

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USD/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

SYMPHONY HALL

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United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: **SYMPHONY HALL**

Other Name/Site Number:

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 301 Massachusetts Avenue

Not for publication: N/A

City/Town: Boston

Vicinity: N/A

State: MA

County: Suffolk

Code: 025

Zip Code: 02115

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

Private: X

Public-Local: —

Public-State: —

Public-Federal: —

Category of Property

Building(s): X

District: —

Site: —

Structure: —

Object: —

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

1

—

—

—

1

Noncontributing

— buildings

— sites

— structures

— objects

0 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 1

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: N/A

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4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Signature of Certifying Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

- Entered in the National Register
- Determined eligible for the National Register
- Determined not eligible for the National Register
- Removed from the National Register
- Other (explain):

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

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6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: Recreation and Culture

Sub: Music Facility

Sub: Auditorium

Current: Recreation and Culture

Sub: Music Facility

Sub: Auditorium

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Late 19th and Early 20th Century American Movements: Italian Renaissance

MATERIALS:

Foundation: Gray Quincy granite

Walls: Red brick

Roof: Copper-clad wood

Other: Steel (marquee)

Bronze (grillwork)

Red brick (limestone columns, string courses, and ornamentation)

Marble (ornaments)

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Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

As the permanent home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Symphony Hall derives its significance not only from its architectural and acoustical prominence, but also from the influential role the BSO has played in shaping American musical culture in this century. The Boston Pops Orchestra has become an American institution and introduced the joy of symphonic music to millions nationwide, further contributing to the BSO's role as a musical leader. Symphony Hall has also provided a stage for world figures outside of music and for events of national import.

Boston Symphony Hall was completed in 1900 by the nationally celebrated New York-based architectural firm of McKim, Mead & White, as a permanent home for the Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO), which continues to own and operate the building. Although constructed nearly a century ago, Symphony Hall remains, acoustically, among the top three concert halls in the world (sharing this distinction with the Amsterdam Concertgebouw and Vienna's Musikvereinsaal), and is considered the finest in the United States. This achievement is primarily the result of the vision of three men: the BSO's founder and long-time patron, Henry Lee Higginson; pioneering Harvard physics professor Wallace Clement Sabine; and noted American architect Charles Follen McKim who, carefully following Sabine's specifications, created a design that was subservient in all its aspects to the needs of performing symphonic music.

Prominently sited at the junction of Massachusetts and Huntington Avenues, Symphony Hall is a strong symbol of the importance of this area as Boston's new and burgeoning cultural center from the 1890s through 1910. More than a dozen cultural and civic buildings made their home along the Huntington Avenue corridor, radiating out from Copley Square (this earlier cultural mecca was originally called "Art Square"): Horticultural Hall (Wheelwright & Haven, 1901), Symphony Hall's more elaborate neighbor; the Children's Hospital on Symphony Hall's opposite side; Jordan Hall (Wheelwright and Haven, 1904; designated a National Historic Landmark in 1994) at the New England Conservatory (Wheelwright and Haven, 1901); the Central YMCA (1913); the Opera House (1912, demolished); the Museum of Fine Arts, relocated from Copley Square (Guy Lowell, 1907-1911+), and so on. Huntington Avenue was Boston's answer to the "City Beautiful Movement" spawned by the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. At the Exposition, visitors saw a gleaming, white city, orderly and magnificent, which inspired the desire to recreate this effect in their own towns and cities. While Huntington Avenue, built on newly filled land, offered the luxury of space required to fulfill this dream, numerous changes, particularly accommodations for increased automobile traffic and the addition of bus and trolley/subway lines, have done much to obscure the original intent of this district.

The opportunity for this growth and activity was created by the expansion of Boston to the west through a continued process of land-filling, particularly of the Back Bay, a tidal flat connected to the Charles River, and the fens along the Muddy River. With its restricted land mass, Boston was constantly in need of more space (indeed, the first landfill project was undertaken by the Puritans shortly after their arrival in 1630). Two of Boston's most prominent neighborhoods, the Back Bay and the South End, were created in the nineteenth century by filling the Back Bay and land on the opposite side of the Boston Neck, a project that increased the city's total area by some 1,000 acres. Work on the South End began in the 1830s and was completed by the 1860s; the

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process of filling the Back Bay began in the 1850s and was largely completed by the 1880s. Boston city planners encouraged the location of cultural and civic institutions along the Huntington Avenue corridor, and these institutions were in turn eager to relocate to the new district (known today as the Fenway) because the land was considerably less expensive than that in the congested downtown area or the stylish Back Bay neighborhood.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Infrastructure and Exterior

As previously noted, Symphony Hall stands on the southwest corner of the intersection of two major thoroughfares, Massachusetts Avenue (formerly West Chester Park) and Huntington Avenue. It is bounded on its rear (west) elevation by St. Stephen (formerly Falmouth) Street. Its south facade is attached to a two-story commercial block constructed in the 1920s that extends along Huntington Avenue (a portion of which was annexed to Symphony Hall in 1990 for administrative offices and reception facilities) on the former site of the Children's Hospital.

Symphony Hall is a steel-framed building, resting on wooden pilings, sunk deep into the fill, which are capped by granite pads on which stand brick support piers. Engineering work for this project was carried out by the Norcross Brothers, who are probably best known as the builders and engineers who carried out the complex structural work for Henry Hobson Richardson's Trinity Church, located in Boston's aforementioned Copley Square (1872-1877). The central tower of this structure alone rests on some 2,000 wood piles. Symphony Hall is also an example of an early steel-frame building in Boston: the 1894 Carter Winthrop Building by Clarence Blackall was the first, and less than a dozen others had been built by 1900.

Constructed in the Italian Renaissance Revival style, Symphony Hall comprises nine bays along Huntington Avenue, nine bays on Massachusetts Avenue, and seven bays at St. Stephen's Street and is placed on a base of local gray Quincy granite (employed extensively in a variety of uses throughout Boston). It is two stories high, with the central five-bay portion rising to a third story along the longitudinal axis. The flanking side aisles have flat roofs, while the main hall has a shallow pitched roof clad in copper.

The predominant cladding is red brick, laid up with "panel brick" details to accentuate various openings. Limestone trim is used for the numerous inset panels, string courses, and for accents at the portico and the blank inscription panel below the pediment. Marble roundels and panels are located on the Huntington Avenue and Massachusetts Avenue facades. Broad granite steps lead up to the very shallow Ionic colonnaded portico on Huntington Avenue, with its seven pairs of oak double doors. The five central doors are crowned by an inset marble roundel, while the two doors located on either side of the portico are surmounted by a double hung window, a rather unusual place for such a detail. Ornate cast bronze lamps were originally located on pedestals on the stairs in front of the portico and flanked the main entrance until the 1960s.

