Fort Worth for Entertainment: Billy Rose’s Casa Mañana (1936-1939)
by Annie O. Cleveland and M. Barret Cleveland

Published in *TD&T*, Vol. 44 No. 1 (Winter 2008)

*Theatre Design & Technology*, the journal for design and production professionals in the performing arts and entertainment industry, is published four times a year by United States Institute for Theatre Technology. For information about joining USITT or to purchase back issues of *TD&T*, please contact the USITT office:

USITT
315 South Crouse Ave., Suite 200
Syracuse, NY 13210
tel: 800-93-USITT (800-938-7488)
tel: 315-463-6463
fax: 315-463-6525
e-mail: info@office.usitt.org
web: www.usitt.org

Copyright 2008 United States Institute for Theatre Technology, Inc.
Early in 1936, Broadway producer Billy Rose went to Hollywood to explore new opportunities on the west coast. Rose was crossing the courtyard of the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer executive building to visit a friend when another acquaintance, Fort Worth native, Rufus Le Maire, spotted Rose from his office window. He called Rose up to his office. “Amon Carter asked me to find someone to stage the Fort Worth Centennial,” Rufus told Billy, “but I didn’t think of you until I saw you traipsing across the lot. Why don’t you get on the next plane to Fort Worth? You’re the best man for the job” (Gottlieb 1968, 106). Rose followed Le Maire’s advice and flew to Fort Worth to hear what Carter and his friends had in mind.
1936 was the centennial of the state of Texas’s independence from Mexico. Efforts had been in the works for several years planning the state wide celebrations. Fort Worth cattle and oil man, Amon G. Carter, was on the centennial committee, but assumed that the major celebrations would be held in either San Antonio (home of the Alamo) or Houston (near the battlefield of San Jacinto where Santa Ana’s invading army was defeated). When Dallas, just twenty-six miles east of Fort Worth, mustered the financial backing necessary for staging the first world’s fair to be held south of the Mason-Dixon, Carter immediately shifted in to high gear to prevent Dallas from stealing the centennial thunder, not to mention the millions in tourist dollars and notoriety. The unabashed promoter of Fort Worth was so unwilling to contribute to the Dallas economy. That he “used to bring a bag lunch to business meetings in Dallas so he did not have to spend money there” (Freedman 1984).

The renegade Fort Worth celebration was first placed in the hands of the town’s women, who planned “…an enlightened production heavy with religion and high culture, a show with all the exciting theatrics of an elementary school production” (Flemmons 1978, 103). Carter, publisher of the Fort Worth Star Telegram, had bigger plans for Fort Worth, and “…gawddammed the dullness of it all, resolved to find a remedy” (Flemmons 1978, 103). He flew La Maire and Rose to Fort Worth to hear his proposal.

To avoid speculation, Rose told the press he was scouting possible venues for his critically acclaimed production of Jumbo which was weekly losing money at the Hippodrome in New York. Carter and city leaders took Rose to an empty pasture just east of the newly constructed Will Rogers Memorial Coliseum complex where they casually remarked that the exposition was scheduled to open on July Fourth, just four months away. Rose was still recovering from the shock of hearing the schedule when Carter and the city fathers told him they were prepared to back the project with $500,000, as compared to the twenty million dollars budgeted for the sanctioned Dallas exposition.
Rose requested a typewriter and sequestered himself in his hotel room to prepare a proposal. A few hours later, he presented his plan. Due to the blistering heat of a Texas summer, he suggested an open-air cabaret theatre open from 6:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m. to be run strictly for entertainment. Rose’s secret weapon to help Fort Worth even up the odds in the lopsided match with Dallas was quite simple—beautiful women (fig. 2).

In his unpublished manuscript, *Billy Rose of Broadway*, Maurice Zolotow quotes from Rose’s proposal: “There is only one thing that can compete with twenty million bucks of machinery, and that is girls—pelvic machinery… We have to give them girls and more girls. Your only chance of bucking Dallas is entertainment on a grand scale, with a strong western flavor, but meeting big time standards in every way” (Jones 1999, 24).

