

BRONX NEWS

ADDING LUSTER TO B'WAY

For nearly 60 yrs., family's cleaned costumes for many of city's biggest hits

BY CORINNE LESTCH
DAILY NEWS WRITER

WHEN BRUCE and Sarah Barish have time to take in a Broadway show, they notice the costumes before the acting or music.

That's because they own Ernest Winzer Cleaners, a 102-year-old Bronx staple known as "Broadway's Valet" for delivering freshly cleaned costumes just in time for the performances.

Bruce Barish said he knew at the age of 9 that he wanted to take over the cleaning establishment in exchange for a slice of showbiz.

"It's always been cool to me because we're doing Broadway, we're doing stars," said the Bronx native, now 45.

Bruce Barish said they are currently servicing shows like "Billy Elliot," "Mary Poppins," "The Lion King" and, yes, "Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark."

"I'm waiting for it to officially open so I can see the real show," he

said with a smile.

Framed posters of 1960s shows like "Golden Boy" with Sammy Davis Jr. line the walls of their office on Cedar Ave., off the Major Deegan Expressway.

Bruce Barish walked through the two-story complex, weaving between the 17 employees pressing, starching and pleating costumes to Bee Gees tunes.

One worked on a diaphanous gown from "Phantom of the Opera."

He pointed out costumes of previous shows — like "Chicago" — preserved and ready for another shot at the stage.

"They're forever changing the lead actresses," he said of "Chicago." "I think [model] Christie Brinkley is going into it."

They also clean the huge Toys "R" Us mascot head worn by Geoffrey the Giraffe and the famous red chair from popular kids' TV show "Blue's Clues."

When Mayor Bloomberg told New Yorkers Broadway shows were still open during December's crippling blizzard, "We had no choice but to get it done," said Bruce Barish, the third-genera-



tion owner after his grandfather bought the cleaners from Ernest Winzer in 1952.

The married couple have two teenage children, but Sarah Barish said the idea of taking over the dry cleaners doesn't appeal to them.

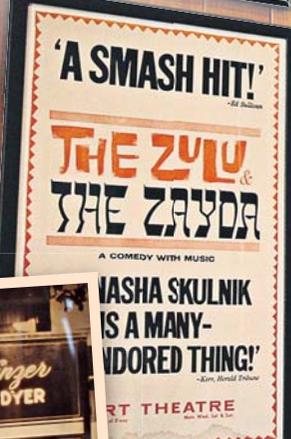
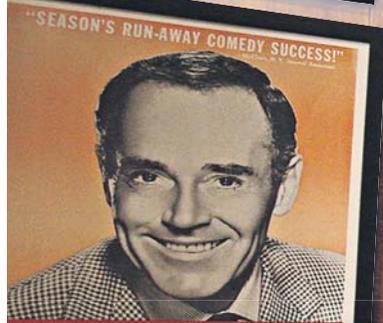
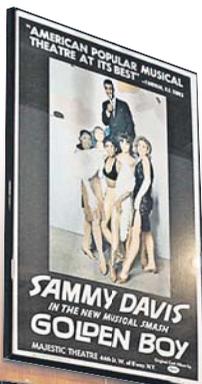
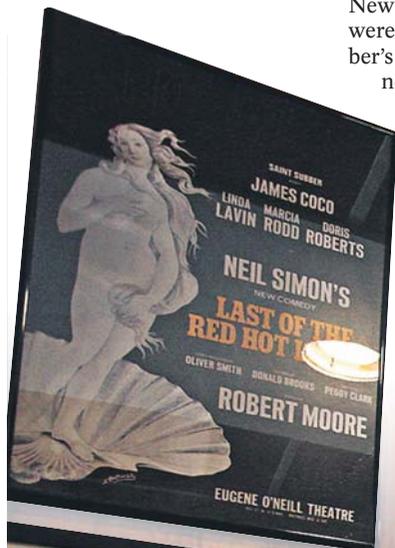
"If they want it, it's there, but they see how hard and long Bruce works, and they don't want that," said Sarah Barish, 46, who was a theater major in college.

But, she added, she's enjoying herself too much now to think about the future. "It's taken a long time to get it to where we want it to be," she said. "It's like you're just getting settled in your own skin."



Yogi Bear and sidekick Boo Boo (top l.) are just two of the many costumes given a shining at Ernest Winzer Cleaners, owned by Bruce Barish and his family since 1952. Top right is Susan Patino, a tailor at the store. Above are still more costumes business is entrusted with.

Below, Barish and his wife, Sarah, in front of posters of some Broadway hits the business — located on Cedar Ave. off Major Deegan Expressway — has worked with over the years. Photos by Victor Chu



Undated photo at left shows a vehicle advertising the company's services, before current family took over.

