



The City of Seattle

## Landmarks Preservation Board

Mailing Address: PO Box 94649, Seattle WA 98124-4649

Street Address: 600 4th Avenue, 4th Floor

LPB 413/19

### REPORT ON DESIGNATION

Name and Address of Property: **The Showbox**  
**1426 First Avenue**

Legal Description: Lots 5 and 8 in Block 25 of Addition to the Town of Seattle, as laid out by A.A. Denny (commonly known as A.A. Denny's 3<sup>rd</sup> Addition to the City of Seattle), as per plat recorded in Volume 1 of Plats, Page 33, records of King County; Except the Westerly 9 feet thereof condemned for 1st Avenue, as provided by Ordinance No. 1129 of the City of Seattle.

At the public meeting held on July 17, 2019 the City of Seattle's Landmarks Preservation Board voted to approve designation of the Showbox building at 1426 First Avenue as a Seattle Landmark based upon satisfaction of the following standard for designation of SMC 25.12.350:

- C. *It is associated in a significant way with a significant aspect of the cultural, political, or economic heritage of the community, City, state or nation.*
- D. *It embodies the distinctive visible characteristics of an architectural style, or period, or a method of construction.*

### **DESCRIPTION**

#### Architectural Description

The Showbox took form in 1939, transforming a former market building to a Streamline Moderne performance venue. Unlike many buildings built for a particular purpose, the building was converted from a market building to fit a 1,000-person performance venue within a tight urban setting. The design of the entrance sequence guides visitors up to the second floor, originally past two bars, negotiating the grade change, often without realizing the change in height. A domed ceiling carried on vase-like columns each with a bouquet of petaled flowers visually supporting the ceiling provides the setting for performers and audiences. The tiered seating allows for dining while providing views of the stage. The early integration of the bar and entrance passageway greatly expanded the reception area for the venue.

To facilitate directional reference due to a slight street grid shift west of north, this description uses First Avenue as the west side of the building.

There was an address shift in the 1980s that shifted all the addresses one to the north, dropping the original 1414 First Avenue (which became 1416 First Avenue) and adding 1426 First Avenue (which was originally 1424 First Avenue). For ease of reference this nomination uses the current addresses and makes note of the original address.

The building is visually and functionally organized into two key roles. The south two-thirds of the first story consist of four retail storefronts opening onto First Avenue. The north one-third of the first story consists of the main performance hall entrance and an associated curved retail storefront and a marquee. The main entrance leads up to the second-floor performance hall, which spans the entire building. The second story ribbon windows in the south two-thirds of the building relate to the performance hall function. Due to grade slope there is a partial daylight basement level along the east alley with crawl space on the west side along First Avenue.

### **Setting**

The Showbox is a two-story Streamline Moderne style building with a partial daylight basement (along the east side of the building) in downtown Seattle on block 25, which is bounded on the west by First Avenue, Pike Street on the north, Second Avenue on the east, and Union Street on the south. Grade for the block slopes downward from north to south. A north to south alley bisects the block into east and west halves. The west half of the block contains the Showbox (mid-block, built 1917), the Green Tortoise Hotel (north end, built 1910, formerly the Hahn Building with ground floor commercial and upper story hotel/apartments), and the Harrold Poll Building (south end, built 1910, formerly the Hancock Building, with offices and ground floor commercial). The Newmark Tower (built 1991, condominium and lower level commercial, formerly the Bon Marche and then the J.C.Penney department store location) fills the east half of the block with the retailer Target in the ground floor.

The Showbox fronts First Avenue and includes the 1416 through 1426 First Avenue storefronts (originally 1414 through 1424). A surface parking lot (originally 1426 to 1430 First Avenue, former location of the Regent Hotel) abuts the north side of the building. The Harold Poll Building (1400 through 1412 First Avenue storefronts) abuts the south side of the Showbox. A concrete sidewalk extends along the front west facade. There are three street trees in front of the building along First Avenue. They are Autumn Blaze Pears (*Pyrus calleryana* 'Autumn Blaze') and range from 12- to 15-inches in diameter at chest height.

Sidewalk seating extends out in front of the southern two west facade storefronts and consists of moveable metal railings and seating. The Great Northern Railroad Tunnel (built 1904) passes diagonally from the southeast to northwest directly below the building site.

### **Exterior**

A masonry foundation supports the building structure with footings below the wood posts. There are no known basement areaways extending below the sidewalk along First Avenue. The building's east and west walls consist of unreinforced, load bearing common bond brick walls with headers every sixth course. These walls are three to four wythes thick for an approximate wall thickness of 12- to 16-inches. Brick piers step out on the interior face of the wall to carry beams supporting the floor framing. The southern third of the east wall at the second story level consists of stacked hollow clay tile, with a brick parapet above.

Multiple steel louvers at through-wall openings along the first story level support building mechanical functions.

The south wall abuts an adjacent building wall and consists of load bearing brick with an inner row of ten- by ten-inch wood posts abutting the masonry. This wall has a total estimated thickness of at least 16-inches (inclusive of the posts). The north wall consists of concrete masonry units with pilasters built out along the interior face at regular intervals to strengthen the wall. Stucco clads the front facade, with recessed expansion joints at opening corners, providing a smooth modernistic surface.

Interior framing consists of ten- by ten-inch posts set on 22-foot centers that support the floor framing. These wood posts occur at each floor. The posts have chamfered corners and carry massive timber beams (approximately 14- by 14-inches in section) that run east to west. Steel strap ties anchor the beam ends to the outer walls. The first floor consists of a concrete slab with some wood floor sections along First Avenue. The second floor and roof deck consist of nominally two-inch-thick boards set on edge and butted one next to the other. This construction method provides a high load capacity for the flooring system. Steel brackets anchor the posts to the beams. Through-wall steel ties connect the second floor and roof framing to the exterior walls.

Windows occur on the front west and rear east facades. West facade windows consist of three window openings set in a horizontal band characteristic of the Streamline Moderne style. Each opening consists of two fixed sash flanked by narrow sash having a larger fixed upper and smaller operable lower sash. Window frames are anodized aluminum. The window band is framed by a projecting modernistic border emphasizing the horizontal character of the facade, with painted corrugated metal panels between the windows and at the south end. The border consists of raised outer edges with a central recessed channel.

East facade window openings occur at both the first and second story levels. Openings have flat headers with steel lintels spanning the openings and rowlock brick sills. Brick infills the first story window openings. Sash at the second story have wire glass and consist of one three and one six lite sash. The remaining two window openings have plywood coverings. All second story openings have painted wood brick moldings.

A flat roof with composition roofing clads the building. A central low-pitched gable roof portion projects up from the main roof over the second-floor trusses and the domed ceiling. Parapets extend along the west, north, and east sides of the roof with a thin ledge (coping) along the front facade to visually accent the parapet edge and provide a horizontal emphasis to the facade. This ledge is repeated at a step in the parapet height. Sheet metal flashing caps the parapet. A steel armature mounted to the roof framing and supporting the front marquee occupies the northwest corner of the roof behind the parapet. Rooftop mechanical equipment is located around the roof perimeter behind the parapet. Sheet metal ducting and steel enclosed conduit (related to restaurant and performance venue functions) extend up to this equipment along the outer face of the east facade to avoid disrupting the interior performance volume. Metal downspouts extend down from the roof along the east facade, discharging at the alley. An internal brick chimney is in the northeast corner of the building.

## **Entrances**

The building features four storefronts, the performance venue entrance and an associated storefront, and three rear service entrances.

The four storefronts in the south two-thirds of the building are unified by painted, square tile that clads the first story level. Raised trim frames tile panel at the transom level over the southern two, and northern two storefronts. This same raised trim wraps the bulkheads and wall sections between the storefronts. Each storefront consists of a single recessed door with side lites and a transom, flanked by inner and outer tall single lite display windows with lower bulkheads. The three southernmost storefronts each have a transom above the recessed doorway. Each storefront has projecting signs mounted below the canopy, as well as two wall mounted signs for the southernmost storefronts. The southernmost two storefronts are flanked by applied pilasters with decorative caps. Two cloth awnings, each carried on an aluminum frame, project out over the southern two and northern two storefronts. The frame is mounted to the building facade at the top of the first story level. Due to grade slope along First Avenue, two awnings are used to allow the northern awning to step up slightly to maintain the building code required clearance height above the sidewalk.

The fifth storefront is integrated into the larger curved opening of the performance volume entrance. Set into the south curve of the main entrance, this storefront features a curved bulkhead and segmented display windows. A door having a tall single lite, flanked by side lites and having a single transom provides access to this commercial volume. A metal frame supports the display windows.

The performance venue entrance consists of three, two-leaf sets of doors leading from a large recessed foyer to an interior passageway up to the second-floor performance venue. A neon marquee is mounted to the building facade above the entrance. The foyer provides a sheltered waiting area for visitors and arcs outward to the south and slopes slightly downward from north to south, following the sidewalk grade. Scored concrete comprises the flooring. A narrow band and thin aluminum trim along the outer edge of the wall above the entrance mark the transition from the wall plane to the ceiling of the foyer. A flat plaster ceiling with recessed light fixtures extends back to the doorways. A series of five large, round engaged columns results in a “scalloped” wall that defines the north side of the foyer. The fifth storefront described above defines the south arced side of the entrance foyer.

