

# The Keith Memorial Theater/Opera House

Boston Landmarks Commission Study Report



**THE KEITH MEMORIAL THEATER / OPERA HOUSE**

**537 Washington Street, Boston, Massachusetts**



Boston Landmarks Commission  
Environment Department  
City of Boston

Report on the Potential Designation of

**The Keith Memorial Theater/Opera House**  
**537 Washington Street, Boston, Massachusetts**

as a Landmark under Chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975, as amended

Approved by: Ellen J. Lipsey 4/7/99  
Ellen J. Lipsey  
Executive Director                      Date

Approved by: Allan A. Hodges 4/7/99  
Allan A. Hodges  
Vice Chairman                      Date

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**1.0 LOCATION OF PROPERTY**

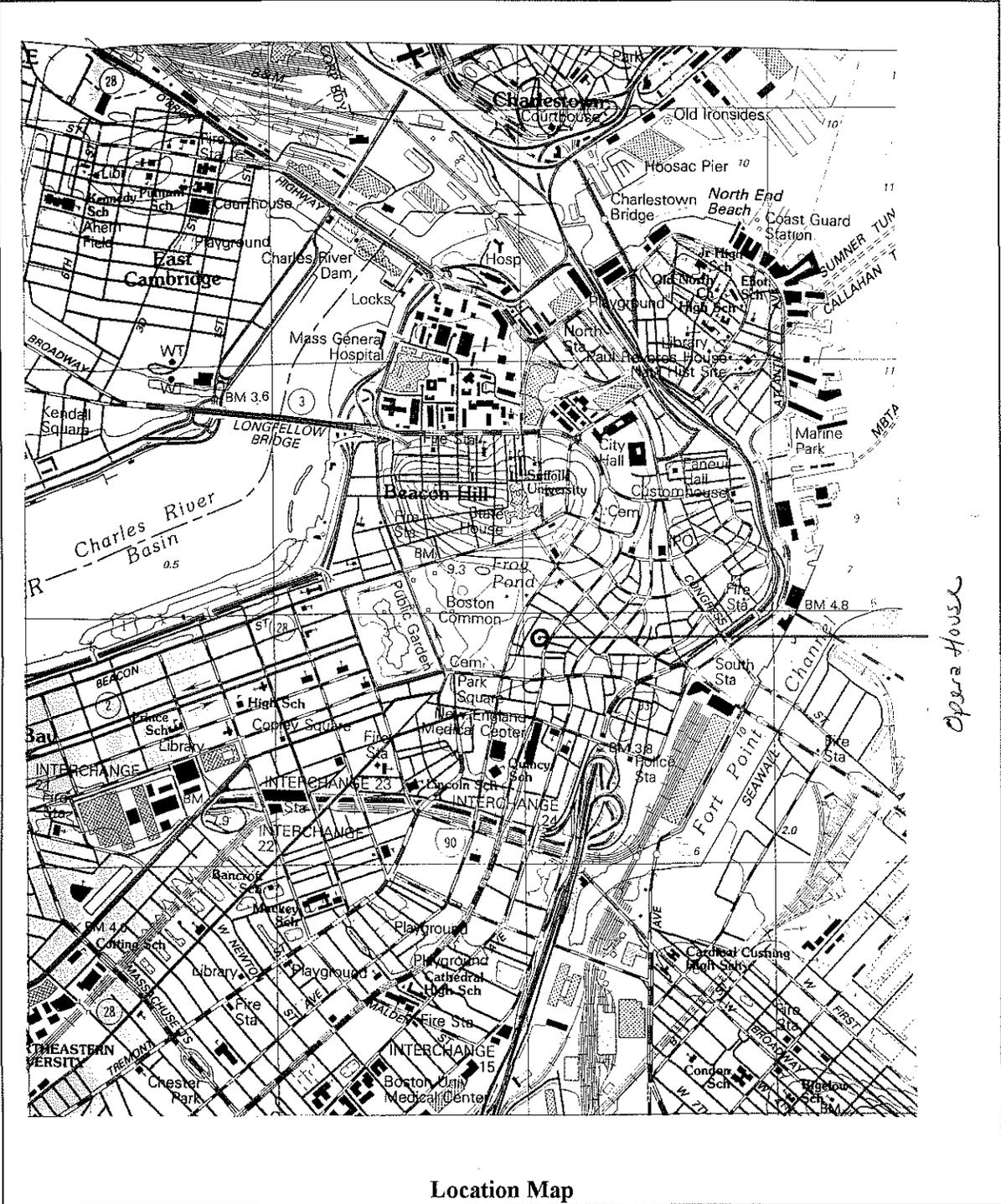
**1.1 Address:** 537 Washington Street, Boston.  
**Assessor's parcel number:** Ward 3, parcel 4830.

**1.2 Area in Which Property is Located:**

The Keith Memorial Theater/Opera House is one of three vacant Washington Street theaters clustered together on the commercial block between West and Avery streets. This segment of Washington Street marks the transition between the downtown retail center and Boston's theater district. The west side of this thoroughfare is characterized by late-19<sup>th</sup> and early-20<sup>th</sup>-century commercial architecture, ranging in height from three to eight stories. In stark contrast, the east side of Washington Street is dominated by Lafayette Place. Opened in the mid-1980s, this inward-facing, urban fortress shopping mall was recently reconfigured with Washington Street storefronts and upper-story office space, soon to be reopened as the "Lafayette Corporate Center."

Long vacant and in a state of decay, this segment of Washington Street is in the midst of a major revitalization campaign, as seen by the 1997 restoration of the nearby Liberty Tree Building, Emerson College's rehabilitation of area buildings for dormitory expansion, and the Spring 1998 ground-breaking for the \$400 million, twin-towered Millennium Place.

**1.3 Map Showing Location:**  
Attached.



**Location Map**  
**USGS Topographical Map - Boston South**  
**537 Washington Street, Boston**  
**Boston, Massachusetts**



## 2.0 DESCRIPTION

### 2.1 Type and Use

Designed as a combined vaudeville playhouse and movie theater, the B. F. Keith Memorial Theater opened in 1928. With vaudeville in its waning years, the RKO theater management quickly adopted a strictly motion-picture format. In 1965, the Sack Cinema Corporation acquired this property, renamed it the "Savoy," and subdivided the interior into two movie theaters. The property reverted back to a live performance space in 1978, following its purchase by Sarah Caldwell's Opera Company of Boston. Rededicated as the "Opera House," it was Boston's primary venue for major operatic productions through the 1980s. Vacant since 1990, the Theatre Management Group, Inc. of Houston, Texas holds a signed purchase option on this property.

### 2.2 Physical Description

#### Exterior

The Opera House is a steel-framed, flat-roofed, brick structure with a seating capacity of 2,700.<sup>1</sup> Its narrow Washington Street frontage (only 26 feet in width) belies the large auditorium situated toward the rear of the parcel. The building's footprint covers an irregular 32,367 square foot site and extends 307 feet from Washington Street back to Mason Street. The buff-brick, rear facade follows the curve of Mason Street. This utilitarian elevation has delivery bays at street level, an asymmetrically fenestrated upper level with 2/2 sash windows, and projecting metal fire balconies.

The ornate Baroque facade, comprised of glazed white terra cotta, rises 96 feet and measures three bays in width. Designed expressly for its view from Washington Street, this richly detailed elevation bears no relation to the large structure lying behind. This false-front treatment, known as an "aedicule facade" was inspired by Italian ecclesiastic architecture of the early-17<sup>th</sup> century. The facade's tripartite composition consists of a monumental entry arch, a fenestrated mid-section, and a highly sculptural, almost ecclesiastic, Serlian parapet. The arch is divided into two sections: an open theater entry below with a grilled tympanum above. The glazed tympanum is fronted by an ornate bronze screen; terra cotta cartouches of exaggerated size embellish the arch's spring line and keystone. Each of the facade's three bays is articulated by delicate ribbed molding, rising from tympanum to cornice, and terminating in a segmental arch with scrollwork and keystone mask. Rusticated piers define the building's corners. Three bronze 9/9 sash windows with paneled window frames and cartouche-embellished surrounds light the area above the central arch. The center window is crowned by a theatrical mask surmounted by a figurative medallion.

The facade's most dramatic feature is its broken-scrolled entablature surmounted by a free-standing Serlian parapet. The frieze is symmetrically punctuated with masks and a highly-sculptural, central corbelled element featuring a corona-rimmed head. Each of the parapet's three arches contains an urn; the large middle one is trophy-like in design. A central sunburst pediment crowns the parapet. Although exhibiting some spalling, the terra cotta appears to be in good condition.

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<sup>1</sup>The original seating capacity was closer to 2,900, however some auditorium space was lost when the orchestra pit was enlarged in the 1980s.

piers supporting a shouldered lintel above which is a mantel entablature. The overmantel contains a large panel flanked by nude male figures and crowned by a wide frieze and heavy cornice."<sup>11</sup>

The walls are of dark wood paneling divided into bays by fluted wood pilasters with gilded capitals. The north and south walls are finished with tapestry. Crimson velvet swags once hung above the scalloped niches set into each corner. Both the original carpeting and later tiling have been removed, leaving a bare concrete floor. The southeast corner niche serves as the entrance to the mezzanine-level men's room. The lavatory is preceded by a small paneled anteroom which contains a marble water fountain, a window overlooking the Entrance Lobby, and the bottom four risers of a blocked stairway (once a passage to the adjacent Bijou Theater). Two telephone booths with leaded glass doors are situated in the southwest corner of the Trustees' Room.

### **Mezzanine Ladies' Lounge**

Also located at the southern end of the Mezzanine Promenade, the Ladies Lounge consists of a small circular foyer featuring a marble water fountain, wood paneling, and an alcove with two telephone booths, significant for their leaded glass doors. Passage through two lounges leads to the women's lavatory. The first lounge is the most ornate, as seen by the white marble fireplace, paneled walls with composite festooning, and arched mirrors with gilt Adamesque tracery. The vaulted ceiling is lit by a crystal chandelier and mirrored wall sconces. The inner lounge reflects a simpler treatment with mirrored and paneled walls, decorative composite panels, and detailed plaster ceiling.

### **Auditorium**

The "U"-shaped auditorium features a sloping orchestra floor with an immense cantilevered balcony above. A perimeter aisle encircles the lower auditorium and is set off from the orchestra seating by a low marble balustrade which supports an arcade of paired wooden pillars. The lower auditorium ceiling (i.e., balcony soffit) features three, large shallow domes, each lit with a crystal chandelier. Smaller crystal fixtures, suspended from segmental arch vaults, light the peripheral seating. The plaster ceiling is embellished with complex, low relief rococo patterns. The articulated bays of the perimeter wall contain rectangular acoustical panels covered in red brocade with ornate composite frames. A decorative plaster frieze encircles this outer wall.

The balcony is segregated into three rows of mezzanine seating and twenty-one rows of upper-mezzanine seating. The mezzanine seating area is fronted by an undulating, bow-fronted parapet, and is set off from the upper-mezzanine by pipe railing and a wide cross aisle. In the upper mezzanine level, a colonnade of paired pillars and paired fluted columns (both of plaster construction) segregates the outer perimeter aisle from the balcony seating. The colonnade is spanned by bow-fronted wooden balustrades. Historic photos reveal that heavy fabric was draped between each bay of this upper colonnade (some of the tasseled rope tie-backs survive).

The colonnade, in turn, supports an elaborate entablature, above which rises a low-ceiling service corridor comprised of balcony-fronted lunettes. Large plaster and gilt cartouches ornament the space between each lunette. The rear central section of this upper service level contains the theater's projection booth room. Overhead, the theater's immense cove ceiling is

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

illuminated by recessed lighting and ornamented with Baroque plasterwork and a mural of dancing figures, clouds, and sky painted in pastel tones.

The auditorium's focal point is the proscenium arch and the individual proscenium boxes to either side. Each luxury box accommodates eight patrons and is set within a colossal order Palladian motif. The elongated segmental arch is capped by a projecting crown element. The center of the proscenium's broad soffit featured a recessed plastered surface which may have contained a decorative mural (water infiltration has destroyed the plaster in this section). The stage retains its original asbestos fire curtain.

The theater's late-1940s tar-and-gravel roof is severely decayed. As a result, a steady trickle of water drips from the auditorium ceiling, eroding the interior architectural finishes and features of the central dome, cornice, and proscenium arch. The juncture of the fly wall and auditorium is particularly prone to water infiltration; as such, protective netting has been strung above the orchestra pit in order to catch large chunks of falling plaster.

### **Elliptical Lobby**

This oval stair landing between the Grand Lobby and the basement lounges also serves as a small lobby. This space is dominated by the marble fountain with female nude statuette situated in the northern niche. This focal point is framed by engaged marble columns with gilded Corinthian capitals. The rest of the room is segregated into arched bays and recessed niches by paired Corinthian pilasters. The oval ceiling above has a recessed dome painted sky blue. Additional elements of note include the paneled doors and arched mirrored bays. The original chandelier and wall sconces survive.

### **Basement Grand Lounge**

This spacious basement lounge is reached by a central staircase off the Elliptical Lobby. Its principal architectural element, a cast-stone fireplace with paired, fluted Ionic columns and caryatid figures, is centered on the western wall. The room's dark-stained paneling is divided into bays by pilaster strips of wood composite material, simulating intricately carved wood. Above the wainscoting, the upper third of the wall surface is ornamented with a Renaissance-style wall mural painted in oil on canvas. The shallow vaulted ceiling is painted in green, blue, and tan with gold leaf highlighting the low relief plaster ornament.

### **Basement Men's Lounge**

Situated north of the Grand Lounge, the Men's Lounge comprises two chambers and a modern lavatory. The outer smoking lounge is dominated by a Tudor Revival cast-stone fireplace and features decorative wood veneer paneling, back-lit stained glass windows, and a faux beamed ceiling (made of plaster). Less ornate, the inner lounge is noteworthy for its paneled walls, marble water fountain, and three paneled telephone booths.

### **Basement Women's Lounge**

The Women's Lounge also encompasses two chambers and a modern lavatory. Access from the Grand Lounge is through a semi-circular arched doorway flanked by wood columns. The lounges are Louis XIV in style and less ornate than those of the mezzanine level. Wall surfaces are divided into arched and rectangular panels painted in green, blue, and beige tones. The outer lounge's wood paneling, applied decorative ornament, and plaster ceiling have sustained serious water damage, as seen by the de-laminated surfaces and corroded ceiling (with damage concentrated along the south and east elevations). The inner lounge has

mirrored wall panels and a decorated ceiling. Between these two rooms is an antechamber with water fountain and phone booths.

