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## Shea's Kicks Off Centennial Celebration

### January 15 Marks 100-Year Anniversary of Shea's Buffalo Theatre Groundbreaking

Shea's Performing Arts Center has kicked off the centennial celebration of Shea's Buffalo Theatre. The commencement took place on January 15, 2025, which marks the 100th anniversary of the day ground was broken on construction of the historic theatre. The launch marks the beginning of two years of centennial festivities planned at the theatre and in the community during 2025 and 2026. Built in one year and one day, Shea's Buffalo Theatre first opened to the public on January 16, 1926.

**Brian Higgins, President & CEO of Shea's Performing Arts Center said,** "Shea's Buffalo Theatre holds a unique place in this community, reaching far beyond our role as an entertainment destination. Shea's is part of Buffalo's identity. We are a leader in arts education, a pristinely preserved national historic treasure, a downtown Buffalo anchor, and an economic catalyst. As we reflect on our 100 years of history, we are working to strengthen the foundation built by Michael Shea to sustain the enduring power of Shea's for generations to come."

"An architectural and design masterpiece, Shea's Buffalo Theatre is a cultural landmark with an incredible history and a bright future," **added Jonathan Dandes, Chair of Shea's Performing Arts Center Board of Trustees.** "We have a lot of exciting things in store marking our centennial anniversary. We invite people near and far to come celebrate with us."

#### HISTORIC TOURS

Shea's is inviting the public in to experience the wonder of the theatre through historic tours. Visitors will be able to learn about Shea's Buffalo Theatre history, preservation efforts, and get a backstage look at the inner workings of production spaces during guided tours.

Public tours will predominantly be held monthly on Mondays at 6:00PM, with the exception of Memorial Day weekend. Tickets are \$25/person. Daytime educational tours can also be scheduled for \$10/student, and private group VIP experiences for \$50/each. Tours are now open from February through August. Additional dates for tours later this year will be added after the Broadway season announcement. For tickets, call Shea's Historic Tour hotline at 716-829-1166. Details are available at: <https://www.sheas.org/historic-tours/>.

### **SHEA'S BUFFALO THEATRE VIRTUAL VAULT**

Shea's Performing Arts Center is bringing the history of Shea's Buffalo Theatre to life through a virtual vault featured on the Shea's website. The virtual vault tells the story of Shea's Buffalo Theatre throughout the decades through photos and descriptive elements. The vault will be opened in phases with the first section, featuring "Construction of Shea's" now available at: [www.sheas.org/vault](http://www.sheas.org/vault).

"This historical theatre is an important component of our region's flourishing arts and cultural community," **said Erie County Executive Mark C. Poloncarz**. "The celebration of this majestic symbol of Buffalo and Erie County's storied history serves as a reminder of the crucial role we all play to help ensure the curtain will continue to rise for many years to come."

"Shea's Buffalo Theatre has inspired, educated and entertained for nearly a century, and I am excited to help mark this extraordinary milestone by celebrating the start of construction on this facility 100 years ago today," **said City of Buffalo Mayor Christopher P. Scanlon**. "As a city-owned facility that celebrates Buffalo's rich arts and cultural heritage, we are proud of the investments we made both inside and outside of this theatre stretching back over ten decades, with several important projects coming up in the year ahead, including \$1 million in capital funds for a new roof as part of my historic 2025 capital budget. I appreciate the generations of people who made it their mission to provide a stage for world-class performances in our community and for their continued commitment to ensure Shea's Buffalo continues to flourish for decades to come."

### **COMMUNITY COLLABORATIONS**

Shea's Performing Arts Center is working closely with cultural organizations, Western New York businesses, neighbors, and community partners to share the magic of Shea's in unique ways with the community. Some examples include collaborations with Explore & More – The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Children's Museum, Buffalo AKG Art Museum, Buffalo Science Museum, Slow Roll Buffalo, Tipico Coffee, Hartman's Distilling Co., Resurgence Brewing, 42N, Oxford Pennant, AAA Western Central New York, WNED, and more. Details of each community collaboration will be announced separately.

### **SHEA'S BUFFALO CENTENNIAL LOGO**

Shea's also unveiled a new Centennial logo featuring its iconic Buffalo blade sign. The trademark Shea's Buffalo blade sign, which was an original ornament on the theatre when it opened, was removed during the theatre's first half-century of operations. A replica of the original, weighing over five tons and illuminated by 1,100 lights was installed in 2004. The blade restoration, along with work recreating the pediment and finials, which adorn the top of the facade, restored Shea's exterior to be an exact replica of the design featured when

the theatre opened in 1926. Merchandise will be available for purchase featuring Shea's new centennial logo.

