

LOEW'S PARADISE THEATER INTERIOR, first floor interior, consisting of the lobby, the foyer, the grand lobby, the main staircase leading from the grand lobby to the promenade level and the area under the staircase, the orchestra seating level of the auditorium, the proscenium area and arch, and the alcoves flanking the proscenium area; the promenade level and upper foyer interior, the men's lounge, the women's lounge, the hallways leading to the mezzanine seating level of auditorium, and the mezzanine seating level of the auditorium; the balcony level interior, consisting of the balcony seating level of the auditorium; all stairways, landings, intermediate lobbies, and elevator lobbies leading to and from the above spaces; and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces, including but not limited to, wall and ceiling surfaces, ticket booths, display cases, framed display boards, columns, pilasters, doors, railings, balustrades, metalwork, mirrors, chandeliers, lighting fixtures, exit signs, attached decorative and sculptural elements; 2405-2419 Grand Concourse (aka 2394-2408 Creston Avenue), Borough of the Bronx. Built 1928-29; John Ebersson, architect.

Landmark Site: Borough of the Bronx Tax Map Block 3165, Lot 44.

On April 18, 2006 the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Loew's Paradise Theater Interior (Item 4). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with provisions of law. Two witnesses, including representatives of the Historic Districts Council and the Art Deco Society, spoke in support of designation. The Commission previously held public hearings on Loew's Paradise Theater Interior (LP-1922) on July 19, 1994 (Item 1) and October 19, 1995 (Item 1).



Summary

The Loew's Paradise, designed by John Ebersson, is one of the most important atmospheric motion picture theaters to survive in the United States. Completed in September 1929, it was one of five so-called "Wonder" theaters built by the New York-based Loew's chain to serve major population centers outside midtown Manhattan. Located in the Bronx, on the west side of the Grand Concourse, just south of Fordham Road, the theater incorporates many richly-decorated interiors, including an auditorium that seats nearly four thousand. Ebersson, who invented this type of theater in the mid-1920s, designed the Paradise to evoke the art and architecture of the late Renaissance or early Baroque period. Guests pass from the outer vestibule into the lobby, a double-height space with an elaborate coffered ceiling hung with a massive tiered chandelier. From here, one enters the foyer, and then, the grand lobby, a wood-paneled room with mirrored walls, decorative ironwork, and ceiling murals by painters Andrew Karoly and Lajos Szanto. A grand staircase leads to the promenade and upper foyer, which have iron balconies overlooking the grand lobby, as well as the men's and women's lounges. The auditorium is reached from four separate levels. Resembling the garden courtyard of an Italian palace, it is vast in scale and retains the remarkable ability to astonish those who enter. A wide proscenium, flanked by asymmetrical walls punctuated by archways and sculpture, is silhouetted against a dark blue sky. The studio of Caproni and Brother, Boston, Massachusetts, produced most, if not all of the sculptures in the theater, including plaster reproductions of works by Michelangelo and Peter Visser, among others. To enhance the feeling that patrons were seated outdoors, Ebersson embellished the room with artificial trees, vines and birds, and installed a machine that produced simulated clouds. In combination with sound, which had recently been introduced to the movies, the atmospheric theater offered a multi-sensory experience that has rarely been equaled. In subsequent decades, however, the Paradise was victim to the growing popularity of television and suburbanization. Though converted to a multiplex in 1973, ticket sales continued to decline and the theater closed in 1994. Over the past decade, however, most alterations have been reversed and the extravagance of the original interior has been regained. Considered by many to be Ebersson's masterpiece, the Paradise reopened as an entertainment venue in October 2005.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The American Movie Industry¹

The first showing of a film of moving images to a paying theater audience took place in April of 1896, when Koster & Bial's vaudeville theater in New York City included the short film "Thomas A. Edison's Latest Marvel, The Vitascope" among its productions.² Such films soon became a regular part of vaudeville programs. By 1905 "nickelodeons" (so-called because of the five-cent admission charges) showing silent movies began to open in converted storefronts, and over the next decade the movies became a popular and inexpensive form of entertainment.

During World War I, America emerged as the dominant force in the motion picture industry, witnessing the formation of the Hollywood studios which became MGM, RKO, Warner Brothers, Universal and Twentieth Century Fox, and the production of such film extravaganzas as Cecil B. deMille's *Ten Commandments*, James Cruze's *Covered Wagon* (the first epic western), and in 1925, *Ben Hur*, the greatest worldwide success that the industry had ever produced. A major breakthrough came in 1927 with *The Jazz Singer*, starring Al Jolson in the first sound track movie. The slightly later introduction of Technicolor catapulted motion pictures into their golden age. Sumptuous movie palaces and countless more modest neighborhood movie theaters were built and numerous legitimate theaters were converted for viewing of the more than 500 films produced annually in the United States. Flourishing throughout the Depression and World War II, the reign of the motion picture industry faltered only in the early 1950s when it was undermined by the increasingly popular medium of television.

Movie Palaces

The American movie theater developed as an architectural type over the first four decades of twentieth century. From the nickelodeons of the turn of the century, theaters grew in size and lavishness during the 1910s, and emerged during the 1920s as movie palaces, a unique national institution. Designed to look like Parisian boudoirs, old Spanish towns, or Indian, Chinese, or Egyptian temples, the theaters often seated several thousand people, and offered vaudeville, organ recitals, orchestras, comedians, magicians, and a full-length feature film -- all for as little as twenty-five cents.

Movie palaces were built by a small group of businessmen. Loew, Keith, Albee, Fox, Balaban & Katz, all started as small-time exhibitors, and gradually emerged as entrepreneurs controlling hundreds of theaters each, in national circuits.³ Most movie palaces were designed by specialists, including John Eberson, Rapp & Rapp, C. Howard Crane, Thomas Lamb, Walter Ahlschlager, B. Marcus Priteca, and G. Albert Lansburgh. Theaters, called "The Rialto," "The Tivoli," "The Granada," "The Oriental," "The Paradise," and similarly suggestive names, were designed in styles reminiscent of ancient Egypt, medieval Spain, Renaissance Italy, the Far East, India, and occasionally, Colonial New England.

The grand eclectic designs of the 1920s gradually gave way in the 1930s to the modernistic motifs of Art Deco and Art Moderne. Some were as large as the earlier palaces, including the grandest of them all, Radio City Music Hall (a designated New York City Landmark and Interior) of 1932, designed by the Associated Architects with Donald Deskey. During the 1930s, however, smaller theaters became the norm -- the great age of the movie palace had come to an end.

Loew's Inc.⁴

Loew's Inc., founded by Marcus Loew early in the twentieth century, became the premiere movie theater chain in New York City and the Northeast, and one of the country's largest, with theaters throughout the nation, and, eventually, around the world. Loew (1870-1927), like many of the pioneers of the cinema and movie theater world, was born on New York's Lower East Side, the son of an immigrant Austrian Jewish restaurant waiter and his wife. Working from the age of six selling newspapers on the street, he became a furrier at age twelve. With his friend Adolf Zukor and rising young actor David Warfield, Loew moved into the business of penny arcades in 1904, and opened his own arcade in 1905 on West 23rd Street, which he converted to a nickelodeon, following the success of a similar venture in Cincinnati.

In 1908, Loew converted a burlesque house in downtown Brooklyn into the Royal Theater (demolished), whose programs of vaudeville, combined with a film, commanded ticket prices of ten cents. Moving quickly into the movie theater business, he took over the management of two Shubert theaters, the Yorkville and the Lincoln Square, the following year, and ran them with a similar policy of showing vaudeville and film. In 1910, with Zukor and the brothers Nicholas and Joseph Schenck as partners, and with the Shubert brothers as investors, he formed Loew's Consolidated Enterprises, and opened the National Theater in the Bronx as the company "flagship." In 1911, he

purchased the William Morris circuit of vaudeville theaters, including the prominent American Music Hall (demolished) on 42nd Street, and reorganized the company as Loew's Theatrical Enterprises.

By 1919, Loew controlled one of the country's major chains, with film and vaudeville theaters in Atlanta, Boston, Memphis, Baltimore, New Orleans, Birmingham, Montreal, and Hamilton, Ontario, in Canada. Expanding his holdings with new acquisitions in Cleveland and along the West Coast, he formed Loew's, Inc. In 1921, he built the Loew's State (demolished) in Times Square, a 3,200-seat movie palace in a sixteen-story office building.

In 1920, Loew acquired his own film studio, "Metro," which had been formed by Louis B. Mayer. Loew's, Inc. took over the Goldwyn studio in 1924, forming Metro-Goldwyn Pictures Corporation, while Louis B. Mayer directed production operations, hence the name Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, or M-G-M. By 1925, with the release of *Ben Hur*, M-G-M had become one of the nation's premier movie production companies. Loew's Inc. remained its parent company. Loew, however, continued to concentrate on expanding his movie theater chain. In 1924 he had 100 houses under his control and by 1927 the number had grown to 144.⁵

In 1925, Loew's former partner Zukor helped arrange the merger of his Famous Players-Lasky company with the giant Chicago movie palace empire of Balaban & Katz, with 500 theaters under its control. The new company, renamed Paramount-Publix, constructed the Paramount Building (1926-27, a designated New York City Landmark) on Times Square. The competition apparently worried Loew, because he reached an accord with Zukor stating that any future theaters built in the outlying areas of New York would be jointly owned by the two companies. Paramount built no theaters in New York City other than the Paramount (theater demolished) in Times Square and the Brooklyn Paramount (1928, altered, now a gymnasium), and Loew built no theaters in Chicago, home base of the Paramount-Publix chain.

Loew's, Inc. remained the premier power in New York. According to a contemporary account in *Motion Picture World*, "The supply of movies is assured and standardized. The vaudeville acts are routed uniformly, the strength of each is known and the proper balance of a bill is fixed. The public knows what it will get for its money, week after week. Thus the Loew line is held."⁶

At the height of his success, Marcus Loew became ill and died in 1927. He was succeeded as president of Loew's, Inc. by his partner Nicholas Schenck, who remained with the company until his retirement in 1957. It was Schenck who oversaw Loew's move into sound pictures, and Schenck was in command when Loew's built, among others, the Paradise on the Grand Concourse, designed by theater architect John Eberson.

