

# Upgrading the Chautauqua Amphitheater: A Rehabilitation Approach



This is a single sheet from a cohesive document  
This Presentation is for illustrative purposes only

The Committee to  
Preserve the  
Historic Chautauqua  
Amphitheater

**CJS**  
ARCHITECTS

# Goals & Considerations



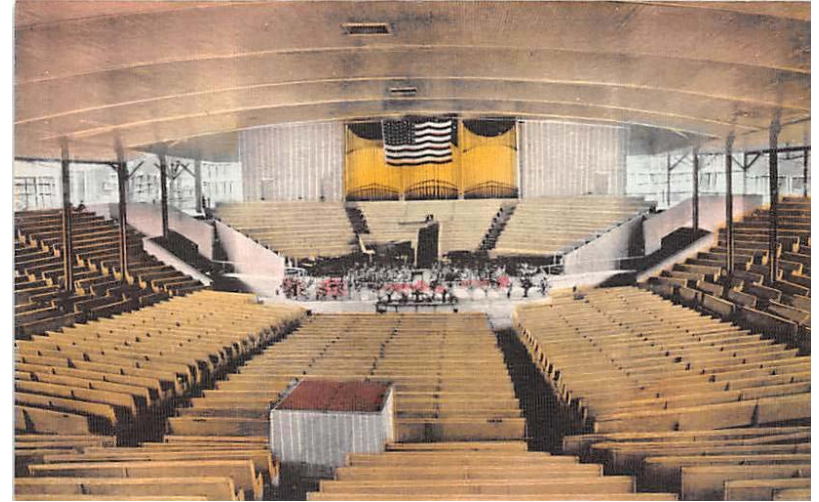
# Community Survey Results

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](http://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



