



The ornate decor of the Palace West Theater reflects the tastes of 1929. The theater is being refurbished for the April 18 opening of *Annie*. Mike Smith/Republic

## Crews revive aging Palace

By Michael Maza  
Republic Staff

Activity is picking up at downtown's Palace West Theater, where the musical *Annie* — complete with the original Broadway cast's Reid Shelton as Daddy Warbucks — opens April 18.

Chet Brown and Bob Brunton, respectively head electrician and head carpenter of the *Annie* company now playing in Reno, were in Phoenix last week to supervise a crew of 28 that is preparing the theater.

The lighting now in place — all of it *Annie* equipment — includes 71 lamps beaming down from a balcony rail and another 140 on stage.

About 20,000 feet of cable is strung with those lights, Brown says.

Setup of *Annie's* lights was complicated by an ancient house electrical system. Harris Christie, general manager of Robert Garner Attractions, co-producer of the show, says \$10,000 was spent on the house system, much of it for temporary installations that will be pulled out when *Annie* leaves town.

Brown, last at the Palace in 1970 to light the show 1776, says the place "hasn't changed a bit" in 10 years.

Brunton agreed. "We walked in on a disaster," he said. "This place is equipped as theaters were 30 years ago."

Brunton's crew has been busy retracing and replacing lines, rigging a ton of sandbags.

They also installed a floor 10½ inches above the Palace stage to accommodate two winch-driven treadmills that move actors and scenery during performances.

Because of the height of some *Annie* sets, lines had to be rerun so they won't snag. Because the Palace's wings are tight, props will have to be hoisted into the air for storage, necessitating other new installations.

Neither man is complaining. "Every theater is different," says Brunton. "We have to build to suit."

The two already have scouted Denver, where *Annie* moves — in seven semi-trailers, at a cost of about \$50,000 per move — at the

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The Palace West Theater at 203 W. Adams — built in 1929 at a cost of \$750,000. Mike Smith/Republic

## Palace

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end of its Phoenix run, and Pasadena, Calif., where it opens after five weeks in Denver.

Christie says other Palace refurbishing plans include new paint and replumbing in the below-stage dressing rooms.

Also, every seat will be steam-cleaned in a process that includes a freeze-and-lift method for removing stains.

The theater will be fogged with a deodorizer.

All together, it's the most extensive reworking the Palace has had since 1968, when the Nederlander family bought the building from ABC Paramount, which had operated it as a movie theater for years.

The Palace, built for \$750,000, opened on Jan. 5, 1929 as the Orpheum Theater.

**BOUND FOR FESTIVAL** — *Night of the Tribades*, Arizona State University Theater's nationally recognized production, will be dusted off in performances at the Lyceum Theater April 28-29.

The ASU company takes the play to Washington, D.C., May 10-11 for the American College Theater Festival in Kennedy Center.

Tickets are \$3 for the 8 p.m. Lyceum shows, which will be complete except for a few lighting and scenic touches.

**A CHORUS LINE** — It's just one of 20 Broadway shows from which songs have been plucked to mount *In Celebration*, an original effort by the Arizona Company of Theatrical Artists.

The revue, with a first act of songs about men and a second of songs about women, opens at 8 p.m. Friday at the Performing Arts Center, Third Street at Moreland. It runs Thursday through Sunday until April 20.

### NEW DIRECTORS/FILMS

The Lincoln Center/Museum of Modern Art's *New Directors/New Films*, a program of films from around the world and meetings with their directors, travels from New York to Santa Fe, N.M., for an April 25-May 1 stand at that city's lovely, old Lennic Theater.

The gigantic schedule includes Shohei Imamura's *Vengeance Is Mine*, sort of a Japanese *In Cold Blood*; and *Return of the Secaucus Seven*, a \$60,000 reunion of '60s radicals, by writer/director John Sayles (which until recently was a favorite unknown author).

One \$35 ticket covers everything from opening reception through 25 film programs to a closing party.

Complete schedules, film descriptions and an order form are available from the National Film Preserve, 1050 Old Pecos Trail, Santa Fe, N.M. 87501.

### BREAK A FORELEG

The Disney film folks who pushed into new territory last year with disastrous results are trying another first — their first deal with an independent producer.

It's an association with Lewis Allen Productions on *Never Cry Wolf*. On paper, this one has possibilities.

Allen co-produced *Annie* on Broadway.

The picture will be directed by Carroll Ballard, who showed smarts on *The Black Stallion*.

The script is by Jay Presson Allen (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, as well as her more recent *Jail Me What You Want*). And it's based on the book by Farley Mowat.

Last year, the Disney organization got its first PG rating (for *The Black Hole*) and released its first picture without the family name, *Midnight Madness*. Both were disappointments, as firsts go.