



# The Capitol Theatre

Pretoria

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BY die aanbidding van hierdie weelderige teater aan die inwoners van Pretoria, lewer African Theatres Bepersk, die tweede van hul super atmosfeer-teaters, waarvan die eerste, die Alhambra, aan die end van 1929 in Kaapstad geopen is.

Verskeie male is my die vraag gevra "Wat is 'n 'atmosfeer-teater'?" Omdat dit lyk asof daar 'n bietjie onsekerheid is wat betref hierdie punt, dink ek dat dit van belang sal wees om duidelik te maak hoe hierdie soort teater toe stand gekom het, en wat dit in werklikheid is. . . . 'n Jaar of wat gelinde was 'n beroemde argitek op reis in die Suid van Spanje toe hy een aand te lande kom op 'n toneeluitvoering in een van die strate van die dorpie waarin hy heen bevind het. . . . Aan die een kant van die straat was die verhoog, terwyl die geboort op stoele in die middel van die pad gesit het. . . . Die sterre het sag geskitter en aan elke kant het die vensters, waandeur die wêre liggies geskyn het, 'n bekoorlike omgewing verskaf vir 'n toneel van buitengewone skoonheid. . . . Die argitek, Mnr. John Ebersen, het onder die indruk gekom van hierdie pragtige effek, en dit het dadelik by hom opgeklim dat 'n teater ontwerp kan word, wat die geboort 'n idee kan gee van 'n Spaanse straat, en dit was nie lank nie of hierdie idee het vrug gedra. . . . Die eerste van hierdie soort teaters het ek in Californië gesien. Die proscenium

BY offering this luxurious Theatre to the citizens of Pretoria, African Theatres, Limited, present the second of their Super Atmospheric Theatres, the first being the Alhambra Theatre, Capetown, which was opened at the end of 1929.

I HAVE been often asked the question, "What is an Atmospheric Theatre?" . . . . Because there seems a little uncertainty on this point, I think it may be of interest to explain how this type of theatre came into being and what it actually is. . . . A few years ago a famous architect was travelling through the South of Spain, when one night he came across a theatrical entertainment held in the street of the little town in which he found himself. . . . At one end of the street was the stage, whilst on chairs placed in the middle of the thoroughfare the audience sat in the cool of a Spanish evening. . . . Overhead the stars were shining softly whilst on either side the dimly-lighted windows of the houses formed a setting to a scene of extraordinary beauty. . . . The architect, Mr. John Ebersen, was delighted with this unusual effect and it immediately occurred to him that a theatre might be conceived which would convey to an audience the picture of a Spanish street, nor was it long before this idea bore fruit. . . . The first theatre of this kind which I saw was in California, where the proscenium represented a

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het 'n landelike brug voorgestel, en die mure aan die kant, Spaanse luise, die versiers waarvan, met helder-kleurige goetlyne behang, afgekyk het op die stalle. . . . Die dak het 'n perfekte illusie gegee van die lug met sterre bezaai, en effens benevel deur drywende wolke, terwyl 'n sagte windjie 'n ligte roering gebring het in die blaas en blomme, wat 'n deel uitgemaak het van die dekoratiewe effek. . . . Hierdie vlugtige blik het die inspirasie gevorm vir die ontwerp van die Alhambra-teater in Kaapstad, waarby die grond-idee 'n weergawe is van die Spaans-Moorse tydperk. . . . Die Capitol-teater het as model die styl van die Italiaanse Renaissance, toe die boustyl en die skone kunste hul hoogtepunt bereik het. . . . Ek hoef nie veel meer te se omtrent die effek van die "Atmosfeer-teater" nie. . . . Die gehoor wat vanaand hier byeen is, sal self kan oordeel. . . . U sal my egter seker verskoon wanneer ek u daaraan herinner dat ons almal van natuur, maar niks meer as groot kinders is nie, en dat die gevoel van geheimernisigheid en avontuur, wat daar is wanneer ons uit die alledaagse omgewing, wat ons so goed ken, oortrap na al die wonderre van 'n ander land 'n vervloe tydperk, iets is wat, selfs vir diegene onder ons wat gereken het dat die kinderdae vir altyd verby is, 'n verruklike aantrekkingskrag het.

## Doel van die Capitol-teater

By die ontwerp van die Capitol-teater is 'n driedelige doel voor oë gehou—die aanbieding, in die eerste plek van perfekte klankpoese; tweedens rolprent-vaudeville- en toneelvoorstellings; en in die derde plek orkes- en orkestvoerings.