John Eberson⁷

John Eberson (1875-1954) was one of the most prominent theater designers in the United States. From the early twentieth century until the 1980s, Eberson and his son Drew (1904-1989)⁸ designed approximately 1,200 theaters. Born in Cernauti, Kukovina, part of Romania, before immigrating to the United States in 1901, he attended high school in Dresden, Germany, and studied electrical engineering at the University of Vienna. Eberson settled in St. Louis where he joined the Johnston Realty and Construction Company. In 1904 he started his own practice, and in 1910 moved the firm to Chicago. During the next two decades, he designed theaters and opera houses throughout the Midwest and Southwest -- all in classically inspired styles. Many were built in Texas for Karl Hoblitzelle's Interstate Theater Company, including the Austin Majestic (1915) and the Dallas Majestic (1921).

Eberson made his great contribution to the American theater when he designed his first "atmospheric" theater, the Hoblitzelle Majestic in Houston (1923, demolished). In place of a domed classical ceiling, he created a blue plaster "sky," with electric light-bulbs simulating stars, and arranged for a hidden machine to project "clouds" moving across the ceiling in an effect similar to that of a planetarium. The walls of the auditorium were designed to simulate a stage-set suggesting an Italian courtyard, and the total effect was that of being outside, in the evening, in a garden, watching a show.⁹ As recalled by Eberson's son, Drew, who studied briefly with Paul Cret at the University of Pennsylvania and joined his father's practice in 1926, Eberson felt "that the ornate [movie] palaces were gradually being overdone and had become static in design, as they were copies of European opera houses and were repetitious in the ornamental treatment." He then "had the idea of atmospheric theatres in which he could use the colors of the Mediterranean and the excitement of the inner courtyards of the romantic periods of architecture."¹⁰

Atmospheric theaters became extremely popular during the 1920s, and as a type were easily recognizable: each included the simulation of an open, lit evening sky with stars and clouds; each had walls designed like a stage set suggesting an exotic setting; and each was asymmetrically designed. In John Eberson's words, "We visualize and dream a magnificent amphitheater, an Italian garden, a Persian Court, a Spanish patio, or a mystic Egyptian temple yard, all canopied by a soft moon-lit sky."¹¹ Over the next six years,¹² he would design some of the country's most extraordinary theaters.

In 1926 Ebersson opened an office in midtown Manhattan, located in the Rodin Studios (a designated New York City Landmark) at 200 West 57th Street. His first New York commission was the Universal Theater (1927, later the 46th Street Theater, altered), located in the Borough Park section of Brooklyn. Designed in the Italian Renaissance style, the *New York Times* reported that it “was the first of its type in East.”¹³ Business was good and two years later, in July 1929, he closed the Chicago office, explaining that “most of his architectural work had to be handled from his New York office.”¹⁴ Though few large theaters were built during the Great Depression, Ebersson remained active. During the 1930s he worked in the Moderne style and produced a body of work less well known than his atmospheric, but of much interest, including the Cinema Rex (1932) in Paris, the Newsreel Theater (part of the Associated Press Building at Rockefeller Center, 1937-38, a designated New York City Landmark), and the Lane Theater in Staten Island (1937-38, a designated New York City Landmark Interior).¹⁵

The Eberssons continued designing theaters through the World War II period, during which time commissions included theaters on military bases, and also the Lewisohn Stadium Bandshell (1948, demolished) at 138th Street and Convent Avenue. After 1945, the firm designed theaters in shopping centers and drive-in theaters, continuing this work until John Ebersson’s death in 1954.¹⁶ His son Drew continued the practice until his retirement in the mid-1980s. The Ebersson legacy, however, is most notable in the grand era of pre-World War II theater design.

The Loew’s Paradise

Plans for a grand movie palace on the site of the Paradise date at least to late 1925 when the Hewitt Place Realty Corporation acquired a small lot to develop a theater that would bring “Broadway to the Bronx.”¹⁷ By 1927, a large property assemblage was purchased by the Concourse Realty Corp., which planned to build a movie and vaudeville palace to lease to the Paramount-Publix circuit.

The theater was one of four planned by Paramount for major residential centers outside midtown Manhattan. The plan included the Kings (closed) on Flatbush Avenue in the geographic center of Brooklyn, the Valencia (a designated New York City Landmark, now the Tabernacle for All People) on Jamaica Avenue in Jamaica, Queens, and the Jersey in Jersey City. When Paramount-Publix looked for a central location in the Bronx, the logical choice was in the vicinity of the Grand Concourse and Fordham Road – a major commercial hub in the northwest Bronx, and already the location of a number of theaters.¹⁸ According to Paramount-Publix’s initial plans, Rapp & Rapp were to design the Kings and the Jersey, while Ebersson was to design the Valencia and the Paradise. Both firms had designed many theaters for Paramount-Publix and its predecessor, Balaban & Katz.

As a result of the 1925 agreement that kept Paramount from building more theaters in New York and Loew’s from entering the Chicago market, the four Paramount theater projects passed to Loew’s. Paramount, however, appears to have maintained an interest in the theaters, using them as local outlets for Paramount pictures. Loew’s also added a fifth theater, the 175th Street, to be designed by the company’s favorite theater architect, Thomas Lamb. Each of the theaters included a Morton “Wonder” organ, apparently the origin of the name “Wonder Theaters” that has since been applied collectively to the five houses. The theaters, all of which survive in varying states of repair, were among the most lavish movie palaces ever built in the metropolitan area.

Ebersson was initially contracted to design a 4,000-seat theater, to be called the “Venetian.” A rendering published in September 1927 shows a facade modeled on the Venetian Gothic style. The description noted:

The accompanying drawing of the proposed Venetian Theater, a \$1,800,000 motion picture playhouse planned for the west side of the Concourse, near 184th St., reveals the exterior appearance of what authorities on theater architecture say will be one of the handsomest amusement structures in the country . . . Details of the interior decorations planned for the Venetian have not been made public, although it is said they will rival in splendor anything to be found in the newest Manhattan theaters or the huge motion picture theaters in the Pacific Coast cities, where fine film playhouses have long existed.¹⁹

Construction began in April 1928. N. Masem & Son was the general contractor and the final cost of construction was reportedly \$4 million. The theater, renamed the Paradise, opened on Saturday, September 7, 1929.

The Paradise was designed as a large commercial building, combining a movie theater with storefronts, running through the block to Creston Avenue. Along the Grand Concourse, Ebersson used elements inspired by Italian palaces and churches of the Renaissance and Baroque periods. Windows framed by oversize columns, segmental arches and balustrades, and parapets with urns, surround the frontispiece, a central section of baroque curves framing the name of the theater, all in glazed terra cotta. This area was the original identifying sign of the theater, necessary because projecting movie marquees were not permitted along the Concourse, a mostly residential boulevard. At the top of the

facade, above the clock, sat an elaborate pergola in which a statue of St. George slew the dragon as the clock chimed the hour (the dragon is gone, but St. George and the bells survive).²⁰ South of the theater entrance are six storefronts with offices above. The exterior walls of the auditorium, visible above and behind the two-story commercial wing, are decorated with terra-cotta urns and balustrades.

Plan and Decoration

Eberson's approach to the interior was historicist, but not scholarly. He was a scenographic designer, in which broad strokes, rather than precise details, were emphasized. In keeping with the theater's original name, the Venetian, he incorporated mostly late 16th and early 17th century Italian decorative motifs and artworks. While the general style is Baroque, no single work of architecture provided him with inspiration, and it is the overall effect that was most important. In fact, when examined closely, some of the statues and works of art date from the Renaissance period, or were not even by Italian artists. Eberson, nonetheless, described the Baroque style as: "the most lavish and brilliant development of Italian decoration, there is nothing overly garish or disturbing about the heavy use of ornamentation in the Paradise."²¹

The theater has an L-shaped floor plan. Lobbies, which extend through the block to Creston Avenue, are aligned on an east-west axis. The grand lobby, located near the northwest corner of the building, meets the rear of the auditorium at a perpendicular angle. This arrangement, in which the bulk of the auditorium is set away from the street, is typical of urban theaters built in the 1920s, setting aside the more valuable street frontage, where ticket holders often waited, for retail tenants.

The entrance is located at the north end of the Grand Concourse façade, directly below the frontispiece. Customers passed through a recessed vestibule into the lobby, a double-height space with an additional box office. Here, tickets were sold, upcoming films were promoted, and patrons were organized into lines. In the center bay of the north and south walls are elaborate glazed display cases. These elements were possibly inspired by the curved niche that displays Gian Lorenzo Bernini's *The Ecstasy of St. Theresa* (1652) in the Cornaro Chapel in Santa Maria della Vittoria (Carlo Maderno, begun 1605) in Rome. Similar elements were also incorporated into the theater's frontispiece and in the walls of the grand lobby.

With each successive point of entry, the space narrows, climaxing in the long aisles that lead down to the seats. Likewise, as visitors move from one room to the next, the materials and ornament change. Whereas the lobbies are faced with materials that are tactile and durable, such as wood or marble, most of the surfaces in the auditorium, where the decoration tends to be viewed from a distance, were made from plaster.

Uniformed ushers greeted ticket holders in the carpeted foyer. In contrast to the grand spaces beyond, the ceiling in the foyer is low and there is relatively little decoration. It serves as a point of departure, with entrances to the auditorium and grand lobby, as well as an elevator and stairs to the upper foyer. The next room is the grand lobby, a double-height space with an elaborate vaulted ceiling, extravagant lighting fixtures, and at the west end, a dramatic staircase. It recalls the nave of Santa Maria della Vittoria where the vaulted ceiling is animated by ivory-colored putti and angels, as well as dramatic murals of figures that float in swirling clouds.

