

2017-J5775

Senate Resolution No. 5775

BY: Senator DEFRANCISCO

COMMEMORATING the 90th Anniversary of the Landmark
Theatre in Syracuse, New York

WHEREAS, Theatrical institutions, and the many social and educational benefits they confer, play a vital role in the development of their neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to recognize and commend those artistic landmarks which have brought outstanding entertainment and cultural enrichment to the citizens of the great State of New York; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commemorate the 90th Anniversary of the Landmark Theatre in Syracuse, New York; and

WHEREAS, In the era of silent movies, Salina Street in Downtown Syracuse had the Empire, the Strand, Temple (later Paramount), and Eckel theatres to draw patrons for movie-stage shows; the latest and grandest of these theatres was Loew's State Theatre; and

WHEREAS, Marcus Loew acquired the building site for his theatre for \$1.9 million, which was located at the northwest corner of Salina Street

(then occupied by the Jefferson Hotel), with frontage for a block along Jefferson Street; and

WHEREAS, With Thomas Lamb as the commissioned architect, construction of Loew's State Theatre began on March 15, 1927; Loew's State Theatre was to be the city of Syracuse's largest theatre, with 3,000 seats and an eight-story office tower; and

WHEREAS, Construction of Loew's State Theatre involved more than 300 workers and cost \$1.4 million; a little more than 11 months later, the theatre opened on February 18, 1928, with hundreds forming lines outside its doors by mid-morning; and

WHEREAS, The new theatre was advertised as "the last word in theatrical ornateness and luxuriousness"; for an admission price of 25 cents, patrons were directed by uniformed ushers through the lobbies, which were adorned with a wealth of colors and materials such as marble and terrazzo; and

WHEREAS, Rich tapestries, exotic furnishings, and stunning chandeliers also adorned the new theatre; the main lobby boasted a chandelier designed by Louis Tiffany for Cornelius Vanderbilt's mansion; and

WHEREAS, The main auditorium of Loew's State Theatre, which now houses 2,800 seats, was decorated in rich reds and golds and elegantly accented with wall ornaments; the 1,400-pipe Wurlitzer organ offered its own unique flavor, treating patrons to such sounds as a glockenspiel, marimba, bird whistles, hoof beats, and surf sounds; and

WHEREAS, For more than a year after its opening, Loew's State

Theatre showed only silent films; the showing of the theatre's first "talkie" was of "The Broadway Melody" on March 30, 1929; and

WHEREAS, The 1930's and the Great Depression provided some of the theatre's finest hours; in 1933, Loew's presented its first public demonstration of television, and in 1934 it introduced double features and began screening films in color; and

WHEREAS, In 1947, Loew's State Box Office receipts were at their peak; however, after World War II, staffing, maintenance, and tax costs all rose, with an enormous negative impact for the theatre; and

WHEREAS, Soon, the Loew's Corporation began to diversify, and the theatre reduced staffing, maintenance, and systems upgrading while mechanical plants failed and decorative fabrics, walls, carpeting and seating fell victim to vandalism; and

WHEREAS, In 1967, the parent corporation of Loew's State Theatre announced the closing and probable demolition of the theatre; a reduced tax assessment in exchange for a pledge to keep operating the theatre enabled Loew's State Theatre to reopen; and

WHEREAS, In the mid-1970s, Loew's State Theatre again announced their closing, with demolition threatened once more; on May 21, 1975, the Citizen's Committee to Save Loew's was formed, but the next day the theatre was officially closed; and

WHEREAS, On July 9, 1975, the Syracuse Area Landmark Theatre (SALT) was established as the agency to try to acquire and preserve the theatre, and on July 14, 1975, it reopened; and

WHEREAS, On May 3, 1976, the theatre was listed in the National

Register of Historic Places by the U.S. Department of the Interior; this provided a federally-protected preservation covenant, making SALT eligible for preservation funding and discouraging commercial development; and

WHEREAS, In 1977, The Loew's State Theatre became the Landmark Theatre, and Sutton Real Estate retained ownership of the office building; SALT was able to buy the theatre portion for \$65,000, on the condition that funds could be raised within 90 days; and

WHEREAS, To help SALT obtain the Landmark Theatre and allow for its reopening, volunteers intensified fundraising and began emergency repairs; members of the community scrubbed, patched, and resuscitated aging equipment, and arranged tours to reintroduce local residents to the splendor of the theatre; and

WHEREAS, To raise money for the price of the Landmark Theatre, SALT hosted a sold-out benefit with Harry Chapin performing, on October 11, 1977; despite these valiant efforts, SALT remained more than \$30,000 short; and

WHEREAS, On November 5th of that year, the State Office of Parks and Recreation, citing the magnificent efforts of volunteers, announced a matching grant of up to \$35,000 for acquisition of the Landmark Theatre;

the National Endowment of the Arts also made a \$5,000 grant for architectural feasibility studies; and

WHEREAS, On June 29, 1979, the title to the Landmark Theatre was at last transferred to SALT; volunteers from the community helped in its restoration: removing asbestos and replacing around 1,800 light bulbs, among many other tasks; eventually, the Theatre became a venue once

again for stage events; and

WHEREAS, Legendary performers that have appeared at the Landmark Theatre included Gregory Peck, Lena Horne, Tony Bennett, Harry Belafonte, Pete Seeger, and Bob Dylan; in more recent years, the theatre has been host to many top-level national acts, including Jerry Seinfeld, Jackson Browne, Celtic Woman, Ray LaMontagne, and numerous Broadway touring shows; and

WHEREAS, In 2017, the Landmark Theatre had a total attendance of 140,000; and

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body that when artistic societies of such noble aims and accomplishments are brought to our attention, they should be recognized by all the citizens of this great Empire State; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 90th Anniversary of the Landmark Theatre in Syracuse, New York; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Mike Intaglietta, Executive Director of the Landmark Theatre.