



PROJECT MUSE®

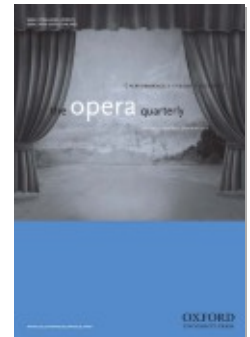
---

## **The Industrial Evolution of the Arts: Chicago's Auditorium Building (1889) as Cultural Machine**

Mark Clague

The Opera Quarterly, Volume 22, Number 3-4, Summer-Autumn 2006,  
pp. 477-511 (Article)

Published by Oxford University Press



➔ For additional information about this article

<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/opq/summary/v022/22.3-4.clague.html>

# The Industrial Evolution of the Arts: Chicago's Auditorium Building (1889–) as Cultural Machine

{ MARK CLAGUE }

Chicago had had the biggest conflagration “in the world.” It was the biggest grain and lumber market “in the world.” It was the greatest railroad center, the greatest this, and the greatest that. The shouters could not well be classed with the proverbial liars of Ecclesiastes, because what they said was true; and had they said, in the din, we are the crudest, rawest, most savagely ambitious dreamers and would-be doers in the world, that also might be true. . . . These men had vision. What they saw was real, they saw it as destiny.

—Auditorium architect Louis Sullivan<sup>1</sup>

## AMERICAN OPERA AS INSTITUTE: ENGAGING SOCIETY, FINANCE, AND ART

In his closing remarks at the First Chicago Opera Festival on April 18, 1885, real estate mogul Ferdinand Peck introduced the public to his idea of building a permanent home for grand opera in Chicago—what four years later would become the Auditorium Building (fig. 1). Addressing the audience in his role as festival president, Peck proclaimed the extraordinary success of the two-week, fourteen-performance gala, which had included works by Bellini (*I puritani* and *La sonnambula*), Donizetti (*Lucia di Lammermoor* and *Linda di Chamounix*), Gounod (*Faust* and *Mireilla*), Meyerbeer (*L'Africaine*), Rossini (*Semiramide*), Verdi (*Aida* and *Il trovatore*), Wagner (*Lohengrin*), and Weber (*Der Freischütz*), plus stars such as sopranos Adelina Patti and Emma Nevada and contralto Sofia Scalchi.<sup>2</sup> He highlighted what was believed to be world-record attendance (possibly over ninety to one hundred thousand people)<sup>3</sup> and revenues (\$132,000)<sup>4</sup> for such a festival by suggesting that these results justified the construction of a permanent opera house. With effusive pride the *Chicago Tribune* reported that

[Peck] desired to thank the people of this city for their generous attendance upon Chicago's first opera festival. It had been a success in every respect, and the management had done its best to accommodate and please the public. Their motto had been “Music for the people”—splendid music, interpreted by the first artists



Figure 1 Chicago's Auditorium Building, c. 1889. The tower marks the entrance to the theater, while the three arches facing the park offer entry to the hotel. Photo from *America from Alaska to the Gulf of Mexico, Series 1*, ed. G. R. Cromwell (New York: James Clarke, 1894).

of the world. The management had accomplished a task that could have been accomplished in no other city in the world—that of constructing this great auditorium in six weeks and producing upon its stage thirteen different operas. This had shown what Chicago would and could do, and he hoped that people would look upon this as a stepping-stone to a great permanent hall where similar enterprises would have a home. [Applause.]<sup>5</sup>

Peck rode the tide of applause to assert Chicago's needs for a large public auditorium and preached the advantages of such a hall. He saw in music, and opera in particular, a means for the city and its people to fulfill their pioneering destiny—a way to provide for the continuing refinement of the civic enterprise. The *Tribune* continued, quoting from Peck's speech:

The continuation of this annual festival, with magnificent music, at prices within the reach of all, would have a tendency to diminish crime and Socialism in our city by educating the masses to higher things.

[Applause . . . ] In conclusion, [Peck] desired to express his thanks to the directors who had assisted him so materially, to the men in the employ of the association, to

Mr. Milward Adams, who had so ably cared for the public in the auditorium, and to the press of the Northwest, which had been so magnanimous in its treatment of the enterprise. The festival had been given with no regard to monetary gain, and it had been a great success socially, financially, and artistically. [Applause.]<sup>6</sup>

This tripartite combination of social, financial, and artistic components generated, along with civic pride, the impulse behind Chicago's Auditorium Building (1889– ). Architects Dankmar Adler and Louis Sullivan typically are credited by historians with its design, which would be true if the building could be considered as distinct from its social and artistic context. In this sense, however, Ferdinand Peck (fig. 2) should be considered one of the principal designers of the Auditorium Building as social project. The structural ingenuity necessary to create this building required not just new strategies of integrating iron and masonry, balancing enormous loads on floating foundations, and enhancing space with allegorical art nouveau decoration; it also required the engineering of cultural production—the adaptation of European musical practice to a Gilded Age American industrial city.

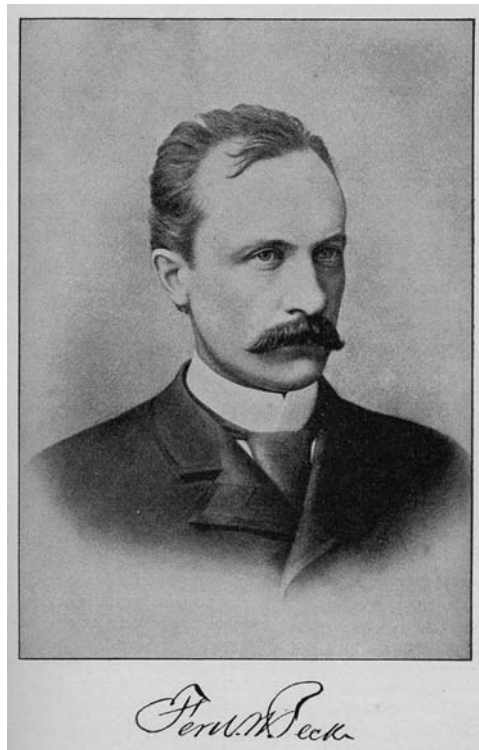


Figure 2 Ferdinand Wythe Peck (1848–1924), the social entrepreneur driving the Auditorium project. From W. S. B. Mathews, *A Hundred Years of Music in America* (Chicago: G. L. Howe, 1889), 321.

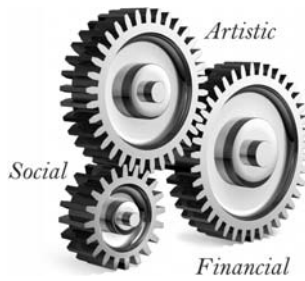


Figure 3 Conceptual mechanism of Chicago's Auditorium Theater as expressed by Peck. Presented as three interlocking gears (figure created by author).

Peck's innovation was the creation of a mechanism for producing opera—a cultural machine—that envisioned the work of culture as the mutual interdependence of social, financial, and artistic components. The Chicago Opera Festival, which used a temporary wooden theater designed by Adler and Sullivan to Peck's requirements, served as the test case—the prototype—to demonstrate the practical utility of his design.<sup>7</sup> Figure 3 illustrates the fundamental conception of Peck's invention by showing each of these three components as gears, in which the motion of one requires the motion of all and the movement of any propels the system as a whole. Thus an artistic triumph would drive ticket sales and bring the community together in a shared experience. A huge donation would pay the fees for increasingly famous artists, who in turn would attract audiences and sell more tickets. The hosting of a charity concert would bring in money for a social cause and thus provide for yet more performances. Similarly, impedance in any part would detract from the whole: artistic failure, social scandal, or financial distress would each add friction, reducing the musical productivity of such a cultural engine. In sum, this multigeared mechanism, integrating the financial, artistic, and social resources of an institutional system, may be seen as guiding the production of culture in Chicago explicitly in terms of the Auditorium but also as an intriguing analytical approach for understanding cultural institutions in other contexts.

#### THE AUDITORIUM BUILDING: BALANCING THE SOCIAL, FINANCIAL, AND ARTISTIC

In western European musical parlance, "opera house" refers to a theater built for the presentation of drama in which the actors generally sing throughout. Yet nineteenth-century America, in an essentially postcolonial context with its attendant anxieties over cultural legitimacy, incorporated the notion of an "opera" house or house for opera differently, ironically connecting more to its Latin etymological roots than to European usage. The word *opera* came through Latin into Italian, where it developed into a specific musical term from its

origins as the plural of *opus*, meaning “work.” The American opera house likewise has been a plural conception: a multiuse civic space performing a variety of cultural work: economic, social, and artistic. This fusing of civic, business, and artistic functions was increasingly true in the late nineteenth century and outside the major urban centers, when the desire for the prestige of an opera house encouraged smaller and less affluent communities to build their own. By combining functions, the cost of an opera house could be spread across a number of civic initiatives, making the house for musical works into a home for many and varied uses. For example, the “opera house” (1890–) in Woodstock, Illinois, outside of Chicago also houses the public library, council chambers, justice court, and fire station, while the city hall and theater are combined in the opera house of Rochester, New Hampshire (1908–).<sup>8</sup> Even New York’s [Old] Metropolitan Opera House (opened 1883) included street-level commercial spaces, a second floor with ballrooms and a restaurant, and apartments for bachelors in the corner blocks.<sup>9</sup>

As the realization of Peck’s vision in 1889, Chicago’s Auditorium represents the ascendancy and possibly the early apex of this many-faceted notion of the opera house as civic center. Rather than offering a home for music drama alone, it housed a consortium of private and public enterprise to invite the broadest range of patrons and their purposes through its doors. It comprised not only a state-of-the-art theater plus a smaller recital/lecture hall, but also a hotel, office and retail rental spaces, three restaurants, a bar, a music conservatory, a public observation deck, an artesian well, and even a Coast Guard signal station on its roof. Chicago’s Auditorium was not only a public hall, but also a comprehensive system of economic, social, and artistic production—a cultural engine—that would house, support, and inspire. Driving this mechanism was a second creation, the Auditorium Association, a board of stockholders that governed the engine’s operation. Founded in 1886, the association’s board met frequently during the design and construction of the Auditorium Building and annually with all stockholders. Ferdinand Peck served as the association’s first president.<sup>10</sup>

My suggestion is that in the American context, the prime mover of culture is not the patron, composer, performer, or even listener, but rather the institution that brings these actors into relation to one another. Such relationships are inherent to an institutional structuring of culture. These institutions develop and propel a particular use of culture for a particular purpose in a specific place. Thus, to find out what opera was in Gilded Age Chicago, we can analyze not only the happenings on its stage but also the relationships supporting its primary institution—the Chicago Auditorium Association and its building project, the Auditorium Building. These relationships in turn created cultural practice. They inspired and enabled the art practiced by the organization—they functioned as an

institutional machine or even muse, producing art and shaping the character and expression of that art. The essential theoretical shift in this ontology of American culture from work of art to work of an institution extends Karol Berger's exploration in *A Theory of Art*.<sup>11</sup> Berger rephrases the question of "what is art" as "what is art for?" Thus, for Berger, purpose begets definition. Taking Berger a step further, his query can be reconceived as "how does art work?" Thus, use begets purpose, which begets essence. In sum, by exploring the workings of an opera house in the institutional formulation of the social, financial, and artistic activities identified as crucial by its builders, the use of music reveals its purpose in a particular time and place and thus its ontological configuration. What Berger's formulation accomplishes is the destabilizing of music's ontology. Music is neither a thing nor an activity, as Christopher Small would have it, but rather a tool (thing) used (activity) by its makers (people) to accomplish a specific task (goal).<sup>12</sup>

Chicago's Auditorium Building offers an especially interesting case study in this analytical approach of ontology derived from practice, because one of its architects' aesthetic principles—that form follows function—helps answer its primary question. Although derived from the ideas of American sculptor Horatio Greenough,<sup>13</sup> it was Louis Sullivan, the so-called father of modern architecture, who popularized the phrase "form ever follows function." He summarized this idea in a poem published in *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* in 1896:

It is the pervading law of all things organic and inorganic,  
Of all things physical and metaphysical,  
Of all things human and all things super-human,  
Of all true manifestations of the head,  
Of the heart, of the soul,  
That the life is recognizable in its expression,  
That form ever follows function. This is the law.<sup>14</sup>

Thus the form of the Auditorium Building promises to serve as an excellent entry point for a deeper examination of its function and thus the function of opera in Chicago as conceived by Ferdinand Peck and his Auditorium Association. By examining the building, we can identify the function, purpose, and nature of opera in Gilded Age Chicago and further understand the manner in which the social, financial, and artistic components contributed to the workings of Chicago culture. Chicago's Auditorium thrived intermittently over the course of four decades during times when the components of its cultural mechanism worked together, each amplifying the effort of the other, and thus the remainder of this essay will explore its three main components outlined by Peck: the social, financial, and artistic.



