible way to protect the murals from eventual destruction by conditions beyond the control of the theatre is to alter the historic fabric of the theatre itself. If the position of the murals is changed dramatically enough, it will be possible to protect them and continue to display them for the enjoyment of the theatre patrons.

Lighting

Lighting a Proscenium Stage

In a theatre such as the Plays and Players there can be little variation to the standard lighting positions. As a small proscenium theatre with a thrust stage there are only a few practical locations for the pipes used to hang lights. This is due mostly to a lighting theory known as the McCandless Method which combines warm and cool colored light on 45° angles on both the horizontal and vertical (Fig. 52).²⁷ Though not strictly adhered to by lighting designers, this method is one of the bases used in teaching lighting design and can be adjusted to suit a designer's particular style.

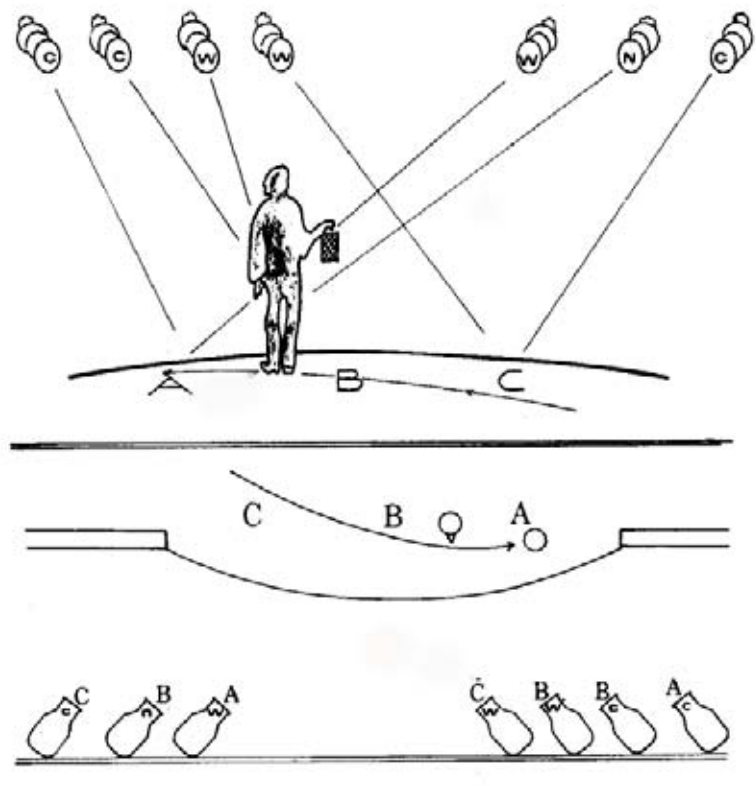


Fig. 52, McCandless Method

Richard H. Palmer, *The Lighting Art: The Aesthetics of Stage Lighting Design*

In order for the Method to work properly there must be the lighting positions to accommodate the lighting design. This entails overhead lights, lights providing a frontal wash, and lighting from the sides, such as those positioned in front of the murals at the Plays and Players Theatre. Removing that lighting position altogether would make basic standard lighting designs impossible to execute; the only reasonable options for the Plays and Players Theatre are placing a permanent lighting position in front of or behind the murals.

Those unfamiliar with lighting design may question why the side positions cannot be eliminated, why the lights above the stage and those at balcony level and the rear of the house are not sufficient. The issue is a matter of modeling, enhancing three-dimensional shape on stage through the use of lighting. With lights only from above and flat on the subject, a three-dimensional shape loses its depth. Angled light is needed for the audience to fully appreciate the shape of the set, the props, and the actors themselves.

Analysis of Current Positions

As technology advances, theatre owners find themselves needing to adapt historic theatres to fit the demands of modern directors and designers. The most visually invasive of these alterations concerns lighting instruments. As lighting designers attempt to use every possible lighting angle in a design, semi-permanent lighting positions must be erected from scratch in older houses that do not support modern lights. The Plays and Players Theatre finds itself in such a situation. On either side of the stage a steel pipe cage has been erected from which to hang lights (Fig. 53). The cages rest on the spots that once held the box seats. The cages support speakers and a truss that sits on level



Fig. 53, Steels Pipes Installed for Lighting Instruments

with Panel Five but far enough out from the mural that the lights do not noticeably damage it. The lights do, however, block the audience's view of the mural, which seriously compromises the significance of Emerson's work.