Daar die groot koepelgewelf en die mure te behandel met "Salinite Acoustic Plaster," is alle geluidsoorsake uit die weg gesaam, terwyl 'n elek-

trische brug en die side-walls Spanish houses, the gaily-curtained windows of which looked down into the stalls. . . . The roof gave a perfect illusion of the sky, studded with stars and faintly obscured by drifting clouds, whilst a cool breeze gently stirred the foliage and flowers which formed part of the decorative effect. . . . This brief glimpse formed the inspiration for the design of the Alhambra Theatre at Capetown in which the motif followed was that of the Moro-Spanish period. . . . The Capitol Theatre has for its model the Italian Renaissance style, at which time Italian Architecture and the Fine Arts were at their zenith. . . . Its seating capacity is 2,500. . . . I need say little as to the effect which the Atmospheric Theatre presents. . . . You, who form this audience to-night, can judge for yourselves. . . . You will, however, perhaps forgive me for reminding you that we are all nothing more than grown-up children at heart and the sense of mystery and adventure which is present when we step from those humdrum surroundings, which we so well know, into all the wonders of another country and a by-gone age, is one which appeals with delightful insincerity to even those amongst us who may have thought that childhood's days had gone for ever.

## Purposes of the Capitol Theatre

In designing the Capitol Theatre, three main purposes have been borne in mind—the presentation, firstly, of perfect sound pictures; secondly, of bio-vaudeville and dramatic performances; and thirdly, of orchestral and organ music.

By special treatment in Salinite Acoustic Plaster of the huge domed ceiling and of the walled surfaces, all acoustic errors have been corrected whilst a special electrical installation of loud speakers



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## Stofverwydering

Die stiel deurmiddel waarvan stof, vuiligheid, ens., verwyder word, is besonder doeltreffend. Hierdie verriebe vir gesondheid en gerief, word baie maal oor die hoof gesien. 'n Hele leër skoonmakers, gewapend met besems en borstels kan hierdie teater nie skoonmaak nie, nog minder kan afsonderlike stofsuikers. Meer as honderd pond stof moet daaglik verwyder word van die tapjete en stoele van 'n moderne teater. In die Capitol word 'n spesiale skoonmaak-installasie gebruik wat net soveel werk doen soos 28 gewone stofsuikers. Deurmiddel hiervan kan die Orkestr-stalles, die Gallery en die Voorportale vinnig en dergelyk skoongemaak word. Al die stof word gesuig na 'n groot kamer aan die kant van die verhoog. Spesiale aluminium-buise verwyder die stof van die stoele en die gordyne.

## Einde

Die Argitek wens om nadruk te lê op 'n punt wat moontlik oor die hoof gesien kan word. As sukses behaal is wat betref die ontwerp en skoonheid van die Capitol, dan is dit die gevolg van die verenigde pogings van baie mense van menigvuldige talente en diverse opleiding.

Die Argitek wil graag verklaar dat hy in die skuld staan by Mr. John Ralston vir die boukundige ontwerp en besonderhede; by Mnr. A. S. Joffe en Kie, van Johannesburg, Adviserende Ingenieurs, vir alle betonwyer en staalkonstruksie; by Mnr. A. S. Kenya vir die ontwerp van en toetsing oor die dekorasie; aan Mnr. J. Jeffreys en Kie, van Londen, Adviserende Lugverversings-ingenieurs; en aan Mnr. Reid en Knuckey, die Algemene Aannemers vir hul uitstekende kennis en uitvoering en vir hul onveranderlike hoffelijkheid.

Die Orde-aannemers is te veelvuldig om afsonderlik te noem, maar elke en het waardevolle bydraes gedoen wat betref die konstruksie en uitrusting van die Capitol-teater.

## Dust Removal

The provision for the removal of dust, dirt and debris throughout the Capitol is unusually efficient. This essential for health and comfort has often been neglected or inadequately made. No army of cleaners with brooms and brushes could clean this theatre, nor could independent vacuum cleaners. It is necessary to remove over a hundred pounds weight of dust daily from the carpets and chairs of a modern theatre of these dimensions. In the Capitol, a multiple-turbine exhaust cleaning plant has been installed, with a capacity of 28 ordinary vacuum cleaners. By means of this plant, the whole of the Orchestra Stalls, Circle and Foyers can be swiftly and thoroughly cleaned.

All the dust is drawn to a large chamber at the stage end of the theatre. Special aluminium tubes take care of the dust in chairs and curtains.

## Conclusion

The Architect wishes to emphasise a point which may be overlooked. If success has been achieved in the design and beauty of the Capitol, the result has been obtained by the combined effort of many men of varied gifts and training.

The Architect wishes to express his indebtedness to Mr. John Ralston for the architectural design and detail; to Messrs. A. S. Joffe & Company, of Johannesburg, Consulting Engineers, for the design of all reinforced concrete and steel construction; to Mr. A. S. Kenya, for the design and supervision of the decoration; to Messrs. J. Jeffreys & Co., of London, Consulting Ventilating Engineers; and to Messrs. Reid & Knuckey, the General Contractors, for their excellent knowledge and workmanship, and for their unvarying courtesy.

The list of Sub-contractors is too numerous for individual mention, but all have made valuable contributions to the construction and equipment of the Capitol Theatre.

