



**REHABILITATION  
OVERVIEW  
2023**

**UPDATE 11/29/23**

# THE RITZ THEATRE

The Ritz Theatre once inspired a world of imagination and creativity for the Coastal Bend. Today it stands as one of the few remaining historic buildings in Corpus Christi.

Bruce Collins, a theatrical pioneer and member of the Robb and Rowley Circuit (predecessors of United Artists Theatres), built The Ritz Theatre in Corpus Christi in 1929. The Ritz was designed by St. Louis architect, W. Scott Dunne, as an “image of fantasy” using Art Deco style and Spanish Renaissance influences to create an atmospheric theatre palace. The elaborate interior, which seated around 1300, featured a Spanish courtyard façade and a ceiling painted like an illuminated night sky.



The Ritz's lobby was a grand, two-story, open space with a mezzanine balcony that circled the room, and featured beautiful mosaic tile and carpeted floors. 715 N. Chaparral served as The Ritz's flashy main entrance, while an additional box office and entrance faced Mesquite Street.



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Opening day for The Ritz Theatre was Christmas day, 1929, and it would thrive for 60 years despite the stock market crash, and the beginning of the Great Depression. The

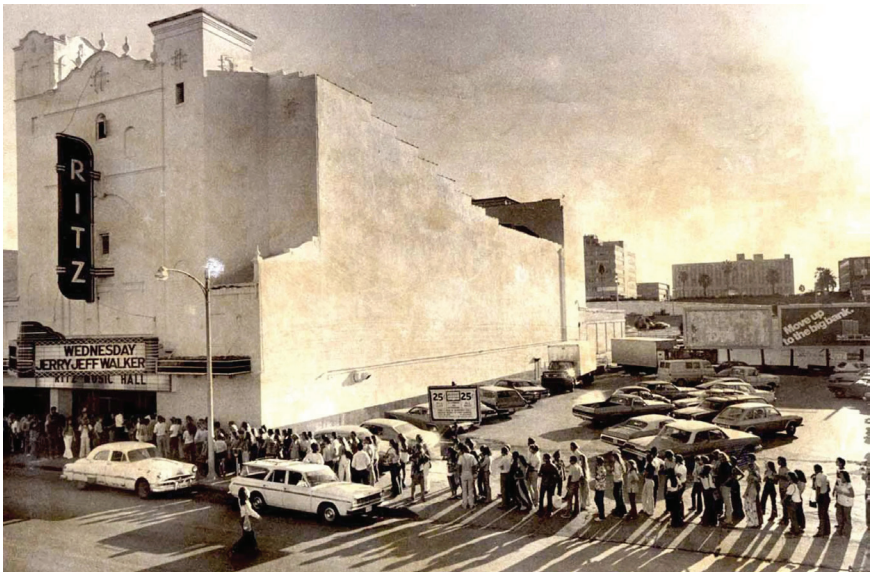
Ritz opened as a first-run movie theatre and vaudeville house. During World War II, big-name bands, USO performances, and vaudevillian acts entertained military personnel as well as the local community. The Ritz continued to thrive as a movie palace until the last regular scheduling of films in August 1972. It reopened as The Ritz Music Hall in 1974 and then Ritz Productions in 1976. Later, the Performing Players, an amateur theatre group, held shows at the theatre, followed by another amateur group, The Encore Theatre Corporation. The latter occupied The Ritz until the 1980's. The Ritz officially closed its doors in 1989 and has not been fully operational since.

# FUN FACTS ABOUT THE RITZ

- Once labeled “the finest in the state.”
- First talking movie theatre in South Texas.
- One of the first public use buildings to be air conditioned in Corpus Christi.
- Owned by Howard Hughes when he owned the United Artist Theatre chain.
- Presidents and actors attended movie premieres at The Ritz in the 1930’s and 40’s.
- Most remember the venue as The Ritz Music Hall from the 70s.
- The Ritz is an atmospheric theatre with a ceiling that looks like a night sky with stars and projected clouds.
- The Ritz was donated to CCPATCH by gift deed on December 23, 2010.

