



"FOUR SCORE AND SEVEN YEARS AGO"

By: Bethany Karp - Grade 5, Pomperaug Elementary School

Here's a quiz: Where in Connecticut did Aretha Franklin, David Copperfield, Bill Cosby, and even Harry Houdini perform on stage? Answer: The beautiful, historic Palace Theater in Waterbury, CT. Rich in history, the Palace Theater has been home to many other famous performers over the years. From 1922 until now, the Palace Theater has been known to display a variety of acts including silent films, Vaudeville, musical acts and plays such as the one I saw: "Four Score And Seven Years Ago."

"Four Score and Seven Years Ago" is a fun, yet educational play. The setting of the play was in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania 1863 at the time of the Civil War. It is about a former slave named Lemuel, who wants to join the Union to fight for the freedom of his people, but instead he is told that Negroes are not allowed to join. Lemuel becomes friends with Mrs. Mcilheny, who gives him a job as well as teaches him how to read. She soon receives a surprise visit from her nephew Jacob, who had joined the Confederate Army. He is ordered by the Southern General to obtain supplies. The plot took some surprising twists and turns as Lemuel learns that people aren't always what they seem. Months after hearing about the Gettysburg Address, he thinks about people who fight based on what they believe is right or wrong.

The cast was composed of 4 very talented actors. Their stunning singing voices were very evident in the musical numbers, and their flawless acting perfected the play. I had the pleasure of meeting the cast backstage after the show, and I was impressed by how professional and delightful they were.

In conclusion, "Four Score and Seven Years Ago" is a kid-friendly, educational, humorous and fun-filled performance. Both young and old will be entertained while surrounded by the beauty of the Palace Theater. You will not regret watching this play.

PES AT THE PALACE

By: Avik Hegde - Grade 5, Pomperaug Elementary School

“Four Score and Seven Years Ago” is how Abraham Lincoln began his Gettysburg Address speech. The speech was given because of the recent battle on the fields of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. It is estimated that about 51,000 soldiers were killed in the battle. “Four Score and Seven Years Ago” was a play we watched about the American Civil War. But before we watched the play, we got to take a tour of the Palace Theater.

The Palace Theater was built by Sylvester Z. Poli, who was from Italy. He built many theaters. The Palace Theater opened in 1922. It was designed by Thomas Lamb. The original box office was operated by two people and it was surprising to hear that there was no air conditioning or heat within. The Palace Theater was originally a movie theater and vaudeville house. It lasted from 1922 to 1987 and then the Palace Theater was shut down.

In 2004, the Palace Theater was reopened. The theater took \$1,000,000 to build, but almost \$30,000,000 to repair it from storm damage! The Grand Foyer, which we visited next, had gigantic chandeliers, a shining roof which looked like it was made of real gold (but we were told that it was plaster) and marble staircases. The wall was painted to look like marble but it wasn't actual marble. On the floor, we noticed there were cracks. We were told that there was a river flowing under the theater which caused the cracks. The display cases containing advertisements for upcoming plays were original. We then went to the Orchestra lobby. It was a new area. It was originally a seating area, but it was rebuilt. Silent movies were played here as well. Karen Streeter, our guide, told us that there were 60,000 gold, copper and silver leaves in the whole theater.

The sound in the theater was great. You could hear perfectly from the back row. We saw the upper seating, which was called the loge. The Orchestra pit under the stage could fit 65 people. “The house” meant all the seats in the theater. The stage was 5,000 sq. ft. For one of his performances, Houdini, the magician, asked for a trapdoor in the stage. Sometime later, while preparing for a circus performance, an elephant fell through that same trapdoor and died. Karen told us that the elephant’s ghost still roams the theater. The other ghosts of the Palace Theater are Sylvester Z. Poli and Charlie, the first janitor. Some scientists came with equipment and scanned for paranormal activity. They concluded that the Palace Theater does have paranormal activity going on.

Later, the other people in our group left and Karen took us to a special seating place called “the box.” We then watched the play. It was about a boy named Lemuel who lived in Gettysburg and was black. Lemuel worked in a supply shop and wanted to join the Union army, but the shop’s owner, Mrs. Mcilheny, lied to him; she told him blacks couldn’t join the army. Mrs. Mcilheny’s nephew, Jacob, who worked for the Confederates, comes later and tells Lemuel the truth. In the end, Lemuel enlists for the Union army and everybody is happy. I later asked the actors if they liked the roles they play and they all said yes. I asked them how many times they rehearsed this and they said, “A lot.” I also asked them how hard it was to master the accents they used and they said they took vocal classes in college.

When the Palace Theater opened in 2004, the newly rebuilt theater was described as “fit for a king.” We sure felt like royalty, getting a private tour, watching a great play and best of all, getting to interview the actors. This experience was really fun and I hope that I can do it again. All in all, I say this play is awesome and I give it 5 stars.

