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National Museum of African American History and Culture

Playbill for Big Deal

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AT THIS THEATRE

[[image - line drawing of The Broadway theatre]]
[[credit]] STAN STARK [[/credit]]

THE BROADWAY

The Broadway opened as a cinema house on Christmas day in 1924, but the first live theatre show wasn't until 1930 with E. Ray Goetz's glittering revue, *The New Yorkers*.

During the 40's, the Broadway housed Irving Berlin's all-soldier World War II show, *This Is the Army*, with an enormous cast recruited from training camps all over the country; the long-running *My Sister Eileen*; Artists and Models; Carmen Jones; and *Memphis Bound!* based on H.M.S. Pinafore, with a cast headed by the late Bill "Bojangles" Robinson.

The 50's saw revivals of *Oklahoma!*, *Diamond Lil*, and the Virgil Thomson/Gertrude Stein *Four Saints in Three Acts*. Gian-Carlo Menotti's *The Saint of Bleecker Street* premiered on December 27, 1954. The Old Vic visited the Broadway in December of 1958, treating Americans to authentic British productions of *Twelfth Night*, *Hamlet* and *Henry V*. In 1959, Ethel Merman exercised her famous tonsils as Rose, the stage mother in *Gypsy*. Fall '61 opened with Alfred Drake in Kean, a Wright and Forrest musical based on plays by Sartre and Dumas.

Vivien Leigh and Jean Pierre Aumont appeared as aristocrats turned servants in the musical *Tovarich*, opening March 18, 1963. Miss Leigh was awarded a Tony for her performance. In December *The Girl Who Came to Supper* took over, starring Florence Henderson and José Ferrer. Noel Coward's musical was based on a play by Terence Rattigan.

On February 16, 1965, Baker Street opened, starring Fritz Weaver as a singing Sherlock Holmes and Martin Gabel as Professor Moriarty. The next season opened in a more serious vein, with *The Devils*, written by John Whiting and based on Aldous Huxley's *The Devils of Loudun*. The talented cast included Anne Bancroft, Jason Robards, Jr. and John Colicos.

Later in 1966, Ethel Merman returned to recreate her role as Annie Oakley in Irving Berlin's *Annie Get Your Gun*. The *Happy Time*, a Kander and Ebb musical, won a Tony for star Robert Goulet in 1968. *Purlie*, the joyous musical based on Ossie Davis' *Purlie Victorious*, opened on March 15, 1970. Melba Moore and Cleavon Little both won well-deserved Tonys.

[[image - black and white photograph of copy of The Playbill, [[image - drawing of Mae West in "Diamond Lil"]]]

In 1972, the theatre was completely altered to accommodate the rock musical *Dude*; and in 1974, *Candide*, a revised version of the 1956 musical, directed by Harold Prince, scored a triumph. This was followed by an all-Black revival of *Guys and Dolls*; the smash British musical, *Evita*, also directed by Harold Prince; a revival of *Zorba* starring Anthony



Quinn; The Three Musketeers; and the late Yul Brynner in his final performances of The King and I.

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[[advertisement]]
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[[image - black and white photograph of a table set for dessert]]

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