When asked how much the project would cost, Rose projected between one and two million dollars. By this point, several of the committee members were having second thoughts about Fort Worth hosting the renegade festival, but Rose had one more shot to fire across their bow, his fee. Rose demanded one thousand dollars per day for one hundred days, with a $25,000 advance. The committee asked Rose to leave the room while they discussed the proposal. After a few minutes, they emerged agreeing to the deal, with Carter personally guaranteeing Rose’s expense. On 7 March, the agreement was signed. On 10 March 1936, ground was broken for the Fort Worth’s Frontier Centennial Celebration. Soon, over 2,000 workers labored around the clock to meet the original June opening deadline.

Rose immediately immersed himself in the “cow town” culture of Fort Worth. Although small in stature at five feet two inches tall, Rose (fig. 1) soon was seen outfitted with a ten gallon hat, courtesy of Carter, and he “packed a solid gold .45 that made him tilt slightly as he walked” (Gottlieb 1968, 109). He was made an honorary deputy sheriff and proudly wore his gold badge.

Fort Worth’s Frontier Centennial was to consist of five key elements (fig. 3). *Jumbo* would be moved lock, stock, and barrel to be restaged intact in a new indoor venue. An outdoor Wild West Show featuring cowboys, Indians, a thundering heard of buffalo, and hundreds of square dancers was to be staged in...
Figure 5. Interior of Casa Mañana amphitheatre. Courtesy Jack White Collection, Special Collections, University of Texas at Arlington Library, Arlington, Texas.

Figure 6. W.D. Smith aerial photograph of Casa Mañana amphitheatre. Amon G. Carter Papers, Special Collections, Mary Couts Burnett Library, Texas Christian University. (Courtesy of Smith Photo)
a rodeo arena. The Frontier Palace, billed as the world’s largest dance hall, would entertain thirsty patrons with music and featured acts. The Sunset Trail, a midway, featuring Sally Rand’s Nude Ranch was designed to part patrons from their pocket change with peep shows and carnival games of chance. The crown jewel and primary attraction of the festival was to be a 4,500 seat outdoor night club presenting extravagantly staged shows nightly. Originally named Casa Diavolo, the name was soon changed to Casa Mañana (fig. 4).

Within a week of Rose’s visit to Fort Worth, the Frontier Centennial’s PR machine was set into motion. A signed press release to be published in the 14 March edition of The Billboard by Fort Worth Mayor Van Zandt Jarvis and other city officials boasted: “Billy Rose has wrapped his voluminous cloak of P. T. Barnum around his shoulders, and with his co-operation Fort Worth will offer to America not a pale, carbon copy of the Chicago World’s Fair but a living, breathing, highly exciting version of the Last Frontier.”

Soon thousands of billboards across nine states were erected with various versions of the slogan “For Education Come to Dallas – For Entertainment, Come to Fort Worth.” Needless to say, the Dallas city fathers prickled at the maverick celebration twenty-six miles to the west horning in on their market. The final straw was when a large neon sign, second in size only to the Wrigley’s sign on Broadway, was erected on top of a building directly opposite the main entrance to Dallas’s Fair Park encouraging visitors to take the forty-five minute drive to Fort Worth to experience the “Wild and Whoo-pee” at Rose’s Fort Worth celebration.

Led by Jumbo’s director, John Murray Anderson, a seasoned Broadway veteran who had staged musical reviews in New York since 1919, Rose brought the circus’s entire production team to mount the Fort Worth Centennial Fiesta. Anderson, with a penchant for assigning nicknames to all of his associates, noted: “The usual retinue of cohorts followed: Raoul (“One More Spring”) du Bois, Albert (“Sandwich”) Johnson, Robert (“Fleming”) Alton and the composer Dana Suesse, plus my old assistant Carlton Winckler, without whom practically nothing ever happened at these big events” (Anderson 1954, 160).

He referred to Rose as “The Mad Emperor” or “The Mad Hatter.” Rose and Anderson soon held auditions for singers, dancers and showgirls for all of the Frontier Centennial’s venues. Casa Mañana alone was to have a cast of over two hundred performers. Talent from across Texas descended on Fort Worth to audition for the twenty-five cents per week jobs. Although this creative team supervised the design, construction, and staging of all venues at the Frontier Centennial, this account can focus only on Casa Mañana.

