

New Brandeis Theater Beautiful Soon to Be Opened and Its Directors



W.J. BURGESS
—MANAGER—

O.D. WOODWARD



FRANK E. WOODWARD
—BUS. MGR.—

CONRAD HECKER
—TREASURER—

WHEN the Brandeis theater opens its doors to admit its first audience on Thursday evening, Omaha will have the most beautiful theater in the western part of the United States, if not in the entire country, and one of the most beautiful in the world. This is not a mere figure of speech, but a sober statement. No theater in all the west, from Chicago to San Francisco, unless it be the new Columbia but recently opened at San Francisco, can approach, much less compare, with the Brandeis in point of simple elegance. Its beauty is of the sort that will appeal to the esthetic soul. It has nothing that is garish or obtrusive. Everything has been done on that scale of lavish treatment which recognizes the "art that conceals artifice," and provides for the appeal to the soul of man through his senses, assailing them by the most subtle and delicate methods. At no point does the interior of the new theater present a direct attack on any of the senses; nothing in its ensemble challenges attention, or commands observance, but its every aspect appeals in the most alluring way to the artistic side of man's nature, and without his being aware of how or why, the observer finds himself quietly but surely slipping into the mood suggested by the surroundings, and drifting away from the sordid things of life, into a sense of luxurious satisfaction from which he will hesitate to depart.

First of all, the Brandeis theater is the last word in theater construction from the standpoint of comfort for the patron. Not a single inch has been left undone that would add even to the slightest degree to the comfort or convenience of those who assemble there to take their pleasure in watching the plays. Not only has the artist developed his best in the decorations of the theater, but he has united his efforts to those of the artisan, and they have completed the circle by providing the necessities of such kind as will give the highest of satisfactions with the most pleasing of the merely beautiful. From the very beginning it was set down that when the Brandeis opened its doors to the public, it would be to welcome Omaha folks to a theater of which they would be proud. This purpose has always been kept in mind, and the builders, the architects, and the lessees have been from time to time surprised by the owners, who have suggested additions here and alterations there, all designed to give to the theater more of genuine beauty, of real comfort and the general tone of sumptuous elegance that makes for the real sensuous delight of the modern theater. A single instance may serve to illustrate this point: One afternoon, several weeks ago, the Messrs. Brandeis, with Mr. Burgess, Mr. Weston, Mr. Latenser and some of the subcontractors were standing on the main floor of the theater, discussing details of the work. One of the Messrs. Brandeis turned aside for a moment, and then asked, "Wouldn't a properly designed mantel, with lighting fixtures, fit in here nicely?" and followed up his suggestion by asking that a drawing be made for the purpose. The drawing was made and submitted the next day, along with the estimated cost of \$1,000. Mr. Brandeis studied it a moment, regarding the effect, and then ordered one on each side of the theater—an extra cost of \$2,000, just to fill a vacant place on the wall, but it will be found that these mantels will greatly enhance the general effect.

In this way the theater has been built. Its loveliness of white and gold, of marble and silver walls, of delicate water colors and still gold light fixtures, of the rich curtains and exquisitely modeled sculptures, are all the outgrowth of a determination that Omaha should have a theater worthy of the name. From the sidewalk in front to the big blank wall at the rear of the stage, everything has been provided on this one plan. Not a detail that will conduce to the comfort of the patron has been omitted everything that will please him in all his senses has been lavishly provided, and he will find the Brandeis truly "the theater beautiful." And the actor will think it heaven after he has made a round of the ordinary theaters and then comes to the wonderfully complete and perfectly appointed world behind the curtain in the new Brandeis.

A mild, conservative richness of beauty pervades the interior of the Brandeis theater. There is charm in color and form without extravagance. It is rich, warm, tangible, yet mellowed as the gleaming of autumnal colors of the woodland glowing through the haze of Indian summer. In the wealth of line and tint that so satisfies the eye a conservatism just short of puritanism prevents the cloying, overwhelming shower of color that the first glimpse suggests. A wonderful intermingling of the best attainments of mural art of all time has been brought to bear in the production of the artistic interior of the new theater. It is as though the jewels of conception had been fused in one alchemy to produce the pigment with which the playhouse has been painted.