Each of the three doorways consists of a pair of two-panel doors. The northern set has flush panel doors with the other two sets having upper glass lites and a solid recessed lower panel and metal pull bar handles. Each doorway has a narrow transom. The northernmost transom consists of an operable wood hopper transom with 14 lites. Added exterior plexiglass covers the transoms with neon signage at each advertising “Open,” “Tickets,” and “Available.” Between each of the doorways and flanking their outer edges are slender reeded (parallel sets of small convex moldings) engaged columns with low square plinths. This same decorative element repeats on the interior side of the doorways as both engaged columns between the doors and an overall casing wrapping around the entire set of three doorways. Added coverings and metal conduit cover some of these on the interior and one on the exterior. A sign board announcing upcoming artists is mounted to the outer edge of the north foyer wall.

Rear service entrances open to the alley and provide both staff access to garbage, composting, and recycling containers in the alley as well as egress routes for restaurants and the second-floor

performance volume. The following lists these openings from south to north; all have steel lintels spanning the openings.

- Double door emergency egress exit. This pair of flush metal panel doors with no exterior hardware services the southeast egress stairway from the second-floor performance volume. The doors are set in a metal frame. An adjacent entry is infilled with concrete masonry units.
- Single door service entrance with a buzzer and cardlock access. This doorway is set in a wood frame and consists of a flush metal panel door. A short concrete ramp leads up from the alley to this doorway.
- Double door emergency egress exits at the north end. This pair of flush metal panel doors with no exterior hardware services the northeast egress stairway from the second-floor performance volume. The doors are set in a metal frame. A concrete step transitions to the alley.

### **Interior**

The building interior is organized around commercial and performance uses. Commercial consists of the four storefronts, each with its own space that connects to a common utility space at the rear of the building along the alley. The fifth storefront is functionally related to the performance use. The performance use is the entire second floor of the building with the main entrance off First Avenue providing the grand entrance to the venue and cleverly fitting a 1,000-person performance space within a tight urban setting. Visitors to the Showbox enter at grade along First Avenue and gradually ascend to the second floor, often without realizing they traveled up a floor.

#### **1416 and 1418 First Avenue**

The storefronts (originally 1414 and 1416 First Avenue) lead to a single commercial space operated as the Blarney Stone First Avenue Pub. The space features contemporary dining facilities along with a bar, kitchen, and associated storage spaces to the rear of the space. Fluorescent fixtures provide lighting. Interior wall finishes consist of painted sheet rock.

#### **1420 First Avenue**

The storefront (originally 1418 First Avenue) leads to a single commercial space operated as the Palace Jewelry Loans and Pawn Shop. The space features a front display and retail space with a workshop and offices located to the rear of the space. Fluorescent fixtures provide lighting. Interior wall finishes consist of painted sheet rock.

#### **1422 First Avenue**

The storefront (originally 1420 First Avenue) leads to a single commercial space operated as the Genghis Khan restaurant. The space has a large open west volume for seating. The kitchen occupied the southeast corner of the space with counter for ordering. A hallway and ramp extend down along the northeast corner of the space to the shared utility space and restrooms at the back of the building. Fluorescent fixtures provide lighting. Interior wall finishes consist of painted sheet rock.

#### **1424 First Avenue**

The storefront (originally 1422 First Avenue) leads to a single commercial space operated as a bar in conjunction with the performance venue. The bar has an upper level off First Avenue and a lower level off the alley, with a direct flight of stairs connecting the two. An incline lift for universal access is mounted to the north side of these stairs. The ramp and stairs leading up from

the main entrance to the second-floor venue form the sloped ceiling of the lower volume. The wall separating this space from the main entry consists of a low stepped cheek wall following the rise of the entrance stairs and decoratively trimmed with paired, thin convex wood moldings (arranged in a stylized fret pattern). The top surface of the wall is also stepped, rising slightly from south to north. A glass wall with the names of bands that have performed in the venue rises from this cheek wall to the enclosed ceiling beam to separate the spaces while maintaining visual connection between the two. A doorway at the west end of this wall connects the two spaces.

A curved bar occupies the south side of the space. A narrow, raised table with associated seating follows the curve of the storefront. The space has composite wood flooring with a low baseboard and painted sheet rock walls and ceiling. Contemporary lighting fixtures illuminate the space.

The lower space consists of a single volume with bench seating and associated cocktail tables and chairs along the outer edges. This arrangement leaves a central corridor open that leads to the rear doorway for restroom access in the shared utility space. Spiral ducting runs along the ceiling supporting ventilation in this space and the upper performance venue. The space has composite wood floor with painted sheetrock walls and ceiling. Wall sconces around the perimeter of the space provide illumination.

### **1426 First Avenue**

The main entrance (originally 1424 First Avenue) leads to a broad passageway that ascends past the ticketing window to open into the central volume of the performance venue. There is an initial landing directly inside the entrance doors from First Avenue that provides a security and crowd management space. A ramp leads up along the north wall with a wide set of stairs leading up to the landing level. A second set of stairs and a ramp ascend from the landing to the performance volume. Finishes along the length of the passageway consist of painted sheet rock walls and ceiling and a composite floor covering. A band of decorative panels extends along the header above the passageway opening into the second-floor performance volume.

The landing transitions between the exterior and the second-floor performance volume. Stepped cheek walls follow the rise of the stairs and the landing. They are decoratively trimmed with paired, thin convex wood moldings (arranged in a stylized fret pattern). Metal hand railings flank the stairs and extend along the ramp. A soffit trimmed with decorative panels marks the transition where the passageway volume rises above the second-floor framing. Ceiling mounted track lighting illuminate photographs of past artist performances. Wood beams carried on wood posts support the landing.

The curved ticketing window dominates the east end of this landing and directs visitors up to the performance volume. The decorative soffit panels wrap along the curved header over the ticketing window. A modernistic curved counter with a clear coated maple (or similar) cap having three recessed fillets along the front edge is where all transactions for tickets purchased on site. The approach sequence to this window marks the initial visitor experience. The lower portion of the counter consists of painted wood with decorative plywood brackets along the underside of the counter. A bank of mahogany (or similar) cabinets below a narrow counter wrap along the curved wall behind the front counter. This back counter provides a work space for staff and associated material storage. A series of small office and work spaces extend east behind the ticketing window. Carpeting covers the wood flooring with painted plaster walls and ceiling with several areas of painted fir flooring.

## **Performance Volume**

The performance volume occupies the entire second floor and is oriented north to south to make the best use of the site grade slope downward from north to south. This site grade provided the shortest vertical height transition distance at the north end to bring people into the space from First Avenue, while allowing a tall open performance volume at the central portion and south end without compromising the ceiling heights of the four commercial spaces along First Avenue below.

The volume is arranged with tiered seating stepping down from the north and extending out along the east and west sides. A domed vaulted ceiling above the dance floor and stage anchor the core of the space. A bar lines the west length of the north wall with the kitchen and egress stairs in the northeast corner. The stage at the south wall is flanked by a proscenium with curved side walls and a flat header. The passageway to the space is recessed below the raised seating areas and opens directly to the dance floor with stairs leading up from the dance floor to the perimeter raised seating. Walls with a stepped top flank the opening. Support spaces for performers are grouped in the southwest corner of the floor. Restrooms are located on either side of the stage. A small mechanical fly loft is in the southeast corner of the space, built out over the egress stairwell, and extends behind the stage. Wood posts enclosed within decorative columns carry the wood beams spanning the volume and supporting the ceiling. Overall finishes consist of a textured plaster ceiling and painted plaster walls having a sanded finish with a variety of composite and Douglas fir wood flooring.

Columns, installed as part of the 1939 remodel, provide both a dramatic visual component of the space and an essential structural function. There are only 12 columns, two rows of five along the outer east and west quarters and two additional flanking the passageway entrance to the performance volume. Timber trusses span the approximately 60-foot clear space over the dance floor and the stage. These columns consist of an inner wood post that connects to the ceiling framing and first floor posts. This configuration is visible at the post (painted with chamfered corners) within the kitchen area in the northeast corner of the space. Enclosing the rest of the posts are wood cladding creating a round cross section enclosure that flares out at the capital in a convex arc terminating in a narrow fillet parallel to the column plane. Springing from within the center of this capital (and out from the center post) are a series of convex petals that rise and end in a narrow fillet connected to the ceiling. Round lens floor lights (located on north and south sides of the columns) provided an up-lighting wash to the columns. All column surfaces are painted. A low wood plinth wraps the base of the columns.

The dance floor, installed as part of the 1939 remodel, consists of a sprung maple dance floor extending out from the stage and covering the entire central volume. This floor was installed over the heavy wood floor deck that provides a solid base. A dome ceiling vault extends out over the dance floor with a recessed channel for concealed lighting. Two pendant type light fixtures hang down from the vault.

