

The Role of the Performing Arts
in Postwar Phoenix, Arizona:
Patrons, Performers, and the Public
by
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A Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

Approved November 2013 by the
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ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

December 2013

ABSTRACT

Civic leadership in Phoenix, Arizona promoted the city's performing arts as part of a deliberate plan towards the larger growth agenda after World War II. From the 1940s through the late 1960s, the business and professional leaders who controlled city government served on boards for performing arts groups, built venues, offered financial support, and sometimes participated as artists in order to attract high-technology firms and highly skilled workers to the area. They believed one aspect of Phoenix's urban development included a need for quality, high-culture performing arts scene that signaled a high quality of life and drew more residents. After this era of boosterism ended and control shifted from business and professional leaders to city government, performing arts support fluctuated with leadership's attitudes and the local, state, and national economies. The early civic leaders were successful in their overall mission to expand the city - now the sixth largest in the nation - and many of the organizations and venues they patronized still serve the community; however, the commitment to developing a quality arts and culture scene waned. Today's public, private, and arts and culture leaders are using the same argument as Phoenix tries once again to become a high-technology center. The theory that arts and culture stimulate the economy directly and indirectly is true today as it was in the 1940s. Although the plan was effective, it needed fully committed supporters, strong infrastructure, and continued revising in order to move the vision into the twenty-first century.

DEDICATION

To my parents, Jim and Laurie Bickert, for their unending support and encouragement in my love of learning. Thank you for taking me to every museum, monument, park, and history-themed summer camp; buying me every history-themed book, movie, doll, or video game; and playing along with whatever historical scene I wanted to recreate. And to my brother Jeff, for being my constant companion on all of our quests – real or imagined.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many thanks to Dr. Philip VanderMeer, Dr. Jannelle Warren-Findley, and Nancy Dallett for all of their help on this project and countless others. I could not have completed this project without their time, resources and guidance. Thank you to Dr. VanderMeer for helping me turn an offhand idea into this fully formed study. After three courses and thesis, I am grateful for his patience and for his impact on my education. I would not be here without Dr. Warren-Findley, who recruited me to the public history program and imparted her expertise on a field I had always wanted to join but never knew existed. Many thanks to Nancy Dallett, who showed me how to apply everything I learned in the classroom, giving me the opportunity to affect real change in my community. I am extremely grateful to my committee for their continued support for my academic and professional endeavors.

The staff at the Arizona Historical Society at Papago Park Library and Archives – Susan Irwin, Linda Whitaker, Rebekah Tabah, and John Irwin – was tremendously helpful in locating and identifying materials. They not only helped me navigate the library's resources, but also graciously welcomed me as an intern and patiently trained me in archival practice. Their professional and academic guidance has been invaluable. I would also like to thank the staff in the Luhrs Reading Room at Arizona State University's Hayden Library for their reference assistance.

I would like to thank Virginia Fairchild, House Manager at ASU Gammage, for hiring me as a floor manager in 2009, thus encouraging my fascination with the building and the performing arts and inspiring this project. She provided materials, contacts, and

wonderful conversation regarding the auditorium's history, and I have truly enjoyed working with her the past four years.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for their continued support and encouragement throughout this process. Alyssa Gerszewski and John Southard were especially kind in offering resources, ideas, and general support. I could not have come so far without everyone's help, and I am eternally grateful.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Hot, dry, desert, sprawl – these words are more likely to be associated with Phoenix than fine art or high culture. A land of cactus and cowboys, residents of other metropolitan areas might think Phoenician culture is as barren as the desert that surrounds it. The city has hosted a performing arts scene since its founding in the 1860s, but after World War II civic leaders prioritized culture as part of a larger strategy to transform the Valley of the Sun into a dynamic urban region. Phoenicians built a Victorian city atop ancient ruins, recreating their Eastern, Midwestern, and Southern lives and replicating features of successful cities despite formidable environmental and regional obstacles. Civic leaders made deliberate decisions to serve the greater goal of growth, including building a performing arts culture that illustrated Phoenix's urban sophistication.

Phoenix's performing arts scene was a product of its citizens' interests. When ranchers and farmers first settled the area in the late nineteenth century, entertainment consisted of gambling, drinking, and consorting with hostesses. Vaudeville shows served as the legitimate front for the other activities, which were all outlawed in the territory. By the 1900s, Phoenix had developed a small, sophisticated set of wealthy pioneer families who formed the types of civic organizations popular during the Progressive Era. The performing arts scene was small, but institutions like Shirley Christy's School of Music, the Musicians Club of Phoenix, the Elks Opera House, Phoenix Union High School's Masque of the Yellow Moon, and the Phoenix Little Theatre laid the foundation for building a community interested in the performing arts. The Phoenix Little Theatre traces its first official season to 1920, but existed in earlier incarnations since the late 1890s.

Once impresario Mrs. Archer E. Linde took over the community concert series in the 1930s, Phoenix hosted some of the biggest names worldwide.¹ Linde's tireless efforts to bring national touring acts to Phoenix, then just a stop along the way to or from Los Angeles, inspired the civic commitment to developing local talent, adequate venues, and cultured consumers implemented in the 1950s.

Cultural identity is integral to Phoenix history, and historians credit its contribution to economic development, but there is no comprehensive study of the connection between the arts and economic development in the region. Jerry Reynolds' *The Golden Days of Theaters in Phoenix* is the closest example of a similar effort, but its purpose is to merely teach readers the history of Valley theaters through the 1980s. Doctoral students from Arizona State University's School of Music wrote most of the organizational histories for groups like the Phoenix Symphony Orchestra and Orpheus Male Chorus. Most of the historical context for this study comes from four fields: histories of Phoenix, institutional histories, studies of arts and culture, and urban histories. Combined, these sources demonstrate how the performing arts culture grew alongside the city, a microcosm of the city's struggle to grow into a legitimate, competitive city with a clearly defined culture.

Despite being the fifth largest city in the nation, the historiography of Phoenix is relatively small. William S. Collins lamented in *The Emerging Metropolis: Phoenix, 1944-1973* (2005) that Phoenix lacks a substantial scholarly literature, though Arizona

¹ Jessie Harper Linde preferred being called Mrs. Archer E. Linde, believing proper ladies used their husbands' names. Many Phoenixians were unaware her name was Jessie until her death in 1965. Joseph Stocker, "Mrs. Archer Linde, Beloved Impresario," *Phoenix Magazine*, January 1985, 95.

State University graduate students have greatly contributed to the literature.² He claimed his work was motivated by “academic boosterism” to demonstrate the city’s legitimacy as a scholarly subject.³ Historians Bradford Luckingham and Philip VanderMeer documented the (comparatively brief) expanse of Phoenix history in *Phoenix: A History of a Southwestern Metropolis* (1989) and *Desert Visions and the Making of Phoenix, 1860-2009* (2010), respectively. Each of the three authors demonstrated the possibilities for urban analysis of Phoenix.

Historians contested negative attitudes from academic and popular writers that dismiss Phoenix as unsustainable, sprawling, and unattractive and frame it within civic leadership’s visions of growth. The city and its metropolitan area have not stopped growing in over a century. Postwar Phoenix experienced rapid demographic and geographic growth, jumping from the ninety-ninth largest city (population) in the nation in 1950 to the twenty-ninth in 1960; thirty years later, it sits in the number six position.⁴ Yet impressive numbers cannot tell the whole story. When authors discussed growth, they were telling a story of economic diversity, political and social maturation, and urban dynamism. Although growth is visible at every stage of Phoenix’s history, the authors agree that the years following World War II through the mid-1970s as the most significant era of development. Collins limited his focus to this postwar era, arguing these

² William S. Collins, *The Emerging Metropolis: Phoenix, 1944-1973* (Phoenix: Arizona State Parks Board, 2005), xiii.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Campbell Gibson, *Population of the 100 Largest Cities and Other Urban Places in the United States: 1790 to 1990* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1998), <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027/twps0027.html>.

decades saw Phoenix begin to ascend the urban hierarchy, and were qualitatively and quantitatively different from other periods of growth.⁵ War brought military installations and the defense industry to the southwest, causing an economic and demographic boom in Sun Belt cities like Los Angeles and Phoenix. Civic leaders from the business and professional worlds and local government encouraged this growth, developing strategies to attract more businesses and residents and building the city higher and wider.

VanderMeer observed that although Phoenix was not a nationally elite city by 1960, the social, economic and political elements were in place.⁶

Leadership's priorities over time for arts and culture illustrate the varying visions Phoenicians had for the city. Critics of Phoenix see sprawl, but scholars demonstrated that civic leaders deliberately acted according to specific goals and a broader perspective they had for development. VanderMeer's *Desert Visions* is oriented around the different visions civic leaders had for their city. From the last nineteenth century through the early 1940s, boosters and early residents promoted the first vision of Phoenix as an American Eden, a city that applied eastern standards of modernity to the harsh realities of the desert environment. Civic leaders crafted the second vision, that booming period of growth from 1940-1960, on the idea that Phoenix was Everytown, where residents could realize the American Dream. Leaders modified this "high-tech suburban vision" in the following decades, expanding areas of the economy like tourism and construction and increasing government efficiency while focusing on the ultimate goal of attracting high-technology

⁵ Collins, *Emerging Metropolis*, xii-xiv.