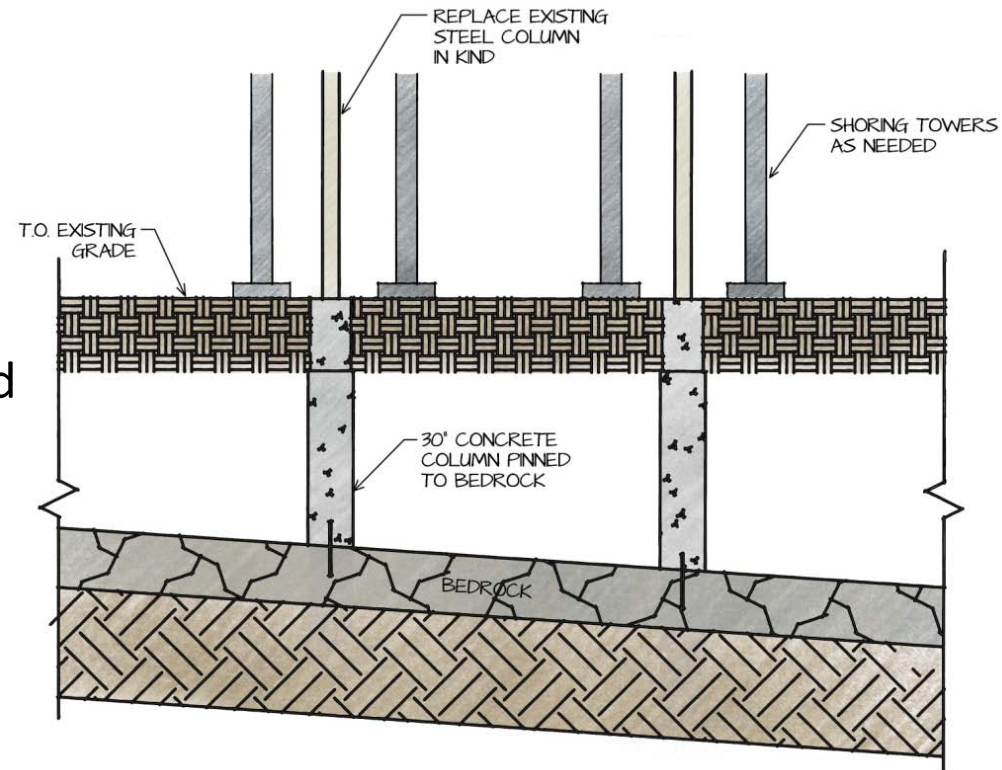


# Caveats about these Opportunities

- 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

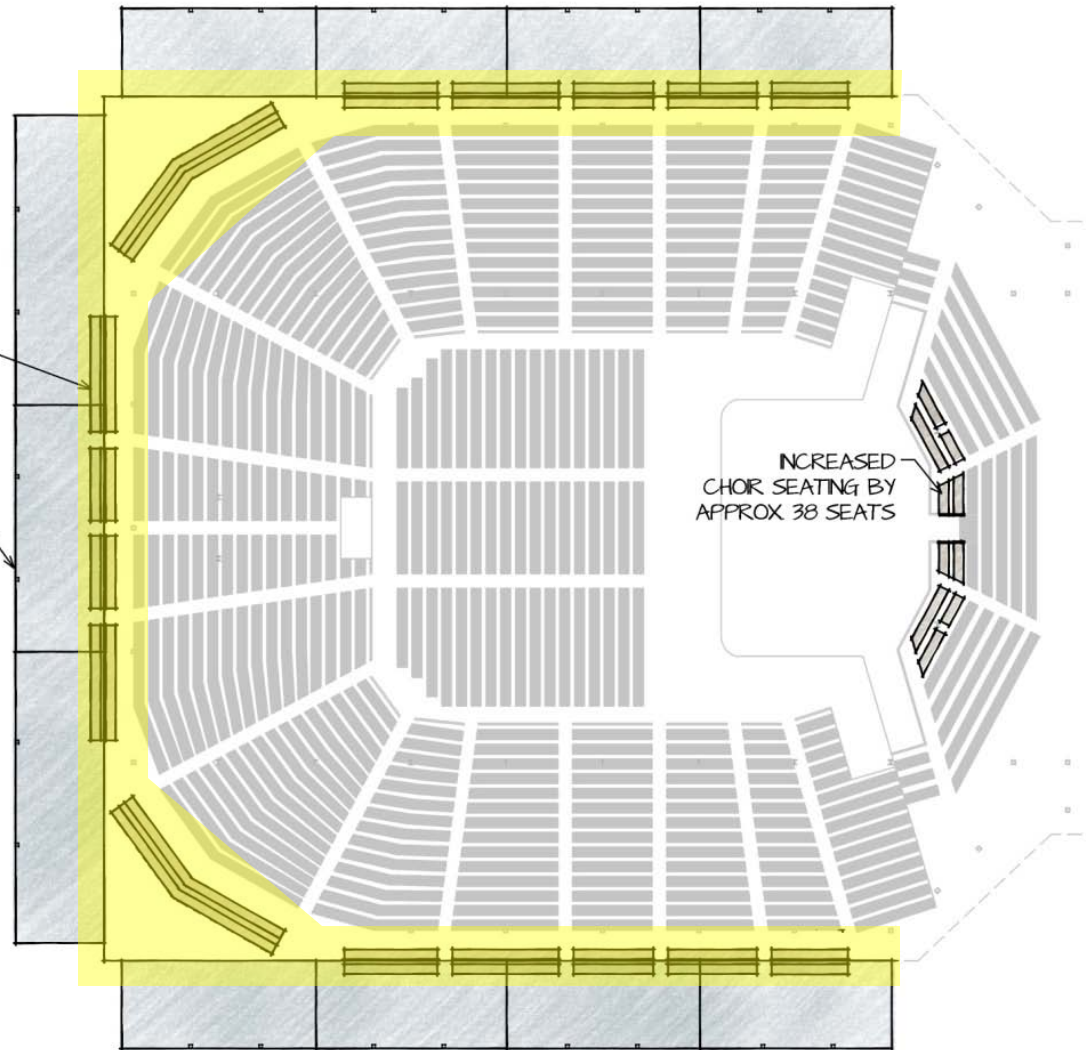
- Adds 300 seats
- Can be installed when necessary and removed when not so as to preserve connections & visibility