The stage is located at the south end of the space. The plain proscenium, installed as part of the 1939 remodel, consists of curved plaster clad walls to either side of the stage providing a streamlined, modernistic character. These rise to a flat header across the stage. Curtains for acoustical dampening hang from the walls and the brick wall along the back of the stage. The stage consists of plywood supported on built-out wood framing. The stage has a rounded front edge. Wood frame stairs provide access to the stage from either side. The main light boom hangs above the front edge of the stage with speakers off to the sides. The sound and lighting control station is located at the north end of the volume just off the west seating area.

The fly loft is located behind the stage and extends to the southeast over the egress stairway. Douglas fir flooring extends throughout the space, with plaster walls. A wood frame ladder provides access to the upper level. The space provides storage for cabling and performance related equipment. The upper portion features graffiti from the multiple bands that played at the venue, including Neil Young and Malfunkshun (one of the forerunners of the grunge scene in the early 1980s and founded by brothers from Bainbridge Island).

Raised seating, installed as part of the 1939 remodel, provides dining and viewing areas overlooking the dance floor and stage. The arc of these seating areas frames the northeast and northwest sides of the dance floor. Curved stairs lead up from the dance floor to the L- shaped areas on either side of the dance floor. A curved ramp extends up from the passageway entrance to the west seating area to provide universal access. Painted metal railings extend along the front edge of the upper west seating areas with solid railings at the lower portions. The east seating area features solid wood railings. Sections of Douglas fir flooring remain visible at the upper portion of the east seating area. Other areas consist of a range of materials including plywood, quarry tile near the kitchen, and composite sheet flooring.

Dressing and waiting rooms are in the southwest corner of the floor and consist of an outer green room enclosed with wood frame, sheet rock clad walls, and seating along both sides of the space. The inner green room is located along the outer west wall with a single window opening. The space features painted sheet rock walls. Seating is arranged around the perimeter of the space with a single overhead globe type light fixture providing illumination. A dressing room is located south of the inner green room and has mirrors above a counter, with multiple outlets for plugging in styling equipment. There is a small refreshment area with a window, microwave, and coffee maker. This room has the same interior finishes as the inner green room.

Restrooms are in the south end of the volume to either side of the stage. The men's restroom is in the southwest corner and extends behind the stage. The women's restroom is in the southeast corner, directly north of the east egress stairwell. Both have composite flooring, painted plaster walls, and sheet rock ceiling with metal stall partitions and recessed lighting.

The kitchen is narrow galley style with quarry tile flooring, T-bar drop ceiling, and painted sheet rock walls. Stoves, ovens, and stainless-steel food preparation spaces are built-out within the kitchen volume in the northeast corner of the floor. A hallway extends west through a former seating area above the entrance passageway, since enclosed, to the west seating area for service. Two doors off the south side of the kitchen area access the east seating area.

Bars are located along the east and west walls and the west end of the north wall. Each features a mirrored backing with bottles lined up on shelves along the back wall and a main bar for service. Refrigerators and cabinets are built in below the bar and along the back wall. A low wood foot rail supported on brass brackets extends the length of the north bar.

### **Utility Spaces**

The shared utility spaces along the east side of the building are commonly referred to as the basement. It exists at and below grade along the length of the alley and extends below grade under the 1426 First Avenue entrance. The rest of the area below the storefronts is crawl space. Due to the site slope, this space is below the floor level of the storefronts along First Avenue. The 1424 First Avenue space connects via the lower volume, which is at grade with the alley. The 1422 First Avenue space utilizes a ramp to connect with the shared utility space. The utility space consists of



a north to south hallway linking to the storefronts and service doorways along the alley, as well as, restrooms at the north end of the building. Storage space for the performance venue is located at the north end of the building. The hallway has a concrete floor (with vinyl composition tiles), painted sheet rock walls, and a T-bar drop ceiling covering ceiling mounted mechanical conduit and ducting.

There are some areas of exposed, painted brick and plaster clad brick along the exterior east wall. Gas meters are all located within this space. Chamfered wood posts are visible in several areas of the hallway. A short ramp leads up to the single door personnel entrance off the alley.

### **Stairways**

There are two main egress stairways servicing the building, one in the southeast corner and one in the northeast corner. Both exit directly to the alley. Both are wood frame construction with painted sheet rock walls and ceilings.

### **Alterations**

The following discussion of alterations stems from Department of Construction and Inspections microfilm records and field observations. The exterior section addresses larger scale work on the building facades. Signage and canopies, as well as interior changes, are all addressed under the specific storefront. The following list provides a reference summary of the key changes to the building.

- 1917: Building constructed and functions as a market building with heavy mill framing. 1939: Remodel creating the Showbox and producing the west facade form, the main entrance, and the second-floor performance volume.
- 1959: Rebuild of the north wall following demolition of the former building to the north.
- 1986: Remodel that reconfigured the storefronts to their current general form.

### **Exterior**

Built as a market building with heavy mill construction to support the heavy loading of merchandise, the two-story building featured five storefronts along First Avenue. These consisted of a single large storefront at the north end (originally 1422 First Avenue, now 1424-2426) with four smaller storefronts to the south. The north storefront also provided access to the second story. The second story consisted of a pair of 4:1 double hung wood sash windows over each storefront. Decorative brick corbelling projected out at the second story to parapet transition. The parapet stepped up slightly over the north storefront, identifying it as the main point of entrance for the market and the upper floor. A broad rectangular metal canopy projected out over the north entrance, with similar though smaller awnings at the storefronts to the south.

The rear alley facade generally retains its original form with some infill of former windows, a doorway in the southeast corner, and the replacement of brick with hollow clay tile in a section of the second story wall at the south end of the facade. The hollow clay tile infills a former skybridge connection, in operation by January of 1917, over the alley to the former Bon Marche Department store building along Second Avenue.

- 1939: Designed by architect Bjarne Moe, this remodel changed the original west facade to the essential form of what remains today. Victor Steinbrueck worked for Bjarne Moe during this period when work was started on this design, before starting his own practice in

1938.2 The work reconfigured the north end of the facade into the main entrance (see 1426 First Avenue below for details) and extended the parapet slightly higher at this location. A thin decorative band capped the top of the west facade parapet, with an extra band added at this step in height above the main entrance. Another band extended along the lower portion of the facade over the main entrance. The upper facade received a stucco coating with rectangular terra cotta panels at the first story. The stucco extended down at the wall between the 1424 and 1422 First Avenue storefronts to mark the transition in function. South of the main entrance were the four storefronts. A projecting band extended the length of the facade above these storefronts with a recessed channel in the middle of the band that originally held a neon light. Slim awnings with a recessed channel detail along the outer face projected out over each of the storefronts. Narrow, terra cotta piers divided each of the storefronts from one another. The 1422, 1420, and 1418 storefronts each had an offset, recessed entrance with display windows above low terra cotta panel clad bulkheads. It is not known how the 1416 storefront was configured, as it was boarded over in 1940 and 1959 drawings show an opening without any storefront display windows or doorway. The upper story featured a horizontal band with a raised border around the outer edge. The existing three window openings set within this band with decorative horizontal panels between the windows and at the south end. These panels consisted of built-up paired convex moldings alternating with a single square profile band. The windows each consisted of three long, horizontal lites with curtains on the interior. Above the main entrance an angled marquee extended across the full width of the facade above.

- 1958: This work demolished the building north of the Showbox, creating the existing vacant lot. This lot was then paved, the attendant's shelter and pole sign constructed, and the space operated as surface parking since 1959. This lot is not part of this nomination report.
- 1959: Architects Carlson, Eley, Grevstad designed the construction of a new north wall for the building. The building had originally used the south wall of the former building to the north. When that building was demolished, its south wall was left standing, but in an unusable condition. This required the construction of the existing concrete masonry wall. Existing beams were fire cut into the new wall. Pilasters were constructed running the full height of the wall to pick up a beam along the outer edge of roof deck. At one time there were three hipped roof skylights along the north wall provided lighting for service bar, control room, and the kitchen, which were located along the north wall at the second floor.
- By 1981 the main marquee over the front entrance had been removed.
- 1986: this work by EHA Architects and Ratti Fossatti Associates, P.S. consisted of seismic upgrades and alterations to the west facade. The roof framing was upgraded and through wall ties were added connecting the outer masonry walls to the floor framing. Shear walls were added along the west facade between the storefronts. As part of this work the front facade was re-stuccoed and the storefronts rebuilt to their current configuration with a centered recessed entrance flanked by display windows. The wider piers between the storefronts cover the new shear walls. New tiles were installed around the storefronts with an aluminum grid overlaid on these tiles above the storefronts for decorative effect. The windows were replaced with glass block. See
- Ca. 1990s to 2000s: As part of this work the front facade was re-stuccoed (producing the expansion joint pattern). The windows were replaced with their current sash and the panels between and to the south of the windows were clad with corrugated metal.

**1416 First Ave (originally 1414)**

This space has transitioned through a variety of uses including an arcade, adult entertainment, men's wear, hair salon, and the current restaurant. Each of these uses altered interior spaces. Signage changes on the west facade occurred with each change in occupancy. The space was remodeled in 1986, 1992, and ca. 2000 to accommodate changing tenants.

