

## POST PLUS

# Restoration plays to B'way acclaim

By WARD MOREHOUSE III

**T**HE latest theatrical gem to rise from the decay that was 42nd Street is nearing completion.

The 1,850-seat Ford Center for the Performing Arts — the brainchild of Canadian impresario Garth Drabinsky — is being built on the sites of the old 1,136-seat Apollo and 1,256-seat Lyric Theater, built in 1920 and 1903, respectively.

Beginning in the spring of last year, the old theaters were essentially gutted. But most of the design details and decorative motifs of the Apollo were salvaged and are being incorporated into the \$30-million Ford Center, which is scheduled

## Post takes sneak peek at theater

to be completed on Nov. 12. Drabinsky's Lyric, the Canadian theatrical giant that brought the hit "Show Boat" to the Gershwin Theater several seasons ago, is building the Ford Center (with financial help from the Ford Motor Co.).

Livent's \$10 million production of "Ragtime," a mega-musical based on the E.L. Doctorow novel of the same name, is slated to begin performances at the Ford Center on Dec. 26.

"Of all the theaters I've

built, this one has a quality about it that holds a very special place for me," Drabinsky said yesterday before Post Plus had a sneak peek at the construction.

Dozens of architectural elements from the Apollo were cut into pieces and transported to a warehouse in Bayonne, N.J., where each was restored by Iconoplast Designs before being reassembled.

"This is the first time this kind of restoration construction work has ever been done," said Francois Furiert, owner and president of Iconoplast.

"You know what this was?" added Furiert. "Science fiction."



Workers from Iconoplast Designs carefully incorporate pieces of restored plaster ceiling (salvaged from the old Apollo Theater) into the new Ford Center. *New York Post: David Rantas*



A mosaic takes form in the main lobby with the help of Leo Pomeranets (left). Meanwhile, Donna Brueger (above) answers to a higher calling. *New York Post: David Rantas*