From the promenade and upper foyer guests could view the grand lobby's opulent décor, make a phone call, and visit the Ladies Parlor or Men's Smoking Room. Chairs, benches, and sofas originally lined both walls of the promenade and the arched openings were hung with thick velvet draperies. Such materials conveyed a sense of luxury and absorbed sound, creating a subdued environment. Composite pilasters line the wood-paneled walls and the vaulted plaster ceiling is richly detailed, inspired by the long galleries that were popular in 16th through 18th century English castles and mansions. This type of decoration was carried into the adjoining lounges. The Ladies Parlor was decorated with delicate moldings and silk damask wall coverings, and the Men's Smoking Room had dark wood paneling, a colorful mosaic of St. George, and lighting fixtures that were reportedly assembled from swords.²²

With a potential audience of four thousand, crowd management was especially important. The auditorium was reached from four separate levels: from the foyer and grand lobby, the east and west end of the promenade, the east and west end of the mezzanine, and the stairs or elevator at the top of the balcony. Separate corridors, used only by exiting patrons, descended to the Creston Avenue, or to the south end of the Grand Concourse façade. Longer than wide, the vast auditorium narrows as it approaches the proscenium, providing a decorative frame for the screen and stage area. Originally, there was an orchestra pit but this feature was eliminated in the 1940s. Four aisles angle inward as they near the stage and all seats have an unobstructed view, including the rows at the rear which are located beneath the balcony. Eberson treated this space like a semi-enclosed room. It has a richly embellished plaster ceiling and a sequence of arches and columns that screen the side aisles from view. Lighting is subtle and indirect, hidden in recessed coves or behind stained glass.

At the mezzanine level, ticket holders entered from the side, onto cantilevered balconies that did not block the view of the audience. The balcony seats enjoy an ideal view of the stage and particularly the proscenium and side walls. It is from this vantage point that one could best appreciate Ebersson's atmospheric design, namely the passing clouds, the vast sky, and the balanced asymmetry of the architectural elements. To enhance verisimilitude, artificial vines climbed the walls, birds paused on the parapets, and evening stars twinkled. In the uppermost rows of the balcony, the effect was somewhat diminished, but never entirely lost.

Creating the Decorations

The extravagantly decorated Paradise is a late example of an atmospheric theater. Drew Ebersson, who worked on the project, remembered that "there were no two sections of the design that truly repeated, and one could find interest in every little detail and scroll." To accomplish such a high level of ornamentation required a team of skilled artisans, as well as an inventory of stock or semi-stock decorative elements. He also said:

Inasmuch as the atmospheric theatre was a specialty, [John Ebersson] found it difficult to find in each town the skills required to polychrome the plaster and to get the exact sky effect that he wished. He, therefore, assembled a crew of skilled decorators and specialists under the banner of his company, known as Michael Angelo Studios, who accomplished the complete decorating job as to the trees, birds, furniture, etc.²³

Ebersson's wife, the English-born interior decorator Beatrice Lamb (1885-1954), managed the studio and it is likely that together they supervised the Architectural Plastering Company, which is credited for producing most of the theater's decoration.²⁴ Staff, an artificial stone made from plaster and other materials, was frequently exploited by Ebersson. He probably first encountered it at the St. Louis Exposition of 1904 where it was used to construct various temporary pavilions. Strengthened with straw or fiber, staff can be cast, cut or shaped, and then painted. Coarsely textured, the architect called this inexpensive material "broom pebble dash."²⁵

Many of the auditorium's most distinctive features are sculptural. Ebersson made frequent use three-dimensional elements and many were produced by P. P. Caproni and Brother of Boston, Massachusetts.²⁶ Founded by Pietro Caproni (1862-1928) in the late 1800s, the studio supplied replica casts of sculptures to museums, collectors, and art schools. Illustrated catalogues featured hundreds of images of reproductions in white or ivory, new or antique bronze, as well as in four sizes. In addition, cast stone or marble copies could be specially ordered. It is most likely that Ebersson purchased the various ivory-colored cherubs and busts that decorate the grand lobby from Caproni, as well as the larger figures in auditorium, specifically the seated representations of Guiliano and Lorenzo de Medici, by Michelangelo, and King Arthur, by the Austrian sculptor Peter Visser, to the right of the stage.

Andrew Karoly (b. 1895) and Lajos or Louis Szanto (1889-1965) created the nine murals that decorate the vaulted ceiling in the grand lobby. Set into recessed coves, embellished with cherubs and scalloped frames, each scene depicts male and female figures floating in clouds. According to historian Michael Miller, "the outermost domes [are] adorned with murals of "Sound" and "Story," respectively, and the larger central dome contains an image of a relatively new deity, "Film."²⁷ Karoly and Szanto were both born in Hungary and came to the United States after the First World War. It is not known how often they collaborated with Ebersson, but Karoly also receives credit for the murals in his Palace Theater (1931) in Albany, New York. Other examples of their partnership include etchings, portraits, and illustrations, as well as murals for the Works Progress Administration. It is also likely that they executed the original mural in the foyer, as well as the one in the proscenium arch.²⁸

The Paradise as Bronx Icon

The Paradise, in the words of its inaugural program, was "operated in conjunction with the vast chain of Loew's Theatres extending from coast to coast." From opening day, the Paradise ran a full program, changed weekly, of vaudeville acts and a first-run black and white film, with sound. The inaugural program of Saturday September 7, 1929, opened with the singing of the "Star Spangled Banner," followed by two musical numbers including an organ solo with Harold Ramsay presiding over the Morton organ, three short films, a stage presentation, and climaxed by the showing of the full-length film, *The Mysterious Dr. FU MANCHU*. The following week the Paradise featured a new stage show, and a new movie, *The Broadway Melody*.²⁹

Admission prices ranged from 25 cents for orchestra and balcony seats and 50 cents for mezzanine seats on weekday mornings, to 75 cents for orchestra and balcony seats and \$1.00 for mezzanine seats on Saturday, Sunday, and holiday evenings. Four years later, in the depths of the Depression, prices dropped to a high of 75 cents.³⁰ Although vaudeville died out, the Paradise continued as a movie theater, remaining largely intact until 1973.

Like movie palaces everywhere, the Paradise played a major role in the lives of its patrons. Among the tens or possibly hundreds of thousands of Bronx residents with memories of the Paradise, opera singer Roberta Peters, in a *New York Post* interview in 1973, recalled:

To me, the Paradise was Sunday afternoons. . . . We never were rich enough to live on the Concourse. We used to stroll on the Concourse -- everybody did. And although I used to go to the neighborhood movies, the Luxor, the Kent and the Zenith, Sunday was something else. First, we would all have Chinese food and then we would go to the Paradise. What else was there to do on Sunday? You know, I always wanted to sing on that stage.³¹

The large capacity of the Paradise made it a logical choice for public gatherings, especially high school and college graduations.³² In 1973, when stage trouble kept the Metropolitan Opera from taking its summer park program to the New York Botanical Gardens, the performance was moved indoors, to the Paradise. Roberta Peters, Anna Moffo and Kitty Carlisle took *Die Fledermaus* to the stage of what the *New York Post* described as "one of the last truly splendid movie palaces in New York."³³

When in August of 1973 Loew's announced that the theater would be divided into two screens, Bronx cultural and civic organizations -- including the Bronx Chamber of Commerce, the West Bronx Federation, and the Bronx Council on the Arts -- expressed their dismay and sought to save the theater.³⁴ As reported in the *New York Times*:

Patrons of the lower theater would be denied an opportunity to view the Paradise's famous "heavenly" ceiling of moving clouds and stars, under which thousands of Bronx couples had their first taste of elegance and romance . . . For many Bronx residents the Paradise is more than just another movie house . . . a now slightly tarnished reminder of the days when Fordham Road and the Concourse were, respectively, the Broadway and Park Avenue of the borough.

The Bronx Council received a \$25,000 grant to study possible reuse of the theater as a cultural and community center. Despite protests, the Paradise was divided into twin theaters, and in subsequent years, subdivided still further, into a total of four theaters. Unlike any of the other four "Wonder Theaters," it continued to show films until January 1994.

Most major movie houses in New York City closed after 1960. While some were converted to new uses, such as churches, or in the case of Brooklyn Paramount, a gymnasium, other large theaters like the Loew's Kings and RKO Keiths, which closed in 1977 and 1986, remained vacant. When the Paradise closed, stories circulated that antique dealers had been invited to view the interior so that the owners could determine the value of the statuary and fixtures. ABI Property Partners of Delaware, who acquired the Paradise from Chartwell Paradise in early 1994, did not believe the building had a future as a theater and plans were discussed to convert the vast structure into a shopping center. According to the *New York Times*, this would have required "sheet rocking over the plaster details."³⁵ Interest in preserving the Paradise began in the early 1970s, but it wasn't until the mid-1990s that the Landmarks Preservation Commission addressed the issue, calendaring the building and interior. Following several public hearings in 1992 and 1994, the Commission voted unanimously to designate the building a landmark in 1997. At this time, however, no action was taken in regard to the interior spaces.

During the late 1990s, the condition of the auditorium deteriorated. In May 1996 a two-alarm fire did substantial damage, destroying much of the stage.³⁶ Though an ambitious restoration was planned, the developer was unable to complete the \$8 million project. At the time, the walls dividing the auditorium were removed and much of the plasterwork was restored by Ted Price and Gordon Thomas. In addition, a new mural, by artist David Jermann was installed on the ceiling of the foyer. He later remarked "I was hired to replace one that was missing, although no one had any idea what the previous one consisted of. Just a blank space."³⁷ Painted in a style similar to Karoly and Szanto, the mural may portray Zeus, as well as other figures, floating in the clouds.