## A few past performers, 1950’s to 1980’s:

- |                     |                             |                     |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| • AC/DC             | • Elvis (50’s undocumented) | • Metallica         |
| • BB King           | • Foreigner                 | • Michael Murphy    |
| • Blue Oyster Cult  | • Freddie King              | • Motley Crue       |
| • Bo Diddley        | • George Thorogood          | • Pointer Sisters   |
| • Bob Dylan         | • Iggy Pop                  | • Richie Haven      |
| • Bruce Springsteen | • Jerry Jeff Walker         | • Robert Palmer     |
| • Charlie Daniels   | • Jimmy Buffet              | • Rush              |
| • Charlie Sexton    | • Joan Jett                 | • Stevie Ray Vaughn |
| • David Allan Coe   | • Kris Kristofferson        | • Styx              |
| • Def Leppard       | • Leon Russel               | • Ted Nugent        |
|                     | • Lynard Skynard            | • Waylon Jennings   |
|                     | • Megadeth                  | • Willie Nelson     |



# RITZ TIMELINE

**1929**

Bruce Collins has Ritz built by architect Scott Dunne

One of the first air-conditioned buildings in Corpus Christi

Stock Market crashes - start of the Great Depression

Opening day on Christmas "It's a Great Life" starring the Duncan Sisters for \$.39

**1930**

Hughes Franklin (Howard Hughes) owns Ritz

Theatre manager is E.H. Rowley who would eventually become part of the famous United Artists Theatres and owner of The Ritz

W.W. Jones suggests additional box office facing Mesquite St. to enhance property

**1940**

Big name bands entertain military personnel and local community

**1950**

Elvis plays free after-movie concert with touring show at The Ritz

Theatre forced to strip some embellishments like proscenium to make room for "big-screen" movies

Corpus Christi bans Elvis and rock n' roll due to "rowdy" concert in 1956

**1974**

The Ritz shows its last regular film screenings

Becomes "The Ritz Music Hall"

Productions from 1974-86 include Willie Nelson, Jimmy Buffett, Bruce Springsteen, Metallica, Def Leppard, Motley, Crue and more

**1976**

Amateur theatre group, The Performing Players, hold shows at The Ritz

**1980**

The Encore Theatre Corporation occupies Ritz

**1989**

The Ritz closes its doors



**2006**

CCPATCH is formed with mission to restore Ritz

**2007**

Ritz opens for public tours at Art Walk

Ritz holds Ghost Tours

**2010**

The Ritz hosts The Haunted Ritz Theatre event on Halloween

Theatre donated to CCPATCH from TRT right before Christmas

**2012**

Ritz is put on Texas' Most Endangered List

2012 *Texas* Most Endangered List

**2013**

CCPATCH and Mayor lift ban on Elvis and rock n' roll with celebration at Whataburger Field

**2014**

Live at The Ritz: the Revival Sessions music series

Clarissa Serna from NBC's The Voice and local Chicas Rock have exclusive performance at The Ritz Theatre

**2017**

Develop new programming plan for Artist Collective and Artist Nurturing Program

Manifesto published

New Board of Directors

¡Que Bueno! Taco Fest created (2018 first event)

**2021**

TIRZ Grant Roof restoration completed!

THC Harvey Grant awarded (executed 2022)



**2022: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CHERYL VOTZMEYER-RIOS HIRED!**

**2023: LEAD ARCHITECT, OTJ HIRED!**

# WHY RESTORE THE RITZ?

- The Ritz can serve as a beacon of entertainment at the entrance to the city.
- The Ritz is one of the last historic buildings still viable for redevelopment.
- The Ritz has been and will be a city icon once again.

## Reviving The Ritz will:

- Raise property values and bring in more tax revenue to be reinvested in the city
- Increase traffic to downtown and encourage the growth of business downtown
- Add a new, dynamic venue to stimulate the economy
- Inspire and support creativity and the arts

## A historic theatre in a medium-size city can, per year:

- Sustain more than 177 full-time jobs
- Create more than \$5.4 million in total area expenditures
- Generate more than \$500,000 in revenue for local governments
- Add more than \$4.2 million to household incomes in the community

*(provided by the League of Historic American Theatres)*



# THE PROS: OTJ ARCHITECTS

OTJ is one of the best of the best when it comes to restoring historic theatres, and they have been nationally-recognized for their work in the arts, culture, and education sectors. OTJ has renovated and preserved over 200 historic theaters, breathing new life into community icons that have fallen into disrepair. OTJ is based out of Washington DC, with offices in Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Miami, NYC, San Diego, and San Francisco.