Along the Massachusetts Avenue facade are seven round-headed wall arches containing lunettes above paired rectangular windows. The central archway, containing what is today the main entrance (but intended as a carriage entrance--see below), is trimmed elaborately with limestone and is surmounted by a carved limestone lyre. The arcaded pattern is continued along the upper

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story of the central hall's longitudinal wall, enclosing seven clerestory windows (as they were noted by the architects on the plans) which mark the uppermost portion of the auditorium. The lunettes were originally intended to be multi-paned *thermae* windows (based on those associated with ancient Roman baths), similar to the ones McKim employed at the Boston Public Library (1887-1895). As built, those opening onto office spaces comprise a four section sash: the two outer are fixed, the two inner are movable; those in the clerestory comprise three fixed sashes. A view of Symphony Hall in 1940 reveals that wooden "shutters," hinged at the bottom, were applied to the clerestory windows so they could either be left open to daylight or closed. These shutters were permanently closed in the 1940s (probably for black-out purposes during the war) and left closed, presumably for noise control in response to increased automobile and trolley traffic in the area. Some sense of the intended grill work may be seen on the St. Stephen Street elevation.

Indeed, many of McKim's original intentions were not carried out due to the rapidly increasing expenses incurred during construction. In addition to the windows, a watercolor rendering of the building (attributed to Theodore O. Langerfeldt) reveals that the architects intended exterior niches to hold sculpture. The pediment was depicted with elaborate copper cresting, which was crowned by an overscaled lyre. Similar detailing was shown on the Massachusetts Avenue elevation as well. Construction drawings completed as late as the spring of 1899 continue to show the lavish copper detailing.

The primary access to Symphony Hall was originally through its Huntington Avenue facade, with a carriage entrance placed below a lavish copper and glass marquee, probably the most elaborate feature of the exterior, at Massachusetts Avenue. However, with the creation of the Huntington Avenue underpass in 1940, Symphony Hall lost several feet of land and a portion of the stairway in front of its main entrance, which severely restricted patron access and caused the BSO to shift the principal point of entry to the Massachusetts Avenue entrance. The original elaborate marquee was replaced by a longer, asymmetrical steel version sometime in the 1930s.

The overall effect of the building as constructed, however, is one of restrained simplicity, an aspect remarked on even by contemporaries in the extensive newspaper coverage at the time of the opening. The *Boston Journal* noted: "The building suggests the architecture of the Northern Italian Renaissance. It is very plain but substantial looking,"¹ while the *Boston Herald* commented:

No more brilliant or important event has ever figured in the musical history of Boston, it is quite safe to say . . . it [Symphony Hall] made an indescribably charming appearance with its flood of electric lights, its chaste and harmonious coloring, the modesty yet effectiveness of its ornamentation . . . The broad aisles and the ease with which visitors could reach and leave their places . . . met with instant appreciation.²

The focus was always on creating a perfect venue for hearing excellent music; nothing should distract listeners. Rather, the architecture should be a conducive backdrop to the performance.

¹*Boston Journal*, Saturday, September 22, 1900.

²*Boston Herald*, Tuesday, October 16, 1900

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One might even consider Symphony Hall an archetypal example of a Boston building: a simple exterior providing no indication of the world-renowned musical innovation and energy inside.

Interior

From the exterior, the structure of Symphony Hall reveals much of its internal organization. Its basilica-like plan acknowledges the centrally placed auditorium—the core of the building and its most significant component—which rises above the lower side "aisles" in which the corridors, public gathering areas, and administrative offices are contained. These side wings serve an important acoustical function by surrounding the concert auditorium in two layers of construction, extending to the uppermost balcony level, excluding exterior noises. The walls of the auditorium and the walls separating the corridors from office space are constructed of brick and terra cotta tile to a thickness of twenty-one inches at the orchestra level. In the auditorium, this feature enhances clear sonic reflection of low resonances (low-pitched orchestral instruments, such as string basses, tympani, and certain winds and brass).

The auditorium can be entered on three sides at the orchestra and first balcony levels through seven double doors (covered in maroon leather, pierced with oval windows) along the side walls, and through two sets of double doors along the rear walls. The second balcony is similarly entered along the sides of the auditorium (there is no rear corridor at this level). All levels can be reached via four broad marble staircases located at the four corners of the public areas. Total seating capacity is 2,625: 1,486 in the orchestra, 598 in the first balcony, and 541 in the second balcony, in ample-sized, fixed fold-down chairs, originally covered in green leather (the coverings have been replaced, but the original batting remains). Seats in the side balconies are arranged in three rows parallel to the side wall at the first level and in two parallel rows at the second level, separated into sections by aisles extending from the doors.

In the orchestra, seats are arranged in twenty-three rows, grouped in four sections separated by three aisles ahead of a central cross-aisle; behind this aisle, they are arranged in twenty-three more rows, grouped in three sections separated by two aisles. The orchestra seating of Symphony Hall is perhaps one of its most unique features. Because Pops concerts required set-up of tables and chairs on the main floor, where patrons could enjoy food and drink during performances, a system of modular seating was devised. This system comprises palettes of graduated heights, each mounted with five seats, and sectional ramping for the aisle ways, bolted together on the flat auditorium floor (constructed of wood) to provide concert seating on a gently sloping floor. Concert seating can be removed and stored in the basement (via an hydraulic lift in the auditorium floor) within the span of a day, giving Symphony Hall great flexibility in the type of events it can accommodate.

Gilt balcony rails are of cast iron in an open lattice design, with red velvet handcaps. The rails are ornamented at regular intervals (opposite the doors, at the end of each aisle way) with cast plaques of *cherubs* bearing a shield, derived from the BSO logo—the dominant feature on the cover of concert programs from 1892 through the early 1960s. The upper walls above the balconies are relieved by plain pilasters topped with Corinthian capitals, forming niches in which, for decorative and acoustical reasons, reproductions of neoclassical sculpture have been placed. The niches are each surmounted by a small rectangular plaster plaque and a rosette. Clerestory windows (now covered with folded fabric fans), located in alternating bays above

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rectangular decorative plaster panels, are enclosed by plaster arches with scrolled-bracket keys. The ceiling is designed in the Italian Renaissance manner with coffers of crosses and rectangles.

The stage floor and shell are of wood, with walls and ceiling constructed in a shallow pattern of rectangular coffers, framed by an elaborate proscenium. Side walls and ceiling angle slightly outward and the stage is slightly raked, so that the shell functions like a loudspeaker, sending sound outward to the auditorium proper. The most prominent feature of the shell is the organ case, which extends across the upper portion of the rear wall. The case is constructed in three sections framed by ornamented pilasters capped with gilt Corinthian capitals. The center section extends forward of the two flanking side sections and displays fifteen gilded, speaking (functional) facade pipes; the side sections each contain seventeen speaking facade pipes. Open gilt lattice grillwork, like that of the balcony rails, curves from the top of the organ case to the ceiling of the stage shell and is ornamented above the center of the organ facade with an open cartouche, all serving to disguise part of the organ's resonating chamber, which extends upward some thirty feet. The organ is an Aeolian-Skinner American Classic design, opus 1134, installed in 1949. Aeolian-Skinner was the premiere American organ builder during the middle years of this century, and the Symphony Hall organ was widely regarded as the finest concert instrument in the world. It replaced the George S. Hutchings opus 487 instrument originally installed in the auditorium.

The interior decoration of Symphony Hall, like that of the exterior, is simple and elegant, the bulk of the ornament reserved for the auditorium. Public areas are understated, with simple moldings, occasional marble embellishments, simple globe lighting, and a warm but subdued paint scheme. Administrative functions and conductor's quarters were (and still are) housed on the second and third floors. One of the most interesting of these rooms is the library, which today is largely intact.