The intricate tracing of Gothic stone vine leaves, the glowing radiance of the early Greek and untrammelled Egyptian, the

chaste grace of the Ionic, a bit of the later Italian, the softness of the Byzantine, all these have been thrown into the melting pot to be cast by the hand of skilled workmanship into the pleasing fabric that clothes the interior of the theater. Delicate, reserved almost to the fading point, but still direct and positive in powers is the range of rich colors employed.

The broad planes of clear wall space are broken by panels of simple design, but peculiarly effective in the relief of the expanse. Bits of bead work and the acanthus leaf have been employed in the decor-

ated with a new idea in view. It is expected that in this house, "the theater beautiful," the audience will not choose to remain seated between acts. In the big comfortable space afforded by the foyers, there will be room for the easy circulation of the big crowds in between-act promenades. In other houses to leave one's seat means a series of at least slight inconveniences and probably a crushing hurry to the seats just before the curtain rises at the end of the intermission. The Brandeis has been designed with the expectation that the greater part of the audience will leave

ray clusters of the bright but softly radiating electric globes. Each little bulb is heavily frosted to reduce the illumination to less than the garish glare of perfectly transparent glass. In wonderfully formed bits of plaster the lights are enclosed in the acanthus leaf designs, gilded with pure gold leaf, yet so treated as not to glisten too brightly. The little rows of beading and tiny intervening niches are alike coated with the golden color which contrasts so handsomely with the ivory white planes of the plaster about.

Beginning with the panels in the lobby

and extending forward through the auditorium enclosure to the boxes in front, the panels are hung with the brilliant galleon tapestry silk, heavy and stiff as canvas and as rich as the robes of a king. This fabric costs considerably more per yard than most folk would care to spend for a fine garment. The panels of galleon are edged with strips of yet another fine silken weave to conceal the tiny attachments that hold the tapestry and to give finish to the hangings.

A row of most happy little golden seraphs, or maybe they are cherubs, support clusters of incandescents in each of the panels. These delicately lined bits of sculpture are wonderfully graceful. Their roman gold finish lends itself well to the rendering of the sculptural effect and at the same time preserves conformity to the coloring of the walls. About the lighting fixtures above will be ranged clustering series of beveled French plate mirrors, giving the general impression of some huge jewel. These mirrors can not, however, be put in place for some time after the opening of the theater owing to the necessity of allowing the plaster to thoroughly season lest the moisture bedim the splendor of the reflecting surfaces. These mirrors represent the spicing of the design and the only suggestion of flash and striking brilliancy



DORIS KEANE

HERBERT SIDNEY AND Wm. COURTENAY

PRINCIPALS IN "ARSENE LUPIN," THE PLAY SELECTED TO OPEN THE NEW BRANDEIS THEATER.

ation of detail, each preserved in reserved and unostentatious relation to the whole. The backgrounds are the ivory colored stretches of plaster. The panels are in rich galleon brocaded silks of tapestry design. Here and there is a suggestion of the mauve that finds its fullest expression in the rich drop curtain of silk plush. The bullion tint of the galleon is carried into the draperies of the boxes and even to the lining of the marble pillars which end in corinthes of dull creamy gold. The design can not be said to be either conventional or floral, but a type that embodies the grace of both. The carpets are of the golden color of the tapestry hangings, bearing alike the same design in the woven pile as that of the embossed brocades.

The few bits of woodwork are of delicately grained oak of a velvety soft finish, through which the lines and shimmering planes of the wood gleam with a subdued elegance. The same treatment has been given the chairs where expansive and comfortable forms of oak support upholstered leather. In wainscoting and balustrades, Vermont marble of very light hue, almost white, but hardly grey, has been used. It is in keeping with the general scheme in that there is nowhere the slightest suggestion of glare or daring. The soft whiteness gives an impression of solidity that well represents all of the bold strength that lies concealed beneath the finery of the outer dress of the walls of concrete and steel.

In its lines the theater has within been designed to give an air of comfortable roominess without chill grandeur. There is a suggestion of coziness enhanced by many a detail that is hard to conceive in proportion alone. Angles are decisive and curves are sweeping, yet both are employed with ease and facility in continuation in the rendering of the mural effects. Broad lines mark the aisles; there are no crammed places, yet every foot is full. The vaulted circles of ceiling and curving stuccoed surfaces are so designed that they catch the diffused illumination from the frosted incandescents globes to spread it out with a tender clear light over all the space alike. The points of extreme brilliancy are few. The general illumination is ample to show each pleasing and accurate detail. From the entrance and roomy vestibule to the termination of the design at the proscenium arch the effect is homogeneous and uniform in its variations. Nothing has been slighted and as much care has been spent in the lobby and vestibule as in the decoration of the auditorium itself. The foyer of the Brandeis theater is de-

about the theater. All else is softened, thus the effect may be heightened by the introduction of the sparkling dashes of light.

