

Landmarks Preservation Commission
February 9, 1993; Designation List 249
LP-1764

N930343HKM
LOUIS N. JAFFE ART THEATER
(YIDDISH ART THEATER/YIDDISH FOLKS THEATER) BUILDING,
181-189 Second Avenue, Manhattan. Built 1925-26; architect Harrison G. Wiseman.

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 a Landmark of the Yiddish Art Theater and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 28). 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.¹

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DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

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Summary

THE LOUIS N. JAFFE ART THEATER (YIDDISH ART THEATER/YIDDISH FOLKS THEATER) BUILDING

The Louis N. Jaffe Art Theater (Yiddish Art Theater/Yiddish Folks Theater) Building, designed by the prolific theater architect Harrison G. Wiseman, was constructed in 1925-26 for Louis N. Jaffe, a Brooklyn lawyer and prominent Jewish civic 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 Building 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 Moorish Revival design of the cast-stone front portion of the theater building incorporates Alhambraic motifs and Judaic references, but also reflects contemporary architectural trends of the 1920s. These include the search for an appropriate stylistic expression for synagogues and other Jewish institutions, the interest in contrast between areas of blank wall surface and concentrated areas of flat decoration, and 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.

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The Lower East Side and Yiddish Theater in New York City²

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*,³ 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";⁴ 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."⁵ 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.⁶

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.'

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 Building⁸

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.⁹

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 \$325,000.¹⁰ 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."¹¹ 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.¹² 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.*¹³

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,"¹⁴ 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."¹⁵

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,¹⁶ 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.*¹⁷

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 Architect and Design of the Theater Building

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.¹⁸

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 cast-stone portion features a two-story arcade incorporating storefronts, surmounted by an arcade of small pairs of windows above, interrupted near the north end by a taller entrance pavilion; the arcade continues around the corner onto 12th Street. The entrance pavilion is dominated by an elaborate monumental arch which consists of a wide surround with panels of foliate and geometric ornament including motifs inspired by the Alhambra, and in the intrados, a cusped arch supported by large half-menorahs, with ornamental moldings suggesting curtains. The auditorium block is fairly simple; the exit doors at the rear of the auditorium along 12th Street are surmounted by a large blind arch with patterned terra-cotta infill. Wiseman's original conception, as seen in his drawing included in the opening program, had shallow roof domes over the entrance pavilion and auditorium. The Moorish motif was originally further carried out by the horizontal projecting marquee (no longer extant) which had ornamental corners. Flanking the main entrance are the carved inscription "Jaffe Art Theatre Bldg" and the cornerstone with the date May 23, 1926 (and the equivalent Hebrew date).

The design of the Jaffe Art Theater Building 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. Wiseman's design thus is related to such synagogues as the Congregation B'nai Jeshurun (1917-18, Walter S. Schneider & Henry B. Herts, 257-265 West 88 Street, in the Riverside-West End Historic District), and the Unity (later Mt. Nebo) Synagogue (1927-28, Walter S. Schneider, 130 West 79th Street, demolished). All three of these buildings also had colossal portals and shared the use of cast stone in their facades, in warm buff-colored tones which

further evoked associations with the Near East. Both the Unity Synagogue and Jaffe Art Theater Building had very similar ornamental panels on these portals with motifs inspired by the Alhambra. The Jaffe theater building and synagogues of this period also reflect the trend in the 1920s towards simplification of architectural forms, and the accompanying interest in the contrast of blank wall surface and concentrated areas of flat decoration. The final trend expressed in this theater was the interest in "exotic" styles for the design of theaters, as well as of clubs/ auditoriums for fraternal organizations. Examples of the former include the numerous lavish movie palaces built across the United States, while an example of the latter is the Shriners' Mecca Temple (later City Center, 1922-24, H.P. Knowles), at 131 West 55th Street, a designated New York City Landmark, which was built to 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"¹⁹ and "it is of Palestinian and American architecture, having the appearance of an Oriental temple rather than that of a theatre."²⁰ 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."²¹

Maurice Schwartz and his Yiddish Art Theater²²

[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. ...*²³

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";²⁴ 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...,"²⁵ 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.*²⁶

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 1926-45²⁷

[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.*²⁸

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.*²⁹

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 re-opened 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.*³⁰

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 1953-61³¹ [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."³² 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-present³³ [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.

Miscellany³⁴

The Louis N. Jaffe Art Theater Building, aside from the theater, also originally contained six stores on the ground story with offices above these. The Russian Art Restaurant, one of the original tenants of the building for years, also presented musical entertainment. A number of cabarets were located here over the years. Directories listed a number of organizations at this address in its earlier years, including the Jewish National Workers' Alliance, Jewish Folk Schools, and the Yiddisher Kultur Farband (YKUF), a communist-oriented organization which sought to advance secular Jewish culture in Yiddish. In the 1960s the offices began to be converted into apartments; three notable gay residents were Jackie Curtis, a drag "superstar" in Andy Warhol films, photographer Peter Hujar (who lived here from 1975 to 1987), and artist David Wojnarowicz (who lived here from 1980 to 1992). Movies partially filmed at the theater building include *The Night They Raided Minsky's* (1968), *The Fan* (1981), and *The Last Exit to Brooklyn* (1989).