## THE SOCIAL

The first component in Peck's cultural design was the social. Harmonizing opera's elite associations with late nineteenth-century midwestern democratic ideology was among his top priorities for Chicago's Auditorium Building. Rather than a social revolution (and the certain disruption of the base of power held by Chicago's industrial barons), Peck's strategy built upon the status quo by creating space for a broader segment of Chicago's public. The Auditorium celebrated the city's working class and recognized the interdependence of business owners and workers, while affirming the distinctions between them. Thus, the Auditorium was intended to help resolve class tension without eliminating class difference, in effect serving to justify and perpetuate class hierarchy while ameliorating certain features. The Auditorium would be "democratic"—a multiuse opera house that would rebalance and preserve, refine, and extend the social order.

One tactic for asserting the Auditorium's democratic identity lay in its seating plan. With over four thousand seats, the Auditorium would include nearly all willing participants and define the roles of patron and worker alike. Peck directed his architects to limit box seating. Rather than include horseshoe-shaped tiers of boxes as in La Scala (opened 1778) or the old Metropolitan, the Auditorium contains only forty boxes holding about two hundred people.<sup>15</sup> These appear only along the sides of the theater (twelve boxes at midlevel and eight below on each side; see fig. 4). This design eliminated what were usually the most prestigious boxes at the center rear of the hall, as well as the prominent proscenium boxes. Peck had adopted this arrangement before in the temporary Grand Opera Hall for the 1885 festival. In both cases, Adler and Sullivan seem to have privileged the boxes' function as places to be seen, rather than to see. Sullivan confirmed this thinking: "We are democratic in America and the masses demand the best seats. The boxes, you see, are on the sides and do not furnish the best possible view. In the imperial theaters the boxes are closed and take up all the best part of the house. Those occupying boxes in America desire to be seen, probably, more than they desire to see."<sup>16</sup>

Thus, form follows function. The open fronts of the Auditorium's boxes face out to the parquet seating instead of in toward the stage, and the room's sight lines allow the boxes to be seen from nearly every seat in the house.<sup>17</sup> Sitting in a box brought notoriety. Even if occupants went unrecognized, their names often appeared in local newspapers. Prestige was granted, but qualified. Sullivan's design also limited the boxes' traditional benefit as private space. Unlike at the Metropolitan, no exclusive anteroom was attached to boxes in the Auditorium, and no part of the boxes was fully shielded from public view, as this would have run counter both to their function as display and to their role in elite control (see fig. 5).<sup>18</sup> Only half walls divided the spaces. While curtains at the back and sides





*Figure 4 Auditorium seating as depicted from the second tier of boxes at the theater's dedication, December 9, 1889. Note that boxes appear along the side wall only, freeing up space for expansive main floor and balcony seating, and that the two upper galleries are kept close to the stage. From "Pride of All Chicago," Chicago Herald, December 10, 1889, 1.*

could be extended to separate the boxes from each other, the people in the boxes were always held under the gaze of the rest of the audience. Single columns separated the upper tiers, while ornamental fronts on the lower level formed an arcade that made it difficult for those sitting in the rear of the box to see the stage. Adler and Sullivan's design thus reduced the value of status in the Auditorium, exposing the priority of pretension over artistry in seat selection and making the house more democratic by giving the best theatrical experience to the more populated galleries. The architects effectively charged an artistic luxury tax of poor views for the privilege of visibility. Further, the behavior of each box inhabitant was on display, and thus elite behavior was tempered and bound to the Auditorium's decorum. The elite were thus encouraged to be sensitive to the listening experience of those in the orchestra and gallery seats. Business deals could not be negotiated during a performance; debutantes could not comfortably discuss the latest fashions.

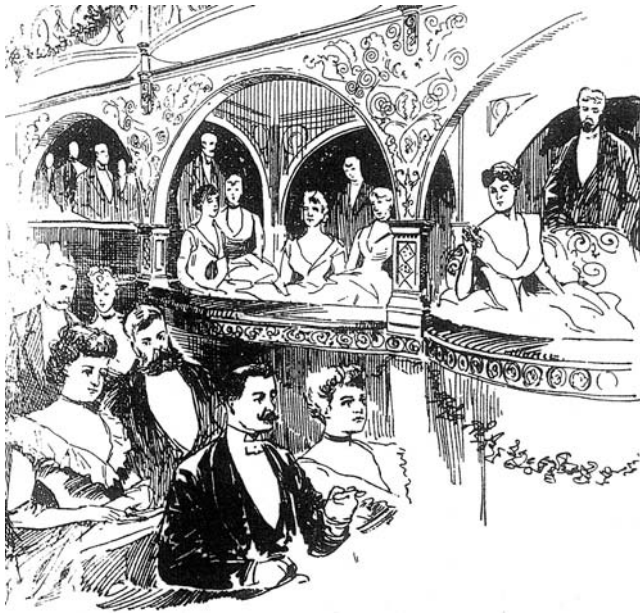


Figure 5 The lower tier of Auditorium box seats (a place to be seen) and the regular orchestra seating in front with superior sight lines (a place to see). From Chicago Herald, October 20, 1892.

This democratic impulse to seating design included the theater's enormous capacity of 4,237 patrons, supposedly the largest capacity of any opera house in the world at the time, which allowed ticket prices to be reduced by spreading the cost of the stage production among a greater number of purchasers.<sup>19</sup> This expansion resulted directly from the policy of replacing low-capacity boxes with expansive galleries.<sup>20</sup> These held an extra 412 people on the main floor and 1,632 in the main balcony, nearly doubling the capacity of the house.<sup>21</sup> Further, placed directly in front of the stage, such additional seats offered some of the best views. Patron and architects worked collaboratively, if sometimes acrimoniously, on the design. Adler attended the frequent meetings of the Auditorium Association's executive committee.<sup>22</sup> Peck's comments also make it clear that the disposition of seating reflected his own thinking. "The great opera houses of Europe," he wrote, "are all smaller in capacity, exclusive boxes occupying much of the space. They are built rather for the few than for the masses—the titled and the wealthy rather than for the people—lacking the broad democratic policy of . . . [the] Auditorium."<sup>23</sup>

The theater's social design extended to a concern for sight and sound. Adler's acoustical strategy, based on engineer John Scott Russell's "isacoustic curve," in which sound traveled congruently with sight lines, led to an unusually steep rake of the theater's seats.<sup>24</sup> This slope enabled direct sound to reach all members of

the audience, while also giving a clear view of the stage even to those in the least expensive gallery seats. To keep the upper views from becoming too distant from the stage, the topmost gallery was placed forward of the main balcony, thus putting the audience in the lowest-priced seats in better proximity to the performers. Further, Sullivan's decoration for the upper galleries retained similar florid detail in its stairways, carpet, and lighting fixtures (although with notably less stenciling and grandeur of scale) and the appointments offered individual seats, rather than the benches used in other theaters for their galleries. "The one great thing that honors a man," Peck was quoted as saying, "is to be an estimable citizen of Chicago, and . . . the amount of money in his possession is a minor matter."<sup>25</sup> Such democratic rhetoric reinforced Peck's tenet of respect for all classes, while simultaneously creating spaces in which each class could be safely segregated.

Auditorium policies in distributing tickets were equally important to this philosophy. The date when ticket sales would begin for a particular event or series was advertised in local papers, and all tickets were sold on a first-come, first-served basis. The wealthy could not reserve seats in advance of the public sale. Lines formed in the early morning hours for popular events, offering equal access to anyone willing to wait.<sup>26</sup> Boxes were sold on the same basis, unless they were auctioned in advance to foster donations.<sup>27</sup> Yet even in such cases, Auditorium policy limited aristocratic pretension. Auditorium boxes were never sold outright but were leased for a limited time period, nor did they become the private domain of wealth. Tickets for a box could be purchased for a "season," but such seasons typically lasted only a couple of weeks—the duration of a touring company's visit to the city. For future events, boxes would be leased again, thus making box holders an ever-changing group. Further, and despite elite protest, box tickets were also sold for workingmen's concerts, making the trappings of privilege available to working-class attendees for fifty cents.<sup>28</sup> Local papers even attempted to treat working-class box holders as they did wealthy patrons by printing their names in reviews. Indications are, however, that working-class attendees preferred to remain anonymous.<sup>29</sup>

While the democratic ideology of the Auditorium as set forth by Peck, his architects, and the members of the association's board was in no way revolutionary, it adhered to progressive social concerns, authoring a mutually dependent social contract. Workers remained workers and business moguls retained their riches, while the Auditorium served as a simulacrum of the social order, expanding membership to those frequently excluded from participation and obligating those who would be leaders to social patronage of the arts, in part for the benefit of the working class. Workers were obligated in turn not to upset the smooth operation of commerce, eschewing protest and unionization, and simply filling both their appropriate seats in the upper galleries and their supporting roles in Chicago's economy with gratitude and due decorum. In this light, Peck's statement in his

closing speech at the opera festival becomes intelligible. The Auditorium would reduce crime and the threat of socialism (in the 1880s this referred mainly to worker unionization, not the red scare of the twentieth-century cold war) by enforcing a social truce among both high and low. Those who took their seats in the Auditorium, whether in a gallery or box, accepted and extended the social status quo. The Auditorium further served to broadcast news of this compact, reassuring potential investors and laborers alike that Chicago was a city in which class discord had been harmonized. Chicago, so the building implied, was a place where investments and entrepreneurial efforts would be secure, and accounts in such newspapers as the *New York* and *London Times* amplified this claim.

#### FINANCE: THE AUDITORIUM AS ECONOMIC ENGINE

Essential to the workings of the Auditorium Building as a cultural machine was the ability of supporting spaces around the theater to manufacture profit. Earnings were intended to cover operational costs, pay dividends to stockholders, and subsidize activities onstage. At least according to the sales rhetoric of Peck's pitch to prospective investors, the Auditorium would not run the fiscal deficits characteristic of other similar American theater projects, including New York's Metropolitan and Cincinnati's Music Hall. Low-risk rentals were to be the Auditorium's primary source of income. In this way, risk was to be borne by the lessee, not the landlord—a business advantage that Peck knew well, as leasing real estate was the source of his own fortune. The Auditorium's multiuse spaces, such as meeting rooms, retail shops, hotel quarters, and restaurants, would bring in money at regular, predictable intervals over long-term leases, while also incorporating the building's uses into the day-to-day lives of Chicagoans, who could buy cosmetics from the Auditorium Pharmacy, have a drink at the Auditorium bar, have lunch in the café, or rent rooms for a meeting or reception. Peck's sales pitch was unexpectedly successful. He raised over six million dollars to create the most expensive building in the United States at the time. As the project's grandeur increased even beyond what Peck had first envisioned, the Auditorium became an even more effective signal beacon of Chicago's postfire economic recovery and strength. Yet the choice of which revenue-producing spaces to build involved several factors: location, economics, and the project's social and artistic aspirations. These spaces were essential to the smooth operation of the Auditorium cultural machine.