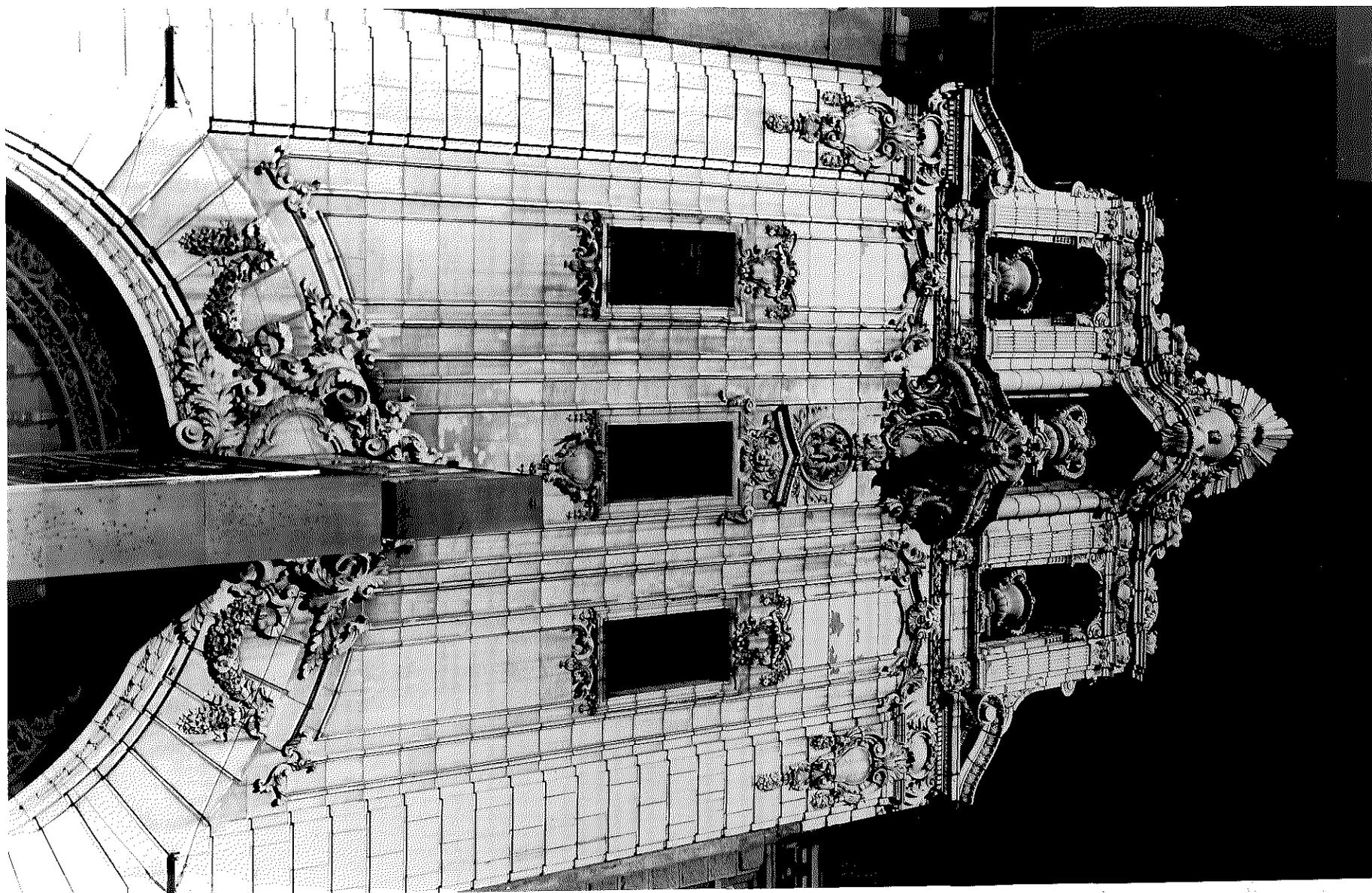
#### **Alterations**

According to the 1983 Historic Structure Report, theater alterations have been confined to the following:

- 1944 - addition of new exit stairs and exterior fire escapes.
- 1970-1971 - dressing rooms converted into twenty-four apartments (converted back to dressing rooms in 1980).
- 1970-1971 - erection of a brick wall in the proscenium arch. Installation of second movie theater in the former stage area (wall removed and stage restored in 1980).
- The original Lamb-designed marquee and a 1946 "RKO Keith's" electronic banner were removed in 1965 and replaced with the existing theater marquee.

#### **2.4 Photographs**

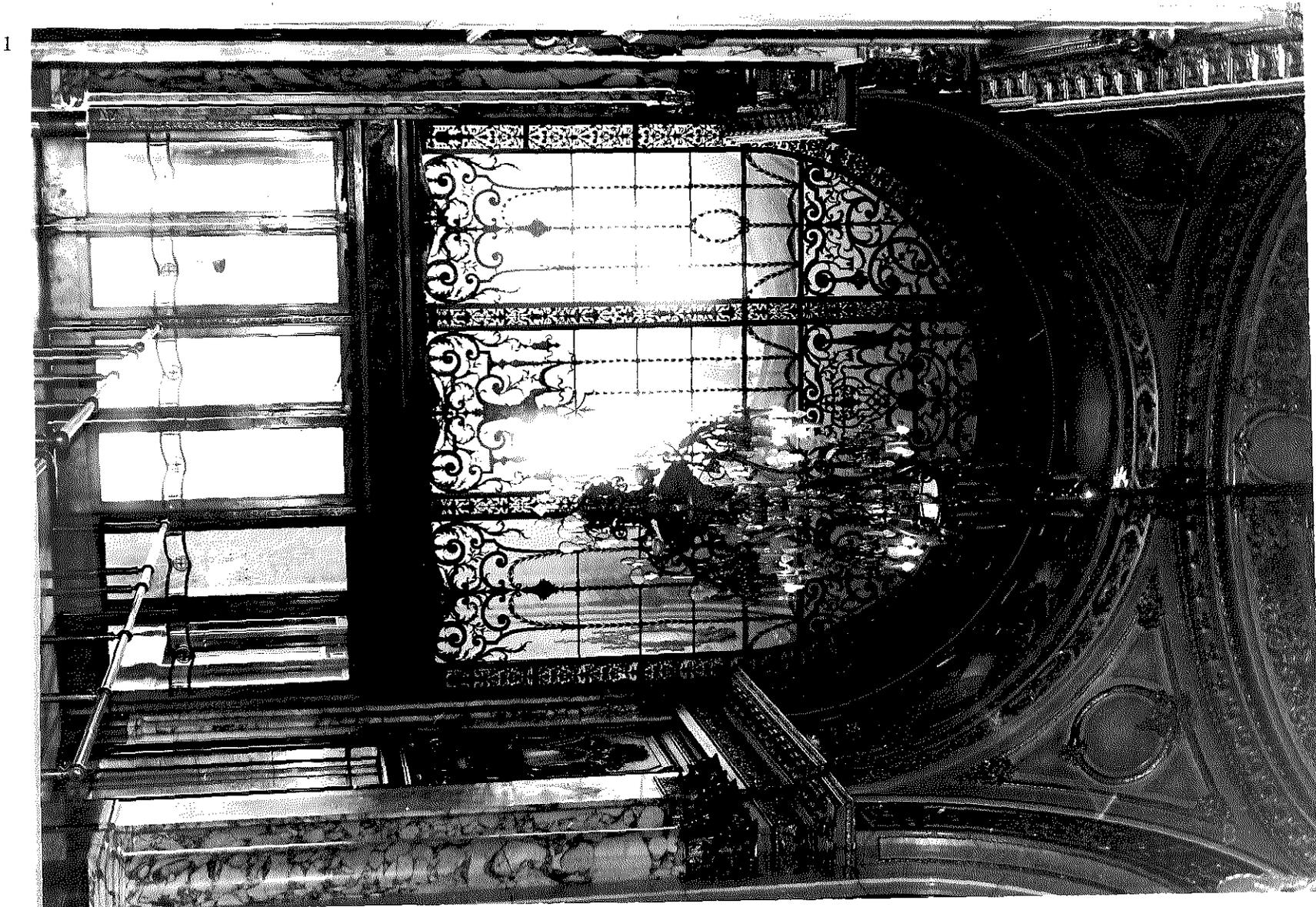
Attached.



Keith Memorial Theater/Opera House - Washington Street Facade  
BLC photo, 1983



Keith Memorial Theater/Opera House - Washington Streetscape (Savoy marquee removed since 1983)  
BLC photo, 1983



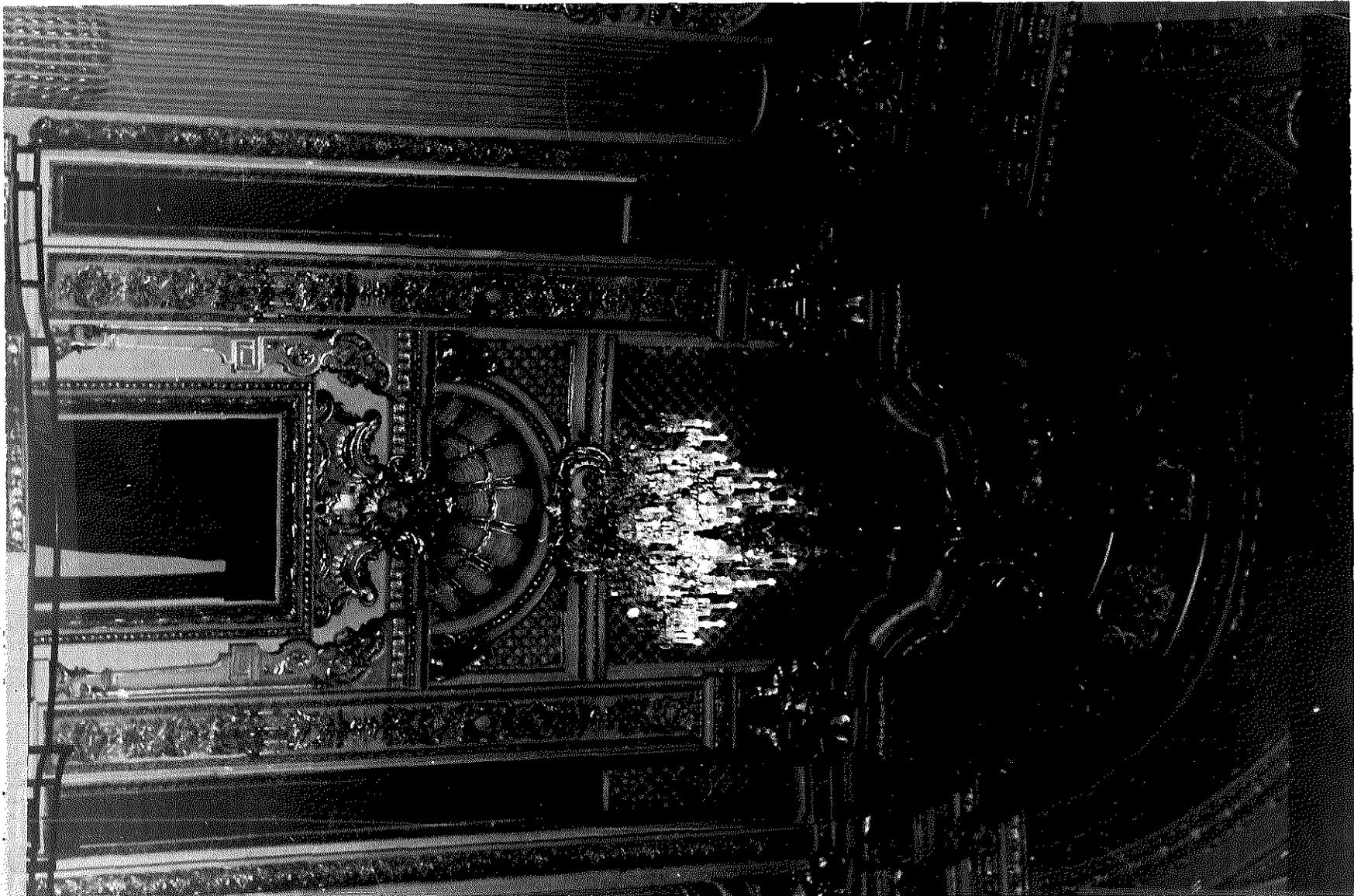
Keith Memorial Theater/Opera House - Entrance Lobby (detail of inner tympanum)  
BLC photo, 1983



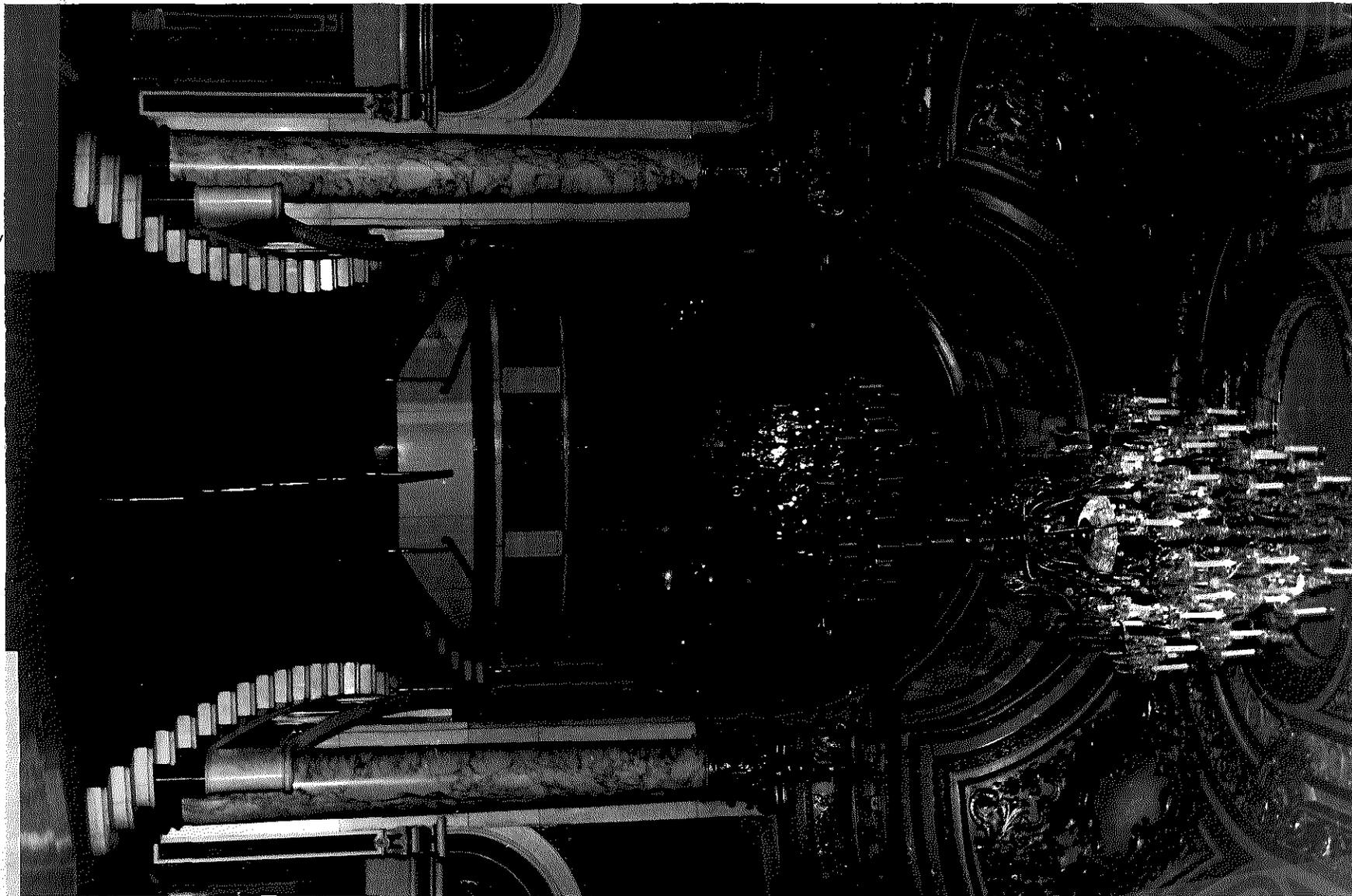
Keith Memorial Theater/Opera House - Entrance Lobby (detail - interior finish)  
BLC photo, 1983



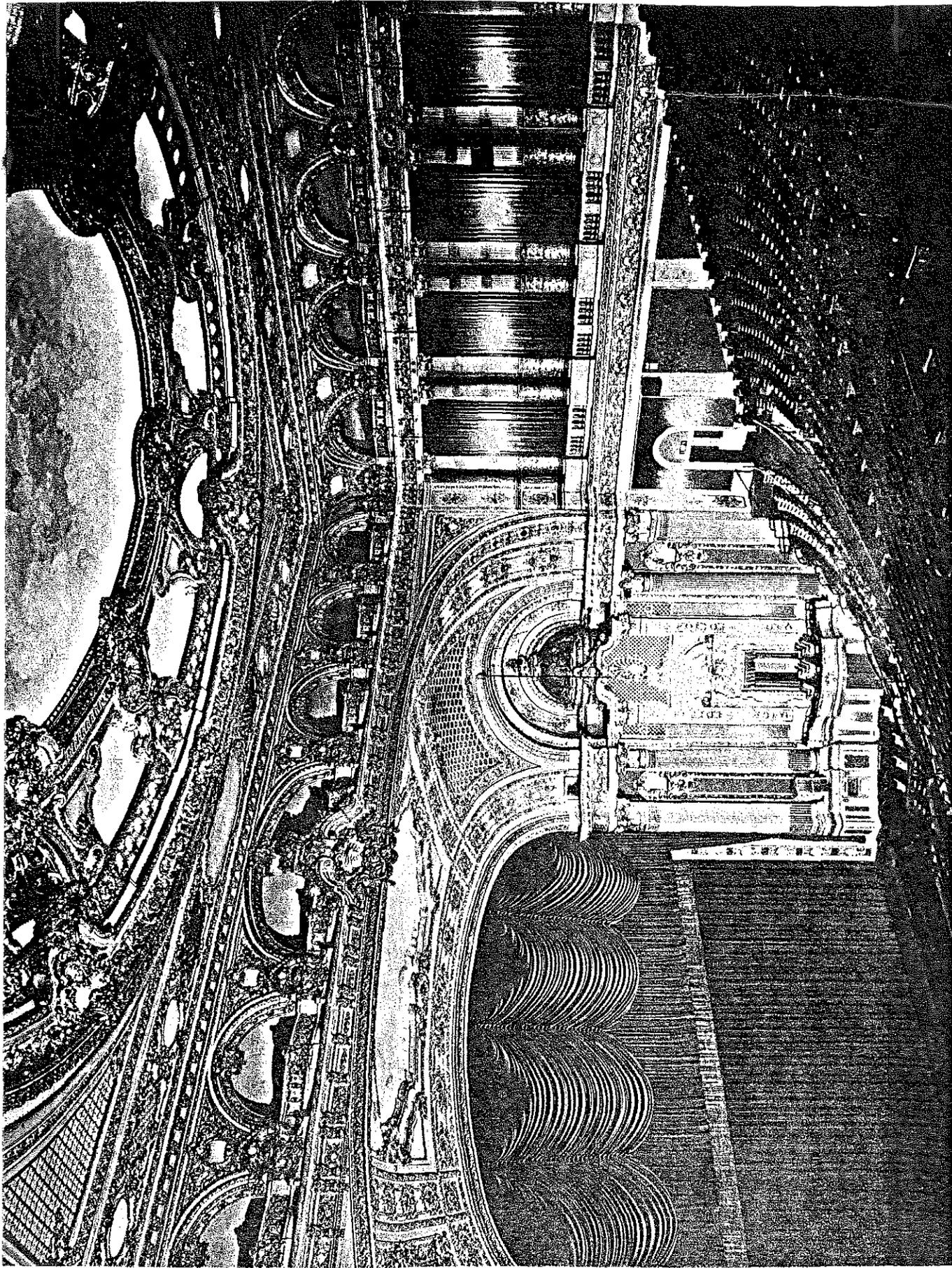
Keith Memorial Theater/Opera House - Mezzanine Promenade (stairs to Upper Mezzanine)  
BLC photo, 1983