**1418 First Ave (originally 1416)**

This space has transitioned through a variety of uses including functioning as part of the arcade in 1416, a wholesale radio and electric equipment company, and jewelry store and now part of the current restaurant in 1416. Signage changes on the west facade occurred with each change in occupancy. The space was remodeled ca. 2000 converting it from retail to restaurant use.

**1420 First Ave (originally 1418)**

This space has transitioned through a variety of uses including Kern's Music Company, being part of the arcade in 1416 and 1418, a retail store, restaurant, and the current jewelry and pawn shop. Signage changes on the west facade occurred with each change in occupancy. The space was remodeled in 1987, 1993, and 2001 for changing tenants.

**1422 First Ave (originally 1420)**

This space has been a restaurant since 1941, with upgrades to equipment and the space over the course of the three restaurants that occupied the space. In 1941, Michael Lyons hired architect Donald McDonald to convert the space into a cabaret venue with a stage at the back and seating to either side of a small dance area; however, this was not implemented. In 1959, Rod Lundberg, then owner of the Unique Café (Unique Grill, tenant from 1948 to 1985) had a design developed to expand his restaurant north into the 1424 space to develop a cocktail lounge; however, this was not implemented. Signage changes on the west facade occurred with each change in occupancy. The space was remodeled for the current tenant in 1987.

**1424 First Ave (originally 1422)**

This space has transitioned through a variety of uses including a bar, wine bar, and retail space. The 1939 building remodel creating the curved storefront as part of the performance hall entrance linked this space with the building's second floor use.

- 1939: This work reconfigured the space as part of creating a larger entrance foyer for the performance hall. This created the existing curved storefront. Programming for the space retained the original stairs down to the lower space. The upper portion of the space was opened along the north side to the passageway leading up to the second floor. A bar was installed along the south side of the space with a storage room at its east end. The west end of the bar curved to follow the curve of the storefront. The stepped pony wall with decorative trim was installed along the north side of the stairs to separate them from the passageway, providing a low, solid railing.
- 1987: This work reconfigured the space for Horizon's Edge Wines to function as a wine bar. The existing bar and storage room were removed and a new central wine bar installed. Wood display counters were built in along the south wall. A partition was added along the north side of the space to separate it from the passageway leading to the second floor. The lower space was converted to storage rooms.
- Ca. 1989: This work modified the space for retail use as part of Rudy's Vintage Clothing.
- 2001: This work returned the space to its 1939 supporting role relative to the second floor performance hall. The space was named the Showbox Annex and the bar rebuilt along the

south wall with a storage room in the east end. The bar follows the curve of the storefront. A raised table was built out along the inner side of the storefront display window. The stepped pony wall was extended to the west (to mask the added stairs in the passageway), the 1987 partition removed, and glass relites with the names of artists that performed in the building installed. These relites maintain the visual connection between the spaces while providing separation. Work installed new flooring on the original stairs. The lower level space was converted to a cocktail room with banquettes along the outer walls. The project installed a wheelchair lift support along the stairs to provide universal access between the spaces. Both the upper and lower spaces received new flooring and lighting.

### **1426 First Ave (originally 1424)**

Since the 1939 remodel, this storefront has been an integral part of the second-floor performance hall function. Consequently, the discussion of alterations for the second floor are included with this space. In addition to being a cabaret and performance venue (including a comedy club and teenage night club), the space transitioned through several functions including a bingo hall and a furniture store. Use of the space for parking was even briefly considered in the late 1950s.

- 1939: This remodel created the front entrance foyer and curved storefront of 1424. The work built out the five engaged columns along the north side, which originally continued to a curved profile on the interior. Work installed the three sets of two-leaf doors, and the single door into the adjacent bar. As part of this work, there was no separation between the bar and the entry passage on the interior. The two existing posts between 1424 and 1426 were clad in plaster to create the large round columns. Within the passageway there was a larger flat entry vestibule that extended back to just west of the cheek wall (which had three steps to it). The cheek wall was located parallel to the stairway in the 1424 space down to the lower level. Floor registers fed by underfloor ducts provided warm air to the vestibule. A ramp rose up from the east edge of this vestibule to the intermediate landing. The top of the ramp ended just east of the column. A second ramp led up from the intermediate landing to the performance volume. An opening in the wall along the west side of the ramp overlooked the 1424 space. The framing for both ramps is evident in the basement level crawl space and the ceiling profile of the lower level of 1424. At the intermediate landing, a curved bar wrapped along the northeast side (current ticket window).
- The remodel of the second floor installed a central sprung maple dance floor. A curved stage with a proscenium having curved side walls and a flat header was installed along the south side of the room. Existing wood posts were enclosed with wood and plaster to create the existing decorative columns and flush mounted floor lights added to provide a light wash on the columns. The project also created stepped seating overlooking the dance floor and stage. The southeast and southwest corners of the space had service bars and restrooms. The stepped seating had four tiers on the northwest, each with six to seven tables and railing along outer edge. There was a service bar and restrooms along north wall. Painted pipe railings were located along the outer edge of each of the stepped seating tiers. The stepped seating in the northeast also had four tiers, each with four to five tables with a service bar and restrooms along the north wall. An egress stairway was in the northeast corner.
- Both the east and west sides of the dance floor had three tiers of seating, each with nine to thirteen tables at the upper tiers and sixteen at the lower. In addition, there was space for 22 tables along either side of the dance floor. Both sides also had booths located along the outer east and west walls. These consisted of ten each side and were U-shaped seating with central table to facilitate viewing of the performances.

- 1940: This work followed up on the initial space conversion to a cabaret and added a coat check room on the east side of the bar. It is unclear from the drawings if the bar (current ticket window) was added as part of this work, or if only some minor upgrades were completed. The bar featured a curved wood counter with fixed stools along its length. A work counter and associated cabinets extended along the back side of the bar. These upgrades included enclosing the post at the south end of the bar with a large plaster column enclosure. Plywood cut outs were installed on the header above the bar. A soffit projected out from the bar with recessed lighting.
- 1951-1952: This work included alterations for the cabaret such as adding a kitchen and range hood. The permit did not indicate the specific location; however, by 1987 the existing kitchen space in the northeast corner had been constructed and none of the other permits issued through 1987 included work for a kitchen. The existing bar at the north wall is also thought to have been added at this time along with enclosing the seating area above the passage way and removing the booths from along the side walls.
- 1961: This work consisted of a change of occupancy to a furniture store.
- 1967: This work included minor alterations to return the space to use as a cabaret for The Happening.
- 1987: This work installed three signs and a new 400-amp sub feed and a load center added on the second floor to support future tenants.
- By 1987, the existing bar was at the north wall, the booths had been removed from the sides, the kitchen had been built out as a catering and food prep space to its current configuration, and the area above the passageway enclosed. Dressing rooms were behind the stage and the space still had bars in the southeast and southwest corners.
- 1990: This work added a sign on the front facade for the Improvisation comedy club. Larry Harris was the operator. The project also upgraded the fire alarm system and installed sprinklers throughout the space and along the entry passageway. The kitchen was upgraded as part of this work.
- 1992: The club applied for and received city approval for dancing on Wednesday evenings during the summer from 11pm to 2am after the comedy shows. The long- term intent was that if the dancing was profitable and trouble free, it was to be permitted on additional nights.
- 1994: Work installed the existing illuminated marquee and sign above the main entry along with neon lights around edges.
- By 1999: The men's restrooms had been built out behind and to the southwest of the stage along with several of the associated waiting room areas in the southwest corner of the floor. The existing inner and outer green rooms had not yet been constructed. The women's restroom had been built out in the southeast corner behind a remaining service bar and small storage room. A small stage had been added along the west side of the floor at the current bar location. The ramp up to the west seating area had been installed and the round stage had been replaced with a rectangular stage, generally within the original footprint. A low wall enclosure had also been added at the north end of the dance floor to separate it from the passageway entrance into the space. A sound booth had been added adjacent the east side raised seating area.
- 2005: Work expanded the bar in the southeast corner of the floor and increased the stage size. The low gate in front of the original passageway entrance was removed and the south booth reconfigured.

- 2000s: This work added a rounded front to the main stage, installed a full bar along the east side of the room, and constructed the inner and outer artist green rooms. The small stage that had been added on the west side of the floor was replaced with the existing bar.

#### **Service Area**

- 1959: This work installed a one-hour fire rated wall for corridor wall.
- By 1959 the restrooms in the northeast corner had been installed.
- 1989: The restrooms in the northeast corner were remodeled and a women’s restroom added.
- Undated: A T-bar drop ceiling was installed throughout these spaces to cover the mechanical systems. Fluorescent lighting fixtures were installed as part of this work.