#### OFFICE SPACES

The Auditorium's 136 office spaces were rushed to completion in early 1889. The association hoped to welcome tenants (and start collecting rent) in May.<sup>30</sup> Leasing

offices represented the ideal financial motor, offering strong profit margins and minimal risk. Expectations were high. In March the association reported that Wabash Avenue frontage was renting at twice the anticipated rate.<sup>31</sup> The Auditorium Tower, reaching to an unheard-of 270 feet above street level, also commanded premium fees. These tower offices had better light and ventilation and were farther removed from street noise than any other commercial space in the city.<sup>32</sup> Although tenants began moving in by the May opening date, it was not until September that all occupants were accommodated.<sup>33</sup>

To speed construction and hold down costs, architectural ornament in the office block was kept to a minimum. Yet Sullivan worked within the confines of this simplicity to convey the function of the space in its design. Indeed, the unadorned iron, brick, tile, and stone testified to the Auditorium's fireproof construction—a valuable feature for tenants.<sup>34</sup> More important, the design's simple strength, pragmatism, and functionality underscored the values of Chicago business. The entrance to the office block, for example, was subtly marked by two semicircular, dressed granite arches that rest upon a low, massive, proto-Doric column. Rather than the triple arches of the hotel and theater, the business entrance features a more modest pair rooted in the elemental strength of the simplest Greek architectural order.

Except for the many florid cast-iron fireplaces in the offices, the decorative opulence found in the theater and hotel was confined to the office block's public common areas, such as the entrance, lobby, stairways, and elevators. Here, plant-inspired natural designs realized in bronzed iron captured some of the theater's elegance. The city's ingenuity was further celebrated in the achievements of Chicago's Winslow Brothers, metalworkers who transformed coarse iron into vegetative tendrils to realize Sullivan's fantastic organic tracteries. Sullivan's designs praised the vitality and originality of Chicago's entrepreneurs, while ameliorating the dangers of wealth. Nature references were intended to soften and warm the cold stone of the office block—a move integral to the building's progressive social rhetoric. In the Auditorium, the devil of wealth, Mammon, was to be rehabilitated by commerce's partnership with culture. Wealth was to be pursued in the service of not just the self but also the community. Leasing an office in the Auditorium thus helped the business owner appear philanthropic because the rent was known to support the theater, and thus the prestige of an Auditorium address reflected well on a business. Peck's insight was to fuse the acts of philanthropy and investment.

Possibly more valuable for the Auditorium's investors than direct dividends were the profits driven to related businesses that the new building inspired. The Auditorium helped transform Chicago's South Loop business district into a musical and cultural mecca, pulling associated business to the Wabash-Congress-Michigan Avenue district. Many of the city's music stores moved nearby to reach

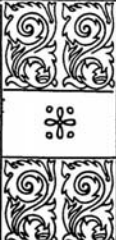



customers brought to the area by the building, forming what became known as Chicago's Music Row. In 1889 the music trade journal *Presto* predicted that "a large share of [Wabash Avenue's] growth will come from the music trade."<sup>35</sup> Later that year, George W. Lyon established Lyon and Potter with six floors of musical goods at 174–176 Wabash,<sup>36</sup> and in 1891 the piano and organ manufacturer W. W. Kimball opened a showroom on the southwest corner of Wabash and Jackson. By that time, at least five music schools and thirteen music stores had Wabash addresses.<sup>37</sup> The Auditorium similarly fostered an alternative theater district to rival Randolph Street. Joined by the Fine Arts Building and its Studebaker Theater (1898) immediately to the north,<sup>38</sup> which featured English-language opera, and the Blackstone Theater (1910) to the south, the Auditorium eventually stood at the center of a thriving theater/music industry matrix.<sup>39</sup> When Orchestra Hall opened a few blocks away along Michigan Avenue in December 1904,<sup>40</sup> Music Row's identity was firmly established.<sup>41</sup>

#### RETAIL SPACES

Although its retail spaces provided rentals, the Auditorium's street frontage also served purposes more social than commercial. The hotel lobby, reading room, café, and restaurant all took up valuable ground-floor commercial space that could have produced additional outside income. Independent shops could rent space only on the Wabash side of the building. Occupying the premier commercial space on the corner of Wabash and Congress was the Auditorium Pharmacy and its perfume store.<sup>42</sup> Featuring beauty products, the shop took advantage of its location within the Wabash fashion and housewares district, as well as the proximity it enjoyed to the Auditorium's women's restaurant and beauty salon. The pharmacy also produced its own cosmetic—Auditorium Cold Cream (Fig. 6)—advertised as an

**:: *The Auditorium Cold Cream* ::**





*might be called the emblem of purity.  
It is so white—so smooth, so fragrant  
and so pure.    ::    ::    ::    ::    ::*

**AUDITORIUM PHARMACY**  
**THE PERFUME STORE**  
**WABASH AVE. and CONGRESS ST.**

Figure 6 Auditorium Pharmacy cold cream advertisement, c. 1890s. Swindall collection, used by permission.



Figure 7 “Auditorium Brand” coffee can label, n.d. Author’s personal collection.

“emblem of purity” and sold for fifty cents a jar. American soprano Emma Eames testified in an advertisement letter supporting the product, writing, “I find your cold cream most excellent and very soothing to the skin.”<sup>43</sup> Another company to trade upon the Auditorium’s name was Chicago’s Buckeye Pure Food Company, which sold “Auditorium Brand” coffee (fig. 7).<sup>44</sup> A barbershop was located next to the beauty salon, both operated by the hotel.<sup>45</sup> While a prominent component of the building’s economic structure, retail space provided comparatively little income. Its real benefit was to integrate day-to-day activities with the opera house, making a trip to the Auditorium routine and placing reminders in the home of the Auditorium’s associations with the good life.

#### THE AUDITORIUM HOTEL: AN INEFFECTIVE DESIGN

Despite hopes that the hotel’s four hundred rooms would deliver the largest share of the building’s income, the Auditorium Association did little during the planning stages to assure its success.<sup>46</sup> Neither Adler nor Sullivan had any experience designing hotels, and no expert was consulted during the initial design phase to make certain that the many components of the hotel would work in harmony. Not until October 1888, well after plans for the hotel were approved, did the association begin seriously to consider its management.<sup>47</sup> Before a contract was signed, prospective managers insisted on adding a banquet hall<sup>48</sup> and required the association to pay a third of the salary for a hotel consultant to work



with Adler and Sullivan until the building was finished.<sup>49</sup> The Auditorium's enormous theater space in the center of the building left only a shallow corridor between the rear stage area and the street for the hotel, which complicated and compromised its design.<sup>50</sup> As a result, the hotel, particularly in the years before corrective remodelings, suffered from spatial inefficiencies that reduced profits.<sup>51</sup> Yet this neglect also reflected the priorities of Peck and the association. Resources and space were given preferentially to the Auditorium's public areas instead of its guest rooms—a choice suggesting that the hotel served purposes other than maximizing income.

Adding a hotel to the Auditorium was not simply a financial decision. Convenient on-site accommodations proved advantageous to the Auditorium's roles as theater and convention hall. Its kitchens and social spaces provided catering and meeting rooms for Auditorium events, including receptions, charity balls, and other society functions.<sup>52</sup> A large proportion of the hotel's already limited space was given over to function rooms, a banquet hall, and two separate kitchens, as well as for refrigerated and dry food storage. The hotel's comfort and thus profitability might have been better served if some of this space had been used for guest rooms, especially by including private baths.<sup>53</sup>

Yet the association's social strategies were in many ways a success. The building's reputation made its two reception rooms the most popular places to welcome Chicago's visiting dignitaries. The largest events made use of temporary flooring that could be extended over the theater's parquet seats to form a reception or meeting hall for up to twelve thousand people.<sup>54</sup> Despite being a last-minute addition, the exquisitely decorated banquet hall offered one of Chicago's most spectacular social spaces. The hotel's main restaurant, built on the tenth floor so that cooking odors could be vented through the roof, as well as the two ground-floor eateries, provided lunch and dinner to out-of-towners as well as locals. Long after other downtown restaurants had closed for the evening, the Auditorium's food emporia remained open, catching the crowds after performances.<sup>55</sup> Even with its design problems and labor inefficiencies, the Auditorium Hotel immediately challenged the economic and social dominance of the city's other leading establishments, such as the Palmer House and the Grand Pacific.<sup>56</sup> Particularly telling is that the Auditorium Hotel charged up to four dollars a night for rooms during the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893. Only two other Chicago hotels, the Hotel Woodruff and the Hotel Metropole, were able to demand such a premium rate.<sup>57</sup>

While it is all but a truism to state that money is the *sine qua non* of cultural practice, few studies of music's history fully address the art's economic dynamics. The economic accomplishments of the Auditorium Building were several. Most important, it set a precedent for cultural philanthropy in Chicago that transformed donations for the arts into civic investments and required their continuation. The

building also deepened links between business and performance by placing a theater at the heart of a cultural economic zone. Further, the project forged new connections between Chicagoans and culture by bringing people to the city's premier musical venue as part of their day-to-day lives. As a direct financial subsidy for artistic practice, the Auditorium was never terribly successful. The theater ran deficits that the building's income could not cover. In fact, the Auditorium Building returned a profit in only one year (1893–94), when hotel income spiked from the World's Columbian Exposition and Imre Kiralfy's huge allegorical pageant *America* filled the theater's seats every day for months on end. After the building's opening 1889–90 gala season, the project and its progressive social dreams were increasingly compromised by this financial insecurity.

#### ARTISTRY

The final component of Peck's cultural engineering was the artistic. Because we lack recordings and other objective, comparable artistic accounts from the nineteenth century, the artistic component is all too easily left out of analyses of Gilded Age culture in the United States.<sup>58</sup> Yet this is a mistake. Not only were certain patrons strong devotees of the arts who gained deep personal satisfaction and pleasure from the musical performances they sponsored, but their social and financial concerns were tempered, if not at times trumped, by the artistic. Peck, for example, was an ardent opera lover and named such "old" operas as Gounod's *Faust* (1859), Verdi's *Il trovatore* (1853), and Balfe's *The Bohemian Girl* (1843) as his personal favorites.<sup>59</sup> Further (and more important to this analysis), social and financial goals were facilitated by, rather than perpetually in competition with, artistic success. This was Peck's vision, and evidence for the interrelationship of these three components can be found throughout the Auditorium's design and operational practices. The building was art. It was intended to house and nurture art. In particular, it was hoped that the building's financial and social success would inspire the further development of opera, especially an American repertory and school of composers, nurtured by audience support and the technical advances of the theater's stage mechanism.

