

THE ARCHITECTURAL RECORD

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BACK OF THE AUDITORIUM, HUDSON THEATRE.

44th Street, New York City.

J. B. McElpatrick & Son, Architects.



AUDITORIUM OF THE HUDSON THEATRE.

44th and 45th Streets, New York City.

J. B. McElpatrick & Son, Architects.

flowers very pleasantly in the wall paintings which Mr. James Finn has placed over the doors. The color scheme of the auditorium, in which Mr. Finn also had a hand, is well-combined, but rather morose than gay; the upholstery, the gallery and box fronts being a metallic green and a metallic gold, and the ceiling chiefly a dull blue.

The interior of the Hudson Theatre, on the other hand, while the effect of it is pleasant and quiet, errs on the side of understatement. The façade is simple and dignified, but the means which have been taken to make it conspicuous from Broadway are neither so successful or so interesting as in the case of the Lyceum. In the interior, the effects which the designer have sought are more appropriate to domestic than to theatrical architecture. The foyer—whose dimensions are pleasantly spacious,—decorated in bronze, green, ivory and gold, and with Louis XIV. mirrors and sofas covered with green velour—is a sufficiently elegant and good-looking apartment, but the scale and feeling is that of a private house. This effect is less conspicuous in the auditorium; but the treatment of this interior is an excellent example of that modest refinement of appearance, which is wholly unfitted to a theatre. The failure of the interior in this respect has been so well expressed in one of the daily papers that I cannot do better than quote it here: “There is a general tendency,” says the writer, “to subdue and be quietly elegant in the color scheme; but the result is quite lacking in character. One wishes for a few notes of virility, and for some big, strong masses of color somewhere in the ensemble. In brief, the theatre is pretty, but it is very tame.”

From this brief view of the theatres which have recently been erected in New York it will be seen that the danger from which the better designed theatres of New York suffer is less that of being vulgarly showy than that of being excessively refined. It looks as if the architects had for the most part been so desirous of escaping the ostentatious crudity of some of the former theatrical interiors that they had fallen into the other error and pitched the scheme of their interior on too low a key. This would not be true of the Empire and the new Lyceum, it would be true of the New Amsterdam only in the special sense, indicated above; it would not be true of the Majestic theatre, which is a vigorous and well composed piece of interior decoration, but it would be true of the other theatres, and it is the fault against which the designers of similar buildings hereafter should be very much on their guard. A refinement that does not count—a weak refinement—has as an unfortunate effect upon taste as a coarse ostentation; and the one character which theatres in New York or elsewhere particularly need is a sort of a good gaudiness.

A. C. David.