During construction

Waddy B. Wood (architect)

As the Town Theatre

NATIONAL MUSEUM of WOMEN in the ARTS
During construction, 1908
As the Town Theatre, ca. 1982

If These Walls Could Talk
Completed in 1908 as a temple for Freemasons, a male-only fraternity, this edifice has a varied history. Over the years, it witnessed secret Masonic rituals and public film premieres. In 1987, it became the only museum solely dedicated to women’s creative contributions.

Take a closer look
Notice the exterior’s stately Renaissance Revival elements—overall symmetry, solid base, arched windows, and Doric columns. Inside, find gilded lions and cornucopias—symbols of NMWA’s spirit of ferocity and fecundity—and the two-story proscenium, or arch, that once framed a movie screen.

Something to talk about
After your visit, walk by 1201/1225 New York Avenue, NW, and examine its architectural style. Completed in 1993, this building echoes the details of the Women’s Museum façade. What similarities do you notice? Why might an architect mirror characteristics of an older neighbor into their design?

Who knew?
The Great Hall appeared as a backdrop for R2-D2 and friends in the fan flick Star Wars: Revelations (2005) and as the German Embassy in Loose Cannons (1990), starring Dan Aykroyd and Gene Hackman.