Perhaps the greatest architectural influence on Chicago's Auditorium was Richard Wagner's Bayreuth Festspielhaus, which was similarly propelled by an operatic aesthetic.<sup>60</sup> Built from 1872 to 1876, the 1,800-seat theater used a Greek amphitheater plan to give all spectators a clear view of the stage. Boxes were present but placed at the rear of the audience, reducing their effectiveness for display. Balconies and galleries, typically the seats of poorer classes, were eliminated. No inexpensive seats were made available. Instead, Bayreuth encouraged the formation of Wagner clubs, through which members of modest means could pool their resources to purchase certificates entitling them to seats at the theater

that would then be shared among members. It is difficult, however, to call these arrangements “democratic,” since Bayreuth’s isolated location in a tiny town far outside of Munich made attendance at Wagner’s lengthy festivals accessible primarily to a well-heeled audience.<sup>61</sup>

The ideological parallels between Bayreuth and Chicago’s Auditorium revolve around the bold assertion of national identity through cultural means. While Wagner hoped to transform German art in his own image, Chicago used the Auditorium both to assert the strength of American culture as well as to proclaim its own arrival as a premier international city. Bayreuth’s influence on the Auditorium might be best located in their common aspiration to advance art. Wagner’s seating plan, for example, is better understood as aesthetic—what the composer himself called “a bold call for the participation of the spectator’s imaginative power . . . in order to transport him into a world of music.”<sup>62</sup> The intimacy of Bayreuth’s relatively small audience and the elimination of aisles dividing the audience, so that all sat in continuous arcs around the stage, intensified the dramatic experience, bringing the audience closer to the action and requiring polished acting by the vocalists. Bayreuth’s most radical innovation further reduced the distance between audience and drama. Typically, the orchestra pit separates the stage area from the seating, but at Bayreuth the audience sits closer, with the orchestra performing from under the stage; the music rises through the floor, emanating from the point of the drama. The coincidental muting of the orchestra also helps the voices to be heard over Wagner’s massive orchestrations. Early drawings for the Auditorium’s orchestra pit used this Bayreuth design.<sup>63</sup> Further, innovations such as the suspension of the Auditorium organ’s cathedral chimes in the fly loft drew from the same impulse toward realism by placing narrative sound effects on the stage.

Reflecting Wagner’s limited funds, the designs for Bayreuth used resources not for a monumental facade or luxurious appointments, but in the service of drama itself. Using the most advanced stage and lighting machinery then available, Wagner hoped to raise production values to reach “the utmost possible achievement of sublime illusion.”<sup>64</sup> In a similar spirit, the Auditorium’s hydraulic stage, central controls, and rotating panorama enhanced the resources of operatic stagecraft. To inspire directors and composers alike, the Auditorium Association did not economize on its stage apparatus, boasting that over \$175,000 had been spent on the equipment alone.<sup>65</sup> America’s industrial revolution had been driven by technology, and many who benefited from it—especially among the Auditorium’s elite patrons—believed deeply in the power of American innovation.<sup>66</sup> Railroads, grain elevators, McCormick’s reapers, refrigerated boxcars, and the disassembly lines of meatpacking houses, among countless other inventions, had made Chicago’s economic growth possible. Likewise, technology would help make the Auditorium a marvel of American enterprise and, in turn, inspire artistic innovation. Peck was proud to have the most advanced stage in the world

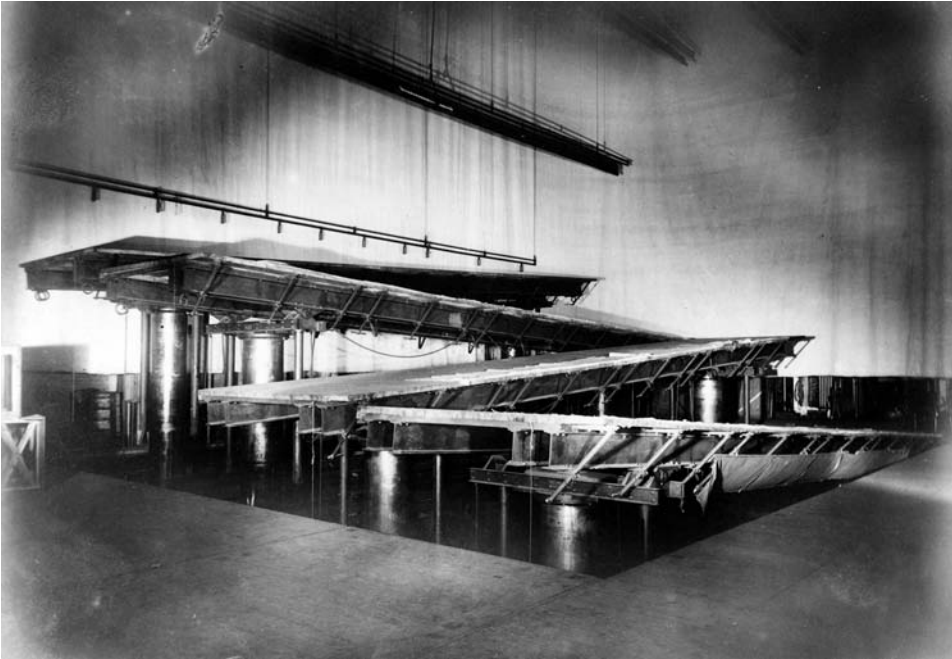
and to have directed money toward making it so. It was hoped that these resources would enhance the work of the artists, engage the attention of the audience, and nurture the art of opera in the United States, possibly inspiring a florescence of American opera composition.<sup>67</sup>

Ultimately, the Auditorium's facilities derived from two main sources: Adler's expertise and the borrowing of the most innovative European technologies. Dankmar Adler exemplified the Chicago architectural school's emphasis on structure over ornament and pragmatism over fashion. A published expert in theater design, Adler gave detailed attention to fireproofing, acoustics, sightlines, mechanics, and such practical requirements as scenery storage, dressing rooms, and the number of stagehands required.<sup>68</sup>

In April 1888 the Auditorium Association sent Milward Adams, soon to be hired as the theater's manager, to Hungary to examine the Asphaelia system stage machinery at the recently built Budapest National Opera House (dedicated in 1884).<sup>69</sup> Peck followed during the summer; and in August, Adler and John Bairstow, the Auditorium's head stage carpenter, traveled for further European research. After visiting major theaters in England, France, Germany (including Bayreuth), and Austria–Hungary, they decided that the Asphaelia system was best suited to conditions in the Auditorium, where the relatively small dimensions of the stage required efficiency and flexibility.

The Asphaelia Gesellschaft had been organized in response to the 1881 Ringtheater fire in Vienna.<sup>70</sup> The group took advantage of recent mechanical and scientific research to update theater design and stagecraft, improving fire and stage safety while making backstage work more flexible and efficient. Mechanical winches and automated stage traps made scene changes faster, and their reliance on central controls reduced labor costs. With the Asphaelia system, just a few stagehands could do the work formerly done by many. Only three other cities, all in Europe, possessed theaters with similarly modern stage equipment: Budapest, Prague, and Halle.<sup>71</sup>

The Auditorium Association hoped that such sophisticated stage equipment would be a “permanent attraction”<sup>72</sup> of Chicago's new theater, strengthening the realism of the *mise-en-scène* and helping performers better capture the imagination of their audiences. Among the most remarkable stage appointments was a system of hydraulic rams and traps that allowed the entire stage, or just sections of it, to be raised and lowered. Four bridges (fig. 8) and twelve stage traps could be adjusted independently to various heights up to eighteen feet below the stage and thirty-one feet above, accommodating a wide variety of arrangements, including seating for a large festival choir.<sup>73</sup> A “star lift” could introduce a single singer to the stage from below. In addition, the traps could be rocked during performance to simulate wave motion.<sup>74</sup> As a writer in the *Tribune* explained:



*Figure 8 Auditorium stage's four bridges set as a continuous ramp, c. 1889. Courtesy Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, HABS IL-1007-92.*

A goblin or fiend may shoot up as quick as lightning, or a ghost rise slowly into view. No need any longer to depend on the effects of an imperfect perspective and an occasional rock to represent the valley in which old Rip Van Winkle appears. A real valley can be produced on the stage by someone on the stage floor touching a few brass handles and knobs, when the traps will rise or drop and give the desired elevations and depressions. No need of any makeshifts to produce the impression of a ship at sea. H. M. S. Pinafore can appear rocked by the waves.<sup>75</sup>

A central switchboard controlled the rams and more than a thousand stage lights. Mechanical winches or “travelers” enabled the operator to bring scenery from the wings onto the stage with the pull of a lever. Such devices, further updated from Asphaelia’s original Budapest design, allowed Chicagoans to claim the most sophisticated stage in the world.<sup>76</sup>

These stage mechanics also enhanced the house’s democratic principles. Set changes onstage at New York’s original Metropolitan Opera House were notoriously slow by comparison, necessitating additional break periods between scenes that spurred further socializing in the private boxes that dominated the house. In the “democratic” environs of the Auditorium, however, such time for socializing was seen as an annoying, elitist delay. Thus the automated and improved

Asphaelia system greatly reduced the time needed for set changes and limited social time to regular intermissions between acts, when all patrons would leave their seats to interact in the common areas and lounges.

#### THE SOCIAL BENEFITS OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY TOURING COMPANIES

The appointments of the Auditorium stage were built explicitly to attract and serve late nineteenth-century touring companies. The theater's extraordinary capacity and thus its potential to host large paying audiences helped lure New York's star-studded opera troupes, such as those run by the Metropolitan, Henry Abbey, Maurice Grau, and Colonel James Mapleson, to Chicago for short, festival runs. To please star singers, Adler included six sumptuously appointed dressing rooms to the north and south of the stage. Another twenty dressing rooms were built to the north of the stage in the Studebaker addition.<sup>77</sup> Each was carpeted and lit with gaslights to assist makeup application and contained an electric bell wired to the prompter's box, so that singers could be cued to appear.<sup>78</sup> Every group of four dressing rooms formed a suite with a single bath. Milward Adams even suggested a backstage reception room where the evening's principals could meet fans. This room was reached from behind the boxes on the south wall.<sup>79</sup>

The Auditorium stage included sixty fly beams and 125 painted drops or back-grounds, providing sets for thirty standard operas. More than three hundred pieces of standard scenery were owned by the house, including thirty-three-foot trees, a twenty-four-by-thirty-six-foot tomb for Verdi's *Aida*, and a thirty-eight-foot tower for *Otello*.<sup>80</sup> This was because nineteenth-century touring companies did not carry their own sets, relying on the host theaters to supply them. The Auditorium Association invested heavily in such sets to enhance theatrical illusion and to attract the best companies. To be profitable, touring companies performed a number of operas in their short runs, often changing repertory daily to keep audiences returning night after night. They also lacked understudy support for leading roles. If a star singer was unable to perform, the scheduled opera was likely to be changed; rather than cancel the performance and lose revenue, companies would simply substitute a different opera. The Auditorium's multitude of sets allowed almost any standard repertory work to be staged on short notice. Thus the artistic components of the stage also helped mitigate financial risk, which in turn encouraged touring companies to favor Chicago.

Many companies visited Chicago twice on each national tour, stopping once on the journey west and again on the way back.<sup>81</sup> For Peck, the rapid succession of nonresident touring companies meant variety, which in turn meant serving the needs and tastes of a broader segment of Chicago's populace. Such variety was key to the Auditorium's social strategy.