THE PALATIAL NEWS

By: Karis Sims - Grade 5, Pomperaug Elementary School

On January 14, I visited the Palace Theater. The chandeliers were very ornate, and I thought the detail on the walls molded with gold and the “wagon wheel” chandelier were jaw-dropping. I thought it was cool to go into places where people like Harry Houdini and David Copperfield had been. I found it amazing to go into places like the dressing rooms where famous actors had stayed. I think Sylvester Poli had an amazing dream, especially for an Irish immigrant, a foreigner in the country. I would certainly recommend the Palace Theater to everyone. The play was very nice and the songs were creative. The plot was interesting and I like plays that remind of us of America’s history. I am very glad we don't have slavery now.

I thought that it was very clever to make it so that everyone could hear the sound with the system. I LOVED meeting the actors. I have a little dream of being an actor someday, too. It was very fascinating to meet the actors face- to-face and get my picture with them. I had a very good time. I found it awesome that a river flows under the Palace. To me, the stage being the second biggest in the country, measuring 5000 sq. ft. is a wonder. I admire that workers were determined to rebuild the Palace Theater because of the fire in 1980, costing \$30 million to restore. The Palace Theater was built in 1920 and opened in 1922. It closed down in 1987 and reopened in 2004. I loved the Palace Theater. I hope I can come back soon. Thank you for letting me come!

"FOUR SCORE AND SEVEN YEARS AGO"

By: Winnie Chen - Grade 5, Pomperaug Elementary School

"Four Score and Seven Years Ago, our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal."-President Abraham Lincoln

"Four Score and Seven Years Ago" is a play that takes its title from the first six words of President Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. This play features five characters: Lemuel, a young black man who escaped slavery in Georgia via the Underground Railroad; Mrs. McIlheny, a Quaker widow who employs Lemuel at her dry goods store and teaches him how to read; Jacob, a young confederate soldier who is also Mrs. McIlheny's nephew; Sergeant Hitchborne, a Union army officer; and General Pickett, a confederate troops commander.

"Four Score and Seven Years Ago" was performed at the Waterbury Palace Theater on January 14, 2014. The marble stairs, priceless chandeliers and amazing designs make this historical venue "fit for a king." The Waterbury Palace Theater was first opened in 1922 by famous New England theater impresario, Sylvester Z. Poli, and was designed by Thomas Lamb. Unfortunately, there was a fire in the theater in 1980 and it was shut down in 1987. The Waterbury Palace Theater reopened in 2004.

Let's go back to the play. "Four Score and Seven Years Ago" takes place in the summer of 1863 in Gettysburg. Lemuel, a young black man who has escaped from slavery, works in a store owned by Mrs. McIlheny. However, what he really dreams of doing is becoming a Union soldier and fighting for abolition, but he had been told that black men were not allowed to join the army. Mrs. McIlheny, being a Quaker, cut out articles from the newspaper about black men being able to join the army so Lemuel wouldn't know. Sergeant Hitchborne (an officer for the Union) and General Pickett (an officer for the Confederacy) arrive at the store to obtain supplies for a battle at Gettysburg. This is when Lemuel meets a young Confederate soldier, Jacob, who is also Mrs. McIlheny's nephew. At first, Jacob treats Lemuel like a slave, but then they find that they have a lot in common, despite their different skin colors. Afterwards, Lemuel and Mrs. McIlheny witness the Battle of Gettysburg. Jacob is among the wounded. In the end, Lemuel finds out that black men can join the army and the play ends with him leaving to fight for slavery to end.

Right after the play was done, I interviewed the cast. They practiced for many months preparing for this show, but they enjoy acting a lot. Daniel, who portrayed Lemuel, said he had been acting for about 15 years; Mike, who was both Sergeant Hitchborne and General Pickett, had been in about 65-70 shows; Elizabeth, who played the part of Mrs. McIlheny, was Mother Goose in her first show, Little Red Riding Hood; and Dylan, who was Jacob in the show, hopes to be on Broadway someday. They all hope to audition for more performing opportunities in the future.

"Four Score and Seven Years Ago" is a wonderful show about life in the time of slavery and the Civil War. The whole cast was extraordinary in the play. I had a great first experience of journalism; it was a memorable day for me at the Waterbury Palace Theater on January 14!

CHARACTERISTICS AND EVERLASTING MEMORIES
By: Christopher J. Lynch - Grade 8, Prospect

I have been going to the Palace Theater in Waterbury, Connecticut for ten years and have thoroughly enjoyed each performance. My family and I attend at least two plays every year. On the day of January 14, 2014, however, my friends and I had an opportunity to have a tour with Karen Streeter and I learned many exciting and amazing facts that I had never known before. This has undoubtedly changed my perspective about the Palace Theater. The Palace's captivating facts, fascinating history and its unique characteristics, as well as people's feelings about the Palace, make it an extraordinary place to visit.