REMOVABLE TIERED SEATING

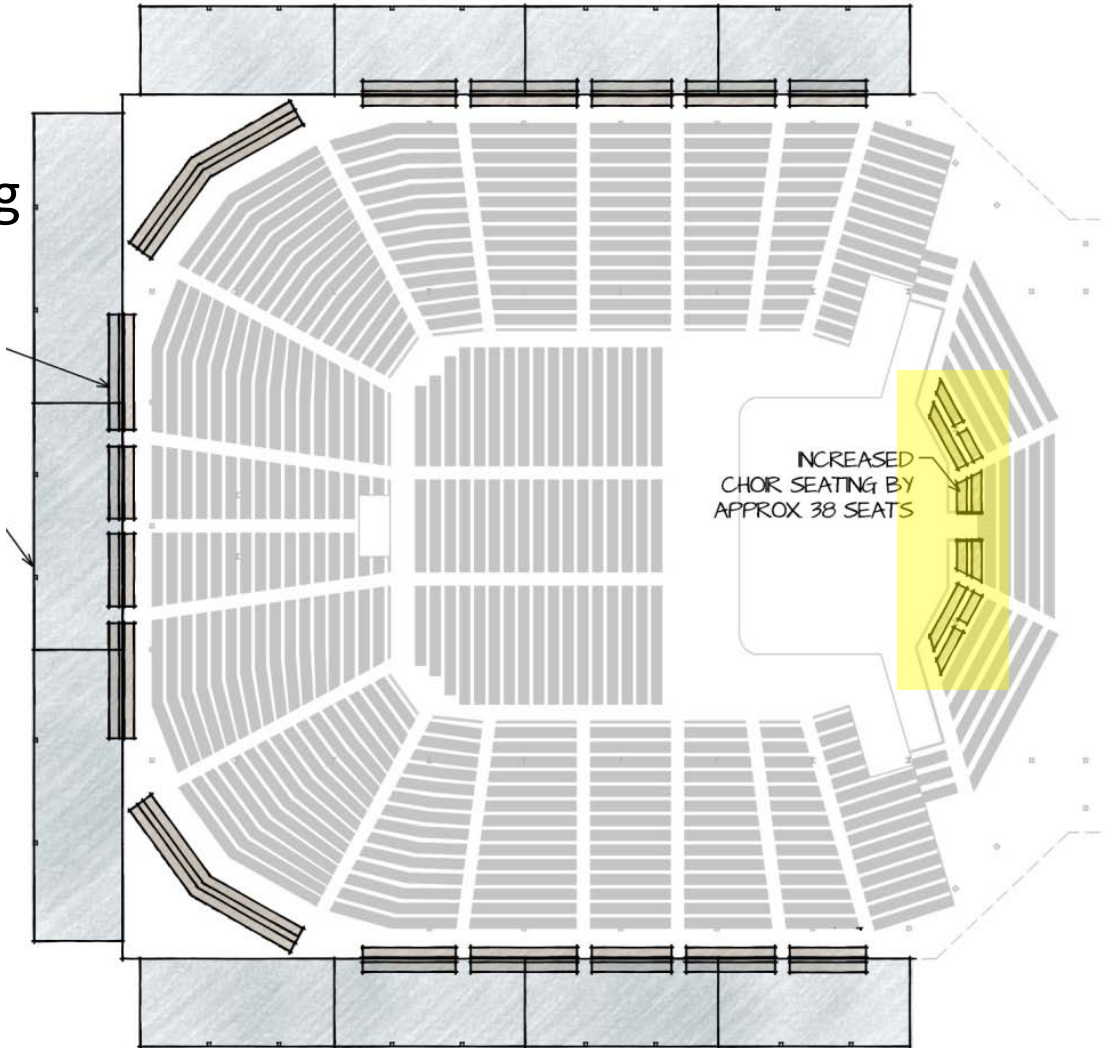
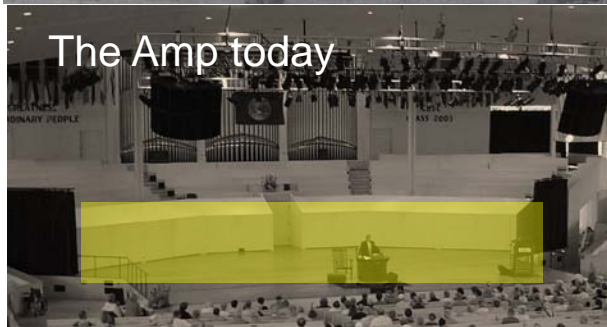
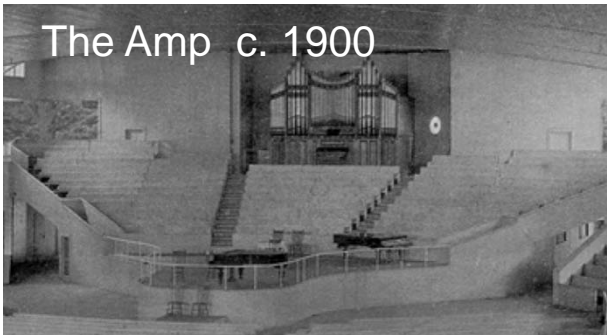
RETRACTABLE AWNING SYSTEM

