

Forty-Year-Old Theater Project Still Dream

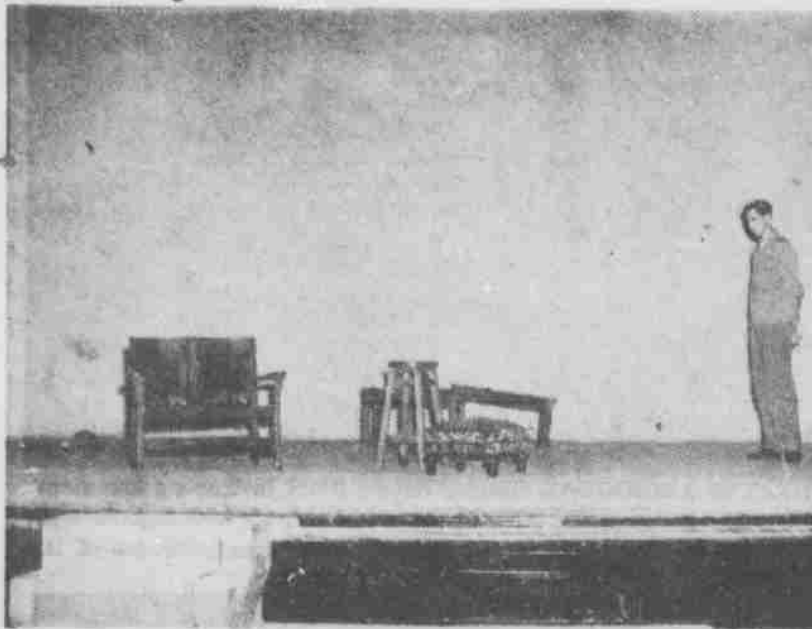
History Says Structure Theater Has Been Tumbling Since 1907

BY FRANK JACOBS

Scene one. The Temple theater—1907. The inaugural performance has just received its final curtain call. The audience is leaving the auditorium. The actors are removing their makeup. Two students comment as they pass through the exit.

Joe—"Wonderful auditorium, isn't it?"

Nobody Home . . .



A LONE FIGURE views the empty stage of the Temple Theatre. Except for a few props, relics of past performances, the ancient floorboards know no weight except the weight of time. Badly in need of refinishing and more than a bit weatherbeaten, the deserted stage is a most imposing reminder of the sorrowful state of campus dramatics.

Temple Sidelights

It's not surprising to hear that the Temple Theater was the first university dramatic building of its kind erected west of the Mississippi. Built in 1905, it is the second oldest university unit in the country.

Besides cancellation of University Theater plays, the condemning of the Opera, Kosmet Klub Spring Musical, and all Music School concerts.

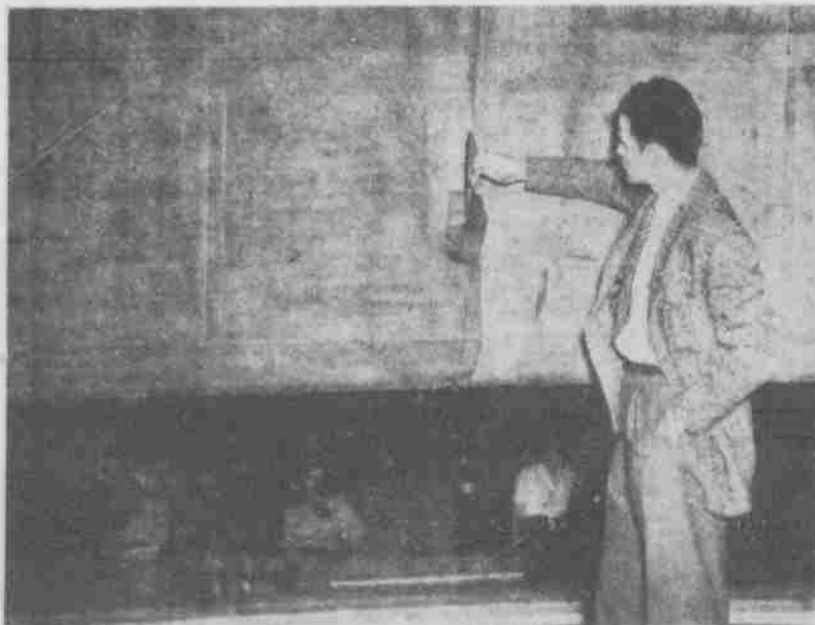
The University Theater is one of the few campus self-supported departments. All office and stage equipment has been purchased

through funds collected at the box-office.

The annual "Cavalcade of Drama" has been all but canceled. An annual series of four student directed three-act plays, the "Cavalcade" this year will not be open to the public.

Not that the Temple is weatherbeaten—but. During this winter's severe snowstorms, it was not uncommon on a stormy day to see fluttery flakes of white floating to the orchestra pit. If and when repairs are made, the roof, in all probability, will be fixed first.

Curtain Ripping . . .



ONE OF MANY rips in the "asbestos and fire-proof" theatre curtain is surveyed by Jack Norman. Full of holes and having a sieve-like appearance, the curtain is but one of many theater components in dire need of replacement. From the other side of the curtain, resigned theatre workers glumly watch the proceedings.

Andy—"Fine place. Guess it's the best in the country."

Joe—"Yes, this university's really going places. This new building outranks any theater I've ever seen!"

Andy—"Yes, but just think of what we'll have in, say 40 years. Think of the building they'll have built by then."

Joe—"I'll say! This university's really going places!"

Scene two. The Temple theater—1949.