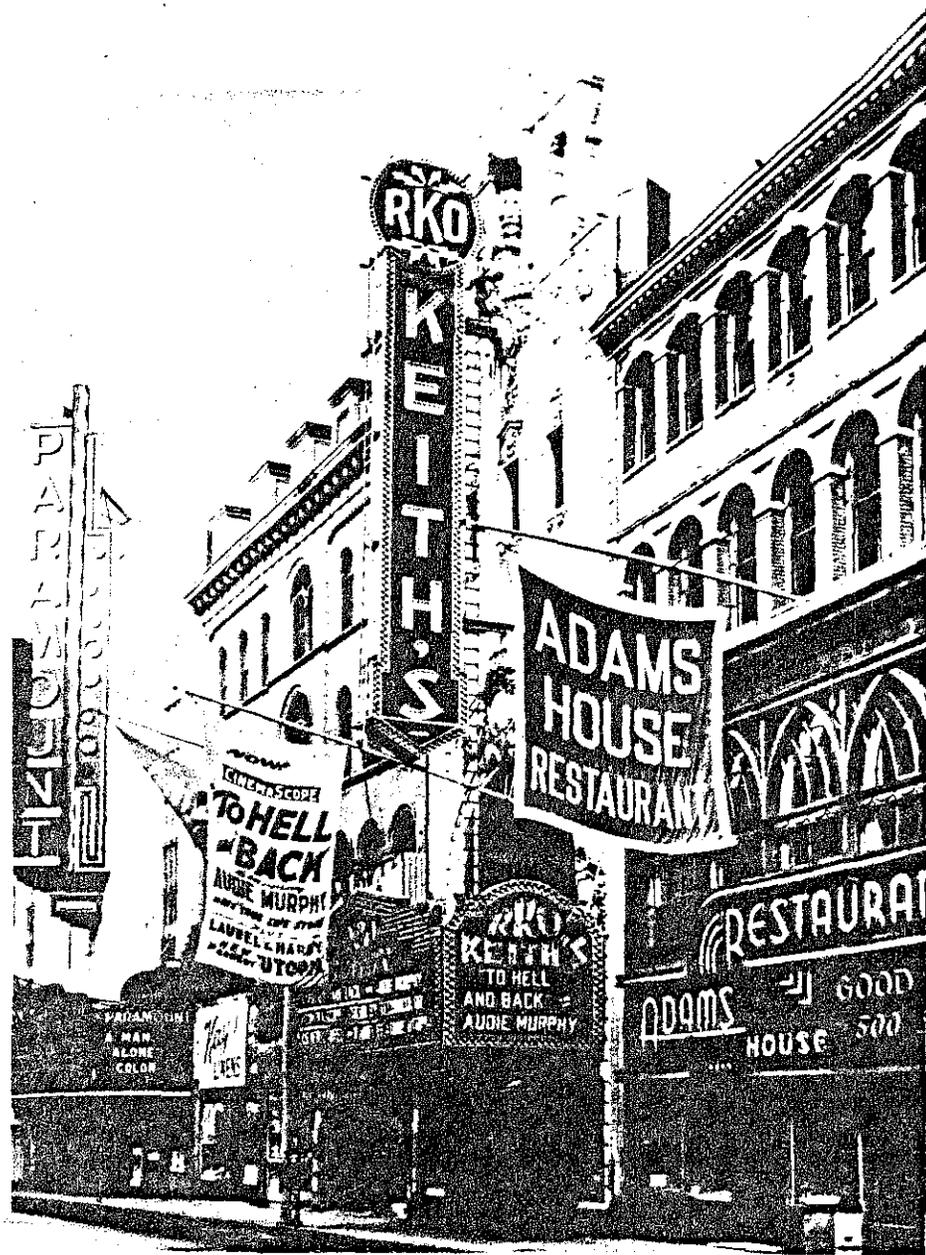
Keith Memorial Theater/Opera House - Proscenium Box  
BLC photo, 1983



Keith Memorial Theater/Opera House - Grand Staircase and Memorial Hall  
BLC photo, 1983

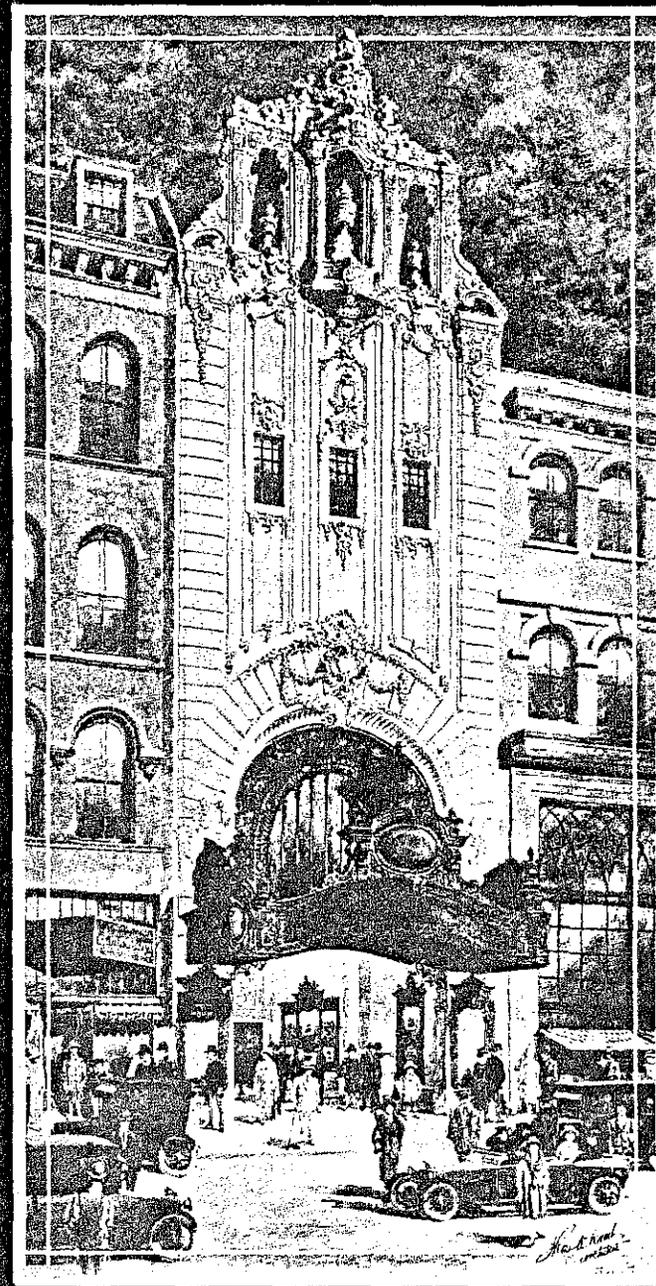


Auditorium , 1970 PMS pho



The marquee designed by Lamb (right) and the one that was installed in 1946 and existed until the 1965 sign which currently exists was erected.

# The Twenty-Second Season 1980



The Opera Company of Boston

Sarah Caldwell, Artistic Director

## 3.0 SIGNIFICANCE

### 3.1 Historical Significance

The Opera House was constructed in 1928 as a tribute to Benjamin Franklin Keith (1846-1914), the Boston showman who originated vaudeville, an American art form characterized by family-oriented, variety stage performance. Keith exerted a major influence on popular culture through his entertainment empire. The Keith Memorial Theater was planned by Edward Albee as a lavish tribute to his business partner and mentor. Albee selected a site rich with theatrical history, where Keith's original storefront "Museum" and Boston's most famous theater once stood.

Keith, a native of Hillsborough, New Hampshire, joined the circus as a teen, apprenticing with P. T. Barnum in the post-Civil War era. He began his vaudeville career in Boston in the early 1880s when he opened a storefront museum of curiosities with a tiny lecture hall at 565 Washington Street.<sup>12</sup> Among his first attractions were a chicken with a human face and 1½ pound Baby Alice. As he upgraded the acts, Keith christened the performances "vaudeville" to get away from the stigma attached to the variety show.<sup>13</sup> After two failed partnership ventures, Keith teamed up with Edwin F. Albee in 1885. This professional alliance and close personal relationship lasted until Keith's death in 1914. In 1886, Keith expanded his enterprise to the nearby Bijou, an elegant 900-seat theater at 543-547 Washington Street. While leasing the Bijou, Keith offered "five daily performances of Gilbert and Sullivan's 'Mikado' at ten cents a seat."<sup>14</sup>

By 1894, Keith possessed the financial wherewithal to construct his own vaudeville venue, "Keith's New Theater," situated behind the Bijou with an entrance at 547 Washington Street. Christened the "mother house of vaudeville," Keith's was the first theater in the nation to present the "lowly" variety show in a setting worthy of grand opera.<sup>15</sup> Initially ridiculed as inappropriate for vaudeville, this opulence succeeded in attracting a middle-class audience. Keith's New Theater was considered the prototype of early-20<sup>th</sup>-century "movie palaces," whereby popular entertainment was presented in palatial settings.<sup>16</sup> Razed in the 1950s, it is now the site of a Mason Street parking lot.

Keith's success was based on his innovative concept of "continuous performances" and on his ability to induce stars from the legitimate theater to appear on his vaudeville stage.<sup>17</sup> During his tenure, performers' salaries increased and backstage accommodations in Keith's theaters became more luxurious. Always an innovator, Keith was the first to show motion pictures in a vaudeville house.<sup>18</sup> During the 1890s, he established "Keith's Circuit," a chain of popularly-priced vaudeville emporiums that grew to four hundred theaters by his death.<sup>19</sup>

Beloved by his adopted city, Keith died in 1914. Progress on an appropriate memorial to the master showman was delayed by World War I. In recognition of his close relationship with

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<sup>12</sup>*Boston Herald*, 28 October 1928, p. 4.

<sup>13</sup>Eliot Norton, *Broadway Down East* (Boston: Boston Public Library, 1978), p. 2.

<sup>14</sup>*Historic American Building Survey No. MA-1078 B. F. Keith Memorial Theatre*, cited in *Marquee* (vol. 15, no. 2, Spring 1983): 6.

<sup>15</sup>Douglass Shand Tucci, *Built in Boston: City & Suburb* (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1978), p. 212.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup>*Dictionary of American Biography*, Volume 10. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928), p.289.

<sup>18</sup>*Boston Herald*, 28 October 1928, p. 4.

<sup>19</sup>*Dictionary of American Biography*, Volume 10. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928), p. 289.

Cardinal William H. O'Connell, Keith bequeathed over two million dollars to Boston's Roman Catholic Archdiocese for the construction of schools and hospitals. His son Andrew Paul Keith (d. 1918) left a bequest for the construction of the Cardinal's new Brighton residence, constructed in 1927 on a parcel adjacent to St. John's Seminary.

The Keith Memorial Theater was planned by Edward Franklin Albee (1857-1930), Keith's long-time business partner, friend, and construction overseer. A contemporary reporter described Albee as "the master theater builder of this country" and lauded the Keith Memorial as his "greatest achievement -- a fitting climax to his long and brilliant career in the vaudeville field."<sup>20</sup> According to this article, Albee was personally involved in all decisions down to the last detail. A native of Maine, he worked in the circus for several years before joining Keith in his early Boston ventures. As much as Keith, Albee is credited with encouraging top quality acts suitable for family viewing. His motto was said to be "Cleanliness, Courtesy, and Comfort."<sup>21</sup> At the time of the Keith Memorial Theater's construction, Albee was president of the Keith-Albee-Orpheum Corporation, created through the merger of the Keith-Albee theater circuit and booking agency with the Pathé and F.B.O. film companies.

The Keith Memorial Theater was erected on the granite foundation of the former Boston Theater, the most celebrated playhouse in the city's history.<sup>22</sup> The Boston Theater opened in 1854, successor to the original Bulfinch-designed theater of 1794 which stood at the corner of Franklin and Federal streets. Upon completion it was hailed as one of the largest and finest theaters in the country. Great actors of the 19<sup>th</sup> century toured here, including Sarah Bernhardt, Eleanora Duse, Lily Langtry, Maurice Barrymore, Edwin Booth, Victor Herbert and Paderevski. The theater's operatic history was equally significant, as the site of Caruso's Boston debut and Gustav Mahler's performance of *Don Giovanni*.

Keith and Albee acquired the Boston Theater in 1892 and renamed it "B. F. Keith's Boston Theatre." In 1897, it was expanded with a rear passageway out to 163 Tremont Street. The Tremont Street annex, complete with a five-story commercial facade, was linked to the Boston Theater by an underground Mason Street walkway, known as the Crystal Tunnel. Following Keith's death in 1914, this theater passed from his son to the Roman Catholic Archdiocese (Cardinal William O'Connell, trustee) and then to Harvard University. It was demolished in 1926, to clear the site for the new Keith Memorial Theater.

The Keith Memorial Theater reportedly cost between five and six million dollars to construct. Its tall, thin terra cotta facade was similar in proportion to the 1897 Tremont Street entrance to Keith's Boston Theater, which had served as the company's signature logo. By the time it opened in October 1928, the popularity of vaudeville was waning and theater management struggled to capture an audience. The initial mix of vaudeville and feature film attractions was quickly abandoned in favor of a strictly vaudeville format in March 1929. In September of that year, theater management reverted to a movie-only format. Thereafter, touring acts on Keith's Circuit were relegated to the adjacent Keith Theater. Among the luminaries who appeared on the Keith Memorial stage were Al Jolson and George M. Cohan, both attended opening ceremonies on October 29, 1928.

In addition to providing patrons with an opulent setting, Albee spared no expense on back-of-the-house accommodations. Described as "more like a hotel in appearance than a theater,"

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<sup>20</sup>*Boston Transcript*, 28 October 1928.

<sup>21</sup>*Boston Herald*, 28 October 1928, p. 2.

<sup>22</sup>Edwin M. Bacon, *Bacon's Dictionary of Boston* (Boston: by author, 1886), p.60.

the performers were treated to “beautifully furnished” suites with private bathrooms and showers. The theater contained “a large waiting room, a gymnasium, handball court, billiard room, nursery, laundry, electric kitchen, barber shop and beauty parlor.”<sup>23</sup>

In 1928, Albee sold his stock in Keith-Albee-Orpheum to Joseph P. Kennedy (b. 1880). A graduate of Harvard University, Kennedy was President of Columbia Trust Company by the age of twenty-five, becoming the youngest bank president in United States history. Kennedy’s initial foray into the entertainment industry involved motion pictures; he subsequently allied himself with Radio Corporation of America and later Keith-Albee-Orpheum, the nation’s largest and strongest vaudeville chain with more than one thousand theaters nationwide. In merging movies, radio, and theaters, Kennedy’s goal was the formation of a company that would be the entertainment equivalent of General Motors.<sup>24</sup> This entertainment empire was named Radio-Keith-Orpheum (R-K-O).

In 1965, the Keith Memorial Theater was purchased by Sack Cinemas and renamed the “Savoy.” To accommodate the projection of two movies, the proscenium arch was sealed off from the main auditorium with a brick wall, creating a second cinema in the former stage area.

In 1978, the Opera Company of Boston purchased this property for \$885,000 and renamed it the “Opera House.” Under the direction of conductor Sarah Caldwell, the Company produced grand operatic productions through the 1980s. On the brink of bankruptcy, the Opera House closed in May 1991. It was severely vandalized in the winter of 1992.

