

Upgrading the Chautauqua Amphitheater: A Rehabilitation Approach



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This Presentation is for illustrative purposes only

The Committee to
Preserve the
Historic Chautauqua
Amphitheater



Goals & Considerations



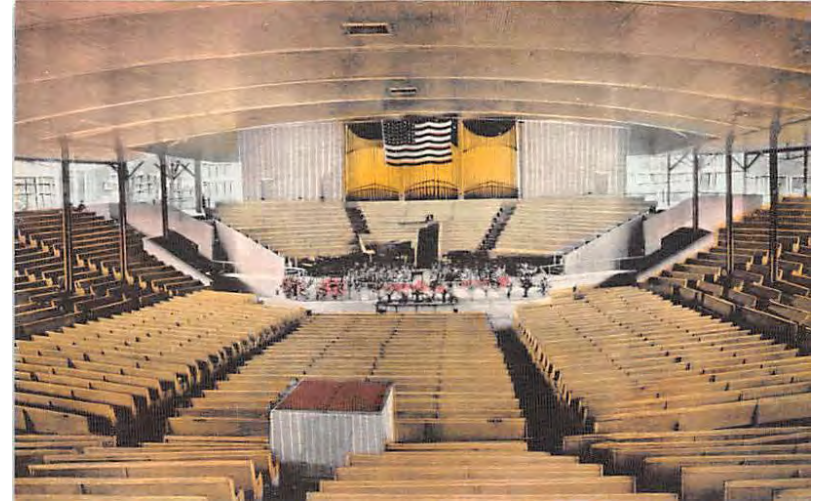
Community Survey Results

According to the Institution's 2011 survey (found on the Institution's website)

- 93% of respondents indicated that the Amp adequately accommodates the Institution's programming needs
- 31% of those felt that the Amp meets those needs perfectly
- The architectural history of the Amp was the second most important feature in defining the overall Amphitheater experience.

Preserve the Heritage of the Campus & Character of the Amp

- Strategic, surgical interventions in the front of the house
- Recognize that the Amp has evolved: this is just the next step in the organic evolution
- Preserve essential spatial relationships: the shape/depth of the bowl, the location of the stage & choir, the organ loft
- Preserve as much existing material – in place – as possible
- Differentiate new features from existing, with compatible design treatments



Improve the Amp



chatauqualiteraryartsfriends.com

Overall goals

- Improve safety of structure
- Re-integrate the Amp into its site context
- Utilize sustainable design practices
- Historic Character

Audience goals

- Improve safety of ramps
- Expand seating capacity & comfort
- Improve weather protection & number of covered seats
- Improve sightlines
- Improve handicapped accessibility

Presentation/ Performance goals

- Maintain quality acoustics
- Improve stage flexibility (dance, opera, etc)
- Enhance back stage functionality
- Upgrade technology

Additional Goals

- Preserve/reuse materials wherever possible – rather than demolish and replace with new materials
- Allow for a phased construction solution (over 2-3 winters)
- Reduce scope of heavy construction:
 - Reduce construction damage impacts on adjacent structures
 - Reduce impact on streets, private homes, etc. on construction access routes
 - Minimize impact on trees
 - Reduce construction run-off



Considerations

- Less “major construction”
 - No major demolition
 - No changes to the depth and shape of the bowl except orchestra pit
 - Build on & fix existing infrastructure
 - Make “surgical” structural repairs & preserve the roof
- Use creative, lower tech ways using CI’s improvement goals as a guideline
- Phase construction because compressed schedule increases costs



10 Opportunities

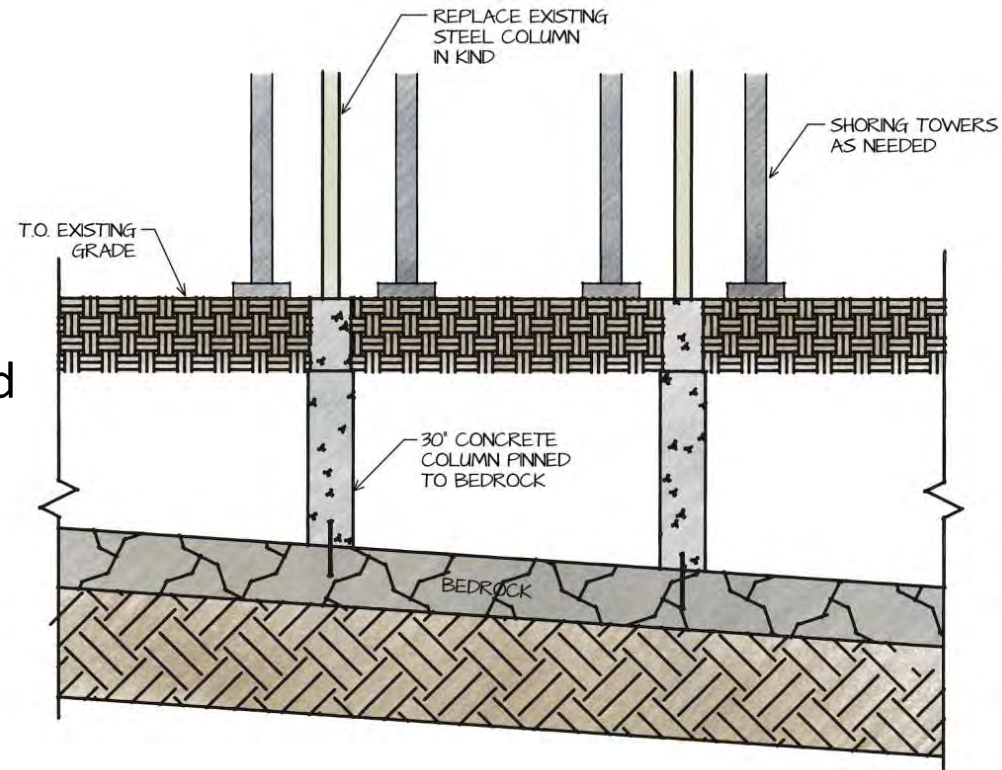


Caveats about these Opportunities

- These opportunities present alternative design solutions to specific needs/challenges. This is not intended to be a complete plan.
- These approaches have been completed without access to existing drawings, studies and Chautauqua Institutes Archives.
- Instead, presentation images from the Institution's website and some self-performed field measurements were used to develop the base documents for these approaches.
- This presentation is intended as a starting point for constructive dialogue on alternative design solutions to demolition and reconstruction.