In their current configuration the steel cages are much more intrusive than the truss. The piping is located against the wall, in some places causing damage to the plaster capitals. One pipe extends down approximately one third across the panels closest to the stage. From this pipe, arms are clamped to extend out and support multiple lights (Fig. 54). When the arms are clamped in place, wrenches most likely hit the murals accidentally. To hang the lights on the arms ladders must be used, which, if not self supporting, are propped against either decorative plaster work or the murals themselves.

Once the lights are hanging, cable must be brought to them, which will most probably contact the murals at some point. During the light focus, the angle of the light,



Fig. 54, Lighting Positions
Obstructing Mural

the shutters, and the barrels are adjusted, sometimes necessitating that the technician reach around a light at an awkward angle. In doing so, the technician might lean against a mural so as not to fall. When considering these potential problems caused by just this one lighting position it is no wonder that the two murals closest to the stage are in the worst condition.

The next lighting position to consider does not affect the murals directly, but it is located in a narrow space between pilasters and capitals. Hanging the topmost lights without hitting the capitals is awkward. There is no acceptable place to rest a ladder during a light hang or focus for this position. A freestanding ladder is therefore a



Fig. 55, Lighting Position on Balcony

necessity.

The balcony rail shows bolt marks, evidence of being used as a lighting position in the past. Adding weight to the rail puts strain on the posts, which already show damage. A lower position has been established that does not damage the posts, obstruct audience view lines of the stage, or block viewing of decorative detail prior to or after the show (Fig. 55).

Alternate Solutions

The most problematic lighting position to find an alternative for is also the most difficult to alter: the pipe of the lighting cages that is closest to the murals. The easiest

solution is to tell lighting designers they cannot use that pipe, as it is for structural purposes only. This would draw complaints of the loss of a lighting angle. As can be seen in the photograph of this position a light is hung from an arm extended back from the pipe closer to the stage. Though that position does not provide the same angles, it comes close. More horizontal pipes can be installed to compensate for the loss of the vertical pipe; they can be used under the condition that lights or arms are not hung within eighteen inches of the mural.

An obtrusive solution that would be costly and labor intensive but would offer good lighting angles would involve the removal of one seat and the extension of the cage further into the house from its current position. The lost revenue from the seat on each side would be insignificant. Though this solution effects the historic aesthetic of the house by removing seats, it is preferable in this author's view to the current obstructed view of the murals.

The most practical solution is a combination of the above. The pipe closest to the murals would carry neither lights nor arms for lights. Horizontal pipes would be added to compensate for the loss of vertical positions with the condition that lights are kept a specified distance from the murals.

The lighting position between the two pilasters has two possible solutions to the problem it presents. The first is to put a height restriction on the hanging of lights on that pipe. All lights must be hung below the level of the capitals to prevent further damage. The other possible solution is to install a vertical truss, with the pipe furthest from the wall used for hanging lights. This solution would allow lights to hang at the level of the capitals, so long as arms are no used to hang the light closer to the capital, as well as keeping wrenches further away from the pilasters.

When lights are hung at the balcony level the lighting pipe installed at the base

of the balcony can be used. The pipe that acts as the balcony rail can be off limits to lighting designers and sound designers. No speakers shall be placed where lights are forbidden.

Lighting Instruments and Wiring

The current lighting instrument most commonly used in the house is the ellipsoidal reflector spotlight (ERS). Generally, the heat emitted from the back of the majority of such lights appears to create no great danger to the murals. The light which is replacing the standard ERS is the Source Four light, distributed by Electronic Theatre Controls, Inc. (ETC) (Fig. 56). "The aluminum reflectors have been redesigned for the newest lamp technology and one manufacturer then bounces the light off a cold mirror to remove the heat from the optical path. The reduction in heat through the front of the unit lengthens gel, template, and shutter life."²⁸ The heat that is reduced through the front of the instrument is redirected to the back of the instrument. The high level of heat



Fig. 56, Source Four light by ETC

concentrated on the murals would have a negative effect on them. To protect the murals, the current type of lighting instrument should be continued for use in the house, rather than upgrading to the Source Four lights.

As cable is currently run through the house, nails and screws are driven into the woodwork and the cable is tied to the nails or screws or draped over the balcony (Fig. 57). This puts unnecessary strain on the woodwork. To avoid the potential damage to wood or plaster, cables can be run along the edge of the floor, covered with carpet and taped down to ensure safety for the patrons. Alternately, cable can be permanently in the walls in segregated cable trays, which provide multiple channels through which to run cable. The purpose of these trays is to allow the safe and permanent installation of multiple types of cabling, in this case cabling for electrical and sound purposes.



