

For Broadway show or bridal shop, the name Ernest Winzer & Co. signifies unexcelled quality in drycleaning. Over 50 years of experience with delicate costumes and overnight deadlines makes Winzer eminently qualified to handle the most exacting job.

Behind the scenes in scores of the country's finest dress shops Winzer is a star performer with its matchless workmanship. Customers and clothiers alike turn to Winzer for restoring the beauty and freshness of soiled gowns, customized dyeing and solving the most difficult garment problems.

Some claim the impossible takes them just a little longer; Winzer can do it overnight. For service, for price and for quality Ernest Winzer & Co. steals the show.

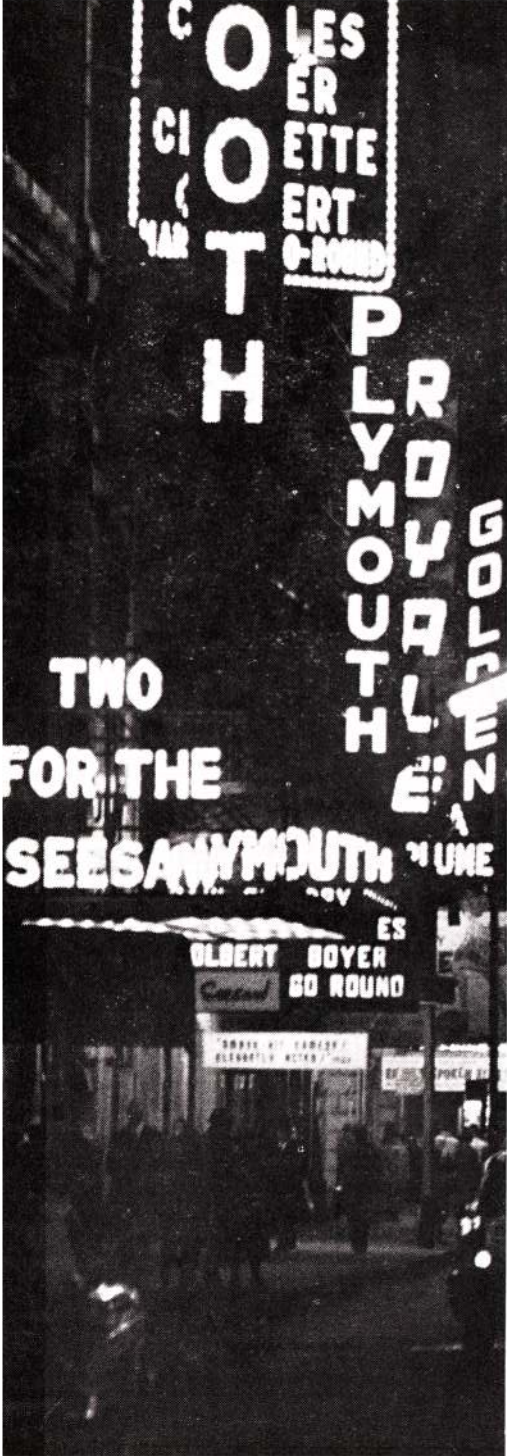
A PARTIAL LIST OF SATISFIED CUSTOMERS

Bergdorf-Goodman	Harry Belafonte	Ella Logan
Valentina's	Magda Gabor	Dorothy Kilgallen
Florence Lustig	Connie Boswell	Janet Blair
Elizabeth Arden	Imogene Coca	Wendy Barrie
Jane Derby	Pearl Bailey	Tallulah Bankhead
Alice Maynard	Jolie Gabor	Marlene Dietrich
Filer-Machol	Gypsy Rose Lee	Maria Riva
Kreinick Modes, Inc.	Eaves Costume	Steve Allen
Rulaine's	Margaret Truman	Wilma Gowns
Florence Lewis	Ethel Merman	Shirley Booth
Helene Pons	Lionel Hampton	Phil Spitalny
Harold Oberon	Audrey Meadows	Jane Froman
Henrietta's Dresses	"Fanny"	Playwrights Company
Anita's Dresses	Alice Maynard, Inc.	Sophie Tucker
Taub Bridal Gowns	Katherine Cornell	Morey Amsterdam
Weiss Bridal Gowns	Lena Horne	N.Y.C. Ballet
Susan's Dresses	Maria Jeritza	Rodgers & Hammerstein
Bibi's Dresses		



Broadway's valet steals the show with unexcelled quality

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BROADWAY'S VALET

There's no business like show business, but cleaning costumes for most of New York's plays is just a small part of this unique operation.