The Paradise was acquired by First Paradise Theatres Corp. in 2003.³⁸ Work continued under the new owner and the theater reopened in October 2005. Celebrated as a major event, the evening's salsa and merengue concert was covered by major newspapers and television news programs.³⁹

Descriptive list of significant features

Lobby

The lobby is a double-height rectangular space, situated between the Grand Concourse and foyer. It has a decorative plaster ceiling and marble floor with inset rubber mats. There are six pairs of entrance doors on the east side. Above the doors is a five-bay loggia, supported by twisting columns and pilasters. There are five pairs of doors on the lobby's west side. The north and south walls are divided into three bays.

1) Ornament includes, but is not limited to, the following:

Columns: East wall, upper level. Groin-vaulted loggia with four pairs of twisting columns and pilasters.

Ceiling: Painted plaster, brownish red with green details, coffered. The base of the ceiling runs along top the walls.

Walls: Painted orange plaster (originally silk). The north and south walls are divided into three bays. The east and west bays have porticos that may be stone or artificial stone. The center bays are more elaborate and incorporate a rounded glazed brass display case flanked by brown marble columns and pilasters. Above the center bay is curved balcony and portico crowned by a rounded pediment. The upper portico frames an arched door with mirrors. The west bay of the south wall has brass doors. The upper level of the west wall has a portico that extends into the ceiling. The portico is flanked by twisting columns and has a scallop shell at the rear. To either side is a single window opening with an elaborate stone frame. The iron grilles are painted black. Behind the grilles, the recessed panel is painted blue.

2) Attached fixtures

Floor: rubber inset mats

Railings: A pair of metal railings, freestanding, east to west, along the north side.

Doors: Glass doors, with brass frames and handles, open to street, and into foyer. Glass transoms with non-historic exit signs.

Light fixtures: Tiered metal chandelier hangs from center of ceiling. Loggia has three small chandeliers, in center and end bays. North and south walls have candelabra-style wall sconces.

Sculpture: Female statue in loggia. Display case, south wall, bust of Benjamin Franklin. Balcony, south wall, female statue. West wall, above doors: statue of draped female on low base.

Foyer

The foyer is a rectangular room between the lobby and grand lobby. There is a single entrance to the auditorium in the east bay of the south wall. North wall has an elevator and stairs to the upper foyer.

1) Ornament includes, but is not limited to, the following:

Ceiling: Wood with decorative moldings. Central oval mural flanked by rectangular panels.

Walls: Painted plaster. Doorways and arches framed by wood moldings.

Staircase: North side, steps rise and turn east. Plaster walls.

2) Attached Fixtures

Doors: Same as west side of lobby, with brass handles. Elevator door, original cab.

Light fixtures: Two types, metal, hang from ceiling. Etched glass shades may not be original. South wall, pair of sconces. Staircase, single fixture above landing.

Mural: Ceiling, center, oval painting by David Jermann (1999), non-historic but in the style of original murals in grand lobby.

Sculpture: South wall, center bay. Male and female figure, possibly Romeo and Juliet, set on pedestal.

Signs: Exit signs in frames above doors, east wall. "Aisle 1" sign, south wall.

Staircase: Decorative iron railing.

Grand Lobby

The grand lobby is a double-height rectangular space separated from the foyer by two pillars. On the south side are five bays with three recessed entrances to the auditorium. Above the three center bays are three iron balconies that adjoin the promenade. At the west end of the room is a wide staircase that rises to a landing and turns south to connect to the west end of the promenade. The west wall is divided into three bays. The right or north bay, beside the landing, has a pair of wood doors that lead to an exit. South of the stairs and beneath the landing is a wide arch that opens to a passage that leads to the west side of the orchestra level of the auditorium, as well as to emergency stairs that rise and exit north. The north wall, on the right as one enters, is divided into three double-height bays.

1) Ornament includes, but is not limited to, the following:

Walls: Wood, outlined with gilt decorative moldings. Doorways framed by elaborate gilt moldings. Arched upper sections of north wall are faced with grid of mirrors.

Ceiling: Divided by gilt moldings to create cartouches and recessed coves for murals.

2) Attached fixtures

Light fixtures: Ceiling, two styles, incorporating glass, metal, and fabric. North and south walls, attached between pairs of pilasters. Historic but modified.

Ceiling murals: Nine, six in side cartouches, three in central coves.

Sculpture: North wall, center, a free-standing group of putti with fish, set on pedestal. Stairs, four busts, including portraits of Mozart and Shakespeare, set inside oval frames.

Staircase: Bronze and iron, west side of room, turns south to meet upper landing, between the stairs and promenade.

Stairs have a decorative railing, as well as a simple railing that divides steps into two aisles.

Balconies: Upper level, north and south sides, decorative ironwork

Alterations: Floor is not historic. Bar at center, 2005.

Promenade & Upper Foyer

Above the grand lobby is the promenade and upper foyer. The promenade is an east/west corridor with balconies overlooking the grand lobby. Near the west end, on the north side, is a landing that connects the promenade to the staircase that rises from the grand lobby. Opposite the stairs, on the south wall, is the entrance to the Ladies Parlor. At the west end of the promenade is a corridor that leads to stairs and the west side of the mezzanine in the auditorium. At the east end of the promenade, on the south side of the upper foyer, is the Gentlemen's Room.

The upper foyer is directly above the foyer. Reached by elevator or stairs on the north side of the room, it has been converted to a bar and has three balconies that overlook the grand lobby. To the south is the Men's Smoking Room, and a corridor that, on the east, leads to a staircase, and to the south, the mezzanine level of the auditorium.

1) Ornament, includes, but is not limited to, the following

Walls: Plaster, with gilt moldings and friezes. Wood-trimmed arches, pilasters, and columns. Black marble base with white veins.

Promenade Ceiling: Vaulted, shallow, ornate relief work, divided by coffers, cartouches, and scrollwork.

2) Attached fixtures

Light fixtures: Promenade ceiling, hanging. North and south walls, attached between pilasters. Upper foyer, three, drum-like, metal. Historic, possibly modified.

Illuminated Signs: South wall, at entrance to "Ladies Parlor" and "Gentlemen's Room."

Alterations: Floor, mostly non-historic, except for mosaic sections below where two drinking fountains were originally installed on south wall.

Ladies Parlor

Two adjoining rooms, foyer and washroom, near west end of promenade, south side.

Walls: Plaster with raised moldings, painted. Arch between rooms.

Ceilings: Plaster with raised moldings, painted.

Floor: Marble, non-historic, 2005.

Fixtures: Ceiling medallion in foyer. Wall sconces in foyer.

Alterations: Sinks and lighting in washroom, 2005.

Gentlemen's Room

Foyer, located at east end of promenade, between promenade and non-historic washroom

Walls: Dark paneled wood.

Ceiling: Gilt wood

Floor: Tile

Lighting fixture: Ceiling, not historic.

Balcony Level

Between the promenade and the upper elevator lobby is the balcony level, consisting of two small lobbies connected by a long corridor. The east lobby is reached from a hallway and stairs that descend from the east side of the auditorium, as well as from the elevator and stairs that rise from the upper foyer. The smaller west lobby is reached from a hallway and stairs that descend from the west side of the auditorium, as well as from stairs that rise from the west end of the promenade.

1) Ornament includes, but is not limited to, the following:

Walls: The east and west lobbies have plaster walls that are outlined with raised decorative moldings. The arches are crowned by cartouches and framed by moldings. The corridor has multiple bays separated by pairs of wood pilasters.

Ceiling: East lobby, decorative pattern, with moldings. Corridor is vaulted, with decorative moldings.

2) Attached fixtures: Bulbs and rosettes alternate in ring that project from decorative medallion at the center of east and west lobby ceilings. Corridor has six ceiling fixtures, fixtures in end bays have simple glass shades, four inside bays have glass shades set into decorative medallions. Brass elevator door, north side, east lobby.

Alterations: Bar, east lobby, 2005.

Upper Elevator Lobby

In the uppermost part of the auditorium, at the northeast corner, is a small enclosed lobby. Reached from the elevator or stairs that rise from the balcony level on the north side of the room, the south wall has a pair of doors that lead to the auditorium, flanked by three fixed glass panels.

Auditorium

Consists of two levels, orchestra and balcony. The space is longer than wide and narrows slightly as it nears the stage. The auditorium has less than 4000 seats and is located to the south of the grand lobby and promenade, and west of the Grand Concourse storefronts. The orchestra level is slightly raked, with five entrances at the rear or north end. The east and west aisles are screened by columns and lead to the front of the auditorium, as well as, to exits. There are no cross aisles. Where the side walls cant inward, toward the stage, semi-circular alcoves adjoin east and west aisles, as well as the exits and stairs.

The balcony is steeply raked and divided by two cross-over aisles into three sections of seating. The lowest section, reached from the upper foyer or promenade, has the fewest seats and small balconies that extend from the east and west sides of the first row. The middle section has the most seating. Along with the upper section, it is reached by stairs that rise from balcony level. Above the top row is a third cross-over aisle. At the east end are doors that lead to the elevator lobby. Above the top aisle is a lighting and projection booth that extends the full width of the balcony.

1) Ornament includes, but is not limited to, the following:

Most surfaces consist of high-relief plasterwork. This ornament is integrated into the surfaces which define the configuration of the auditorium.

- Proscenium arch: Located at the south end of the auditorium. Silhouetted against the ceiling, the free-standing outer section rises in stages to a central architectural feature, consisting of a central niche, urns, and statues of reclining figures. The squat pillars that divide the balustrade are crowned with urns. The inner section frames the stage. Between these sections is a curved plaster ceiling. At center are decorative moldings that frame a large mural. To the side of the stage are angled walls that contain large arched niches flanked by twisting columns and male caryatids. Within each niche is a single statue and decorative coffering. Centered below each niche are architectural enframements crowned by broken pediments.

- East wall: Between the proscenium and the balcony seating, is divided into three bays. The central bay is the most ornate, consisting of decorative moldings, sculptural relief, columns, and arches. The north and south bays incorporate broken pediments and Corinthian pilasters. Above each of the side bays is a circular opening with draped garlands. At the level of the orchestra, the center and south bays function as exits. Below the balcony, free-standing columns support arches that screen the groin-vaulted east aisle.