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<sup>23</sup> Samuel Sayward, “A \$5,000,000 Theatre from Which No Profits Are Asked,” *The Motion Picture Herald* (24 November 1928): 40.

<sup>24</sup>*Boston Herald*, 28 October 1928, p. 3.

### 3.2 Architectural Significance

The Keith Memorial Theater/Opera House is a regionally important and remarkably well-preserved example of a 1920s flamboyant movie palace. It is also the work of internationally-prominent theater architect, Thomas White Lamb (1871-1942). This memorial to Benjamin Franklin Keith ranks among the nation's finest theaters in terms of opulence, architectural quality, and interior layout. Constructed on the eve of the Depression, the Keith Memorial Theater was one of the last extravagant movie palaces built in the nation.

The Keith Memorial Theater's signature Baroque aesthetic is a marked departure from the Classical Revival architecture typically associated with Boston's theaters. Noteworthy Baroque design elements include the profusion of curvilinear ornament, strict axial planning, and circulation through a hierarchy of domed oval spaces. The facade represents one of Boston's finest examples of architectural terra cotta, a kiln-fired material popular in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century due to its ability to convey rich sculptural detail, an effect too expensive to execute in stone. The interior, described in contemporary accounts as "a dazzling architectural dream in ivory and gold," is one of the finest theater spaces in Boston. It is Boston's second largest theater; only the Metropolitan (Wang) is more ambitious in terms of scale and auditorium size.

Constructed on the foundation of the former Boston Theater, Lamb was challenged to design a theater with a seating capacity of nearly 3,000. His solution was to reduce the stage size in favor of a larger auditorium. According to Emerson Theater's manager Lance Olson this compromise was "brilliant for its specific purpose (i.e., vaudeville)" but "serves few other (performance) uses admirably." In addition to its public spaces and stage, the theater was equipped with a four-story animal suite, freight elevators, loading docks, dressing rooms, film projection room, and theater organ.

The term "movie palace" describes the desire of theater architects to attract middle-class patrons by creating an environment fit for royalty. This philosophy was described in a 1930 publication.

The modern theater is more than a house in which to see a picture or to produce an act. It has a very important place in our social and economic structure. The vast majority of those attending our theater are of limited means. Their homes are not luxurious and the theater affords them an opportunity to imagine themselves as wealthy people in luxurious surroundings.<sup>25</sup>

The entrance and grand lobby decor of the Keith Memorial Theater consists of monumental columns of solid marble rather than painted pilasters, as was common in most theaters. These seven-ton columns were quarried in Italy and polished in Vermont. Much of the molded plaster detailing and cut stone work is attributed to the John Evans Company, a nationally renowned producer of architectural ornament from 1870 to 1930.<sup>26</sup> The Evans Company supplied plaster moldings for several H. H. Richardson works as well as for Clarence Blackall's Colonial Theater. The Keith Memorial's wood paneling, most notably that of the Trustee's Room, was executed by C. H. Rugg & Company, a firm whose work is represented at the Parker House and Park Plaza Hotel.

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<sup>25</sup>R. W. Sexton, ed., *American Theaters of Today* (New York, 1930), p. 24.

<sup>26</sup>Files of the Opera Company of Boston.

Thomas W. Lamb was the best known and most prolific theater architect of his era, designing over three hundred theaters worldwide. Born and educated in Scotland, Lamb emigrated to the United States as a young man. He completed his architectural training in New York City and later achieved national prominence as the designer of the Capitol Theater, Ziegfeld's, and Madison Square Garden. The Keith Memorial Theater is a rare local example of Lamb's work and the only Boston commission where both his interior and exterior design survives intact. Other Boston works attributed to Lamb include the 1915 remodeling of the Orpheum interior, the interior of the Keith Theater (demolished in the 1952), the Loew's State Theater in the Back Bay (demolished), and the Fenway Theater, now the Berklee Performance Center.

The 1983 Historic American Buildings Survey for the Keith Memorial Theater provides the following critique of Lamb's aesthetic development.

The entire history of picture-theater architecture from the nickelodeon to the Art Deco palace is represented in Thomas Lamb's designs. While his earliest theaters, notably the Regent, New York's first high-class picture theater, were in the heavy Baroque style of the vaudeville houses, Lamb soon turned for inspiration to the work of the brothers Adam, and his name became for some years synonymous with the Adam style in theaters. The growing popularity of moving pictures in New York City brought about a whole series of Adamesque Lamb theaters, the Strand, Rialto, Rivoli, and the 5,000-seat Capitol, the first movie theater built on a truly palatial scale.<sup>27</sup>

The Keith Memorial Theater exhibits both Baroque and Adamesque ornament. Its facade and ceiling treatments represent the flamboyant Baroque style Lamb adopted in the late-1920s in an attempt to surpass prior commissions and create the ultimate movie-palace fantasy.

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<sup>27</sup>*Historic American Building Survey No. MA-1078 B. F. Keith Memorial Theatre*, cited in *Marquee* (vol. 15, no. 2, Spring 1983): 4.

### 3.4 Relationship to Criteria for Landmark Designation

The Keith Memorial Theater/Opera House meets the criteria for Landmark designation found in section four of Chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975 as amended, under the following criteria:

**A. as a property listed on the National Register of Historic Places.**

**B. as a property identified prominently with an important aspect of the cultural and social history of the city, commonwealth, and nation, -- specifically**

- ☞ for its association with the Keith-Albee vaudeville empire, the nation's preeminent chain of theaters and booking agencies;
- ☞ as a lavish memorial to Benjamin Franklin Keith (1846-1914), the "Father of Vaudeville;"
- ☞ as a rare surviving vaudeville theater; and
- ☞ as the final theater erected by Edward Franklin Albee (1857-1930), who along with Keith elevated the architectural standards for both back-stage amenities and public accommodations, creating the blueprint for the flamboyant movie palaces of the 1920s.

**D. as a property representative of elements of architectural design and craftsmanship which embodies distinctive characteristics of a type inherently valuable for study, -- specifically**

- ☞ as an outstanding and well-preserved work by internationally-prominent theater architect Thomas White Lamb (1871-1942); and
- ☞ as an exceptional example of decorative terra cotta and exuberant Baroque/Adamesque theater design.

#### **4.0 ECONOMIC STATUS**

##### **4.1 Current Assessed Value**

According to City of Boston Assessor's records, the property at 537 Washington Street, Boston has a total assessed value of \$750,000, with land valued at \$521,000 and the building at \$229,000.

##### **4.2 Current Ownership**

This property is owned by Opera House Inc., 537 Washington Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02111. The Theater Management Group, Inc. (headquartered at 2000 West Loop South, Suite 1000, Houston, Texas 77027) has a signed purchase option.

## 5.0 PLANNING CONTEXT

### 5.1 Background

Washington Street's prominence as a thoroughfare dates from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when it provided the only overland route from Boston to Roxbury and the interior settlements beyond. One of the best known establishments along this route was Lamb Tavern (1745), located on the site of the Paramount Theater, from which the first Boston to Providence stagecoach departed in 1767. Another local tavern, the Liberty Tree on the corner of Washington and Essex streets served as the 1760s meeting place of the Sons of Liberty.

During the Early Republican era, the lower Washington Street area continued to develop as a commercial district. In 1810, the Bulfinch-designed Boylston Market was constructed at the corner of Washington and Boylston streets, conveniently sited for farmers trucking their produce into town from outlying regions. The advent of rail travel to Boston via the filled South Cove attracted travelers to this section of Washington Street in the 1830s and '40s. To capitalize on its proximity to the railroad terminus, several hotels, including the Adams House (1844, rebuilt 1883) which replaced the old Lamb Tavern, were built in this vicinity.

The presence of travelers seeking entertainment, as well as its transitional location between the city's business and residential districts, may have contributed to this area's development as a theater district. The Lion Theater, constructed in 1835 (site of the Paramount), featured equestrian and dramatic arts and was later transformed into a concert hall known as the Melodeon (1839). The 3,000-seat Boston Theater, built in 1854, was reputed to be "without question the finest theater in the world."<sup>28</sup> And in 1894, Benjamin Franklin Keith built Keith's New Theater, called "the mother house of vaudeville."

By the early-20<sup>th</sup> century, theaters for vaudeville, burlesque, and motion pictures were clustered in the area bounded by Washington, Tremont, and Boylston streets. B. F. Keith opened one of the City's first movie theaters, the Bijou Dream (1908), on the second story of the Adams House Annex at 543-547 Washington Street, in a space previously occupied by a parlor theater known as the Bijou. Another small and early movie theater, the Modern, opened in a converted 19<sup>th</sup>-century carpet warehouse in 1913.

In 1932, there were five operating movie theaters on the block: the Keith Memorial (renamed the RKO Keith Memorial); the Paramount; the Modern; the Bijou; and Keith's New Theater (then known as the Shubert Lyric Theater and later renamed the Normandie). All five continued to operate during the Depression and through World War II, the heyday of the motion picture industry.

The demise of the Washington Street theaters began in the 1950s, due in part to post-war suburbanization and the growing popularity of television. Keith's New Theater was razed in 1952. The Bijou closed in the early '50s and was remodeled for non-theater use. The Modern (later the Mayflower) became an adult movie venue, closing its doors in the 1970s. The Keith Memorial Theater was purchased by Sack Cinema Corporation in 1965 and renamed the Savoy; it remained open until the late 1970s. And finally, the Paramount, which also showed adult movies, closed in 1976.

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<sup>28</sup>Demolished in 1926 to clear a site for the Keith Memorial Theater/Opera House.

In addition to the demise of Washington Street's theater district, area retail establishments also suffered an economic blow. During the late-19<sup>th</sup> and early-20<sup>th</sup> century, retail clothing stores, particularly small men's clothing and accessory shops, lined lower Washington Street. The upper stories of these commercial buildings housed the city's garment industry. With manufacturing in decline and with shoppers drawn to suburban malls, the retail district retreated to Downtown Crossing, at the intersection of Summer, Winter, and Washington streets.

The deterioration of lower Washington Street could also be attributed to the influx of adult entertainment establishments in the 1970s. After urban renewal activity leveled the city's red light district, known as Scollay Square, these businesses migrated down Washington Street. A special zoning code amendment was enacted to restrict the spread of X-rated entertainment uses to the two blocks of Washington Street between Boylston/Essex and Stuart/Kneeland, subsequently dubbed the "Combat Zone."

## 5.2 Current Planning Issues

Development within the theater district vicinity is subject to Article 38 of the Boston Zoning Code, as established under Chapter 665 of the Acts of 1956. Approved by the Mayor on March 20, 1989, Article 38 created the "Midtown Cultural District." The goals and objectives of the Midtown Cultural District are as follows:

- to direct downtown development in a way that promotes balanced growth for Boston;
- to prevent over-development of the Financial District and the Back Bay by promoting mixed-use development in Midtown;
- to revitalize Midtown as the region's center for performing and visual arts by rehabilitating historic theaters and creating new cultural facilities for the city's nonprofit arts community;
- to protect the quality of life and provide for expansion of the thriving Chinatown neighborhood by creating affordable housing and business opportunities; and by controlling institutional expansion in the area;
- to preserve Boston's historic resources and public open spaces, which provide enjoyment to all residents and visitors and which increase land values in their proximity, by virtue of historic, aesthetic, and environmentally beneficial qualities;
- to provide new and expanded facilities for community services; and
- to create a new residential neighborhood downtown by encouraging the development of housing which is affordable to all segments of the community.

## 5.3 Special Planning Issues

In order to focus attention on Boston's vacant and decaying historic theaters, Mayor Thomas M. Menino nominated the Washington Street Theaters (i.e., the Paramount, Modern, and Opera House) to the National Trust for Historic Preservation's 1995 list of our nation's "Ten Most Endangered Properties." Accorded this recognition, the Washington Street Theaters became the subject of a charrette co-sponsored by the National Trust, the Boston Preservation Alliance, and the City of Boston. Held on January 12, 1996, this one-day workshop was attended by architects, developers, preservationists, and theater managers from across the country, who examined viable development scenarios for the three theaters. Findings from the Boston Historic Theater Charrette were presented to the public at a forum held at the Opera House on June 4, 1996.

In 1998, the Houston-based Theatre Management Group (TMG) executed an agreement to purchase the Opera House from Sarah Caldwell's Opera Company of Boston. Although, TMG has yet to embark on the public review process (i.e., file a Project Notification Form with the Boston Redevelopment Authority and an Environmental Notification Form with the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs), a recent promotional statement highlights their plans for the Opera House Restoration Project (see excerpted project description below).

"This project involves the reconstruction and expansion of the existing Opera House located at 539 Washington Street in the Washington Street Theater District. The realities of modern-day theater business require a change in program from one that was exclusively opera to a broader bill including popular Broadway and Broadway-type shows, such as *The Lion King*, *Ragtime*, and *Showboat*. In order to accommodate the staging and production needs of major Broadway musicals, the Opera House must increase its stage size and provide a loading area to facilitate the loading and unloading of stage equipment and sets.

The Theater Management Group, a Houston-based company specializing in the restoration of historic theaters throughout the United States, is the project proponent. Under the Theater Management Group's proposal, the front facade and trim of the historic Beaux Arts style theater will be restored to its original condition, while the interior will be restored and slightly reconfigured to provide handicapped access, improved backstage facilities, additional fire escape routes and other small changes. To accommodate larger shows, the stage will be expanded from 35 feet to 45 feet in depth, and to 100 feet in width, requiring the building envelope to extend into Mason Street. Fully enclosed loading facilities, including two truck bays, will be added on the Mason Street side of the building. Closure of Mason Street directly behind the Opera House was determined to be the most workable configuration to accommodate the stage expansion, maintain public health and safety, and allow the construction of a new loading dock for Tremont on the Common.

Aside from the Mason Street stage addition and loading facilities, the building envelope will not change, and will remain between 60 and 100 feet in height. The overall interior square footage will increase from approximately 77,000 square feet to 90,000 square feet. The number of seats will decrease slightly to approximately 2,600 seats. The proposed project will not include any new parking facilities, but will rely on existing lots and garages in the area."

#### **5.4 Current Zoning**

The Keith Memorial Theater/Opera House at 537 Washington Street, Boston, is zoned for residential/commercial use. It is located within the Midtown Cultural District where development is limited to a height of one hundred twenty-five (125) feet and a maximum floor area ratio (FAR) of eight (8) is allowed. Under Article 38 of the Boston Zoning Code, the substantial rehabilitation of an existing theater may qualify for increased FAR. Qualifying projects include major exterior renovations and improvements, such as facade restoration, and/or substantial interior rehabilitation, including: expanding stage or wings; reraising the orchestra; increasing rehearsal, dressing room, or lobby space; or historic restoration.

## 6.0 ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES

### 6.1 Alternatives available to the Boston Landmarks Commission:

#### A. Individual Landmark Designation

In 1983, Boston Landmarks Commission (BLC) staff prepared a study report and scheduled a public hearing on October 25<sup>th</sup> of that year to consider the Keith Memorial Theater/Opera House for Landmark designation. At the request of the owner, the designation vote was postponed indefinitely. In recognition of the Theatre Management Group's current efforts to restore the Opera House, BLC staff updated and expanded the 1983 study report for this property. The proposed standards and criteria found in sections 8.0 - 10.0 are consistent with the design review methodology adopted by the Commission in 1994.

Landmark designation represents the City's highest honor and is therefore restricted to cultural resources of outstanding architectural and/or historical significance. Landmark designation under Chapter 772 would require review of physical changes to the following elements hereinafter referred to as the **Specified Exterior and Interior Features**:

1. **The Washington Street Facade; the Outer Vestibule; and the Theater Roof** (specifically in regard to weatherproofing and visibility of roof projections from Washington Street); and
2. **The Entrance Lobby; Inner Lobby; select sections of the Mason Street Passage and Storefronts** (see Orchestra Level Floor Plan in Appendix A for specific designated space); **Grand Lobby; Memorial Hall; Mezzanine Promenade; Trustee's Room; Mezzanine Ladies' Lounge; Auditorium; Balconies; Proscenium Arch and Boxes; Elliptical Lobby; Basement Grand Lounge; Basement Men's Lounge; Basement Women's Lounge; and Public Stairways.** See Appendix A for floor plans of all designated interior spaces.

#### B. Denial of Individual Landmark Designation

The Commission retains the option of not designating any or all of the Specified Exterior or Interior Features as a Landmark.

#### C. Landmark District Designation

The Boston Landmarks Commission's enabling statute precludes the designation of Landmark districts in the central city.

#### D. Preservation Restriction

The Massachusetts Historical Commission holds an active Preservation Restriction Agreement on the Keith Memorial Theater/Opera House through the year 2000.