#### **Extant Features and Spaces from the 1917 and the 1939 Remodel**

The following are the spaces and features built in 1939 to create the Streamline Moderne styled Showbox:

##### West façade

- Ledge along parapet and at the step-in parapet height (1939 remodel)
- Horizontal window band including outer modernistic frame (1939 remodel)
- Stucco wall finish providing a streamlined wall surface and background to the raised ledge and window band emphasizing the horizontality of the facade composition (1939 remodel, reclad in the 1990s-2000s)

##### Front entrance

- Engaged columns creating a “scalloped” north wall that turn the corner from First Avenue into the main entrance and support the overall Streamline Moderne styling (1939 remodel)
- Entrance door reeded surrounds (exterior and interior) support the overall Streamline Moderne styling (1939 remodel)
- Three doorways, including the original north wood transom (1939 remodel)
- Flared front foyer and the rounded front of the associated storefront (1424) (1939 remodel)

##### Passageway

- The two round columns along the east side and the column at the east end of the ticket window (1939 remodel)
- The three easternmost steps in the cheek wall on the south side of the passageway and including the decorative moldings (1939 remodel)
- Open visual connection with the associated curved storefront (1424) (1939 remodel)
- The stairway within the 1424 First Avenue storefront descending to the lower level (1917 construction)
- Ticket window and counter, including the Streamline Moderne inspired horizontal bands along the outer edge of the counter and the curved corners (1939 remodel)
- Ramps along the passageway (retained below added stairs) (1939 remodel)

##### Performance volume

- Columns, including the associated floor lighting and support the overall Streamline Modern styling (1939 remodel)
- Crib flooring and heavy timbers built for market use that supported the change in use to a second floor dance hall use (1917 construction)
- Dance floor, maple flooring and raised system (1939 remodel)
- Tiered seating, including several of the original curved walls and metal hand railings separating levels (1939 remodel)

- Domed central ceiling vault and the two original pendant light fixtures (1939 remodel)
- Roof trusses spanning the dance floor and providing the vertical clearance for the domed central ceiling (1939 remodel)
- Round stairs transitioning from the dance floor up to the tiered seating and support the overall Streamline Moderne styling (1939 remodel)
- Curved proscenium walls flanking the stage and support the overall Streamline Modern styling (1939 remodel)
- Fly loft behind the stage, including the notable graffiti related to artists having a significant impact on the local and national music scene (1939 remodel)

East facade

- Load bearing brick walls (1917 construction)
- Multi-lite windows (1917 construction)

## **SIGNIFICANCE**

Founded as the Show Box in 1939 in the former Central Public Market building (constructed in 1917), the Showbox at the Market has hosted a diverse array of musicians entertaining generations of fans throughout its nearly 80 years as an entertainment venue. Historian and author Peter Blecha highlights the breadth of music showcased at the Showbox over the years:

From the Jazz Age to the hip-hop and grunge eras the storied ballroom has featured shows by touring icons like Duke Ellington, Muddy Waters, and the Ramones, and up-and-comers like Coldplay, Katy Perry, Moby, Lady Gaga, and Lorde, as well as concerts by homegrown talents ranging from the burlesque queen Gypsy Rose Lee to Merrilee Rush, the Sonics, Pearl Jam, Soundgarden, and Macklemore.

Local tavern and theater owner Michael Lyons (1891–1965) opened the Showbox in the former Central Public Market, a 1917 building on First Avenue, just across the street from the Pike Place Public Market. The performance venue has weathered ups and downs, opening and closing over the years. But those very ups and downs prodded the building’s owners to continually revamp the venue’s image and offerings over the years, hosting emerging musicians and talents and promoting new sounds and ideas.

### **Neighborhood Context**

First Avenue and the neighborhood around the Pike Place Public Market developed as Seattle’s commercial development extended north from the city’s original city center, present-day Pioneer Square. First and Second avenues become the primary commercial corridors for the growing city. Before the end of the 19th century, regrading efforts, led by city engineers like R.H. (Reginald Heber) Thompson (1856–1947), were in full swing to level the downtown area to create a more easily navigable area. The first regrade Thompson tackled was along First Avenue, from Pike Street to Denny Way, in 1898. A regrade of Pike and Pine streets, from Second Avenue to Broadway, followed in 1903. Commercial construction soon followed on these flat streets. Early 20th century buildings constructed on First Avenue included the Leland Hotel (1902), Pythian Temple (1901), Rosenberg Block/Livingston Hotel (1901), Stewart Hotel (1902) and the Smith Block (1906).

In 1907, Seattle’s first public market formally opened in the neighborhood, between First and Western avenues and Virginia and Pike streets. New buildings, such as the Sanitary Market building (1909) were constructed to house the growing market. The market’s early success and

popularity with shoppers led real estate developers and business entrepreneurs to develop property adjacent to the market for additional market space as well as housing and theaters. Streetcar lines easily brought shoppers into the neighborhood who, once there, could partake in the various amenities—from taverns and theaters to food stalls—which sprang up around the market. The construction of a comfort station at the foot of Pike Street near the Leland Hotel in 1908 made it a comfortable stop for streetcar passengers. By the early 1920s, Pike Place had established itself as a regional market with over 175 tenants selling food goods and specialty products.

As the city prospered from the Klondike Gold Rush, downtown continued to expand and First Avenue and Pike Street became a busy spot for markets and hotels. The Elliott Hotel/Hahn Hotel (1908), Kalem Block (1909), Hotel Loftus (1909), and Triangle Building (1909) were all constructed soon after the public market opened. The boom in hotel construction near the market reflected a larger trend city-wide as Seattle hosted the Alaska Yukon Pacific Exposition (AYPE) of 1909 and the city's population grew. During the years of the Great Depression, many of the hotels and residential hotels near Pike Place provided affordable housing during a time of unemployment and under-employment.

### **Original Construction and Use**

Construction was underway on the building in 1916, but was not completed and ready for occupancy until mid-1917. An advertisement in *The Seattle Daily Times* announced the new building's use as the Central Public Market – “the real public market of Seattle” – competing with the Public Market Center (Pike Place Public Market) just steps away from the new building. Mr. H. P. Voght was the first manager of the new market. Set up as a large, public market, the building offered market space for individual tenants to set up shop to sell their own goods, from fresh produce and baked goods to meat, fish, dairy, and canned goods. The building was across the alley from the Bon Marche Store at Second Avenue and Pike Street. C.H. (Charles) Frye (1858-1940) was listed as the building's owner. A brief article in the *Seattle Daily Bulletin* lists H. Buchinger (likely Theobald Buchinger) of Frye & Co. as the designer for the new market building, with contractor Martin Schuchle. See Figures 90-95.

Charles Frye arrived in Seattle with his wife, Emma Lamb Frye (d. 1934), and his brother, Frank, in 1888 and soon established a meatpacking business with several meat markets in the city. Charles and Frank set up their first meat market on Columbia Street between First and Second avenues. Family friend Charles Bruhn joined the brothers in business in 1891, forming Frye-Bruhm Meat Packing Co., and established their main location on Airport Way S near S Walker Street. The Fries bought out Bruhn in the late 1890s and expanded their business. The Fries were incredibly successful and prospered from their meatpacking business as well as diverse business interests in real estate, industry, agriculture, ranches, gold mines, and oil wells. During their lifetime, Charles and Emma amassed a significant art collection. They did not have any children and after their deaths, Emma in 1934 and Charles in 1940, the Fries provided for a free public art museum to showcase their great collection. The museum, the Frye Art Museum, opened to the public in 1952 and continues to operate and share the Fries' art.

Once the building was up and running by summer 1917, early tenants included the Central Meat Co., Central Butter Store, Washington Fruit & Vegetable Co., Farmers' Vegetable Department, and Lucky Strike Fish Co. By October 1917, Central Public Market had even more tenants, including Bay City Meat Co., General Baking Co., Mrs. St. Arnaud Pickles and Delicatessen, Central Fruit Store, and Help-Yourself Grocery Co. Western Delicatessen and American Grocery were also tenants in the buildings in the late 1910s. By the mid-to late-1920s, the Central Public Market was actively advertising to fill vacant stalls in their building.



### **Show Box - Remodel and Early Cabaret Days**

Veteran theater owner Michael (Mike) Lyons redeveloped the former market building as a dine and dance club, opening to audiences on July 24, 1939, after a \$100,000 remodel with a diverse program including swing harpist George Lyons; Warner and Margie with their dancing dog, Mona; comedy act Ray and Bee Gorman, ballroom artists Earl, Fortune, and Pope; Lucille Hughes “The Blonde Magician;” and dancer Virginia Pope. Joe Daniels booked the performers and Jack Russell emceed. Upon its opening, Lyons declared,

*We are giving Seattle something entirely new in the way of popular entertainment. We have made the Show Box one of the finest cafes of its kind in the country...*

Born in New York City in 1891 to Russian-born parents, Michael Lyons arrived in Seattle in 1911. After arriving in Seattle, Lyons (a former circus-performer), operated a tavern in Pioneer Square before managing several movie houses (e.g. the Bison, the Circle, the Crown, the Playhouse, the Union, and the Victory). During this period, he married his wife Vern Fontaine in 1924. He then opened his namesake venue, Lyons Music Hall, in 1934 at 1409 First Avenue. Michael and Vern later divorced and Michael married Dorothy Hadley in 1936.

With the success of Lyons Music Hall, Lyons leased the building directly across First Avenue from his music hall. Lyons signed a long-term lease for the two-story building at 1414-22 First Avenue in September 1937. Lyons leased the building from owner William K. Greene for an amount totaling approximately \$75,000 over ten years. Remodeling of the property was quickly started to convert it into a cabaret and new retail spaces.