⁶ Philip VanderMeer, *Desert Visions and the Making of Phoenix, 1860-2009* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2010), 180-181.

firms like Goodyear (1941), AiResearch (1942), Motorola (1948), Sperry Phoenix (1957), and General Electric (1957). Leaders during this era focused on developing cultural institutions to make the city modern and attractive to an educated workforce.

Civic leaders drove the growth vision, building on the earlier tradition of boosters advertising the city's features (sometimes falsely) and developing a clear strategy to build Phoenix into their ideal city. Phoenix, like every successful urban center, is the product of its residents' continued promotion and to ignore boosterism was to "risk decline and defeat in the urban sweepstakes."⁷ The authors did not differ much interpreting the importance and function of civic leaders: they were agents of change whose promotion launched Phoenix into its current position. This thesis defines civic leader in the broadest sense: leaders in municipal affairs either through the private or public sectors. These men were elite business and professional leaders with diverse interests but a shared goal and vision for building the city. Although they commanded their own firms, they entered the political realm because they wanted an efficient government to build a prosperous city for personal and professional benefit. In the 1940s this group of leaders, tired of local government's corruption and ineptitude, formed the Charter Government Committee (CGC), whose members dictated city (and sometimes state) politics for the next three decades.⁸ When their influence faded in the 1970s, control over the city's development

⁷ Bradford Luckingham, *Phoenix: The History of a Southwestern Metropolis* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1989), 4.

⁸ During World War II, the Army banned all airfield personnel from entering Phoenix until the city cracked down on prostitution and gambling. Fearing the serious economic repercussions of losing such a large market, local business leaders met with local government in the Adams Hotel and forced them to resign so the Army would regain confidence in local leadership's ability to control vice. Three weeks later, the city

shifted from civic leaders representing private and public interests to city leaders working through the municipal government.

The CGC and Chamber of Commerce functioned were the force behind city government during the postwar era, but were more than just political puppet masters. These business leaders and professionals worked as civic leaders sometimes holding government office, but more consistently serving in community organizations promoting philanthropy, fraternity, and the arts. At the same time, their wives organized to bring Eastern culture and refinement to the West. The same names dominated economic, political and often cultural realms, reoccurring across multiple chapters of Phoenix history. The influence of citizens like Newton Rosenzweig, Walter Bimson, Charles Korrick, the Goldwaters, Eugene Pulliam, the Heards, Frank Snell and others is still felt today – particularly in the arts community they established.

Civic leaders understood the interactive relationship between the economy, politics, and culture, and during the postwar era they incorporated culture in city planning through projects like auditoriums and the convention center. The sophisticated leaders personally enjoyed fine arts like the theater and classical music but understood establishing cultural institutions was necessary to recruiting the residents they wanted. Civic leadership promoted these programs while assuming that growth was ultimately good, and the decisions they made for politics, the economy, and culture centered on gaining residents and annexing land. Attracting a white, middle-class, and educated workforce was the linchpin in realizing their goals for the city.

reinstated everyone ousted in the “Card Room Putsch,” prompting the city government overhaul that led to the CGC. VanderMeer, *Desert Visions*, 103-104, 153.

Phoenix has served as a white haven since its inception. Tourism, one of its earliest industries, catered to rich visitors escaping harsh winters through resorts like the Arizona Biltmore and Camelback Inn. As the snowbird population increased, so did the number of hotels; by 1946 there were 49 hotels between Seventh Avenue and Seventh Street in downtown Phoenix. Wealthy visitors were the minority, but city leaders focused on courting rich and well-connected visitors who could establish firms in the Valley, or at least invest in its development. Organizations like the Phoenix Chamber of Commerce and the Phoenix Symphony Association illustrated what leaders valued for themselves and other residents. Thus leaders intentionally crafted development to reflect the morals and culture they wished to attract, which would further catapult the Valley's economy.⁹

Before Phoenix could promote its identity, it had to decide what it should be. Historians detailed the challenges of cultivating an image for the city. VanderMeer described the ensuing identity crisis that arrived with new residents after the war: was Phoenix the "West," a desert city, or an extension of southern California? Postwar civic leaders presented Phoenix as mainstream America, differing little from the rest of the country except for maintaining its traditional image as the spot for healthy outdoor recreation. Phoenicians embraced mid-century mass culture – film, cars, shopping malls, and suburbia – but could not shake the regional culture and its past identity of agriculture and ranching. Just as Phoenicians defined what they were, they struggled to overcome what they did not wish to be. Since the nineteenth century Phoenicians fought to escape

⁹ Luckingham, *Phoenix*, 8; Seth J. Anderson, Suad Mahmuljin, and Jim McPherson, *Downtown Phoenix* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2011), 39; Philip VanderMeer, *Phoenix Rising: The Making of a Desert Metropolis* (Carlsbad, CA: Heritage Media Corp., 2002), 21.

the “Wild West” image, although some cities like Scottsdale fully embrace the cowboy identity. Collins explained the problem best: “The cause of bringing culture to a town where a man caught in a business suit during rodeo week was liable to have his tie summarily cut off challenged the civic leadership.”¹⁰ Appearing cultured meant emulating other regions’ definitions of culture – a little more symphony and a little less rodeo.¹¹

Leaders cultivated culture through the arts, and culture attracts industry, a model boosters drove since the nineteenth century. Phoenicians often measured culture against Eastern standards, with the middle and upper classes desiring high culture (art, symphony, theater) and competing with regional, ethnic and popular culture (rodeos, vaudeville, movies). This struggle was typical of Western towns, where immigrants brought their own culture and then adapted it. Phoenix’s sophisticated elite missed their symphonies and art museums, and they led the movement to bring high culture to Phoenix. Valley National Bank president Walter Bimson secured a building and funding for the Phoenix Art Museum in 1959, and Blanche and Charles Korrick of Korricks Department Store supported the Musicians Club of Phoenix since the 1920s and helped start the Phoenix Symphony Association in 1947. The boards of directors and donors listed on postwar performing arts programs read like a who’s who of Phoenix. These leaders not only enjoyed the arts personally but also understood the importance of establishing arts organizations in order to attract eastern businessmen like Daniel Noble,

¹⁰ Collins, *Emerging Metropolis*, 353.

¹¹ VanderMeer, *Phoenix Rising*, 106-107.

who brought Motorola to Phoenix in 1949 and was actively involved with the Phoenix Symphony Association, Phoenix Art Museum, and Arizona State University.

Still, historians credited civic leaders with making (high) cultural progress by the 1960s, only to fall apart in the 1970s. Professionalizing groups proved difficult to sustain, as opera and ballet, faltered and even more established groups with a broader appeal, like the Phoenix Symphony Orchestra, had trouble stabilizing. This was one sign of an ending era. Collins argued that the 1970s marks the end of an era, in part because the leaders who supported this culture had retired or died. By the late 1980s, arts and culture finally stabilized with increased attendance, more private donations, and support from the city through bond measures and the creation of the Phoenix Office of Arts and Culture. The story folds neatly into the historical narrative, exemplifying vision, growing pains, and eventually maturity. Yet the authors do not answer if these tactics succeeded, and by what standard. In *American Culture, American Tastes: Social Change and the 20th Century* (1999), Michael Kammen concluded that middlebrow culture became the norm due to the rise of the middle class and decline in elitism. Would the postwar patrons be happy with what they see today – increased government and popular support for the arts, but a broader definition of what constitutes culture?

Kammen charted the evolution of taste in the twentieth century by examining changes in class stratification. Where there was once a cultural hierarchy of highbrow, middlebrow, and lowbrow, there is now cultural plurality. His argument centered on the difference between popular culture and mass culture, and the transition from popular to mass deconstructed the dominance of elitist high culture. Popular culture was prevalent in various forms for centuries (Shakespeare is a good example) and through the first half of

the twentieth century, and people shaped it democratically. Taste preferences and social class dictated what constituted popular culture and the process was interactive; people endorsed what they enjoyed. Mass culture, however, is highly standardized, non-regional, and completely commercial. It is dictated by companies and advertisers and thrust upon everyone. Kammen argued that because the West was not fully industrialized until World War II, it was not a full participant in mass culture until mid-century, which is true for Phoenix. Boosters simultaneously promoted high culture and mass culture in Phoenix, attempting to present Phoenix as Everytown and a home for sophisticated entertainment.¹²

The authors agreed that World War II marked a new era for Phoenix but credited different years and causes for its close. Luckingham identified 1941-1960 as the boom years while 1960-1980 was a new era of growth marked by Phoenix's emergence as a major Sunbelt center, during which the city's economy and population continued growing but at the expense of public services and infrastructure. Collins ended the growth era in 1973 with the opening of Civic Plaza and the new Valley National Bank building, Valley Center, symbolizing the "new" downtown Phoenix, which he deemed a success. It also marked the point when many civic leaders retired or passed away, closing an era of intense boosterism and leaving a leadership vacuum. VanderMeer argued the transition came in several stages. Beginning in the 1960s Phoenix dealt with the emerging consequences of rapid growth, and the massive population increase diversified residents, changing their needs, interests. The CGC-era ended in the 1970s when Phoenicians

¹² Michael Kammen, *American Culture, American Tastes: Social Change and the 20th Century* (New York: Knopf, 1999), 18, 32, 243.

elected new city leaders to develop new strategies for governance with mixed success. The 1980s saw more changes: Phoenicians voted for a district system of representation, changing who was elected to city council, while leadership worked to expand the city's economic base beyond construction and tourism. The stage of development for performing arts groups corresponds with the city's development, as the leadership, size of the city, public services, availability of funding, and expectations of the population all impact how and when groups organized, recruited, secured venues, staged performances, and professionalized. The decades following the war marked a new vision for Phoenix's future as more residents, businesses, and leaders contributed their ideas of how the city should develop. Understanding the era that formed Phoenician's goals and attitudes is essential to understanding the role of the arts in that agenda.¹³

Leaders created their postwar visions of Phoenix without considering racial and ethnic minorities. Despite its Native American and Hispanic roots, Phoenix civic history lacks diversity. Postwar civic leaders' vision did not include integrating minorities into the city's growth, and Phoenix saw de facto segregation with Hispanics isolated in barrios and 90 percent of the African-American population living south of Van Buren Street. Both communities had poor education, housing, and employment rates, problems Phoenix leadership did not address until forced. Beginning in the 1960s with the national Civil Rights Movement, African-American community leaders formed private-public partnerships to improve conditions. Similarly Hispanics organized their own advocacy groups while capitalizing on the national Chicano Movement, as did the state's Native

¹³ Luckingham, *Phoenix*, 177, 219; Collins, *Emerging Metropolis*, xvi; VanderMeer, *Desert Visions*, 183-186.