#### E. Preservation Plan

The Commission could recommend development and implementation of a preservation plan for the building.

#### F. National Register Listing

The Keith Memorial Theater/Opera House is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a contributing building to the "Washington Street Theatre District."

## 6.2 Impact of Alternatives

### A. Individual Landmark Designation

Landmark designation represents the City's highest honor and is therefore restricted to cultural resources of outstanding architectural and/or historical significance. Landmark designation under Chapter 772 would require review of physical changes to the Specified Exterior and Interior Features of the property, in accordance with the standards and criteria adopted as part of the designation.

### B. Denial of Individual Landmark Designation

Without Landmark designation, the City would be unable to offer protection to the Specified Exterior and/or Interior Features, or extend guidance to present and future owners.

### C. Landmark District Designation

Not applicable.

### D. Preservation Restriction

Under the terms of a 1980 Preservation Restriction Agreement, the Massachusetts Historical Commission is empowered to review proposed changes to the theater's interior and exterior through the year 2000.

### E. Preservation Plan

A preservation plan would investigate various adaptive use scenarios, analyze investment costs and rates of return, and provide recommendations for subsequent development. The Theatre Management Group, Inc. has assembled a project team of architects, conservators, and preservation consultants, who are actively pursuing this alternative.

### F. National Register

Due to its National Register status, the Keith Memorial Theater/Opera House is protected from adverse impacts caused by federal, federally-licensed or federally-assisted activities. Similar protection from state-sponsored projects is achieved by the concurrent listing of all National Register properties on the State Register of Historic Places under Chapter 254 of the Massachusetts General Laws.

National Register listing also provides an investment tax credit for the certified rehabilitation of income-producing properties. Properties owned by non-profit organizations may qualify for rehabilitation assistance under the competitive Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund.

## **7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The staff of the Boston Landmarks Commission recommends that the Specified Exterior and Interior Features of the Keith Memorial Theater/Opera House as described in Section 6.1A be designated a Landmark under Chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975, as amended. The boundaries of the designation shall correspond to ward 3, parcel 4830 as depicted on the City of Boston Assessor's map.

The standards and criteria for administering the regulatory functions provided for in Chapter 772 are attached.

## **8.0 GENERAL STANDARDS AND CRITERIA**

### **8.1 Introduction**

Per sections, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 of the enabling statute (Chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975 of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, as amended) Standards and Criteria must be adopted for each Landmark Designation which shall be applied by the Commission in evaluating proposed changes to the property. The Standards and Criteria established thus note those features which must be conserved and/or enhanced to maintain the viability of the Landmark Designation. Before a Certificate of Design Approval or Certificate of Exemption can be issued for such changes, the changes must be reviewed by the Commission with regard to their conformance to the purpose of the statute.

The intent of these guidelines is to help local officials, designers and individual property owners to identify the characteristics that have led to designation, and thus to identify the limitation to the changes that can be made to them. It should be emphasized that conformance to the Standards and Criteria alone does not necessarily insure approval, nor are they absolute, but any request for variance from them must demonstrate the reason for, and advantages gained by, such variance. The Commission's Certificate of Design Approval is only granted after careful review of each application and public hearing, in accordance with the statute.

As intended by the statute a wide variety of buildings and features are included within the area open to Landmark Designation, and an equally wide range exists in the latitude allowed for change. Some properties of truly exceptional architectural and/or historical value will permit only the most minor modifications, while for some others the Commission encourages changes and additions with a contemporary approach, consistent with the properties' existing features and changed uses.

In general, the intent of the Standards and Criteria is to preserve existing qualities that cause designation of a property; however, in some cases they have been structured as to encourage the removal of additions that have lessened the integrity of the property.

It is recognized that changes will be required in designated properties for a wide variety of reasons, not all of which are under the complete control of the Commission or the owners. Primary examples are: Building code conformance and safety requirements; Changes necessitated by the introduction of modern mechanical and electrical systems; Changes due to proposed new uses of a property.

The response to these requirements may, in some cases, present conflicts with the Standards and Criteria for a particular property. The Commission's evaluation of an application will be based upon the degree to which such changes are in harmony with the character of the property. In some cases, priorities have been assigned within the Standards and Criteria as an aid to property owners in identifying the most critical design features. The treatments outlined below are listed in hierarchical order from least amount of intervention to the greatest amount of intervention. The owner, manager or developer should follow them in order to ensure a successful project that is sensitive to the historic landmark.

- ◆ **Identify, Retain, and Preserve** the form and detailing of the materials and features that define the historic character of the structure or site. These are basic treatments that should prevent actions that may cause the diminution or loss of the structure's or site's historic character. It is important to remember that loss of character can be caused by the cumulative effect of insensitive actions whether large or small.
- ◆ **Protect and Maintain** the materials and features that have been identified as important and must be retained during the rehabilitation work. Protection usually involves the least amount of intervention and is done before other work.
- ◆ **Repair** the character defining features and materials when it is necessary. Repairing begins with the least amount of intervention as possible. Patching, piecing-in, splicing, consolidating or otherwise reinforcing according to recognized preservation methods are the techniques that should be followed. Repairing may also include limited replacement in kind of extremely deteriorated or missing parts of features. Replacements should be based on surviving prototypes.
- ◆ **Replacement** of entire character defining features or materials follows repair when the deterioration prevents repair. The essential form and detailing should still be evident so that the physical evidence can be used to re-establish the feature. The preferred option is replacement of the entire feature in kind using the same material. Because this approach may not always be technically or economically feasible the commission will consider the use of compatible substitute material. The commission does not recommend removal and replacement with new material a feature that could be repaired.
- ◆ **Missing Historic Features** should be replaced with new features that are based on adequate historical, pictorial and physical documentation. The commission may consider a replacement feature that is compatible with the remaining character defining features. The new design should match the scale, size, and material of the historic feature.
- ◆ **Alterations or Additions** that may be needed to assure the continued use of the historic structure or site should not radically change, obscure or destroy character defining spaces, materials, features or finishes. The commission encourages new uses that are compatible with the historic structure or site and that do not require major alterations or additions.

In these guidelines the verb **Should** indicates a recommended course of action; the verb **Shall** indicates those actions which are specifically required to preserve and protect significant architectural elements.

Finally, the Standards and Criteria have been divided into two levels:

- ◆ **Section 8.3** - Those general ones that are common to all landmark designations (building exteriors, building interiors, landscape features and archeological sites).
- ◆ **Section 9.0** - Those specific ones that apply to each particular property that is designated. In every case the Specific Standards and Criteria for a particular property shall take precedence over the General ones if there is a conflict.

## 8.2 Levels of Review

The Commission has no desire to interfere with the normal maintenance procedures for the landmark. In order to provide some guidance for the landmark owner, manager or developer and the Commission, the activities which might be construed as causing an alteration to the physical character of the exterior have been categorized into:

**A. Routine activities which are not subject to review by the Commission:**

1. Activities associated with routine maintenance, including such items as: Housekeeping, pruning, fertilizing, mulching, etc.
2. Routine activities associated with seasonal installations which do not result in any permanent alterations or attached fixtures.

**B. Activities which may be determined by the Executive Director to be eligible for a Certificate of Exemption:**

1. Ordinary maintenance and repair involving no change in design, material, color and outward appearance, including such items as: Major cleaning programs (including chemical surface cleaning), repainting, planting or removal of limited number of trees or shrubs, major vegetation management.
2. In-kind replacement or repair.

**C. Activities requiring Landmarks Commission review:**

Any reconstruction, restoration, replacement, alteration or demolition (This includes but is not limited to surface treatments, fixtures and ornaments) such as: New construction of any type; removal of existing features or element; any alteration involving change in design, material color, location or outward appearance; major planting or removal of trees or shrubs, changes in landforms.

**D. Activities not explicitly listed above:**

In the case of any activity not explicitly covered in these Standards and Criteria, the Executive Director shall determine whether an application is required and if so, whether it shall be an application for a Certificate of Design Approval or Certificate of Exemption.

**E. Concurrent Jurisdiction**

In some cases, issues which fall under the jurisdiction of the Landmarks Commission may also fall under the jurisdiction of other city, state and federal boards and commissions such as the Boston Art Commission, the Massachusetts Historical Commission, the National Park Service and others. All efforts will be made to expedite the review process. Whenever possible and appropriate, a joint hearing will be arranged.

**8.3 General Standards and Criteria**

1. The design approach to the property should begin with the premise that the features of historical and architectural significance described within the Study Report must be preserved. In general, this will minimize alterations that will be allowed.

2. Changes and additions to the property and its environment which have taken place in the course of time are evidence of the history of the property and the neighborhood. These changes to the property may have developed significance in their own right, and this significance should be recognized and respected. (The term "**later contributing features**" shall be used to convey this concept.)
3. Deteriorated materials and/or features, whenever possible, should be repaired rather than replaced or removed.
4. When replacement of features that define the historic character of the property is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence of original or later contributing features.
5. New materials should, whenever possible, match the material being replaced in physical properties and should be compatible with the size, scale, color, material and character of the property and its environment.
6. New additions or alterations should not disrupt the essential form and integrity of the property and should be compatible with the size, scale, color, material and character of the property and its environment.
7. New additions or related new construction should be differentiated from the existing thus, they should not necessarily be imitative of an earlier style or period.
8. New additions or alterations should be done in such a way that if they were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property would be unimpaired.
9. Priority shall be given to those portions of the property which are visible from public ways or which it can be reasonably inferred may be in the future.
10. Surface cleaning shall use **the mildest method possible. Sandblasting, wire brushing, or other similar abrasive cleaning methods shall not be permitted.**
11. Should any major restoration or construction activity be considered for the property, the Boston Landmarks Commission recommends that the proponents prepare an historic building conservation study and/or consult a materials conservator early in the planning process.
12. Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved.

The General Standards and Criteria has been financed in part with funds from the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, through the Massachusetts Historical Commission, Secretary of State Michael Joseph Connolly, Chairman.

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## 9.0 EXTERIOR - SPECIFIC STANDARDS AND CRITERIA

Keith Memorial Theater/Opera House  
537 Washington Street, Boston

### 9.1 Introduction

1. In these guidelines the verb **Should** indicates a recommended course of action; the verb **Shall** indicates those actions which are specifically required to preserve and protect significant architectural elements.
2. The intent of these standards and criteria is to preserve the overall character and appearance of the Washington Street facade of the Keith Memorial Theater/Opera House, specifically its exterior form, its mass, and its richness of detail.
3. The standards and criteria acknowledge that there will be changes to the exterior of the building and are intended to make the changes sensitive to the architectural character of the building.
4. Since it is not possible to provide one general guideline, the following factors will be considered in determining whether a later addition(s) and/or alteration(s) can, or should, be removed:
  - a. Compatibility with the original property's integrity in scale, materials and character.
  - b. Historic association with the property.
  - c. Quality in the design and execution of the addition/alteration.
  - d. Functional usefulness.
5. In order to safeguard the theater's interior features and finishes from water infiltration and evaluate the impact of roof projections on the Washington Street facade, the Commission shall review all plans for rooftop weatherproofing, drainage systems, and installation of new mechanical equipment and head houses.
6. The following **Specified Exterior Features** are subject to the terms of the guidelines herein stated: the **Washington Street Facade**; the **Outer Vestibule**; and the **Theater Roof** (specifically in regard to weatherproofing and visibility of roof projections from Washington Street).
7. Items under Commission review include but are not limited to the following:

### 9.2 Exterior Walls

#### A. General

1. No new openings shall be allowed
2. Original existing openings should not be filled or changed in size.
3. Exposed conduit shall not be allowed on the Washington Street elevation.

4. The Boston Landmarks Commission recommends that work proposed to the materials outlined in sections B, C and D be executed with the guidance of a professional building materials conservator.

**B. Masonry (Brick, Stone, Terra Cotta, Concrete, Stucco and Mortar)**

1. All masonry materials, features, details, and ornamentation of the Specified Exterior Features, such as: the glazed terra cotta, marble, plaster (structural and decorative), granite foundation, terrazzo flooring, mortar joint sizes, color, and tooling shall be preserved.
2. Original or later contributing masonry materials, features, details, surfaces and ornamentation shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired by patching, piecing-in, or consolidating the masonry using recognized preservation methods.
3. Deteriorated or missing masonry materials, features, details, surfaces and ornamentation shall be replaced with material and elements which match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile and detail of installation.
4. When replacement of materials or elements is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
5. If using the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute materials may be considered.
6. Original mortar shall be retained.
7. Deteriorated mortar shall be carefully removed by hand-raking the joints.
8. Use of mechanical saws and hammers shall not be allowed.
9. Repointing mortar shall duplicate the original mortar in strength, composition, color, texture, joint size, joint profile and method of application.
10. Sample panels of raking the joints and repointing shall be reviewed and approved by the staff of the Boston Landmarks Commission.
11. Cleaning of masonry is discouraged and should be performed only when necessary to halt deterioration.
12. If the building is to be cleaned, **the mildest method possible** shall be used.
13. A test patch of the cleaning method(s) shall be reviewed and approved on site by staff of the Boston Landmarks Commission. Test patches should always be carried out well in advance of cleaning (including exposure to all seasons if possible).
14. **Sandblasting (wet or dry), wire brushing, or other similar abrasive cleaning methods shall not be permitted.** Doing so changes the visual quality of the material and accelerates deterioration.

15. Waterproofing or water repellents are strongly discouraged. These treatments are generally not effective in preserving masonry and can cause permanent damage. The Commission does recognize that in extraordinary circumstances their use may be required to solve a specific problem. Samples of any proposed treatment shall be reviewed by the Commission before application.
16. In general, painting masonry surfaces shall not be allowed. Painting masonry surfaces will be considered only when there is documentary evidence that this treatment was used at some point in the history of the property.

#### C. Wood

Not Applicable.

#### D. Architectural Metals (Cast Iron, Steel, Pressed Tin, Copper, Aluminum and Zinc)

1. All metal materials, features, details and ornamentation of the Specified Exterior Features, such as: the bronze tympanum grills, bronze display cases, bronze ticket booth, bronze doors, bronze sash, Dutch metal, flashing, coatings and finishes shall be preserved.
2. Original or later contributing metal materials, features, details and ornamentation shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired by patching, splicing or reinforcing the metal using recognized preservation methods.
3. Deteriorated or missing metal materials, features, details and ornamentation shall be replaced with material and elements which match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile and detail of installation.
4. When replacement of materials or elements is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
5. If using the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute materials may be considered.
6. Cleaning of metal elements either to remove corrosion or deteriorated paint shall use **the mildest method possible**.
7. Abrasive cleaning methods, such as low pressure dry grit blasting, may be allowed as long as it does not abrade or damage the surface.
8. A test patch of the cleaning method(s) shall be reviewed and approved on site by staff of the Boston Landmarks Commission. Test patches should always be carried out well in advance of cleaning (including exposure to all seasons if possible).

9. Cleaning to remove corrosion and paint removal should be considered only where there is deterioration and as part of an overall maintenance program which involves repainting or applying other appropriate protective coatings. Paint or other coatings help retard the corrosion rate of the metal. Leaving the metal bare will expose the surface to accelerated corrosion.
10. Repainting should be based on paint seriation studies. If an adequate record does not exist repainting shall be done with colors that are appropriate to the style and period of the building.

### **9.3 Windows**

**Refer to Sections 9.2 B, C and D regarding treatment of materials and features.**

1. All window elements, details and features [functional and decorative], such as: the terra cotta surrounds, double hung sash, entry and inner tympanum, glazing, coatings and finishes shall be preserved.
2. The original window design and arrangement of window openings shall be retained.
3. Enlarging or reducing window openings for the purpose of fitting stock (larger or smaller) window sash or air conditioners shall not be allowed.
4. Removal of window sash and the installation of permanent fixed panels to accommodate air conditioners shall not be allowed.
5. Original or later contributing window elements, features (functional and decorative), details and ornamentation shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired by patching, splicing, consolidating or otherwise reinforcing using recognized preservation methods.
6. Deteriorated or missing window elements, features (functional and decorative), details and ornamentation shall be replaced with material and elements which match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile, configuration and detail of installation.
7. When replacement is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
8. Aluminum, vinyl, metal clad or vinyl clad replacement sash shall not be allowed.
9. Simulated muntins, including snap-in, surface-applied, or between-glass grids shall not be allowed.
10. Tinted or reflective-coated glass (i.e.: low "e") shall not be allowed.
11. Due to the width of the bronze muntins, insulating glass in multi-light windows may be allowed.
12. Exterior combination storm windows may be allowed provided the installation has a minimal visual impact. However, use of interior storm windows is encouraged.