While planning his new and larger venue, Lyons traveled back east to New York and New Jersey to tour popular nightclubs, theaters, and ballrooms. The Riviera nightclub in Fort Lee, New Jersey, caught Lyons’ eye and was cited as the inspiration for his new venue. See Figure 103. Lyons hired architect Bjarne H. Moe (1904–1980), who was establishing his reputation as a theater designer in Seattle and the greater Pacific Northwest with his design for the Green Lake Theater (1937). Moe also had a reputation for helping clients modernize their properties, with evidence of this skill mentioned in a 1932 article in *The Seattle Daily Times*. In the article, Moe provided two different mock-ups of a simple wood-clad bungalow refaced with brick to completely modernize and refine the property. His eye for updating buildings continued with many of his theater remodels, including the Roman Theater in Red Lodge, Montana, the Capitol Theater in Walla Walla, and the Varsity Theatre and Show Box remodels in Seattle.

When the new theater opened as “The Show Box,” newspaper articles varied in reporting the number of seats for the new venue, with some reporting 1,000 and others 1,500 and 1,600. The club was praised for its lavish and deluxe interior, terraced with plush carpeting down to the dance floor. Modern metal furniture, fluorescent lighting, and air conditioning further set the new club apart. Indirect lighting adorned the vase-shaped columns and central dome. Other modern features included a large, electric organ, and a disappearing picture screen for 16mm film movies. In addition to enjoying the opening program described above, patrons danced the night away to Jimmy Murphy and his Musical Men—Ed Vollman, Hollis Eich, Cecil Ireland, George Garbor, Floyd Kelly, Ed Carey, Jr., Sherman Herrick, and Vern Strobel.

The *Argus* considered the theater a bright spot on First Avenue, which, at the time, had many places with “all the atmosphere of waterfront dives.” The *Argus* reporter went on to explain that while the Show Box was not sophisticated, its, “floor show was quality stuff, handsomely staged,

with pretty chorines in fresh, attractive costumes.” Patrons of the Show Box could dance for hours on the spring-action dance floors, with music on and the dance floor open from noon until 1am. The venue took off, and thanks to the bookings of Jim Daniels, soon had an array of exciting acts to impress guests. The variety of performances included burlesque dancer Sally Rand, who performed “fan and bubble dances, in nudity, discreetly befogged by dimmed blue light,” and whose silhouette was used by Lyons in advertising. Lyons received a slap on the wrist from the Seattle Theatre Censor Board for the racy Sally Rand ads as the board considered them “suggestive and objectionable.” Lyons only managed the Show Box for a few years before retiring in 1942 and moving to Sultan, Washington.

The Show Box featured many top American musical talents during the 1940s and 1950s, including performers such as Paul "The King of Jazz" Whiteman and his Orchestra, Louis Armstrong, Ted Lewis, Gene Austin and his Café Society Band, the Duke Ellington Orchestra, Eddie "The King of the Banjo" Peabody, Belle "The Ragtime Singer" Baker, Jimmy "The Schnoz" Durante, and Sammy "The Greatest Living Entertainer in the World" Davis Jr. See Figures 63-64. During this time, there were two separate, racially segregated musicians unions—the whites-only American Federation of Musicians (AFM) Local 76 and the predominately black AFM Local 493—with clear, although unofficial, boundaries on where performers took gigs. The Show Box occasionally bucked this system and hired African American performers, even though it was located within the boundaries of the AFM Local 76’s turf. Local African American performers included organist Melody Jones and Al Pierre's hot jazz band; and the Norm Hoagy and His Orchestra recorded a disc titled "Show Box Boogie" at the Show Box in 1952.

The Show Box also continued to showcase bawdy performers, hosting Mae West, Sally Rand, and Sophie “The Last of the Red Hot Mamas” Tucker. Seattle's own renowned burlesque queen Gypsy Rose Lee performed at the Show Box around 1946. Lee recounted to The Seattle Times nearly two decades later that "the club wasn't in the best part of town, but it was a fine showcase -- sort of a forerunner of today's plusher theater-night clubs.”

The Show Box entertained patrons for the next several years through the end of World War II and the late 1940s, save for a few closures due to enforced city-wide electrical blackouts. Despite the city’s prohibition on dance halls during this period, women were brought in to dance with the men, particularly servicemen during the war years. However, financial struggles resulted in the Show Box’s closure in 1949. The Show Box reopened in 1951 under new management – attorney George Baum, financier William Lemereaux, and cafe operator Pat Patton. Performers during the 1950s included the Mills Brothers, Peggy Lee, Dick Contino, the Lancers, Guy Mitchell, and Joni James. However, this new version of the Show Box was short-lived and the venue closed again in 1955.

### **Concert Venue – The Happening and Modern Productions Revolution**

In 1958, the owner of the building next door (then a hardware store) decided to demolish his building (1426-30 First Avenue). The Show Box shared a party wall with the building and upon its demolition, the north wall of the Show Box was left in a dangerous state prompting building officials to limit access to the Show Box. At this point, Michael M. Lyons sold the property to his son, Nathan Lyons, who constructed a new north wall for the building and then resold the property to his son, also Michael Lyons. The cabaret remained vacant, according to Polk’s Seattle City Directory, from 1956 to the early 1960s. The space reopened as Show Box Furniture by October 1961 but was vacant again by 1964. By 1967, the cabaret space reopened, once again hosting live performances and was listed in Polk’s Seattle City Directory as the Happening Teenage Nite Club (or Happening The Teenage Nite Club).

Seattle's Merrilee Rush & the Turnabouts opened The Happening on March 3, 1967, with a dance. The band rose in prominence the next year after landing in the Top 10 of Billboard's Hot 100 with their hit "Angel of the Morning." According to Peter Blecha, Other local bands got their shot too -- including the Sonics, Daily Flash, Brave New World, the Bandits, International Brick, Magic Fern, West Coast Natural Gas, and Peece. The room also attracted young crowds by importing up-and-coming California notables such as the Buffalo Springfield (with Steven Stills and Neil Young), the Music Machine, the Peanut Butter Conspiracy, and Country Joe & the Fish.

Despite the success with booking these groups, the Happening's management also booked acts that conflicted with their target demographic's taste preferences, like the Harry James Orchestra or Junior Wells's Chicago Blues Band. The Happening appears to have closed in 1972, with the night club still listed in Polk's Seattle City Directory through 1972 and Kenneth L. Legg listed as the manager in 1970.

By 1975, the Talmud Torah Hebrew Academy's bingo hall was in the former cabaret space. By the end of the decade, though, the promotional company Modern Productions—run by Mike Vraney, Jim Lightfoot, Carlo Scandiuzzi, and Terry Morgan—started renting the space to once again use it as a music venue. Modern Productions held its first gig in the theater, still known as the Talmud Torah, on September 8, 1979. British New Wave band, Magazine, headlined, with Dr. Albert and The Blackouts also playing. A review of Magazine's music in The Seattle Times the night before their performance call them "one of the last holdouts of Britain's New Wave."

Modern Productions quickly brought back the Showbox name for the venue and over the next several years hosted scores of Punk Rock/New Wave-era bands. They followed up the Magazine show with a benefit for The Rocket, a new music publication, with a show by the Dishrags. British bands like the Police, XTC, Fingerprintz, the Specials, Ultravox, 999, the Jam, Squeeze, the Psychedelic Furs, PIL, Dire Straits, and German singer Nina Hagen all performed on the Showbox stage. Great American acts soon followed, with Iggy Pop, the Ramones, Devo, X, Pere Ubu, and the Dead Kennedys helping make the Showbox the busiest rock concert hall in Seattle. In less than a year of opening, The Seattle Times rock critic, Patrick MacDonald, declared the Showbox "the most important rock hall in town." Modern Productions ran shows at other venues, like Washington Hall, the University of Washington's Ethnic Cultural Center, and the Norselander, but the Showbox's intimacy despite its capacity and "comfortable tackiness" made it the prime venue for the production company. The theater's original sprung dance floor saw lots of action in those days, with the crowd-surfing and pogo-dance ways of the punk scene. In addition to the edgy punk bands, Modern Productions Showbox also hosted a few legends at the Showbox, including: Muddy Waters, James Brown, and Toots and the Maytals.

Local bands also benefitted from the Showbox's success, with groups like the Blackouts, the Enemy, the Look, the Macs Band, the Dishrags, Red Dress, the Debbies, Solger, the Wipers, the Fastbacks, the Cowboys, the Pudz, the Fartz, the Refuzers, and the Accident playing shows in the up-and-coming venue. Bainbridge Island glam-metal band Malfunkshun, the first band of Mother Love Bone's frontrunner Andrew Wood, played the Showbox in 1982 and was a key forerunner to the area's grunge scene of the 1990s. Wood's Mother Love Bone bandmates, Stone Gossard and Jeff Ament went on to form Pearl Jam in 1990. Three bands (the Blackouts, the Debbies, and Solger) even got free rehearsal space for a time at the Showbox.