It was, of course, the auditorium which deservedly attracted the most attention and where the most decoration was lavished. As observed by the *Boston Herald*:

The decoration is really so simple in its nature that when one has said that the color scheme is creme and gold, that would seem, at first thought, to be the whole story. It is only when one studies the interior that the mind becomes conscious of details. In shape and construction the hall is practically a reproduction of the famous hall at Leipsic [sic] . . . All the walls of Symphony Hall are of a shade of cream, unrelieved by any suggestion of color, but they are broken up with pilasters and with niches for statues. The ceiling is done in gold, with panels and big beams. From this ceiling are suspended a number of very artistic and original chandeliers of bronze and brass . . ."³

The ceiling was also cleverly designed with its beautifully embellished, pierced plaster paneling disguising fresh air vents. The ceiling motives are derived from classical ornament, such as a scrolling acanthus. The statues, from the Boston studio of Pietro Caproni, are plaster cast replicas of such neoclassical sculpture as Apollo, The Marble Faun, Faun and Infant Bacchus, the Diana of Versailles, and so on. It was the proscenium arch, however, which drew the loudest

³Boston *Herald*, Thursday, September 20, 1900

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praise in the contemporary press and which still draws all viewer's eyes forward today. The arch is sixty-two feet by forty-five feet, and is encrusted with band after band of such classically derived gilt ornament as acanthus leaves, cornucopia, and fasques. Careful attention to this type of detail was among the qualities for which the McKim, Mead & White firm was so well known. Placed at the center of the proscenium is an elaborate cartouche, bearing the name of one man: Beethoven.

Changes have taken place on the interior: the original lighting was removed at some point (except for the chandeliers suspended from the auditorium ceiling, which are original but appear to have been augmented), the color scheme has been lost, and an elevator was installed within one of the stairwells in the 1970s, although this is surprisingly unobtrusive. The main public reception room (known as the Cabot-Cahners Room) on the second floor was entirely redecorated. And yet all of the alterations are reversible and the most significant elements of the building remain intact: the hall, the striking cast-iron banister and balusters, even the clever skylights providing natural light in the stairwells and the second-balcony corridor, are intact, as are the original doors to the auditorium. The original clerestory could be restored. While the smooth original circulation pattern was disrupted when the main entrance was changed from Huntington Avenue to Massachusetts Avenue, that too could easily be restored, as no partitions or permanent physical alteration occurred when access was altered.

All of Symphony Hall's original double-hung wooden sashes were systematically replaced between 1991 and 1995 with Marvin sound-control windows. In the summer of 1997, a major renovation of the auditorium's concert lighting and electrical support systems was undertaken. This project provided new stage lighting, adaptable for television and other formats, a new system of catwalks in the attic above the auditorium, and an electrical infrastructure that will support future expansion. Overall safety of the auditorium was enhanced through the removal of nearly a century's worth of electrical cable and elimination of the need to suspend rented television lighting from the ceiling. Wooden scrims used to hide stage lighting were removed from the ceiling of the stage shell, as were similar large wooden baffles along the side walls of the auditorium, also installed to disguise stage lights.

Conclusion

Despite alteration over the years and loss of land along Huntington Avenue, Symphony Hall nonetheless retains its architectural integrity. While McKim, Mead & White's Symphony Hall is not their most brilliant architectural work in Boston (that distinction must go to the Boston Public Library; designated a National Historic Landmark in 1986), it nonetheless occupies an important place in their oeuvre and within the sphere of Boston's cultural life. Symphony Hall is a building which was designed to house a specific function, and it is that at which it excels. Symphony Hall suits its intended purpose elegantly and appropriately. Every aspect of the design was carried out with music in mind, whether for the listener or the performer. Furthermore, the care with which the building was designed—taking into special account the acoustical properties from the outset, creating a flexible seating plan, and employing refined and elegant interior decoration—speak well of not only the building's architects, but also of the entire team. Sabine orchestrated, if you will, the acoustics; the Norcross Brothers oversaw the construction of an early steel frame building; Major Higginson, conceived and pioneered the project, and kept it

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afloat. It was a meeting of the minds of talented individuals from which the City of Boston has been the beneficiary for nearly a century.

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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

Nationally: X Statewide: Locally:

Applicable National

Register Criteria: A X B C X D

Criteria Considerations

(Exceptions): A B C D E F G

NHL Criteria: 1, 4

NHL Theme(s): Expressing Cultural Values: Visual and Performing Arts
Architecture, Landscape Architecture and Urban DesignAreas of Significance: Music
Architecture

Period(s) of Significance: 1900 - 1949

Significant Dates: 1900, 1924, 1931, 1949

Significant Person(s): Charles Follen McKim (architect), Wallace Clement Sabine (scientist), Henry Lee Higginson (financier), Pierre Monteux (conductor), Serge Koussevitzky (conductor), Aaron Copland (musician/composer).

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: McKim, Mead & White
Norcross BrothersHistoric Contexts: XXII. Music
J. Forums (Halls and Auditoriums)XVI. Architecture
G. Renaissance Revival

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State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

Symphony Hall in Boston is a structure of world renown and stature. It was the very first concert hall in history designed according to scientific acoustic principles and is ranked among the three finest concert auditoriums in the world; it is frequently studied as a model for new halls around the globe, yet its famous acoustic has not been replicated anywhere.

Henry Lee Higginson and the Founding of the Boston Symphony Orchestra

Henry Lee Higginson, founder of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, was born in New York City in 1834. As a young man, he studied singing and piano in Vienna and developed a keen passion for fine music. He served in the Civil War, acquiring the rank of Major (a title he retained all his life) and a prominent facial scar from a sword fight. He established himself as a banker in Boston in 1868 and through shrewd and prudent dealings became a leading financier.

Boston was one of the nation's leading musical centers in the second half of the nineteenth century, but the musical scene there did not rival that of the great European capitals with which Higginson was familiar. Most notably, it lacked a permanent orchestra and the kind of musical training that would produce orchestral musicians of the first rank. In 1881, Higginson singlehandedly willed the BSO into being, assuming responsibility for providing about \$50,000 yearly of an estimated annual budget of some \$115,000 (the rest coming from ticket and other revenues), thus clearing the estimated annual deficit and assuring the organization's successful continuance. He apparently was not impressed with either the New England Conservatory or the Boston Conservatory, both opened in Boston in 1869, for in announcing the formation of the BSO he noted: "One more good thing should come of this scheme, namely a good honest school for musicians." However, it would take another sixty years and the vision of another great man, Serge Koussevitzky, to realize this particular dream. He continued to guide and shape the orchestra with a firm hand, hiring conductors and musicians, until 1918. Higginson died in 1919.

The Need for a Concert Hall

For the first nineteen years after Henry Lee Higginson founded the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the ensemble occupied rented quarters. Between 1881 and the end of the century, the orchestra's concerts took place in the former Boston Music Hall, located in an increasingly crowded downtown Boston. During those years, the BSO paid rent for the use of the space for rehearsals and concerts, and the orchestra's management had no control over the staff, employed by another entity. This led to a scandal in the matter of subscription sales early in the history of the ensemble when it became clear that the Music Hall box office staff privately reserved series tickets for favored friends at advanced prices before sale was opened to the general public. When Major Higginson learned of this box-office chicanery, there seemed little he could do. No other concert hall in Boston was suitable. The realization that he was more or less at the mercy of others may have planted the first seed of the idea that eventually led to the construction of a

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hall that would be fully owned and operated by the orchestra.⁴ Still, the orchestra remained in the Music Hall for a decade and a half after the scandal broke, because Higginson was naturally first concerned with building the musical ensemble; a physical structure could wait.