The 1,700 spacious seats of the mellowed brownish golden oak are ranged in sections divided by wide roomy aisles. Not a supporting pillar stands to interrupt the view of the stage from any seat in the house. The upholstering is rich and soft, yet firmly comfortable in its luxuriousness. Joy of all joys—there are specially big seats for the fat man. These were just made for him, too—on purpose—twenty-two inches wide.

Under each seat is a ventilating register, so fitted that in winter it delivers warm air and in the warmer end of the season the cooled breeze of big fans blowing in the basement air chambers below.

A rare touch of cozy comfortableness is added in an afterthought of the architect, two fireplaces on opposite sides of the big lobby, the promenade. These fireplaces are just the very last word in beauty of design. Set deep in the splendor of the golden walls, they radiate a cheery glow that speaks cheeriness and welcome. The fireplaces represent a familiar touch that seems quite unexpected in places of public gathering.

A number of mural paintings of exceptional beauty grace the theater. On the proscenium arch are three groups of allegorical design of lovely grace. They are cameo ovals as soft and airy as the subdued tones of the walls about. Their coloring is rich and powerful, but it shines forth with only a dewy sort of clearness. Perhaps the best of the paintings is that in the foyer where the arched semi-circle is occupied by a canvas of striking strength despite its daintiness of expression. The work is that of Theodore Behr, a Chicago artist of prominence in decorative fields.

The cameo paintings on the proscenium arch are surrounded by sculptured groups executed in the same fairy-like touch.

The friezes are relieved here and there by the introduction of garzoyles and conventional bits of ornamentation made more forcible by touches of the golden tint that pervades the theater. On the broad expanse of the mauve tinted plush drop curtain is an embroidered design in golden

silks. Above the valance, a mighty bit of trimming ten feet deep, carries a derivative of the same figure as that on the curtain below. The contrast of pale violet and dull gold is exquisite.

The exacting care of the decorators striving for perfection in this theater beautiful is well shown in the work of the asbestos fire curtain. The asbestos performs an entirely utilitarian function, but it, too, is made to bear a share in the attainment of the general effect. Colored in its roughly textured surfaces to a soft dusty purple grey, it is bordered with a broad outline design of rich heavy gold. From the auditorium it seems as though the heavy fabric bore the design in forged bars of the metal itself.

About the exits appear a replica of the design at the entrance to the capitol building at Washington, which incidentally bears a relation to the Grecian conceptions of unity that are carried out in the general decorative scheme.

It is, indeed, "the Theater Beautiful."

A remarkably intricate machine lies concealed behind the curtain of this theater. The picture presented to the audience must represent the efforts of more than the scene betrays. The stage and its appurtenances is a vast workshop, where scenic effects are the results of the craftsmanship of a force of skilled and experienced workmen. In the Brandeis theater this stage has been brought to a degree of perfection in completeness unexcelled and probably unequalled in any playhouse that the country boasts. The fruits of many a costly experience elsewhere have been brought into appreciation in concrete form there.

Standing on the stage naked of its hangings one gets the impression of hanging at the bottom of a huge well, so vast is

silks. Above the valance, a mighty bit of trimming ten feet deep, carries a derivative of the same figure as that on the curtain below. The contrast of pale violet and dull gold is exquisite.

The exacting care of the decorators striving for perfection in this theater beautiful is well shown in the work of the asbestos fire curtain. The asbestos performs an entirely utilitarian function, but it, too, is made to bear a share in the attainment of the general effect. Colored in its roughly textured surfaces to a soft dusty purple grey, it is bordered with a broad outline design of rich heavy gold. From the auditorium it seems as though the heavy fabric bore the design in forged bars of the metal itself.

