

The fourth theatre of the group to be built within a year, the Finsbury Park Astoria completes a circuit of deluxe houses designed to equal in grandeur any theatre in the United Kingdom

By W. H. MOORING

THE Astoria, Finsbury Park, which opened on September 29, may well claim to be the last word in construction, comfort and entertainment. Its completion marks the crowning point of a most ambitious scheme, in which it was the definite intention of the board of directors of the Astoria chain to open in Greater London four of the largest and most up-to-date super-cinemas in the United Kingdom, if not in Europe, within twelve months. The already-opened sister theatres of the Finsbury Park Astoria are those at Brixton, Old Kent Road and Streatham.

The theatre, which occupies an extraordinarily fine island site at the corner of Seven Sisters Road and Isledon Road, overlooks one of the busiest traffic centers in London. Bus routes from every part of North London pass its door, and it is exactly opposite the Finsbury Park underground station, and only 20 minutes from the London West End. Full advantage has been taken of the island site to permit of properly supervised car parks on either side of the building.

The front elevation of the theatre is definitely modern—in fact, almost severe in its simplicity of line. The facia has been carried out in cream and dull glazed tiles, which at night will be most strikingly illuminated. Although ample provision has been made on the frontage for advertising spaces, they are part of the original design, and will in no way detract from the beauty and simplicity of the facade.

The vast interior has been designed on Spanish lines, and throughout the whole theatre this beautiful atmosphere has been created and maintained.

Past the pay-boxes, which are fitted with the most up-to-date and efficient change and ticket giving machines, the

**THE FINAL LINK IN LONDON'S
CHAIN OF ASTORIA CINEMAS**

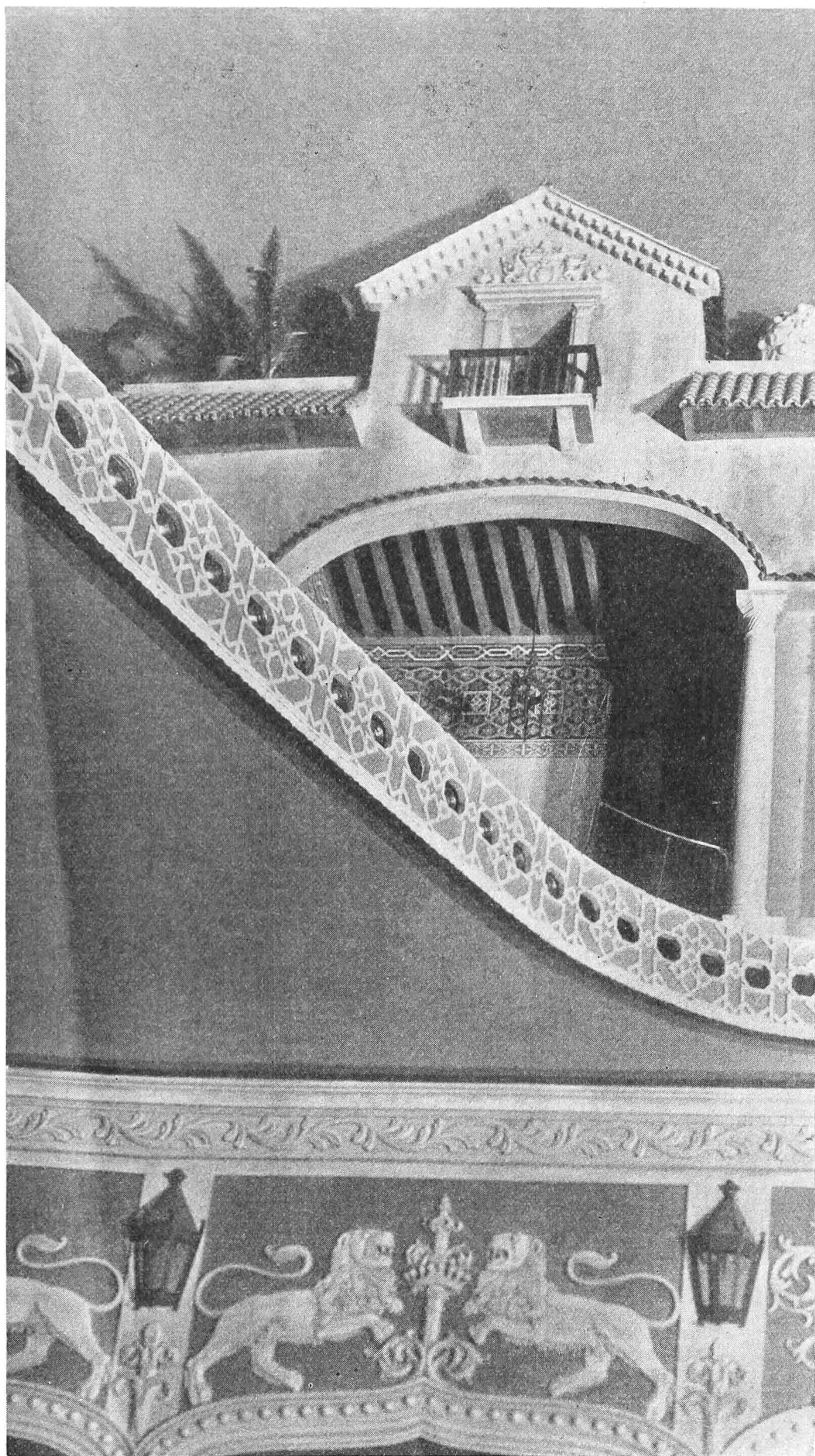
patrons enter the spacious vestibule which has been designed in the form of an octagonal courtyard. The whole is commanded by a central fountain of dull green and gold mosaic, standing on eight pillars. Above, a balcony with decorative iron railings overlooks the fountain, and high above is the domed ceiling with its brilliant scarlet and blue mosaic. An unusual effect has been obtained by the inclusion of little kiosks for the sale of iced drinks, chocolates and cigarettes in the walls of the courtyard.