Fig. 57, Cables Run Through House, Obstructing Mural and Putting Weight on Moulding

Combining Solutions

To this point, each problem the theatre faces in the restoration process has been looked at individually. The murals need some repair work, and intervention to prevent future deterioration. The lighting units currently are disrupting the aesthetic of the house and need to be more discreet and placed so as not to further damage the Emerson murals. Potential solutions for preserving the murals have been presented, as well as solutions regarding the awkward and intrusive lighting placement. However, there remains a solution which looks at both problems together, and presents what could be the most historically sensitive and safest arrangement of the lights and murals.

This solution is inspired by the restoration work done in the Grand Opera House in Wilmington, Delaware. A lighting cove was created in the theatre by cutting the ceiling decoration and applying it to an angled panel below the cove (Fig. 58 and 59). This created a new lighting position in the theatre with minimal intrusion of the historic fabric²⁹.

The suggested restoration and alteration process of the Plays and Players Theatre would take place in multiple stages. The Plays and Players Organization would need to carefully time the work as much of it would require closing the theatre while the work is in progress. This process would not only eliminate the obtrusive lighting positions that currently exist, it would protect the historic fabric and establish permanent lighting positions. The process also allows for the installation of updated wiring.



Fig. 58, *Above*, and Fig. 59, *Below*, Lighting Cove in Grand Opera House, Wilmington, DE



Stage One

- The murals are removed for cleaning, repair, patching, and varnishing.
- Microscopic paint analysis is conducted for final determination of original paint coloring.
- Paint is removed from wood paneling and repairs are made.
- The fabric paneling is removed and new fabric ordered based on the exposed sections.
- The steel pipe lighting cages are removed.

Stage Two

- New walls are constructed for the murals which angle away from the existing walls. Within, new lighting positions will be constructed (Fig. 60).
- Segregated cable trays are installed behind the wood paneling for both sound and electrical cables, leading to permanent wall boxes behind the panels to provide electrical access for lighting instruments and connection to the sound system for speakers.

Stage Three

- The repair of the wood paneling is completed and it is stained and varnished to match the original color scheme.
- The columns, capitals, doors, and moulding are repainted according to original color scheme.
- The seating boxes are returned to their original use.

Stage Four

- The new fabric paneling is installed.
- The murals are replaced on their new walls.
- The seating is reupholstered to reflect the historic color palette.
- The theatre reopens.



Fig. 60, Proposed Positioning for Murals and Lighting Pipes

Conclusions

The restoration and subsequent management of an historic theatre, while continuing the operation of the theatre, is a balancing act. To appropriately utilize technological advancements, compromises in the ideal restoration must be made. To maintain the restoration, sacrifices must be made on the part of the theatre owner, director, designer, technician, and the patrons of the theatre.

The Plays and Players Theatre, while in need of restoration, is not yet decrepit. It can be saved before the historic fabric of the theatre is beyond redemption. As Mrs. Jay turned towards the murals of Edith Emerson in the time of World War I to rejuvenate the theatre, the Plays and Players Organization can spark the restoration of the theatre and bring in new patrons through the preservation of the same murals.

The restoration and renovation suggested will help to preserve the murals for future generations of theatre goers to enjoy. It will also provide permanent lighting positions which do not compromise the murals or clutter the aesthetic of the theatre.

Only if the Plays and Players Organization is willing to maintain the restored theatre and enforce the maintenance with the Philadelphia Theatre Company will a restoration be truly successful. With hard work, dedication, and a continued commitment to the ideals of the Little Theatre, preservation will be a valuable tool that keeps the Plays and Players Theatre thriving.

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- ¹¹ Ibid, 99-101.
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- ¹³ Ibid
- ¹⁴ "By-Laws of Plays and Players," (Plays and Players Theatre Archives, Philadelphia, 12 September 1995).
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- ²⁴ Walter A. Newman, Jr. to Diana Dorkin, 29 September 1978, (Plays and Players Theatre Archives, Philadelphia).
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Attachment A



PLAYS and PLAYERS

1714 DELANCEY PLACE : : PHILADELPHIA, PENNA. 19103

BY-LAWS
OF
PLAYS AND PLAYERS
(Revised September 12, 1995)

ARTICLE I

Office

The office of Plays and Players (hereinafter referred to as "the Corporation") shall be located at 1714 Delancey Place, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

ARTICLE II

Membership

Section 1. Subject to other provisions of these By-Laws, membership in the Corporation shall be divided into such classes for the purpose of determining dues and privileges of membership, and shall be governed by such rules of admission, retention, suspension and expulsion, as shall be prescribed from time to time by the Board of Directors.

Section 2. Upon recommendation of the Executive Committee, the Board of Directors may vote Honorary Membership in the Corporation to a non-member of the Corporation who has rendered outstanding service of a non-theatrical nature to the Corporation. Honorary Members shall not be subject to payment of dues and shall enjoy all privileges of the Corporation except the right to hold office and the right to vote in Corporation elections.