1. How to Stabilize the Existing Roof Structure

- Stabilize column foundations
- Introduce temporary shoring towers
- Install new concrete foundation pinned to bedrock
- Depending on existing conditions of connection, existing steel columns might need to be replaced in kind due to asymmetrical stress introduced on members
- Remove shoring towers once work completed



2. How to Increase Seating (5 ways)

- A. Removable perimeter seating (“mini-bleachers”)
- B. Additional choir seating
- C. New fixed seating at upper level corners
- D. Portable bleachers for large events
- E. Lawn seating

2A. Removable Perimeter Seating

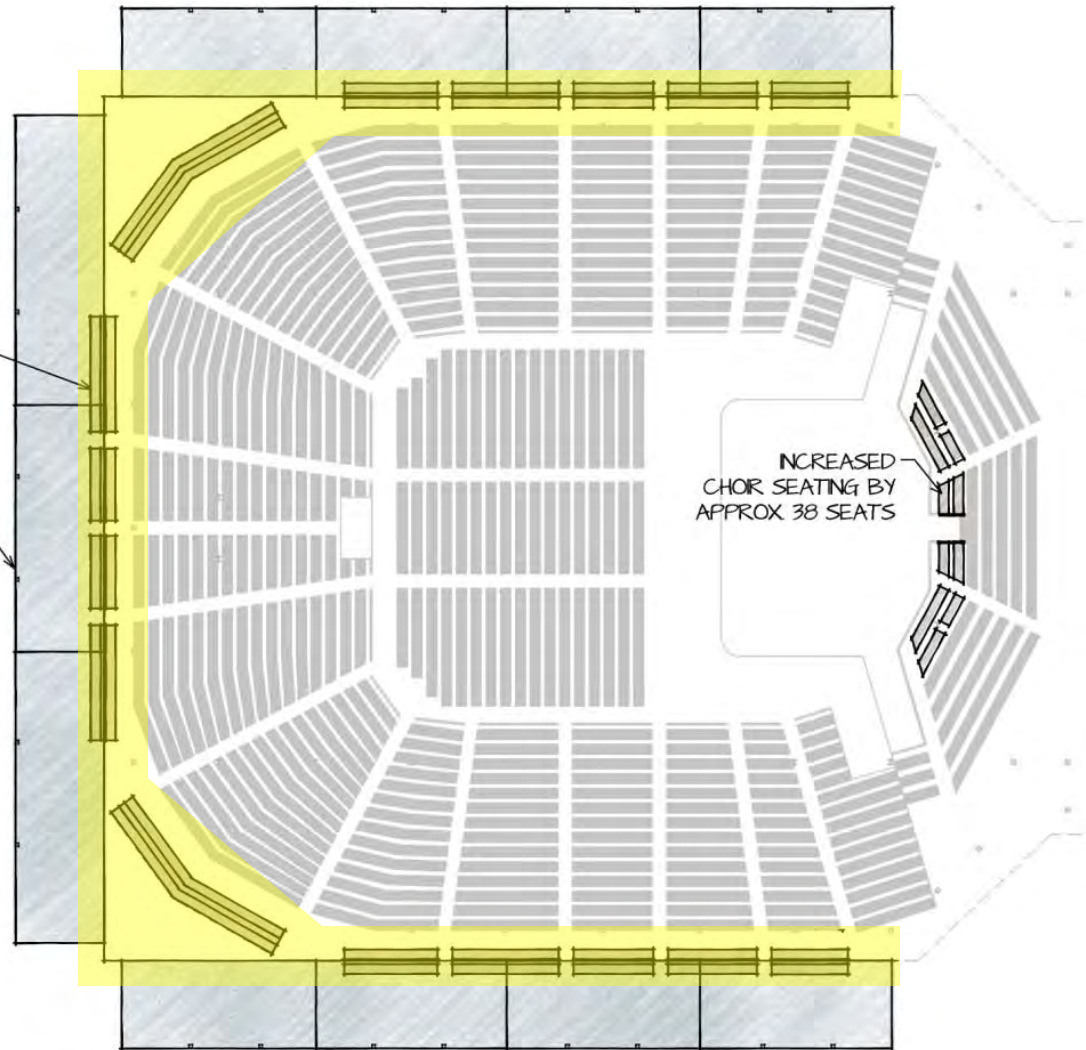
- Adds 300 seats
- Can be installed when necessary and removed when not so as to preserve connections & visibility