Casa Mañana was designed to seat 2,500 patrons for dinner (soup, salad, sirloin steak, baked potato, string beans, and a beverage of choice for two dollars) at linen topped tables (fig. 5). Another 2,000 customers paid the one dollar admission for a seat to the show and the opportunity to belly up to what was billed as “the longest bar in the world” for a thirty-cent beer. Contracted at a cost of $205,000, the 130-foot diameter revolving stage and could complete a revolution in one minute, forty-five seconds (fig. 6). The entire stage rode on tracks, and revealed a nine-foot deep water filled lagoon as it traveled up stage. A series of forty-three water jets created a forty-foot water curtain lit by hundreds of colored lights. Over sixty members of I.A.T.S.E. Local 126 were employed to construct and shift the scenery and proudly posed for a group photo on the giant stage proclaiming it as “The Largest Outdoor Theater in the World” (fig. 7). The New York engineering firm of Bruckner–Mitchell, Inc. designed and installed all of the mechanical effects and fountains for the entire Centennial Fiesta. Company president, Richard R. Bruckner, a veteran of over 1,500 stage installations in Europe and the United States personally supervised the design and construction of the 17,000-ton stage. Although most of the stage was decked with tongue and groove wood flooring, a large portion of the floor was exposed riveted boiler plate steel. Not only was the surface hard on dance shoes, not to mention the dancer’s legs, but the steel had to be sprayed with water to cool it down before the first of two daily performances.

“Every stick of wood, every strand of wire, every lamp and light, every fence paling, every building from the Stupendous Casa Mañana to a frankfurter stand was designed by Albert Johnson…” (Rosenfield, Jr. 1936, 1) (fig. 8). His fee for designing all of the venues and scenery for the Centennial Fiesta attractions was $5,000. (Architect Joseph R. Pellch’s fee was five times this amount to translate Johnson’s designs to construction blueprints for the buildings.) Johnson earned his nickname “Sandwich” from Anderson who never saw him eating anything other than roast chicken sandwiches. At 26, the talented young designer from LaCrosse, Wisconsin was already a seasoned veteran. He began his study with Norman Bel Geddes at seventeen. By the age of twenty, he began his Broadway career with the set design for the musical review Three’s a Crowd. The Oxford Companion to the American Theatre (2004) notes that his 1931 set for The Bandwagon as “…one of the first to successfully abandon the often heavy-handed opulence of the Ziegfeld era…made effective use of revolving stages to speed the action, and it was the first show to discard footlights in favor of lighting from the balcony.” Before his death in 1967 at age fifty-seven, he had designed more than forty Broadway openings, as well
as for Radio City Music Hall, summer stock, industrials, and feature films.

The production was billed as *The Casa Mañana Revue: A Cavalcade of World’s Fairs*. The evening began with band leader Joe Venuti conducting his orchestra for the pre-show dinner entertainment. As the diners finished their meals and the sun began to set behind the arched entry, legendary band leader Paul Whiteman mounted the podium. The stage was so large that both Whiteman and Venuti’s orchestras, placed on opposite sides of the huge revolving stage, could not see each other. The solution was to center Whiteman in front of the stage where he raised his lighted baton to give the downbeat for the opening fanfare. The stage glided upstage to reveal the water filled lagoon bathed in multicolored lights which slowly began to revolve. Moments later the lights revealed the first of the evening’s four scenes: “The 1908 Saint Louis World’s Fair.” Scene 2
featured “The Paris Fair of 1923,” and Scene 3 was “The 1933-34 Chicago Century of Progress.” The evening’s finale, listed as a “Masque of Texas” (fig. 9), honored Texas’s heritage under the six flags of Spain, France, Mexico, Republic of Texas, Confederate States of America, and the United States. With the show girls scantily clad in gold “cowgirl” costumes, Venetian gondolas floating in the lagoon, and the fountains gushing under a rainbow of colored lights, the combined bands struck up “The Eyes of Texas” to close the show. The audience expressed their appreciation for the show in true Texas style. One reporter from the New York Times (1936) observed: “Texans are not given to polite applause. Pleased with what is revealed to their eye and ear they stand and give vent to variations of the rebel yell, hands cupped over mouth in the fashion of harmonica players. Only when bored does their recognition sink to the level of hand clapping.”
Although Carlton Winckler (fig. 10) had worked as Anderson’s assistant since 1934, he somehow escaped Anderson assigning him a nickname. At the ripe old age of twenty-eight, Winckler was the “old man” of the production team. Born in Bloomfield, NJ, Winckler’s interest in theatre emerged at the age of five and by the time he was high school age, he was working for Bobby Fulton’s Marionette Show. After shadowing John Murray Anderson for five months, Winckler was eventually given a chance to work on lavishly staged prologues for Publix Unit Shows which were a syndicate of film houses. “As part of a program lasting about two hours the patrons could sit in baroquely spectacular surroundings and see a varied stage show featuring music and dance in addition to the film” (Dorris 1995, 84). Winckler quickly moved up the ranks to stage manager and by the time he turned twenty he was producing shows for Publix units under his own name. He eventually served as technical director for the Roxy Theater (home to the Roxyettes, soon to become the Rockettes with the 1932 opening of Radio City Music Hall) and had worked for Billy Rose for three years.