## SUCCESS AND FAILURE: THE INSTITUTIONAL MUSE

Rather than operating in perpetual conflict, the social, financial, and artistic components of American culture were thought to have been brought into equilibrium in the cultural implement that was the Auditorium Building. This was a dynamic equilibrium, capable of adjustments to circumstance, but one limited by venue design, social rhetoric, and economics. The results were mixed, and examining the successes as compared to the failures reveals much about the design and operation of the Auditorium machine as a cultural generator. It also reveals how the machine manufactured culture; or maybe, more accurately, it reveals the creative contribution of the institution to cultural practice. As a set of relationships, operations, and possibilities (some malleable and others less so), Chicago's Auditorium Building and the Auditorium Association asserted a controlling influence that shaped cultural practice under their auspices. The unwritten social bylaws, operating costs, and artistic potential of the theater demanded blockbuster events that appealed to a broad cross-section of Chicagoans and that carried the artistic prestige to inspire blanket press coverage and its attendant free publicity. However, the Auditorium's muse also asserted more subtle influences, which can be best seen in the events that offered its greatest triumphs and most critical failures.

## THE AUDITORIUM'S INAUGURAL SEASON

The goals of the Auditorium Association were met most closely by the monthlong season of opera, choral works, and other events that inaugurated the Auditorium in December 1889 and January 1890. This first month of dedication activities reveals the Auditorium functioning as its designers had hoped. At this time the association had capital to spend and asserted strong control of the theater's operation (over time both these components would decline). It also benefited from the unending hyperbolic praise of a local press excited about the new venture. The accompanying list of events (table 1) from this inaugural celebration shows the wide variety of activities hosted by the Auditorium Association to propel its social, financial, and artistic goals.

The opening four-week opera festival featured twenty-one performances of fourteen operas, for a total audience reported to be more than one hundred thousand and with gross receipts of \$232,954.<sup>82</sup> Standing-room tickets boosted the attendance for several operas to more than six thousand, while the dedication ceremony on December 10 was attended by a crowd estimated at ten thousand inside the Auditorium and twice that on the streets outside (see fig. 9). The repertory included two of Peck's personal favorites—*Faust* and *Il trovatore*—along with several of the works and composers featured in the 1885 festival that had



Date	Event	Primary performers
December 1889		
9	Theater dedication	Adelina Patti, Clarence Eddy (organ)
10	Gounod, <i>Roméo et Juliette</i>	Patti, Giuseppe Del Puente
11	Rossini, <i>Guillaume Tell</i>	Francesco Tamagno, Giulia Valda
12	Gounod, <i>Faust</i>	Emma Albani, Luigi Ravelli
13	Verdi, <i>Il trovatore</i>	Tamagno, Valda
14	Donizetti, <i>Lucia di Lammermoor</i>	Patti, Ravelli
16	Verdi, <i>Aida</i>	Tamagno, Lillian Nordica
17	Rossini, <i>Semiramide</i>	Patti, Guerrina Fabbri
19	Rossini, <i>Guillaume Tell</i>	Tamagno, Valda
20	Verdi, <i>Il trovatore</i>	Nordica, Tamagno
21	Flotow, <i>Martha</i>	Patti, Ravelli
22	Lecture, "Socialism in England" by Percival Chubb for first meeting of revitalized Chicago Economic Conference in Auditorium Recital Hall	
23	Meyerbeer, <i>Les Huguenots</i>	Albani, Ravelli
24	Verdi, <i>La traviata</i>	Patti, Ravelli
25	<i>Messiah</i> , 1st subscription concert	Apollo Club with Nordica
26	Verdi, <i>Aida</i>	Tamagno, Nordica
27	Bellini, <i>La sonnambula</i>	Patti, Ravelli

28	Gounod, <i>Faust</i> (Sat. matinee)	Albani, Enrico Vicini
28	<i>Messiah</i> , 1st Workingmen's Concert <i>Chicago Tribune</i> contains editorial letters debating waged worker concerts	Apollo Club with Nordica
29	Talk by Rev. J. S. Huntington on "The Church in Its Relation to Social Reform," Chicago Economic Conference	
30	Donizetti, <i>Lucia di Lammermoor</i>	Patti, Ravelli
31	Meyerbeer, <i>Les Huguenots</i>	Albani, Ravelli
January 1890		
1	Rossini, <i>Semiramide</i>	Patti, Fabbri
2, 3	Verdi, <i>Otello</i>	Tamagno, Albani
3	Charity Ball seat auction raises \$5,800	
3	Lecture by Prof. Alexander Winchell on "The Paleontological Evidences of Evolution"	
4	Rossini, <i>Barber of Seville</i>	Patti, Arturo Marescalchi
5	Open letter to Ferdinand Peck and the Auditorium Association concerning "Auditorium Saloon" from Federal Labor Union Local 2696; reply published on Jan. 7 in <i>Chicago Tribune</i>	
5	Lecture by Edward O. Brown (free-trade supporter) on "The Abolition of Privilege," Chicago Economic Conference	
7	Lecture by Princess Engalitcheff of Russia on "St. Petersburg Society"	
9	Fourth Annual Charity Ball	Second Regiment Johnny Hand's Orchestra

Table 1. Events during the first month of the Auditorium Theater's operation (operas offered by the Abbey and Grau Grand Italian Opera Company)

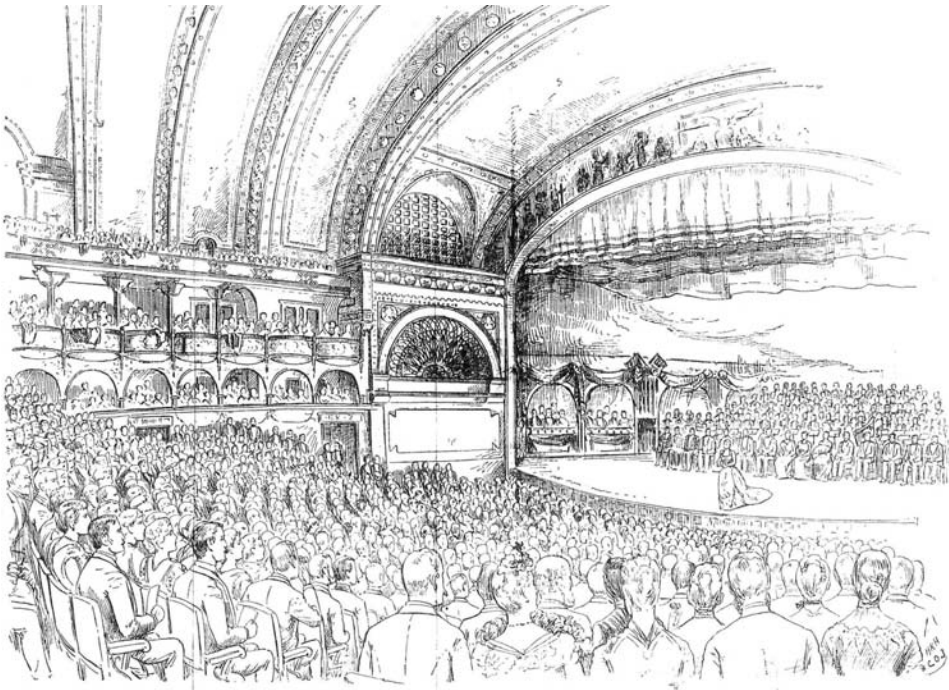


Figure 9 Adelina Patti singing at the Auditorium's dedication, from *Chicago Tribune*, December 10, 1889. Note the temporary stage boxes added for President Benjamin Harrison and Vice President Levi Morton, as well as Ferdinand Peck.

helped propel the Auditorium idea. This time Abbey and Grau served as impresarios, and soprano Adelina Patti headlined the casts as Juliette, Lucia, Martha, Violetta, Amina, Semiramide, and Rosina, providing the star power to dedicate the theater and bring in overflow audiences. While Patti's voice was beginning to show signs of decline, tenor Francesco Tamagno, making his American debut, impressed critics and audiences alike with both his voice and acting in the parts of Arnold, Manrico, Radames, and Otello—the role he had created for Verdi's world premiere two years earlier. Others in the casts, notably Luigi Ravelli and Lillian Nordica, further propelled the festival's artistic success. The praise of the opening performances on the front page of the *New York Times* and its lament in an editorial that the Auditorium provided what "New-York up to the present time conspicuously lacks" could only have thrilled Chicago's boosters.<sup>83</sup> The Auditorium's extensive stage appointments and mechanics also proved their worth when *Les Huguenots* had to be substituted for *Otello* on New Year's Eve after Tamagno and many others in the company came down with influenza.<sup>84</sup>

The festival's receipts pleased all the collaborators and exceeded the gross of the 1885 festival by over a hundred thousand dollars. This windfall supported the

enormous all-star casts, the company, and the venue, even as many of the Auditorium's auxiliary commercial spaces (including the hotel and restaurants) had yet to open. Indirect profits were also clearly made by related businesses, especially in clothing and jewelry to outfit well-to-do audience members. One *Tribune* article joked that Patti and Santa Claus were in competition, since shoppers who might wait until the last minute to pick up their holiday gifts would find the department stores picked clean of clothing and fashion accessories previously purchased for the opera.<sup>85</sup>

On the social front, Chicago's premier mixed vocal ensemble, the Apollo Chorus, moved to the Auditorium from its previous home at Central Music Hall and helped fulfill the association's desire to serve all classes by following its regular subscription concerts with repeat performances for working-class attendees. This desire to meet the cultural needs of labor (simultaneously accommodating and controlling) had been part of the Auditorium's mission since Chicago's Haymarket killings of May 1886. Tickets for these "workingmen's concerts" were heavily discounted at ten, fifteen, and twenty-five cents apiece and distributed through local businesses to wageworkers earning not more than fifteen dollars a week. Twenty-two thousand workers were said to have applied for the four thousand available seats to hear the first such performance—Handel's *Messiah* with soprano Lillian Nordica—and four such concerts were given during the Auditorium's first year.<sup>86</sup>

Potentially even more significant to Peck's dream of resolving class tension were the ways in which the Auditorium catalyzed local discussions of class issues, creating a social counterpoint to parallel the hall's musical interactions. The Apollo Club concerts inspired newspaper editorials that debated whether such an act of charity was "Un-American" because it created two castes.<sup>87</sup> Further, the opening of the Auditorium also led to a reinvigoration of the Chicago Economic Conference, a strategic initiative to bring business and labor leaders into conversations on topics of mutual interest. Beginning in April 1888, the organization had held a single season of seven weekly meetings during which a guest speaker was given the floor, and the audience (which included a core of widely divergent local leaders representing business and labor) remained silent (interruptions and "miscellaneous conversation" were forbidden) until a discussion period, when questions were posed in a "respectful manner."<sup>88</sup> Such a format was intended to keep the dialogue productive. With the opening of the Auditorium, a series of the same name was resurrected, beginning with a December 22 talk by English socialist representative Percival Chubb, who spoke to the topic of "Socialism in England." Held in the Auditorium Recital Hall and attended by 500, the meeting was described in the *Tribune* as sponsored by the Chicago Economic Club, an association of "twenty-four persons ... [which] included the ultra-conservative and the ultra-radical, the laissez-faire philosopher,

and the progressive reformer.”<sup>89</sup> Two other sessions were held before the first month was over, and weekly after that. Meetings were open to the public and held on Sunday evenings to encourage the attendance of working-class participants. That the series began with a talk on socialism by an English proletariat leader seems a further move to encourage broad participation and counteract skepticism. Altogether, the social, financial, and artistic activities of the Auditorium’s first month were an enormous success.