American population. During Phoenix's political evolution in the 1970s Calvin Goode and Alfredo Gutierrez were elected to city council, representing the African-American and Hispanic communities, respectively, and bringing their concerns to the city's agenda. Regarding culture, VanderMeer observed that although Native Americans comprise only 2 percent of Arizona's population, their culture is basic to the state's self-image, as is the more dominant Hispanic culture, representing one third of residents. As minority populations increased, and they gained a greater voice in the community, ethnic cultures became more visible in the city, particularly in arts and culture. In the 1990s African-American and Hispanic theater troupes emerged in addition to art and festivals celebrating the multicultural city. The authors depict postwar Phoenix as a hegemonic city that only addressed minorities groups when they spoke out. As demographics changed in the twenty-first century, Phoenix was forced to recognize its citizens' diversity in all aspects of civic life.¹⁴

Once the postwar leadership left, a new generation of leaders had to determine where and how the arts fit in Phoenix's future. Ann Elizabeth Marshall's 1993 dissertation "Arts and Cultural District Formation in Phoenix, Arizona" presented three case studies of arts district projects – the Arts District, Heritage Square, and the Warehouse District – and analyzed how they fit redevelopment goals by evaluating stakeholders. Planning the official Arts District through city government did not begin until the late 1980s/early 1990s, although the Civic Center facilities that housed the Phoenix Public Library, Phoenix Little Theatre, the Phoenix Art Museum and The Heard Museum had operated as an arts district since the 1950s. By the 1980s, Phoenix saw a

¹⁴ Luckingham, *Phoenix*, 212-219; VanderMeer, *Phoenix Rising*, 111-117.

revived interest in the arts from public and private sectors. Phoenix mayor Terry Goddard (1984-1990) actively supported city arts projects, including all three of Marshall's case studies, allocating staff, convening committees, and pushing projects through City Council. The shift from civic leaders to city leaders in the 1970s meant Phoenix needed officials like Goddard to prioritize the arts since the original base of postwar patrons was gone. Government participation was the key to stimulating a vibrant arts community in the 1980s, but Marshall concluded public support and valuing creativity were the first steps of development; past bond measures had failed because of lack of community support. Marshall encouraged future policy studies to explore the implications of an entertainment-based strategy of economic development. Arts districts not only foster the culture of creativity necessary to attract human capital, but are used to revitalize overlooked downtowns.¹⁵

As with arts and culture, downtown Phoenix underwent multiple stages of development and redevelopment, symbolizing the various visions of leaders. Downtown Phoenix thrived before the war, with steady growth around City Hall from the 1890s through the 1940s. A hub for retail, dining, and government, it was also the city's cultural center. Theaters, or "cathedrals" as Reynolds describes them, made Washington Street an alley of entertainment before the war, featuring film, vaudeville, theater, and musical performances. Phoenix's prewar glory days were part of a national trend in downtown development. Robert M. Fogelson's *Downtown: Its Rise and Fall, 1880-1950* (2001) described the three phases of downtown as *the* business district at the turn of the century,

¹⁵ Ann Elizabeth Marshall, "Arts and Cultural District Formation in Phoenix, Arizona" (DPA dissertation, Arizona State University, 1993), 124, 488, 497, 531.

the *central* business district in the 1920s, and just another business district by World War II. A relatively young city, Phoenix's downtown dominance lasted a bit longer with 52 percent of citywide retail sales still occurring downtown in 1948.¹⁶ However, land annexing led new suburban housing and shopping developments, leaving downtown with abandoned and blighted.

The postwar boom benefitted the Valley overall, but led to neglect and decentralizing downtown. White Phoenicians, concerned about the rising number of minorities and urban problems, moved to the suburbs or uptown, taking business with them. By the 1960s, downtown retail was dead; department stores like Penney's, Diamond's, and Goldwater's left downtown for shopping malls like Park Central. In order to revitalize downtown, leaders recognized they needed major public investment and a return to downtown's historic vibrancy but were seriously divided over urban renewal. In the 1970s the city razed historic buildings and cleared slums to create super-blocks, such as Civic Plaza and Valley Center, and parking lots. This strategy was not entirely successful, and downtown remained neglected until the 1980s when the Phoenix Community Alliance, the Downtown Phoenix Partnership, and the growing interest in historic preservation began seriously reviving downtown. VanderMeer credited Mayor Goddard's focus and vision with driving development and providing municipal support. In 1988 the city passed an excise tax and bond initiative, encouraging the construction of cultural and educational facilities like Phoenix Museum of History and Herberger Theater

¹⁶ Anderson, Mahmuljin, and McPherson, *Downtown Phoenix*, 23; Robert M. Fogelson, *Downtown: Its Rise and Fall, 1880-1950* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 2.

Center and refurbishing historic buildings like the Orpheum and Heritage Square's Victorian homes.¹⁷

Larry R. Ford found these efforts to revive downtown unsuccessful. In *America's New Downtown* (2003) he ranked Phoenix against fifteen other downtowns, comparing built environment, function and amenities. Phoenix tied for last with Charlotte with a failing grade of 48 percent. Ford concluded that downtown Phoenix is just too big to be functional. He echoed other critics of Phoenix, noting that it was too difficult to move between activities. He liked the idea of redefining downtown as the ninety-block region known as Copper Square, but thought the super blocks created in the seventies still inhibited navigation. The only high-scoring aspect of downtown Phoenix was its major attractions, which by then included Bank One Ballpark (now Chase Field), Heritage Square, and Symphony Hall. Yet Ford lamented the distance from the Civic Center, a criticism Frank Lloyd Wright had made during development in 1949. Although these amenities drew an estimated nine million visitors per year by 2000, the city continued to make the amenities more accessible with increased public transportation, parking, hotels, and housing.¹⁸

Urban studies theorist Richard Florida presented his argument for cultivating cities that attract ideal workers in *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002). Florida identified architects, designers, scientists, engineers, academics, artists, musicians and

¹⁷ Anderson, Mahmuljin, and McMurphy, *Downtown Phoenix*, 95; Collins, *Emerging Metropolis*, 366; VanderMeer, *Phoenix Rising*, 89.

¹⁸ Larry R. Ford, *America's New Downtowns: Revitalization or Reinvention?* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 214, 290; Collins, *Emerging Metropolis*, 356; VanderMeer, *Phoenix Rising*, 90.

entertainers as examples of members of the creative class. Since 1950, society increasingly valued creativity until it became the highest commodity, as “coal and iron ore were to steelmaking.”¹⁹ Therefore in order for cities to be competitive, they must invest in creativity, including research and development, education, arts, culture, design, and related fields. Additionally, they must invest in cultivating a unique and organic culture appealing to workers who thrive on creativity. He argued projects like stadiums and convention centers do not return on investment as well as investments in education and programs that cultivate creativity. He advised cities to prioritize attracting and maintaining the creative class in order to generate jobs and increase wealth and income, rather than use funds for big entertainment centers. Because creative industries are invariably linked, multiple industries could flourish simultaneously.²⁰

Florida cited Phoenix as an example of a failing effort to attract the creative class. When some cities, like Phoenix, are not luring firms, they are investing in research and development and building office complexes – Silicon Valley on a suburban model. Florida argued that these models prove unsustainable and contribute to the problems of sprawl, as they are models for the future based on what worked elsewhere in the past. Further, the creative class prefers an authentic city, not a replica. Florida recalled a Phoenix business journalist who harshly told him, “We’re like Pittsburgh or St. Louis fifty years ago but without the world-class universities.”²¹

¹⁹ Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It’s Transforming Work, Leisure, Community, and Everyday Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), 6.

²⁰ Ibid., 6-8, 319-320.

²¹ Ibid., 284.

Despite the efforts over the past decades, Phoenix has not reached the level of acclaim civic leaders hoped for decades earlier. However, Phoenix continues to evolve. The funds from another bond measure in 2001 continued support for cultural facilities. In 2008 light rail began bringing Mesa and Tempe residents directly into downtown, with future plans to expand throughout the Valley. In addition, the creation of a downtown campus by ASU and the construction of additional residential projects, offer further signs that a new downtown is emerging. Although downtown is still not the commercial and cultural center leaders have wanted for decades, scholars stressed that downtown is not just a place, but also a process.