There are some intriguing facts about the Palace that you may not know. Over the course of its life, several famous musicians, magicians and actors have performed at this theater. Tony Bennett has performed there several times. In fact, he was the last person to perform when the theater closed, and he performed when it reopened in 2004. Many, many years ago, there were bats flying around on the top floor and the employees used to have to carry tennis rackets with them to swat at the bats. At another time, in its earlier days, there was a circus that came to town. As they were going over the stage, an elephant fell through the stage! He unfortunately passed away.

The Palace opened in 1922, and closed in 1987. When the owner of the theater, Sylvester Poli, opened it in 1922, it cost him \$1 million. On the same street where the Palace is located, there were four other theaters; two of those four theaters Mr. Poli owned. The theater had severe damage to it in the 1980s due to fire and it was just left in ruins. The theater was closed for eighteen years and reopened its doors in 2004. Since the theater was completely ruined, several items in the lobby and main entrance had to be replaced. It took three years and cost thirty million dollars to refurbish.

Today, when you walk into the grand foyer of the Palace Theater, there are vaulted ceilings and gigantic mirrors. The grand staircase is solid marble and is pearl white. The gold-colored railings wrap around the staircase. When you look to the ceiling there are gold-plated circular molds with elaborate designs and the colossal, extravagant chandeliers are priceless artifacts. Inside the house, there are 3,500 seats. There is an orchestra pit inside the house in the first three to five rows. The theater area has two levels and they say that the top level seats are the best in the house. When inside the house, you can hear the slightest noise because of the unique shape of the house and the way it is set up. It is so quiet inside that you cannot hear anything that is going on outside in the main lobby. Underneath the palace runs the Mad River. Sometimes, if you are quiet, you can hear the river flowing. When you go into the basement, the floor is kind of bumpy due to the river running beneath it.

Karen Streeter, our tour guide, said that people's mouths drop when they come in and see the Palace for the first time. As a matter of fact, three of my friends, who had never been there before, were astonished at the beauty. Another friend walked in and said, "Oh, fancy!" At one time however, it was not so elegant and beautifully sparkling. In the 1970s, my mom and dad saw some rock concerts there and thought that the Palace was run down and dilapidated. My grandmother, on the other hand, remembered it in 1947 as one of the most beautiful places she has ever been. It was as if she was in heaven when she was a young girl, going there to see the cowboy movies on Saturdays. It reminded her

very much of New York. She said it was very elegant, and out of all the theaters on the street, the Palace was the best.

According to the Merriam Webster Dictionary, the definition of the word “palace” means, “a home of a king or high official and a very luxurious building.” That is exactly what the Palace is today, as it was in yesteryears. As I continue to attend shows at the Palace Theater, I will always remember the wonderful tour and all I learned about the theater’s amazing history and astounding facts. The Palace Theater is a memory of mine that I will pass down to my children, just as my grandmother passed down the memory to her children and grandchildren.

A DAY AT THE PALACE

By: Matthew Lynch - Grade 6, Prospect

I had been to the Palace Theater in Waterbury, Connecticut many times before, but on Tuesday, January 14, 2014, we went for a tour and to see the play, “Four Score and Seven Years Ago.” We went with many of our friends and I had a chance to learn about the Palace Theater’s history, the Civil War, and my friends’ perspectives of the play.

Karen Streeter, our tour guide, showed us all the great things in the Palace. It was interesting to see the pictures of the Palace long ago after a big fire had almost destroyed the whole building. In the grand foyer, the stairs, chandeliers, floor and mirrors are all original. I thought the big golden oval, above the bar, was one of the neatest parts of the Palace. I learned that the Mad River runs under the Palace and that is why there are cracks in the floor of the Grand Foyer. My favorite part of the tour was the basement. I liked looking at the paintings of the plays with the signatures of the actors.

The play, “Four Score and Seven Years Ago,” took place in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania during the Civil War. It was about a young black man, Lemuel, who wanted to join the Union Army, but he believed he could not join. His boss, Mrs. Mcilheny, a store owner, did not want him to join, so she kept cutting out the newspaper clippings which said how blacks could now enlist in the war.

The Union Commander came to the store and said that the Union was going to take all of her products. He said that the Union would pay her price, if they would even pay her back (Lemuel said, “Maybe...”). After the Union Army got pushed back, the Confederate Commander came to the store and said that they would now be taking all of her products, and would pay her back after the war (Lemuel said, “Maybe...”).