Despite the popularity of the Showbox, money was tight for Modern Productions, and the venue closed once again in 1985, save the occasional event or show. Its last music event for a number of years was a Northwest AIDS Foundation benefit on February 10, 1990, headlined by Mudhoney and featuring Common Language, the Killing Field, Adrian's Childhood, Dickless, Gas Huffer, and Coffin Break.

### **Seattle Improv & Showbox Comedy & Supper Club**

In 1990, the Showbox theater space was reopened as Budd Friedman's Seattle Improv comedy club, opening on October 25. Opening night featured Paul Reiser, Ellen DeGeneres, J.J. Wall, and Jeff Dunham. Other great comics that regaled audiences at the club included Garry Shandling, Dennis Miller, Paula Poundstone, and John Mulrooney. Barry Block took over the club in 1994, re-opening it as the all-ages Showbox Comedy and Supper Club, which featured a mixture of comedy, jazz, magic, hypnotism, hip-hop, R&B, electro-industrial, and gothic/industrial DJ shows. Block's comedy and supper club was short-lived and closed by 1996.

### **Showbox in the Market – Showbox**

In 1996, a new management team led by restaurateur Jeff Steichen took over the Showbox theater space. The Showbox Music Club launched at the beginning of 1996, with early shows by Hagfish, Lisa Loeb, Throwing Muses, and the Posies. Other big names that played in the Showbox during the late 1990s included Pearl Jam, Soundgarden, Elvis Costello, Los Lobos, and Erykah Badu. English band Coldplay played its first American show at the Showbox in February 2001. The Showbox also featured early performances by Katy Perry, Moby, Lady Gaga, and Lorde.

The success of the original Showbox location prompted management to open a second, larger Showbox location, the Showbox SoDo (1700 First Avenue S). With the addition of a second Showbox, the original location became known as the Showbox at the Market in 1997. National firm AEG Live acquired the lease for both Showbox venues in 2008. In 2014, to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the original Showbox, the theater's name was returned to the simplified Showbox, and the Green Room Lounge (opened in 2001) was named Kerns Music Shop in honor of the former music shop adjacent to the Showbox.

### **Show Box Building Retail**

Although the Show Box theater is the building's largest commercial space, the building features four street-level, ground floor retail spaces fronting First Avenue. These spaces have hosted a variety of tenants over the years, including restaurants, clothing stores, an arcade, and a music shop. The storefront addresses were 1414 (now 1416), 1416 (now 1418), 1418 (now 1420), and 1420 (now 1422), with storefronts listed by current address below. The addresses were changed in the late 1980s, between the 1985 and 1987-88 city directories. Key tenants included Kerns Music Shop, Amusement Center Arcade, and Unique Restaurant. These tenants, particularly the arcade and restaurant, helped anchor the building particularly as the Show Box opened and closed over the years.

### **1416 and 1418 First Avenue**

These storefronts were vacant until 1940, when Gordon Radio & Electric Warehouse Co. was listed in the city directory. Although separate storefronts, they frequently were operated by one business. These storefronts were listed as vacant again in 1941. The Amusement Center Arcade then moved in and was listed at this address (1416) in the 1943-44 city directory. The arcade continued to occupy the storefront until 1975. The arcade more specifically listed itself as showing

movies beginning in in 1976 and continued to be listed at the space until 1985. Albert R. Hawkins was listed as the arcade's manager in 1953.

By 1978, the two storefronts were operating as two separate businesses. Amusement Center Arcade continued to be in the storefront, at 1418. Venusian adult entertainment was listed at 1416 in the 1978 city directory, followed by Temple of Venus adult entertainment in 1980 and 1981.

Between the 1985 and 1987-88 city directories, the storefronts' addresses changed. Konstantin Mens Wear, retro clothing, was listed at 1416 (formerly 1414) and continued at this address until 1989. Insync Jewelry & Gifts was listed at 1418 (formerly 1416) and continued to be listed at this address until 1989. These storefronts were then vacant for the next several years, according to the city directory listings.

### **1420 First Avenue**

Local trombone player "Jumpin' Johnny" Kerns (1907-2006) opened Kerns Music Shop at 1418 First Avenue; the shop was listed there by 1942. Kerns sold instruments and records, rented out instruments to school kids, and offered private lessons. As a record shop, Kerns Music Shop was popular with a younger demographic. Kerns connections allowed him to arrange for noon-time appearances in his shop of performers in town to for shows at the neighboring Show Box or the grander Palomar Theater. Stars like Frank Sinatra, Harry James, Sarah Vaughan, and Nat King Cole supposedly performed a couple songs in Kerns' shop, to the delight of his young patrons. Kerns' clients included musicians from the house bands of the Spanish Castle Ballroom and Parker's Ballroom, two of the largest dancehalls in the city. In an interview with historian Peter Blecha, Kerns' described one his proudest memories as meeting young Quincy Jones (b. 1933) as he came in to buy his "first" horn. Kerns moved out by 1949.

The storefront then housed the Arcade Jewelry Store until 1951, followed by Leslie's Gifts between 1987 and 1994.

### **1422 First Avenue**

By 1941, Russell's Restaurant, run by F. Russell Dolloff, occupied the storefront immediately south of the Show Box entrance and marquee. Russell's was listed in the storefront until the 1943-44 city directory. By 1948, Unique Restaurant (also Unique Grill & Restaurant) occupied the storefront. Unique continued to occupy the space until 1985. In the 1987-88 city directory, Genghis Khan Restaurant occupied the storefront, then listed as 1422 First Avenue. As of 2018, Genghis Khan is still in the space.

### **Seattle's Music Scene and Comparisons**

Seattle's music scene is long and storied, from the jazz scene on Jackson Street to the counter-cultural grunge era of the 1980s and 1990s. Although geographically isolated, according to author and former pop music coordinator with The Seattle Times, Paul de Barros, "Seattle has never been as musically isolated as most people imagine." The city stood at the center of the largest vaudeville circuit in the nation by 1910, with Alexander Pantages's network of theaters. The city's first official theater, Squire's Opera House, opened in 1879 on First Avenue S, between S Washington and S Main streets, but was surrounded by other, informal venues such as Plummer's Hall, Yesler's Hall, and Yesler's Pavilion. As the city grew, so did the number of vaudeville and live entertainment venues. These types of programs continued to flourish the early years of the 20th century, but waned with the introduction of motion pictures and then "talkies." The first full-length commercial film with sound shown in Seattle was "The Jazz Singer" on

December 30, 1927, at the Blue Mouse Theater at 1421 Fifth Avenue. Many of the early vaudeville venues converted to movie theater use or shuttered their doors. The ritzier live show venues continued to thrive, during the 1930s and 1940s, as did the dinner and dancing clubs, like the Show Box's cabaret.

As the rock-n-roll era dawned in the 1950s, the ballrooms of the 1930s and 1940s declined. Nightclubs continued to flourish, though, with jazz bands and scrip that patrons could buy to trade for liquor, the clubs' attempt at skirting illegal liquor sales at dance halls. Dance halls like the Show Box, Trianon, and the Spanish Castle (in Fife) provided a nightly escape for guests. However, with the rise of the jukebox and television, dance halls with live music also declined. Both the Show Box and the Trianon closed in the mid-1950s. The Spanish Castle held on until the mid-1960s, but was demolished in 1968. Dancing remained popular, just not at the ballroom-scale of previous decades, as dancing to the latest music could happen at any tavern with a jukebox.

The 1960s brought folk, pop, and more rock music to Seattle's music scene. The year The Happening opened in the former Show Box, 1969, the Seattle Pop Festival was held (a week after the first Woodstock). Over 50,000 fans flooded a private campground to see Led Zeppelin, the Doors, the Byrds, the Guess Who, Ike and Tina Turner, Chicago, the Youngbloods, Vanilla Fudge, Ten Years After, Chuck Berry, and Bo Diddley. The Eagles Hall, the fraternal organization's headquarters in Seattle (700 Union Street), became a prime location for rock shows, first rented out in 1967. However, the Eagles Hall alienated fans when it banned smoking and making out on the premises and closed in 1972.

### **Show Box Comparisons**

The Show Box witnessed a range of live entertainment, from burlesque shows to improv comedy, swooning jazz to distortion-filled grunge, and jitterbug swing to pogo dancing. Although other venues in the city have hosted the types of performances held at the Show Box over the years, few have had the same combination of performances with the same capacity. The following highlights a few comparisons to the Show Box, demonstrating the venue's singularity.

Popular cabaret venues in Seattle during the 1910s and 1920s were the Rathskeller Orchestra and Cabaret (1110 Second Avenue) and the Palace Hippodrome (1022 Second Avenue). In the year Mike Lyons opened the Show Box, only one cabaret was listed in the city directory – the Caballero, managed by Chris Reed, at 717 Pike Street. The Caballero was open by 1939 and continued to operate at this location until the 1970s. However, unlike the larger Show Box, the Caballero only had a seating capacity of 350. The Caballero does not appear to have had a dance floor like the Show Box and by 1972 was hosting topless dancing, rather than the edgy music performances occurring at The Happening in the Show Box. See Figure 86.