#### FAILURE: THE AUDITORIUM BUILDING AND THE CHICAGO ORCHESTRA

Such success would not greet the Chicago Orchestra (known today as the Chicago Symphony Orchestra) in the Auditorium, where it performed from its founding in 1891 through 1904. Initially, the regular rentals of the theater that would be provided by the orchestra’s twenty-week seasons might have seemed a plus to the Auditorium’s managers, yet hosting a resident ensemble also represented a major shift in the venue’s social and financial dynamics. The orchestra’s difficulties in the Auditorium reflected a failure of neither the facility nor the orchestra, but rather a mismatch of aspirations—an incongruity of goals and needs. The Auditorium had been designed to welcome blockbuster traveling performers for brief stays that would fill the house with ever-changing audiences. Its first year had included both Italian and German opera companies, violin soloist Pablo de Sarasate, and a high school graduation, as well as two seasons of Gilbert and Sullivan and Christmas pageantry. The orchestra, by contrast, hoped to create ongoing relationships with a core group of regular subscribers. Conductor Theodore Thomas had tired of appealing to audiences of thousands and wished to cultivate a smaller audience of classical music devotees.

In the annals of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, complaints about the Auditorium’s great size are frequent.<sup>90</sup> It is argued that the orchestra was forced to build its own Orchestra Hall—just north of the Auditorium on Michigan Avenue—in 1905 because the Auditorium’s capacity made it all but impossible to sell season subscriptions. As good seats were always available in a venue seating 4,200, individual tickets were not particularly precious and patrons did not need to buy subscriptions to an entire season in order to guarantee tickets to hear a few favorites. This difficulty undercut Thomas’s goal of uplifting his audience to a “higher class” of music. He had hoped to attract purchases of an entire season using a few well-known works as bait. Instead listeners bought single tickets on the day of popular performances, and attendance was poor at other events. Listeners could skip concerts containing repertory that was unfamiliar or intimidating without financial penalty; they did not need to invest in classical music to cater to their already established tastes, and thus there was little opportunity to change those tastes.<sup>91</sup>

Thomas's audience development strategy represented a valid choice, but one incompatible with his performance venue. Thomas and the Chicago Orchestra Association were correct when they complained of constant struggles with the facilities of the Auditorium. The Auditorium was fundamentally inappropriate for a resident ensemble, and Thomas recognized from the outset that the "Auditorium was not suited to our use":

A building which is properly equipped for the work of a large permanent concert orchestra should contain, in addition to its stage, audience chamber, and foyers, a large room in which the musicians can tune and prepare their instruments before performances, and a cloak room for the use of the orchestra. It should also have a suitable storage room with lockers in which the instruments can be kept without danger of injury from heat, cold, or dampness, and where they will be safe from handling by meddlesome or careless persons. It should have a commodious library, furnished with clean, closed cases for storing the music, and long, well-lighted tables at which copyists and librarians can bind, repair, copy, and sort it for daily use. Finally, it should have room for part-rehearsals, offices for the manager and his staff, and a private office for the conductor, in which he can transact his business undisturbed. Nearly all of these conveniences were lacking in the Auditorium, and therefore . . . it was very unsuitable for our purposes.<sup>92</sup>

Rather than a shortcoming of the Auditorium, however, the building's unsuitability for a permanent symphony reflected a strategic decision on the part of its designers—a choice that fit their conception of the most desirable relationship of culture to the city. The Auditorium had been built to host an ever-changing succession of festival entertainments by touring companies for sell-out audiences. A long run, during the Auditorium's first year of operation, was anything more than a week. Such a variety of programming regularly brought different constituencies to the Auditorium and encouraged a wide range of uses, from charity balls and political conventions to sporting events and grand opera. Program offerings had to be able to attract three or four thousand attendees to be viable, and thus had to be both popular and populist. A resident company, however, changed the fundamental socioeconomic equation of the hall, replacing variety with repetition. The Chicago Orchestra's eight-month season, with onstage rehearsals and in which most prime performance times (Friday afternoons and Saturday evenings)<sup>93</sup> were dedicated to a single organization, was fundamentally incompatible with the intentions of the Auditorium's founders. Housing the orchestra prevented the Auditorium from attracting the touring companies and cultural festivals for which it was designed. The lack of instrument storage and a library room or conductor's suite was not an oversight on the part of Peck and his architects; these facilities had been intentionally left out of the building to mandate what he felt was a more "democratic" blockbuster-event programming strategy.

The Auditorium's 4,237-seat theater demanded that management target a broad community. This was one effect of what might be called the institutional muse—the smooth interaction of artistic, economic, and social relationships that facilitates the operation of a cultural organization. The structure of the Auditorium Building itself controlled the type and format of performance within its walls. By integrating function and design, the architects satisfied both the needs and intentions of the building's patrons. The design celebrated engineering as a tool to perfect modern life, and as such both rationalism and utopian dreams have left their traces on the building. In Chicago's Auditorium Building, thought, idea, effort, and innovation united to propel the city toward a vision for a new age.

#### CONCLUSION: UTOPIA FOR THE ARTS

Chicago's Auditorium Building represents an idealistic attempt to perfect the nineteenth-century theater. By integrating theater design with the financial, social, and artistic aspirations of the industrial city, Peck and his associates hoped to create an unprecedented cultural institution: the fabled perpetual-motion machine, but here intended to manufacture unending cultural triumphs. The Auditorium would be self-supporting: it would serve the community; it would advance art; and it would inspire Chicagoans to strive for even greater triumphs. The results of these plans were mixed. The building's financial support gradually eroded and collapsed. In 1929 the Auditorium was superseded, primarily because of financial overextension, by Samuel Insull's Civic Opera House. Yet the Auditorium had provided the foundations for many of Chicago's current musical assets. Without the Auditorium, Chicago's cultural florescence might have been delayed or failed to occur at all.

The Auditorium was the first home of the Chicago Orchestra (1891–1904). Starting in 1910, the theater housed the city's first resident opera companies. The Auditorium also set a precedent for patronage that was essential to the establishment of both these performance institutions. Neither the orchestra nor the opera companies ever operated on a profit basis; they produced annual deficits and required regular donations to cover these debts. Yet such philanthropy would have been impracticable only a few years before, when Peck first pitched his Auditorium idea to the Chicago Commercial Club as an investment.

The Auditorium's most important direct effect was on the World's Columbian Exposition. Chicago's most famous nineteenth-century event was in many ways a direct outcome of the process that built the Auditorium. Not only did the Auditorium entertain and impress the politicians who voted to award the world's fair to Chicago, but Chicagoans' ten million dollars in fair pledges—money that helped tip the vote in the city's favor—grew out of the success of the



Auditorium's stock subscription scheme and the excitement created by the Auditorium's dedication, which occurred just as Chicagoans' bid for the fair was being buttressed and finalized.<sup>94</sup>

Although it is impossible to measure cultural significance on any completely objective scale, the Auditorium is arguably the most influential architectural, social, and economic structure of nineteenth-century Chicago. Its continued operation in the twenty-first century as a cultural and educational center (Roosevelt University)—despite legal battles and proposals to tear it down or convert it completely to hotel space—suggests that Peck's vision of a grand, multiuse structure has ultimately been fulfilled.

#### NOTES

Mark Clague is an assistant professor of musicology and American culture at the University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre, and Dance. He researches music-making in the United States, especially the classical tradition in Chicago, with a focus on the functional aesthetic of music, critical geography, and the interrelationship of music and society. He has edited *The Memoirs of Alton Augustus Adams* for the University of California Press (2008) and authored articles for *American Music* and the *Black Music Research Journal*.

1. Louis Henry Sullivan, *The Autobiography of an Idea* (New York: Press of the American Institute of Architects, 1924), 200–201.

2. Names of operas and artists are taken from the souvenir program, *First Chicago Opera Festival* (Chicago: Chicago Opera Festival Association, 1885), 13, 15.

3. The attendance estimate of between 110,000 and 115,000 attributed to Peck in the *Chicago Tribune* ("The Opera Is Over," April 19, 1885, 12; and "A Grand Music-Hall," May 3, 1885, 12) appears exaggerated, as the Grand Opera Hall contained 6,252 seats (2,238 main floor, 1,486 dress circle, 1,824 main balcony, 352 boxes, and 352 dress balconies), providing for a maximum of 87,528 seated patrons during a sold-out fourteen-performance run. See Simas Gamaliel Pratt, ed., *First Chicago Grand Opera Festival* (Chicago: Skeen and Stuart, 1885), 8. But between ten and eleven thousand people (with extra chairs and standing room) were said to have attended some of Adelina Patti's performances, and Peck's claims were consistent, if extraordinary. Wilbur Thurman

Denson reports 75,000 spectators ("A History of the Chicago Auditorium" [PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, 1974], 34), citing Thomas

E. Tallmadge, who gives only revenue figures (*Architecture in Old Chicago* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1941], 161). The *Tribune* published the following attendance figures for the performances: April 6—8,000; April 7—5,000; April 8—4,000; April 9—9,000; April 10—5,000–6,000; April 11—afternoon, 9,000–10,000, evening, 5,000–6,000; April 13—7,000; April 14—10,000; April 15—5,000; April 16—9,000; April 17—10,000–11,000; April 18—afternoon, 8,000, evening, 6,000. These figures total 104,000 attendees—48,000 for week one and 56,000 for week two—but it is clear that these numbers are estimates, and no precise figures were offered by the festival administration. Further, Peck may have exaggerated attendance to strengthen his argument in favor of a new hall. If these numbers were close, some 24,000 standing-room tickets would have been distributed. Regardless of the exact number, it is clear that an unusually large number of attendees patronized the festival. The *Tribune* concluded, "The people of Chicago evidently took a fit to go to the opera, and they went in a multitude which has hitherto been unprecedented in this country and probably in the world" ("Close of the Opera Festival," April 19, 1885, 4).

4. Peck told a *Tribune* reporter that "receipts had been \$170,000, of which \$130,000 was now in the bank" ("The Opera Is Over," April 19, 1885, 12). The same figures are reported in "Music for the People," *Chicago Inter Ocean*, May 3, 1885, 6. A revenue figure of \$132,000 is given by Bruce

Grant (*Fight for a City: The Story of the Union League Club of Chicago and Its Times, 1880–1955* [Chicago: Rand McNally, 1955], 122), Denson (“History of the Chicago Auditorium,” 34), and Tallmadge (*Architecture in Old Chicago*, 161), who all apparently depended on the usually reliable financial numbers from A. T. Andreas, *History of Chicago* (Chicago: A. T. Andreas, 1884–86), 3:651. Peck was circumspect in future discussions with the press concerning the amount of profit realized by the festival, which suggests that the \$170,000 figure was exaggerated. Contemporary sources questioned the financial results as well (*Chicago Daily News*, April 23, 1885, Gleason Scrapbooks, Newberry Library, Chicago). Real profits would have been \$7,000 minus expenses such as rental for the hall, and probably amounted to about \$2,000. Prices for seats were \$1, \$2, and \$2.50 (roughly equivalent to \$18, \$37, and \$46 in 2007 dollars when accounting for inflation), but the proportion of seats sold at each price point is unknown. If the \$132,000 figure is correct and attendance figures are close, the majority of seats were sold for one dollar. One adjustment to these calculations is that many tickets to the festival were given away for free, helping to explain the high attendance and comparatively low revenues. Tickets, for example, were given to the police for providing security and to railroad employees, who were asked to slow trains down when passing the theater to reduce outside noise. The press, local chorus members, the National Guard regiment and its band, and firefighters received complimentary tickets as well, and total attendance figures included these seats (*Chicago Daily News*, April 25, 1885, Gleason Scrapbooks, Newberry Library, Chicago). Selling for one dollar, standing-room tickets likely accounted for the claim that the overflow attendance of the Patti performances, in particular, fulfilled the festival organizers’ goal of presenting “music for the people.” Inflation estimates are based on the consumer price index factors developed by Robert Sahr, Oregon State University (see <http://oregonstate.edu/cla/polisci/faculty/sahr/sahr.htm>).