Faced with the challenge of illuminating the huge stage from a long distance, Winckler sought out the latest in lighting technologies for the production. Although no lighting plots were uncovered, an examination of programs, photographs, newspaper accounts, and Winckler’s cue sheets and inventory records provides the clues for reconstructing key elements of his design. The 1936 Casa Mañana program notes “99 flood lights of 1,500 watts each direct their beams towards the movable stage,” and the 1937 program boasts “…throwing powerful illusionary effects a distance of 160 feet—required a still further development…that of using incandescent lights, in which the light is thrown by polished glass reflectors, ground
like lenses.” Century Lighting was credited with providing all of the lighting equipment for the Centennial Fiesta, so the first assumption was that Winckler was incorporating the new Lekolite innovations for the production. The inventory lists of all of the Centennial Fiesta’s electrical equipment stored at the end of the season noted only “8 – 500 watt Lekolites.” The inventory does, however, list “150 – 16˝ Projector Floods, 1500 watts.” After consulting early Century catalogues, it was clear that these fixtures were not the popular ellipsoidal reflector spotlights used today, but were Century’s 16˝ 1000- to 2000-watt Beam Lights (beam projectors). The catalogue notes “In large pageants, style shows, and gala functions, where distances are in excess of 100’, it can be used in one or more rows as a most practical long distance floodlight” (Century Lighting 1952). A quick phone conversation with Willard Bellman, professor emeritus and USITT Fellow, confirmed that some fixtures of the day indeed had glass reflectors, and that these beam projectors were the brightest incandescent fixtures of their time. Eight switchboards of resistance-plate dimmers totaling 300,000 watts capacity controlled the Casa Mañana system. Winkler called the cues by telephone to the stage hands backstage who never saw the show. A year later, the 1937 Casa Mañana program proudly stated, “But whatever else the Frontier Fiesta has left the American stage, it has made one definite and valuable contribution—a stage light with four times the carrying power of the ordinary lamp. And like most inventions, it was born of necessity.”

Costume designer, Raoul Pène du Bois, accompanied director John Murray Anderson for the train trip to Fort Worth where he was met by the Fireman’s Band, a retinue of local dignitaries, and Rose in full Western regalia. Imagine their response when du Bois emerged dressed in “…a full alpine suit complete with leather knee pants, rolled stockings and a tunic with the simple legend “Prosit” embroidered across the front and a green cloth Tyrolean hat with a shaving brush behind, medals all ‘round and the longest and tallest cock pheasant feather outside the Bronx Zoo” (Beebe 1939, 1).

Du Bois (fig. 11) joined the Anderson team in 1934 at the age of twenty for his Broadway debut as one of the five costume designers for the Ziegfield Follies of 1934. He was the nephew of painter Guy Pène du Bois and began his career at the ripe old age of twelve as an assistant to scenic designer Cleon Throckmorton during his summer vacation from school. Reflecting on his attraction to designing for the stage, Raoul stated in a 1940 interview, “I was torn between wanting to be an architect, a portrait painter, or a regular painter…and stage designing seemed to take in all of those, so I chose that” (Arnold 1940).
Du Bois was responsible for all of the costumes for the Frontier Centennial. In addition to *Jumbo* for which he “… whipped into shape a breath-taking collection of screaming clown uniforms, tinsel by the ton and spangles in unholy profusion” (Star Telegram 1939), du Bois designed 300 color-coordinated square dancing couples for the Frontier Fiesta and costumes for the four acts of *A Cavalcade of World’s Fairs*. Even du Bois’s design had its limits, however. “I am bitterly opposed to anything savoring of surrealism—which is why I was so griped when it was announced at the Casa Mañana that for one of their shows I was planning a girl’s costume built entirely of live white mice harnessed together” (Beebe 1939, 2).