Section 3. Application for membership shall be made upon forms supplied by the Corporation for that purpose. The application

shall be signed by the applicant and by a proposer who shall be a member in good standing. Thereafter, the name of the applicant shall be posted on the Corporation bulletin board for a two (2) week period. Each applicant shall be presented to the Membership Committee in person by the proposer and interviewed by the Committee. All recommendations of the Membership Committee shall be submitted to the Board of Directors for action.

Section 4. Each member shall pay such initiation fee and annual dues as shall be determined from time to time by the Board of Directors. Such annual dues for all members who were members of record on May 1, 1972 and continued as members without interruption thereafter shall be payable on October 1st of each year. Dues of members who joined or rejoined the Corporation after May 1, 1972 shall be payable annually thereafter in the anniversary month of their election to membership or rejoining of the Corporation. Any member whose dues shall remain unpaid for thirty (30) days after becoming due shall be notified by the Treasurer in writing and, if such dues are not paid within thirty (30) days after such notice, the membership of such member may be terminated by the Board of Directors.

Section 5. Resignations of membership shall be made in writing and addressed to the Secretary, but no person shall be permitted to resign in good standing unless his or her dues and any other obligations to the Corporation are paid in full, and a member shall

not be entitled upon resignation to reimbursement of any part of dues paid for the year of resignation. All interest of a member in the property and assets of the Corporation shall terminate for all purposes upon acceptance of the resignation of such member or upon termination of his or her membership as otherwise authorized by these By-Laws. Any member who shall resign in good standing shall be entitled to reinstatement upon written application without payment of additional initiation fees.

Section 6. Membership privileges of the Corporation shall include attendance at all Corporation functions and productions and use of the Bar and Corporation's rooms, subject, however, to reasonable rules and regulations to be adopted from time to time by the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors, or a Committee designated thereby, may impose reasonable charges to all Corporation productions and to Corporation social functions when so announced, subject to such reasonable rules and regulations as may be adopted from time to time by the Board of Directors and the payment of such guest fees as shall be determined from time to time by the Board of Directors.

Section 7. No applicant for membership shall be denied membership by reason of race, religion or national origin.

ARTICLE III

Officers and Board of Governors

Section 1. The officers of the Corporation shall be the

President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer. The Board of Directors ("the Board") shall consist of the foregoing officers and twelve (12) Directors. Any person of the age of eighteen (18) years or older, whether or not a member of the Corporation, shall be eligible to serve.

Section 2. The President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer shall be elected annually for a term of one (1) year or until their successors are elected. In the first annual election following the adoption of this By-Law, four (4) Directors shall be elected to serve for a term of three (3) years each, one Director shall be elected to serve for a term of two (2) years, and one Director shall be elected to serve for a term of one year. Thereafter, four (4) Directors shall be elected each year to serve for a term of three (3) years or until their successor are elected. The term of office of Officers and Directors shall commence on July 1st.

Section 3. All vacancies on the Board or in any office of the Corporation may be filled by the President, subject to approval of the Board, even if reduced to less than a quorum as a result of vacancies, for the unexpired term, provided, however, that a vacancy in the office of the President shall be filled for the unexpired term by the Vice-President. In the event that the Vice-President is unable or unwilling to fill the office of President, that office shall pass for the unexpired term to a

person to be designated by a majority vote of the Board.

Section 4. (a). The President shall be the chief executive officer of the Corporation, shall preside at all meetings of the membership and of the Board and shall appoint all Committees and be a member ex-officio thereof. He or she may delegate to the Chairperson of any Committee selection of the members of such Committee.

(b). The Vice-President shall act as President in the absence or disability of the President and shall discharge such other duties as the President or Board shall from time to time designate.

(c). The Secretary shall keep the minutes of all meetings of the Board and the membership, the Seal and other records and papers of the Corporation, and perform generally the usual duties of a corporate Secretary.

(d). The Treasurer shall collect, hold, deposit and disburse all funds and securities of the Corporation, under the direction of the Board, shall keep accounts of all receipts and disbursements, and shall present monthly (or at other intervals set by the Board) to the Board and annually to the members a detailed financial statement of the Corporation's affairs. Such annual financial statement to the members need not be in writing, provided, however, that an adequate number of copies of such statement shall be kept available at the office of the Corporation

for inspection by members upon request. Such annual financial statement need not be verified by a certified public accountant.