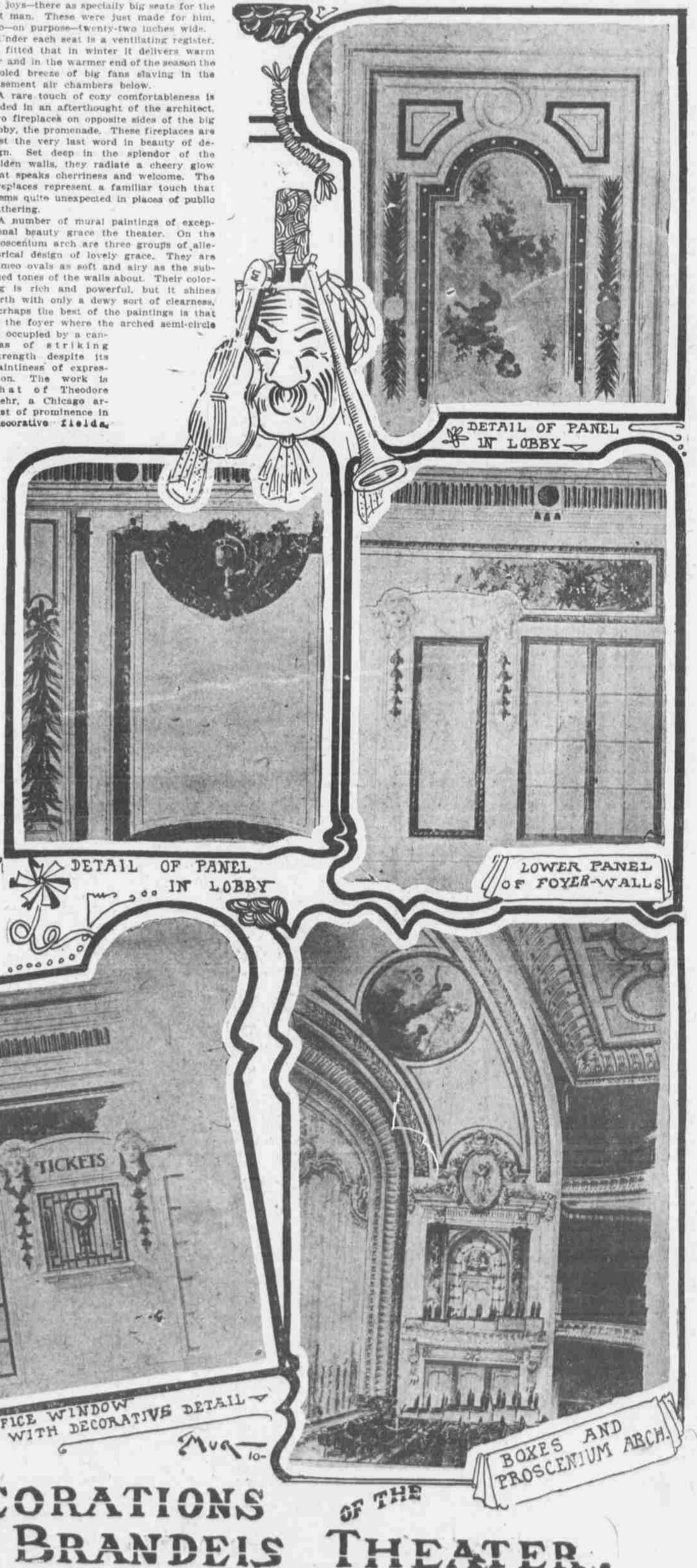
About the exits appear a replica of the design at the entrance to the capitol building at Washington, which incidentally bears a relation to the Grecian conceptions of unity that are carried out in the general decorative scheme.

It is, indeed, "the Theater Beautiful."

A remarkably intricate machine lies concealed behind the curtain of this theater. The picture presented to the audience must represent the efforts of more than the scene betrays. The stage and its appurtenances is a vast workshop, where scenic effects are the results of the craftsmanship of a force of skilled and experienced workmen. In the Brandeis theater this stage has been brought to a degree of perfection in completeness unexcelled and probably unequalled in any playhouse that the country boasts. The fruits of many a costly experience elsewhere have been brought into appreciation in concrete form there.

Standing on the stage naked of its hangings one gets the impression of hanging at the bottom of a huge well, so vast is

(Continued on Page Four.)



DETAIL OF PANEL IN LOBBY

DETAIL OF PANEL IN LOBBY

LOWER PANEL OF FOYER WALLS

BOX-OFFICE WINDOW WITH DECORATIVE DETAIL

BOXES AND PROSCENIUM ARCH

MURAL DECORATIONS OF THE BRANDEIS THEATER.