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# Shea's Buffalo Theatre Turns 100

January 16 Marks the Centennial Anniversary of the Grand Opening  
of Buffalo's Wonder Theatre

Year Kicks-Off with a Celebration on the Iconic Shea's Stage Followed by  
Special Events Throughout 2026

This week Shea's Buffalo Theatre is celebrating the **centennial anniversary of its grand opening**, marking 100 years since the landmark theater first opened its brass doors to the public on **January 16, 1926**. Now part of the Shea's Performing Arts Center three theatre campus, Shea's is inviting the community to celebrate with us all year long, beginning with a **party on the iconic Shea's stage** on the 100th anniversary.

"For generations, Shea's Buffalo Theatre has been a special place where memories are made and shared," **said Brian Higgins, President & CEO of Shea's Buffalo**. "It's survival and success are rooted in the deep conviction that this theatre matters to our culture, our city, and our people. This centennial celebrates the community, volunteers, artists, and supporters whose passion built, saved, and sustained this extraordinary place. As we step into our next century, we do so with a bold commitment to ensuring Shea's continues to inspire and bring people together for generations to come."

## **SHEA'S BUFFALO THEATRE HISTORY**

Shea's Buffalo Theatre opened in 1926 under the moniker of "The Wonder Theatre," and was the dream of founder and showman Michael Shea. The theatre was constructed in a

year and a day at a cost of around \$1.8 million. Originally serving as a movie house under Paramount Pictures and advertised as having “an acre of seats,” Shea’s Buffalo would later stage vaudeville shows and play host to some of the biggest names in entertainment.

In the 1970’s, after the City of Buffalo foreclosed on the property (1974) for back taxes, a group of concerned citizens formed The Friends of Buffalo Theatre to save the downtown anchor from demolition. This not-for-profit organization ran the theatre for several years and was responsible for getting Shea’s listed on the National Register for Historic Places (1975). Subsequently, the City of Buffalo assumed ownership of the Theatre, with support from City Comptroller George O’ Connell and in 1980, Shea’s O’Connell Preservation Guild is formed as the non-profit theatre manager, a status which continues to this day.

In recent decades, millions of dollars in restoration and improvements have been completed at Shea’s Buffalo, much of it by volunteers. From the ceilings (2015) to the carpets (2009), and return of the historic blade sign (2004) to stagehouse expansion (1999), This work has allowed Buffalo to keep the only surviving Louis Tiffany designed theater, with an original Wurlitzer organ, in magnificent condition for our patrons and the community.

## **SHEA’S BUFFALO CENTENNIAL**

[Shea’s Centennial Anniversary Celebration](#) will take place on Friday, January 16 from 5:30 – 8:30PM. The celebration takes place in Shea’s Grand Lobby and the Shea’s stage featuring live entertainment by D.J. Milk, Curtis Cook on the Wurlitzer, IOT Band, and several local theatre partners. Tickets are \$50, benefit Shea’s, a non-profit, and include a champagne toast, heavy hors d’oeuvres, photo opportunities from the stage, and more. Sponsorship opportunities are also available. For more information visit: <https://www.sheas.org/performances/sheas-centennial-celebration>.

Below are highlights of additional events and community collaborations planned for Shea’s centennial year:

### **January:**

42 North Wonder Beer Release

Shea’s / AKG Exhibit at Buffalo Niagara International Airport

### **February:**

2/28: [Buffalo Fashion Runway Presents Black Carpet III](#)

### **March:**

Broadway Season Announcement

Construction begins on Shea's Buffalo Expansion Project

**April:**

Strategic Plan Release

Tipico New Centennial Blend Coffee

**May:**

5/16: Wonder Awards: Shea's High School Musical Awards

**June:**

6/25: Buffalo Run Club at Shea's

**July:**

7/8: Mighty Wurlitzer Concert Featuring Richard Hills

7/13: Slow Roll Buffalo at Shea's

**August:**

8/21: Theatre Day at the Buffalo Bisons Game

**September:**

Broadway Season Begins

**October:**

10/3: Shea's Gala

**November:**

Shea's Anniversary Ornament Release

**December:**

Centennial Year Finale Celebration

Throughout the year, Shea's will also continue to feature outstanding performances, historic tours, educational opportunities, and free films.

**EXPLORE SHEA'S PAST**

Learn more about Shea's storied history and witness documents and photographs from over the years, by visiting Shea's Virtual Vault at: [www.sheas.org/vault](http://www.sheas.org/vault).

## **PLAY A ROLE IN SHEA'S FUTURE**

A transformative capital campaign is underway to expand Shea's Buffalo Theatre and prepare this beloved landmark for its next century. The community is invited to be part of Shea's enduring legacy by purchasing a [Centennial Seat Plaque](#) or exploring other opportunities to [Elevate Shea's](#).

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### **Photos:**

[Shea's Buffalo Photos](#)

[Shea's History](#)

Shea's Centennial Invitation: [Centennial Invite.jpg](#)