Section 5. (a). The Board shall have the general charge and management of the business affairs and property of the Corporation and the disposition of its funds and may exercise all such powers of the Corporation and do all such lawful acts and things as are not by statute or by the Articles of Incorporation or by these By-Laws directed or required to be exercised and done by the members. The Board may from time to time adopt and amend rules and regulations governing the conduct of the Corporation's affairs and business and the use of the Corporation's property, assets and funds.

(b). The Board shall meet monthly from September through June on such day as it may designate, at the office of the Corporation or such other place as it may designate, upon not less than five (5) days notice. Summer meetings may be called by the President at the office of the Corporation upon the same notice. Special meetings may be called by the President at the office of the Corporation and shall be so called upon the written request of five (5) members of the Board. Not less than five (5) days notice of any such special meeting shall be given by mail and such notice shall specify the purpose of the meeting. No business not specified in such notice shall be transacted at such special meeting, provided, however, that any amendments germane to such

specified business may be offered and acted upon.

(c). Seven (7) members of the Board shall constitute a quorum for all purposes. Except as otherwise specified in the Articles of Incorporation or these By-Laws, or as required by law, all actions of the Board may be taken by majority vote of those present at the meeting. Except as otherwise provided in Article VIII these By-Laws, no vote may be cast by proxy at the meeting of the Board. One or more members of the Board may participate in any meeting by means of conference telephone or similar communications equipment by means of which all persons participating in the meeting can hear each other. The Chairpersons of Standing Committees, during their respective terms, shall attend the meetings of the Board and shall have the privileges of the meeting except the right to vote.

(d). The Board shall have the power, by a two-thirds vote of the entire Board, to terminate the membership of any member who shall, in its judgment, be detrimental to the welfare of the Corporation. No such action shall be taken until after not less than ten (10) days notice has been given to the member of such proposed action and the grounds thereof, and such member shall have been given an opportunity to appear before the Board, or a Committee designated thereby, to be heard thereon and to present evidence or argument in his or her behalf.

ARTICLE IV

Nominations and Elections

Section 1. There shall be an annual election for Officers and Directors.

Section 2. A Nominating Committee shall be appointed by the President, subject to the approval of the Board, at the meeting of the Board in March and the names of the Nominating Committee shall be forthwith posted in two conspicuous places on the Corporation premises. The Nominating Committee shall post a slate of one candidate for each office to be filed at least four weeks before the date fixed for the election in two conspicuous places on the Corporation premises. Additional nominations for any such office may also be made in writing by any ten (10) members and filed with the Theatre Administrator for the Corporation at least three weeks before the date fixed for the election, which additional nominations, if any, shall be posted forthwith with the slate of the Nominating Committee and thereafter the nominations shall be considered closed.

Section 3. In the event there are no additional nominations, the President shall direct the Secretary to cast a "unanimous" vote in favor of the ballot as presented by the Nominating Committee, and to notify the Corporation members of such action. In the event, however, of additional nominations for one or more office, the election of the Officers and Directors shall be held by mail.

The President shall designate a day in May at which time the ballots will be counted and tabulated. At least fifteen (15) days before such a day, a printed ballot with a return envelope addressed to the Corporation shall be sent to each member and must be returned in person or by mail by the member in such envelope on or before noon of the day designated. The names of the candidates for each office shall be listed on the ballot in the order of their nomination and an asterisk shall be placed beside the names of incumbents. The return envelopes, unopened, shall be kept in the safe on the Corporation premises and turned over to the Judge of Elections at the time counting commences. The President shall appoint a Judge of Elections and as many tellers as may be necessary, who shall have exclusive charge of opening, counting and tabulating the ballots. Any candidate may appoint a representative who may be present in the room at the time the ballots are opened, but no candidate may be appointed a judge, teller or representative, and no person other than judge, tellers and representatives shall be allowed in the room at the time. The results of the election shall be announced to the membership as soon as convenient thereafter.

ARTICLE V

Committees

Section 1. There shall be an Executive Committee, which shall be composed of no fewer than four (4) members of the Board,

appointed by the President, subject to the approval of the Board. Subject to the authority of the Board, the Executive Committee shall have charge and direction of the continuing management of the business, affairs, property, assets, and employees of the Corporation, and shall perform such other duties as may be designated from time to time by the Board.

Section 2. The Board or the President may from time to time appoint such additional standing or special committees, composed of one or more members or nonmembers, and vest in them such powers and duties, as may be deemed necessary or useful. Subject to the requirements of law and of the Articles of Incorporation, any such Committee shall have and exercise such authority and perform such duties as shall be specified.