- West wall: Between the proscenium and the balcony, is divided into three bays. The central bay is the most ornate, consisting of decorative molding, sculptural relief, columns, and arches. At the level of the orchestra, the center bay functions as an exit passage. Below the balcony are a series of arches. Separated by full-height pilasters, they screen the groin-vaulted west aisle.

- Orchestra ceiling: The rear or underside of the balcony contains five coves adorned with decorative moldings. The ceiling is further divided into rectangular sections by moldings and has intricate plaster relief. The main ceiling, extending from the stage to the rear of the auditorium, is painted.

2) Attached fixtures

Murals: The painted oval panel in the proscenium arch is original and executed in the Baroque style.

Light fixtures: Attached to east and west walls on both levels, or hung in side aisles, are largely original. At the rear of the orchestra are recessed lights, with original glass shades. Fixtures on rear wall of balcony level are not likely to be historic.

Sculpture, west wall, south to north: Standing figure, seated figure on pedestal at balcony level, white busts and putti above orchestra level arches,

Alterations: Bank of recessed ceiling lights located above the stage is not historic. On the south side of the proscenium hangs an aluminum metal frame. Small, white non-historic speakers have been attached to architectural elements near stage. Seats do not appear to be historic but are compatible with the auditorium's design. Ceiling is painted dark blue. These changes were made by 2005.

Researched and written by
Matthew A. Postal
Anthony W. Robins

NOTES

1. The two basic works on the history of the American movie palace, on which this account is largely based, are Ben M. Hall, *The Best Remaining Seats* (New York: Bramhall House, 1961), and David Naylor, *American Picture Palaces* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1981). Charlotte Herzog, "The Movie Palace and the Theatrical Sources of its Architectural Style," *Cinema Journal* 20 (Spring 1981), 15-37, discusses the influence of architectural antecedents such as vaudeville theaters and penny arcades on movie palace design. The quarterly issues of *Marquee*, the publication of the Theatre Historical Society since 1969, are another invaluable source.
2. Bosley Crowther, *The Lion's Share: The Story of an Entertainment Empire* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1957), 13.
3. For a typical history see Carrie Balaban, *Continuous Performance* (New York, 1964), the biography of A. J. Balaban, founder of Balaban & Katz. The only major figure in the industry who never built an enormous chain was Samuel "Roxy" Rothafel; however, his Roxy Theater (demolished), the 6,000-seat "Cathedral of the Motion Picture" at 50th Street and Seventh Avenue, was the epitome of the type, and his greatest creation, Radio City Music Hall (a designated New York City Interior Landmark), was the most famous movie theater in the country.
4. This account of Loew's Inc. is based on Crowther.
5. These included new theaters in New York City, and newly acquired ones in Cleveland, New Orleans, Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Toronto, Syracuse, Buffalo, New Haven, New London, Chicago, Kalamazoo, Akron, Flint, Saginaw, Evansville (Ind.), and London, Ontario.
6. Cited in Crowther, 130. The date is identified only as the mid-1920s.
7. This section is based on Jane Preddy, "John Eberson and the Atmospheric Theater," in *Temples of Illusion* (Hunter College, 1988), not paginated.
8. "Drew Eberson, 85, a Designer of Theaters," *New York Times*, July 11, 1989, A16.
9. Naylor, 67-68.
10. Drew Eberson, foreword to the Theatre Historical Society's 1975 Annual devoted to the Loew's Paradise (unpaginated).
11. Naylor, 68.
12. Many had Spanish or Moorish themes, including the Tampa (1926) in Tampa; the Olympia (1926, now Gusman Center) in Miami; the State Theater (1927) in Kalamazoo; the Loew's United Artists (1928) in Louisville; the Palace (1928) in Marion, Ohio; and the Loew's Akron (1929) in Akron. Eberson variants on the atmospheric theme included the Greek and "Pompeian" ornament of the Capitol (1925), the "Persian" of the Avalon (1927), and the extraordinary French Second Empire fantasy of the Balaban & Katz Paradise (1928), all in Chicago.
13. "800,000 Mortgage on Brooklyn Theatre," *New York Times*, November 24, 1927, 43.
14. "Talkies Take John Eberson to Manhattan," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 21, 1929, B3.
15. The Lane is a designated New York City Interior Landmark. For more on this period of Eberson's work, see Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Lane Theater, First Floor Interior, Designation Report* (LP-1696), report by Anthony W. Robins (New York: City of New York, 1988).
16. Preddy.

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17. Michael Miller, essay in the Theatre Historical Society's Annual for 1975.
 18. The Adam Wertheimer Department Store had already established itself at the northwest corner of the Concourse and East Fordham Road, automobile showrooms opened further down either side of the ridge, and several movie palaces -- the RKO Fordham, the Concourse, the Valentine, and the Windsor -- were constructed nearby. Alexander's opened a branch in the remodeled Wertheimer store. The Dollar Bank for Savings established a branch first at 2480 Grand Concourse in 1932, then up the Boulevard at No. 2516. In the context of the commercial growth of the Concourse at Fordham Road, its choice by Paramount, and later Loew's, for the site of its major Bronx theater was logical. On the development of the Grand Concourse, see: Evelyn Gonzalez, "From Suburb To City: The Development of The Bronx, 1890-1940," in *Building A Borough: Architecture and Planning in the Bronx, 1890-1940* (New York: The Bronx Museum of the Arts, 1986); "Grand Concourse Historic District National Register Nomination," (1987); "Improvements on Grand Boulevard," *Real Estate Record & Builders Guide* 99 (June 23, 1917), 887; Louis A. Risse, *History in Brief, of the Conception and Establishment of the Grand Boulevard and Concourse in the 23d and 24th Wards* (n.d.); Risse, *The True History of the Conception and Planning of the Grand Concourse and Boulevard in the Bronx* (1902); Stan Fischler, *Uptown, Downtown* (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1976); Benedict Fitzpatrick, *The Bronx & Its People, A History, 1609-1927* (New York: The Lewis Historical Publishing Co., Inc., 1927); Martha Golden, "The Grand Concourse, Tides of Change," unpublished typescript, New York Landmarks Preservation Commission Scholars Program, 1976; Stephen Jenkins, *The Story of the Bronx* (New York: G.P. Putnam & Sons, 1912); John McNamara, *History in Asphalt* (Bronx, N.Y.: The Bronx Historical Society, 1984); Lloyd Ultan, *The Beautiful Bronx, 1920-1950* (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House, Publishers, 1979); Lloyd Ultan and Gary Hermaly, *The Bronx in the Innocent Years, 1890-1925* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985).
 19. Reprinted in the Theatre Historical Society 1975 Annual; the clipping is not identified except by the date September 1927.
 20. Drew Eberson, who worked on the Paradise wrote, "An important feature of the Paradise was the marvelous clock which father obtained, I do not know where, portraying St. George and the dragon, and at the strike of the hour, St. George would move out around the clock in combat with the dragon."
 21. August 1929, quoted by Miller.
 22. The sword lamps were mentioned in a discussion of the theater at <http://cinematreasures.org/theater/900>.
 23. Drew Eberson, "Forward" to Theatre Historical Society Annual for 1975.
 24. Preddy, also see "Mrs. John Eberson," obituary, *New York Times*, July 16, 1954, 21.
 25. "John Eberson Scrapbook," Theatre Society Annual for 2000.
 26. Various catalogues, published by P. P. Caproni in 1902, 1911, 1928 and 1931, are in the collection of the New York Public Library.
 27. Michael Miller.
 28. According to Michelle M. Frauenberger, Registrar, Franklin Delano Roosevelt Presidential Library, there is 1943 oil painting by the artists, called "News Cathedral" in the library's collection. It is a replica of a mural in the entrance hall of the Poughkeepsie Journal. Also see "History of the Palace Theater" at www.albany.ny.org/history_palace_theatre.asp; and www.hungarian-history.hu/lib/maj/maj13.htm.
 29. Loew's Paradise Inaugural Program, September 7, 1929: "Loew's Paradise" clippings file, Billy Rose Theatre Collection, Lincoln Center, New York Public Library Research Libraries.
 30. *New York Sun*, January 1, 1933: "At Paradise Theater." "Loew's Paradise" clippings file.