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 exterior of the Jaffe Art Theater Building consists of a three-story "commercial block" along Second Avenue faced in cast stone with a taller auditorium block faced in brown brick behind it to

the west, extending along 12th Street. The cast-stone portion features a two-story arcade, incorporating storefronts, of seven bays on the avenue, surmounted by an arcade of small pairs of windows on the third story;³⁵ this scheme is interrupted at the second-from-the-northernmost bay by a taller entrance pavilion. The arcade continues around the corner onto 12th Street for two bays.³⁶ The arcade consists of semi-circular arches and panelled pilasters with capitals having intertwined birds amidst foliate and geometric decoration. There were originally six stores, each with an entrance alcove, on the ground floor in this portion of the building; today the southernmost three bays are storefronts, the next two bays are ticket counters, and the northernmost bay (and the 12th Street bays) corresponds to a new interior stairway. Anodized aluminum storefronts and doors (nearly flush with the exterior wall), spandrel panels,³⁷ and windows³⁸ were installed during the building's conversion to a movie theater in 1990. The third-story pilasters have a simple guilloche pattern and foliate capitals. The entrance pavilion is dominated by an elaborate monumental arch which consists of a wide surround with panels of foliate and geometric ornament including motifs inspired by the Alhambra, and in the intrados, a cusped arch supported by large half-menorahs, with ornamental moldings suggesting curtains;³⁹ the pavilion has a simple projecting cornice with rounded corbels. The main entrance consists of four new glass and anodized aluminum doors, above which is the inscription "Village East Cinemas."⁴⁰ Flanking the main entrance are the carved inscription "Jaffe Art Theatre Bldg" to the south, below which is a small door leading to upper floors, and a signboard to the north, below which is the cornerstone with the date May 23, 1926 (and the equivalent Hebrew date). The current marquee is V-shaped.⁴¹ A flagpole has been recently placed above the entrance arch. On the roof, south of the entrance pavilion is a terrace, while a small addition is located to the north.

The brick auditorium portion of the building, to the west of the cast-stone portion, has a wide facade on 12th Street consisting of the central section with the auditorium exit doors, which is flanked by taller, slightly projecting "pavilions." The five pairs of new exit doors are surmounted by a wide, molded cast-stone band with corbels similar to the pilaster capitals on the cast-stone portion of the building, and a large blind arch with a patterned brick surround and pink quatrefoil-pattern terra-cotta infill. This facade is

capped by a cast-stone band. Each flanking "pavilion" has a ground-floor rectangular opening with a new wrought-iron gate. Each is surmounted by an arched opening, behind which is an exterior fire stairway. At the west end of the facade is an exit

alley with fire escapes covered by corrugated metal and a new wrought-iron gate.

Report prepared by Jay Shockley
Deputy Director of Research

NOTES

1. The Commission had previously held public hearings on this building (LP-1569) on December 10, 1985 (Item No. 7) and March 11, 1986 (Item No. 5).
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. 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.
23. Cited in Sandrow, 262.
24. Lifson, 313.
25. William Schack, "A Yiddish Group Makes a Comeback," *NYT* (Nov. 6, 1932), IX, 2.
26. "A Wandering Jew and His Yiddish Plays," *Boston Transcript* (May 4, 1929), 12.
27. 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).

28. Atkinson, *NYT* (Dec. 18, 1932), 3.
29. New York Art Troupe letter (n.d., c. 1934), Yivo Institute.
30. Ben-Ami, "A New Jewish Theatre," *NYT* (Oct. 1, 1944), II, 2.
31. 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).
32. Little, 54.
33. 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.
34. This section was compiled from the following sources: *Manhattan Address Telephone Directories*, and Grey Art Gallery, *Peter Hujar* (New York: New York University, 1990).
35. These windows were originally one-over-one double-hung wood sash; they are now similar but of anodized aluminum.
36. To the west of these bays was a door; this opening is now blind and is covered with a wrought-iron grille.
37. The original spandrels may be seen on historic photographs (c. 1926); the current ones of anodized aluminum are a more planar variation, with louvers.
38. The second-story windows within the round arches were originally tripartite, with one-over-one double-hung wood sash; they are now single-pane anodized aluminum windows.
39. The colossal window of the entrance arch was originally divided into 12 panels; currently it is divided differently and some of the panels are anodized aluminum.
40. The original doors were set within an exterior alcove; the current doors are nearly flush with the exterior wall.
41. The original rectangular, horizontal projecting marquee had ornamental corners; the structure of this marquee apparently survived until its replacement with the current one. A photograph taken in 1934 shows that at that time there was also a vertical projecting sign reading "Yiddish Art Theater" to the north of the colossal arch; by 1936, photographs show that the "Art" was replaced with "Folks." The Russian Art Restaurant had a similar, although smaller, vertical projecting sign at the south end of the building.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Louis N. Jaffe Art Theater (Yiddish Art Theater/Yiddish Folks Theater) Building has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the Louis N. Jaffe Art Theater (Yiddish Art Theater /Yiddish Folks Theater) Building, designed by the prolific theater architect Harrison G. Wiseman, was constructed in 1925-26 for Brooklyn lawyer and prominent Jewish civic 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 Moorish Revival design of the cast-stone front portion of the theater building incorporates Alhambraic motifs and Judaic references, but also reflects contemporary architectural trends of the 1920s, including the search for an appropriate stylistic expression for synagogues and other Jewish institutions, the interest in contrast between areas of blank wall surface and concentrated areas of flat decoration, 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; and 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.