Historians maintained that Phoenix is an urban center and the model for the new American city. Luckingham began his book by immediately emphasizing that Arizona is one of the most urban states in the nation, with 80 percent of its population living in cities, and 60 percent in the Phoenix metro area. He argued that the sprawling, multi-centered Valley is the “urban form of the future.” Some may see it as the “anticity,” but others enjoy the fragmented and dispersed metropolis. VanderMeer similarly began *Desert Visions* by observing that decentralization is the new urban pattern, and residents enjoy the economy, jobs, housing, and lifestyle Phoenix offers. Similarly Collins believed Phoenix’s roots as the modern American city took place in the postwar decades, demonstrating how all areas of city development created this new model.²²

These authors found a discussion of arts and culture relevant to the history of Phoenix. The arts contributed to Phoenix’s position as the hub of economy, politics,

²² Luckingham, *Phoenix*, 1, 9; VanderMeer, *Desert Visions*, 1; Collins, *Emerging Metropolis*, xvii.

society and culture, dominating the surrounding metropolitan area. Historians were concerned with how the arts fit into Phoenix's narrative, but in order to determine how arts policy affected urban development, the issue needs further exploration. Marshall's thesis was an excellent example of examining the relationship between government, business, the arts, and the community, and her prescriptive conclusions are useful. If Phoenix wants to build its economy, attract human capital, and prove itself as the new urban model, then these issues must be placed in their historical context. Understanding how the arts developed, why they developed, who developed them and how successful they were will better inform city leaders who wish to include the arts in an agenda of development.

Since secondary literature on Phoenix performing arts groups is limited, primary sources were critical in compiling the first survey of the performing arts. Phoenix Little Theatre has the largest archival collection with twenty-seven linear feet of board minutes, programs, and promotional materials from its over eighty-year history, housed at the Arizona Historical Society at Papago Park. The Phoenix Symphony Collection has two boxes worth of his thesis research, including clippings and interview transcripts.²³ The Musicians' Club and Orpheus Male Chorus also have collections that include similar items. All contain scrapbooks or clipping collections with articles from various newspapers. Programming and publicity materials contain information on the connections between the group and the larger community, such as specific individuals, Phoenix buildings, local organizations, membership incentives and community projects. Many

²³ The Phoenix Symphony Orchestra Collection was originally the Brian Carrol Stoneburner Collection and contains materials from his 1981 thesis research.

other theaters and organizations are represented in the Ephemera Collection, whose Arts & Leisure series contains materials too small to comprise an entire collection. The manuscript collections from Stephen C. Shadegg and Newton Rosenzweig provide administrative information on their performing arts endeavors. Finally, the Behavior Research Center Collection contains numerous research reports on Arizonans' attitudes towards the arts and explaining the audience's behavior.

Local newspapers *The Arizona Republic(an)* and the *Phoenix Gazette* offered additional information on events mentioned in the manuscript collections and provided insight into how the newspapers boosted the goal and how the community received these cultural offerings. Only specific dates relating to large events such as season openings/endings or building openings were reviewed in order to strategically assess such an abundance of material. *Phoenix Magazine's* arts and entertainment section provided numerous previews, reviews, and profiles on Valley organizations and events from the 1960s until today, providing the harsh criticisms and institutional exposes excluded from the scrapbooks. Magazines *Point West* and later the *Phoenix New Times* also supplied similar discussions which delved deeper into the arts community than the newspapers.

In addition to the Phoenix histories, arts histories, and urban histories, institutional histories identified major periods of growth, change, and turmoil. Although their origins differ, they experienced the same pattern of growth in the 1950s and early 1960s, struggled with professionalizing through the 1970s, and had to find new funding models in the 1980s before becoming somewhat stable in 1990s. ASU School of Music students wrote histories of the Phoenix Symphony Orchestra, Orpheus Male Chorus, Phoenix

Bach Choir, while other groups wrote their own histories, as the Phoenix Little Theatre did for their sixty-fifth anniversary.

Nonprofit and government agency reports produced in the late 1990s and early 2000s provided broad histories of Valley arts to contextualize data on funding, economic impact, attendance rates, policies, and popular opinions related to the local and state arts scene. Agencies like Arizona State University's Morrison Institute for Public Policy prepared these reports to inform arts policy decisions and argue their positive economic impact, often citing Florida's work. Combined, these sources illustrate how the arguments civic leaders used in the 1940s to create performing arts groups have morphed into policy arguments today.

The following chapters examine how each participant in the performing arts scene – the performers, the patrons, and the public – contributed to Phoenix's cultural development and their role in the growth vision. Each chapter follows the same chronology, beginning with a historical background on each group through World War II. The performing arts scene organized and developed from 1947 through the 1960s, helped by the patrons who wanted a more cultured city and the growing audience looking for entertainments. During this time group leadership and the city built venues to stage various groups and accommodate larger crowds while signaling the city's increased maturity through the built environment. The mid-1960s through 1980s saw the struggle to professionalize while power shifted from civic to city leadership in the 1970s and 1980s. By the 1990s Phoenician leaders and residents had a renewed commitment to arts and culture, and with private and public help many of the groups stabilized to become full-time, professional arts groups. Discussing each participant instead of moving the

narrative chronologically allows for a focused discussion of how each group influenced the growth vision and modified their actions as the city developed, and highlights those changes over time. Though their histories are entwined, the fine arts will not be included in this study. In addition to spatial considerations, focusing on the fine arts does not provide the same discussion of local artists and consumers as the performing arts.

The performing arts groups featured in Chapter Two and discussed throughout include theater, symphony, and choral groups, but the Phoenix Little Theatre, the Phoenix Symphony Orchestra, and Orpheus Male Chorus are featured prominently as they have the longest histories in the Valley and have had a greater opportunity to cultivate their audience and influence as local institutions. Other groups and venues will also be discussed to demonstrate the broader impact of performing arts on Valley development. These groups' challenges with developing performers, finding performance space, and professionalizing reflected the city's level of development at a given time. Chapter Three examines the individual patrons, boards of directors of performing arts groups, local and state governments, and agencies and commissions who supported the arts, detailing who they were, what their role was, why they supported the arts, and what they accomplished. Besides analyzing the role of individuals such as Jessie Linde, Newton Rosenzweig, Lewis Ruskin, and Terry Goddard, the chapter focuses on how all of these people used their positions within the Valley to bring the performing arts into the realm of civic affairs. Patrons procured funds, hired management, found facilities, and marketed these groups as part of their larger strategy of developing the city, and frequently readjusted their plans to meet the growing city's needs. Chapter Four evaluates how well the groups

from chapters two and three succeeded and profiles the audience early leaders hoped to attract and retain through the arts.

The final chapter assesses the more recent past and how effectively leaders promoted their vision, while raising new questions about the future of the arts in the Valley and the possibilities of analyzing a city within this framework. Various reports from civic and arts and cultural organizations, like the Arizona Town Hall and Maricopa Regional Arts and Culture Task Force, use the same arguments as postwar civic leaders to stress the economic importance of developing Phoenix's culture. However instead of focusing on high culture, today's leaders recognize a broader definition of culture and celebrate the Valley's diversity, citing Florida's research as evidence that if Arizona's future lies in high-tech, they must court the creative class. Chapter five observes how postwar leadership's goal is being carried into the twenty-first century.

This thesis examines how performance groups, civic leaders, city government, and residents cultivated Phoenix's performing arts scene and evaluates its success in promoting the larger economic visions for the Valley's future. It provides a case study for how the performing arts contribute to quality of life, which subsequently encourages the economy. Civic leaders did not necessarily support the performing arts because they personally enjoyed them (though many did), but because they had a deliberate plan for Phoenix's development and the performing arts were one aspect of that plan. They wanted their town to become a big city, which required industry, jobs, transportation and communication infrastructure, housing, leadership, and culture and recreation. The performing arts contributed to many of these aspects and therefore the larger growth agenda either directly through their intrinsic cultural and economic value, or indirectly by

promoting a better quality of life and meeting an urban cultural benchmark. This thesis is not so much a history of Valley performing arts institutions – although institutional histories are discussed and compared – but rather an examination of how civic leaders used these groups as one piece in achieving their larger goal of making the city economically competitive, first regionally and later nationally. They did not necessarily fail, but they were unable to see their vision through to the 1980s. New generations of leaders need that same understanding that the arts are an important for their intrinsic and economic value.

CHAPTER 2

PERFORMERS, PERFORMANCES, AND PLACES

Although the story of Phoenix appears to be one of unbounded growth, the history of the performing arts reflect the constant battles for funding, audience, and credibility amidst an atmosphere of ever-changing population and politics. Groups had to adapt their development strategies and refocus their institutional and artistic visions to match the evolving expectations of their audience due to increased competition. This introduction to Phoenix's performing arts groups contextualizes the later discussions of how civic leaders promoted the groups to advance their growth vision, and how the arts built audience and community. The struggles that performers and staff faced regarding organizing, recruiting, finding venues, programming, and professionalizing, are indicative of larger struggles Phoenix faced as a growing urban center. Just as Phoenicians sought their identity among popular, mass, regional, and ethnic cultures, the trajectory of performing arts reflects the struggle for culture and identity in an ever-growing city.

