



The Grand Foyer

front centre of the second mezzanine. Coordination between conductor, organists etc frequently requires the use of a click-track. The target sound level is 98db.

The building includes a recording studio with independently sprung floor. Equipment is 32 channel, 24 track. There is yet another Wurlitzer and the room includes a fine collection of 1932 percussion with a particularly splendid Art Deco Glockenspiel.

Rehearsal rooms within the Music Hall building include one for the Rockettes with a measuring stick attached to the door – each

of the Rockettes (36 in the line plus 12 swing) must be between 5' 5½" and 5' 8" in height. Dressing Rooms include a special Animal Room.

There is appropriate and adequate on-site accommodation for all production activities including wardrobe (both making and maintaining), music library and design studios.

THE SHOWS

For forty-six years Radio City stayed with the blockbuster film plus stage spectacular formula that *the* Music Hall had developed

out of the older concept of cine-variety and thereafter made its own speciality.

Over the years, rising costs ensured that there was a dilution. The orchestra gradually dropped from 100 to 40 members. The Ballet Company (claimed to be America's first permanent Corps de Ballet) of 28 started to reduce in the late 1950s and was finally chopped in 1974. The famous Rockette kicking line shortened a little. By 1978, falling attendances, rising costs and, probably most devastating, the virtual disappearance of the big family-rated movie brought the theatre to the brink of destruction. Saved from redevelopment by a successful passionate campaign for designation as a National Landmark, the Music Hall came under the control of a new production company headed by Robert F. Janni.

An extensive renovation of the audience areas was put in hand: new carpet to the original designs, fabric renewal, total cleaning, freshening of gold leaf etc. etc. – and removal of the hot-dog and coke facilities which had crept into the grandeurs of the foyer and lounge during the cash crises. Practically everything (with the exception of the programme lights in the backs of the original auditorium seats) is restored to 1932 condition.

The films have gone and the stage show has reverted to the twice daily revue format for which "Roxy" had originally built his Art Deco Palace. Can Radio City Music Hall succeed now with a formula which fifty years ago survived not even weeks but mere days? Was a full stage show given a fair chance? A disastrously over-long opening performance combined with a first-night departure of the show's Designer (Robert Edmund Jones, no less) and first-night heart attack suffered by the project's mastermind, 'Roxy' Rothafel.

Is the place just too big to provide the audience/stage contact necessary to sustain a full-length programme? Much of the attraction of the 40-minute show in the old movie days was that all the wonders (the orchestra's arrival, the Rockette's Routine, the seasonal pageants, the scenery machinery) could be produced casually – almost thrown away. Now they may have to be milked.

On the other hand, history is now on the side of probable success. The building is not only an official American *Landmark*, it is an unofficial American *Institution*. An essential tourist attraction. A new addition to the show, two dozen young singers called the *New Yorkers*, are as wholesome as Doris Day. At least the *spirit* of the family blockbuster movies is alive and well and living in Art Deco splendour.



An Auditorium with good sightlines and remarkable acoustics.

The first major phase of the Music Hall's history – the period 1932 to 1968 – is detailed in a new lavishly illustrated book, *THE RADIO CITY MUSIC HALL*. An affectionate history of the World's Greatest Theatre by **Charles Francisco**. Published by **E. P. Dutton**, 2 Park Avenue, New York 10016.