INCREASED CHOR SEATING BY APPROX 38 SEATS



# 2B. Choir Seating

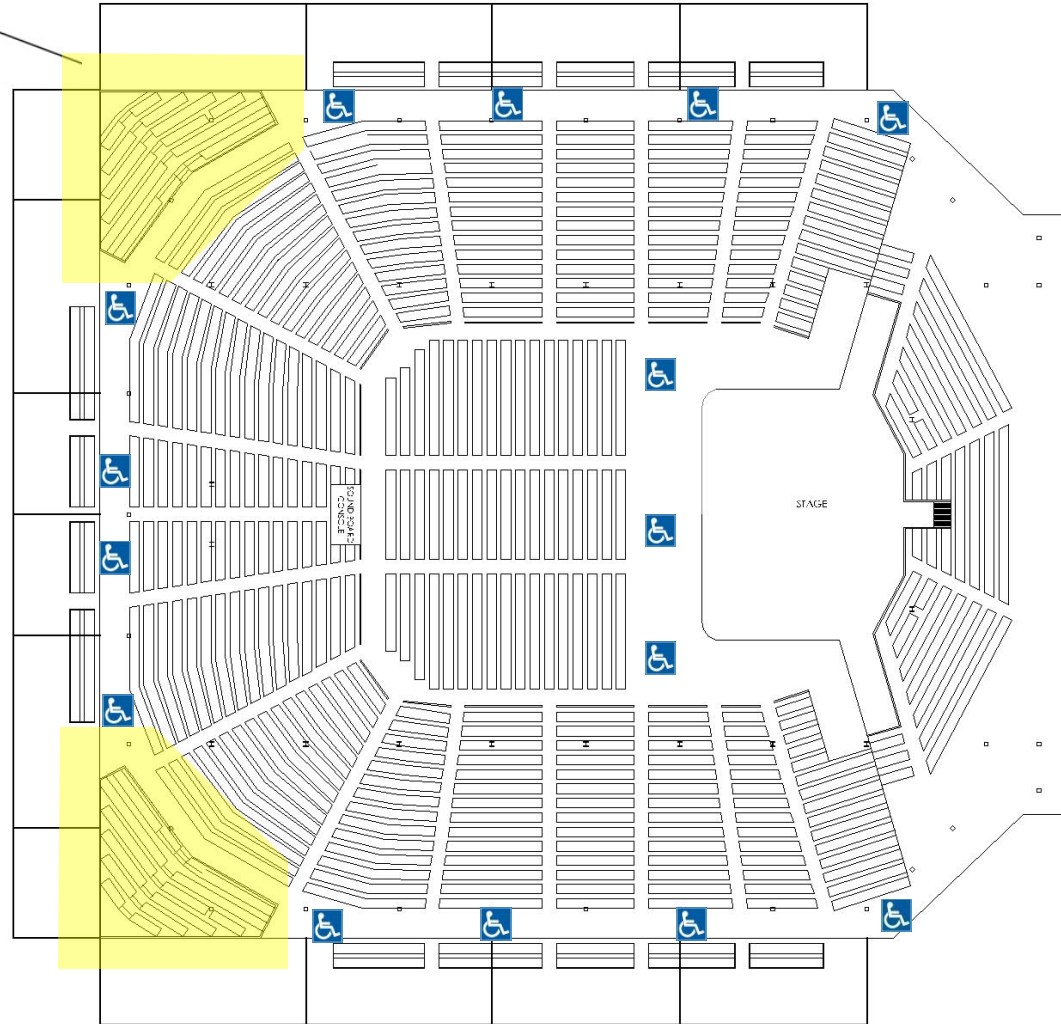
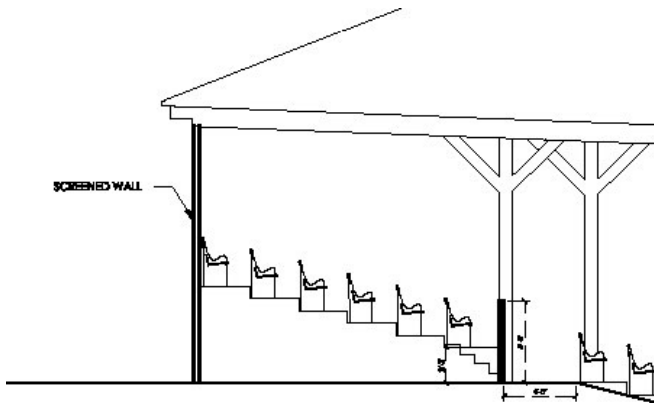
- Adds 38 seats
- Move on-stage storage to back of house & bring choir closer to stage



