

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

LOOKING BACK 1921–1987

The Orpheum Theatre, originally known as the Hennepin, opened in 1921 and seats 2,579. Designed by the Milwaukee firm of Kirchoff and Rose in a Beaux Arts style, its first performers included the Marx Brothers with more than 70,000 guests attending the opening week run. Billed as the largest vaudeville house in the country when opened, it became a major outlet for such entertainers as Jack Benny, George Burns and Fanny Brice. The Orpheum featured a playroom and day care off the mezzanine lobby and backstage had eight floors of dressing rooms. As vaudeville declined in the 1930s-'40s, the Orpheum became one of Minneapolis's major cinema houses, with *Gone with the Wind* in 1940 selling out every show for three weeks. It also hosted big bands including Benny Goodman, Tommy Dorsey and Count Basie. In 1959, Ted Mann, owner of six other downtown Minneapolis theatres including the Pantages, bought the Orpheum and brought in touring productions including *My Fair Lady* and *Fiddler on the Roof*. Movies also continued to be shown, with the 1965 James Bond film *Thunderball* shattering box office records. The Orpheum set a Minneapolis record for first run engagements of Best Picture Oscar winners—nine in all—including *From Here to Eternity* in 1953 and *The Godfather* in 1972.

RENOVATION 1988–PRESENT

In 1988, the Minneapolis Community Development Agency purchased the Orpheum from singer Bob Dylan and his brother, David Zimmerman, who owned the theatre. Restoration began in 1993 and, to accommodate elaborate Broadway productions, the Orpheum stage was extended almost 20 feet, with the back wall of the theatre painstakingly removed brick by brick. Unexpected architectural discoveries made during the renovation of the lobby included six Pompeian friezes previously hidden under velour curtains, fake window grids and a false wall. The chandelier in the main auditorium is the theatre centerpiece. It is 15 feet high and weighs 2,000 pounds. Following a \$10 million restoration, the Orpheum re-opened in December 1993 with a concert by Heart and in January 1994 with the Broadway production of *Miss Saigon*. Productions that have originated at the Orpheum include *Victor/Victoria*, the pre-Broadway world premiere of Disney's *The Lion King* and the national tour premiere of Elton John and Tim Rice's *AIDA*. Hennepin Theatre Trust is now the owner and operator of this magnificent structure.



Photo: Minneapolis Public Library

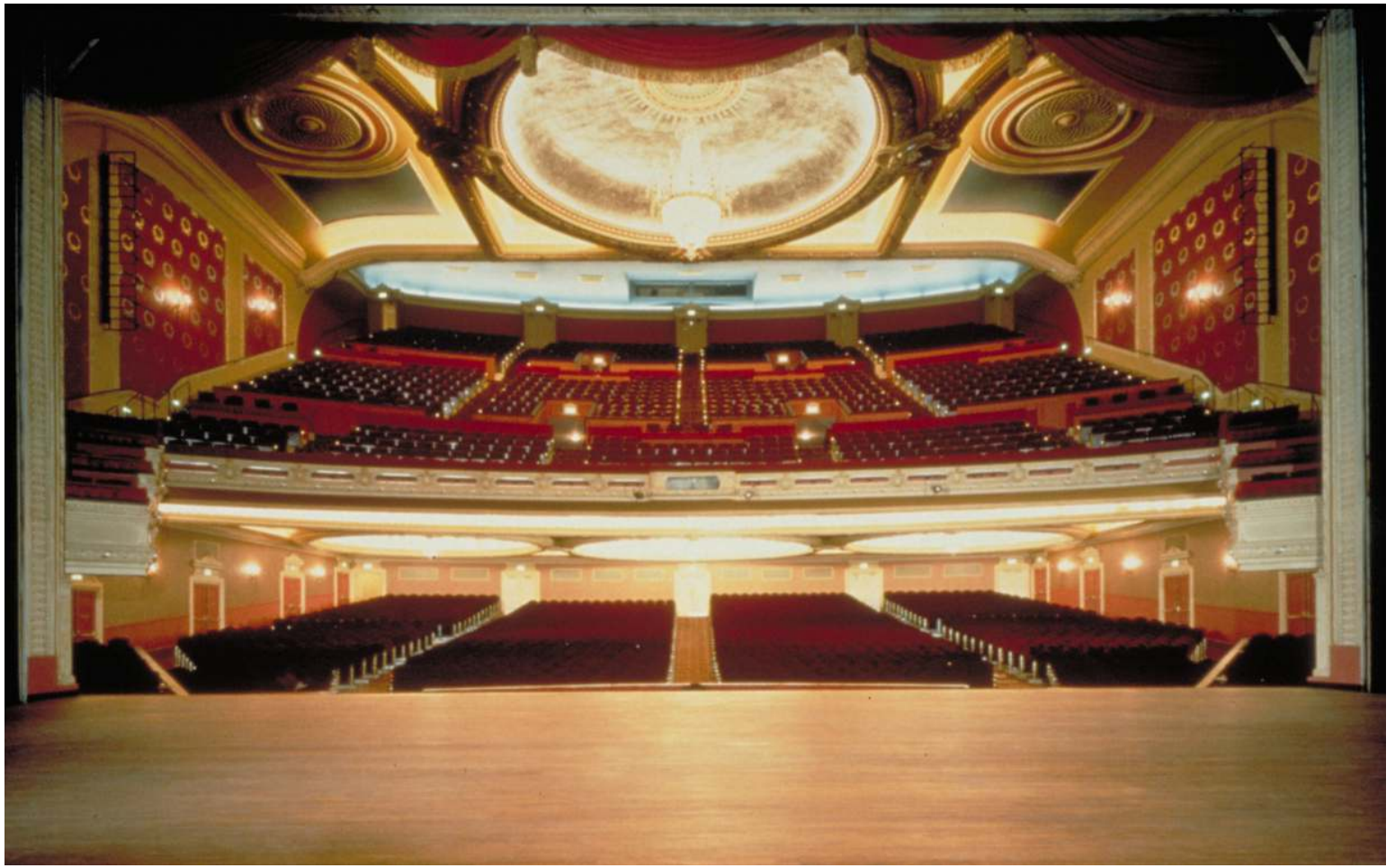
**EVERYONE HAS A
THEATRE STORY.
TELL US YOURS!**

If you, or someone you know, has an interesting story or experience connected to the State, Orpheum, Pantages or Century Theatre, we would love to capture it for our archives. Please e-mail us at info@hennepintheatretrust.org.



Hennepin Theatre Trust, owner of the historic Orpheum, State, Pantages and New Century Theatres, is an independent, non-profit organization dedicated to arts-inspired community cultural development.
Orpheum Theatre • 910 Hennepin Avenue, Minneapolis • www.HennepinTheatreTrust.org • 612.455.9500





TOUR ALL OF THE TRUST'S THEATRES – TOURS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC!

Take a walking tour of Hennepin Theatre Trust's State, Orpheum and Pantages Theatres! Experienced guides highlight architecture and historical facts and stories about the venues that anchored the region's "Theatre Row." Hour long tours are offered twice a month and begin at the State Theatre Box Office. Tickets are \$5 per person. Group tours are also available but must be arranged in advance. Discounted rates are available for educational organizations. For more information on these tours, please visit our website at www.hennepintheatretrust.org.



YOU CAN JOIN US IN PRESERVING OUR HISTORY!

Please join Hennepin Theatre Trust in preserving and maintaining these three magnificent theatres to keep them open, active and accessible! To find out how you can support this work, please contact Individual Giving Coordinator Kathryn Tjaden at kathryn.tjaden@hennepintheatretrust.org or 612.455.9516.