What finally motivated the decision to create a new home for the Boston Symphony was the simple fact that the Music Hall was scheduled to be closed down and razed as part of an urban development project in downtown Boston. The necessity of providing a new home for the concerts, which had grown very popular—indeed, had become a hallmark of Boston’s position in American cultural life—allowed Higginson and his professional managers the chance to take control of the orchestra’s physical environment as well as its musical development. One important consideration was the creation of an auditorium designed particularly for concert-giving, not the miscellaneous hash of events that had taken place downtown in Music Hall, ranging from a fireman’s ball to a series of sermons or public lectures, to dances, and other miscellaneous entertainments.

Planning and Design

Higginson formed a committee of advisors who would help determine the elements that would characterize “the new Music Hall,” as it was going to be called in the confident assurance that the old one would have seen its last days before construction was completed. Visual attractiveness was a consideration, but far more so was practicality and, above all, acoustics. It was this last feature that made Symphony Hall virtually unique for its time and for years after. The world had already seen the creation of a number of concert halls with excellent acoustics, but that happy situation was invariably the result of accident, not design. For Symphony Hall, Higginson hired a scientist in the new emerging field of acoustics to work with the architects in the hope of ensuring a favorable result. Boston’s Symphony Hall is the first concert hall designed to be acoustically balanced specifically for music.

One of America’s most distinguished architectural firms, McKim, Mead & White, New York, was engaged for the project, with the technical assistance of Wallace Sabine, then an assistant professor of physics at Harvard with a specialty in acoustics.⁵

⁴In the meantime, Higginson solved the problem of box office shenanigans by the clever device of having all seats put up to bid at auction, with the first choice of seats going to those who bid highest premium over the stated subscription price. This had the added advantage of providing extra income for the ensemble, thus reducing the necessary amount of Higginson’s guarantee to make up the deficit from his own funds every year.

⁵Professor Sabine had undertaken these studies when asked by the Corporation of Harvard University to solve acoustical difficulties in the building that then served as the Fogg Art Museum. When plans for a new concert hall in Boston began to bear fruit, he was conveniently at hand just across the Charles River.

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Charles McKim had a close relationship with Major Higginson, having designed Higginson's home at Pride's Crossing.⁶ Indeed, immediately after he had purchased the land for Symphony Hall, Higginson contacted McKim directly about the building in a letter dated October 27, 1892:

This is a secret—please keep it absolutely—

Two or three of us have bot [sic] the only feasible lot in Boston for a Music Hall . . . I know of no one, but you, to whom I should like to entrust the work— Perhaps others are as good but not for me—nor do I know if Mr. [Stanford] White is as good—nor if you or he would touch the job. Possibly you may have time to glance at the land . . . I can't give the work to any one without consultation, & I would not ask you to spend a minute on it, except just to look at the ground—which will take much more than a hall for 2500 people—

If anything is done, it must be at low cost— & perhaps a theatre might be better.⁷

McKim responds to Higginson the next day:

. . . We all feel that it is quite impossible to express the pleasure we have that you should wish to associate us with the development of your splendid idea for a Music Hall for the City of Boston; and that nothing more flattering or complimentary has ever happened to our office . . . I will only add that while our ambition will be to make the building representative of the purposes for which it is intended in the best sense, we believe this is not inconsistent with the use of simple materials and economic construction.⁸

This correspondence immediately reveals the close friendship and mutual respect of the two main protagonists. It also reveals that from the very first, finances were at issue. Dozens of letters survive, providing rich details regarding the Symphony Hall project, and have been collected by Richard Poate Stebbins, editor, in *The Making of Symphony Hall. A Documented History*, an invaluable source.

The first plan for the new concert hall was an architect's design by McKim, planned in the shape of a Greek amphitheater (no doubt a reference to Boston's general reputation as "the Athens of America"), a graceful and visually attractive plan. But there was concern as to whether sounds from the stage would radiate properly and evenly, in good balance, when the acoustic waves would disperse from front to back of the auditorium as the side walls spread apart. Sabine was convinced that the plan would severely attenuate the sound from the orchestra, particularly the essential bass notes that underlie the harmonic element that shapes a musical composition.

⁶For information on McKim, Mead & White, see *A Monograph of the Works of McKim, Mead & White* (originally published in 1915; reprinted by Da Capo Press, 1985.) Among the firm's Boston work, one may mention the John F. Andrew House (1884-1888, 32 Hereford Street at Commonwealth Avenue); the Boston Public Library (1887-1895, Copley Square); the Algonquin Club (1887, 217 Commonwealth Avenue); the St. Botolph Club (1890, 199 Commonwealth Avenue); the Pickham House (1895, 303 Commonwealth Avenue); and the Shaw Memorial on the Boston Common (1897). For information on Henry Lee Higginson, see Bliss Perry, *Biography and Letters of Henry Lee Higginson* (Boston: 1921).

⁷Richard Poate Stebbins, editor, *The Making of Symphony Hall, Boston. A Documented History*, 110.

⁸Ibid.

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Sabine carried out acoustical tests in many large rooms of varying shapes and sizes in the Boston area, and, at Higginson's suggestion, the structure and acoustics of existing concert halls in Europe were brought into consideration. Sabine's studies and the advice of the advisory panel demonstrated what is now regarded as a universal truism: the ideal shape for a concert hall is one shaped like a shoe-box, rectangular in shape, wider than it is high.

The *Boston Journal* featured a detailed article outlining how Sabine had perfected his acoustical experiments:

. . . Mr. Wallace C. Sabine, Assistant Professor of Physics at Harvard, seems to have reduced acoustic construction to a formula, for from the moment he laid the plans of his proportions and materials before the architects of the hall . . . he maintained that there was little question about the desired outcome as there was in the minds of the architects about the appearance of the structure . . . Mr. Sabine began by establishing the duration of audibility of what he calls residual sound, but what is popularly known as reverberation, by means of an organ pipe, the action of which he could control electrically, and a chronograph. Then he determined the relative absorbing power of various substances—cushions, draperies, plaster on lath, plaster on tiles, and brick, wood, open windows, men and women. He began with all the cushions of the Sanders Theatre of Cambridge, and noted scientifically all the steps by which he reduced a reverberation which originally endured 5.62 seconds to one of only 1.14 seconds durability . . . When he came down to the laws for Symphony Hall he took famous music rooms for comparison, and calculated that the duration of residual sound, in seconds, was 2.30 in the Leipsic (sic) Gewandhaus, 2.44 in the old Boston Music Hall, and would be 2.31 . . . in the new Symphony Hall.⁹

McKim, the dominant partner, yearned to build an amphitheater, which would have been a disaster for the usefulness of the new building. Fortunately, the amount of land purchased for the new building was too small to site a structure in the shape of an amphitheater, so Sabine's preferred design won out by default—a "shoe box" shape inspired by one of the most magnificent halls then functioning in Europe, the old Gewandhaus in Leipzig. In such a structure, the parallel side walls and the ceiling will reflect the sound waves back into the middle of the space, giving it a richness, warmth, and depth. Even though the resultant hall was larger by 200 seats than Music Hall, and by 1,000 seats than the old Gewandhaus, the design was so exquisitely calculated for acoustics that Symphony Hall enjoyed a reverberation time virtually identical to that of the Leipzig building and notably shorter (and therefore clearer) than its predecessor in Boston.