# 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

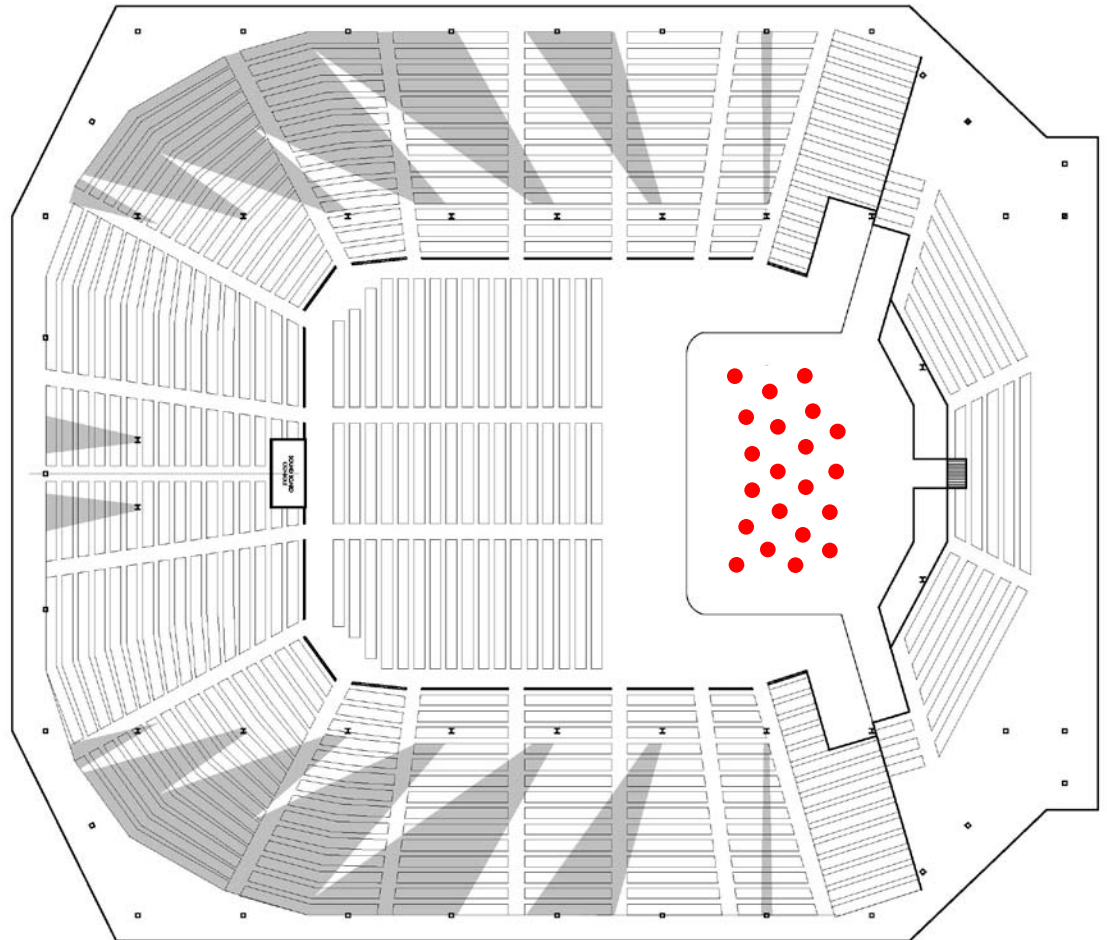
- Install supplemental sound systems around the Amp (like at Hall of Philosophy)



Source: [www.mattburkhart.com](http://www.mattburkhart.com)