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 a Landmark the Louis N. Jaffe Art Theater (Yiddish Art Theater/Yiddish Folks Theater) Building, 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 THEATER¹

YIDDISH ART THEATER 1926-28

- The Tenth Commandment*, by Abraham Goldfaden; adapt./dir. Maurice Schwartz; design, Boris Aronso 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 Sadoff; 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 Hagan, 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 Geringer, Jerry Stiller (Dec. 10, 1958) (71 perf.)
- The Beaux' Strategem*, by George Farquhar; dir. Stuart Vaughan; with June Havoc, Robert Geringer, 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 Entermédia.

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.)

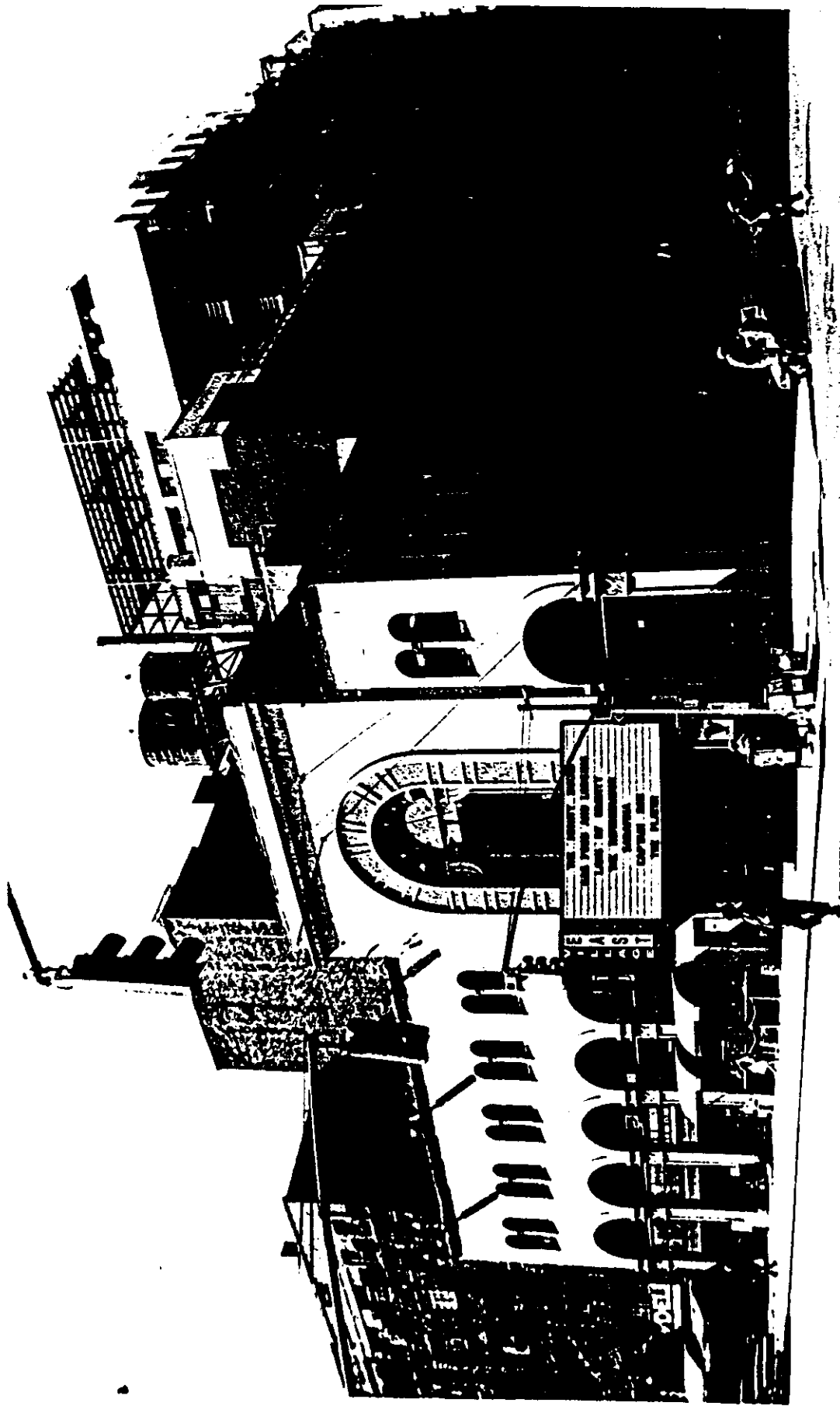
[Theater closed 1988-90]