The "final" performance of "Winterset" has just received its final curtain call. The audience is leaving the auditorium. The actors are removing their makeup. Two elderly men, about 62, comment as they pass through the exit.

Joe—"What a dump, a fire-trap."

Andy—"Delorable place! Must be the worst in the country!"

Joe—"What's happened to this university? This theater is in terrible shape."

Andy—"Yes. Remember back in 1907, how proud we were of the new Temple building."

Joe—"That was in 1907! What's happened?"

TO ANSWER best Joe's question, a survey of the situation is in order. A trip through the Temple theater is not the colorful and intriguing experience that it used to be. Today, instead of beholding a brightly-lighted, clean theater buzzing with industry, there is only the gloomy shadow of bleak idleness.

Walking down the creaking aisle, the auditorium visitor is first impressed by the lack of activity. But then, after a closer surveyal of specific theater areas, the reason is clear for this inactivity.

Generally, the auditorium is in lousy condition.

So, students, put on your walking shoes and let's begin our Temple tour.

THE FIRST specific spot we will visit is that mass of lumber and nails known as the "steel staircase." To be sure, the stairs are not made of steel. The metallic reference stems from an administration article a few years back stating that the University theater had just constructed a modern "steel staircase."

Picking wooden splinters from our fingers, we enter the mirrored chamber, the makeup room. The makeup room recalls a lost era.

Along the walls, above the mirrors, photos of past theater successes offer a reminder of the University theater of other years.

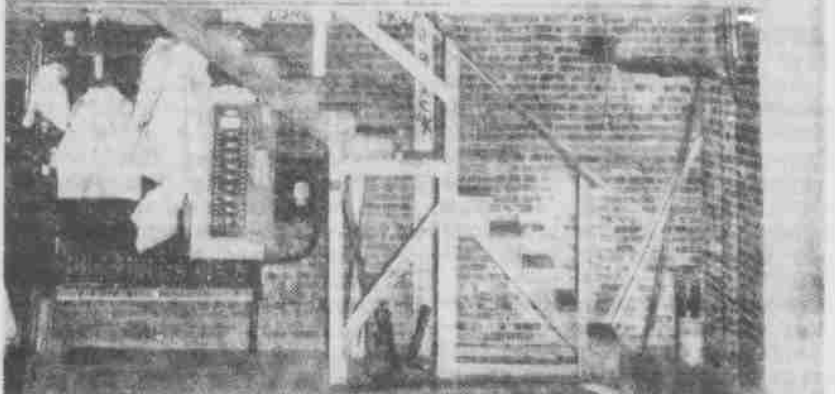
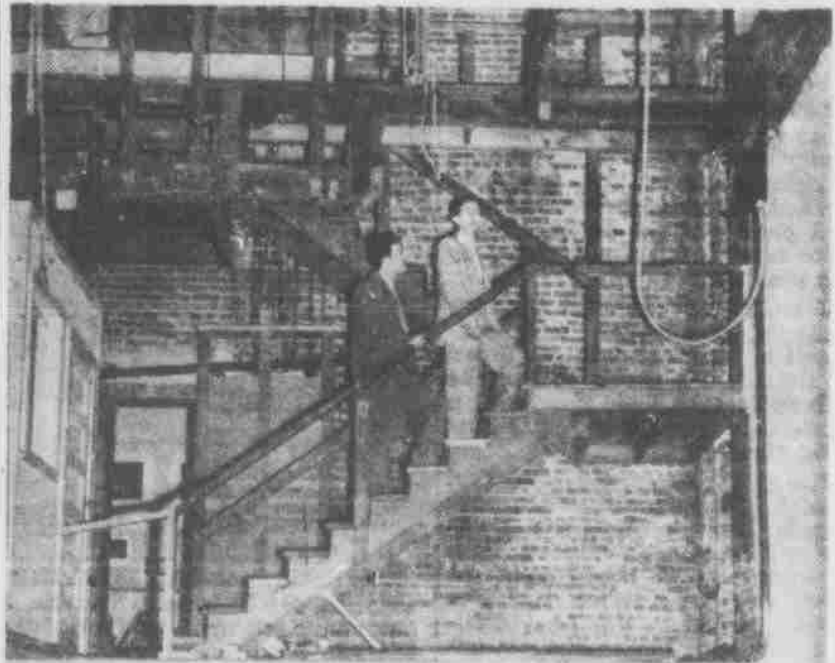
From the makeup room we tramp up the stairs to the balcony. Still littered with programs from "Winterset," the balcony displays reason alone for the building condemnation. Above our heads, the paint curls as it peels off. There is a slight sprinkle outside and soon we see the first signs of water trickling through the cracks in the ceiling.

Glancing to the right and left, inadequate exits blot our vision. The wooden stairs, complete with no banisters, only add to the title of "firetrap."

FINALLY, we end our tour on main stage. The gross inadequacies of the auditorium are most sharply pointed out before the footlights.

We first pull down the asbestos

The Steel Staircase . . .



INITIALED AND SCARRED through 45 years of theatrical performances, the rickety backstage stairs offer little in modern American architecture. To the left of the stairs at the foot of the picture rests the newly-innovated theatre switchboard.

Ceiling Dripping . . .



GAYLORD MAER adjusts a bucket to catch the rain leaking through one of many cracks in the auditorium ceiling. The second oldest university theater in the country, the Temple was built in 1904. Watch falling plaster, Gay!

curtain. Labeled "fireproof" by theater optimists, the curtain would at best be a mere delayer in case of a serious blaze. Patched and repatched, its usefulness seems to have been outlived.

But from the shabby curtain, peeling ceiling and hazardous staircases, our eyes fall on the several well-planned and expensive improvements that the theater has financed.