Even the decorative elements of McKim's final design were planned to improve the projection and reflection of sound within the listening space, so as produce a rich, complex, yet clear blend of the many different sound waves issuing from the players on the stage. The parallel rectangular side walls and the horizontal ceiling of the listening space were complex surfaces, broken up by pilasters, niches, and indentations, so that the sound waves would be similarly broken up into micro-reflections, rather than bouncing back as intrusive echoes. Eventually the idea arose of putting statues in the niches. These were full-sized plaster casts of famous works of classical

⁹*Boston Journal*, Wednesday, October 31, 1900.

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antiquity, most of them representing mythological or historical figures in some way or other connected with music and the arts. The statues themselves, in addition to adding to the visual beauty of the space, further broke up the waves of sound emanating from the orchestra.

One element of the design was a strong reflection of the musical taste of nineteenth-century America and of Higginson's own ideals as expressed in the founding of the orchestra. The stage proscenium was carved with a number of scrolls evidently intended to carry the names and/or busts of the great composers, as so many concert halls do. Since Higginson had paid virtually all of the deficits of the orchestra since its founding, and continued to do so during and long after the construction of the "new Music Hall," he naturally had the right to choose which composers should be represented. His decision was both typical of his time and remarkably prescient: "I cannot think of any composer whose position in the history of music will never change, except Beethoven." So today, the stage proscenium contains many blank scrolls and just one—the largest, placed at the center of the stage above the musicians' heads—bearing the name of Beethoven, whose music had, throughout the nineteenth century, inspired many previous attempts to create a standing orchestra in Boston. While this view paid homage to the strength of the German tradition which was even then being undermined by French, Russian, and other composers, including a number of talented Americans, it left the scrolls symbolically open, ready, as it were, to receive the names of future generations of great masters as yet unborn—a highly suitable symbol for this building in which so many great works of the twentieth century were to have their first hearing.

Ironically, though through most of its construction the new building was regularly referred to as "the new Music Hall," this name was not, in the end, available, because plans to raze the original Music Hall did not go forward on the original timetable. Virtually at the last minute, a new name had to be found for the Boston Symphony's home. The chosen name was Symphony Hall. Signs of the original intention are still visible, both on an architect's color rendering of his vision of the finished exterior (with the words "Music Hall" engraved over what were to be the main entrance doors on Huntington Avenue), and in the cast-iron bannisters for the great staircases at the Huntington Avenue end of the building, which to this day bear an emblem made of the letters BMH ("Boston Music Hall") intertwined in a floral display.

SYMPHONY HALL IN BOSTON'S MUSICAL LIFE

Boston Symphony Orchestra Concerts

From the opening concert in October 1900, at which the principal item performed was by Beethoven—the *Missa Solemnis*, then almost unknown—to the present, Symphony Hall has taken on the role, both symbolic and actual, of the musical center of Boston. First and foremost, of course, it has been the site of the concerts of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, some two dozen concert series spread over the course of the winter months from October through April, with events on most Friday afternoons (now sometimes Friday evenings) and Saturday evenings, as well as most Thursday evenings and some Tuesday evenings.

Until the end of World War I, conductors of the Boston Symphony were invariably German or Austrian, and the music was predominantly German and Austrian. However, most of the music directors had sufficiently broad taste to introduce important works in the French and Russian

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traditions, as well as the many nationalist schools that had grown up during the course of the previous century—not least American music. Boston had a thriving school of fine composers (reflecting its position at that time as the center of American musical culture), and their works were heard with some regularity in BSO concerts. To be sure, the Germanic conductors did not always deign to learn the works themselves. On many occasions, they simply invited the local composer to conduct his own work.

Already at the time of Symphony Hall's construction, local composers such as John Knowles Paine, George W. Chadwick, Arthur Foote, Margaret Ruthven Lang (the first woman to have a work performed by the BSO), and Amy Beach had been heard in the concerts of the Boston Symphony. After the turn of the century, under the directorship of Wilhelm Gericke, Max Fiedler, and the captivating Karl Muck, new works by Chadwick, along with many compositions by other Boston composers, including Charles Martin Loeffler (possibly the greatest composer to have been a playing member of the orchestra), Frederick Shepherd Converse, Philip Greeley Clapp, and Edward Ballantine were heard in the subscription concerts. Daring novelties like Arnold Schoenberg's Five Pieces for Orchestra and much modern French music by the likes of Debussy, Ravel, and d'Indy appeared as well. Tchaikovsky was still a very recent composer, though a large percentage of his major works had already been heard here by the turn of the century. In the early years of the twentieth century, he became a constant presence.

The force that finally changed the German domination of the BSO repertory, which had also matched Higginson's own personal taste, was the catastrophe of World War I, which fomented such anti-German hysteria that it ultimately brought about the arrest of conductor Muck and his internment for the remainder of the war in a prison camp in Georgia. In order to avoid future problems involving the politics of the conductors, whether actual or trumped up, Higginson, near the end of his life, distraught at seeing the work of more than thirty-five years brought almost to ruin, named a French conductor, Henri Rabaud, for the 1918-1919 season.

Rabaud turned out to be only a caretaker conductor, though he began the change that eventually made the Boston Symphony into a great orchestra for the performance of French music. More interested in composing than in a career as a conductor, Rabaud left after one year. His place was filled by one of the great figures of the century, Pierre Monteux, who had become instantly and permanently famous with his performances of Stravinsky's epochal ballets in Paris a decade earlier. Monteux brought the BSO fully into the twentieth century, particularly with many performances of the early masterpieces of Stravinsky, not previously heard in Boston. He also premiered the last and most important orchestral scores of Charles Tomlinson Griffes, the tragically short-lived American composer who showed promise of being one of this country's greatest masters. Monteux's term lasted only six years, but he rebuilt the orchestra after the demoralization of the Muck incident and a strike in the early twenties and thus paved the way for the man who, more than any other, must still be regarded as the most significant figure in the 117-year history of the Boston Symphony, the Russian emigré Serge Koussevitzky.

The Koussevitzky era lasted a full quarter of a century. It has only just now been matched in longevity by the term of Seiji Ozawa. Koussevitzky's term with the Boston Symphony Orchestra has never been surpassed, having produced an average of six premieres every year. This evaluation of Koussevitzky does not take into account his creation and fostering of Tanglewood, both as the summer home of the orchestra and as the site of a significant center for the training of

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the most advanced young musicians, because neither of these activities especially affected Symphony Hall.