One of the more spectacular costumes that was realized was the $5,000.00, forty-pound, eighteen-karat-gold gown for Miss Fay Cotton, Texas Sweetheart No. 1, fabricated by Whiting & Davis, New York jewelers (fig. 12).

Rose contracted with Brooks Costumes, one of the major New York costume companies, to construct all of the costumes for the centennial. With over 2,000 costumes scheduled to be constructed in the 100 days before opening night, Brooks opened a branch office in Fort Worth in the warehouse of a major department store and hired a staff of over 150 local seamstresses under the supervision of Brooks’s general manager A. M. Goldberg. Since rehearsals were scheduled in the same building in downtown Fort Worth, the daunting task of fitting all of the costumes was more manageable.

Although costumes for the showgirls, all of whom were at least six feet tall (fig. 13), were one of the signature highlights of the Casa Mañana Revue, du Bois was not, however, required to design the costumes for the headliner for the revue, Sally...
Rand (fig. 14). Clad in nothing more than “scientifically correct make-up which, in Sally’s case, is a sort of plaster,” (New York American 1935) carefully applied by her “male maid,” Ralph Hobart, Rand performed what was billed as a “Ballet Divertissement and Corps De Ballet.” With the stage bathed in her signature blue light, Rand kept all eyes glued and minds guessing as she demonstrated that her hands were indeed quicker than the eye each night as she performed her number. As in the Chicago exposition, she replaced her pair of signature feathered fans with a single large balloon (which was actually a weather balloon developed by Goodyear). Performing with the balloon out of doors proved to be challenging for Rand when the wind picked up. On more than one occasion the balloon escaped and landed in the audience where some of the young male viewers were slow to return the prop to the entertainer. The balloon was even the victim of a prank perpetrated by someone with a pin on the end of a cane.

Although du Bois had his reservations about leaving New York for the wilds of Fort Worth, by the time he left on a train bound for home, Anderson recounts: “When du Bois and I left Texas, ‘One More Spring’ also wore a ten-gallon hat, cowboy boots, and a belt of playing cards with turquoise matrix. On the long train ride to New York he was as homesick for Fort Worth as he had originally been for the big city when leaving for the Southwest” (Anderson 1954, 169).

Du Bois and the other members of Billy Rose’s team were not going to miss Fort Worth for too long. Although the Frontier Centennial Fiesta was scheduled for only one season, the Cow Town’s citizens were not willing to give up the most exciting times in the city’s history. The fountains were drained, the lights
Figure 15. Photo of “It Can’t Happen Here” set under construction, 1937 Casa Mañana Revue. Courtesy Fort Worth Star-Telegram Collection, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Library, Arlington, Texas.

Figure 16. Photo of battleships from “It Can’t Happen Here,” 1937 Casa Mañana Revue. Courtesy, Fort Worth Star-Telegram Collection, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Library, Arlington, Texas.

Figure 17. Photo of Albert Johnson and union painters, 1937 Casa Mañana. Courtesy Fort Worth Star-Telegram Collection, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Library, Arlington, Texas.
stored, resistance plate dimmers were covered with Vaseline, and the revolving stage was given a coat of paint to withstand the winter weather. Casa Manana was to return even bigger and better in the summer of 1937.

Rose and his publicity team were not shy in promoting the 1937 Casa Manana Revue. On one of the full-color flyers, he announced:

I stake my reputation as a showman on my personal guarantee that the Fort Worth Frontier Fiesta of 1937 will in all aspects – magnitude, loveliness, lavishness, and imagination – exceed and excel our efforts in 1936. I agree with our President –

THIS IS NOT THE TIME TO RAISE PRICES.