5. “The Opera Is Over,” *Chicago Tribune*, April 19, 1885, 12.

6. *Ibid.*

7. The festival’s special hall was not the first such prototype for the Auditorium Building. Chicago had long used multipurpose buildings to house its theatrical stages. McVicker’s Theater (1857–71, rebuilt 1872 after the fire), Crosby’s Opera House (1865–71), Central Music Hall (1879–1900), and the Chicago Opera House (1885–1912) are among the other local

precedents for the Auditorium project. Each combined a stage with income-producing spaces, such as ground-floor retail and office rentals, with increasing scale. McVicker’s included four rental spaces, while the Chicago Opera House was a ten-story commercial building that included a theater. The Auditorium, however, expanded the multiuse strategy to unprecedented scope both in the sheer amount of rental space and the diversification of uses.

8. For more information, see <http://www.woodstockoperahouse.com/navigation/history.html> and <http://www.rochesteroperahouse.com/history.htm>. Both these institutions (as well as the Auditorium) are still in operation as of 2008, suggesting something of the long-term success of the multiuse strategy.

9. Joseph M. Siry, “Chicago’s Auditorium Building: Opera or Anarchism,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 57 (June 1998): 132.

10. See “Records of the Chicago Auditorium Association, Originally Chicago Grand Auditorium Association, December 11, 1886 to November 7, 1906.” Auditorium Collection, Roosevelt University Archives, Chicago.

11. Karol Berger, *A Theory of Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

12. Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1998).

13. Greenough was influenced in part by Ralph Waldo Emerson’s philosophy. See Horatio Greenough’s collected writings, published as *Form and Function: Remarks on Art*, ed. Harold A. Small (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1947). Functionalism had much to do with an organic aesthetic drawing inspiration from nature.

14. Louis Sullivan, “The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered,” *Lippincott’s Monthly Magazine*, March 1896, 403–409.

15. Boxes make up less than 5 percent of the Auditorium’s capacity, while at the old Metropolitan, boxes represented 24 percent, or 732 out of 3,045 seats. Siry, “Chicago’s Auditorium Building,” 129.

16. “The Pride of Chicago,” *Chicago Daily News*, December 9, 1889, morning edition (Auditorium Scrapbooks, Newberry Library, Chicago, reel 1).

17. The pricing of the Auditorium’s seats today reflects the poor view of the stage from the boxes, as a box seat is generally less expensive than a seat on the main floor.

18. Boxes 3 and 4 on each side of the Auditorium’s lower tier had small vestibules

about three feet deep. They might have held extra chairs but were not large enough for entertaining (Bart Swindall, Auditorium historian, personal communication, 2002). These boxes sold for the same price as the others and were thus not thought to be unusually valuable. Box 1 on either side was considered the most prestigious.

19. Several larger venues had been built in the United States by this time, primarily as industrial exposition halls. Larger predecessors include Cincinnati's Music Hall, which opened in 1877 with 4,468 seats but was not an opera house as it lacked a proscenium stage and fly space until a 1896 renovation that reduced the capacity of the hall. See "Music," *Chicago Tribune*, May 14, 1878, 3.

20. New York's Academy of Music (built 1854) had originally seated 4,550, some on benches, but its capacity had been reduced to 2,700 after an 1866 fire and the subsequent renovations that included the addition of boxes. Joseph M. Siry, *The Chicago Auditorium Building: Adler and Sullivan's Architecture and the City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 199.

21. In 1910, when a resident opera company was founded and used the Auditorium as its home, seating was renovated by adding a horseshoe ring of boxes. This reduced the seating capacity of the main floor and the house as a whole to a total of 3,600. Siry, *Chicago Auditorium Building*, 395.

22. In May 1887, for example, the committee met on the 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 11th, 12th, 26th, and 27th. "Records of the Chicago Auditorium Association, Originally Chicago Grand Auditorium Association, December 11, 1886 to November 7, 1906," Auditorium Collection, Roosevelt University Archives, 1–18.

23. Ferdinand W. Peck, "Annual Report of the President to the Stockholders of the Chicago Auditorium Association, 7 December 1889," Auditorium Collection, Roosevelt University Archives, 3.

24. The isacoustic strategy was first articulated in John Scott Russell, "Elementary Considerations of Some Principles in the Construction of Buildings Designed to Accommodate Spectators and Orators," *Edinburgh New Philosophical Journal* 27 (April–October 1839): 131–36. A complete explication is beyond the confines of this study but can be found in Charles E. Gregersen, *Dankmar Adler: His Theaters and Auditoriums* (Athens, OH: Swallow Press, 1989), 11–14, 16–23.

25. Edward R. Garczynski, *Auditorium* (New York: Exhibit Publishing, 1890), 120.

26. Not everyone was in a position to line up for tickets. Indeed, workers were often excluded from such public sales. Distribution of tickets for special workingmen's concerts was handled through company offices on the basis of applications. Workers did not need to visit the box office to purchase these tickets—a strategy that also discouraged regular patrons from buying discount tickets. This policy also encouraged ticket scalping, in which people would wait in line simply to purchase prime seats to resell at a profit.

27. One exception to this procedure was the ticket auction for the Auditorium dedication and inaugural season of opera. Even in this case, more than four thousand seats were still sold at face value.

28. It appears that fifty cents purchased one of the six seats in a box.

29. Unidentified newspaper article in Auditorium clipping file, Ryerson Library, Art Institute of Chicago.

30. Although the building had yet to open, the association already employed a manager and stage carpenter, among other staff. By the time the theater was dedicated, such "carrying charges" as staff salaries totaled two hundred thousand dollars (Peck, "Annual Report, 1889," 2). The association therefore needed to begin drawing on the income of the property to subsidize operations. It appears that the first tenants moved in on the deadline and included Adler and Sullivan and Charles Abercrombie (clipping dated May 1, 1889, Ryerson Library scrapbook, Art Institute of Chicago).

31. Robert C. Twombly, *Sullivan: His Life and Work* (New York: Viking, 1986), 175, citing *Chicago Tribune*, March 24, 1889, 30.

32. These advantages diminished over time as taller office buildings were built and the city's elevated trains began running in 1897, increasing street noise coming into the building. The "El" tracks also obscured the Wabash Street office block facade and plunged the lower floors into shadow. Donald Miller, *City of the Century: The Epic of Chicago and the Making of America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 270.

33. Charles Edward Gregersen, "The Auditorium Building: A History and Architectural Description," in *Addendum to the Historic American Buildings Survey, IL-1007*, 1980, 28. Original report by Osmund Overby and Larry J. Honolka, 1963; available online: [http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/habs\\_haer/](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/habs_haer/). Construction was rushed to the extent that some walls in the office portion had to be repainted,

because the first coat had been applied before the plaster had dried.

34. The only fires in the Auditorium were contained within the kitchens (Swindall, personal communication, 2002).

35. Carol Baldrige and Alan Willis, "The Business of Culture," *Chicago History* 19 (Spring/Summer 1990): 49.

36. Lyon and Potter directly imitated the Auditorium in hiring one of its decorators, H. J. Milligan, and adopting its color scheme of ivory and gold. Lyon, who had broken away from Lyon and Healy (which began publishing in 1864; see Kenan Heise and Michael Edgerton, *Chicago: Center for Enterprise: An Illustrated History* [Woodland Hills, CA: Windsor Publications, 1982], 140), pulled a huge publicity stunt in accepting a record delivery of Steinway, Behning, and Lyon's own pianos that filled twenty freight cars. The new firm became the city's exclusive Steinway dealer. See "It Beats the Record: A Special Train of Twenty Cars Loaded with Pianos for Chicago," *Chicago Tribune*, December 29, 1889, 10.

37. Baldrige and Willis, "Business of Culture," 49. Kimball started as a music distributor but began manufacturing organs in 1881 and pianos four years later. Bessie Louise Pierce, *A History of Chicago*, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1937–57), 3:166.

38. Florence Ffrench, comp., *Music and Musicians in Chicago: The City's Leading Artists, Organizations and Art Buildings, Progress and Development* (Chicago: Florence Ffrench, 1899; reprint, New York: Da Capo, 1979), 81.

39. Chicago's music industry grossed \$7 million in 1889. This figure includes \$3 million in piano sales (up 6 percent from 1888), \$2.5 million in organs (unspecified increase), \$1,125,000 for other instruments (up 5 percent), and \$520,000 in sheet music (up 10 percent). See "The Commerce of 1889: Musical Instruments," *Chicago Tribune*, January 1, 1890, 9–11. Chicago's instrument manufacturing industry also grew rapidly in the 1880s, helping Chicago surpass Boston for third place among the country's largest instrument manufacturers. New York and Philadelphia placed first and second (Pierce, *History of Chicago*, 3:165). Chicago's piano production reached its zenith in the early years of the twentieth century, when some thirty piano factories made 250,000 pianos a year. One-quarter of these instruments were either player pianos or a predecessor to the jukebox, a coin-operated piano manufactured by J. P. Seeburg Piano Company and Mills Novelty Company (Heise

and Edgerton, *Chicago: Center for Enterprise*, 320–21).

40. Philo Adams Otis, *The Chicago Symphony Orchestra: Its Organization, Growth and Development, 1891–1924* (Chicago: Clayton F. Summy, 1924; reprint, Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1972), 152–53.

41. Music Row, anchored by Kimball, Steger, Lyon and Healy, and Cable-Nelson, thrived into the 1920s. In the 1990s, it was revitalized by the creation of the Chicago Music Mart, DePaul Center, at South State and Jackson streets—occupying the ground floors of the renovated Goldblatt's Department Store (opened 1912). In many ways, this mixed-use building, which combines university, city government, retail, and performance spaces, echoes the economic strategies of the Auditorium itself.

42. The Auditorium Pharmacy opened with the building in 1889 and was still advertising in the 1930s. It may have been Chicago's first twenty-four-hour drugstore (Swindall, personal communication, 2002).

43. Advertisements and a jar of the product are held in the personal collection of Auditorium historian Bart Swindall.

44. Undated coffee can label in author's personal collection. The colors of the can are ivory and gold and thus parallel the color scheme of the Auditorium prior to 1902 (and as restored today).

45. Garczynski, *Auditorium*, 65–66.

46. A complete description and history of the hotel lies outside the confines of this article, except as it affected the building's financial health and the ways in which the hotel enhanced the Auditorium's social initiatives. See Garczynski, *Auditorium*, 51–106, for an exhaustive description of the hotel. In 1906 plans were considered to demolish the theater and build a twenty- or twenty-two-story addition that would increase the hotel's capacity to 900 rooms (Gregersen, "Auditorium Building," 35). The Auditorium Hotel continued to operate until June 30, 1941, even after the Auditorium Association went bankrupt in 1929 and was taken over by the building's landowners. See "Famed Auditorium Theater and Hotel to Close June 30," *Chicago Daily News*, May 29, 1941.

47. In January 1889 the association selected a hotel proprietor. At that time, prospective managers estimated that hotel earnings for the association would be fifty thousand dollars—about half of what had been expected. This reduction of income, representing two million dollars over forty years, hampered the association's effort to pay down the principal of

its bonds. The association signed a ten-year lease with a syndicate headed by James H. Breslin and R. H. Southgate, associated with a number of hotels including the Congress Hall at Saratoga, as the Auditorium Hotel Company in April 1889. Decorating costs were divided evenly between the association and the hotel company (Gregersen, "Auditorium Building," 30).

48. With less than nine months until the hotel was supposed to open, Adler was asked to design the additional banquet hall. He did so by using space above the theater on trusses that further overloaded the foundations (Gregersen, "Auditorium Building," 30). The banquet hall included a musicians' gallery so that ensembles could accompany dinners (Garczynski, *Auditorium*, 103).