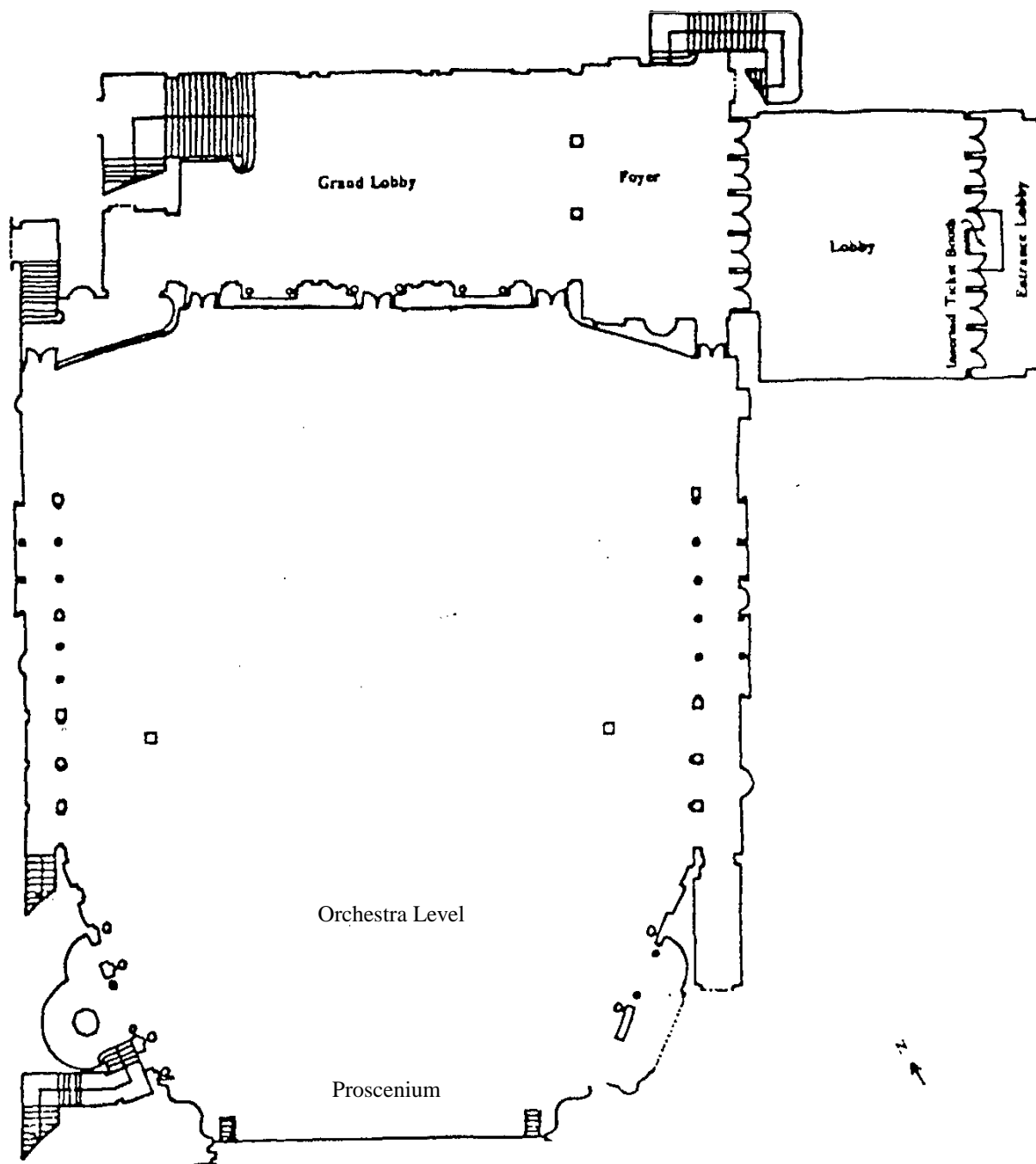
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31. Arthur Greenspan, "It's Paradise for Roberta," *New York Post*, Friday, July 6, 1973, 22. Loew's Paradise clippings file.
 32. One such graduation, from Bronx Community College in May 1973, made its way onto the front cover of the *New York Times Magazine* (May 27, 1973, color photo). On the Paradise marquee: "Bronx Community College Commencement Today 9 AM."
 33. Greenspan, 3, 22.
 34. As filed at the Buildings Department, August 13, 1973; the lower portion was to be 1890 seats, the upper to be 970, and the cost put at \$150,000. See *New York Times*, August 30, 1973: "Faces Loss of Its Paradise" (no page number), by George Gent.
 35. "Restoring the Panache to a Bronx Movie Palace," *New York Times*, October 17, 1999, 473.
 36. "Fire Damages Stage of Old Paradise Theater," *New York Times*, May 24, 1996, B4.
 37. David Jermann, e-mail to author, February 27, 2006.
 38. "Paradise Theatre on Concourse Nears Revival," *Norwood News*, April 6-19, 2000; "Will a Picture Palace Hero Finally Save the Day," *New York Times*, February 25, 2000, C8. In 2003 a 30-minute film, "Loew's Paradise Theatre, The Bronx," narrated by Marvin Scott, was released by Back in the Bronx.
 39. Martin A. Jackson, "The Paradise Reborn" at www.backinthebronx.com/paradise.html.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

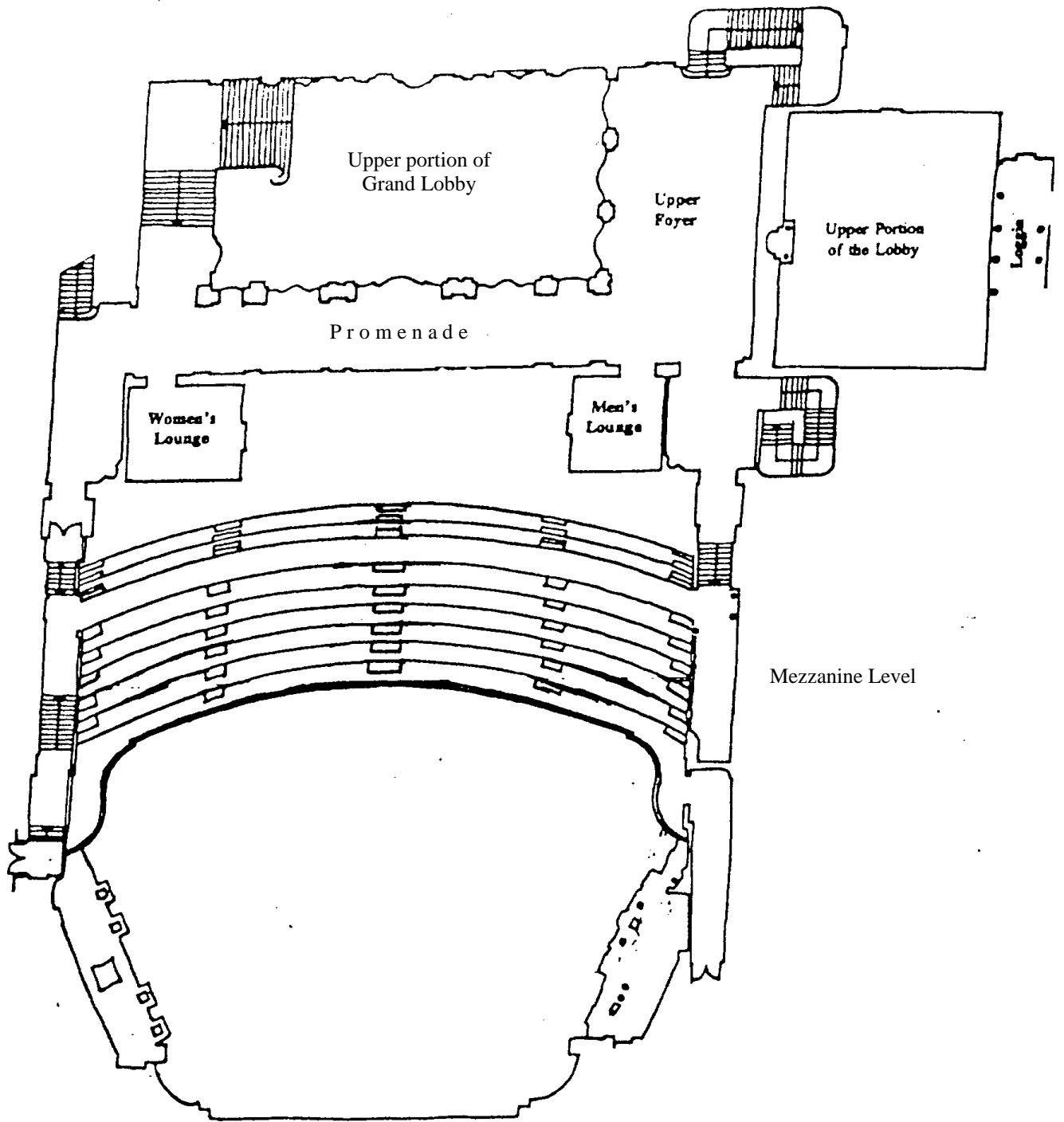
On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Loew's Paradise Theater Interior has a special character and special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage, and cultural characteristics of New York City; and that the interior is one which is customarily open and accessible to the public and to which the public is customarily invited.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the Loew's Paradise Theater Interior survives as one of the few remaining movie palaces in New York City; that it was one of five major metropolitan area theaters built by the Loew's corporation in 1929-30, meant to serve a large population outside the Times Square-Midtown Manhattan theater district; that it is one of the finest "atmospheric" designs by John Eberson, creator of that type of theater design; that the building, which opened in September 1929, incorporates many richly-decorated rooms, including a double-height lobby, foyer, grand lobby, promenade, upper foyer, auditorium, as well as intermediate spaces; that the vast auditorium seats nearly four thousand and resembles the courtyard of an Italian palace; that these interiors are decorated with plaster reproductions of major works of sculpture produced by Caproni and Brother Studios in Boston and murals by the painters Andrew Karoly and Lajos Szanto; that the Paradise Theater has long been a prominent building in the Bronx, located south of the major commercial intersection of Fordham Road and the Grand Concourse; that for decades the interior also served an important civic function, hosting high-school and college graduations and other community events; that the Paradise Theater, after closing in 1994, was restored and reopened in 2005; and that the theater remains an important landmark of the Bronx.