The Phoenix Little Theatre (PLT) and the Phoenix Symphony Orchestra (PSO) are the oldest continually operating institutions and drive the narrative of the city's performing arts history. Their origins, triumphs, and struggles best reflect the oscillating history of the performing arts over a long period of time. Both provide a platform for discussing various other groups, as these small organizations frequently shared venues, performers, stages, audiences, and funding. As the city grew, so did opportunities for performers and public expectations. Community outreach programs and arts education produced generations of talent within in the Valley, leading to a proliferation of groups

varying in size, quality, and function. In practicing their craft Valley performers had to work around patrons' squabbles and the audience's whims, but their talent and quality of productions at a given time served as a cultural barometer for the growing city. This is not a complete history of these individual groups; rather, an avenue for exploring one aspect of Phoenix's development and the role these groups played in a larger vision.

Early Entertainers

The performing arts have existed in Phoenix since its founding, but performers' aspirations were often quelled by the lack of opportunities. In the 1890s a theatrical stock company arrived in the newly incorporated city of Phoenix but failed to thrive for lack of an audience. One member, Fred B. Mussey, remained and staged the first performance of the Phoenix Players Club in October 1897. Records of the group's activities are missing until 1920, when Harvard Drama School alumnus Harry Behn and speech and drama school operator Katherine Wisner McClusky organized the Phoenix Players, who held their first production of Shakespeare's comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Shirley Christy's School of Music. Two years later, Behn renamed the group the Phoenix Little Theatre, and in 1924 Maie Bartlett Heard, a PLT founder and wife of *Arizona Republican* owner Dwight B. Heard, offered the remodeled Heard stables as a venue. The PLT performed about seven shows per season during their twenty-seven-year occupancy of the stables, playing to sold-out crowds who braved the elements in the insufficient venue. Although the PLT proved successful, they were among the first Valley groups struggling to survive in a city unprepared to support the arts.²⁴

²⁴ Tom Oldendick and Christine Uithoven, *The Phoenix Little Theatre: 65 Years of Memories* (Phoenix: The Phoenix Little Theatre, 1985), 2-4.

The frequency and quality of these early performances also depended on the number of performers in the Valley. Mrs. W. M. Nichols worried that capable musicians were neglecting their craft because there was no designated performance outlet. In February 1906 Nichols, then president of the Phoenix Women's Club, gathered eighteen women in her home to create the Monday Musical Club, later the Musicians Club of Phoenix. The club began as an informal, weekly gathering of women (men often joined at performances, but were only allowed auxiliary status). The Valley's best musical talent was associated with the club for over fifty years. This included persons trained in music, interested in music, or those who made a living from it, such as Eugene Redewill of Phoenix's Redewill Music Company and Shirley Christy of the Arizona School of Music. The club was instrumental in encouraging performers and composers by hosting study sessions, awarding scholarships, and providing recital experience. The group dedicated funds to the war effort during both world wars, earning two commendations for services rendered during World War II. The Musicians Club initiated many music organizations, including the Orpheus Male Chorus, Phoenix Symphony, and Lyric Club. During the Great Depression, the Works Progress Administration music project sponsored several groups statewide, allowing unemployed musicians and performers to continue working while offering 2,500 performances over four years.²⁵

The Phoenix Symphony Orchestra is similarly rooted in Arizona's territorial days. In 1902 Redewill organized and conducted an orchestra until 1928. In 1929 conductor

²⁵ Bertha Kirkland, "Musicians Club: Phoenix, Arizona," [ca. 1952], Box 6 Folder 3, MS 6, Musicians Club of Phoenix Records, 1915-1917, Arizona Historical Society – Papago Park, Tempe, AZ; Mrs. W. R. Battin, "Remarks," [ca. 1956], Box 6 Folder 6, Musicians Club Records; William S. Collins, "The New Deal in Arizona" (master's thesis, Arizona State University, 1999), 341.

Benjamin King and violoncellist Montague Machell organized the Phoenix Civic Orchestra, providing free concerts at the Phoenix Union High School Auditorium (PUHS). A year later they renamed themselves the Phoenix Philharmonic Orchestra, and by 1933 new conductor Harry S. Marquis re-named the group the Phoenix Symphony Orchestra. Like other early groups, the symphony was more a training ground for interested performers than a quality producing body. Romeo Tata, conductor (1938-1941) and music teacher at Arizona State Teacher's College in Tempe (now Arizona State University), recalled the symphony had no salary, comprised mostly amateurs with some trained musicians and college students, often performed without everyone present, and never had enough money to purchase or rent music, despite the Symphony Society's fundraising efforts. With the onset of World War II, musician and audience participation dwindled. The Musicians' Club of Phoenix sponsored an orchestra under Montague Machell during the war, but by 1945 Phoenix no longer had a civic orchestra. In music as in theater, participation dictated viability.²⁶

Another musical group with deep roots in Valley history is the Orpheus Male Chorus. L. Douglas Russell, a voice teacher at the local Arizona School of Music, wanted an opportunity to showcase his students' work and created the Phoenix Orpheus Club. The group debuted on the radio station KFAD's 1929 Christmas broadcast and gave their

²⁶ Bryan Carrol Stoneburner, "The Phoenix Symphony Orchestra, 1947-1978: Leadership, Criticism and Selective Commentary" (master's thesis, Arizona State University, 1981), 1-4; Romeo Tata to Bryan Carrol Stoneburner, 20 June 1980, Box 1 Folder 1, MSS 103, Phoenix Symphony Orchestra Collection, Arizona Historical Society – Papago Park, Tempe, AZ.

first concert February of the following year.²⁷ It grew rapidly, with 104 members by 1937 and 155 local business sponsors. Like other performing arts groups, the Chorus also suffered during the war. Besides dwindling memberships, sponsors, and audiences, the military took many of its members, including director David N. Murdock, son of U.S. Representative John N. Murdock, who was killed in action in Sicily in 1943. After the war, the Chorus required significant rebuilding to once again fill its ranks.²⁸

The Phoenix Little Theatre survived the war, but only barely. The *Arizona Republic* reported how the PLT adopted the ““first things must come first”” attitude as well as any civic organization: “its best male talent is now in uniform” and “all of its best feminine talent is engaged in Red Cross work, or civilian defense duties, and their time is no longer free.”²⁹ The stage was dark from April 1942 through the end of the year, and the theatre only hosted small, informal gatherings and dramatic readings. Mel Fickas assumed presidency of the board in January 1943 and thrust the theater into supporting the war effort. PLT staged performances at the area’s new military bases, like Luke Air Force Base. Military personnel joined the PLT as audience members and as cast and

²⁷ The *Arizona Republican* started a joint venture with the owners of the seven-year-old KFAD in September 1929, and on December 29, 1929 announced the radio station would be renamed KTAR at the new year. Editors of the *Republic* broadcast news thrice daily. Richard Ruelas, “When 1 Owner Ruled Major Media in City,” *Arizona Republic*, March 19, 2011.

²⁸ “New Chorus Formed,” *Arizona Republican*, November 5, 1929; “Orpheus Club Members Plan Formal Concert in February,” [ca. January 1930], Box 5 Folder 110, MS 3, Orpheus Male Chorus Records, 1929-1992, Arizona Historical Society – Papago Park, Tempe, AZ; “The Orpheus Club,” 1936-1937, Box 3 Folder 56, Orpheus Male Chorus Records; “Tempe Burial Arranged for D. N. Murdock,” *Arizona Republic*, June 17, 1944.

²⁹ “Little Theater Affected By War,” *Arizona Republic*, November 22, 1942.

crew, but programming reflected the dearth of male actors, evidenced by 1944's all-female production of Clare Boothe Luce's "The Women." Phoenix mayor J. R. Fleming named December 10-15, 1945 "Little Theatre Week," honoring entertainers' wartime efforts. Fickas boasted that the Little Theatre not only provided entertainment to servicemen; it also made military personnel and their families feel connected to the community. By adapting their strategy to fit the needs of Arizonans at war, the Phoenix Little Theatre managed to survive and reached new audiences who had come to love the theater and the Valley.³⁰

Composing the Players

The end of the war meant the end of the artistic lull, and now there were far more Phoenixians, with varied tastes, cultures, and expectations. Phoenix needed groups that would both entertain its new audiences and signal its maturity to the region and to prospective residents. It needed regionally – if not nationally – recognized groups representing the city's unique culture. The problem was no one knew what that meant. Phoenix leaders promoted Western and outdoors cultures to encourage tourism, taking advantage of the Valley's desert environment and agricultural history for attractions like rodeos and hiking. Although that strategy remains successful, Phoenix needed fine arts and high culture to gain urban status. Leaders believed fine arts would retain and attract the skilled employees necessary to realize leaders' economic vision of Phoenix as a

³⁰ Oldendick and Uithoven, *Phoenix Little Theatre*, 20 – 23; "Little Theater Affected By War."

technology center. Phoenix needed more institutions contributing to the arts scene, requiring local and sometimes imported talents for performances.³¹

The reincarnated Phoenix Symphony Orchestra opened its first four-concert season on November 10, 1947 under the direction of John Barnett, the first of many conductors tasked with building the amateur group. Barnett, who graduated from the Manhattan School of Music and studied at the Mozarteum in Salzburg, had an excellent reputation, great recruiting ability, and sympathy for a Western orchestra's struggles. Barnett commuted between Phoenix and Los Angeles, where he was associate conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, leaving the musicians to rehearse with his assistants and bringing eight to fourteen Los Angeles musicians for each PSO concert. After two successful seasons the PSO board, the Phoenix Symphony Association, felt the symphony was large enough to require a conductor handling business between shows, and for Barnett's successor the board unanimously selected Robert Lawrence, who held the baton from 1949-1953. Lawrence, who studied at Juilliard, was a fine musician, but still developing as a conductor. Lawrence later described his tenure, as "adventurous-trial-and-error:" his own musical talents still needed developing, and the musicians were more ardent than skilled Lawrence resigned in 1952 to take a job with the Metropolitan Opera.³²

³¹ VanderMeer, *Desert Visions*, 164-167.