UP the stairs, the circle patron will approach the balcony seats by way of the promenade leading to the tea lounge, vast in its area and daring in its decorative scheme. Moorish architecture is suggested by the windows, whilst the ceiling is of solid gold. The balcony approach gives a foretaste of the wonders of the auditorium. The ceiling is deep blue "sky" whilst the fringe of quaint tiles breaking the wall above one's head emphasizes the courtyard impression. Through artistic wall apertures one can glimpse to the right the sun-bathed hills rolling away in the distance, whilst ahead one overlooks the little town of which one now feels almost a part—a Spanish town, with warmth and splendor and romance. Then through the modern swing doors to the circle.

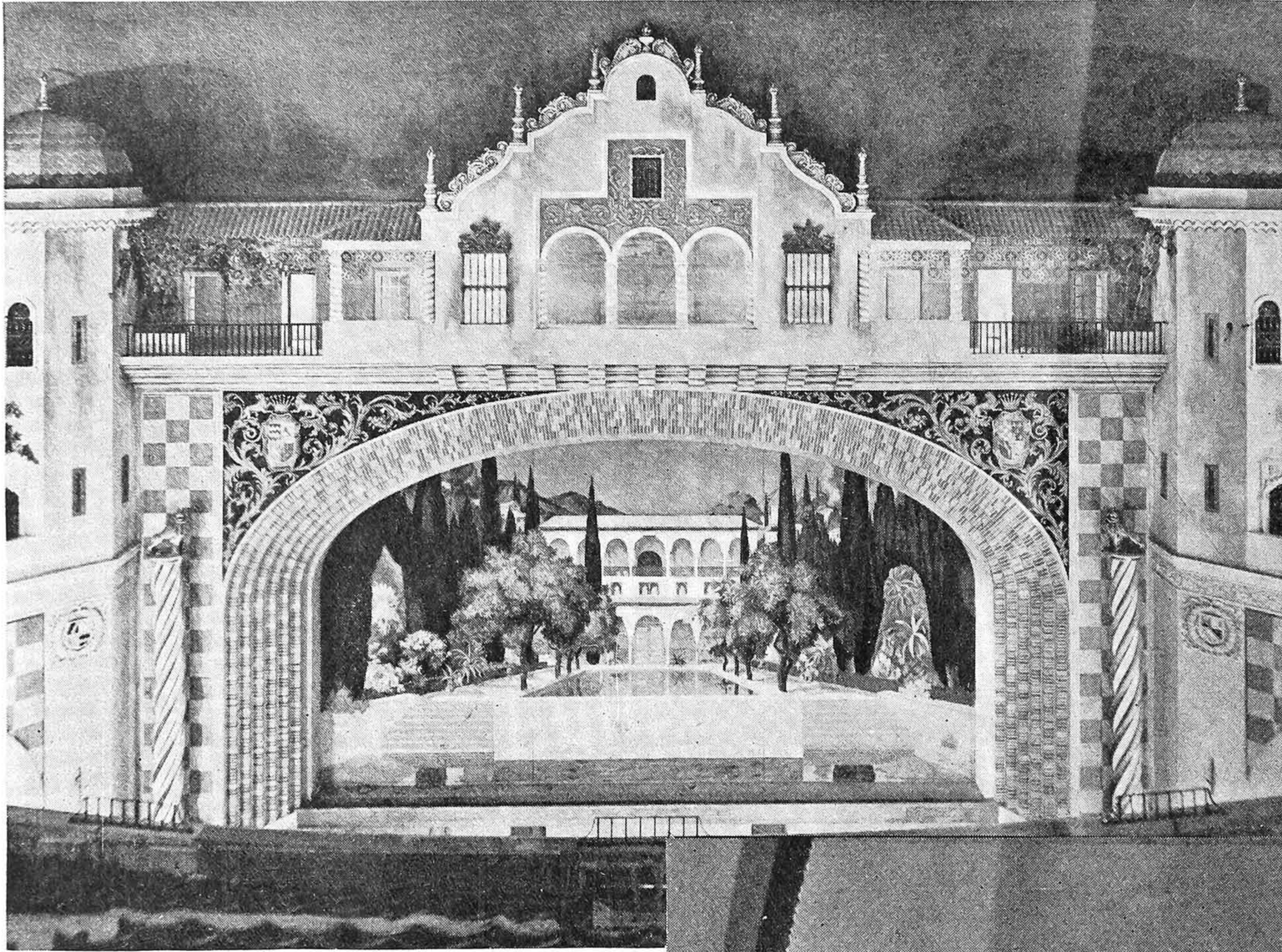
Stalls patrons descend half-dozen broad shallow steps to the vast waiting hall—and thence to the stalls, where all the wonders of this lovely Spanish landscape theatre await them.