THE BUSIEST THEATERGOER in New York visits nearly 30 playhouses every week, but he doesn't go to see the shows. He's a routeman for Ernest Winzer, Inc., a 50-year-old cleaning company specializing in theatrical costumes.

In Winzer's plant in the second story of a onetime garage at 1828 Cedar Ave. in the Bronx, silk kimonos from "The Flower Drum Song" move along the same finishing line as garish band uniforms from "The Music Man" and spangled gowns from "My Fair Lady."

Costumes were the stock in trade for the company Ernest Winzer started in 1908. Ordinary cleaning was incidental. When Winzer sold the business to Al Steinhorn and Walter Stiehl in 1952, nearly 80% of the plant's volume came from Broadway shows.

In just seven years, the pair managed to tip the balance to a point where today non-theatrical work makes up three-quarters of their volume. At the same time they've held on to Winzer's reputation as Broadway's valet.

Al Steinhorn, a former laundryman whose forte is promotion, says of the business: "Most cleaners would probably consider our job impossible. We have to combine unusual speed with exacting quality. The pressure is great, but our people are used to it."

A typical theatrical job begins for Winzer before the show even reaches Broadway. Following a contact with the show's producer, manager or wardrobe mistress—most of whom already know of Winzer through association or reputation—a truck is dispatched to the show's final road stop, usually Boston, Philadelphia or New Haven.

The entire wardrobe is picked up after the Saturday night performance and taken back to the plant. By 5:00 Sunday morning the costumes are being checked in by one of three crews which work around the clock. The cleaning is completed in a day, and at 8:00 the next morning the finishing is under way. By 5:00 p.m. the costumes are ready for delivery.

The pressure doesn't let up once the show is on the boards. Each of Winzer's five drivers can make as many as 17 stops for pickups and have the costumes back in the plant by 12:30 a.m.

"These wardrobes often cost thousands of dollars," says Al. "Producers can't afford to use our service unless



every precaution is taken to return each costume in perfect condition."

Winzer's three seamstresses are kept busy removing buttons, ornamentation, dress shields and padding, and replacing them after the garments have been cleaned.

Problems are everyday occurrences. But Walter Stiehl, an old hand at solving production problems, is equal to almost any test.

One of Walter's severest tests occurred a little over a year ago during the run of "Oh Captain!" At the insistence of the New York censor, chorus girls in the show were fitted out in skimpy costumes featuring skin-colored latex bodices trimmed with fur.

To clean these costumes, he had to strip off the fur, wash and dry the latex and get the fur back on in time.

True to the traditional rallying cry of the stage that the show must go on, Winzer is equipped to cope with nearly every type of emergency. The plant has an auxiliary boiler and compressor to be used in case of mechanical breakdowns.

Only once has a power failure threatened to sabotage work. That was during a storm a few years ago, when Walter Stiehl was summoned from his bed in the middle of the night by an urgent phone call informing him that there was no electricity at the plant.

He sped across town toward the plant with nightmares rushing through his mind. Fortunately, a repair crew managed to restore the electricity soon enough for the night shift to get all the orders finished.

"That experience really gave me a few grey hairs," he recalls.

Elaborate ornamentation is replaced on costume from "Flower Drum Song" by one of the three seamstresses who must remove and later replace dress shields, padding and fancy embroidery. With Broadway's current accent on oriental shows, Winzer's seamstresses sew kimonos by the hundreds.



Calypso costumes for the musicale "Jamaica" join those of other Broadway shows on one of the most colorful finishing lines in the world. Winzer has 16 employees who do nothing but hand finishing of silks. They have to work fast and flawlessly so costumes can be delivered in time for shows.

Other cleaners might get gray hairs just looking at Winzer's silk line, especially this season when it's laden with elaborate oriental attire from no less than five Broadway shows.

Winzer has as many as 16 employees doing nothing but hand finishing silks. They're so proficient with hand ironers that they can usually turn out a garment as fast as an average silk finisher can with a machine.

Then there's wetcleaning.

Winzer probably does more wetcleaning than any plant in the U.S. Practically all whites are wetcleaned. For "The Music Man" alone 200 paisley shirts are washed every week.