VILLAGE EAST CITY CINEMAS 1991-

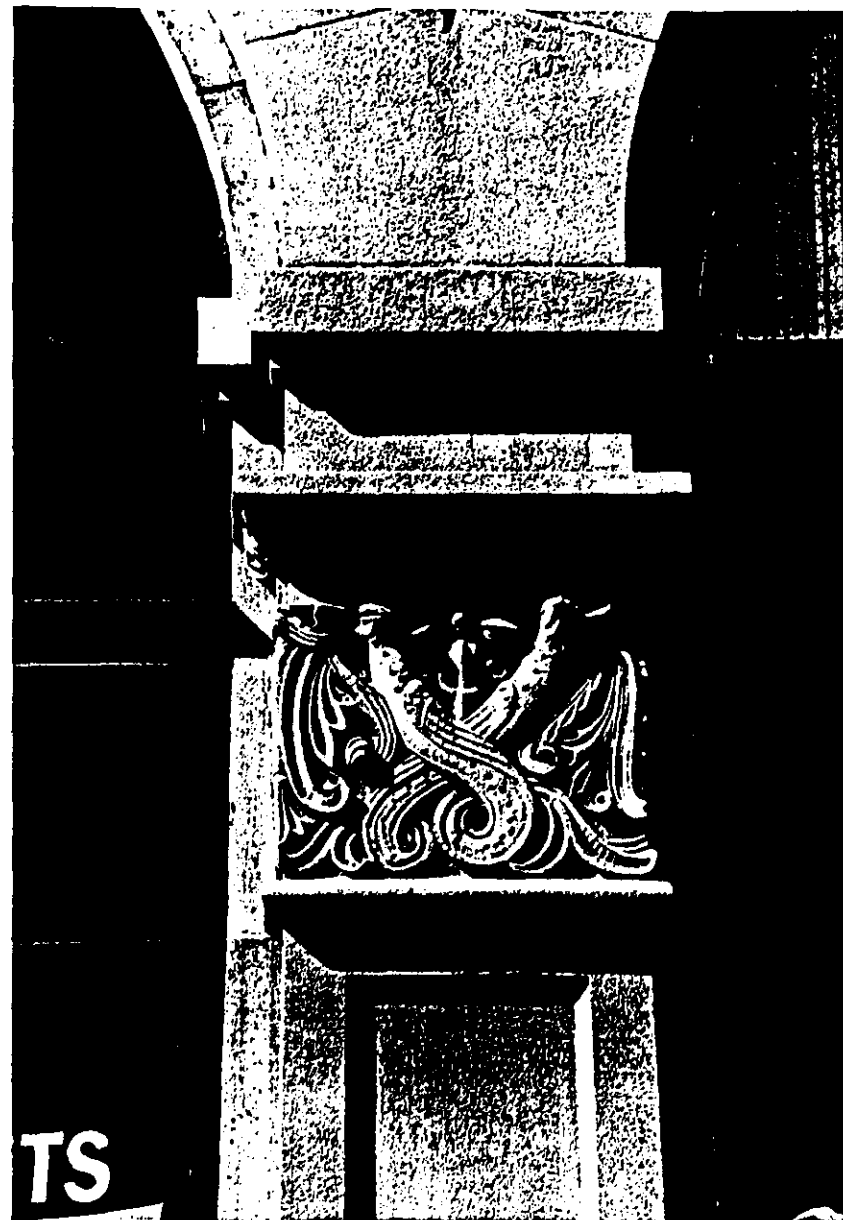
Movies

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.