³² Stoneburner, "Phoenix Symphony Orchestra," 5, 12-13, 17; Norma Townsend, *The Symphony Picture of Phoenix, 1900-1970* (Phoenix: privately printed, [1970?]), 4; Robert Lawrence to Bryan Carrol Stoneburner, February 1, 1980, Box 1 Folder 1, Phoenix Symphony Orchestra Collection.

The PSO finally had stable leadership with the arrival of Australian Leslie Hodge, who had a seven-year tenure. Hodge brought a fun personality and unique leadership style, though some PSO performers felt that the group needed a stricter leader. The musicians varied on their assessment of his conducting ability. Some found his free and eccentric style exciting, while others thought he lacked the necessary fundamentals. Regardless, Hodge provided the consistent management that allowed the PSO to grow. One reporter enthusiastically deemed the 1953-54 season, Hodge's second and the PSO's seventh, "the most successful in the symphony's history, both in box-office receipts and general interest."³³ This harmonious relationship ended with Hodge's resignation in 1959. His replacement, Guy Taylor, was also a Juilliard alumnus and an experienced conductor, having formerly led the Springfield (OH) and Nashville orchestras. His ten-season tenure would prove critical to the PSO's artistic development.³⁴

The Orpheus Male Chorus (OMC) also revitalized in 1947. After three directors in the previous five years, and a membership as low as twenty-eight performers, the Chorus had to rebuild its connection with the community. As in the PSO, many of its members were local educators. Murdock had been Glendale High School's band and glee club leader, and during his tenure the club had become part of the Adult Education program at Phoenix Junior College. In 1947 Ralph Hess, a music educator in the

³³ "Symphony's Progress," *Arizona Days and Ways*, October 17, 1954, 4.

³⁴ Stoneburner, "Phoenix Symphony Orchestra," 20-22, 26, 33; Floyd Denton, interview by Bryan Carrol Stoneburner, March 26, 1980, Box 1 Folder 2, Phoenix Symphony Orchestra Collection; Lawrence Cummings, interview by Bryan Carrol Stoneburner, January 28, 1980, transcript, Box 1 Folder 1, Phoenix Symphony Orchestra Collection.

Glendale and Phoenix school systems, became director, marking the beginning of a thirty-four-year tenure with international success.³⁵

The quality of the performances was the product of the talent Phoenix groups recruited. Until the mid-1960s, Phoenix institutions were unable to afford professional performers, and although some had the talent, they had to devote their time to their day jobs. Amateur status signaled a lower stage of cultural development, but it allowed the community to create the performing arts scene collaboratively. PSO violinist Dr. Lawrence Cummings observed, “[Phoenix] was one of the few places in the country where one could be an integral part of the beginning of the growth; you couldn’t see it so dramatically in some of the eastern cities.”³⁶ Phoenicians wanted live theater, so they showed up at rehearsals, took turns directing, volunteered to sell concessions, bought season tickets, and tolerated inadequate venues until they could buy bonds for a new theater. Civic leaders wanted to demonstrate the city had professional, sophisticated culture; regardless of quality, the mere existence of these groups signaled to the community’s enthusiasm for the performing arts.

Groups found their performers among the ranks of community members. For the first few decades, performers’ backgrounds were varied; some were amateur aficionados, while others were classically trained in Eastern institutions. By definition the PLT was a community venture, hosting open auditions and offering acting workshops in addition to their School of Theatre. A few of its seasonal contributors were or became big names. Its

³⁵ “Tempe Burial”; Robert C. Butler, II, “A History of the First Fifty Years of the Orpheus Male Chorus in Phoenix” (master’s thesis, Arizona State University, 2010), 14-19.

³⁶ Cummings, interview.

stage saw several Miss Arizonas in starring roles, honed the skills of such actors as Nick Nolte and Andy Devine, and produced works by Hollywood screenwriter Brenda Weisberg Meckler and ambassador and author Clare Boothe Luce. Orchestra musicians often applied their skills as instructors, working in local schools or providing private lessons. Some were very able and well trained, like Louise Lincoln Kerr, a skilled violinist and composer. Kerr proved herself in classical institutions back East before becoming a member, composer, and benefactor for the PSO. The PSA deliberately tapped into the trend of performers as local educators when they hired Lawrence as resident conductor. OMC members' day jobs ranged from students to engineers to farmers, and the men hailed from almost every state and six countries. Doctors, lawyers, students, businessmen, and musicians joined in mutual love of music and performance.³⁷

Veterans and manufacturers were not the only ones flocking to Phoenix and taking an interest in its growing arts scene. Industry professionals hoped to capitalize on what was a growing trend of decentralizing arts scenes, leaving the bright lights of Broadway for budding cities like Phoenix. Richard Charlton and Ann Lee arrived from New York in November 1948 intent on opening a stock theater. Charlton wanted the theater to be both a try-out stop for shows hoping to reach Broadway and a patron for promising playwrights, directors, and performers. The Sombrero Playhouse opened in March 1949 and immediately garnered attention from New York and Los Angeles. Kirk Douglas took the stage in 1950's *Detective Story* as he prepared for the film version, and

³⁷ "Louise Lincoln Kerr, 1892-1987," *Arizona State Library, Archives, and Public Records*, accessed August 23, 2013, <http://www.azlibrary.gov/azwhf/women/kerr.aspx>; Joseph Stacey, "They Pay to Sing for Their Supper," *Arizona Highways*, February 1965, 12.

in 1954 the Sombrero debuted Hollywood screenwriter and playwright Lenore Coffee's *The Open Window*. When it was not featuring stars in the flesh, it functioned as a movie theater. Phoenix Little Theatre may have introduced the theater to Phoenix, but Sombrero Playhouse introduced Phoenix to the national theater community.³⁸

Finding a Home

Until 1964, the PSO offered concerts in the PUHS auditorium, the only city venue large enough to stage a concert. It found a venue befitting its growing size, quality, and stature when Arizona State University completed their new performing arts center, the Grady Gammage Memorial Auditorium. Gammage was the ideal building for an orchestra, specifically designed to host symphony orchestras and large musical performances. Gammage was the last project for famed architect Frank Lloyd Wright and his only public building in Arizona, and his design team at Taliesin West created a state-of-the-art auditorium in which every detail was oriented around improving sound. The “flying” balconies are seemingly unsupported to provide space for sound and air circulation behind them, a soundproof wall divides the auditorium and ASU's music school classrooms, and the floors have a steep slope to unify sound. Its most notable feature is the telescopic orchestra shell, which according to chief architect William

³⁸ Moyca Christy Manoil, “Sombrero Playhouse,” *Arizona Highways*, January 1958, 2; Vera Morris, “The Muse is Heard: The Idea Behind the Sombrero Playhouse,” *Point West*, February 1966, 26; “Kirk Douglas to Fill Stage Role,” *New York Times*, December 12, 1950; Edwin Schallert, “Phoenix Premiere Wins New Fame for Playhouse,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 24, 1954.

Wesley Peters, virtually extends the walls, ceiling, and volumetric space of the house to the stage itself and making “one great room.”³⁹

Dr. Vernon O. Knudson oversaw the auditorium’s outstanding acoustical design. He had to consider the range of performances Gammage would stage – large or small, symphonic or choral, operatic or musical – and ultimately gave more weight to music performances than speeches, using convex shapes throughout the hall to increase reverberation. The musicians loved playing in Gammage as the acoustics allowed them to hear and play better. Violinist Angelo Filigenzi said a larger auditorium made performances more comfortable and allowed them to reach a larger audience, and seeing a packed house made them play better. George C. Izenour, theater design and engineering consultant, summarized Gammage’s multifunctional capabilities as “three equals one:” the auditorium is simultaneously a concert hall, opera house, and drama theater, making it the ideal venue for Valley groups in the 1960s.⁴⁰

The symphony’s first concert at Gammage on October 19, 1964, was one of the most successful in the orchestra’s history. Conductor Guy Taylor selected Robert Ward’s *Jubilation Overture*, Leroy Robertson’s *Saguaro Overture* (the composition’s debut), Wagner’s *Wesendock Lieder*, and Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9 to celebrate the occasion. The world-class venue attracted large audiences eager to see the new hall. The

³⁹ William Wesley Peters, “Remarks,” in “Convocation Dedicating Grady Gammage Memorial Auditorium,” September 16, 1964, Ephemera Collection, Arizona Historical Society – Papago Park.

⁴⁰ Ibid.; Vernon O. Knudson, “Acoustics: ‘We Have Reason to Rejoice,’” *Arizona Days and Ways*, November 29, 1964, 38, 40; Angelo Filigenzi, interview by Bryan Carrol Stoneburner, May 5, 1980, transcript, Box1 Folder 2, Phoenix Symphony Orchestra Collection; George C. Izenour, “Stage Provides Flexibility,” *Arizona Days and Ways*, November 29, 1964, 36-37.