Were I presenting the Casa Manana on Broadway, seats would retail for no less than $5.50 each. Despite this, despite the fact that this year’s expenditures exceed that of last years by

MORE THAN A QUARTER OF A MILLION DOLLARS,

and weekly operating cost is fifty per cent greater than last year,

THERE WILL BE NO ADVANCE IN PRICES.

The entire production team returned to Fort Worth to mount the new revue, A Musical Dramatization of “BEST SELLERS” based on four popular novels, Gone with the Wind, Lost Horizon, Wake Up and Live, and It Can’t Happen Here. Rose once again produced a mix of attractions for the 1937 Frontier Fiesta, but replaced Jumbo with “Melody Lane,” a sentimental sing-along of old time favorites, and the “Firefly Garden,” featuring Salici’s Puppets, replaced the wild west show. Harriet Hoctor, billed as “America’s Premiere Ballerina,” headlined the Casa Manana Revue.

As before, Albert Johnson designed all attractions for the 1937 Frontier Fiesta. For the new Casa Manana Revue, he again designed a full stage set for each of the acts. As a part of the “bigger and better” publicity campaign, newspaper accounts touted the new show as having the “largest set in the world” (fig. 15). The headline for a story in the 29 June 1937 issue of the Fort Worth Press reads: “Workers Say it is No Fun Pushing Mammoth Stage – Weighs a Million Pounds as Used in Fiesta Show; Is Largest Ever Constructed Anywhere.” Carlton Winckler noted forty workers (out of the full crew of fifty-two stage hands) had exactly twelve minutes to position the set in place before the massive stage revolved. At a height of forty-one feet, the set incorporated a series of sixteen elevators to raise showgirls to the top of the scenery. A fleet of electrically driven eighteen-foot battleships patrolled the lagoon with blazing guns when the stage receded for the finale.

Forty workers had exactly twelve minutes to position the set in place before the massive stage revolved. At a height of forty-one feet, the set incorporated a series of sixteen elevators to raise showgirls to the top of the scenery. A fleet of electrically driven eighteen-foot battleships patrolled the lagoon with blazing guns when the stage receded for the finale.

Raoul Pène du Bois and his costume designs were not to be eclipsed by the magnitude of the scenery for the production. In addition to the glittering hoop skirts for the “Gone with the Wind” cotillion and the exotic orient inspired costumes for “Lost Horizon,” his design for “It Can’t Happen Here” showcased the largest gown ever built. Fabricated from 1,200 yards of shimmering satin, the train of the gown was carried by a retinue of twenty-eight men as “Miss Liberty” climbed to the top of the set’s massive staircase.

Although the second season for the Frontier Fiesta and Casa Manana were successful, Billy Rose was forced to close the stage show early. He appeared to “borrow” liberally from Margaret Mitchell’s Gone With the Wind in the opening act under the same title. Mitchell responded on 10 September with a lawsuit alleging Rose had pirated her novel and sought an immediate court injunction to close the show and seize all of the sets, costumes, and other assets of the production. Lawyers for the city of Fort Worth concluded that Mitchell had a good case for plagiarism. Rose had no less than eight named characters, including Scarlett O’Hara and Rhett Butler. The production included a scene of the burning of the O’Hara’s mansion, which Rose called “… the coincidental burning of the mansion and the novel ‘a thirty year old theatrical trick’” (Jones 1999, 135). The court ruled on 14 September in Mitchell’s favor, and Rose’s five percent gross profits were impounded as due compensation.

Although Casa Manana opened for a third season in 1938 and again in 1939, the 1937 season ended Fort Worth’s relationship with the flamboyant Rose and his talented production team.
They concurrently designed and staged Cleveland’s *Aquacade*, starring Johnny Weissmuller and Eleanor Holm (soon to become the second Mrs. Billy Rose). The finale of the Cleveland production was a carbon copy of Casa Mañana’s “It Can’t Happen Here.” Subsequent versions of the *Aquacade* were produced in 1939 for the New York World’s Fair and in 1940 for the *Golden Gate Exposition* celebrating the opening of the new Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco starring Esther Williams. Rose went on to open an indoor night club version of Casa Mañana in Manhattan, complete with a revolving slip-stage. Although the Casa Mañana night club was short lived, Rose took the model of the Frontier Palace and redesigned the Texas honky tonk with a more upscale flair, and opened it as The Diamond Horseshoe. Anderson, Johnson, Du Bois, and Winckler all worked with Rose into the 1940s on most these projects.