From the very beginning, Koussevitzky showed a deep interest in the fostering of native music in America. Thus, he made Symphony Hall the locus of an unparalleled flowering of American music between 1924 and 1949. Beginning with Aaron Copland and including Howard Hanson, Roy Harris, Roger Sessions, Edward Burlingame Hill, Walter Piston, William Schuman, Samuel Barber, Nikolai Berezowsky, Lukas Foss, David Diamond, Irving Fine, and Vladimir Dukelsky (later better known as Vernon Duke), John Alden Carpenter, Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco, Arthur Lourié, Ernst Toch, Harold Shapero, and Leonard Bernstein—to mention only native or immigrant composers who had premieres in Symphony Hall during this period. Of course, there were many foreign composers whose work he fostered with premieres: Arnold Bax, Arthur Bliss, Alfredo Casella, Manuel de Falla, Camargo Guarnieri, Arthur Honegger, Paul Hindemith, Jacques Ibert, Gian Francesco Malipiero, Igor Markevitch, Bohuslav Martinů, Olivier Messiaen, Darius Milhaud, Albert Roussel, Ottorino Respighi, Sergei Prokofiev, Igor Stravinsky, Bela Bartók, Benjamin Britten, Jean Sibelius, Dmitri Shostakovich, Nikolai Tcherepnin, Heitor Villa-Lobos, Alexander Tansman, Germaine Tailleferre, and Karol Szymanowski. Small wonder that Symphony Hall was considered, in those years, the hub of contemporary music-making. To concentrate only on the new would threaten to overlook Koussevitzky's renown as a conductor of the nineteenth-century masters from Beethoven to Tchaikovsky, and his devotion to the great choral works of Bach, which he also performed with fervor and devotion.

It was during Koussevitzky's tenure that the orchestra began specifically to commission new music in the form of a dozen works invited from as many composers for the orchestra's fiftieth anniversary in 1930-1931. An astonishing number of the works written for that occasion have been recognized as among the supreme masterpieces of the century. In particular is Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms*. Other notable works among the commissions included: Hindemith's Concert Music for Strings and Brass, Howard Hanson's Second Symphony, Prokofiev's Fourth, Roussel's Third, Copland's Symphonic Ode, and Respighi's *Metamorphoseon, Modi XII*. The practice of commissioning a body of new works has continued in connection with all major anniversaries since that time. Other Koussevitzky-era commissions include such twentieth-century landmarks as Berg's Violin Concerto (1937), Schuman's Third Symphony (1941), Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra (1944), Barber's Cello Concerto (1946), and Messiaen's *Turangalîla-Symphonie* (1949).

Of special note in the story of the Boston Symphony and Symphony Hall is the relationship between Aaron Copland and the BSO. Regarded today as the Dean of American Music, Copland first came to the public's attention in the twenties and thirties when Koussevitzky, recognizing the young composer's genius and uniquely American voice, regularly premiered Copland's early works with the BSO and commissioned new compositions. It was in Symphony Hall that audiences first heard Copland's Music for the Theatre (1925), Concerto for Piano and Orchestra (1927), and the aforementioned Symphonic Ode (1932). He later became one of the original faculty members of the Tanglewood Music Center, with which he remained actively involved until his death. Copland often acknowledged his debt, stating publicly that without Koussevitzky and the BSO he would not have had a career. Koussevitzky was also responsible for discovering Leonard Bernstein, who became an assistant conductor of the BSO in 1942 and, like Copland,

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maintained a lifelong connection with Tanglewood and the Tanglewood Music Center and composed a number of his major works for the BSO.

Similarly, the father of twentieth-century music himself, Igor Stravinsky, enjoyed a productive relationship with the BSO, which was responsible for the world premiere of no less than five Stravinsky works and another six U.S. premieres.

The difficult task of following a conductor so influential as Koussevitzky fell to Charles Munch, who combined in his culture and training both the French and German elements that were so important to the repertory and the audience, though his genial manner was very different from Koussevitzky's passionate intensity. Munch made of the BSO the pre-eminent French orchestra in the world and gave many performances and recordings of the great French romantic repertory. He also supervised the orchestra's commissioning program for its seventy-fifth anniversary, which brought about the creation of Roger Sessions's Third Symphony, William Schuman's Seventh, Martinů's Sixth, and Leonard Bernstein's Third, among others. In addition, Henri Dutilleux's Second Symphony, Alexander Tcherepmin's Fourth Symphony, and Irving Fine's Symphony, not BSO birthday commissions, were premiered during Munch's directorship.

Munch was followed by Erich Leinsdorf, who re-asserted the great German traditions of the past, often in imaginative combinations of works on a given program. He also conducted the last of the Boston Symphony's many premieres of the work of leading American composer Walter Piston, who composed all of his works with the BSO sound, shaped by Symphony Hall, in mind, commissioned several important works including Carter's Piano Concerto, and gave noteworthy performances, followed by recording, of the complete symphonies of Prokofiev. Leinsdorf's relatively short tenure was followed by the even shorter term (owing to illness) of William Steinberg. He was replaced by the young Seiji Ozawa, whose music directorship, continuing to this day, has now matched that of Serge Koussevitzky in longevity.

Ozawa's brilliant technique in even the most difficult music, whether the large choral-and-orchestral symphonies of Gustav Mahler or the abstruse modern twelve-tone score, forged a new virtuosity in the orchestra and made possible the introduction of much new repertoire. Not surprisingly, owing to his Japanese origin, Ozawa introduced work by leading Japanese composers, especially Toru Takemitsu, to Symphony Hall. He also continued Munch's close connection with French music, especially that of Hector Berlioz and Olivier Messiaen and, in later years, Henri Dutilleux. The single largest series of new works to be heard during Ozawa's tenure was the dozen commissions for the Boston Symphony's centennial, beginning in 1981. These included four works by Boston composers (John Harbison, Donald Martino, Peter Lieberson, and Leon Kirchner), four by American composers outside of Boston (Leonard Bernstein, Roger Sessions, Olly Wilson, John Corigliano), and four non-American composers (Peter Maxwell Davies, Sir Michael Tippett, Sandor Balassa, and Andrzej Panufnik). The active performance of new music (including many non-commissions and commissions outside of anniversary celebrations) has included work by John Cage, Bernard Rands, Stephen Albert, Christopher Rouse, Hans Werner Henze, Sofia Gubaidulina, George Walker (in a commission that earned the composer the Pulitzer prize), and others.

Always, through the years, along with the commissions, the novelties, and the rarities, the auditorium of Symphony Hall has resounded with the enormous repertory for orchestra ranging

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from the early eighteenth century to the present day and increasingly representing the musical creativity of all nationalities and races.

The Boston Pops

If the performances of the Boston Symphony are the prime purpose for which Symphony Hall was conceived and built, its partner in musical performance was the organization's lighter offspring, the Boston Pops, originally called the "Promenade concerts." These lighter musical offerings for the spring and summer had been part of Henry Lee Higginson's original conception of the Boston Symphony. They were planned to reflect the outdoor venues for food and drink with the participation of a high class of music-making that Higginson had observed as a young man in Vienna. These concerts served several purposes: they attracted large audiences even during the summer months; they kept the orchestra playing together nearly all year, though under a different conductor and in a somewhat different repertory; and they attracted a more diverse audience than the Symphony subscription concerts and might induce some newcomers to try winter programs at a later time.

The Promenade concerts began at Music Hall in 1885, but by the time Symphony Hall was in the planning stage, the Pops series, as it came to be called by the turn of the century, was well-established. The architects therefore had to design the auditorium with a special floor that would be slanted during the winter season. The normal rows of seats were bolted in place for subscription concerts, yet flat during the Pops season for the placement of tables. This was accomplished by means of an ingenious system of risers that could be removed (or replaced) on a day's notice and stored in the basement of Symphony Hall by way of a large elevator that descends from the middle of the audience space.