Jacob, who happens to be Mrs. Mcilheny’s nephew, comes to pick up the supplies for the Confederate Army. He meets Lemuel. They talk about the war and argue about which side is right. They both want to fight for their own side. Jacob goes to battle and gets shot. Mrs. Mcilheny and Lemuel save Jacob’s life from the Union Commander and help him escape to get back to the Confederates. (The Union Commander wanted to make a little money on the side!). Lemuel decides to leave and join the army, and Mrs. Mcilheny gives him her husband’s Union cap.

I enjoyed the show because I liked how it was about the Civil War and I enjoyed the war scenes. My favorite actor was Jacob because he was amusing. I enjoyed his acting and singing and how he pretended to dodge bullets! I especially enjoyed the song, "I'm going to make a little money on the side." My friends, Sam and Josh, liked the war scenes the best, too. My friends, Ben, Dan, Leah, and Myah, all liked Lemuel the most because of his acting ability. They thought he was believable. My friend, Isabella, also enjoyed the play and she had a lot to share. She said it was "very realistic, and quite on with the history point of the Civil War." She also "liked how it showed different points of view." Of the 22 people in our group, they all said they liked the play. I think the play was a huge success!

All in all, it was a great day! I enjoyed the tour because I liked learning about the history of the Palace Theater, and how it survived for many years and then was reconstructed to its former glory. I enjoyed the play because I liked the acting and music. It seemed real. I enjoyed interviewing my friends and getting their perspectives on the show. All of my memories of the Palace have been great, but this, by far, is one of the greatest.

PALACE THEATER HISTORY

By: Kayleigh Theroux – Grade 4, Community School

Once there was a man named Sylvester V. Poli. He built the Palace Theater. The theater officially opened in 1922. Sylvester wanted the Palace Theater to look like it was fit for a king, but he wanted it to be for the people of Waterbury. In 1987, the Palace closed because of a fire. Many things were destroyed. It cost 30 million dollars to restore the Palace. Eighteen years after the Palace closed, the new grand opening was in 2004. From then on at the Palace, there were many great performances.

If you take a look, the Palace Theater has lots of detail and excitement. The palace has original mirrors, chandeliers, and other things. At the Palace, the stairs are made out of marble and the walls next to it are fake marble.

There have been legendary performers who have performed on the Palace Stage! Harry Houdini, Queen, Jackie Gleason, Frank Sinatra, Glen Miller, Bob Dylan, and Bruce Springsteen are only some of the famous people who have performed at the Palace. It is amazing to think that so many famous people have performed in Waterbury, but when you see how beautiful the Palace is, you can understand why they would want to come perform.

The show I saw was about a man named Lemuel who was a slave and wanted to join the army, but Lemuel's owner, Mrs. Mcilheny, didn't want him to go because she loved him. Jacob was already in the army and he knew Mrs. Mcilheny. In the fight, Jacob got shot in the arm and quit the army. The general was not very nice to Lemuel or Mrs. Mcilheny because they didn't want to sell him the whole store.

The group of actors likes to take on challenges and try new rolls. Mrs. Mcilheny has been performing for 20 years, the General has been performing for 13 years, Lemuel has been performing for 15 years, and Jacob has been performing for 7 years.

PALACE THEATER

By: Jacob Theroux - Grade 5, Community School

The Palace Theater tour, by Karen Streeter, was very fun and cool. Let me tell you what I learned. There was a man named Sylvester Poli and he was the man who made this theater happen. He opened the theater in 1922 and also put in a hotel for all of the performers next to the theater. The first box office only fit two people and it was open to the weather, so it was either really hot in the summer or really cold in the winter. It was rarely ever the right temperature in the box office. The lobby was also open to the weather, so some of the decorations got ruined. In the grand foyer, the mirrors, chandeliers, the stairs and the cracks in the floor were all original.

There are cracks in the floor because there is a river running right under the floor. One day there was a fire in the building next to the Palace and the firemen came and soaked everything in the theater. Because all of the decorations were moldy, they all fell down and broke. In the whole theater there is 60,000 sq. ft. of gold foil. That's a lot of gold in the theater. There is a dome which is 65 feet wide, and the whole purpose of the dome is to capture the sound and bring it right back down to the audience. I would encourage students from my school to come here because it's such a nice place and a lot of the kids don't realize how cool the history is. I would consider journalism because you can get to see some really cool places.

Now I'm going to talk about the actors that I met after the show. Mrs. Mcilheny was very nice. She was a school teacher and she seemed like she was going to go very far with her acting. Lemuel was very nice and a great actor and it seemed like the stage was where he belonged. Jacob was awesome because he seemed like he stayed true to his acting and will never stop. The General seemed like he has been there a long time, which is good, and it seemed like he took his acting very seriously.

That concludes my report on the Palace Theater.