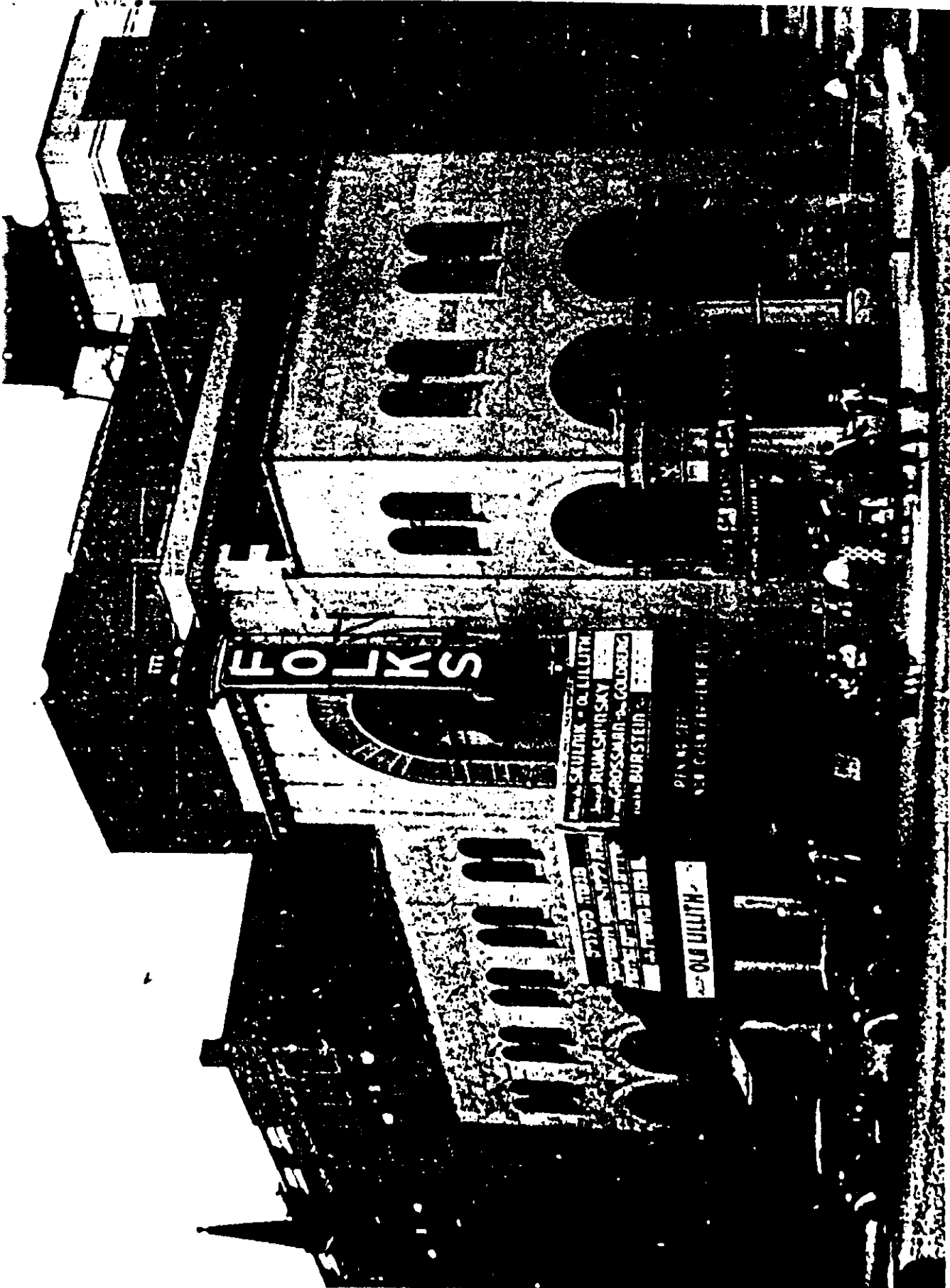
Louis N. Jaffe Art Theater Building
181-189 Second Avenue, Manhattan
Photo credit: Carl Forster