49. The consultant was Armand Knyler, a "hotel interior expert" (Gregersen, "Auditorium Building," 30). Such changes led to delays that further reduced income. The hotel opened more than three months behind schedule in March 1890, while the banquet hall did not host its first event until October. On the opening of the hotel, see "Declared It Gorgeous," *Chicago Tribune*, March 16, 1890, 3. The first use of the banquet hall is described in "Welcome to the Guests," *Chicago Tribune*, October 14, 1890, 1.

50. In January 1887 the depth of the stage was reduced by five feet to give much-needed space to the Michigan Avenue arm of the hotel, one of a few instances in which the theater was compromised in favor of the building's other functions (Gregersen, "Auditorium Building," 21).

51. One problem was that the hotel's standard rooms were designed on the European plan and did not have private baths. The boom in hotel construction in Chicago leading up to the 1893 Columbian Exposition, however, produced many rooms on the more attractive American plan that included private baths. Many of the Auditorium Hotel's rooms were remodeled to include bathrooms in 1910, after the association took over management of the hotel (Gregersen, "Auditorium Building," 36). Another inefficiency was that the narrow guest corridors on the Congress Street side had rooms only on one side for the first six floors, requiring extra staff and thus driving up costs.

52. The first such event was the charity ball of January 9, 1890 ("Will Be a Great Ball," *Chicago Tribune*, January 5, 1890, 6). The first private reception at the hotel occurred on or shortly before January 29, 1890 and was given by Mr.

and Mrs. P. E. Studebaker ("Studebaker Reception," *Chicago Tribune*, January 30, 1890, 3).

53. Gregersen, "Auditorium Building," 33.

54. Garczynski, *Auditorium*, 132. This figure includes standing area on the parquet and stage as well as the balconies, boxes, and galleries.

55. An Auditorium program for Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette* dated March 20, 1897, for example, advertises, "The Auditorium Restaurant is open after the performance" (author's personal collection).

56. Pierce, *History of Chicago*, 3:469.

57. James G. Blaine et al., *Columbus and Columbia* . . . (Chicago: Pontiac Publishing, 1892), 826.

58. Ralph P. Locke makes a similar argument about the exclusion of personal passion from music history in his critique of Lawrence Levine's book *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988) in "Music Lovers, Patrons, and the 'Sacralization' of Culture in America," *19th-Century Music* 17 (1993): 149–73.

59. See his obituary, "Ferdinand Peck, Widely Known Chicagoan, Dies," *Chicago Tribune*, November 5, 1924, 19.

60. Siry, "Chicago's Auditorium Building," 134; citing Roula Mouroudellis Geraniotis, "German Design Influence in the Auditorium Theater," in *The Midwest in American Architecture*, ed. John S. Garner (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 47–54.

61. Siry suggests that Wagner's aim might have been "to provide a more democratic . . . experience for the audience" ("Chicago's Auditorium Building," 135). Yet diminishing the prominence of the boxes may have had as much to do with lowering the position of noble patrons, asserting an equality between nobility and the genius artist—that is, Wagner himself.

62. Richard Wagner, "Actors and Singers" (1872); quoted in Robert W. Gutman, *Richard Wagner: The Man, His Mind, and His Music* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990), 449.

63. Gregersen, "Auditorium Building," 24.

64. From Wagner's speech on the occasion of the founding of the Bayreuth Festspielhaus in Richard Wagner, *On Music and Drama*, trans. H. Ashton Ellis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 358.

65. Peck, "Annual Report, 1889," 2; online inflation calculators equate \$175,000 in 1889 dollars with almost \$4 million in 2007.

66. See Miller, *City of the Century*, 89–122.

67. Interview with composer Silas B. Pratt about the motivations for the First Chicago



Grand Opera Festival of 1885, printed in “Opera at Home,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 8, 1884, 8. Pratt hoped that “Under my plan I think it will be possible to furnish better operatic performances than we are getting now, and at reasonable prices of admission, at the same time creating an interest which will make operatic performances attractive for their own sake, and not only on account of the prima donna. We could bring out three or four new operas in Chicago—ultimately the works of American composers also—and give model performances of older works. The operas will be sung in English, if possible, in order to give the performances a distinctly American character.”

68. See Dankmar Adler, “The Paramount Requirements of a Large Opera House,” *Inland Architect and News Record* 10 (October 1887): 45–46; “Stage Mechanisms,” *Inland Architect and News Record* 13 (March 1889): 42–43; and “Theater-Building for American Cities” *Engineering Magazine* 7 (August 1894): 717–30, (September 1894): 815–29.

69. Hired immediately upon his return from Europe (c. June 1, 1888), Adams began work immediately to prepare for the Republican convention, which was only a couple of weeks away. He had been associated with Central Music Hall and was well known to the Auditorium’s directors. Contemporary descriptions indicate that he had a personal charisma (and even sex appeal) that assisted him in carrying out his duties. The *Figaro* stated, “He is courteous, even-tempered and quiet; making friends of everybody who meets him, and is precisely the man for the place at the Auditorium” (September 18, 1890, Auditorium Scrapbooks, Newberry Library, Chicago). Of the accompanying photo, the paper suggests: “A face like that will sell a copy to every woman in town.”

70. See Edwin O. Sachs, “Modern Theater Stages,” *Engineering* (September 25, 1896): 387; Sachs, “Stage Mechanism,” *Journal of the Society of Arts* (April 22, 1885): 520; and Sachs and Ernest A. E. Woodrow, *Modern Opera Houses and Theatres*, 3 vols., (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1896).

71. “The Auditorium Stage,” *Chicago Tribune*, December 7, 1889, 12.

72. Peck, “Annual Report, 1888,” 2.

73. Heights taken from Garczynski, *Auditorium*, 134. The upper limit is given by combining the thirteen-foot potential elevation of each of the four forty-six-by-nine-foot stage bridges, plus eighteen additional feet of height provided by an auxiliary (four-by-six-foot) platform that could be

raised from the main bridge itself. The large bridge was powered by hydraulics and could raise 30,000 pounds.

74. Garczynski, *Auditorium*, 134.

75. “The Auditorium Stage,” *Chicago Tribune*, December 7, 1889, 12.

76. In his “Annual Report, 1888,” Peck wrote, “[The modern stage] will cost much more than the ordinary stage, but will be unequaled on either continent in its effects and operating economies” (2). One of the improvements made was the attempt to stabilize the traps for dance performance. Engineers sought to avoid vibrations that had interfered with the stage in previous Asphaelia installations.

77. A total of thirty dressing rooms is given in “The Auditorium Stage,” *Chicago Tribune*, December 7, 1889, 12. Garczynski’s total is preferred here. It is possible that four auxiliary spaces were used as dressing rooms for the unusually large cast of the inaugural festival, explaining why the *Tribune* number is slightly higher at this time.

78. “Auditorium Supplement,” *Chicago Inter Ocean*, December 10, 1889, 14.

79. “The Auditorium Stage,” *Chicago Tribune*, December 7, 1889, 12, and “Auditorium Supplement,” *Chicago Inter Ocean*, December 10, 1889, 14.

80. “Auditorium Supplement,” 12, describes the stage appointments in detail. According to Garczynski, drops were operated conveniently from the stage (not from above in the fly gallery, as was more typical at the time). In addition there were two seventy-six-by-forty-foot paint frames controlled from a painters’ bridge with which to create new scenes (Garczynski, *Auditorium*, 133–35). Apparently half of the painted canvas drops would have been in storage at any given time but could be quickly mounted to the fly beams for use.

81. Abbey’s company did this in 1889–90, when they performed for the dedication in December and came back through the city in March. See John Frederick Cone, *First Rival of the Metropolitan Opera* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 372–73.

82. “After the Opera,” *Chicago Tribune*, January 5, 1890, 1.

83. “Grand Opera at Its Best,” *New York Times*, December 12, 1889, 1; editorial article 7 [no title], *New York Times*, December 10, 1889,

4. New York’s Carnegie Hall (built 1890, in use March and April 1891) was constructed in part to answer the challenge of Chicago’s Auditorium. Andrew Carnegie hired the firm of Adler and

Sullivan to consult on the design of New York's hall. See "Carnegie Music Hall," *New York Times*, July 19, 1889, 8.

84. "Unable to Warble," *Chicago Tribune*, January 1, 1890, 1.

85. "Patti and Santa Claus Are Rivals," *Chicago Tribune*, 8 December 1889, 3.

86. See "The Apollo Club and the Workingmen," *Chicago Tribune*, December 22, 1889, 12, and "Mr. Peck Has His Way," *Evening News*, December 30, 1889, 6.

87. "Apollo Club and Wagesworkers," *Chicago Tribune*, December 22, 1889, 27.

88. "Business-men and Workingmen," *Chicago Tribune*, April 7, 1888, 6.

89. "Socialism in England," *Chicago Tribune*, December 23, 1889, 2.

90. An open letter from the Orchestra Association, "To the Patrons of the Chicago Orchestra," responded to critics resistant to moving away from the Auditorium. "The immediate reason for the attempt to provide a new hall . . . is the excessive size of the Auditorium." Rose Fay Thomas, *Memoirs of Theodore Thomas* (New York: Moffat, Yard, 1911), 513. While the Auditorium was not ideally suited for the orchestra, it is clear that the drive to build a new hall and Thomas's threats to resign and disband the symphony were part of a calculated strategy to mobilize donors to endow the ensemble. Thomas told the association, "We now have here a large and cultivated public, which demands the highest forms of music, and, I believe, would not be willing to give up the orchestra. But what is everybody's business is nobody's business, and the people will do nothing unless the situation is brought before them very strongly. I therefore ask you to announce to the general public that, unless a sufficient endowment can be raised to provide a suitable building in which to carry on the work of our institution during the next six months, I shall resign. . . . I take this course because I believe it is the only way to arouse the public to quick and

decisive action." Thomas, *Memoirs of Theodore Thomas*, 511.

91. Many Orchestra Association members were also Auditorium stockholders who saw the expense of a second hall as unnecessary and injurious to their property. Some in the general public also questioned the move, for "the Auditorium was a popular and agreeable hall for the audience." Thomas, *Memoirs of Theodore Thomas*, 512. The Auditorium Association offered a compromise of remodeling the hall to reduce seating capacity and to raise an endowment fund to relieve the orchestra's guarantors of financial liability. This offer was refused on account of potential acoustic problems and most importantly because raising money for a new hall was easier than endowing an extant institution—as some explained, "Men wish something to show for their money." Thomas, *Memoirs of Theodore Thomas*, 517.

92. Theodore Thomas, *A Musical Autobiography*, edited by George P. Upton (Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1905), 103.

93. Ezra Schabas, *Theodore Thomas* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 182.

94. World's fair stock subscriptions gained momentum at the time of the Auditorium's dedication, due to the intense competition with New York and the pride and confidence of Chicagoans. The Auditorium certainly helped inspire this outpouring of civic pride. The building was even referred to at times as "The Pride of All Chicago" (*Chicago Daily News*, December 9, 1889), or "Chicago's Pride of Prides" (stereoview card 5384 by B. W. Kilburn, Littleton, NH, 1890). The *Chicago Tribune* chronicles the World's Fair subscription fund from November 1889 to about March 1890. See, for example, "The Chicago Fair Subscriptions," December 5, 1889, 4; "New York's Still Hunt: Trying to Steal the Senate World's Fair Committee," December 7, 1889, 7; and "The World's Fair Bill," December 20, 1889, 1.