REMOVABLE TIERED SEATING

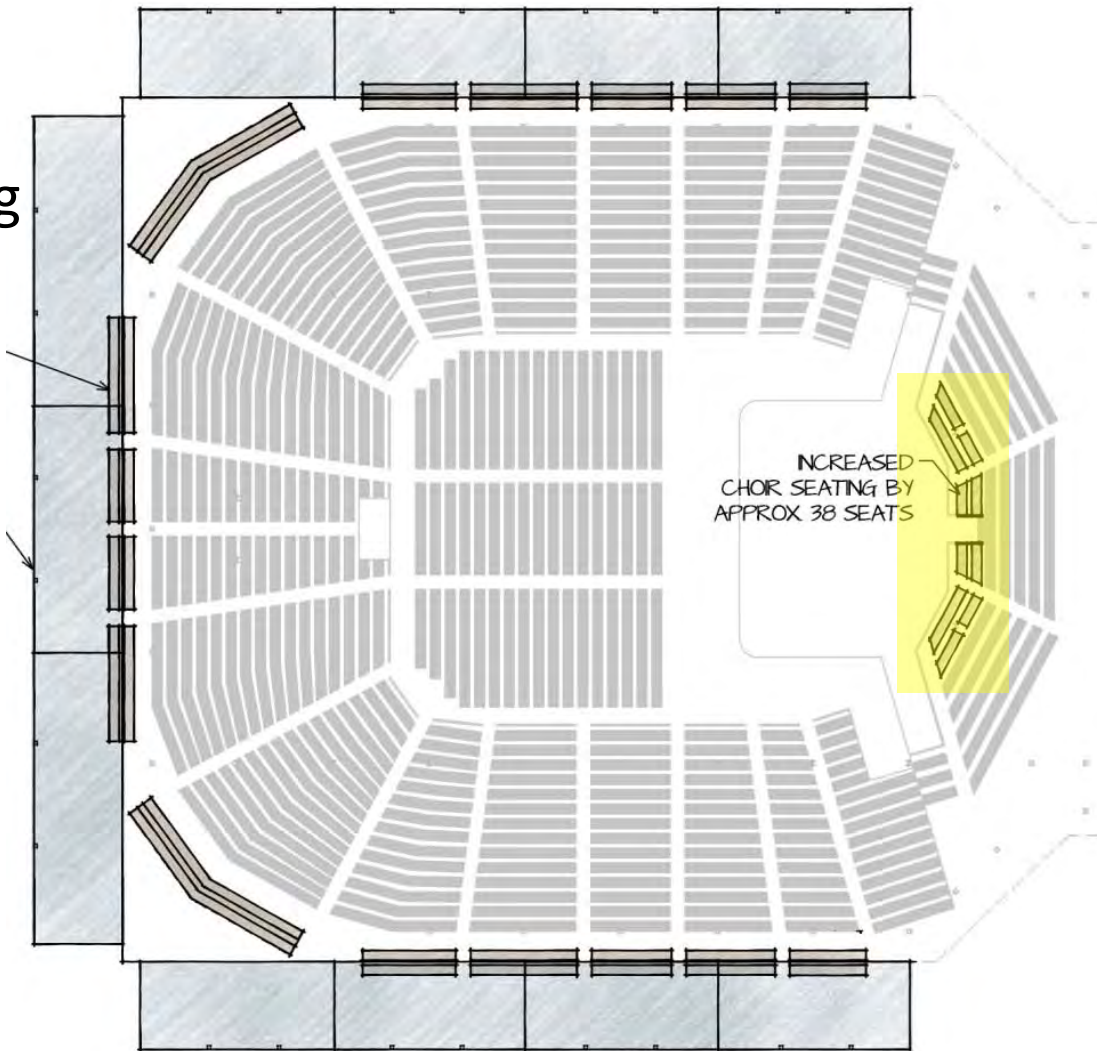
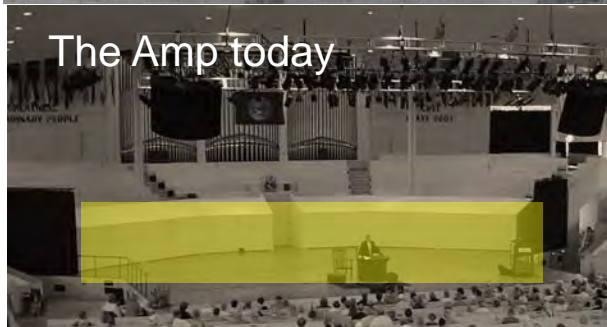
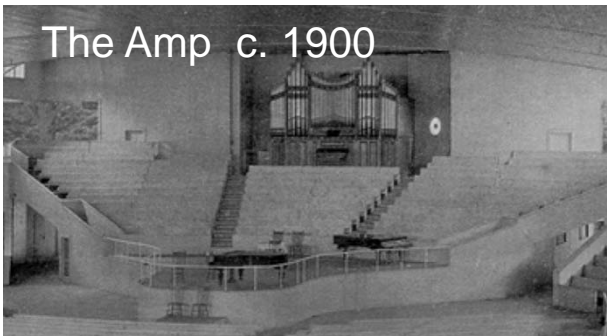
RETRACTABLE AWNING SYSTEM