From the first, the Pops concerts had a three-part structure that is maintained to this day. The first third consists of overtures, marches, colorful suites, ballet excerpts, and the like—all the short musical numbers that are grouped under the generic term "light classics." The middle third is most often a concerto performed by a member of the orchestra. Though, for some events (particularly those taped for television today), it may feature a well-known guest artist, whether in the realm of classical or popular music. The final third is the lightest part of the program, containing arrangements of popular songs and other specialties, often including a novelty number arranged especially for the orchestra and never performed by anyone else.

During the early years, there was no fixed conductor for the concerts. For several years, two or even three members of the orchestra divided conducting duties between themselves. The series of regular conductors of the Pops concerts began in the late teens and early twenties with Agide Jacchia, a fiery Italian who took the Pops through most of the Prohibition era, when it was feared the concerts would not survive because of the lack of wine and beer during the performances. After his sudden departure at the end of the 1926 season, a young member of the Boston Symphony named Arthur Fiedler sought the position, but he was rejected in favor of another European, the composer Alfredo Casella, who never clearly understood the point of the Pops concerts, and audiences began drifting away. In the meantime, Fiedler had begun a series of increasingly popular concerts on the Esplanade along the Charles River with his own pick-up orchestra. This drew the attention of the Boston Symphony trustees to the man they had rejected

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three years earlier. Knowing something had to be done to save the Pops concerts; Fiedler seemed to be the man to do it. Fiedler was to prove them correct in their decision.

Fiedler's remarkable career as conductor of the Boston Pops lasted almost a half-century and saw the establishment of these concerts, originally designed largely for financial reasons, as a well-known feature of American life (earning the Pops the nickname "America's Orchestra"), particularly after Fiedler began to record (in 1935) and later broadcast concerts on the radio and then on television. The very name "Boston Pops Orchestra" was invented for the first recordings put out by the group in 1935. Before that, the series of concerts had a name—the "Pops Concerts"—but the orchestra itself was anonymous. It is probably safe to say that more people have heard the sound of Symphony Hall through Boston Pops recordings or broadcasts or have visited the Hall by way of television than are familiar with any other concert hall in the world. It was during the Fiedler era that the Boston Pops began taping the enormously popular *Evening at Pops* series, which is now the second-longest running program on public television and is seen in some 35 million homes nationwide.

Following Arthur Fiedler's death, the Boston Symphony trustees named the eminent film composer John Williams as the new Pops conductor, a position he held for more than a dozen years. During this time Williams greatly enlarged the amount of film music (both his own and that of others) heard in the concerts and updated the styles of popular music that might be featured either in the arrangements for the orchestra or in the work of the guest artists. Upon his resignation, Williams was replaced by a considerably younger conductor, Keith Lockhart, who, in the space of a few years has already begun to make his own mark. Both Williams and Lockhart have continued the series of television broadcasts that brings Symphony Hall into the nation's homes.

Recording

Most symphony orchestras record in a venue different from the one in which they play concerts, whether it is a recording studio per se, a church, or some other large space acoustically suitable for recording. The Boston Symphony Orchestra and the Boston Pops record in the auditorium in which they play their concerts. Thus, the sound of Symphony Hall has been carried around the world, whether on old shellac 78 discs, vinyl long-playing records, or compact disks.

Civic and Other Uses

Of course, the principal purpose of Symphony Hall is to provide the most suitable location possible for the concerts of the Boston Symphony and the Boston Pops orchestras. But even at full throttle, the orchestra does not fill the hall every night. Certain nights of the week are not used by the orchestra, and sometimes the players are on tour or vacation. At these times, other musicians and musical entities can rent the hall for performances.

Of the many organizations that may appear in Symphony Hall, the most venerable is the Handel & Haydn Society, an organization whose founding goes back more than sixty-five years before that of the BSO itself. In the early years, the Handel & Haydn Society was a self-governing organization of amateur singers who hired a conductor and an orchestra to put together a performance of Handel's *Messiah* or Haydn's *Creation*. Later, the choice of repertory

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broadened, but for the most part it consisted of the major Baroque and Classical era oratorios. In the last third of the twentieth century, the society underwent a major change, becoming fully professional (and much smaller with regard to choral size), first under the directorship of Thomas Dunn and later under that of Christopher Hogwood. For most of the century, the major concert performances of the Handel & Haydn Society have taken place in Symphony Hall.

The Celebrity Series, variously sponsored by diverse organizations, with slight changes of name, has brought distinguished recitalists, chamber ensembles, and touring orchestras to Symphony Hall for the last forty years. Sunday afternoons and Friday evenings frequently find an audience in the hall to hear a favorite singer or string quartet or piano soloist, or perhaps an orchestra from England or Germany.

Even before the founding of the Celebrity Series, there was a long tradition of recitals in Symphony Hall. Among the great recitalists were pianists Sergei Rachmaninoff, Claudio Arrau, Rudolf Serkin, Harold Bauer, Josef Hofmann, Vladimir Horowitz, Ignace Paderewski, and Artur Schnabel. Violinists who appeared at Symphony Hall include Mischa Elman, Fritz Kreisler, Jascha Heifetz, Yehudi Menuhin, Isaac Stern, and many others. The singers included John McCormack, Feodor Chaliapin, Geraldine Farrar, Amelita Galli-Curci, Louise Homer, Lawrence Tibbett, Marian Anderson, and Jessye Norman. Some of these benefited from the 1917 concert in which the young African-American tenor Roland Hayes rented Symphony Hall himself for a recital of German Lieder and other classical repertory. The success of that concert assured that Symphony Hall would be open to musicians of all races. Hayes was also the first African-American ever to perform with a symphony orchestra in this country, making his BSO debut at Symphony Hall in 1923.

The ability to convert the main floor of Symphony Hall has also occasioned many non-musical uses over the years, comprising a mind-boggling array of events both sublime and ridiculous. Local events included early auto and boat shows, travelogues, graduations, lectures and debates, political rallies, mayoral inaugurations, business conventions, fashion shows, silent film screenings (including the 1916 premier of Cecil B. de Mille's version of *Carmen*, starring locally-born soprano Geraldine Farrar; both were on hand for the event, which was accompanied by members of the BSO), acrobats and dancers (including Isadora Duncan and Anna Pavlova). Of national import were the 80th birthday celebration for Edward Everett Hale, the memorial service for Julia Ward Howe in 1911, and the Lodge-Lowell debate that aroused American interest in the League of Nations. Dr. Hale and Mrs. Howe often appeared as guest lecturers in their last years. Such world figures as Admiral Perry, William Beebe, Booker T. Washington, Alexander Kerensky, Hilaire Belloc, G.K. Chesterton, Dame Margot Asquith, Ellen Terry, Eleanor Roosevelt, Mme. Chiang Kai-shek, Robert Frost, Lloyd Douglas, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Harry Houdini, lectured from the Symphony Hall stage.¹⁰ During the early days of the United Nations, the BSO offered Symphony Hall as either temporary or permanent quarters to that body.

¹⁰Programs from all of these events are available for viewing in the BSO Archive.