## Recognizable projects restored with OTJ's help are:

The Majestic Theatre, San Antonio, TX

Alameda Theatre, San Antonio, TX

The Plaza Theatre, El Paso, TX

Boston Opera House, MA

Cincinnati Music Hall, OH

Grand Opera House, MS

The Howard Theatre, Washington DC

Kings Theatre, NY

MLK Jr. Memorial Library, Washington DC

Paramount Theatre, VA

Saenger Theatre, New Orleans, LA

Times Square Theatre, NY

The Theater of the Performing Arts  
at the Planet Hollywood Casino,  
Las Vegas, NV

We are most excited about OTJ's work in Texas, particularly their restoration work on The Plaza Theatre in El Paso. The Plaza was originally built by the same architect as The Ritz, Scott Dunn. We have few resources showing the original details in The Ritz and will look to The Plaza restoration to give clues on how to bring The Ritz back to its 1929 glory.



OTJ's first phase will start in the next few months and includes completing a building assessment, conceptual master planning, and cost estimating. Under the direction of Gary Martinez, OTJ has already secured team leads and we will be looking to add local professionals under this leadership team!

**Architectural – OTJ Architects**

**Theatrical Planners – Schuler Shook**

**Structural Engineers – Lundy & Franke Engineering**

**MEP (mechanical/electrical/plumbing) – Cleary Zimmerman Engineers**

**Plaster Repair and Decorative Painting – Evergreene Architectural Arts**



**Marquee and blade restoration design  
by Wagner Sign Co.**

WAGNER

# IMMEDIATE FUNDING NEEDS

CCPATCH is seeking \$500,000 as seed funding to kick off the first phase of the revitalization of the historic Ritz Theatre.

The first \$230,000 in donations will be doubled because of another grant we have received from the National Park Service and Texas Historical Commission related to past hurricane damage. The “Harvey grant” is to be used specifically on repair to the exterior of the building that was damaged by hurricane Harvey and this grant is time sensitive (must complete, pay for the work, and submit receipts for reimbursement by March 31, 2024).

## **\$500,000 will pay for:**

### • OTJ’s first phases:

- Building assessment and hiring the pro team
- Conceptual master planning
- Cost estimating
- Final plan submission

### • Completing the exterior work identified in the THC grant:

- Embedded steel repairs
- Patch and seal cracks in brick veneer
- Waterproofing exterior

### Other immediate work needed:

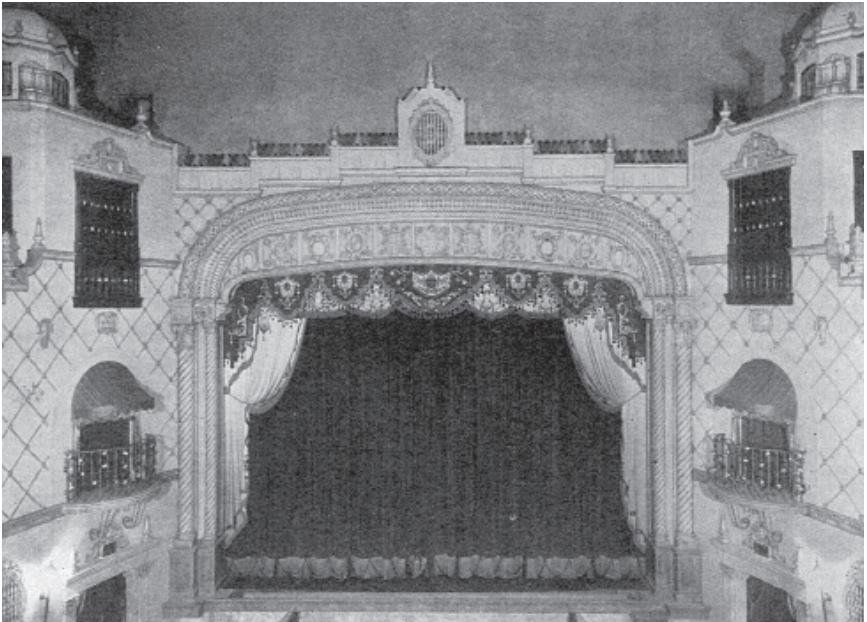
- Doors, windows, and access
- Fire, safety, and security





# RECENT WINS FOR THE RITZ

- Hired Executive Director, Cheryl Votzmeyer-Rios
- \$230,000 “Harvey Grant” from TX Historical Commission (reimbursement grant)
- \$230,000 grant from the City of Corpus Christi to match the Harvey grant
- Hired Susan Palmer as Fundraising Consultant to lead the capital campaign
- Unanimous approval to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places
- Exterior work to seal the building starts mid-December by Stoddard Construction