INCREASED CHOR SEATING BY APPROX 38 SEATS



2B. Choir Seating

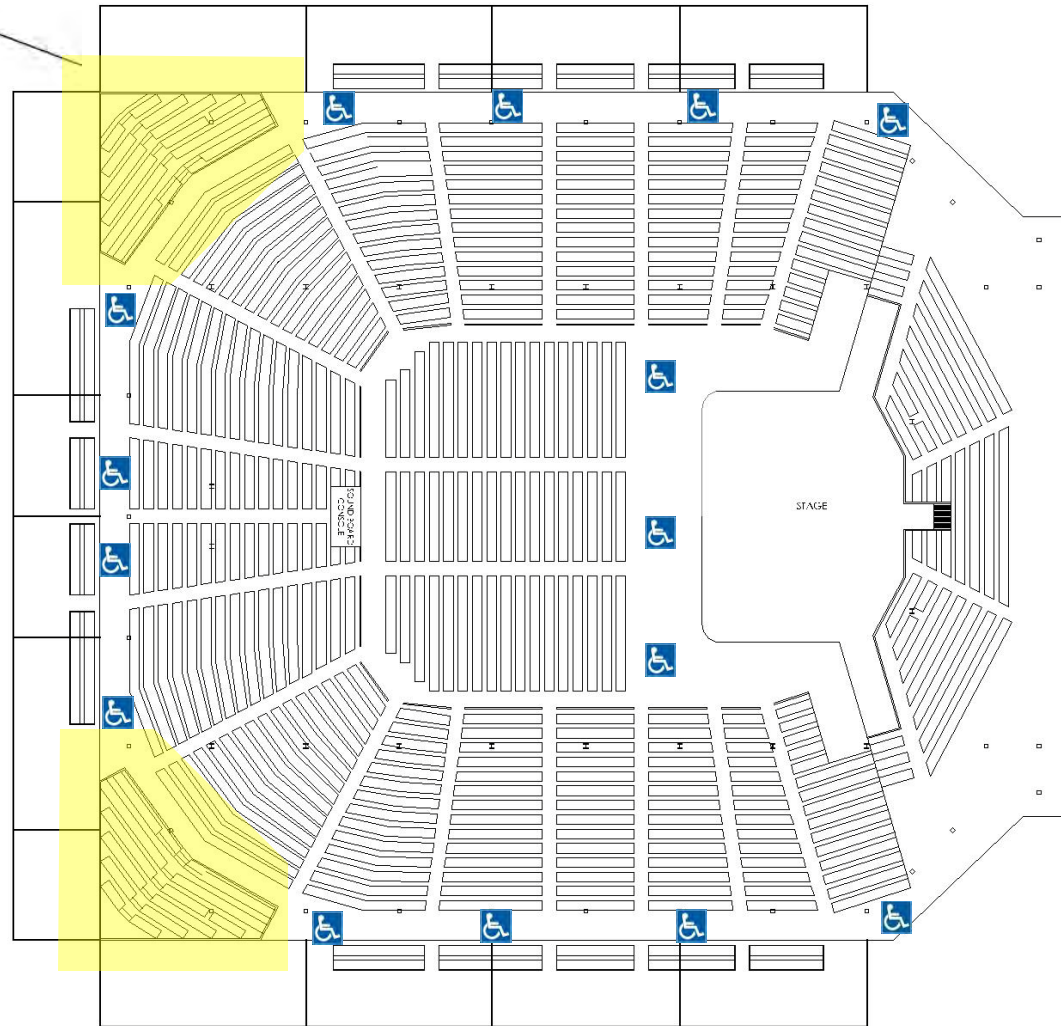
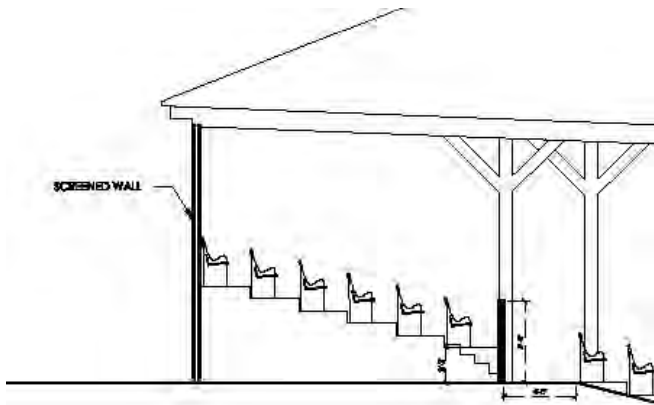
- Adds 38 seats
- Move on-stage storage to back of house & bring choir closer to stage



2C. Fixed Corner Seating

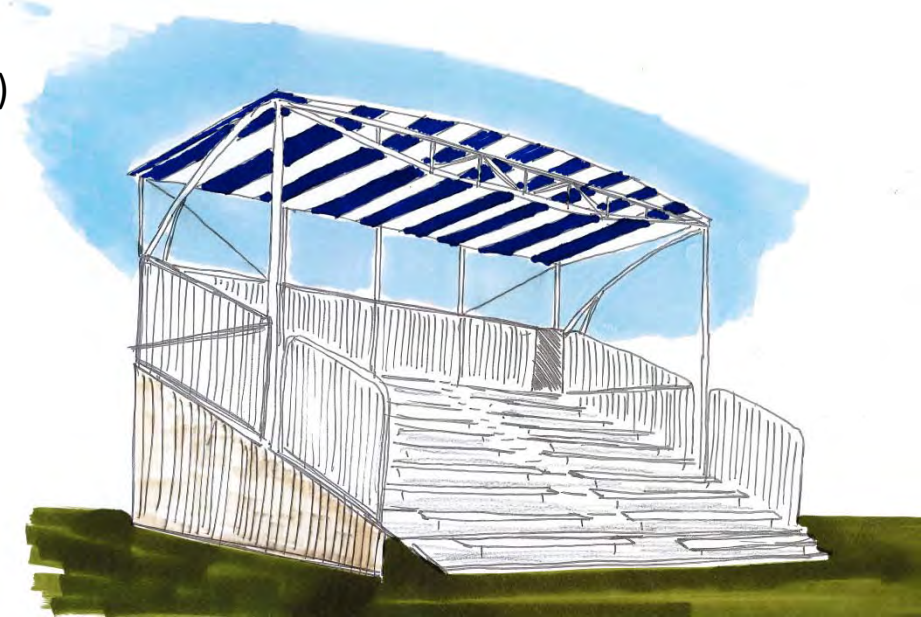
- Adds 168 seats
- Located to maximize visibility and community connections

FIXED SEATING OF APPROX 84 SEATS



2D. Portable Bleachers for Large Events

- Re-establish visibility from the West
 - Remove existing bleachers and replace them with portable bleachers but only when needed
 - For example Century Industries:
 - Bleachers TSP 10C (180 seats)
 - 29'4" x 19'6"
 - Stadium seating TSPVIP 8-32 (147 seats)
 - 32'6" x 20'3"



2E. Lawn Seating

- Introduce bermed grass knolls on west side of the Amp to provide seating for paid patrons and shield views from sidewalk in an elegant way.