The 1940 city directory lists the Show Box under "Dancing Halls and Pavilions" reflecting its nature of providing both cabaret style entertainment and a dance floor. Eight other halls were listed that year, including Lyons' own Lyons Music Hall as well as the Avalon Ball Room (1017 Stewart Street), Crescent Dance Hall (second floor of 1512 Sixth Avenue), Everstate Club (12054 Fremont Avenue N), Lockhart Inn (E 115th and Bothell Way), Faurot's (1214 E Pike Street), Tent Dance Inc. (719 ½ Pike Street), and the Trianon (218-222 Wall). Into the 1940s, many of these places continued and others arrived on the scene, including Chubby's Old Time Dance (1431 First Avenue, in the Economy Building).

The Trianon opened in downtown Seattle, at the corner of Wall Street and Third Avenue, in May 1927. The two-story building took up half a city block and was built for ballroom use. The venue

showcased live bands, many of them local, for patrons to dance the night away. When it opened, the Trianon boasted the largest dance floor in the West with a capacity of 5,000. A second story balcony, overlooking Third Avenue, allowed guests to take a break from dancing to observe activities out on the street or sneak away for privacy. The Trianon struggled to break even over the years and eventually had to cut down their daily dances to Saturday nights only. The venue closed in 1956 and became a discount house. The building now functions as office space.

Washington Hall (153 14th Avenue) was constructed in 1908 for the Danish Brotherhood; local architect Victor Voorhees designed the simple building and Hans Pederson constructed it. Located in Seattle's Central District, the building was more than a meeting hall, social and cultural center, and boarding facility for newly arriving immigrants; the brotherhood opened the building as a dance hall and performing arts venue. Washington Hall has been jam-packed with events since it opened, hosting theatrical productions, dances, and even boxing matches. Like the Showbox, it hosted jazz great Duke Ellington. And like the Showbox, Washington Hall was also booked by the promotional company, Modern Productions. The Showbox was the larger venue for Modern Productions' bookings. From 1978-1998, the non-profit On the Boards rented Washington Hall and booked numerous shows. Washington Hall saw many of the same bands as the Showbox over the years. Today, Washington Hall is a Seattle Landmark and National Register-listed building. It was acquired by Historic Seattle in 2009 and has been fully rehabilitated.

The Eagles Hall/Auditorium (1416 Seventh Avenue/700 Union Street), was constructed in 1925 for use by the Fraternal Order of Eagles Aerie No. 1. Local architect Henry Bittman designed the terra cotta-clad eight-story theater and apartment building. In early 1967, Overall Cooperative Structure (OCS) began booking rock shows in the fraternal lodge; Boyd Grafmyre, a UW drama major, took over booking the space after OCS went out of business later that year. Legends like Janis Joplin, Steve Miller, The Grateful Dead, The Doors, Chicago, Richard Berry, Pink Floyd, and Duran Duran all performed in the Eagles Hall. The Eagles Hall's tenure as a rock venue was short, ending its run as the "primary psychedelic temple" in 1972. The building was renovated in 1995 as the new home of the ACT Theater (A Contemporary Theater).

### **Architect and Architectural Style**

The building's original architect is listed as H. Buchinger, but the H is likely a typo as the only Buchingers listed in the city directories during this time were architect Theobald Buchinger (1866-1940) and his extended family. The 1939 remodel to create the Show Box was designed by architect Bjarne H. Moe (1904-1980).

### **Theobald Buchinger**

Theobald Buchinger (1866-1940) was born in Vienna, Austria, but immigrated to the United States with his family in 1886. They settled in Washington Territory and Buchinger, who had trained at the Vienna Polytechnic University, established a career as a draftsman before forming his own architectural practice. He first partnered with architect Paul Bergfeld in 1899, but they parted ways after a few years. He then formed a short-lived partnership with Alfred Breitung in 1905. Together they designed several large projects for the Seattle Catholic Archdiocese. Their partnership ended in 1907 and then Buchinger worked on his own. He formed a brief partnership with Louis L. Mendel in 1924 and then engineer Robert M. Thorne in 1929. He was elected President of the Washington State Society of Architects in 1926. Buchinger passed away in 1940. Photo from The Seattle Daily Times, 12/12/1926, page 32.

### **Bjarne H. Moe**

Bjarne Holten Moe was born in Norway in 1904 to parents Ole B. and Martha Moe. The Moe family immigrated to the United States in 1907 and then lived throughout the Pacific Northwest, in both the U.S. and Canada. The family eventually settled in Everett, where Bjarne (called Barney) graduated from high school. He eventually attended the University of Washington between 1925 and 1928, where he was a member of the Washington Atelier Club for architecture students and the Alpha Delta Chapter of the Pi Kappa Phi fraternity. Moe did not complete his degree, but started to work as a draftsman for the architectural firm Shack, Young & Meyers. Moe used his skills as a draftsman for several local architects, including Frederick Anhalt and Robert Reamer, Sherwood Ford and Charles Stanley, and Wenatchee-based architect Ludwig Solberg. Moe married Vivian Wright in 1930; they divorced in 1944. Together the Moes had two daughters, Karen and Kristen.

Moe began to garner a reputation as a theater designer while working for Robert Reamer of the Metropolitan Building Company with two key projects: Spokane's Majestic Fox Theater (1931) and the Fox Theater (1931) in Billings, Montana. Moe struck out on his own in 1932 and went on to design many theaters, new construction and remodels, around the Pacific Northwest, including:

- Guild 45th Theatre remodel (1933, extant), Seattle
- Roman Theater remodel (1935, extant), Red Lodge, Montana
- Huff Theater (ca. 1936, demolished 1997), Coeur d'Alene, Idaho
- Green Lake Theater (1937, extant), Seattle
- Liberty Theater (1937, extant), Ellensburg
- Ritz Theater (1937, extant), Ritzville
- Capitol Theater remodel (1938, extant), Walla Walla
- Bungalo Theater (1939, demolished), St. Maries, Idaho
- Lake City Theater (ca. 1939, extant), Seattle
- Show Box Theater & Cabaret (1939), Seattle
- Renton Theater (1939, extant), Renton
- Liberty Theater (1939, extant), Dayton
- Varsity Theatre remodel (1940, extant), Seattle
- Empire Theater (1940, extant), Tekoa
- Roxy Theater (1941, extant), Bremerton
- New Liberty Theater (1947, unknown), Lynden
- Coy's Highline Theater (1947, unknown), Highline
- Crest Theater (1949, extant), Shoreline
- Ridgemont Theater remodel (1967, demolished), Seattle

It appears that Moe's last theater project may have been remodel work on the Ridgemont Theater (1922; remodeled 1947 and 1967; demolished 2001) at Greenwood Avenue N and N 78th Street, which featured an applied metal façade with a basket-weave pattern. He passed away at the age of 75 in Seattle on April 29, 1980.

### **Streamline Moderne**

Moe designed the remodel of the building at 1426 First Avenue for use as "The Show Box" in the Streamline Moderne style. A popular architectural style during the 1930s and 1940s, it is a later version of Art Deco. As its name suggests, Streamline Moderne is a sleek, modern aesthetic, emphasized with horizontal massing, asymmetrical facades, smooth concrete or stucco exterior finishes, and horizontal bands. Curved corners, ribbons of windows (often metal), glass brick, porthole windows, and cantilevered awnings are often key features on Streamline Moderne



buildings. The Showbox's exterior features Streamline Moderne elements with its smooth west facade and horizontal banding, plus curved entrance to the theater. The Showbox's interior retains many of its original Streamline Moderne elements, with its vase-like columns, centered dome, and sleek curved walls separating the terraced dining areas overlooking the dance floor have sleek curved walls.

In addition to being used on new construction, this architectural style was used in building remodels, either to simply modernize their appearance or completely alter the look in anticipation of a new use, as was the case with Moe's design for the Showbox. Moe designed at least three other theater remodels in Seattle using the Streamline Moderne style: the 45th Street Theatre (Guild Theater) in Wallingford, the Varsity Theater in the University District, and the Ridgemont Theater in Lake City. The 45th Street Theatre (Guild 45th Theatre) was constructed between 1920 and 1921. Moe designed a substantial remodel of the property in 1933. New design elements included a stepped parapet and new structural elements to create an Art Deco facade. The Varsity Theater was constructed in 1921 as the Meister Building, which was designed by architect William White. Moe's remodel for the building, which occurred in 1940, largely kept the original terra cotta facade, but added a smooth-faced upper story with streamline details to accommodate the new theater use. The Ridgemont Theater was constructed between 1920 and 1921 and it appears it was remodeled by the 1940s in the Streamline Moderne style. Moe completed a subsequent remodel on the building in 1967, updating the Streamline Moderne facade of the 1940s. Another theater which received a Streamline Moderne facade remodel was the Uptown Theatre (SIFF Cinema Uptown). The Uptown Theatre was constructed in 1926, and its exterior had been updated with a Moderne marquee by 1954.

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**The features of the Landmark to be preserved include:** *The exterior of the building; and the following portions of the interior: (a) the entire second floor; and (b) the First Avenue main entry lobby (including but not limited to the adjoining bar space), which ascends to the second floor.*

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