13. Exterior combination storm windows shall have a narrow perimeter framing that does not obscure the glazing of the primary window. In addition, the meeting rail of the combination storm window shall align with that of the primary window.
14. Storm window sashes and frames shall have a painted finish that matches the primary window sash and frame color.
15. Clear or mill finished aluminum frames shall not be allowed.
16. Exterior storm windows shall not be allowed for arched windows, leaded glass, faceted frames, or bent (curved) glass.

#### **9.4 Poster Cases and Ticket Booth**

**Refer to Sections 9.2 B, C and D regarding treatment of materials and features; and Sections 9.3, 9.5, 9.11, 9.12 and 9.14 for additional Standards and Criteria that may apply.**

1. All exterior display cases [functional and decorative], such as: the outer vestibule's bronze poster cases, the Washington Street bronze poster cases, and the ticket booth shall be preserved.
2. Original or later contributing display case materials and features (functional and decorative) shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired by patching, splicing, consolidating or otherwise reinforcing using recognized preservation methods.
3. Deteriorated or missing materials, features (functional and decorative), details and ornamentation should be replaced with material and elements which match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile, configuration and detail of installation.
4. When replacement is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
5. If using the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute materials may be considered.
6. Original or later integral display case materials, features (functional and decorative), details and ornamentation shall not be sheathed or otherwise obscured by other materials.
7. The ticket booth may be relocated to its original documented position in the Entrance Lobby.

#### **9.5 Entrances/Doors**

**Refer to Sections 9.2 B, C and D regarding treatment of materials and features; and Sections 9.4, 9.6, 9.12 and 9.14 for additional Standards and Criteria that may apply.**

1. All entrance elements, materials, details and features [functional and decorative], such as the bank of glazed bronze doors shall be preserved.

2. The existing Washington Street entrance design and arrangement of door openings shall be retained.
3. Enlarging or reducing entrance/door openings for the purpose of fitting stock (larger or smaller) doors shall not be allowed.
4. Original or later contributing entrance materials, elements, details and features (functional and decorative) shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired by patching, splicing, consolidating or otherwise reinforcing using recognized preservation methods.
5. Deteriorated or missing entrance elements, materials, features (functional and decorative) and details shall be replaced with materials and elements which match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile, configuration and detail of installation.
6. When replacement is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
7. If using the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute materials may be considered.
8. Original or later contributing entrance materials, elements, features (functional and decorative) and details shall not be sheathed or otherwise obscured by other materials.
9. Replacement door hardware should replicate the original or be appropriate to the style and period of the building.
10. Entry lighting shall be located in traditional locations (e.g., suspended from the Outer vestibule ceiling, or attached to the side walls of the Outer Vestibule.).
11. Light fixtures shall not be affixed to the face of the building.
12. Light fixtures shall be of a design and scale that is appropriate to the style and period of the building and should not imitate styles earlier than the building. Contemporary light fixtures will be considered, however.
13. Buzzers, alarms and intercom panels shall be flush mounted inside the recess of the entrance and not on the face of the building.
14. Entrance elements should be of a color based on paint seriation studies. If an adequate record does not exist repainting shall be done with colors that are appropriate to the style and period of the building/entrance.
15. Roll down metal grates/grills shall not be allowed. The Commission encourages the use of accordion grates, wrought iron gates, glass, or other visually transparent security barriers.

## **9.6 Porches and Stoops**

**Not Applicable.**

**9.7 Ironwork  
(includes Fire Escapes, Balconies and Window Grilles.)**

**Not Applicable.**

**9.8 Parapet**

**Refer to Section 9.2 B, C and D regarding treatment of materials and features; and Sections 9.9 and 9.10 for additional Standards and Criteria that may apply.**

1. All parapet elements, materials, and features [functional and decorative], such as: the glazed terra cotta, arches, and ornament shall be preserved.
2. Original or later contributing parapet materials, elements, features (decorative and functional), details and ornamentation shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired by patching or reinforcing using recognized preservation methods.
3. Deteriorated or missing parapet materials, elements, features (functional and decorative), details and ornamentation shall be replaced with materials and elements which match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile, configuration and detail of installation.
4. When replacement is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
5. If using the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute materials may be considered.
6. Original or later contributing parapet materials, elements, features (functional and decorative), details and ornamentation shall not be sheathed or otherwise obscured by other materials.
7. The Commission shall review plans for new or additional parapet support systems.

**9.9 Roof Projections  
(includes Penthouses, Additional Stories, Roof Decks, Mechanical or Electrical Equipment, Satellite Dishes, Antennas and other Communication Devices)**

**Refer to Sections 9.8 and 9.10 for additional Standards and Criteria that may apply.**

1. The basic criteria which shall govern whether a roof projection shall be allowed is its visibility from Washington Street.
2. Minimizing or eliminating the visual impact of the roof projection from Washington Street is the general objective and the following guidelines shall be followed:
  - a. Location shall be selected where the roof projection is not visible from Washington Street; setbacks shall be utilized.

- b. Overall height or other dimensions shall be kept to a point where the roof projection is not seen from Washington Street.
- c. Exterior treatments shall relate to the materials, color and texture of the building or to other materials integral to the period and character of the building, typically used for appendages.
- d. Openings in a penthouse shall relate to the building in proportion, type and size of opening, wherever visually apparent.

#### **9.10 Additions**

**Due to the Opera House's architectural significance, no exterior additions shall be allowed along the Washington Street elevation.**

#### **9.11 Signs and Marquees**

**Refer to Sections 9.3, 9.4, 9.5 and 9.12 for additional Standards and Criteria that may apply.**

1. Awnings shall not be allowed.
2. Commercial signage other than the poster boxes and the marquee shall not be allowed.
3. The Commission encourages replacement of the existing marquee (mid-1960s) with a marquee based on Thomas Lamb's original design.
4. A new marquee should not detract from the essential form of the building nor obscure its architectural features.
5. A new marquee should be of a size and material compatible with the building and its current use.
6. The design and material of a new marquee should reinforce the architectural character of the building.
7. Marquees applied to the building shall be applied in such a way that they could be removed without damaging the building.
8. Permanent marquee lettering forms or typeface will be evaluated for the specific use intended, but generally shall be either contemporary or relate to the period of the building or its later contributing features. Temporary marquee lettering shall not be subject to review.
9. Lighting of the marquee shall be evaluated for the specific use intended, but generally illumination of a sign shall not dominate illumination of the building.
10. No back-lit sign boxes shall be allowed on the exterior of the building.

11. Implementation of a banner system for the temporary advertisement of current theatrical productions shall be subject to Commission review, specifically in regard to banner placement, height, orientation, size, method of attachment, and design. The Commission encourages banner design to be evocative of historical precedents, such as this theater's 1946 vertical marquee.

## 9.12 Exterior Lighting

**Refer to Section 9.2 D regarding treatment of materials and features. Refer to Sections 9.5, 9.11 and 9.13 for additional Standards and Criteria that may apply.**

1. There are three aspects of lighting related to the exterior of the building:
  - a. Lighting fixtures as appurtenances to the building or elements of architectural ornamentation.
  - b. Quality of illumination on building exterior
  - c. Interior lighting as seen from the exterior.
2. Wherever integral to the building, original or later contributing lighting fixtures shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired by patching, piecing-in or reinforcing the lighting fixture using recognized preservation methods.
3. Deteriorated or missing lighting fixture materials, elements, features (functional and decorative), details and ornamentation shall be replaced with material and elements which match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile, configuration and detail of installation.
4. When replacement is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
5. If using the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute materials may be considered.
6. Original or later contributing lighting fixture materials, elements, features (functional and decorative), details and ornamentation shall not be sheathed or otherwise obscured by other materials.
7. Supplementary illumination may be added where appropriate to the current use of the building.
8. New lighting shall conform to any of the following approaches as appropriate to the building and to the current or projected use:
  - a. Accurate representation of the original period, based on physical or documentary evidence.
  - b. Retention or restoration of fixtures which date from an interim installation and which are considered to be appropriate to the building and use.
  - c. New lighting fixtures which are differentiated from the original or later contributing fixtures in design and which illuminate the exterior of the building in a way which renders it visible at night and compatible with its environment.

- d. The new exterior lighting location shall fulfill the functional intent of the current use without obscuring the building form or architectural detailing.
9. Interior lighting shall only be reviewed when its character has a significant effect on the exterior of the building; that is, when the view of the illuminated fixtures themselves, or the quality and color of the light they produce, is clearly visible through the exterior fenestration.
10. No exposed conduit shall be allowed.
11. As a Landmark, architectural night lighting is recommended.
12. The design of new marquee lighting shall be based on historic photographic evidence.

### **9.13 Building Site**

**Not Applicable.**

### **9.14 Accessibility**

**Refer to Sections 9.2 A, B, C, and D regarding treatment of materials. Refer to Sections 9.3, 9.4, 9.5, 9.6, 9.10, 9.12 and 9.13 for additional Standards and Criteria that may apply.**

1. A three-step approach is recommended to identify and implement accessibility modifications that will protect the integrity and historic character of the property:
  - a. Review the historical significance of the property and identify character-defining features;
  - b. Assess the property's existing and required level of accessibility;
  - c. Evaluate accessibility options within a preservation context.
2. Because of the complex nature of accessibility the commission will review proposals on a case by case basis. The commission recommends consulting with the following document which is available from the commission office:

U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Cultural Resources, Preservation Assistance Division; **Preservation Brief 32 "Making Historic Properties Accessible"** by Thomas C. Jester and Sharon C. Park, AIA.

### **9.15 Archeology**

**Refer to Sections 9.2 B, C, and D regarding treatment of materials. Refer to Section 9.13 for additional Standards and Criteria that may apply.**

1. Disturbance of the terrain around the building or site shall be kept to a minimum so as not to disturb any unknown archeological materials.

2. The building site should be surveyed for potential archeological sites prior to the beginning of any construction project.
3. Known archeological sites shall be protected during any construction project.
4. All planning, any necessary site investigation, or data recovery shall be conducted by a professional archeologist.

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## 10.0 INTERIOR - SPECIFIC STANDARDS AND CRITERIA

Keith Memorial Theater/Opera House  
537 Washington Street, Boston

### 10.1 Introduction

1. In these guidelines the verb **Should** indicates a recommended course of action; the verb **Shall** indicates those actions which are specifically required to preserve and protect significant architectural elements.
2. The intent of these standards and criteria is to preserve the overall character and appearance of the Keith Memorial Theater/Opera House interior, including its size, configuration, proportions; relationship of rooms and corridors; relationship of features to spaces; and the spaces themselves.
3. The standards and criteria acknowledge that there will be changes to the interior of the building and are intended to make the changes sensitive to the architectural character of the building.
4. Each property will be separately studied to determine if later addition(s) and alteration(s) can, or should, be removed.
5. Since it is not possible to provide one general guideline, the following factors will be considered in determining whether a later addition(s) and/or alteration(s) can, or should, be removed:
  - a. Compatibility with the original property's integrity in scale, materials and character.
  - b. Historic association with the property.
  - c. Quality in the design and execution of the addition(s)/alteration(s).
  - d. Functional usefulness.
6. The following **Specified Interior Spaces** are subject to the terms of the interior guidelines herein stated: the **Entrance Lobby; Inner Lobby**; select sections of the **Mason Street Passage** and **Storefronts** (see Orchestra Level Floor Plan in Appendix A for specific designated space); **Grand Lobby; Memorial Hall; Mezzanine Promenade; Trustees' Room; Mezzanine Ladies' Lounge; Auditorium; Balconies; Proscenium Arch and Boxes; Elliptical Lobby; Basement Grand Lounge; Basement Men's Lounge; Basement Women's Lounge; and Public Stairways**. See Appendix A for floor plans of all designated interior spaces.
7. The Commission has no intention to interfere with temporary alterations to the configuration of the stage and orchestra seating, such as a thrust stage, ramps, cabaret seating, or screening to block off seats or sections of the theater which may be required by certain productions. As a result, none of these standards and criteria is intended to interfere with ongoing theater productions, and such temporary alterations are therefore exempt from prior Commission review and approval. However, theater management shall notify Commission staff of all temporary alterations.
8. Temporary is defined as the length of a specific theater production.

9. The Commission shall not review changes to the backstage area, service areas, loading docks, dressing rooms, stage, or fly loft.
10. Items under Commission review include but are not limited to the following:

## 10.2 Interior Volume

1. The full unobstructed volume and spatial relationships of the Specified Interior Spaces shall be maintained.
2. Changes to the volume and function of the Public Lounges may be allowed, however the Commission encourages the retention and reuse of historic fixtures, materials, and elements [both functional and decorative] whenever possible.
3. Existing designated interior spaces shall not be subdivided.
4. Proposals for new openings in walls, ceilings, and floors shall be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
5. New openings in walls shall be made within existing articulated bays.
6. Original existing openings in walls, ceilings and floors should not be filled or changed in size.
7. No exposed conduit shall be allowed on any interior surface.

## 10.3 Interior Finishes

### A. General

1. All materials and finishes within the Specified Interior Spaces shall be retained except insofar as their replacement or reinterpretation may be proposed, based on the existence of reliable physical or documentary evidence.
2. Except as provided for within these Standards and Criteria, no existing surface material shall be removed, altered, or covered.
3. Cleaning of the interior surfaces shall be completed using **the mildest methods possible**.
4. Material conservation efforts shall: 1.) stabilize historic fabric; 2.) respect Thomas Lamb's interior design aesthetic (based on an analysis of physical evidence documented in a report by the project conservator); and 3.) recognize the building as an aged structure (i.e., discourage aggressive removal of patina).
5. The Project Conservator shall prepare test patches for proposed conservation methods related to all gilded, painted, glazed, stained, textured and treated surfaces. These test patches shall be reviewed and approved on site by the staff of the Boston Landmarks

Commission. Test patches should always be carried out well in advance of scheduled work.

6. The Boston Landmarks Commission recommends that the work outlined in sections B, C and D be executed with the guidance of a professional building materials conservator.

## **B. Wood**

1. All wood surfaces, features, details and ornamentation, such as: the baseboard trim, paneling, decorative veneer, cornices, doors and door moldings, balustrades, piers, pillars, pilasters, overmantels, composite details and finishes shall be preserved.
2. Original or later contributing wood surfaces, features, details and ornamentation shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired by patching, piecing-in, consolidating or reinforcing the wood using recognized preservation methods.
3. Deteriorated or missing wood surfaces, features, details and ornamentation shall be replaced with material and elements which match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile and detail of installation.
4. When replacement of materials or elements is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
5. If using the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute materials may be considered.
6. Cleaning of wooden elements shall use **the mildest method possible**.
7. Natural wood surfaces and elements shall not be painted.
8. Paint removal should be considered only where there is paint surface deterioration and as part of an overall maintenance program which involves repainting or applying other appropriate protective coatings. Coatings such as paint help protect the wood from moisture and ultraviolet light and stripping the wood bare will expose the surface to the effects of weathering.
9. Damaged or deteriorated paint should be removed to the next sound layer using **the mildest method possible**.
10. **Propane or butane torches, sandblasting, water blasting or other abrasive cleaning and/or paint removal methods shall not be permitted.** Doing so changes the visual quality of the wood and accelerates deterioration.
11. Repainting should be based on paint seriation studies. If an adequate record does not exist repainting shall be done with colors that are appropriate to the style and period of the interior.

**C. Architectural Metals**  
**(Cast Iron, Steel, Pressed Tin, Copper, Aluminum and Zinc)**

1. All metal materials, features, details, and ornamentation, such as: the bronze screen of the Entrance Lobby tympanum, bronze railings, bronze balustrades, gilding, Dutch metal, coatings and finishes shall be preserved.
2. Original or later contributing metal materials, features, details and ornamentation shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired by patching, splicing or reinforcing the metal using recognized preservation methods.
3. Deteriorated or missing metal materials, features, details and ornamentation shall be replaced with materials and elements which match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile and detail of installation.
4. When replacement of materials or elements is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
5. If using the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute materials may be considered.
6. Cleaning of metal elements either to remove corrosion or deteriorated paint shall use **the mildest method possible**.
7. Abrasive cleaning methods, such as low pressure dry grit blasting, may be allowed as long as it does not abrade or damage the surface.
8. A test patch of the cleaning method(s) shall be reviewed and approved on site by staff of the Boston Landmarks Commission. Test patches should always be carried out well in advance of cleaning.
9. Cleaning to remove corrosion and paint removal should be considered only where there is deterioration and as part of an overall maintenance program which involves repainting or applying other appropriate protective coatings. Paint or other coatings help retard the corrosion rate of the metal. Leaving the metal bare will expose the surface to accelerated corrosion.
10. Repainting should be based on paint seriation studies. If an adequate record does not exist repainting shall be done with colors that are appropriate to the style and period of the interior.