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Today and the Future

More than ever, Symphony Hall, soon to celebrate its one-hundredth birthday, is a monument to music for all Bostonians, all visitors to Boston, and all who hear recordings or broadcasts originating in the Hall. From the school-age children who attend the Boston Symphony's Youth Concerts to the subscribers who have been attending BSO concerts for sixty years or more, from the family attending a Pops concert to the 35 million homes across the country viewing an *Evening at Pops*, Symphony Hall stands—as it has stood throughout this entire century—as the very center of Boston's, and indeed the nation's, musical life.

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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**Primary Sources**Boston *Daily Advertiser*, Tuesday, October 16, 1900Boston *Globe*, Saturday, September 22, 1900Boston *Herald*, Thursday, September 20, 1900; Tuesday, October 16, 1900**Additional Sources**Hessberg, C. and Ledbetter, S., editors. *The Boston Symphony Orchestra: The First Hundred Years*. (Boston: 1981.)Howe, M.A. DeWolf, *The Boston Symphony Orchestra 1881-1931* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1931.)Johnson, H. Earle, *Symphony Hall, Boston* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1950.)Stebbins, Richard Poate, editor, *The Making of Symphony Hall. A Documented History. With Unpublished Correspondence from Henry Lee Higginson, Charles Follen McKim, Wallace Sabine and Others*. Unpublished manuscript, BSO Archives. 1998.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

 Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested. Previously Listed in the National Register. Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register. Designated a National Historic Landmark. Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: # Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

 State Historic Preservation Office Other State Agency Federal Agency Local Government University Other (Specify Repository):Boston Symphony Orchestra Archive: Drawings Collection,
Photograph Collection and Clipping FilesBoston Public Library, Fine Arts Reference Department: Architect
and Building Index Card FilesNew-York Historical Society: original McKim, Mead & White
architectural drawings

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: less than one acre

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
	A 19	328180	4689710

Verbal Boundary Description:

This boundary description is excerpted from the transfer of deed, dated October 28, 1892, from John Gardiner to Henry Lee Higginson, et al., as recorded in the Suffolk County Registry of Deeds (1800-1899 2092.201):

". . . A certain parcel of land situated in that part of said Boston, known as the Back Bay, bounded and described as follows, viz: Southeasterly by Huntington Avenue, there measuring one-hundred and fifty feet, Southwesterly by land now or formerly of the Boston Water Power Company, two-hundred and twenty-five feet, Northwesterly by Falmouth Street [St. Stephen Street] one-hundred and fifty-two and 1/10 feet, and Northeasterly by West Chester Park [Massachusetts Avenue] two-hundred and twenty-five and 1/100 feet or however otherwise said premises may be bounded or described."

Boundary Justification:

This represents the property purchased for the construction of Symphony Hall and includes all of the land on which Symphony Hall was constructed (an easement of several feet on the adjoining property was obtained in 1899 when the actual dimensions of Symphony Hall were determined). It excludes the adjoining land on which stands the Cohen Wing, which was not annexed until 1990 and is not part of the structure designed by McKim, Mead, & White.

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11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: Gernit Petersen, Assistant Director, Foundation and Government Support
Boston Symphony Orchestra
Symphony Hall
Boston, MA 02115

Steven Ledbetter, BSO Musicologist

Kimberly Alexander Shilland, Architectural Historian

Telephone: (617) 638-9462

Date: June 26, 1998

Edited by: Carolyn Pitts and Patty Henry
National Historic Landmarks Survey
National Park Service
P.O. Box 37127, Suite 310
Washington, DC 20013-7127

Telephone: 202/343-8163

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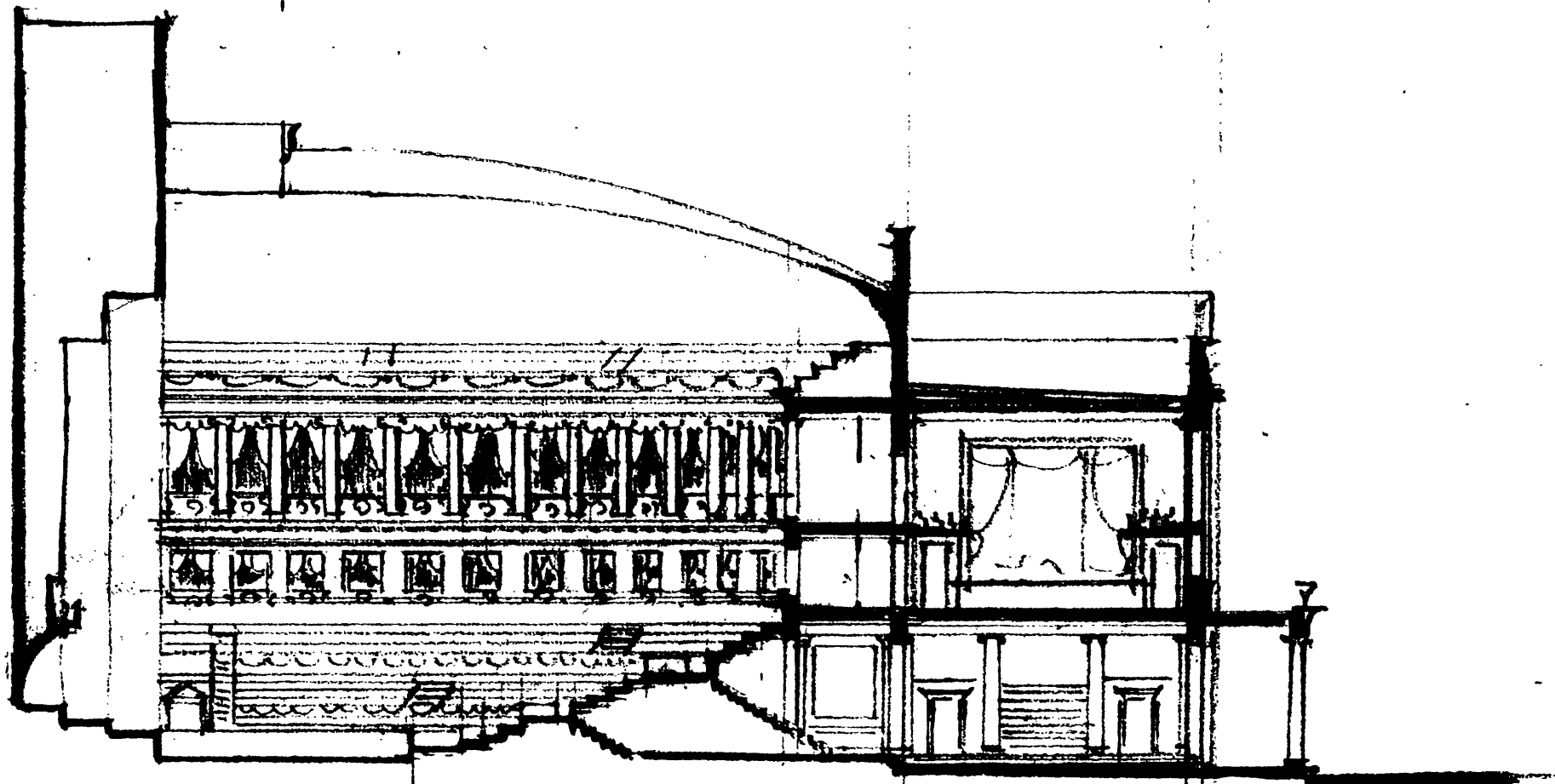


BOSTON
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ORCHESTRA

SEASON
1892-93

PROGRAMME





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