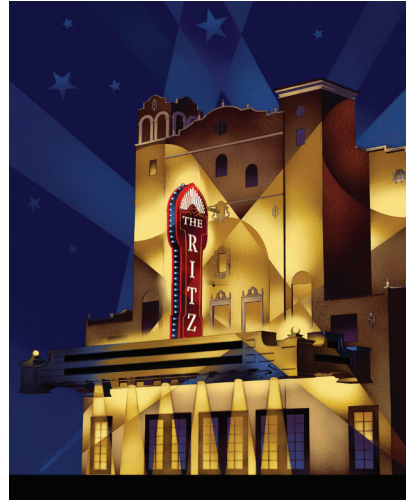
# **CORPUS CHRISTI PATCH:**

## **POSITIVE ACTION TOWARDS CULTURAL HERITAGE**

Corpus Christi PATCH is committed to developing, fostering, and promoting the arts as valuable experiences central to the vitality of the community by restoring and developing The Ritz Theatre into a state-of-the-art entertainment and education venue of the highest quality.

**Towards this goal, CCPATCH will undertake the following activities:**

- Restore and develop The Ritz Theatre into a state-of-the-art, multi-purpose arts and entertainment venue.
- Initiate programs in art, music, dance, theatre, and education to serve the citizens of Corpus Christi and South Texas.
- Create jobs with a positive environment and promote a higher worth for fields in the arts.
- Conduct ongoing planning and assistance for the growth of the arts and arts venues in the community.
- Work closely with the school districts, colleges and universities and other educational institutions on the development of educational arts programs.
- Facilitate a cohesive entertainment district by promoting communication and relationships between venues.
- Increase interest and traffic to downtown and enhance pedestrian use.
- Promote cultural diversity and preserve the heritage of South Texas.
- Develop awareness in the community of the value of the arts in our city.



## **CCPATCH Board of Directors:**

- Monica Sawyer, President
- Steve Sampson, Vice President
- Lesley Lomax, Secretary
- Jeff Smith, Treasurer
- Laura Sandoval
- Jessica Holt
- Melissa Espinoza
- Tom Gates
- Richard Hatch
- Courtney McIntosh
- Charlie Webb

*We will be announcing new board members soon, and are currently accepting applications for board members as well as advisory board members. Please submit inquiries and resumes by email to [cvotzmeyer@ccpatch.org](mailto:cvotzmeyer@ccpatch.org).*



### **Executive Director: Cheryl Votzmeyer-Rios**

Cheryl Votzmeyer-Rios spent the last few years completing her Masters of Public Affairs and Administration degree as well as growing her consulting business, CVotzmeyer Consulting, which provides valuable resources to arts organizations such as the Art Center of Corpus Christi and the Rockport Art Center. She also holds a Bachelors of Fine Art degree with a Minor in Art History. Many in the community know Cheryl as an artist and from her impactful work with K Space Contemporary, the Dia de los

Muertos Festival, and the Texas Women for the Arts. Cheryl is action-minded and works in service to the community through her board positions on the Downtown Management District and Revitalization Alliance, among others. We are honored to have Cheryl on our team and she is already working hard to bring The Ritz back to life.

**Since 2006, EVERY consultant the city has paid to deliver recommendations on improving Corpus Christi, increasing income, and generating growth and prosperity, has put reviving The Ritz as a key component in their action plan. It's time to take the expert's advice and take action to revive The Ritz Theatre!**



**For more information, contact CCPATCH  
Cheryl Votzmeyer-Rios  
Executive Director  
cvotzmeyer@ccpatch.org  
mobile: 361-728-7041**

**office: 361-887-6055  
PO Box 187  
Corpus Christi, TX 78403**

**The Ritz is located at 715 N. Chaparral St.  
Corpus Christi, TX 78401 (no mail here please)**



**[www.ccriz.com](http://www.ccriz.com)**



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**[youtube.com/@CCRitz](https://youtube.com/@CCRitz)**

## **SUPPORT THE RITZ!**

Any monetary donation or documented in-kind donation qualifies you to be a Friend of The Ritz.



***\*Donors contributing \$5,000 or more by 1-31-2024 will become members of the Founder's Circle, honoring those willing to be the first to invest in the rehabilitation of the historic 1929 Ritz Theatre.***