Once again, the citizens of Fort Worth did not want to give up their “House of Tomorrow” after the close of the 1937 season. Although Rose and his team were no longer a part of the plan, new shows were produced for both the 1938 and 1939 summer seasons. To disassociate themselves from the Rose controversy, the board of directors decided to sell most of the Frontier Fiesta’s portable assets, including sets, costumes, and props to nostalgic souvenir hunters. One practically minded customer offered “$10 for the mountains from ‘The Last Frontier,’ claiming he could salvage enough lumber to add a new wing to his dairy barn” (Jones 1999, 141). Only the Frontier Palace and Casa Mañana structures were not razed.

The board of directors engaged the Music Corporation of America (MCA) to produce the 1938 Casa Mañana Revue. Producer Lou Wasserman and director Paul Oscard maintained Rose’s formula of combining big-name bands with nationally recognized headline talent, but instead of packaging a show for an entire season, new acts were rotated in and out of the production on a regular schedule. MCA booked a number of headliners for the summer season, including the Wayne King Orchestra, tenor Morton Downey, and for the closing week, Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy. The scale of the scenery, however, was reduced significantly. Beth Lea, one of Rose’s showgirls, longed for the opulence of the Rose era: “It just wasn’t as pretty after that. Billy Rose had the money—he was
bankrolled; these people weren’t. They [MCA] were just people who came in to make a little money and spend as little as possible” (Jones 1999, 146).

The year 1939 marked the fourth and final season for the Casa Mañana amphitheatre. Following the model of the 1938 season, Casa Mañana Marches On was produced by the William Morris Agency. They drew upon a large stable of headliners rotating in and out of the production, featuring, Ray Bolger, Eddie Cantor, Martha Raye, and the comedy team of George Burns and Gracie Allen. Only Carlton Winckler returned for the 1939 season as associate producer and technical director. Large production numbers were interspersed throughout the evening in between the main acts. Although there was no direct evidence to prove this assumption in the archives combed for this project, he may have had a hand in designing the last major technical effect for the Casa Mañana stage. For the “Sun Valley” number (fig. 18), a sheet of a newly developed plastic was laid on the deck as an ice skating rink. Stagehands repaired the “ice” using a blowtorch to smooth the gouges from the chorus of ice skating beauties.

The large revolving stage turned for one last time on 4 September 1939 to the strains of Dana Suesse’s signature song penned for the original 1936 Casa Mañana, “The Night Is Young and You’re So Beautiful.” Three days earlier, Germany had invaded Poland. The day before closing, France and England had declared war on Germany. That evening the pre-show dancing was halted to broadcast Franklin Roosevelt’s address to the nation which closed with his solemn vow, “As long as it remains in my power to prevent, there will be no blackout of peace in the United States” (Jones 1999, 153). The show finished without interruption, but the mood had turned somber for the rest of the evening.

Although he maintained his friendship with Amon Carter until Carter’s death in 1955, Rose returned to Fort Worth on only one other occasion. On 13 March 1954, Rose came to Fort Worth for a nostalgic visit after a seventeen-year absence. Little evidence of the glory of “Fort Worth’s Great White Way” remained. Only the Pioneer Palace, painted a tasteless green, was still standing. Of the graceful blue and white arched Casa Mañana Amphitheatre, only the star shaped fountain and the rusting skeleton of the revolving stage remained (fig. 19). Longtime Fort Worth entertainment critic, Jack Gordon, who met and covered Rose seventeen years earlier at the Centennial Fiesta, wrote about Rose’s visit: “With a bitter laugh, Rose told this Reporter at his side: ‘If you ever write anything about this junkyard, don’t forget to mentioned that I had the world’s longest bar in my Casa Mañana. It was 50 feet long. Now that’s something a man would like to be remembered for’” (Gordon 1986, 6).