It's this special care, both Al and Walter agree, that has been instrumental in Winzer's success—special care and speed.

Overnight orders are common-

place at Winzer's, and the whole operation is geared to work at maximum speed while maintaining quality workmanship.

Dye jobs, flameproofing, waterproofing, leathers, suedes and other special work which ordinarily takes at least a week in most plants must be done between performances by Winzer.

When a Columbia Pictures unit was in New York to film location shots for "The Eddie Duchin Story" its wardrobe was picked up at midnight and delivered the next morning at 7:00.

A studio official wrote: "It is hard to convince most cleaning organizations of the necessity for quick, fast, overnight service; and it becomes doubly hard when the work is often not in the plant until late at night. Your long experience with



WALTER STIEHL handles spotting problem on a gown from "My Fair Lady." An NID graduate, he is in charge of production.

theatrical cleaning was a great help to us."

Other customers have expressed the same sentiment. One of New York's most fashionable gown designers recommends Winzer as "the finest drycleaning service in the country."

Another clothier praised Winzer for the care that had been lavished on a \$3,000 gown. "It looks fresher and newer than it was when it was first finished," he reported.

Besides handling work for leading manufacturers, Winzer also counts among its customers Berg-

dorf-Goodman, John Wanamaker, Nieman-Marcus and other important stores throughout the country.

Nearly 95% of Winzer's volume is in charge accounts. Many of these customers do business with Winzer as a result of the plant's theatrical work. A sampling of charge accounts reveals such names as Harry Belafonte, Ethel Merman, Margaret Truman, Steve Allen, Dorothy Kilgallen and the Gabor sisters.

Rogers and Hammerstein are good friends of Ernest Winzer Inc., such good friends, in fact, that they see that all costumes for R & H shows are stored in Winzer's 1,000 square foot storage vault.

A trip through the vault and an auxiliary storage space is a tour through a museum of American musical comedy. Here one may see costumes from "South Pacific," "The King and I" and scores of other hit shows. Hanging in storage are the elaborate costumes for the television spectacular, "Cinderella," costumes that were only worn once.

Rogers and Hammerstein and other Broadway production groups like The Theater Guild and The Playwright's Company turn to Winzer for drycleaning because they have learned to expect exceptional service.

Twenty-four-hour phone service makes it possible for Winzer to solve last-minute emergencies. If someone spills makeup on Helen Hayes' costume in "A Touch of the Poet" the dress can be rushed to Winzer and restored to its original freshness within two hours.

Picking up a show at its final drop can be an expensive proposition. Not every play can be expected to furnish \$200 a week in cleaning

like some musicals. Every now and then a Winzer routeman will drive all the way to Boston to pick up four or five costumes.

There seem to be no extremes Al Steinhorn and Walter Stiehl won't go to in order to keep their customers satisfied. Recently they sent a station wagon all the way to Philadelphia just to pick up a suit from Claudette Colbert. The price? The same \$8.50 it would have cost Miss Colbert if she had brought the suit in herself.

Winzer's price structure starts at \$2 for a man's suit and \$2.50 for a plain dress. These prices hold true for the theater trade as well as the public. Says Al: "Our service reaches folks in all brackets."

Winzer's employees are accustomed to cleaning almost anything. A few months ago they were greeted by a 300-pound bundle of rags that had to be dyed to look like earth for the Washington opening of "J.B."

During the summer months when most cleaners are suffering from the summer slump, theater work is a salvation for Winzer. In addition to serving the shows running on and off Broadway, Winzer drycleans costumes for summer stock companies throughout the East.

With volume stabilized by theatrical work and personal cleaning increasing month after month, it's little wonder that Winzer has doubled its business in the last seven years—and with the same number of employees (40) that were on hand when Al and Walter took over the management.

In case Winzer's owners need more rewards than the growth of business



STORAGE VAULT filled with costumes from Rogers and Hammerstein shows is virtually a museum of American musical comedy.

and the reputation they've won, they can take a measure of pride in the fact that the drama critic for The New Yorker has on several occasions praised their performance.

Most recently he wrote: "... Fans of Ernest Winzer, the drycleaner, will be happy to know that his career continues to prosper and his art to deepen."

You may take exception to the old adage that there's no business like show business, but you'll have to admit there's no drycleaning business like Ernest Winzer, Inc. **END**