Seating Increase Summary

Current proposed plan increases seating capacity from 4,036 to 4,363 (337 seats)

Our proposal adds *more* seats, without lowering the bowl or extending the roof:

- Perimeter seating 216 seats
- Choir seating 38 seats
- Corner seating 168 seats
- Portable Bleachers max 540 seats (180 seats x 3 units)
min 441 seats (147 seats x 3 units)
- **Total** **863+** seats not including lawn seating

3. How to Increase Audience Size

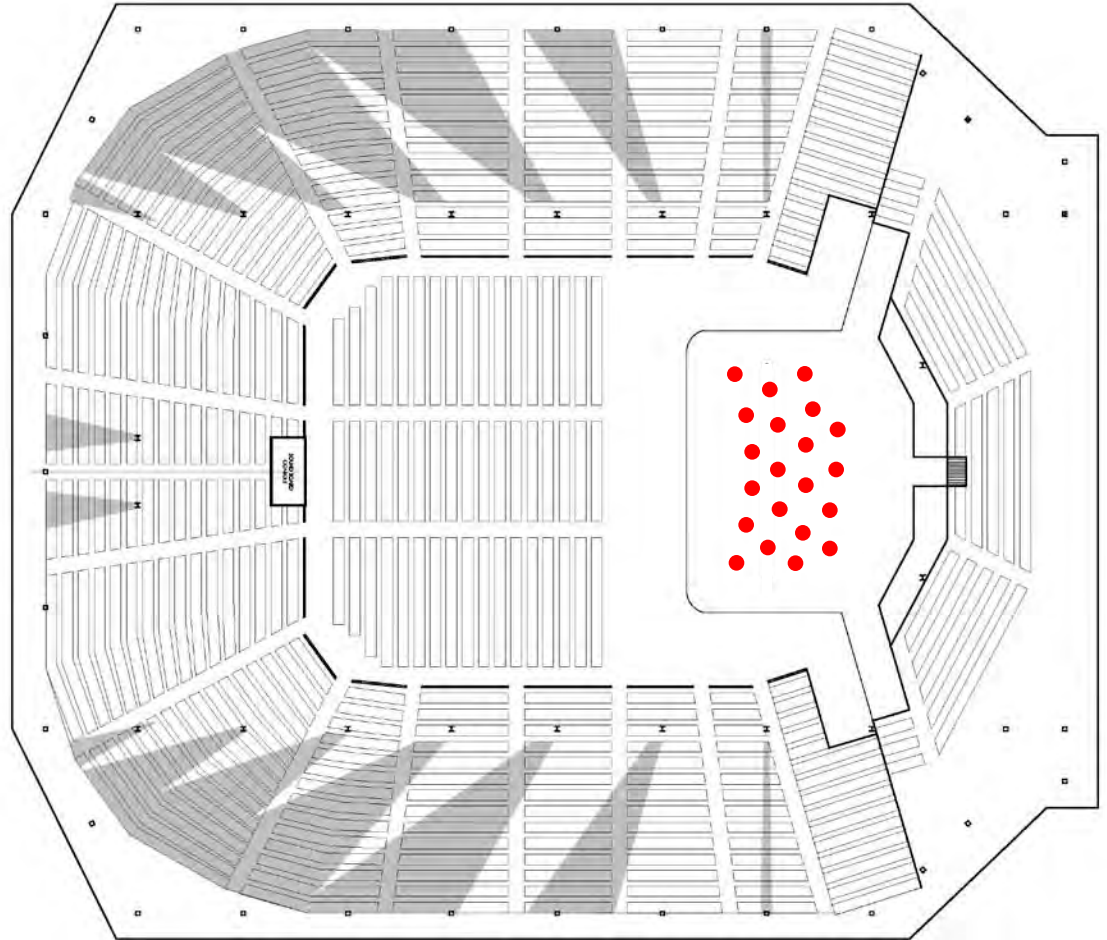
- Install supplemental sound systems around the Amp (like at Hall of Philosophy)



Source: www.mattburkhart.com

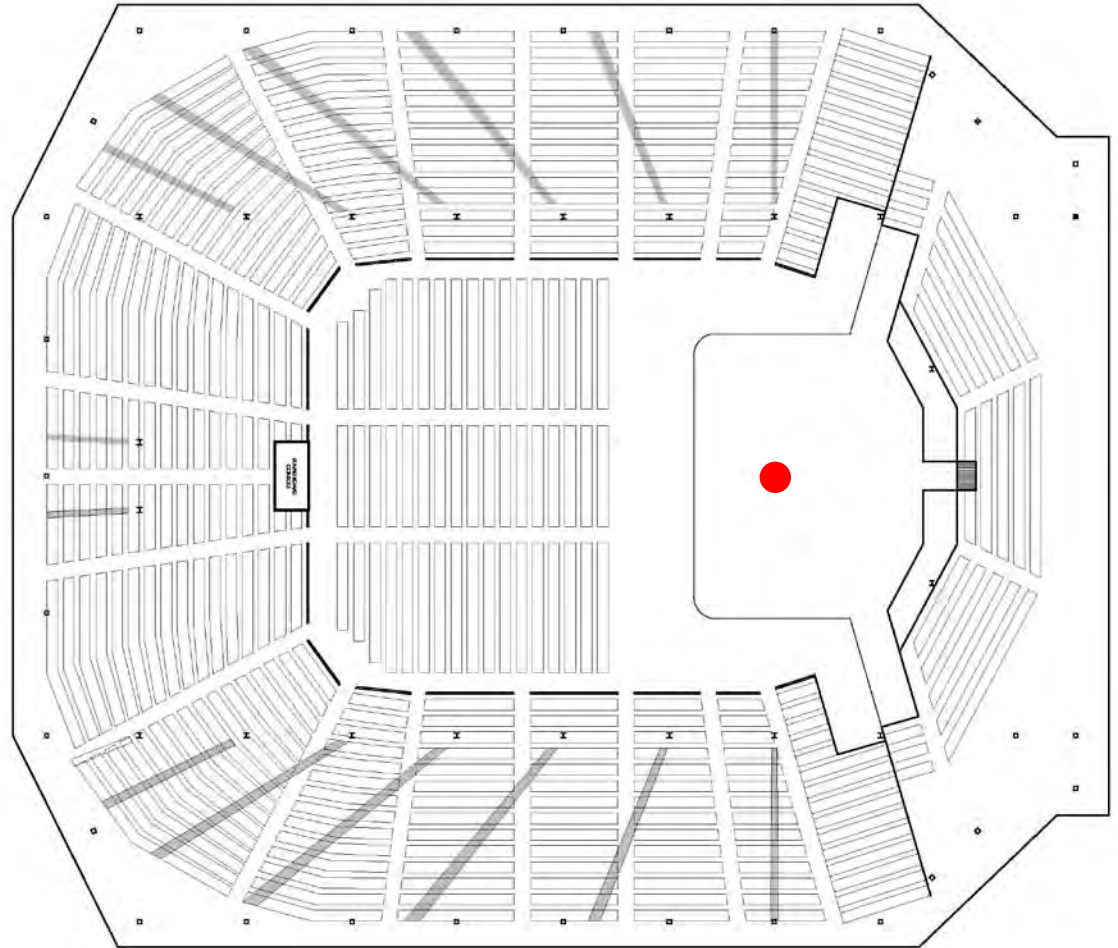
4. How to Improve Sightlines

- Fact: 79% of existing seats have clear sightlines to view of the entire stage during large performances



