

ATLANTA SPOTLIGHT: HORIZON THEATRE COMPANY AND EMORY UNIVERSITY

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## The Pantages:

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# RENOVATING YOUR THEATER SPACE

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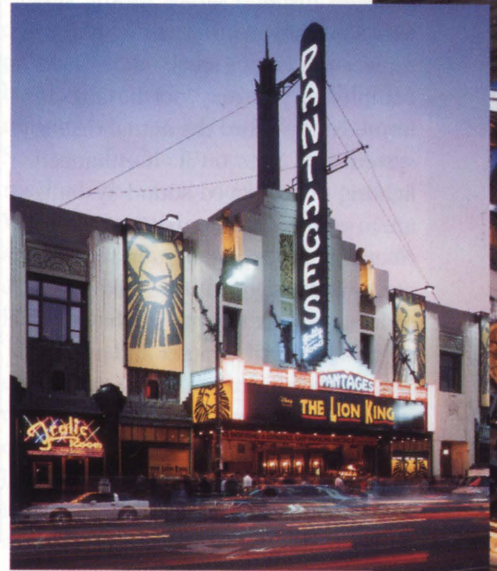


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# Fit For A King

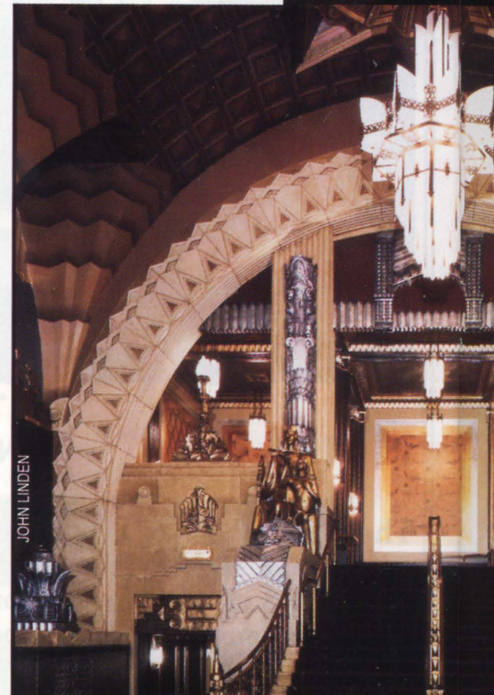
The Pantages Theatre, Sachs Morgan's third project with Nederlander and Disney, has become the crown jewel of Hollywood's theater scene.



By Derek  
Armstrong

When Sachs lovingly refers to Sachs as a Disney-Nederlander "triple whammy." In a Studio of New York began refurbishing L.A.'s Pantages Theatre for the West Coast premiere of *The Lion King*, it had some idea what the principal clients had in mind. That's because the design studio, led by the husband-wife team of Roger Morgan and Ann Sachs, had worked with the Nederlander Organization, the renowned theater owner, and its star client, the Walt Disney Co., on two previous projects. Within the past few years, Sachs Morgan has restored Broadway's Lunt-Fontanne Theatre for *Beauty And The Beast* and The Palace (*Beast's* former home) for *Aida*—both Disney shows in Nederlander venues.

The Pantages—a movie and vaudeville house built in 1930, which hosted the Academy Awards from 1949 to 1959—underwent a year-long renovation starting in September 1999, which Sachs Morgan painstakingly chronicled through photographs. It's the third in what



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Three different views of the glorious Pantages Theatre interior show off a year's worth of hard work.

the glow to these great palaces of live entertainment. "They're like aging stars," says Sachs, a former stage actress. "You've got the face, you just need to perk it up. Understand that we weren't building the Pantages—essentially, we're talking about the biggest housekeeping job you could imagine."

And Disney has been impressed, having selected the 2,700-seat theater from several contenders for its West Coast production of *The Lion King*, currently scheduled to run through the end of September. The way Disney has saluted Nederlander's ongoing commitment to restoring his theaters is enough to posit a trend—give your theater an overhaul, and you'll be able to woo the bigger clients. That is, if you have the money. Nederlander spent nearly \$10 million on the

Pantages renovations, about twice as much as he had once envisioned. "If you're going to do it, you might as well do it right," Nederlander told the *Los Angeles Times* in the weeks before the theater's gala reopening last October, which marked its 70th anniversary.

All that money has made the place dazzle, giving delighted *Lion King* patrons an eyeful, from the exterior box office lobby to the exquisite main lobby to the grandiose auditorium itself, nearly every visible surface of which was repainted under the direction of Sachs Morgan. A team of nearly 300, including a variety of contractors, painters and other restoration specialists (see sidebar), followed Roger Morgan's guidelines for recreating the original glamour of the building, down to the most minute of authentic details.





# Renovating Your Theater Space

It took some detective work to determine the original colors of long-faded paint, much of it hidden for years by architectural add-ons built in the ensuing decades. But many were ascertained through an understanding of how paint oxidizes, plus some clues from original photography and design notes. Uncovering

the secret flourishes of the once and future crown jewel of Hollywood was an incredible experience, says Morgan, much like “discovering King Tut’s tomb.” When the renovation crew poked through a dropped ceiling that had been hiding the ornate, three-dimensional original, “you saw at last how it was meant to be,” he says.

When the last brush stroke lifted from the last surface, the numbers were staggering. Workers from Evergreene Painting Studios used over 1,800 gallons of paint to coat more than 84,000 square feet of gold, silver, copper and bronze leafing, consuming nearly 31,000 worker hours. The renovation team laid 7,260 square yards of new carpeting, installed

## Pantages Renovation

Interior Design & Architectural Lighting by  
Sachs Morgan Studio

### Historical Restoration/Renovation by

Spectra Company  
Downey Electric

Henry P. Chow Structural Engineering  
Ed Grush General Contractor, Inc.  
Evergreene Painting Studios, Inc.  
George & Goldberg  
Frank Lawrence Electric  
L.H. Hajnal-Electrical Engineering  
Litemakers, Inc.

Matt Plaskoff Construction  
McKay Conant Brook Acoustical  
SPF/Architects

Sun West Plumbing  
Thermal Comfort, Inc.

Wexco International Corp.-Construction Mngt.  
Wong & Gotama-Mechanical Plumbing Engineering



Evergreene Painting Studios spent a total of 31,000 worker hours retouching every surface of the interior, including the intricate ceiling, some 40 feet off the auditorium floor.