



## TACOMA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

For Immediate Release: May 18, 2017

### ***Coming Soon: “Showtime in Tacoma: Theaters and Performers”***

Tacoma Historical Society’s summer exhibit pulls back the curtain on Tacoma’s rich theater and entertainment history, spanning more than a century of changing venues, performers and technologies.

### ***Starring: Two new books from Tacoma Historical Society Press***

*Showtime in Tacoma* by Blaine Johnson and Brian Kamens, including essays by Murray Morgan, and *In Search of Alexander Pantages, Head of the Vaudeville Circuit*, by Griselda “Babe” Lehrer.

***Featuring: Autographed photographs of 35 world-class artists*** who performed in Tacoma from 1904 through 1927, including Rachmaninoff, Kreisler, Sousa, Nijinsky, and the Ballet Russe, as collected by impresaria Bernice E. Newell.

***Appearing:*** June 7 through September 9, 2017, Tacoma Historical Society Museum, 919 Pacific Avenue. Open Wednesday through Saturday, 11 am to 4 pm. Free admission.

***Opening Reception:*** Thursday, June 8<sup>th</sup>, from 5 to 7 pm.

Contacts: Tacoma Historical Society: (253) 472-3738, [info@tacomahistory.org](mailto:info@tacomahistory.org)  
Bill Baarsma, 253-759-6765, [wbaarsma@harbornet.com](mailto:wbaarsma@harbornet.com)  
Brendan Balaam, [curator@tacomahistory.org](mailto:curator@tacomahistory.org)  
Deb Freedman, [treasurer@tacomahistory.org](mailto:treasurer@tacomahistory.org)

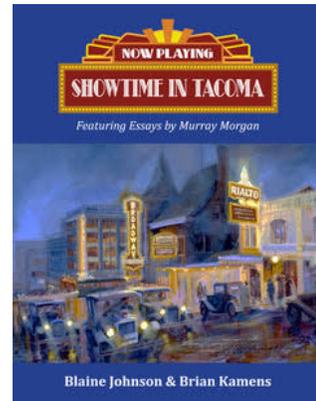
Tacoma Historical Society is pleased to present a new exhibit, “Showtime in Tacoma: Theaters and Performers” at the Tacoma Historical Society Museum, located at 919 Pacific Avenue in downtown Tacoma. Developed by curators Deb Freedman and Brendan Balaam and designed by Chris Fiala Erlich, the exhibit will run from June 7 through September 9, 2017 with free admission.

A special feature of the exhibit will be a display of autographed photographs of 35 world-class artists who performed in Tacoma from 1904 through 1927. The mementos were collected by Bernice E. Newell, who’s Artists’ Course of Concerts brought renowned performers to the stages and venues of Tacoma.

The exhibit opening will be held in conjunction with a jam-packed schedule of activities celebrating the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the premiere of the silent movie *Eyes of the Totem*, filmed in Tacoma in 1926. The exhibit is fully sponsored by “Team Totem” with revenues generated from *Eyes of the Totem* ticket sales. See the website [www.eyesofthetotem.com](http://www.eyesofthetotem.com) for details of anniversary events and showings.

In conjunction with the exhibit, Tacoma Historical Society Press is pleased to announce the forthcoming publication of two new books, begun by Tacoma luminaries Murray Morgan and Babe Lehrer more than a decade ago.

*Showtime in Tacoma*, by Blaine Johnson and Tacoma Public Library’s Brian Kamens, covers the theaters, venues, performances and events that have attracted audiences to more than a century’s worth of memorable experiences. “This is the story of what and where we watched, what we lost and, most significantly, how these deep-seated roots anchor a dynamic new era in Tacoma’s colorful cultural history.”

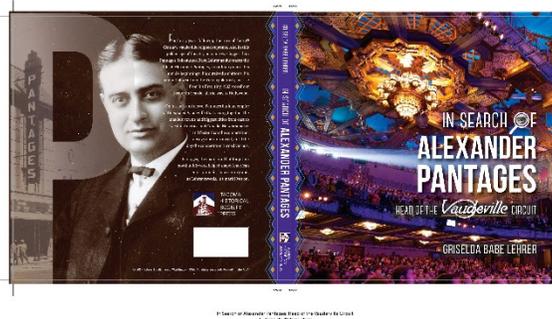


Over 150 theater names have graced the marquee of Tacoma, bringing a wide variety of performers and entertainment through an array of changing technology, while serving as gathering places for Tacoma’s growing sense of community and place.

Cover image by Marshall Johnson

*Showtime in Tacoma* is loaded with historic details and lively tales, including a dozen essays by the late historian Murray Morgan. “We’re deeply indebted to Lane Morgan, daughter of Murray and Rosa,” said author Blaine Johnson, “for generously making available boxes of materials from Murray’s unfinished work. It is particularly satisfying that Murray’s rich storytelling about Tacoma’s historic theaters now becomes available to a new audience through these essays.”

A second title, *In Search of Alexander Pantages, Head of the Vaudeville Circuit*, relates the saga of the theater mogul Alex Pantages - his personal life, his national theater empire and the cast of characters who shared his life and performed on his stages. The Lehrer Family Trust has finished the manuscript and research that was nearly completed by the late Griselda “Babe” Lehrer, a well-known Tacoma businesswoman and philanthropist who held a special place in her heart for Tacoma’s Pantages Theater.



###

About Tacoma Historical Society: Tacoma Historical Society is a community-supported volunteer-driven 501(c)(3) charitable, nonprofit corporation, and is dedicated to the preservation, promotion and presentation of the history of the City of Tacoma and its people. Tacoma Historical Society works to forge connections between past and present generations, fostering an appreciation of the past and a sense of place within our community’s history.

[www.tacomahistory.org](http://www.tacomahistory.org)