The auditorium is novel in its conception. The roof span is claimed to be the greatest in the world. Above stretches the Mediterranean blue sky, where stars twinkle or the sun shines, according to the will of the chief electrician. When the fire curtain (which is part of the landscape effect) is lowered, the illusion is complete. Two great old stone towers flank the proscenium arch right and left, joined above by a realistic upper story of a quaint turreted building complete with windows (with green shutters) and practical doors which lead on to the artistic iron railed balcony. To right and left of the proscenium arch there straggle away, in uneven line, the brilliant roofs of quaint old-fashioned houses.

FASCINATING little stone stairs, leading to "behind the scenes," appear here and there. Miniature courtyards and fountains, trailing flowering plants



The two views of the auditorium (that on the opposite page and that above) show either wall at a point near the proscenium arch, indicating, if the eye moves along the balcony line from one to the other, the vast sweep of the auditorium. The design is atmospheric in Spanish motifs, expressing in relief a Spanish town, with suggestions of landscape and with friezes punctuating the panorama and breaking up its great mass.



Left: View of the stage and proscenium arch from the balcony. Two massive stone towers flank the proscenium, uniting by means of a medieval turreted castle, which, by the way, has real windows with green shutters and doors which lead out upon a railed balcony. The "sky" effect of the ceiling sweeps down behind the "castle roof."

Below: A more detailed reproduction of the auditorium mural decorations, consisting in a deep decorative wall into which are set plaster figures and ordinaries of Spanish tradition and behind which foliage, sky and the distant buildings of the "town" effect a smooth vignette. This view indicates how the balcony sweeps in a bold line far forward, almost to the towers flanking the proscenium.

and sun-kissed trees all help to complete the illusion. At the back of the circle one glimpses another little house with brilliantly illuminated windows—the operating box, the apertures of which have been cleverly blended into this unusual decorative scheme. The promenade at the back of the circle resembles a stone balustraded terrace.

The luxurious organ has been made by John Compton and has two consoles—one in the orchestra pit and the other (which is mobile) on the stage. The organ chamber is above the proscenium arch, and is hidden by one of the quaint shuttered windowed houses which form part of the decorative scheme.

The orchestra pit, which is of ample proportions, being both deep and wide, will accommodate a large orchestra. The stage, which is probably unique in its dimensions, is as wide as that at Drury Lane theatre, and has been fitted with the most up-to-date counter-weight system for the rapid removal of scenery, and the most modern lighting equipment. Some of the most beautifully equipped dressing rooms, band rooms and staff rooms ever incorporated in any theatre have been installed, whilst a large scenery dock equipped with the most modern devices is also a feature.

A further unique feature of the thea-
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