ARTICLE VI

Membership Meetings

A meeting of the Corporation membership shall be called once during each fiscal year between the months of September and June at the office of the Corporation on a date to be fixed by the President. Special meetings may be called at the office of the Corporation by the President and shall be called by him or her upon written request of thirty (30) or more members. All meetings of the membership shall be upon not less than ten (10) days notice to all members of record as of a record date. The record date shall be set by the Board of Directors not more than twenty (20) business

days in advance of such meeting. The call of any special meeting shall specify the purposes of such meeting and no other business may be transacted thereat, provided, however, that any change of amendment germane to the stated purposes of such special meeting may be acted upon thereat. Ten percent (10%) of the membership of the Corporation, based upon the total number of members in good standing (exclusive of Honorary Members), as of the last previous meeting of the Board of Directors, shall constitute a quorum at all meetings of the membership and all action shall be taken by a majority of the members present at such meeting. No vote may be cast by proxy at a membership meeting.

ARTICLE VII

General Provisions

Section 1. Any notice required to be given by these By-Laws shall be in writing and delivered personally to the person entitled to such notice or mailed to such person as his or her address appearing on the records of the Corporation at the time such notice is given. Notice of meetings of the Board of Directors may also be given by telegram. Notice shall be deemed to be given upon personal delivery thereof to the recipient or deposit thereof in the mails or with a telegraph office. Whenever any notice is required to be given under the provisions of the Articles of Incorporation or these By-Laws, or by law, a waiver thereof in writing signed by the person or persons entitled to such notice,

whether before or after the time stated therein, shall be deemed fully equivalent thereto and actual attendance at any meeting shall constitute a waiver of any requirement of notice.

Section 2. Any action which, pursuant to the Articles of Incorporation or these By-Laws, or by law, may be taken at a meeting of the Board of Directors or may be taken without such a meeting shall be as valid a corporate action as though it had been authorized at such a meeting if all members of the Board of Directors shall consent thereto in writing specifying the action to be taken, provided, however, that this provision shall not apply to the termination of membership of a member pursuant to Article III, Section 5. (d), of these By-Laws.

ARTICLE VIII

Amendments

These By-Laws may be altered, amended, or repealed by a two-thirds vote of the entire Board of Directors, (either in person or by written proxy), at any regular or special meeting of the Board of Directors. All members of the Board shall be notified in writing not less than fifteen (15) days prior to such meeting of the proposed amendment, and the proposed amendment shall be set forth in full in the call of such meeting. Any change in such amendment germane to the subject under consideration may be offered and acted upon at such meeting.

Attachment B



Congressman Mackin, District

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

STATE:
COUNTY:
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY NUMBER DATE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

Type all entries - complete applicable sections

1. NAME
COMMON: **Plays and Players**
AND/OR HISTORIC: **Prior to 1922 - The Playhouse**

2. LOCATION
STREET AND NUMBER: **1714 Delancey Street**
CITY OR TOWN: **Philadelphia**
STATE: **Pennsylvania** CODE: **42** COUNTY: **Philadelphia** CODE: **101**

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered Social	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) <input type="checkbox"/> Comments

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY
OWNER'S NAME: **Plays and Players**
STREET AND NUMBER: **1714 Delancey Street**
CITY OR TOWN: **Philadelphia** STATE: **Pennsylvania** CODE: **42**

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION
COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: **City Hall**
STREET AND NUMBER: **Broad and Market Street**
CITY OR TOWN: **Philadelphia** STATE: **Pennsylvania** CODE: **42**

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS
TITLE OF SURVEY: **Phila. Historical Commission : Historical Com. Bldgs. Survey**
DATE OF SURVEY: Federal State County Local
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: **Philadelphia Historical Commission**
STREET AND NUMBER: **1313 City Hall Annex**
CITY OR TOWN: **Philadelphia** STATE: **Pennsylvania** CODE: **42**

STATE:
COUNTY:
ENTRY NUMBER
DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