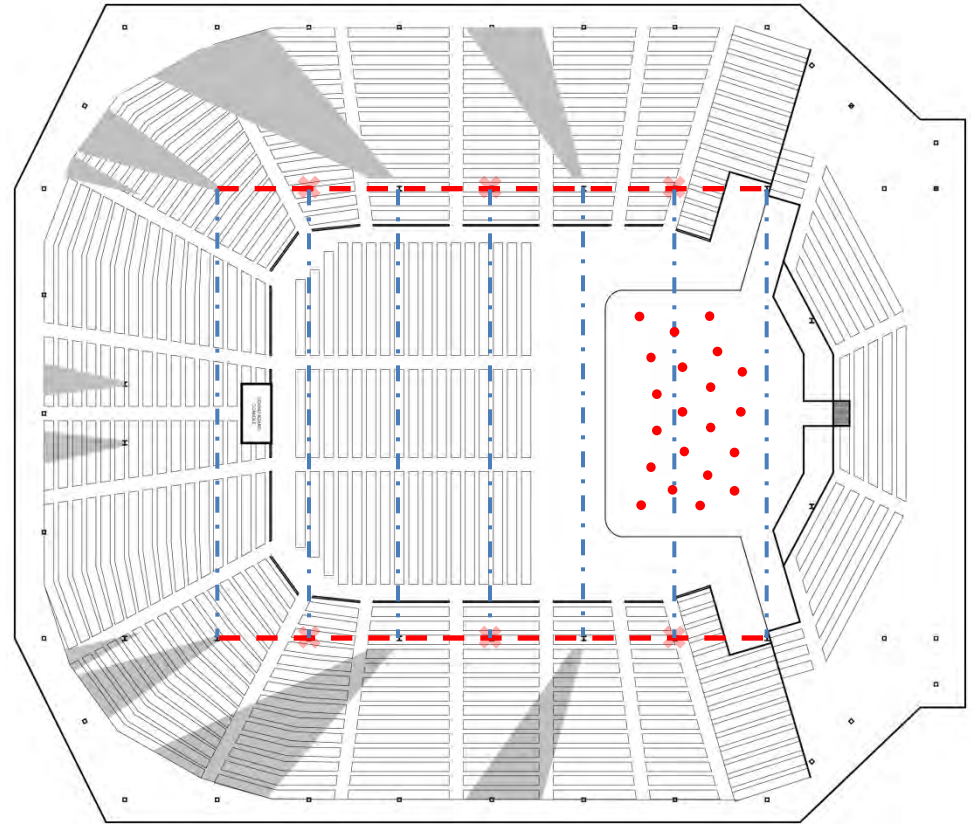
4. How to Improve Sightlines

- Fact: 96% of existing seats have clear sightlines to view an individual speaker on stage



4. How to Improve Sightlines

- If reduce number of columns by 50%
 - 88% of existing seats will have clear view of group performance (a 9% gain)
 - How: Insert a new roof truss perpendicular to existing roof trusses to capture every other existing truss



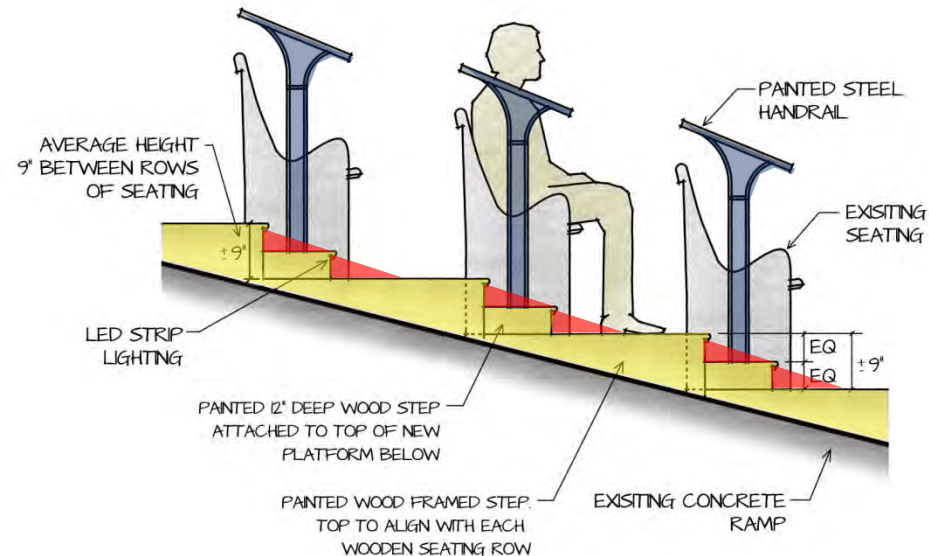
4. How to Improve Sightlines

- Install television monitors for obstructed view seats
- Also enables close up views of lectures & performers, sign language interpreter, close captioning, projection of films and powerpoint shows



5. How to Improve Ramp Safety

- Convert existing ramps into steps (each about 4.5 inches high for a total of 28 steps/ new plans propose taller and more steps)
- Add handrails on each bench
- Add LED lighting at each stair nosing