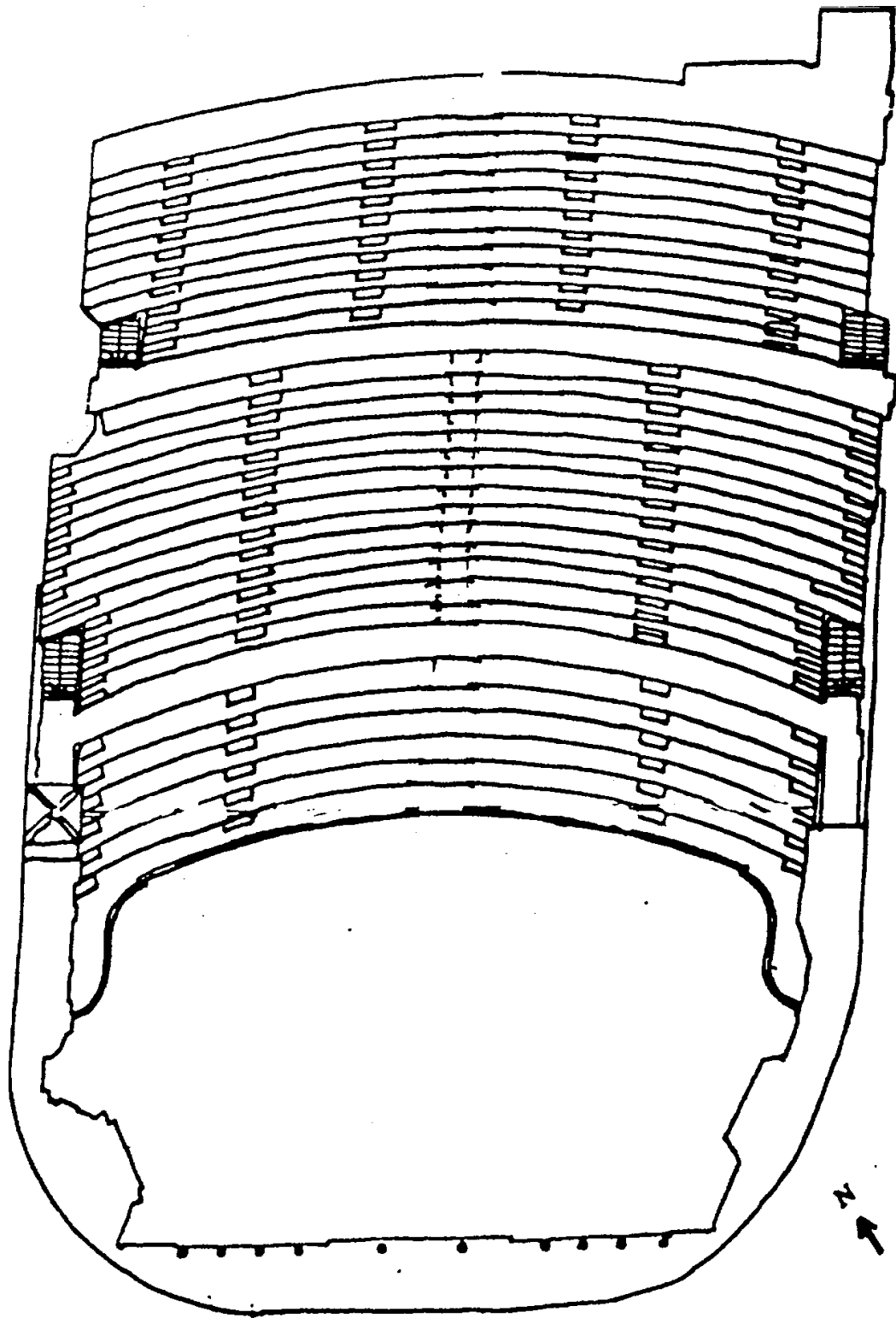
Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the Loew's Paradise Theater Interior, consisting of first floor interior, consisting of the lobby, the foyer, the grand lobby, the main staircase leading from the grand lobby to the promenade level and the area under the staircase, the orchestra seating level of the auditorium, the proscenium area and arch, and the alcoves flanking the proscenium area; the promenade level and upper foyer interior, the men's lounge, the women's lounge, the hallways leading to the mezzanine seating level of auditorium, and the mezzanine seating level of the auditorium; the balcony level interior, consisting of the balcony seating level of the auditorium; all stairways, landings, intermediate lobbies, and elevator lobbies leading to and from the above spaces; and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces, including but not limited to, wall and ceiling surfaces, ticket booths, display cases, framed display boards, columns, pilasters, doors, railings, balustrades, metalwork, mirrors, chandeliers, lighting fixtures, exit signs, attached decorative and sculptural elements; 2405-2419 Grand Concourse, aka 2394-2408 Creston Avenue, Borough of the Bronx, and designates Borough of the Bronx Tax Map Block 3165, Lot 44, as its Landmark Site.



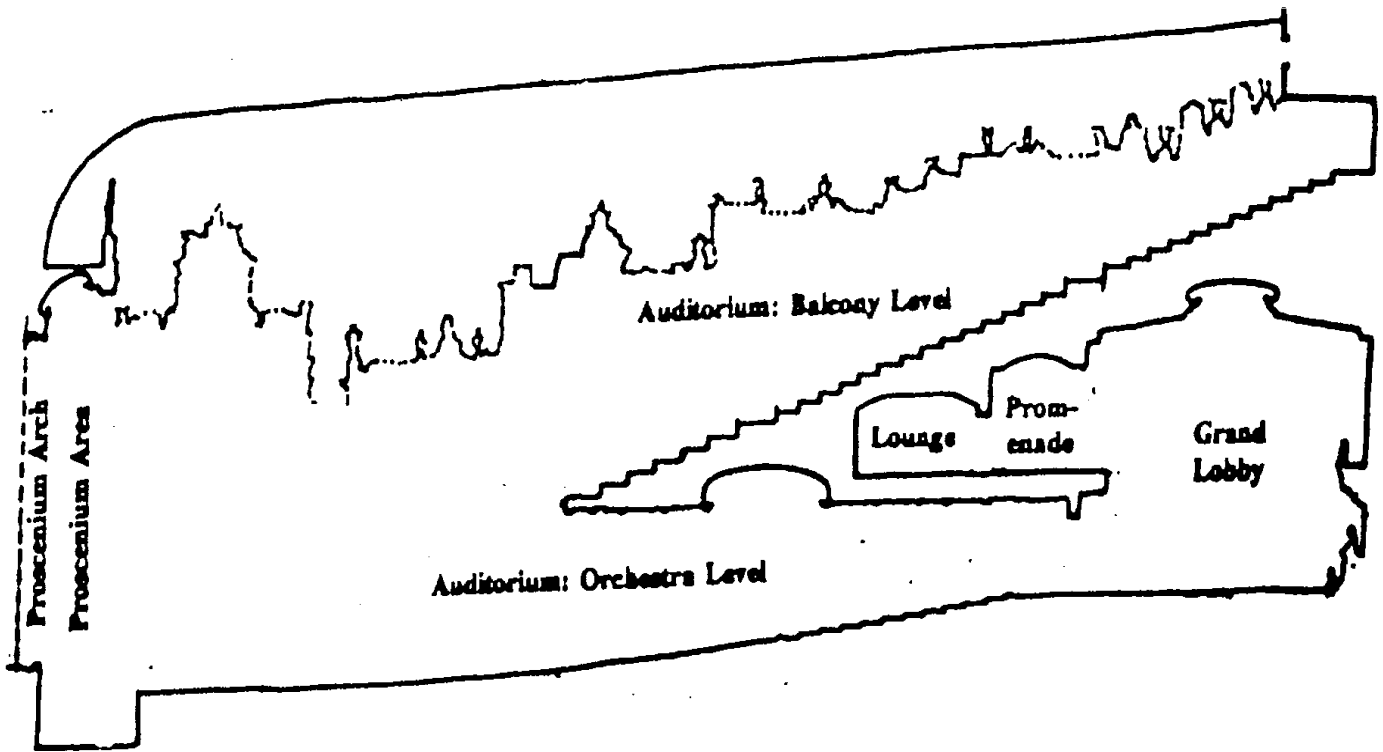
Loew's Paradise Theater Interior
2405-2419 Grand Concourse (aka 2394-2408 Creston Avenue), The Bronx
Lobby, Foyer, Grand Lobby, Orchestra Level of Auditorium



Loew's Paradise Theater Interior
Promenade, Upper Foyer, Mezzanine Level of Auditorium