### **SHEA'S CENTENNIAL EVENTS**

Over the course of the two-year centennial celebration, Shea's Performing Arts Center will be holding a number of special events and activities. Shea's is kicking things off with a groundbreaking centennial cocktail party on January 16 from 5:30-7:30pm with [tickets available](#) for just \$19.25 per person.

In February, Shea's will announce its lineup of performances, produced by Western New York theatre company partners, that will be featured in the **Shea's 710 Theatre season**, as well as details about the inaugural season of MusicalFare Theatre at Shea's 710.

Save March 18<sup>th</sup> on your calendar for the announcement of the centennial **2025-2026 Five Star Bank Broadway Season**, which will include an incredible lineup of award-winning productions.

A special celebration will take place in April, marking the **birthday of Shea's Buffalo Theatre founder Michael Shea**. Born in 1859 in St. Catharines, Ontario, as a young boy Michael and his family moved to Buffalo's Old First Ward. He worked as a laborer on the docks of Buffalo's waterfront and later owned a saloon before beginning in the theatre entertainment industry, with Shea's Buffalo being his crowning work.

Shea's High School Musical Theatre Awards program, has been renamed **"Shea's Wonder Awards"** in a nod to Shea's Buffalo which opened under the moniker and still features a sign labeling the Buffalo Theatre District destination as "The Wonder Theatre." **Shea's Wonder Awards** ceremony, celebrating arts education and the talent of young local performers will take place on Saturday, May 17, 2025.

On June 6, Shea's Buffalo Theatre will host its Annual **2025 Gala Fundraising Celebration**, proudly presented by *Ticketmaster* and *Rupp Pfalzgraf LLC*. Under the leadership of Gala Chairs Marco and Kari Cercone, guests will be invited to "Experience the Wonder" of Shea's, celebrating 99 years of storied history while looking ahead to the Centennial Gala in Spring 2026

Shea's Buffalo Theatre Centennial sponsors include the John W. Danforth Co., Daniel & Gail Alexander, Kaleida Health, Five Star Bank, KeyBank, Tompkins Bank, OSC Charitable Foundation, Union Concrete, Gary & Deborah Hill.

### **SHEA'S BUFFALO HISTORY:**

Shea's Buffalo Theatre, the historic crown jewel of Shea's Performing Arts Center, opened in 1926 under the moniker of "The Wonder Theatre," and was the dream of Michael Shea. Originally serving as a movie house under Paramount Pictures with "an acre of seats," it would later stage vaudeville shows and play host to the likes of the Marx Brothers, Frank Sinatra, George Burns, Bob Hope, and more in the 1930's. Later in the 1970's, to save the theater from demolition, a group of concerned people formed The Friends of Buffalo Theatre. This not-for-profit organization worked to bring about a preliminary restoration and was responsible for getting Shea's listed on the National Register for Historic Places. Over

the past 20 years, there has been over \$30 million in restoration completed, all by volunteers, at Shea's which allows Buffalo to keep the only surviving Louis Tiffany designed theater, with an original Wurlitzer organ, in magnificent condition for our patrons and the community.

For more information on Shea's Buffalo Theatre and events the Shea's Performing Arts Center three-theatre campus, visit: [www.sheas.org](http://www.sheas.org).

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#### Additional Resources:

Timeline: [Shea's Buffalo History Timeline](#)

#### Photos:

Shea's Buffalo Theatre Groundbreaking: [Jan 15 1925.jpg](#)

Shea's Buffalo Theatre Construction:

[Jan 19 1925.jpg](#)

[Feb 24 1925 \(2\).jpg](#)

[March 23 1925 \(2\).jpg](#)

[June 29 1925 \(2\).jpg](#)

[Jul 28 1925.jpg](#)

[Oct 3 1925](#)

[Oct 20 1925.jpg](#)

Shea's Buffalo Theatre on Opening Day: [Jan 16 1926](#)

#### **Shea's Buffalo Centennial Logo**

[Shea's 100 - Color.jpg](#)

[A Century of Wonder - Color.jpg](#)

[A Century of Wonder - on blue.jpg](#)

[Shea\u0027s Centennial Circle - Blue Background.png](#)

[Shea\u0027s 100 Logo Animation.mp4](#)