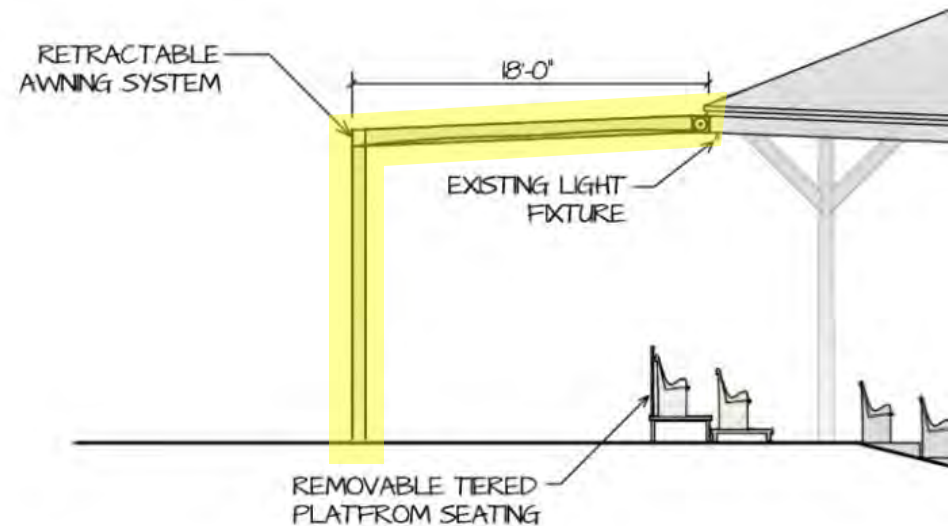


6. How to Increase Weather-Protection

- Introduce retractable awning system



Precedent: the great tradition of awnings at Chautauqua Institution and fabric structures in the Chautauqua movement



Commercial Grade Awning: for the Amp, the aluminum structures could be clad in wood to complement the existing structure. This structure is very durable in high winds and rain.

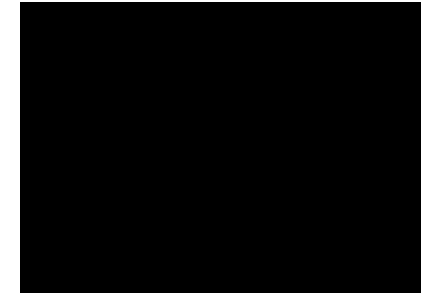
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7. How to Improve Seating Comfort

- Option 1:

- Keep existing benches and provide free or low-cost cushions



- Option 2:

- Redesign bench as per current proposed plan

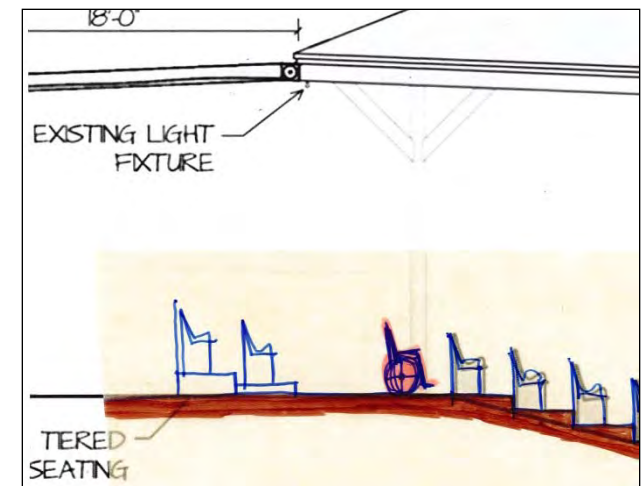
- And...

- Increase seating options around Amp
- Standardize leg room (currently haphazard on main level)



8. How to Improve Accessibility

- Provide more and better protected handicapped seating for wheelchair/cart users on upper level. Ability to provide more handicapped seating due to excess of seating as demonstrated in prior slides
- Introduce passenger/freight elevator in back stage area to allow for easier access to all levels including stage



9. How to Modify the Stage to Support Diverse Programming



pinterest.com

- Stage to remain same size, height
 - Same size as Eastman Theater in Rochester – size is not the issue
 - Proven connection between audience and performer/speaker
- Create orchestra pit for dance and opera performances (see next slide)
- Enhance connections to back of house
- Modernize technological/stage systems