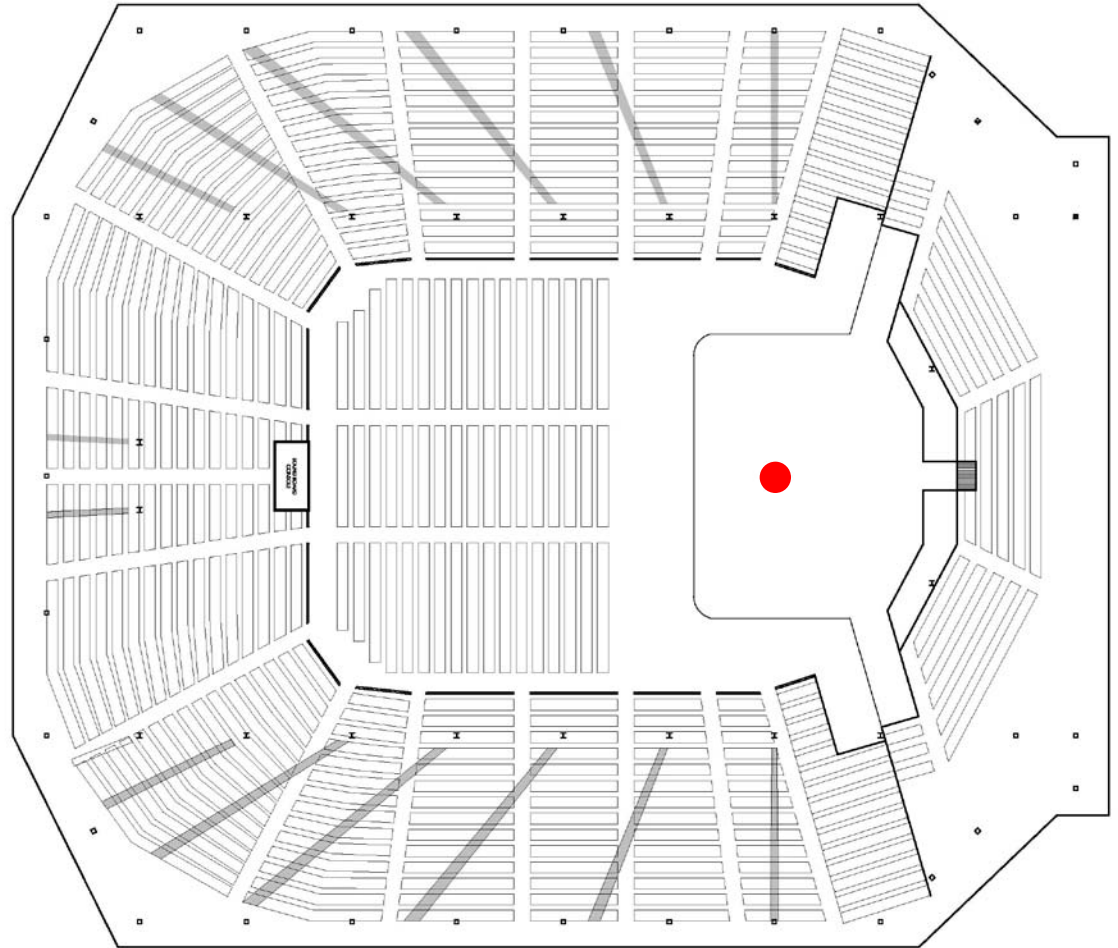
# 4. How to Improve Sightlines

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



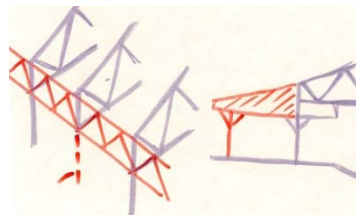
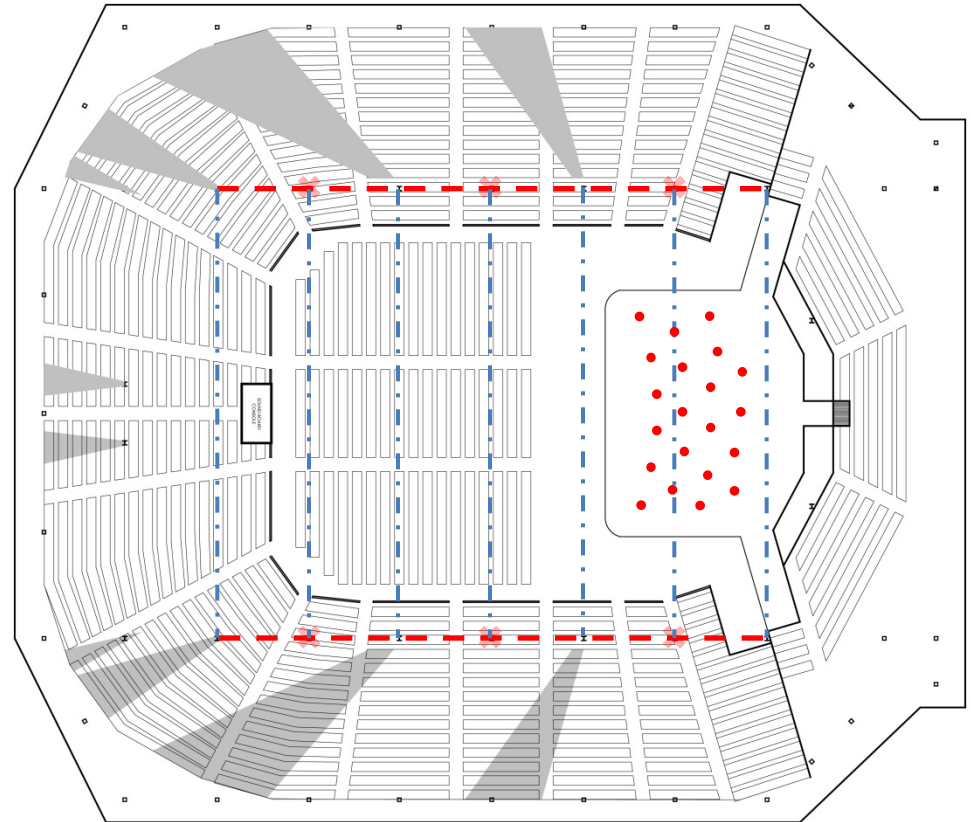
# 4. How to Improve Sightlines