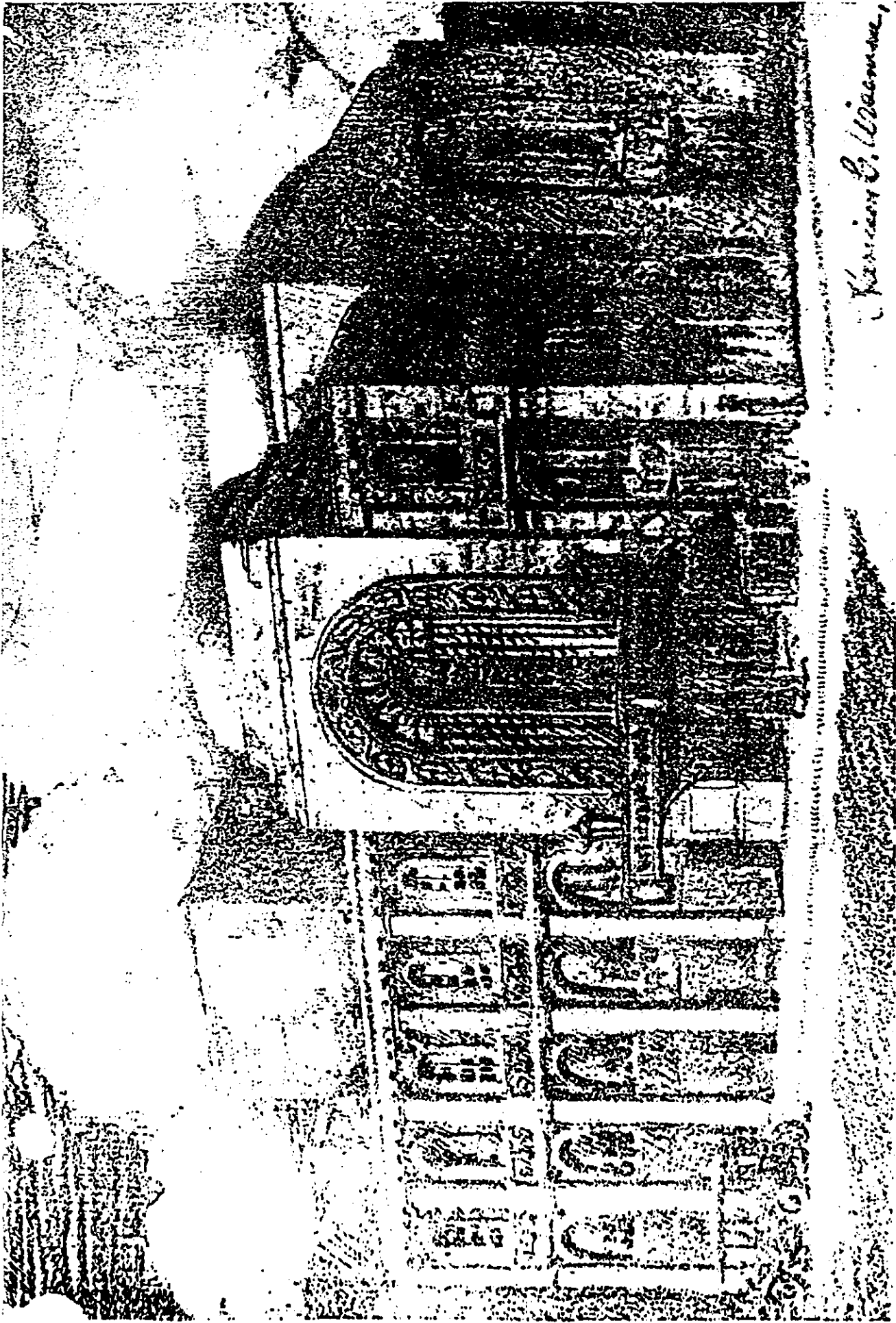
Entrance pavilion arch and pilaster capital
Louis N. Jaffe Art Theater Building
Photo credit: Carl Forster



Louis N. Jaffe Art Theater Building
Photo: P.L. Sperr (Apr. 1934)
NYPL, Billy Rose Coll.