Annie Cleveland is a freelance costume designer and teaches with Barry Cleveland in the department of theatre at California State University, Northridge.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
The authors wish to thank the Department of Theatre and the Mike Curb College Of Arts, Media, and Communication at California State University Northridge for their generous funding support to visit to key collections in Fort Worth and New York. A debt of gratitude is also owed to the curators maintaining the collections where we were afforded the opportunity to gather the materials for this project:
• Brenda McClurkin, Special Collections, University of Texas at Arlington Library, Arlington, Texas;

Figure 19.
Photograph of abandoned Casa Mañana stage machinery. Courtesy Fort Worth Star-Telegram Collection, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Library, Arlington, Texas.
WORKS CITED


Rosenfield, John, Jr. 1936. Billy Rose’s Show in Dress-rehearsal Days; Casa Mañana and “Jumbo.” Dallas Morning News, 14 July, Section 1.
The Editor F D+T

I enjoyed reading the article by the Cleveland's about Billy Rose. Obviously a tremendous amount of time, energy and creative thinking went into the research for the article. It would be interesting to read a series of articles about Billy Rose, or even a book.

On page 32 they write about Carlton Winkler and his use of the Century Kerosene Beam Light Projector. The unit had a 16" diameter reflector, parabolic in shape and finished in specular aluminum. It had a mogul prefocus base socket. The lamp used was 1520W 640 beam base down, a glass reflector 16" in diameter would be too expensive.

Incidentally, I had the pleasure of working with Carlton Winkler. He was truly a great man. It might be interesting to your readers and the Cleveland's to know that Billy Rose was a speed champion on the stage. At one time he was the personal secretary to the financier Bernard Baruch. He also was at one time the largest individual owner of NBC stock. I was at one time 4th floor manager at Century.

Sonny Sonnenfeld.
Barry and Annie,

I received my copy of the Winter issue of TD&T earlier this week and took a moment to browse through it. To be frank, it was my intention to check out the Rosco ad and then set the magazine aside to read over the weekend. But something about the not-your-typical-cowboy picture on page 25 grabbed me and the next thing I knew I was totally involved in the Fort Worth Centennial Show, Billy Rose and associates. I think the extent of my involvement on a busy afternoon speaks to the skill of the authors in bringing to life these events after 70+ years.

Probably doesn't come as a surprise that I was most fascinated with the research which you had done on the technical details, the production spaces themselves, the scenic elements, the costumes and the lighting....particularly the lighting. The name Carlton Winckler brought me up short; I knew Carlton, but in a totally different context. Here he was the 28 year old technical director and 35–40 years later he was a highly respected television lighting director and later consultant with Imoro Fiorentino & Associates. He was among the standard-setters when the industry moved from black and white to color in the sixties. I read somewhere that he was born in January, 1908, just 100 years ago. Faced with the pressure of an impossible schedule and Billy Rose and Amon Carter pushing, I can imagine what it must have been for Carlton to deal with Ed Kook, the young owner of Century Lighting. These must have been huge orders for this small company. They hadn't been in business for many years and Kook had been an accountant so he didn't come in with a lot of resources. I'm sure they were undercapitalized and now Billy Rose needed hundreds of Beam Lights and Lekos and all kinds of gear and Kook most probably made promises he couldn't keep and Carlton was the one everyone relied on to make the
vision (dream?) a reality. The Carlton I knew was a professional, polished, flappable older man. At 28, he must have been a professional, unflappable younger man!

I don’t know if you know Bill Klages. Bill is a very important TV LD and has been for 50 years. He was also at Fiorentino’s, probably with Carlton. He now lives in Santa Monica. If you’re interested in talking to him, I’ll try to put you in touch.

The article was very well done. It’s clear that it took a lot of time and research and I’m sure that like me, many other USITT members found it a “good read”!

Stan Miller
Dear Barry,

Thank you for sending a copy of your article. You and Annie did a great job. The article is beautifully illustrated and it’s really nice to see some of our photos in print. Plus, I know a lot more about Casa Manana now, which should come in handy in the future. It has quite an interesting history. Thanks also for the mention at the end.

If you have the PDF handy, I would like a copy. I’ll forward it to our administrators as an example of how our archival material is used.

Thanks again,
Mike

Mike Strom
Senior Archivist
Mary Couts Burnett Library
Texas Christian University
7-257-7595

3/5/2008