- 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



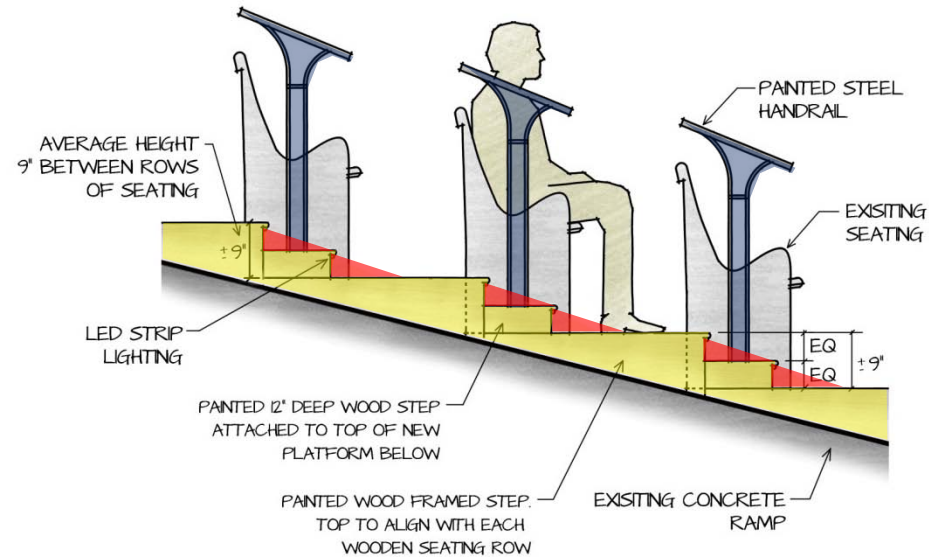
# 4. How to Improve Sightlines

- 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

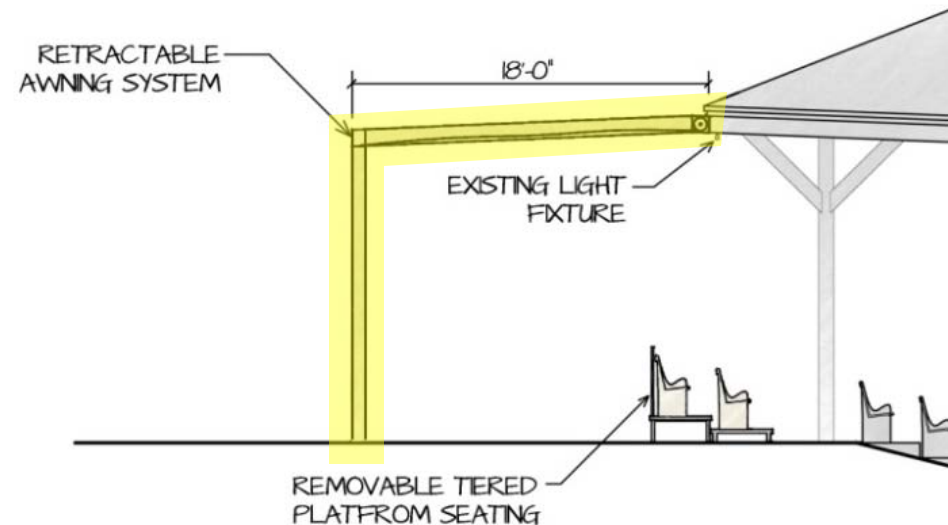


# 6. How to Increase Weather-Protection

- 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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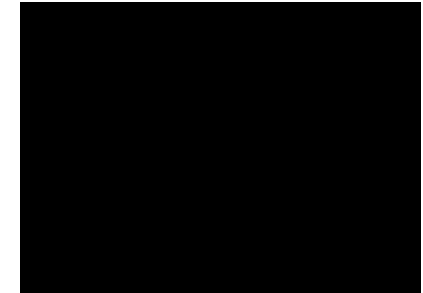
The Committee to  
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# 7. How to Improve Seating Comfort

- Option 1:

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



- Option 2:

- Redesign bench as per current proposed plan

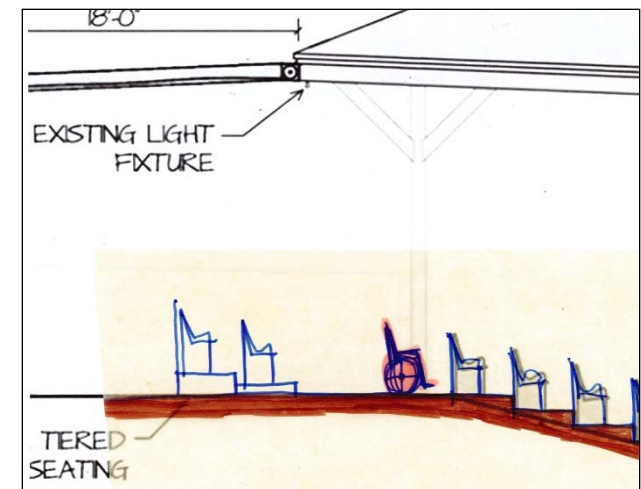
- And...