**D. Plaster**

1. All plaster materials, features, details and ornamentation, such as: moldings, cornices, ceilings, vaults, domes, columns, piers, pilasters, bas-relief and high-relief details, scagliolla, surface modeling, tooling, gilding and colors shall be preserved.

2. Original or later contributing plaster materials, features, details, surfaces and ornamentation shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired by patching, piecing-in, consolidating or reinforcing the plaster using recognized preservation methods.
3. Deteriorated or missing plaster materials, features, details, surfaces and ornamentation shall be replaced with material and elements which match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile and detail of installation.
4. When replacement of materials or elements is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
5. If using the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute materials may be considered.
6. If the plaster is to be cleaned, **the mildest method possible** shall be used.
7. A test patch of the cleaning method(s) shall be reviewed and approved on site by staff of the Boston Landmarks Commission. Test patches should always be carried out well in advance of cleaning.
8. **Sandblasting (wet or dry), wire brushing, or other similar abrasive cleaning methods shall not be permitted.** Doing so changes the visual quality of the material and accelerates deterioration.
9. Repainting should be based on paint seriation studies. If an adequate record does not exist repainting shall be done with colors that are appropriate to the style and period of the interior.

**E. Masonry  
(Brick, Stone, Terra Cotta, Concrete, Terrazzo and Mortar)**

1. All masonry materials, features, details and ornamentation, such as: the marble columns, pilasters, piers, mantels, tiles, stairs, banisters, balustrades, fountains, statuary; surfaces; cast stone features; terrazzo flooring; surface modeling, tooling, bonding patterns, joint sizes, and color shall be preserved.
2. Original or later contributing masonry materials, features, details, surfaces and ornamentation shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired by patching, piecing-in, or consolidating the masonry using recognized preservation methods.
3. Deteriorated or missing masonry materials, features, details, surfaces and ornamentation shall be replaced with material and elements which match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile and detail of installation.
4. When replacement of materials or elements is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
5. If using the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute materials may be considered.

6. Original mortar shall be retained.
7. Deteriorated mortar shall be carefully removed by hand-raking the joints.
8. Use of mechanical saws and hammers shall not be allowed.
9. Repointing mortar shall duplicate the original mortar in strength, composition, color, texture, joint size, joint profile and method of application.
10. Sample panels of raking the joints and repointing shall be reviewed and approved by the staff of the Boston Landmarks Commission.
11. Cleaning of masonry is discouraged and should be performed only when necessary to halt deterioration.
12. If the masonry is to be cleaned, **the mildest method possible** shall be used.
13. A test patch of the cleaning method(s) shall be reviewed and approved on site by staff of the Boston Landmarks Commission. Test patches should always be carried out well in advance of cleaning.
14. **Sandblasting (wet or dry), wire brushing, or other similar abrasive cleaning methods shall not be permitted.** Doing so changes the visual quality of the material and accelerates deterioration.
15. Waterproofing or water repellents are strongly discouraged. These treatments are generally not effective in preserving masonry and can cause permanent damage. The Commission does recognize that in extraordinary circumstances their use may be required to solve a specific problem. Samples of any proposed treatment shall be reviewed by the Commission before application.
16. In general, painting masonry surfaces shall not be allowed. Painting masonry surfaces will be considered only when there is documentary evidence that this treatment was used at some point in the history of the property.

**F. Fabrics  
(Wallpaper, Lincrusta, Drapery, etc.)**

1. All fabric materials, features, details and ornamentation, such as: the carpeting, drapery, upholstery, tapestry, and wall coverings shall replicate the original theater fabrics in color, pattern, texture, weight, and design. If replication is not possible replacement fabrics shall evoke the late-1920s palace theater design aesthetic.
2. Deteriorated or missing fabric materials, features, details, surfaces and ornamentation shall be replaced with material and elements which match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile and detail of installation.

3. When replacement of materials or elements is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
4. If using the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute materials may be considered.
5. If the fabric is to be cleaned, **the mildest method possible** shall be used.
6. A test patch of the cleaning method(s) shall be reviewed and approved on site by staff of the Boston Landmarks Commission. Test patches should always be carried out well in advance of cleaning.
7. **Abrasive cleaning methods shall not be permitted.** Doing so changes the visual quality of the material and accelerates deterioration.
8. Examples of original historic fabrics (drapery, tapestry, wall coverings, and carpeting) should be preserved and displayed on site as part of the building's interpretive program.
9. The Commission encourages encapsulation of the original asbestos fire curtain and its retention on site.

#### **10.4 Interior Walls**

**Refer to Section 10.3 B, C, D, E, F regarding treatment of materials and features; and Sections 10.2, 10.13, 10.14 and 10.16 for additional Standards and Criteria that may apply.**

1. All wall materials, elements and features [functional and decorative], such as: the fabric panels, wood paneling, engaged columns, pilasters, wainscoting, mirrors and mirrored surfaces, painted decorations, composite and carved ornament, paint colors, and patterning shall be preserved.
2. Original or later contributing wall materials, elements, features (decorative and functional), details and ornamentation shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired by patching, piecing-in, consolidating, splicing or reinforcing using recognized preservation methods.
3. Deteriorated or missing wall materials, elements, features (functional and decorative), details and ornamentation shall be replaced with material and elements which match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile, configuration and detail of installation.
4. When replacement is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
5. If using the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute materials may be considered.

6. Original or later contributing wall materials, elements, features (functional and decorative), details and ornamentation shall not be sheathed or otherwise obscured by other materials.
7. Wall should be of a color based on paint seriation studies. If an adequate record does not exist repainting shall be done with colors that are appropriate to the style and period of the interior.

## **10.5 Ceilings**

**Refer to Section 10.3 B, C, D, E, F regarding treatment of materials and features; and Sections 10.2, 10.13 and 10.14 for additional Standards and Criteria that may apply.**

1. All ceiling materials, shapes, elements, and features [functional and decorative], such as: coves, vaults, domes, arches, coffers, beams, decorative moldings, carvings, patterning, murals, paint colors, and gilding shall be preserved.
2. Original or later contributing ceiling materials, elements, features (decorative and functional), details and ornamentation shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired by patching or reinforcing using recognized preservation methods.
3. Deteriorated or missing ceiling materials, elements, features (functional and decorative), details and ornamentation shall be replaced with material and elements which match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile, configuration and detail of installation.
4. When replacement is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
5. If using the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute materials may be considered.
6. Original or later contributing ceiling materials, elements, features (functional and decorative), details and ornamentation shall not be sheathed or otherwise obscured by other materials.
7. Ceilings should be of a color based on paint seriation studies. If an adequate record does not exist repainting shall be done with colors that are appropriate to the style and period of the interior.

## **10.6 Floors**

**Refer to Section 10.3 B, C, D, E, F regarding treatment of materials and features; and Sections 10.2, 10.14 and 10.16 for additional Standards and Criteria that may apply.**

1. All floor materials, elements, and features [functional and decorative], such as: the terrazzo, marble, and tile flooring shall be preserved.

2. Original or later contributing floor materials, elements, features (decorative and functional), details and ornamentation shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired by patching or reinforcing using recognized preservation methods.
3. Deteriorated or missing floor materials, elements, features (functional and decorative), details and ornamentation shall be replaced with material and elements which match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile, configuration and detail of installation.
4. When replacement is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
5. If using the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute materials may be considered.
6. Original or later contributing floor materials, elements, features (functional and decorative), details and ornamentation shall not be sheathed or otherwise obscured by other materials.

## **10.7 Windows**

**Refer to Sections 10.3 B, C, D, E, F regarding treatment of materials and features and Section 10.16 for additional Standards and Criteria that may apply..**

1. All interior window elements, details and features [functional and decorative], such as: transoms, frames, muntins, moldings, hardware, glass, coatings and finishes shall be preserved.
2. The original window design and arrangement of window openings shall be retained.
3. Original or later contributing interior window elements, features (functional and decorative), details and ornamentation shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired by patching, splicing, consolidating or otherwise reinforcing using recognized preservation methods.
4. Deteriorated or missing interior window elements, features (functional and decorative), details and ornamentation shall be replaced with material and elements which match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile, configuration and detail of installation.
5. When replacement is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
6. Clear or mill finished aluminum frames shall not be allowed.

## **10.8 Storefronts**

**Refer to Sections 10.3 B, C, D, E, F regarding treatment of materials and features; and Sections 10.7, 10.9, 10.13 and 10.16 for additional Standards and Criteria that may apply.**

1. Mason Street storefront materials and features [functional and decorative], such as: the display windows, doors, transoms, and frames shall be preserved.
2. Original or later contributing storefront materials and features (functional and decorative) shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired by patching, splicing, consolidating or otherwise reinforcing using recognized preservation methods.
3. Deteriorated or missing storefront materials, features (functional and decorative), details and ornamentation shall be replaced with material and elements which match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile, configuration and detail of installation.
4. When replacement is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
5. If using the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute materials may be considered.
6. Original or later integral storefront materials, features (functional and decorative), details and ornamentation shall not be sheathed or otherwise obscured by other materials.
7. Roll-down metal grates or grilles shall not be allowed on the exterior of a storefront. All security devices should be located in the interior of the shop.
8. Removal of transoms and installation of permanent fixed panels to accommodate air conditioners shall not be allowed.

## **10.9 Entrances/Doors**

**Refer to Sections 10.3 B, C, D, E, F regarding treatment of materials and features; and Sections 10.8, 10.10, 10.13 and 10.16 for additional Standards and Criteria that may apply.**

1. All entrance and interior door materials, details, features [functional and decorative], such as: the bronze lobby doors, bronze auditorium doors, wood paneled doors, glazing, transoms, paint colors, and finishes shall be preserved.
2. The original entrance design and arrangement of door openings shall be retained.
3. Enlarging or reducing entrance/door openings for the purpose of fitting stock (larger or smaller) doors shall not be allowed.
4. Original or later contributing entrance/door materials, elements, details and features (functional and decorative) shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired by patching, splicing, consolidating or otherwise reinforcing using recognized preservation methods.

5. Deteriorated or missing entrance/door elements, materials, features (functional and decorative) and details shall be replaced with material and elements which match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile, configuration and detail of installation.
6. When replacement is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
7. If using the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute materials may be considered.
8. Original or later contributing entrance/door materials, elements, features (functional and decorative) and details shall not be sheathed or otherwise obscured by other materials.
9. Only paneled doors of appropriate design, material and assembly shall be allowed.
10. Flush doors (metal, wood, vinyl or plastic), sliding doors and metal paneled doors shall not be allowed.
11. Replacement door hardware should replicate the original or be appropriate to the style and period of the interior.
12. Buzzers, alarms and intercom panels should be flush mounted inside the recess of the entrance.
13. Entrance elements should be of a color based on paint seriation studies. If an adequate record does not exist repainting shall be done with colors that are appropriate to the style and period of the interior.

#### 10.10 Stairs

**Refer to Sections 10.3 B, C, D, E, F regarding treatment of materials and features; and Sections 10.6, 10.9, 10.11, 10.13 and 10.16 for additional Standards and Criteria that may apply.**

1. All stair materials, elements, details and features [functional and decorative], such as the steps, balustrades, railings, columns, posts, paint colors and finishes shall be preserved.
2. Original or later contributing stair materials, elements features (functional and decorative), details and ornamentation shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired by patching, splicing, consolidating or otherwise reinforcing using recognized preservation methods.
3. Deteriorated or missing stair materials, elements, features (functional and decorative), details and ornamentation shall be replaced with material and elements which match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile, configuration and detail of installation.
4. When replacement is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.

5. If using the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute materials may be considered.
6. Original or later contributing stair materials, elements, features (functional and decorative), details and ornamentation shall not be sheathed or otherwise obscured by other materials.
7. Stair elements should be of a color based on paint seriation studies. If an adequate record does not exist repainting shall be done with colors that are appropriate to the style and period of the interior.

#### **10.11 Ironwork (includes Balconies, Window Grilles, Mechanical Grilles)**

**Not Applicable.**

#### **10.12 Additions**

**Refer to Sections 10.2 and 10.16 for additional Standards and Criteria that may apply.**

1. An interior addition should only be considered after it has been determined that the existing interior cannot meet the new space requirements. Additions can significantly alter the historic appearance of the interior.
2. New additions shall be designed so that the character defining features of the interior are not radically changed, obscured, damaged or destroyed.
3. New additions should be designed so that they are differentiated from the existing and should not necessarily be imitative of an earlier style or period.
4. New additions shall be of a size, scale and of materials that are in harmony with the historic interior.

#### **10.13 Interior Lighting**

**Refer to Sections 10.4, 10.5 and 10.14 for additional Standards and Criteria that may apply.**

1. There are three aspects of lighting related to the interior of the building:
  - a. Lighting fixtures as appurtenances to the interior or elements of architectural ornamentation.
  - b. Quality of illumination.
  - c. Interior lighting as seen from the exterior.

2. Wherever integral to the interior, original or later contributing lighting fixtures shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired by patching, piecing-in or reinforcing the lighting fixture using recognized preservation methods.
3. Deteriorated or missing lighting fixture materials, elements, features (functional and decorative), details and ornamentation shall be replaced with material and elements which match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile, configuration and detail of installation.
4. When replacement is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
5. If using the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute materials may be considered.
6. Original or later contributing lighting fixture materials, elements, features (functional and decorative), details and ornamentation shall not be sheathed or otherwise obscured by other materials.
7. Supplementary illumination may be added where appropriate to the current use of the interior.
8. New lighting shall conform to any of the following approaches as appropriate to the interior and to the current or projected use:
  - a. Accurate representation of the original period, based on physical or documentary evidence.
  - b. Retention or restoration of fixtures which date from an interim installation and which are considered to be appropriate to the interior and use.
  - c. New lighting fixtures which are differentiated from the original or later contributing features.
  - d. The new interior lighting location shall fulfill the functional intent of the current use without obscuring the interior volume or architectural detailing.
9. No exposed conduit shall be allowed.

#### **10.14 Systems**

**(Heating, Air Conditioning, Electrical, Security, Fire Suppression, Plumbing, etc.)**

**Refer to Section 10.3 C regarding treatment of materials. Refer to Sections 10.2, 10.4, 10.5, 10.6, 10.11 and 10.13 for additional Standards and Criteria that may apply.**

1. The commission acknowledges that the systems themselves (i.e. the compressors, boilers, generators and their ductwork, wiring, pipes, etc.) will generally either need to be upgraded, augmented, or entirely replaced in order to accommodate the new use and to meet code requirements. Therefore, the following Standards and Criteria are written to guide the changes so that they shall not destroy the historic character of the interior.

2. Original or later contributing systems, materials, elements, features (functional and decorative) and details shall be retained and, if necessary, repaired by patching, piecing-in, splicing or reinforcing using recognized preservation methods.
3. Deteriorated or missing system materials, elements, features (functional and decorative) and details shall be replaced with material and elements which match the original in material, color, texture, size, shape, profile, configuration and detail of installation.
4. When replacement is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
5. If using the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute materials may be considered.
6. Original or later contributing system materials, elements, features (functional and decorative) and details shall not be sheathed or otherwise obscured by other materials.
7. Installation of new systems shall cause the least alteration possible to the building's floor plan, interior volume and to the historic building material.
8. Vertical runs of ducts, pipes and cables should be in closets, service rooms, wall cavities or other inconspicuous locations.

**10.15 Equipment  
(Architectural Mirrors, Theater Seating, Clocks, Furniture, etc.)**

**Refer to Section 10.3 B, C, D and F regarding treatment of materials. Refer to Sections 10.4, 10.5, 10.6, 10.11 and 10.13 for additional Standards and Criteria that may apply.**

1. Replacement house seating should match the original in arrangement and appearance.
2. Mirrors and mirrored surfaces shall be retained.
3. Historic theater exit signs shall be retained.
4. Relocation of statuary, poster cases, and ticket booths shall be subject to review.
5. Theater equipment which is integral to the function of the theater and does not damage the interior may be installed without review.
6. Theater equipment which permanently affects the appearance of the designated spaces will be reviewed by the Commission. Items include, but are not limited to: the fire screen, curtain, projector booth, and any other permanent fixtures.

## 10.16 Accessibility

**Refer to Sections 10.3 B, C, D, E and F regarding treatment of materials. Refer to Sections 10.4, 10.6, 10.6, 10.7, 10.8, 10.9, 10.10 and 10.12 for additional Standards and Criteria that may apply.**

1. A three-step approach is recommended to identify and implement accessibility modifications that will protect the integrity and historic character of the property:
  - a. Review the historical significance of the property and identify character-defining features;
  - b. Assess the property's existing and required level of accessibility;
  - c. Evaluate accessibility options within a preservation context.
  
