



NEWS RELEASE

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Phoenix Orpheum Theatre, Arizona's Most Beautiful Theater, turns 90



PHOENIX (Jan. 2, 2019) — Phoenix's historic Orpheum Theatre, deemed "Arizona's Most Beautiful Theater" by Architectural Digest turns 90 on Jan. 5, 2019.

Opening in 1929 amid much fanfare, the Orpheum's Spanish-baroque architecture, ornate features and atmospheric setting attracted visitors from near and far. In 1929, the theater offered 1,800 seats and an early form of air conditioning, which made it a place for entertainment and refuge from the desert heat.

Designed by architects Lescher & Mahoney, the theatre was built for \$750,000 by J. E. Rickards and Harry Nace. The last major construction project in Phoenix before the Great Depression, Phoenix's Orpheum Theatre was the only theater between Los Angeles and Denver able to accommodate traveling vaudeville shows. Since opening, the venue welcomed some of the entertainment industry's most notable celebrities including Mae West, Henry Fonda and Lauren Bacall.

The iconic venue continues to play an integral role in Arizona's arts and culture community. In recent years, notable celebrities to have graced its stage include Carol Channing, Jimmy Fallon, Lewis Black, Chris Botti, Kate Mulgrew, Barack Obama, David Feherty, Joe Jackson, Jerry Riopelle and many others.

Throughout its existence, Phoenix's Orpheum Theatre changed names and ownership all while providing entertainment to various audiences in different capacities. Among its many uses, the venue had a long run serving as a Spanish language movie theater. By the 1980s, the theater needed major repairs and the city of Phoenix purchased the property and placed it on the National Register of Historic Places prior to embarking on a 12-year, \$14 million

restoration project. Today the venue is downtown Phoenix's oldest operating theater which regularly hosts events for Theater League, Phoenix Opera and Phoenix Ballet in addition to hosting off-Broadway touring shows and Silent Sunday movies featuring music provided by the mighty Wurlitzer piper organ.

The nonprofit support group, *Friends of the Orpheum Theatre*, hosts FREE public tours monthly and other events such as Downstairs at the Orpheum jazz concerts and Orpheum Ghost Tours to raise funding for school programs and venue upgrades.

Owned and operated by the city of Phoenix, the venue is still making headlines today, in addition to the [Architectural Digest](#) (AD) recognition, the Orpheum has received recent awards from Trip Advisor, Phoenix New Times and Best Things Arizona. The theater has been featured on HGTV, FOX10, KJZZ, Univision, PHXTV and other notable news outlets.

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Photos:

