

Historic Precedent Study

Melissa Meyer, Assoc. AIA LEED AP BD+C was commissioned by Emmy Award-winning director, playwright, producer, Broadway performer and educator, Cornelia “Corky” Dozier to conduct an Historic Precedent Theater Study that showcases successful Before and After historic theater renovations throughout Florida as evidence that it can be done!

- ❖ Athens Theatre, Colony Theatre
- ❖ Olympia Theatre
- ❖ Overtown Lyric Theatre
- ❖ Sarasota Opera House.

THE ATHENS THEATRE

DeLand, FL

The Athens Theatre opened in 1922 as a Vaudeville and silent movie house. During the Depression, "the Athens Theatre was the only entertainment people could afford," according to DeLand historian Bill Dreggors. "The DeLand Amusement Corporation charged only nine cents (for children) because if it was a dime, they'd have to pay the state entertainment tax." Later, promotions with RC Cola allowed patrons to enter free with six RC bottle caps. Originally a vaudeville house and silent movie palace, the Athens Theatre featured live stage shows by touring performers, as well as films of the day that were often accompanied by the theatre's Wurlitzer Pipe Organ.

Once the entertainment centerpiece of West Volusia County, the showplace evolved through the decades from a vaudeville theater, to a movie house, a place for community theatre and prom parties, a dinner theater, a video game room, a restaurant, a pizza, beer and movie house, and a teen night spot. Dozens remember it as the site of their first date, first kiss, and even as the place to go for a midnight matinee after the high school prom. Following a renovation in the 1950's, the building deteriorated and eventually closed in the early 1990's.

TIMELINE

1922

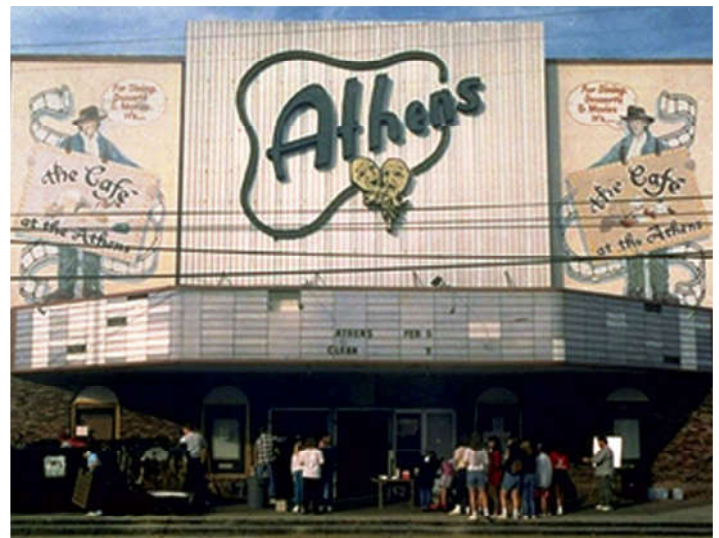
Opening night performance included a movie, live theatre performance and several vaudeville acts

1950's

Multiple Renovations

1990's

Closed



The Athens Theatre Renovations

THE ATHENS THEATRE

DeLand, FL

The Athens Theatre was designed by architect Murray S. King in an Italian Renaissance style and is one of the most distinctive buildings in the Downtown DeLand National Register Historic District. Through the years the theatre's facade was rendered unrecognizable through a series of unsympathetic alterations, which subsequently led to the deterioration of the building. R.J. Heisenbottle Architects was commissioned to restore the theatre's facade to its original appearance, and adapt the interior to that of a fully functional performing arts venue. The facade's brick, marble, cast stone, windows, doors, and marquee were all part of the extensive restoration. Work also included the rehabilitation of the auditorium's interior, structural repairs and retrofitting of all new mechanical, electrical, plumbing, theatrical and life safety systems.

The Athens Theatre is one of the few existing examples of a classic American theatre in Central Florida. Once the centerpiece of DeLand, the Athens Theatre is a jewel of Italian Renaissance architecture. On January 5th, 1922, the eve of the theater's opening, the DeLand Daily News declared the Athens to be "Florida's Handsomest Theatre" and "a gem of architecture". Constructed primarily by DeLand craftsmen and laborers, the facility embodied the very best in design, construction, decoration and equipment. The theatre's name was derived from the vision of DeLand's founder, Henry DeLand, who sought to create a city that would be the "Athens of Florida".

TIMELINE

1993

MainStreet DeLand Association and the community Organize

1994

Florida Bureau of Historic Preservation Grant helps with purchase of the Theatre for the people of DeLand

1990's

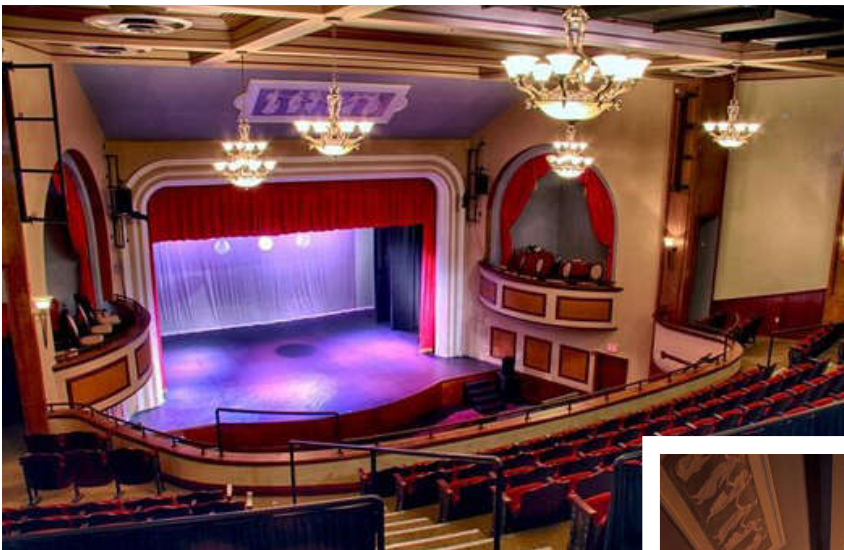
Closed

2004

Ownership transferred to Sands Theater Center, Inc.

2009

Renovated by R.J. Heisenbottle Architects



The Athens Theatre Renovations

COLONY THEATRE

Miami Beach, FL

One of the city's most well-known examples of the Art Deco style, the landmark Colony Theatre on Lincoln Road is an integral part of Miami Beach's Art Deco Historic District, the largest collection of Art Deco architecture in the world that comprises hundreds of hotels, apartments and other structures erected between 1923 and 1943. Opened on January 25, 1935, the theater and was built for the Paramount chain as a movie house. Many big premieres were hosted there like "The Last Gangster" in 1937 and "The Best Years of Our Lives" in 1946.

During World War II, Miami Beach became one of the largest centers and officer schools for soldiers. The Colony Theatre was used to show informative movies about health, training and news to young GI's. It was listed in 1950 with a seating capacity of 894. The theater closed in 1953 while being refurbished and equipped for wide-screen movies. The November 12, 1955 issue of Boxoffice reported that the Colony would be reopened by Florida State Theatres on December 23rd with the southeastern regional premier of "Guys and Dolls." After that, the Colony thrived as a first-run house, with occasional road shows, for a couple of decades until it was renovated again in 1976 for performing arts. It has been restored again since, and is now owned by the city of Miami Beach.

TIMELINE

- 1935
Opened
- 1953
Closed for refurbishing
- 1976
Renovated for performing arts
- 2006
Renovated, refurbished and reconstructed by R.J. Heisenbottle Architects



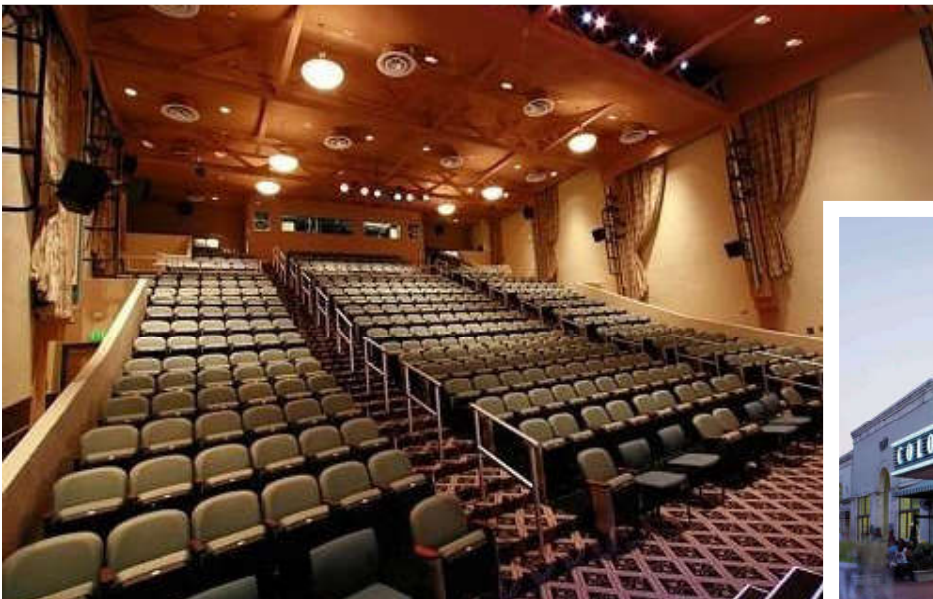
The Colony Theatre Renovations

COLONY THEATRE

Miami Beach, FL

The \$6.5 million renovation/restoration completed in 2006 transformed this theatre into one of South Florida's most popular entertainment venues for a wide variety of programs, including music, dance, theater, opera, comedy, performance art, and film. Renovations by R.J. Heisenbottle restored the exterior configuration and architectural ornamentation of this National Register of Historic Places theatre, including reconstruction of the original marquee, entry lobby and ticket booth.

Interior improvements included the auditorium space and a completely new stage house with a full complement of support facilities and state-of-the-art theatrical rigging and sound systems. The completely refurbished auditorium has a seating capacity of 440, which includes disabled-accessible seating. Every seat in the house has a perfect visual angle to the entire stage. Recently, the Colony Cafe opened at the theater, serving coffee, liquor and light fare. They also have live music.



TIMELINE

2006

Dade Heritage Trust
Outstanding Preservation
Project Award—Colony Theater

2007

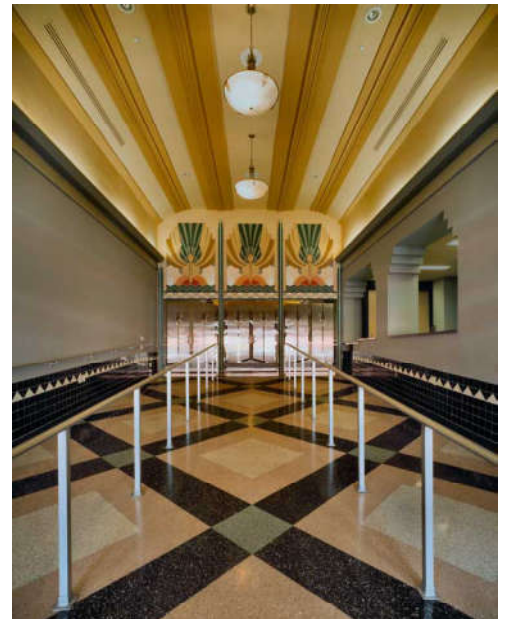
Florida Trust for Historic
Preservation Award – Colony
Theater -Adaptive Re-use

2007

Miami Design Preservation
League – Barbara
Capitan Award – Colony
Theater Restoration

2007

AIA Florida, Merit Award
of Excellence – Colony
Theater Restoration



The Colony Theatre Renovations

OLYMPIA THEATRE

Miami, FL

Built in 1925, the Olympia Theatre, now the Gusman Center for the Performing Arts, was the second "atmospheric theatre" in the country, and one of the most spectacular spaces designed by nationally renowned architect John Ebersohn. The ornate 1,700 seat theatre interior was inspired by a walled Italian garden, complete with a hand-painted simulated night sky ceiling with twinkling stars, wafting clouds and a peacock perched on the golden balcony. The Olympia opened in 1926 as a silent movie palace and amazed the public with its stunning Moorish architecture and perfect acoustics. It also achieved fame as the first air-conditioned building in the South. The "talkies" and Vaudeville soon arrived at the Olympia, and for more than 40 years the theater was the number one entertainment center in Miami.

Cultural icons such as Elvis Presley, B.B. King, Luciano Pavarotti and Etta James have provided memorable evenings under the Olympia Theater's stars. The theater has also hosted today's best-known pop stars and is a favored venue for concerts. In 1975, South Florida business tycoon and philanthropist Maurice Gusman saved the aging theater and adjacent Olympia Office Building from demolition, donating them to the City of Miami. Thanks to extensive restorations in the 1970s, overseen in part by famed architect Morris Lapidus, the theater was named to the National Register of Historic Places in 1984.

TIMELINE

1925

Built

1926

Opened as a silent movie palace

1976

Saved from demolition
by Maurice Gusman

1970's

Restorations by Morris Lapidus



The Olympia Theatre Renovations

OLYMPIA THEATRE Miami, FL

By the late 1980's restorations, repairs and upgrades to the interior, HVAC, electrical, plumbing, acoustics and lighting were necessary. Architect, R.J. Heisenbottle was retained to develop an ambitious, multi-year plan for the work. In order to minimize loss of income, construction was planned to occur during only the summer months, when bookings were normally at a minimum. Critical components were broken down into construction segments that could be completed in three months. During the rest of each year, the architectural and engineering team completed plans, while theater management secured funds for the next round of work.

While the structural repairs were underway, additional projects were launched to make the theater more attractive to promoters. The stage was enlarged and new lighting and audio equipment was installed. Restoration of Eberson's original design, including the original colors and finishes, was a top priority of the Heisenbottle plan. Following detailed analysis, decorative painters restored the original, vibrant paint scheme to the decorative plasterwork throughout the theater. Seventies-vintage plastic seating was replaced with historically appropriate wood-and-brass seats. Even the new carpeting was custom-loomed to match the 1926 original.

TIMELINE

1980's

R.J. Heisenbottle ongoing
Restoration & Upgrades

1999

Dade Heritage
Trust, Outstanding
Preservation Project



The Olympia Theatre Renovations

OVERTOWN LYRIC THEATER

Miami, FL

The Lyric Theater is the only original historic theater remaining in the heart of Overtown, a part of Miami settled by Caribbean blacks employed to construct Henry M. Flagler's railroad in the late nineteenth century. The Lyric was built in 1919 by Geder Walker, Miami's first black millionaire, as one of the earliest and most important centers of entertainment in the black community. When the theater opened, it was an important stop on the black vaudeville circuit, known affectionately as the "Chitlin' Circuit." In the 1930s and 1940s, the theater was a major component of NW 2nd Avenue's "Little Broadway" entertainment district and contributed to Overtown's reputation as the "Harlem of the South."

When the theater opened, it was used primarily late at night. After visiting black musical greats had finished playing in Miami's premiere venues where white audiences paid, they would head to the Lyric and play another concert late into the night for far less money. What was once a vibrant and cohesive neighborhood, Overtown began to lose its luster in the early 1960s, when construction of Interstate 95 cut through the vital core of the community. Overtown quickly deteriorated and many of its historic buildings were demolished. Fortunately, the Lyric survived. The building has been recently restored and serves as a performing arts center. The Lyric Theater was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1989.

TIMELINE

1919

Built by Geder Walker, Miami's first black millionaire

1930's and 1940's

Peak of "Little Broadway" and "Harlem of the South"

1960's

95 cuts through the vital core of the community

1989

Listed in the National Register of Historic Places



OVERTOWN LYRIC THEATER MIAMI, FL

In 1998 R.J. Heisenbottle Architects was selected to restore the theater and to design a modern, compatible addition. The historic theater building was completely restored to match its original appearance. New electrical, mechanical, fire safety, ADA accessibility, lighting, rigging and sound systems were installed. A new entrance lobby wing was added, including restroom and dressing room facilities. The new wing was done in a modern, all-glass design, with a sinuous, undulating floor plan inspired by the shape of a guitar, yet consistent in scale and setback with the original building.

Today the Lyric Theatre stands as a nostalgic reminder of what Overtown once was and as a hopeful symbol that the community will once again emerge as a powerful and vital part of Miami. The Lyric had its reopening gala in 2014. Now owned by the Black Archives History and Research Foundation, the building is finding new life. It hosts jazz and hip-hop concerts in addition to a lecture and film series.

TIMELINE

1998

Heisenbottle Architects was selected to restore the theater

2014

Reopening gala



SARASOTA OPERA HOUSE

Sarasota, FL

The Sarasota Opera House, originally the Edwards Theatre, was the vision of Sarasota's first mayor, A. B. Edwards. It originally opened on April 10, 1926 with an elaborate three-story entrance containing eight shops on the ground floor, twelve offices on the second floor, and twelve furnished apartments on the third floor. The theater's auditorium contained a grand orchestral pipe organ. The Sarasota Herald Tribune hailed Edwards for "having admitted Sarasota into a fairyland of costly decoration, rich furnishings and never to be forgotten artistry."

The building was designed by Roy A. Benjamin in the Mediterranean Revival Style. In the 1920s, it quickly became a popular entertainment venue with major performers of the day, with appearances by Will Rogers in 1927, the Ziegfeld Follies in 1928, and Elvis Presley in 1956. The theater was used as a movie house when it presented the world premiere of Cecil B. DeMille's *The Greatest Show on Earth*, which was filmed in Sarasota, and attended by its stars Charlton Heston and Dorothy Lamour.

Over the years, managements changed as did the name of the theatre. In December 1936 it became The Florida Theatre. The Asolo Theater moved to the Edwards Theater in 1958. The same year a hurricane damaged the pipe organ. Various attempts to modernize removed many of its original details. It became a full-time movie theater in the 60's, and 1973 it closed. In 1979 the Asolo Opera Guild bought and renovated the building.

TIMELINE

1926

Opened

1936

Name changed to the Florida Theatre

1950's

Orchestra pit is covered and stage is extended to accommodate movie screens

1960's

Became a full-time movie house

1979

Renovated by the Asolo Opera Guild



The Sarasota Opera House Renovations

SARASOTA OPERA HOUSE

Sarasota, FL

In 1984, the building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Further renovations between the end of the 2007 season and the March 2008 opening season have led to a significantly-enhanced opera theater. The \$20 million in renovations included gutting the auditorium, which resulted in a newly configured seating plan and the expansion of the public areas, including the Opera Club on the second level.

The opening up of the 3-story atrium exposed a newly installed skylight system which had existed in the 1926 building, but which had been covered by a ceiling and a chandelier used in the film, *Gone with the Wind*. In 2008, the Sarasota Opera reopened with Verdi's *Rigoletto*. Seating was expanded to approximately 1,200. After the 2009-2010 season, some seats along the far sides were taken out and replaced with aisles on either end of the theater leaving 1,119 seats.

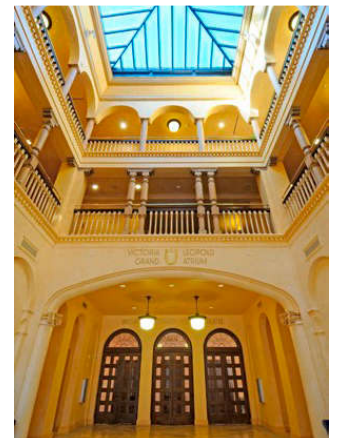
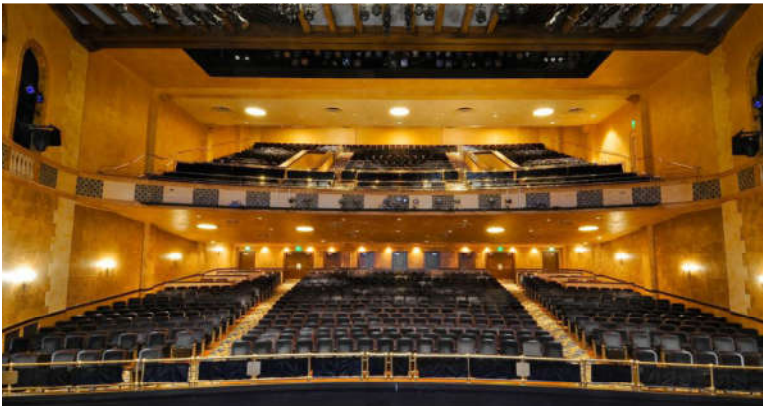
TIMELINE

1984

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places

2007-2008

More restorations & upgrades



The Sarasota Opera House Renovations