Loew's Paradise Theater Interior
Mezzanine and Balcony Level of Auditorium



Loew's Paradise Theater Interior
Sectional view: South-North, Looking West



Loew's Paradise Theater Interior
Auditorium
Proscenium and West Wall

All photos by Carl Forster



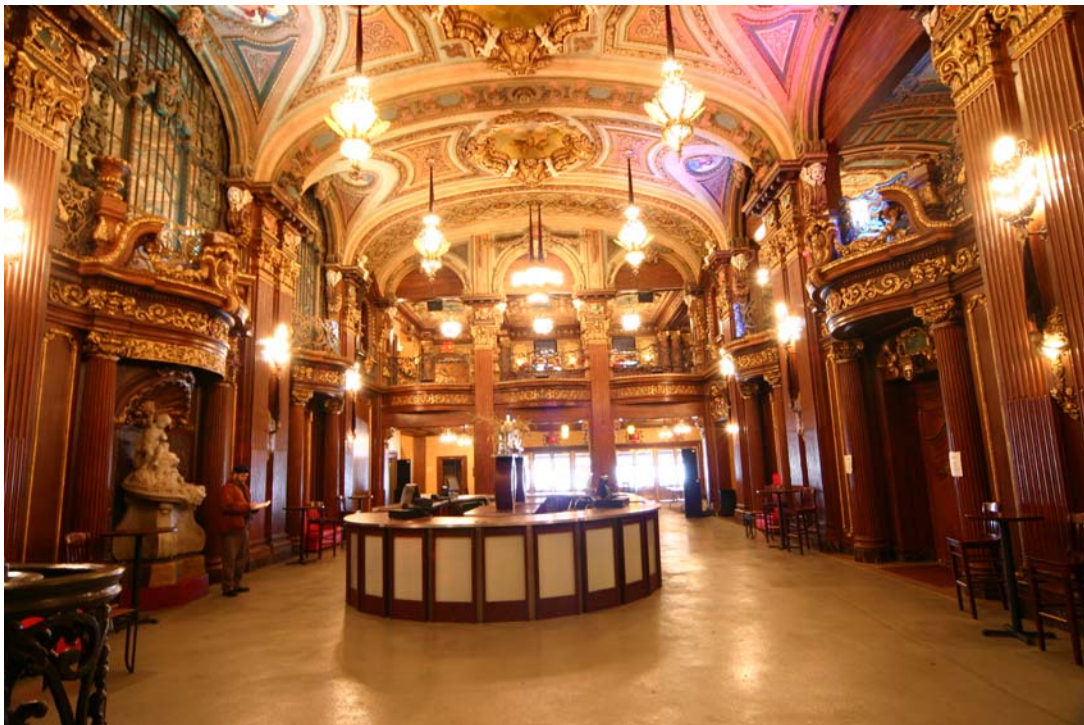
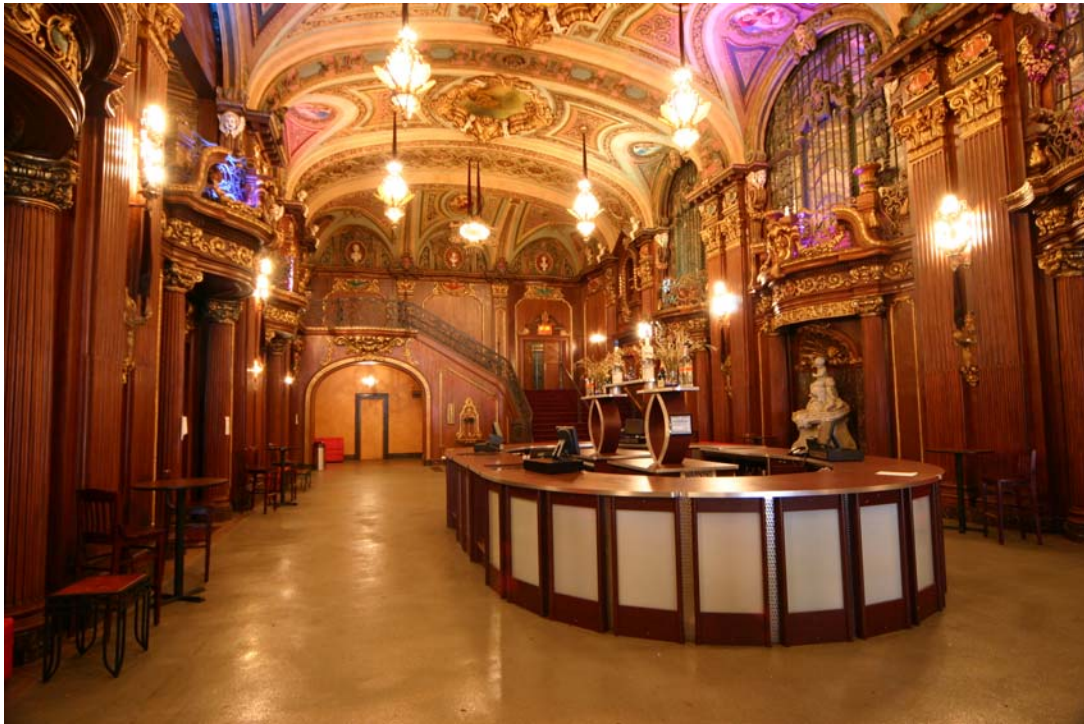
Loew's Paradise Theater Interior
Auditorium, Orchestra Level
West Wall
View from rear



Loew's Paradise Theater Interior
Auditorium
Balcony level: west wall
Orchestra level: east wall



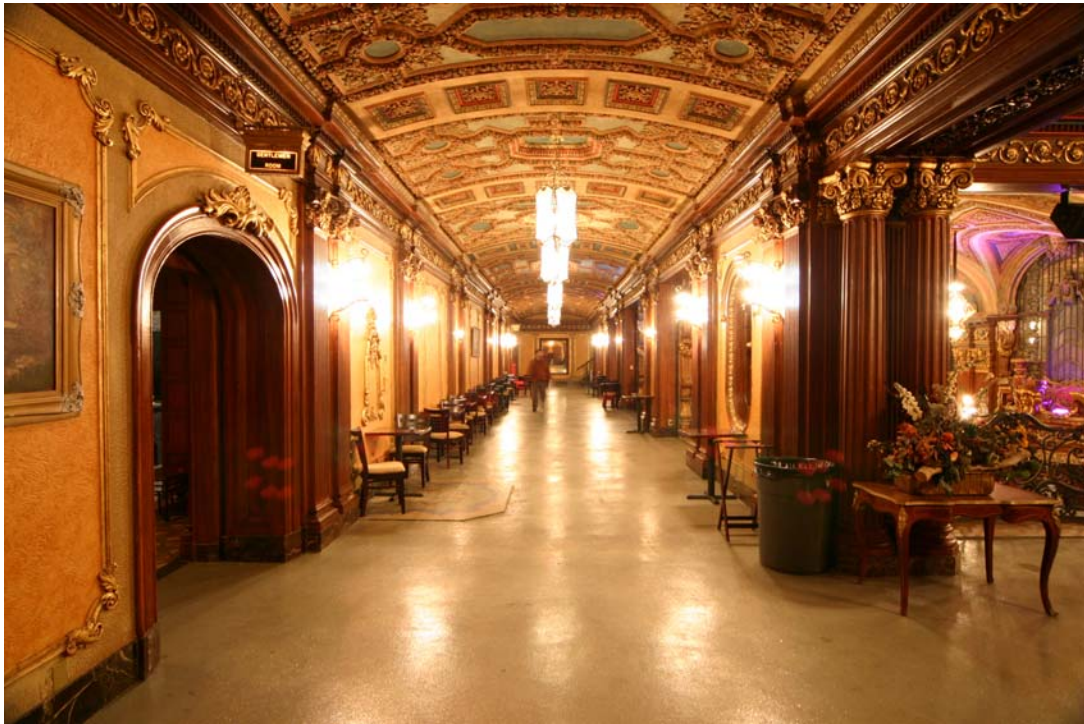
Loew's Paradise Theater Interior
Lobby: south wall
Foyer: view west toward Grand Lobby



Loew's Paradise Theater Interior
Grand Lobby
View west
View east



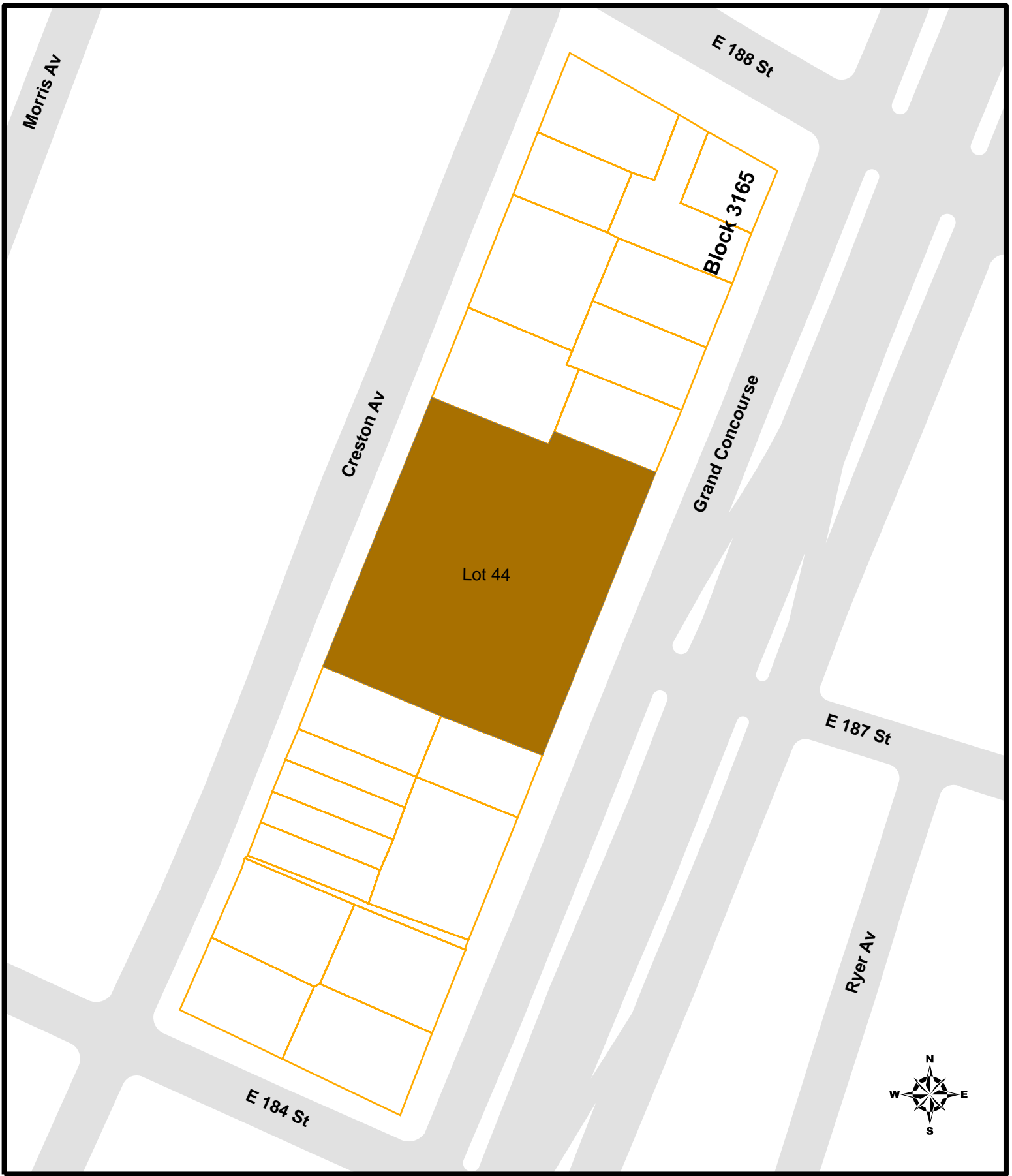
Loew's Paradise Theater Interior
Grand Lobby, ceiling details



Loew's Paradise Theater Interior
Promenade: view west
Upper foyer: view north



Loew's Paradise Theater Interior
Promenade: Ladies Parlor
Balcony level: Promenade, view west



Loew's Paradise Theater Interior (LP-2193), 2405 Grand Concourse
(AKA: 2401-2419 Grand Concourse, 2394-2408 Creston Avenue), The Bronx.
Landmark Site: Borough of the Bronx Tax Map Block 3165, Lot 44

Graphic Source: New York City Department of City Planning, MapPLUTO, Edition 03C, December 2003