9. How to Modify the Stage to Support Diverse Programming

- Create orchestra pit within existing bowl



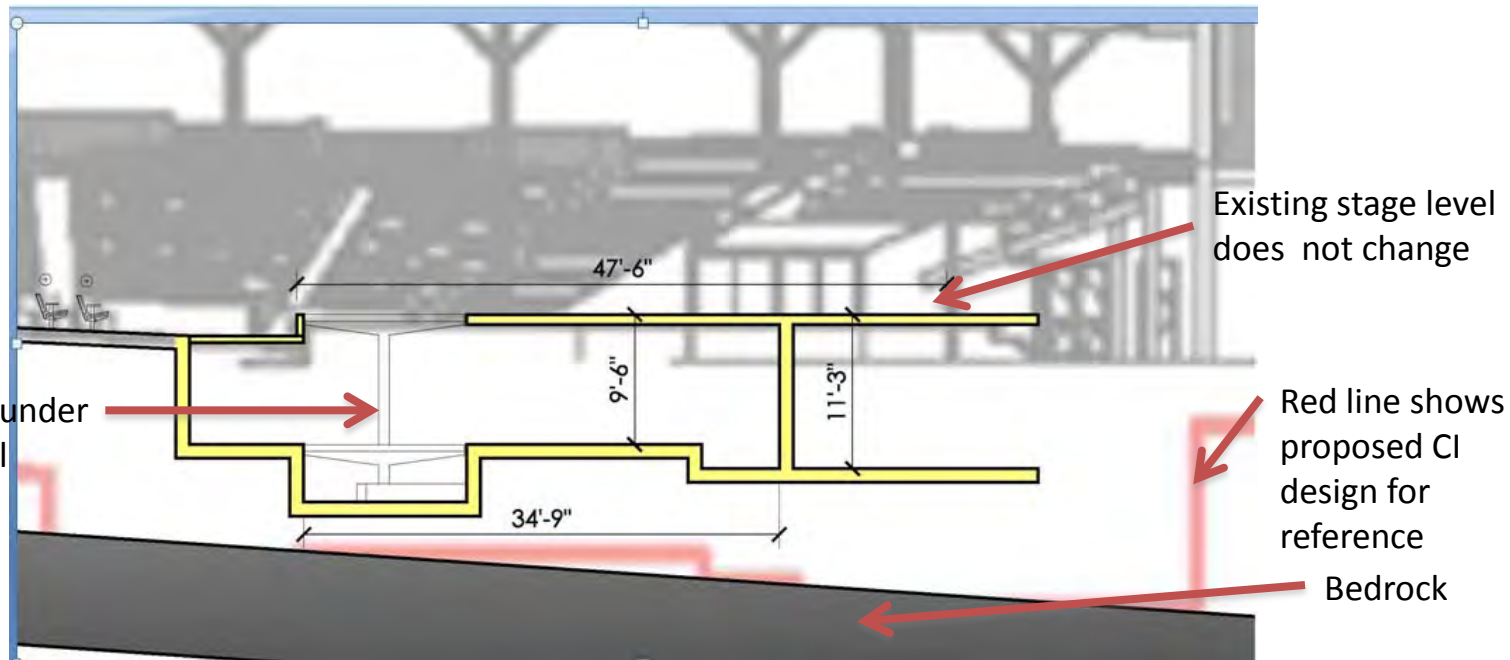
Yelp.com

Westminster Amphitheater, Oakland, CA



9. How to Modify the Stage to Support Diverse Programming

- No need to break out bedrock / size of our proposed pit appears to be identical to current CI published design



10. How to Improve Back of House – Support Space

- Introduce combination freight/passenger elevator for loading & audience accessibility
- Maintain existing stage level (i.e., don't lower it) but raise backstage to the same level
- Provide access to orchestra pit
- Add public amenities (larger, better restrooms)
- Improve green rooms, choir room and dressing rooms



c. 1907 photo during installation of the Massey Organ, shows original towers (now hidden)

10. How to Improve Back of House – Public Space

- Expand and rebuild porch as an enhanced amenity
 - Awning/ Covered outdoor seating
 - Adjacent “plaza”
 - Potential two level porch with view to the Lake



Existing Porch









Example two-
Level
Chautauqua
porch

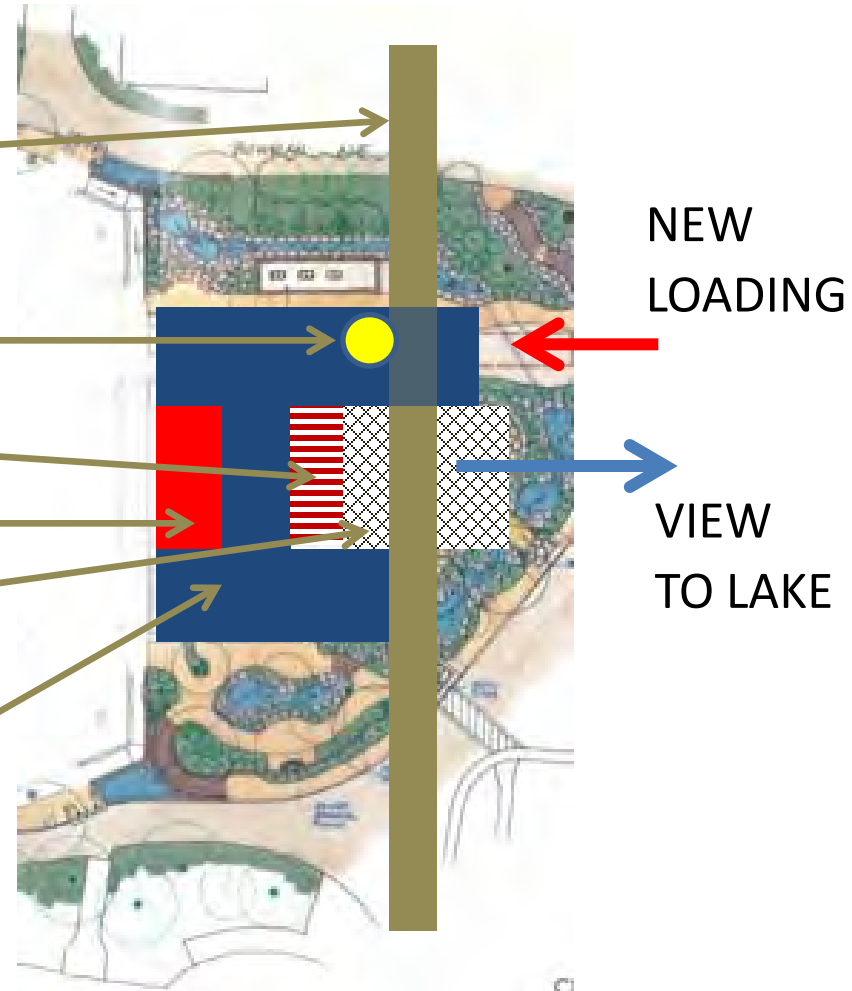
10. How to Improve Back of House- Perry's Bridge

- Maintain Perry's Bridge, an important & delightful experience
- Explore 2nd level porch connection from back of house to bridge



10. How to Improve Back of House- Summary Diagram

- Maintain & Connect to Perry's Bridge 
- Add new passenger & freight elevator 
- Create two level porches 
- Preserve Massey Organ 
- Potential plaza/courtyard 
- Improve & expand back stage support space/restrooms 



“One thing that’s important to say is that it would be a great shame if the preservation effort devoted to the Amphitheater were misinterpreted as in some way being opposed to the idea that Chautauqua is a living, evolving institution....It’s possible for the Amphitheater to evolve and improve without starting all over again.”

— Paul Goldberger, *Vanity Fair* and former architecture critic and Chief Cultural Correspondent, *NY Times*, in a blog post for the National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1.27.15