Orpheus Male Chorus also moved into Gammage from PUHS in 1967, giving their staging and costuming committee much more opportunity to realize their artistic visions at the annual concert in March. Despite playing in such a grand hall and sharing the stage with local and national legends, many Phoenixians were annoyed Phoenix groups had to play in Tempe. As a compromise, the PSO played Monday nights at Gammage, and performed an encore on Tuesdays at PUHS. Still, it was embarrassing the growing city could not even host its own symphony. The PSA made plans in 1967 for a bond election that would bring them back to their original city.⁴¹

The PSO finally had a suitable home in Phoenix when Symphony Hall opened September 29, 1972. One reporter gave an early review and raved the acoustics “may be the best money can buy,” but once the hall opened, it was obvious it did not lend itself as well to an orchestra the way Gammage Auditorium did.⁴² Conductor Eduardo Mata complained that although the building was handsome, “The acoustics are generally dry, uneven, reverberation time is very short and from the stage the impressions of the acoustics is quite deceiving.”⁴³ However it was well suited to soloists like Richard Posner, who said with Symphony Hall’s acoustics, “There’s no forcing. It’s very

⁴¹ Stoneburner, “Phoenix Symphony Orchestra,” 40; Butler, “Orpheus Male Chorus,” 63.

⁴² Jack Swanson, “Symphony Hall Bet: The Best,” *Arizona Republic*, August 6, 1972.

⁴³ Eduardo Mata to Bryan Carrol Stoneburner, May 6, 1980, Box 1 Folder 1, Phoenix Symphony Orchestra Collection.

comfortable.”⁴⁴ Over the following decades Symphony Hall would twice be refurbished and remodeled, and the new venue helped increase ticket sales for the next few years.⁴⁵

Growing Pains

Professionalization was a major step in development from the 1960s through 1980s, signaling well-funded organizations with quality performers. If Phoenix wanted quality performance art, its groups needed to make the transition from amateur to professional by paying a competitive salary for the top talent. After an exciting season at Gammage, the PSO had more income than ever and was finally able to retain its performers through contracts. Douglas Richards, Managing Director of the PSA, Lawrence Cummings, Chairman of the Orchestra Committee, and Cecil Armstrong, President of the American Federation of Musicians Local 586 negotiated a master contract in 1965. The contract required six events (rehearsals or shows) a week for a minimum of twenty-six weeks for a salary of \$60 per week. During the first year sixty musicians signed contracts, but despite greater compensation, quality did not improve. Before contracts, musicians were paid based on how often they attended events, and often spent no more than eight hours per week with the symphony. With the new contract terms, they now had to commit fifteen hours per week for a salary that could not fully support players. In 1965 the Ford Foundation announced an \$85 million grant program for American symphonies, which would advance quality by allowing musicians to devote

⁴⁴ Jim Newton, “But Where is All the Ballet, Guys?” *Phoenix Gazette*, September 29, 1972.

⁴⁵ Stoneburner, “Phoenix Symphony Orchestra,” 267; “Symphony Hall – Designed for Varied Cultural Events,” *Phoenix Convention Center and Venues*, accessed November 13, 2013, <http://www.phoenixconventioncenter.com/venues/symphony-hall/history.php>.

their full energy to their craft and attracting young musicians to professional careers. The foundation awarded the PSO \$850,000 over ten years pending \$600,000 matching community funds. The musicians said the award was largely due to their new semi-professional status and not their actual quality. Compensation made the PSO seem professional, but the pay was still not worth the time requirement, forcing some of the best musicians to leave.⁴⁶

Professionalizing was a common problem for Phoenix's performing arts groups. Many of the organizations were twenty years old in their postwar incarnations, and the city had grown too large to continue valuing amateur community productions. As residents watched the city mature, they held its artists to the same rising standards; however, professionalizing brought new problems. Donna Lederman, writing in the local magazine *Reveille*, wrote, "The Phoenix Symphony Orchestra is well into an extended crisis, a period of convulsive change, which could leave it five years from now either an excellent musical organization or a dead one."⁴⁷ She noted most organizations cannot afford to professionalize in one step, and the results are often "cataclysmic," offering the failure of the Columbus (Ohio) Symphony Orchestra as an example. Other Valley performing arts groups would soon learn the same lesson as the PSO: professionalizing was necessary to demonstrate growth, but often an artistic gamble.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Stoneburner, "Phoenix Symphony Orchestra," 43; Lee Dirks, "The Phoenix Symphony," *National Observer*, November 1, 1965; Donna Lederman, "Will the Orchestra Survive?" *Reveille*, January 1967, 9.

⁴⁷ Lederman, "Will the Orchestra Survive?" 8.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

In *Regional Theatre: The Revolutionary Stage* (1973), Joseph Wesley Zeigler documented the spread of regional theater beyond the bright lights of Broadway from the 1940s through the 1960s. As the country grew, so did the theater community. “Theatre people” moved to other metro regions, bought houses, raised families, and invested in their communities. Thus the repertory theater movement created its own larger theater community outside New York City. Yet Ziegler points out these “resident professional theatres” were “too rarely resident and too often not nearly professional enough.” Zeigler’s focus was on cities like Chicago, San Francisco, and Seattle, but Phoenix was also part of the regional theater movement in the 1960s, just as it hosted the little theater movement at the turn of the century. In *Composing Ourselves: The Little Theatre Movement and the American Audience* (2004) Dorothy Chansky argued that the theater community rejected Broadway fifty years earlier during the little theater movement because of progressive idealism and the desire to reform, a classic example of art imitating life. Midcentury audiences disliked the urban hierarchy that only allowed quality entertainment in certain cities and wanted it transplanted to their regions, just as they had done with housing and shopping. Phoenix audiences also wanted quality arts nearby, but had to wait until population and infrastructure grew to support more groups and venues and larger productions with quality performers; therefore, the same events occur in Phoenix as in other cities, but at a later date.⁴⁹

Richard Charlton, still the producer at the Sombrero Playhouse, had realized this potential a decade prior and caught the trend early. In the 1950s and early 1960s the

⁴⁹ Joseph Wesley Zeigler, *Regional Theatre: The Revolutionary Stage* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1973), viii, 1.

Sombrero offered star-studded, professional theater, bringing in such notable celebrities as Tallulah Bankhead, Ginger Rogers, Gloria Swanson, Mickey Rooney, and Vincent Price. Its first pre-Broadway tryout was 1962's *Natural Affections* by Pulitzer Prize winning playwright William Inge, starring Academy Award winner Shelley Winters. Charlton also capitalized on another, earlier trend of promoting Phoenix as a getaway for celebrities. The theater and its Backstage Club allowed performers to continue working while enjoying Phoenix's weather and recreational activities during winter vacation. The Sombrero afforded Phoenix national prominence, but it was a local venue for mass culture: traveling acts, New York shows, national celebrities, and Hollywood films. It was not a place where amateur performers honed their skills by joining a community production. The Sombrero's vision for performance art in Phoenix involved bringing established performers to a new audience. The Phoenix Star Theatre brought a similar caliber of talent, hosting touring Broadway shows and celebrities like Sammy Davis, Jr., Wayne Newton, Liberace and Nat King Cole. Charlton and Phoenix Star Theatre's Buster Bonoff were both East Coast transplants, trying to recreate Eastern institutions in Phoenix. Although other groups also replicated other community programs, they wanted to be unique to the city, organically formed by their own local talent.⁵⁰

In 1964, several actors left PLT and created the Arizona Repertory Theatre (ART), a professional organization formed in the tradition of the regional theater movement. They performed in a renovated church on Fourth Street and Fillmore, where they staged successful and quality productions of serious works like *The Lower Depths*,

⁵⁰ Sombrero Playhouse clippings, [1960s], Ephemera Collection; Bob Stout, "Pre-Broadway Production Scheduled to Open in Phoenix," *Phoenix Gazette*, January 5, 1962; Phoenix Star Theatre programs, 1964-1972, Ephemera Collection.

The Lady's Not for Burning, and *Rashomon*. In 1965, the PLT hoped to capitalize on ART's success and suggested a joint venture called the Phoenix Theatre Center, housing both groups at the Civic Center, where they would build another stage. One theater housing a professional and non-professional group was unconventional but mutually beneficial: PLT would have another group to share costs of maintenance and improve the theater's reputation, while ART would have a permanent home and better resources. The Phoenix Children's Theatre joined a few months later.⁵¹

Although the concept seemed promising, problems soon arose. The three tenants did not share the same artistic vision. Competing egos hurt theater development before construction even began. PLT board members doubted ART's professional status, claiming their actors were unpaid, and accused them of being a clique, while one ART member retorted at least they did not produce "a stale re-hash of tired comedies." Phoenix Children's Theatre managed to stay out of the fray, staging three productions in the 1965-1966 season with a child/teen cast. PLT and ART could not overcome their pride, and the trio dissolved their relationship before the second stage was finished.⁵²

Critics, audiences, and performers were ready to see theater groups mature and professionalize, but without substantial community support and strong leadership, they entered the 1970s struggling to survive. After a futile search for another permanent home ART dissolved in 1967, challenging other groups to fill the void as the "professional" Phoenix theater. PLT was stuck trying to finance the Theatre Center, causing them to suffer artistically and financially over the next decade. Despite the Sombrero's star-

⁵¹ Oldendick and Uithoven, *Phoenix Little Theatre*, 50.