7. DESCRIPTION	
CONDITION	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Fair <input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated <input type="checkbox"/> Ruins <input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed <small>(Check One)</small>
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered <input type="checkbox"/> Moved <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site <small>(Check One)</small>
DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE	
<p>The original properties 1712-14-16 Delancey St. were sold to Mrs Beulah E. Jay (directress of the Metropolitan Dramatic School). The three lots have a combined frontage of 48 feet, extending in depth 92 feet to Panama St.</p> <p>Ground was broken for a four story brick building at Nos. 1712-14-16 Dalancay St. to be occupied as a dramatic school.</p> <p>ARCHITECT: Amos W. Barnes CONTRACTOR: Frederick A. Havens & Co.</p> <p>The brick building has a frontage of 47 ft. 10 in., and a depth of 92 ft. 3 1/2 in. The building contains a small stage and auditorium with a balcony. Total seating capacity is 324.</p> <p>It is a 3 story steel, brick, and granite building - fireproof. The front has a simple and dignified facing of rough brown tapestry brick, the ornamentation being limited to a single band of figures across the front in bas relief brightened by colored tile.</p> <p>The architect who designed Philadelphia's Forrest theater provided a stage adequate for which it was intended. The classical interior interior done in subdued tones has seats so arranged that one is practically as good as another, and all command a good "close Range" view of the stage. There are two small boxes which omit the traditional dust catching canopies. The orchestra is so situated that it is in a pit unobtrusive to the eye, but retains full tonal value.</p> <p>The wall decorations in the auditorium were done by a prominent artist, Edith Emerson, who lists among her accomplishments the murals of the U.S. Library of Congress (full description on accompanying sheet)</p> <p>The cornerstone (as described by actor Edward Everett Horton) is the keystone of the proscenium arch and is filled with theater memorabilia of the day.</p> <p>The entrance lobby is of brick and ornamental tile with a box office on either side.</p> <p>The third floor is used for rehearsals, theater-in-the-round, receptions, dinners, club meetings, etc.</p>	

B. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian; 16th Century 18th Century 20th Century
 15th Century 17th Century 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

1911-12

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Phi- | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | osophy | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Human- | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | itarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Playhouse was short lived as a dramatic school and was soon used as a pre-Broadway try-out theater for plays with such prominent actors as John Drew, the Barrymores, Maude Adams, Otis Skinner, and other greats.

The Plays and Players, an amateur theater group founded in 1911, purchased the theater in 1922, and is still its owner. "Plays and Players" claims to be the oldest little theater group in continuous existence in the country, and have continued thruout the years to uphold the best in little theater tradition. The founding president was Mrs. Otis Skinner.

When Plays and Players building is not in use with their current productions (three week-ends each month at a minimum) it is leased to the Gilbert and Sullivan Opera Co., The Philadelphia Art Alliance Dance Committee, etc. for their productions.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Plays and Players 50th Anniversary Year Book- 1960-61
 Philadelphia newspaper clippings dating 1911-1912

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			D R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	0 0 0	0 0 0		39° 56' 49"	75° 10' 14"	
NE	0 0 0	0 0 0				
SE	0 0 0	0 0 0				
SW	0 0 0	0 0 0				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: Less than one acre

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Joseph P. Barker, Jr, vice-president

ORGANIZATION: Plays and Players DATE: 12.19.72

STREET AND NUMBER: 1714 Delancey St.

CITY OR TOWN: Philadelphia STATE: Pennsylvania CODE: 42

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name: [Signature]
 State Liaison Officer

Title: Executive Director, Pa. Hist. and Museum Commission

Date: 2/16/73

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

[Signature]
 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: _____

ATTEST: _____

[Signature]
 Keeper of The National Register

Date: _____

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

GP 901.087

Attachment C

NEWMAN GALLERIES . . . ESTABLISHED 1865

1625 WALNUT STREET, PHILADELPHIA, PA. 19103 • LO 3-1779

850 WEST LANCASTER AVENUE, BRYN MAWR, PA. 19010 • LA 5-0625

13 WEST HIGHLAND AVENUE, CHESTNUT HILL, PA. 19118 • CH 8-0102

PAINTINGS • GRAPHICS • FRAMING • RESTORING • EXHIBITIONS

September 29, 1978

Plays & Players
1714 Delancey Place
Philadelphia, PA 19103

Attn: Ms. Diana Dorkin

Gentlemen:

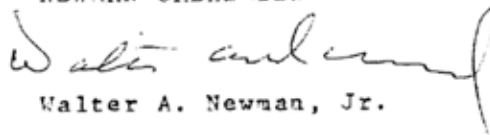
Having inspected the seven murals by Edith Emerson, we submit the following proposal for their restoration:

- Balcony: 2 Murals, approx 7' x 5'
Clean & varnish surface, retouch
as necessary \$ 400. each
- Stage: 1 Mural, approx. 3' x 24'
Clean & varnish surface, retouch
as necessary 1,200.
- Lower Level: 4 Murals, approx. 14' x 9'
Remove from walls, clean plaster
walls, clean back of murals, re-
adhere to walls (providing plaster
is sound), clean & varnish surface,
retouch as necessary. 3,800. each

This work would require approximately two months to complete. It would include the cost of scaffolding. It does not include the 6% Pennsylvania Sales Tax.

Please let me hear from you if you have any questions.

Very truly yours,
NEWMAN GALLERIES


Walter A. Newman, Jr.

wan/jgh

Attachment D

STEVEN B. ERISOTY

Paintings Conservation

2223 E. Susquehanna Avenue

Philadelphia, Pa. 19125

(215) 739-9957

September 1989

Proposal for the restoration of the murals in the Plays & Players Theater, by Edith Emerson and her students.

Plays & Players Theater

1714 Delancy Street

Philadelphia, PA. 19103

I will begin by describing the condition of the murals, and then list each of the steps necessary to properly conserve them. All the murals are painted on canvas, and glued to plaster walls. The structural condition of the murals falls into two clear divisions. The three murals that were glued to interior walls are still firmly attached, and their paint appears quite stable. (Two are in the balcony, and one is over the stage). Work on these murals would be cosmetic: dirt removal and inpainting. The remaining four murals, which line both sides of the auditorium, have serious structural problems, as well as cosmetic problems.

The four largest murals have been glued to plaster which was either applied directly to the exterior brick walls, or directly abutts the exterior brick walls. Either way, exposure of the murals to drastic and constant changes in temperature and relative humidity, and possibly moisture coming from the bricks, has caused the adhesive holding the canvas and the paint layer to deteriorate. The canvas has come loose from the wall in many sections of these four murals. In the past, attempt have been made to reattach loose and torn sections with tacks. Small scale flaking has occurred in many areas, the small bits of missing paint are visible when close inspection with lights is performed. In normal theater lighting and viewing distance, these small losses are not noticeable. Dirt has accumulated on the surface, which presents a dull appearance. These four murals are in desperate need of stabilization.

I will outline the steps needed to properly restore the murals. The estimate of time is based on my working with 1 helper during the entire project, and with several additional helpers for various parts of the project.

Steven B. Erisoty
Paintings Conservation
 2223 E. Susquehanna Avenue
 Philadelphia, Pa. 19125
 (215) 739-9957

September 1989
 Edith Emerson Murals
 Plays & Players Theater
 1714 Delancy Street
 Philadelphia, PA 19103

Time breakdown for 1 large mural, size approximately 16'h x 9'w

<u>Procedure</u>	<u>Estimated days for two men plus thosenoted</u>
The flaking paint must be consolidated.....	1 day
Tacks removed and painting faced with paper for protection....	2 days
Construction of rolling and supporting devices (construction crew needed).....	2 days
Removal of canvas from the wall.....	5 days
Construction of new walls in place to reattach murals to. (further explanation on next page) (construction crew needed).	3 days
Transportation of mural and studio set up.....	1 day (construction crew needed)
Flatten distortions and mend tears.....	7 days
Cleaning process (additional conservator to be hired).....	10 days
Scraping old glue from revers of mural.....	10 days
Lining canvas with new fabric support.....	2 days
Varnishing.....	2 days
Inpainting losses (additional conservator to be hired).....	5 days
Reattachment onto new wall.....	<u>1 day</u>
<u>Total estimated work days</u>	51 days

Steven B. Erisoty

Paintings Conservation

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September 1989

Edith Emerson Murals

Plays & Players Theater

1714 Delancy Street

Philadelphia, PA 19103

Construction of New walls for mural support

In order to prevent further deterioration by the cold, and possibly moist, exterior walls, I am recommending that a false wall with an air space behind it be built out from the present wall. The air space will help to buffer the temperature changes that the murals have had to endure since their original installation. These new walls would be carefully fitted between the plaster pilasters. This would reduce the visible depth of the pilasters, but would seem a change necessary for the preservation of the paintings.

Steven B. Erisoty
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September 1989
Edith Emerson Murals
Plays & Players Theater
1714 Delancy Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103

Restoration estimate
Cost break down for 1 large mural, 16'h x 9'w

51 days for Steven Erisoty at \$400.00 per day.....	\$20,400.00
51 days for a trainee assistant at \$100.00 per day.....	\$5,100.00
6 days total for a construction crew, 2 men at \$350.00 each per day.....	\$4,200.00
15 days for an assistant conservator at \$400.00 per day....	<u>\$6,000.00</u>
Total Labor charges.....	\$35,700.00
Cost of materials.....	\$3,750.00
Cost of Photographic documentation.....	\$1,250.00
Studio space rental for 1 year lease..... \$2,100.00 to <u>\$3,300.00</u> (cost dependant on availability of space)	
Maximum total costs for work.....	\$44,000.00

This is a cost estimate for the first of 4 murals in need of restoration. Actual costs for restoration of subsequent murals may be reduced or raised in accordance with what is learned during the restoration of the first. Space rental must be done yearly; if more than one mural is slated for restoration per year, this could help reduce costs for space rental. Availability of space would also figure into a starting time for the project. Costs of scaffolding have not been included and should be considered an additional expense.