- 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



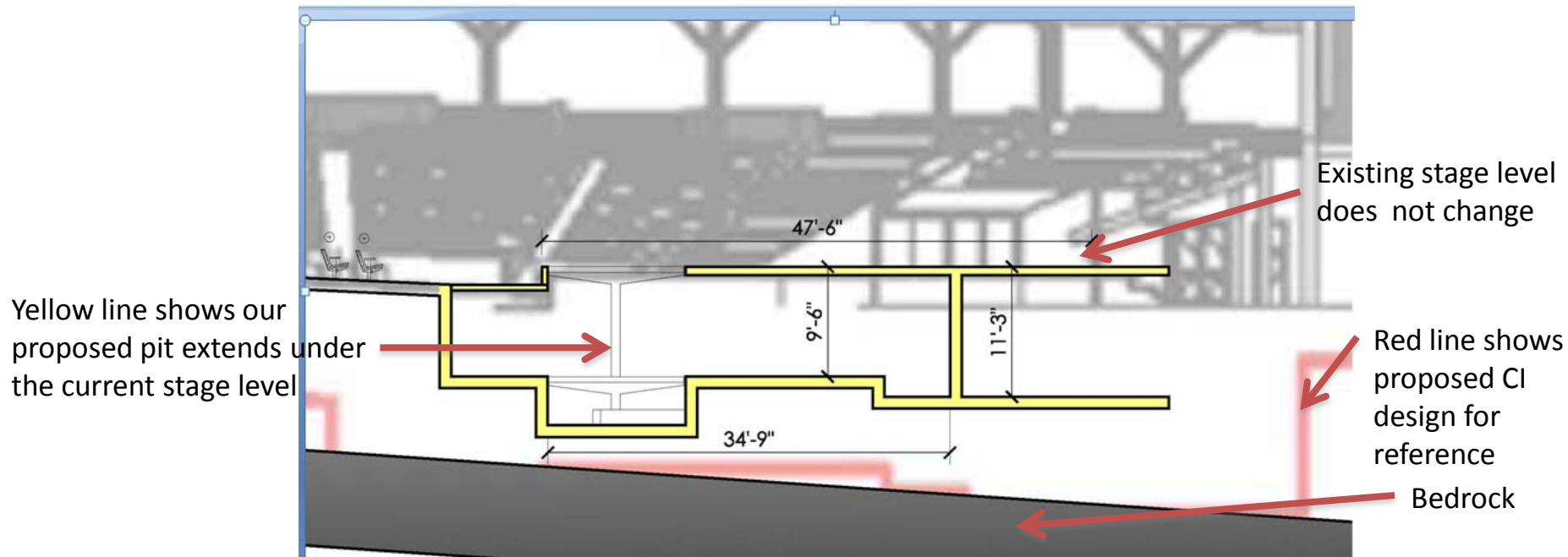
Yelp.com

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

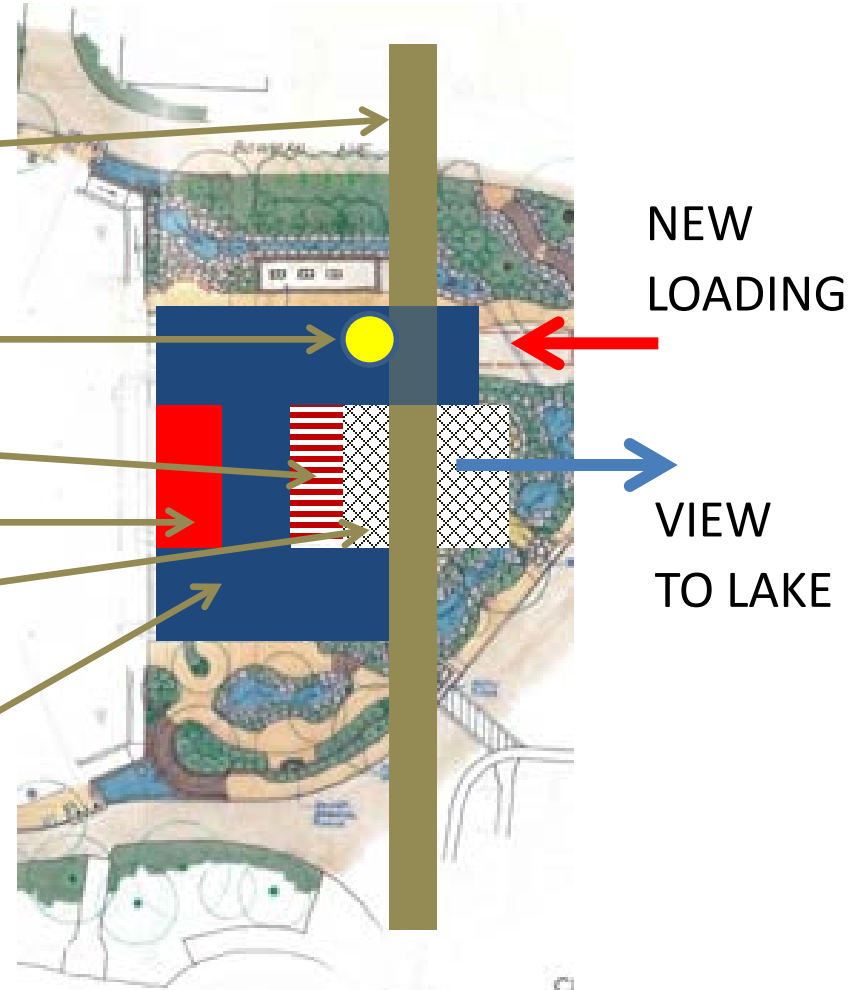
- Maintain Perry's Bridge, an important & delightful experience
- Explore 2nd level porch connection from back of house to bridge





# 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