2. Because of the complex nature of accessibility the commission will review proposals on a case by case basis. The commission recommends consulting with the following document which is available from the commission office:

U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Cultural Resources, Preservation Assistance Division; **Preservation Brief 32 "Making Historic Properties Accessible"** by Thomas C. Jester and Sharon C. Park, AIA.

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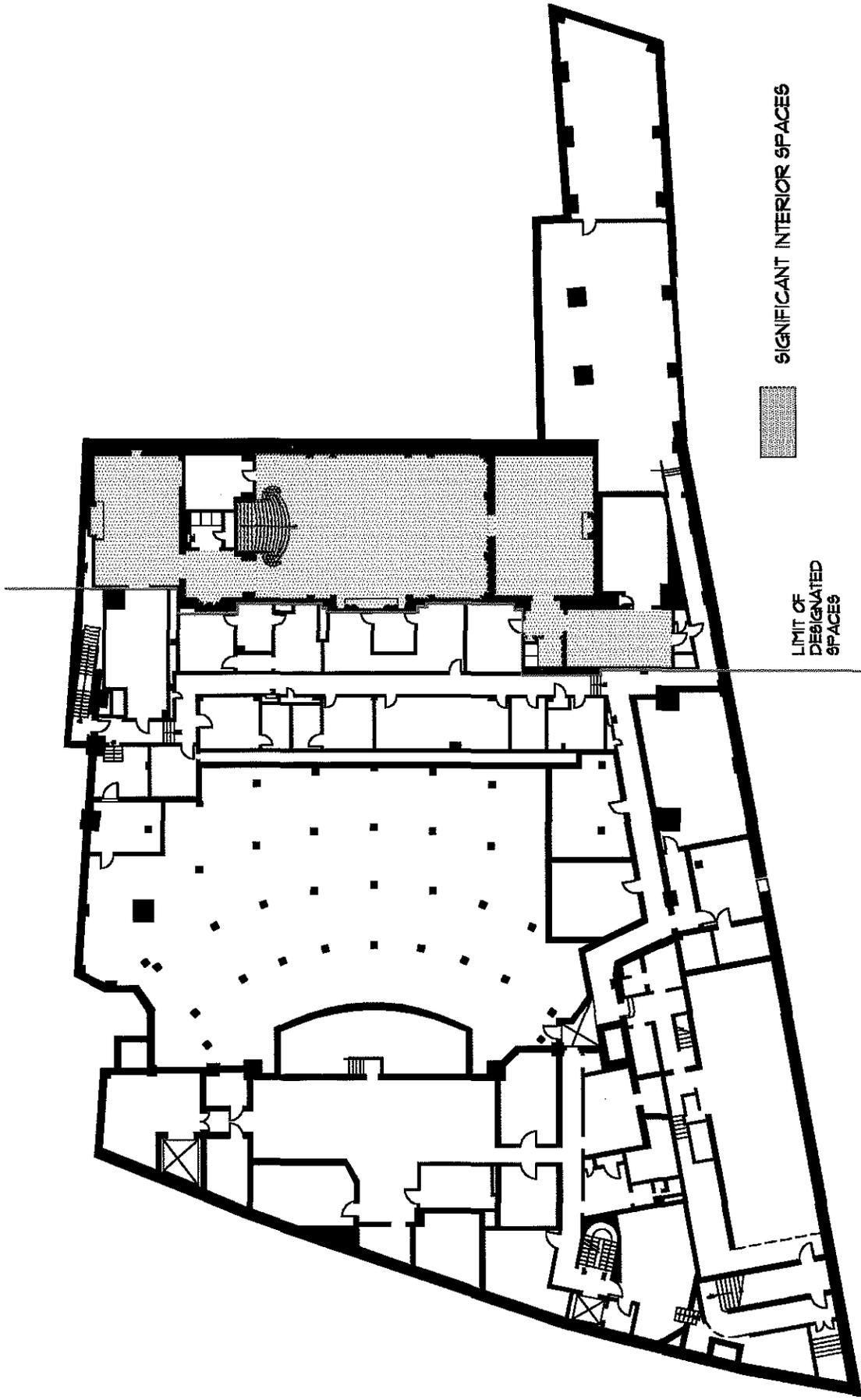
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**APPENDIX A**

**Floor Plans of Designated Interior Spaces**



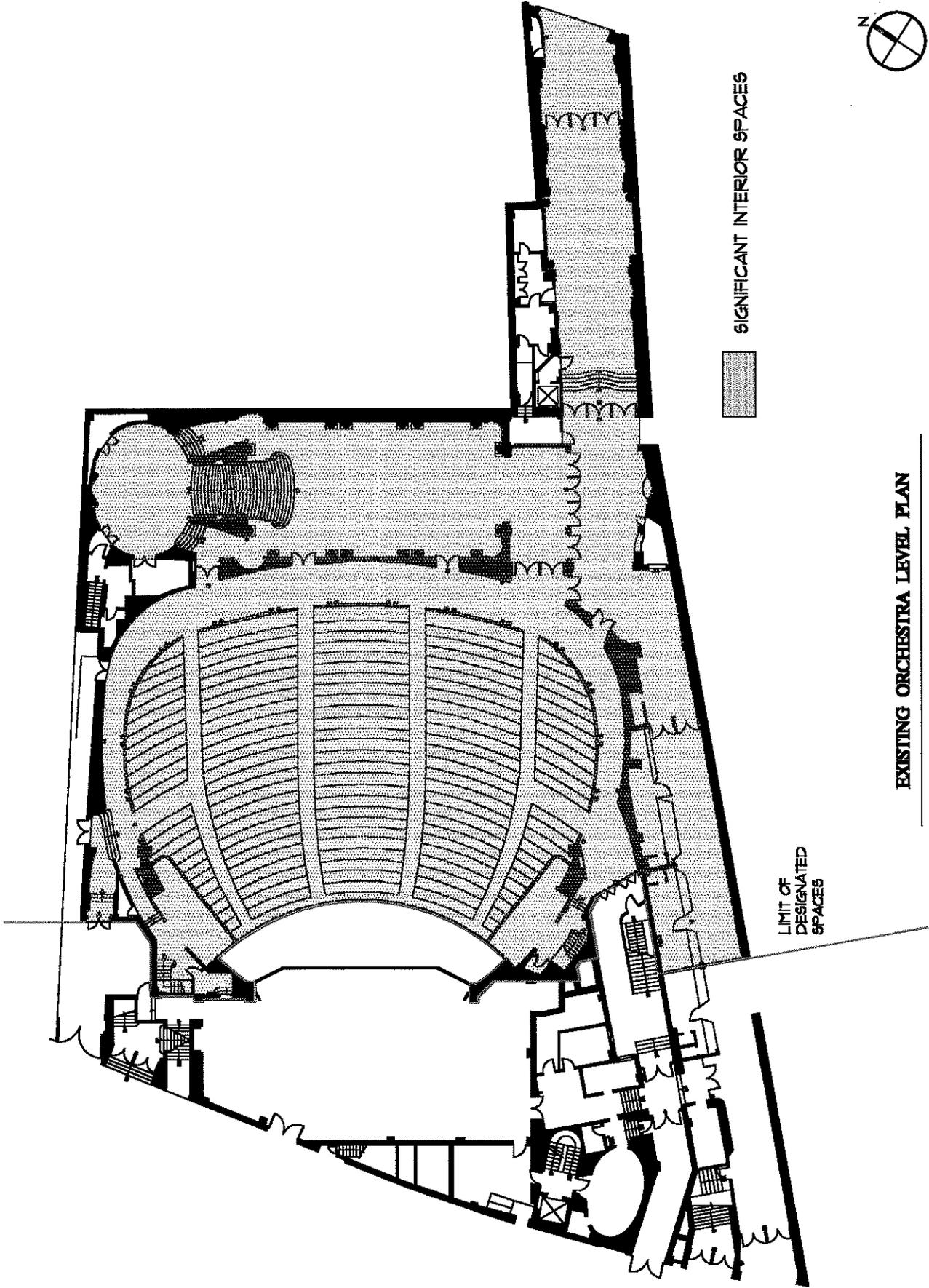
SIGNIFICANT INTERIOR SPACES

LIMIT OF DESIGNATED SPACES



EXISTING BASEMENT LEVEL PLAN

BOSTON OPERA HOUSE



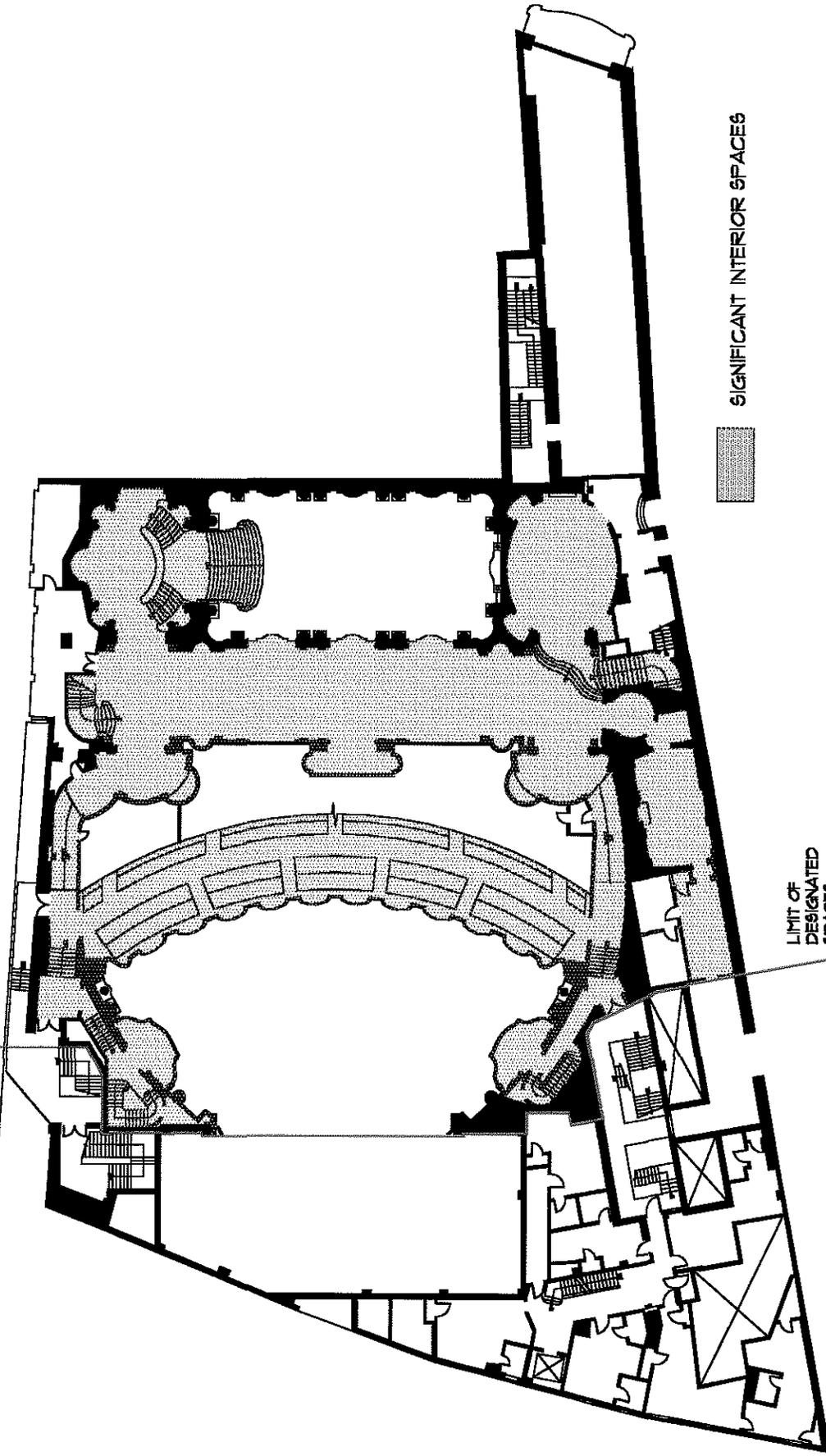
SIGNIFICANT INTERIOR SPACES

LIMIT OF DESIGNATED SPACES



EXISTING ORCHESTRA LEVEL PLAN

BOSTON OPERA HOUSE



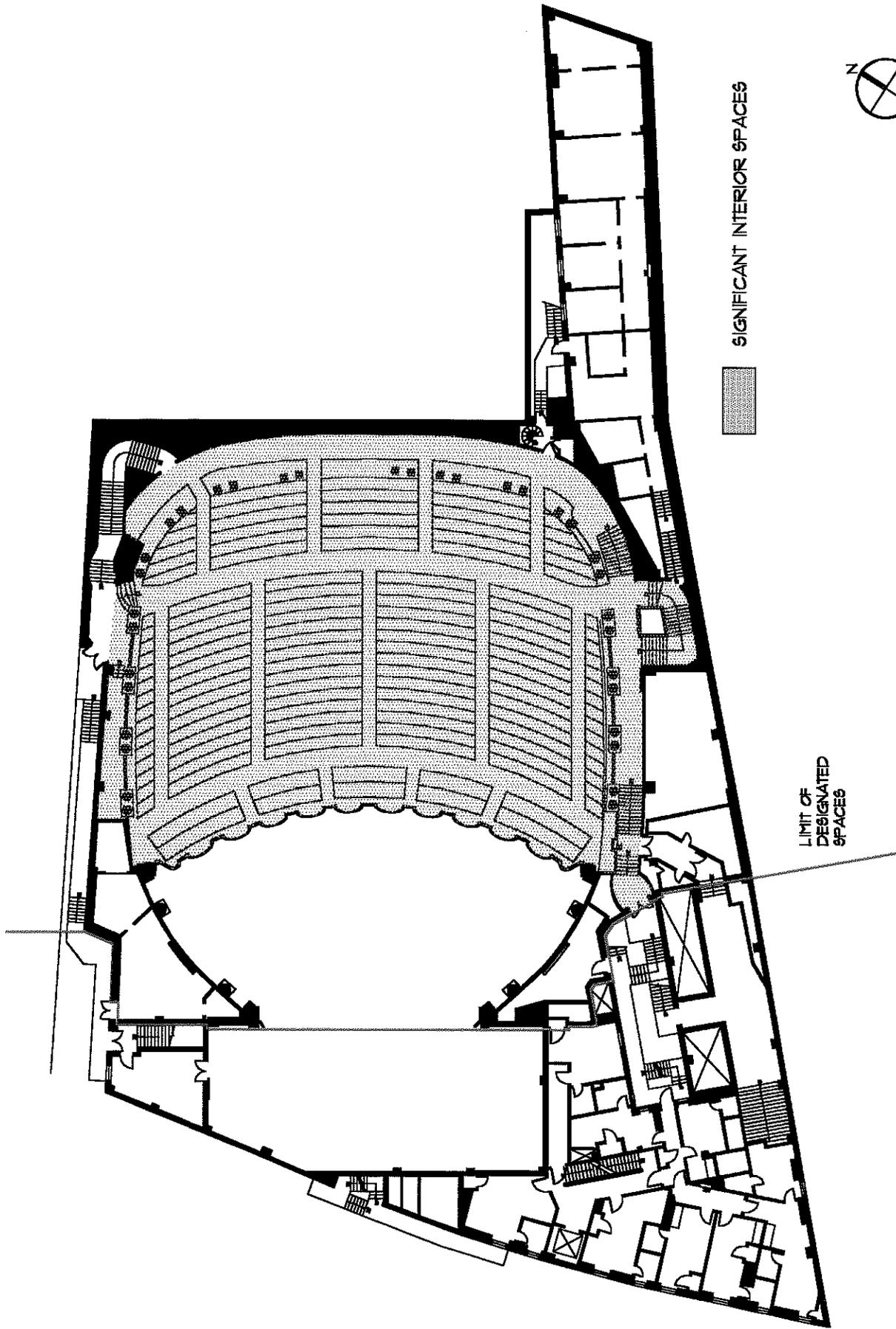
SIGNIFICANT INTERIOR SPACES

LIMIT OF DESIGNATED SPACES



EXISTING MEZZANINE LEVEL PLAN

BOSTON OPERA HOUSE



SIGNIFICANT INTERIOR SPACES

LIMIT OF DESIGNATED SPACES



EXISTING UPPER MEZZANINE LEVEL PLAN

BOSTON OPERA HOUSE

Martinez & Johnson ARCHITECTURE

**CITY OF BOSTON  
MAYOR, THOMAS M. MENINO**

**ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT  
Antonia M. Pollak, Director**

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