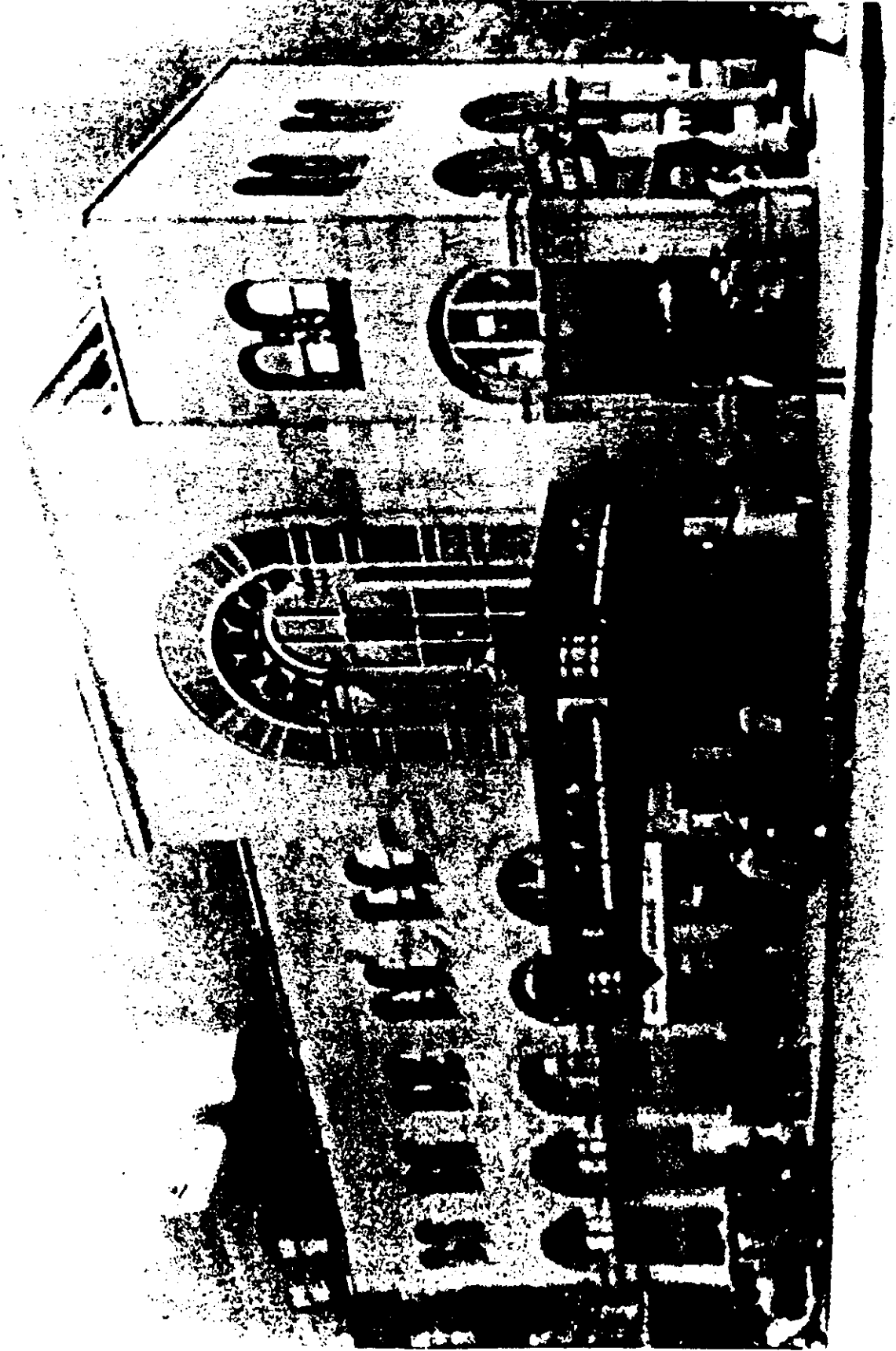


Louis N. Jaffe Art Theater Building
Photo: Victor Volnar (Sept. 1935)
NYPL

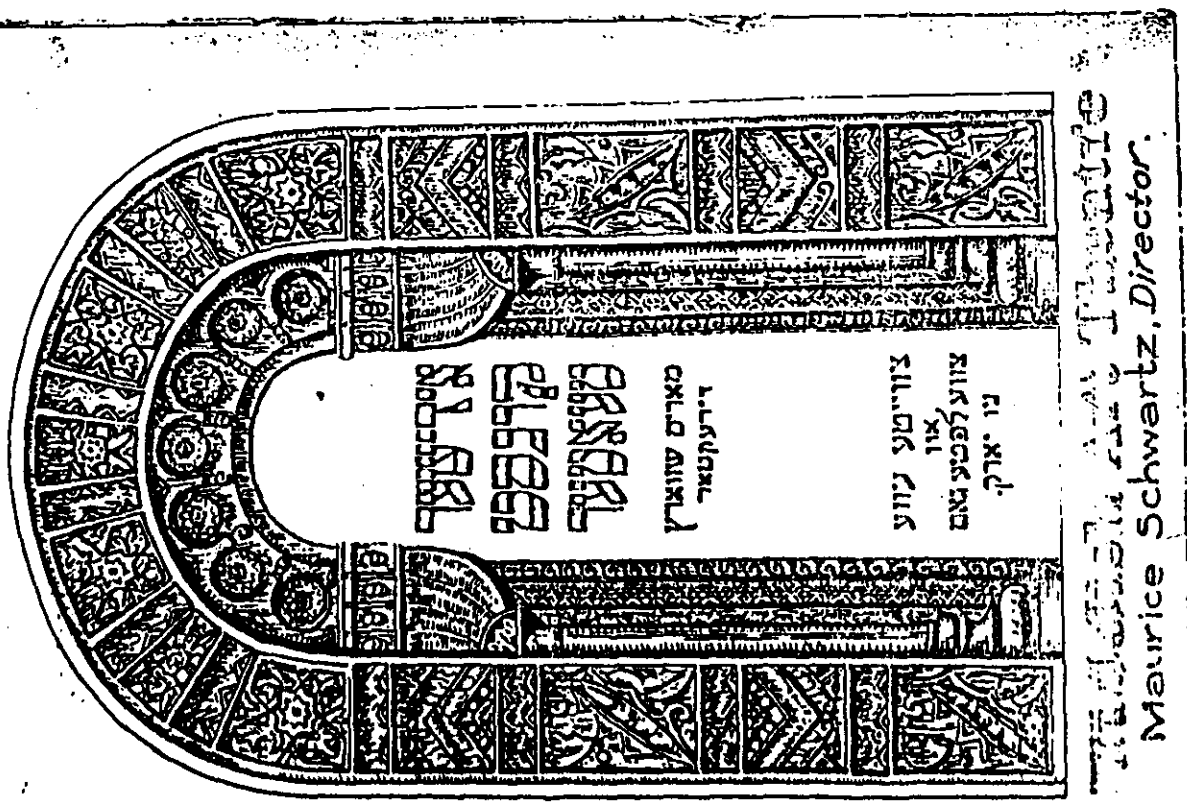
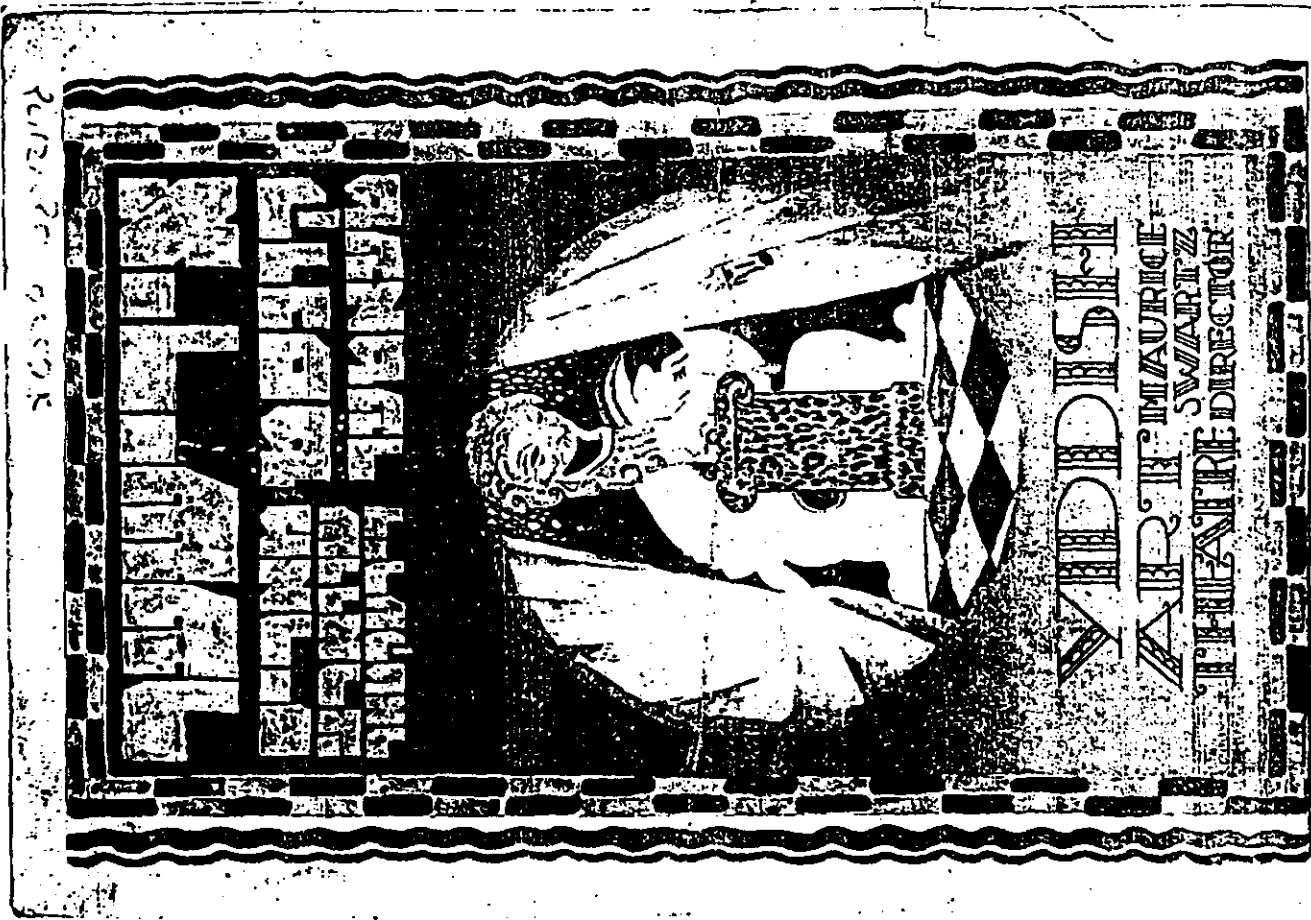


Harrison G. Wiseman,

Original drawing of the Louis N. Jaffe Art Theater Building
by architect Harrison G. Wiseman
Yiddish Art Theater opening program (Nov. 1926)
NYPL



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



Yiddish Art Theater program covers
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DIRECTOR

NEW JEWISH FOLKS THEATRE

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Yiddish Art Theatre

Maurice Schwartz, Director



PHOENIX THEATRE

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Yiddish Art Theatre

MAURICE SCHWARTZ, Director
SECOND AVENUE AT TWELFTH STREET

Various letterheads
Louis N. Jaffe Art Theater

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SECOND AVENUE AT 12TH STREET, NEW YORK

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