⁵² Ibid., 50-52.

studded attractions, it did not have the community support to generate enough revenue and closed in 1968. The building remained as a movie theater, but it was demolished in 1981 and replaced by an office complex. The acting community craved professional theater, but the necessary cultural support from patrons and audience was still not available despite Phoenix's rapid growth.⁵³

As in theater, leadership troubles continued to plague the PSO, but Guy Taylor did the most to improve the symphony in its first twenty years. Taylor explained that while the PSO featured great musicians, when he arrived they did not know how to play together as a symphony. *Phoenix Gazette* critics Serge Huff and Phillip Nelson both recognized Taylor's ability to extract what he needed from his musicians and to tap into the orchestra's potential. Orchestra member Lawrence Cummings described Taylor as "the single most important developmental agent in the history of the orchestra," providing the leadership necessary to bring the symphony to maturation.⁵⁴ Taylor oversaw the shaky transition to professionalize in 1965, and popularity remained, even if quality declined. He signed a new three-year contract that season for almost double his salary.⁵⁵

⁵³ Ibid., 52; Jerry Reynolds, *The Golden Days of Theaters in Phoenix: A Dramatic Tableau of the Theaters and Amusements in Greater Phoenix from 1877 to 1982* (Glendale, CA: Associated Media Services, 1982), 122, 138; VanderMeer, *Desert Visions*, 169.

⁵⁴ Cummings, interview.

⁵⁵ Stoneburner, "Phoenix Symphony Orchestra," 33, 45; Guy Taylor, interview by Bryan Carrol Stoneburner, 19 March 1980, Box 1 Folder 3, transcript, Phoenix Symphony Orchestra Collection; Serge Huff, interview by Bryan Carrol Stoneburner, 21 April 1980, Box 1 Folder 3, transcript, Phoenix Symphony Orchestra Collection; Phillip

It was a huge shock, then, when the board voted not to renew Taylor's contract after the 1968-1969 season. PSA president Wade Hampton announced the PSO would feature guest conductors throughout the 1969-1970 season, claiming it would stimulate interest among musicians and concertgoers. Taylor's dismissal was extremely controversial among PSO patrons and the audience, and many musicians disagreed with the decision. They spoke highly of Taylor and largely sided with him during his controversial last season. Though disappointed, some recognized that Taylor had served the average term for a conductor, and Richards pointed out Taylor was not fired, the PSA simply informed him they would not renew his contract and gave him a year to find employment. Assistant concertmaster Eugene Lombardi believed Taylor would be reinstated, and for a while so did Taylor, but when Taylor left so did Lombardi, recognizing the board's desire to move in a different direction.⁵⁶

The Orpheus Male Chorus avoided the budgeting and leadership issues of other groups during this time because they had a different mission. Although their organization and audience steadily expanded after the war, they remained committed to serving as a community group. Yet rather than present themselves as a professional group serving the Valley, they decided to function as a community group representing Phoenix on an

Nelson, "Symphony Displays Positiveness Which Augurs Well for Future," *Phoenix Gazette*, October 28, 1959.

⁵⁶ Bina Breitner, "Board Reaffirms Firing of Taylor," *Arizona Republic*, September 13, 1968; Cummings, interview; Jack Ratterree, interview by Bryan Carrol Stoneburner, April 28, 1980, transcript, Box 1 Folder 3, Phoenix Symphony Orchestra Collection; Douglas Richards, January 29, 1980, transcript, Box 1 Folder 3, Phoenix Symphony Orchestra Collection; Eugene Lombardi, interview by Bryan Carrol Stoneburner, April 22, 1980, transcript, Box 1 Folder 3, Phoenix Symphony Orchestra Collection.

international stage. Their first international performance was in February 1954 at the University of Sonora, and the group continually gave performances in Mexico in honor of Mexican holidays until 1957. Julius Festner, an officer and member, sent footage of their 1956 Guadalajara concert to a friend in Cologne, Germany who aired it over the Cologne radio station. As a result, the group was invited to the Third Annual Austrian International Song Festival, held July 17-20 in Vienna. The tour would expose the groups to audiences in Shannon (Ireland), Heidelberg, Augsburg, Salzburg, Vienna, Landeck, Geneva, Paris, Brussels, and Amsterdam.⁵⁷

This tour was a huge opportunity for a Southwest organization to compete with Old World classical groups. Group members were required to travel and perform in “authentic” Western wear donated by Levi Strauss and Company: jeans, boots, cowboy hats, and red bandanas. They spread Southwest culture at every stop, performing for airplane passengers and hotel staff. The European crowd arrived en masse to see Pima Indian Victor Manual perform the ceremonial chants of his tribe and the cowboy attire they’d only seen in the movies, but they forgot about these attractions when they heard how well the eighty men sang. The huge success brought recognition from numerous European organizations, and Arizona’s civic leaders honored the OMC for their international public service. The OMC continued to tour Europe and the US under the leadership of director Ralph Hess until 1976, appearing at such events as the New York World’s Fair in 1964 and the Rotary International Convention in Toronto in 1964. The OMC increased their success while other amateur groups faded because of strong

⁵⁷ Butler, “Orpheus Male Chorus,” 29-33; William H. Gooding, “High Spirits Prevail as Orpheus Songsters Start 5,500 Mile Trip,” *Phoenix Gazette*, July 22, 1958.

leadership, commitment to their vision, and a genuine love for their art not as a career but as a hobby. The OMC's clearly defined mission and altruistic mindset brought them the recognition and respect other groups could not maintain.⁵⁸

Starving Artists

Michael Vetrie arrived in April 1977 as the new managing director for the Phoenix Little Theatre. He had the difficult task of trying to restore PLT's image after the failed merger left the company in debt and with a reputation for poor quality productions. After one year at the helm, Vetrie made drastic improvements. Enrollment in the Theatre Center's school increased dramatically, providing more competition between better actors for roles. Because of the increase in quality, they were able to attract new qualified staff members dedicated to establishing a regional theater.⁵⁹ Vetrie developed the Phoenix Theatre Concept, a professional/amateur hybrid model. Professional actors retained on annual contracts staffed the theater school, training amateur actors for PLT performances as well as starring in their own performances. The professional faculty and amateurs worked together on community outreach programs, and occasionally on PLT performances, for which the theater compensated contracted staff. The success was short-

⁵⁸ Levi Strauss Correspondence, 1958, Box 1 Folder 14, Orpheus Male Chorus Records; Gooding, "High Spirits," July 22, 1958; Stacey, "They Pay to Sing," 10-13, 34-35; 1958 Trip, 1958, Box 1 Folder 20, Orpheus Male Chorus Records; Michael Foley to Ralph Hess, November 10, 1964, Box 3 Folder 47, Orpheus Male Chorus Records; Marlin K. Tabb to Orpheus Male Chorus, June 1964, Box 3 Folder 47, Orpheus Male Chorus Records.

⁵⁹ Michael Vetrie, "Goals Realized 1976-1977 Season," 13 March 1978, MS 39, Phoenix Little Theatre Records, Arizona Historical Society – Papago Park, Tempe, AZ.

lived, and by December 1979 Vetrie and five key staff members quit, citing financial difficulties and artistic differences with the board.⁶⁰

By the 1980s, the PLT was able to take its first major steps towards professionalizing. The board hired Tom Oldendick in May 1980, who brought back the momentum by mixing popular musicals with hit Broadway dramas and comedies, staging a summer mini-season, and performing in other venues like the Scottsdale Center for the Performing Arts. He signed the first agreement with Actor's Equity, bringing in experienced, union actors. Oldendick's successor Michael Mitchell dropped 'Little' from the name in 1993, rebranding as the Phoenix Theatre. He explained though the group was no longer a community theater, "we will always be the community's theater."⁶¹ Theatre alumnus Bob Sorenson observed, "Phoenix used to be a place that performers left when they graduated college. In the '90s, it became a place to stay. A lot of very talented people stayed." The PLT had grown into a professional organization befitting Phoenix's size and status, but remained committed to its community theater origins.⁶²

The Phoenix Theatre is one example of the professional theater renaissance occurring in the city. The Arizona Theatre Company (ATC) formed in Tucson in 1966 as the Arizona Civic Theatre and professionalized in 1972, when they began hiring Actor's Equity performers. Its first Phoenix performance was in 1978, the year they became the

⁶⁰ Michael Vetrie, "Theatre Phoenix Concept," 1977, Box 2 Folder 19, Phoenix Little Theatre Collection; Hardy Price, "Phoenix Little Theatre Director Resigns Over Dispute," *Arizona Republic*, September 12, 1978.

⁶¹ Kerry Lengel, "Arizona's Rock of Ages," *Arizona Republic*, August 15, 2010.

⁶² Oldendick and Uithoven, "Phoenix Little Theatre," 64-68; Lengel, "Arizona's Rock of Ages."

Arizona Theatre Company, and five years later it began offering full seasons in Phoenix and Tucson. In 1990, Governor Rose Mofford designated ATC the State Theatre of Arizona. They perform classic and contemporary plays and musicals, as well as premiering new works. Similarly the Actors Theatre Phoenix formed in 1986 using Actor's Equity performers, hoping to become Phoenix's main professional theater group. According to the group, critics were prejudiced against the company in its early seasons because they used local performers; it was hard to imagine any talented actors had remained in the Valley. At first they were forced to keep casts small to cut costs, as salaries were the highest costs in a production's budget. In 1989 both groups moved into the new Herberger Theatre Center, located just north of Symphony Hall. Professional actors had two more opportunities to perform for Phoenix theaters, and the city could cultivate the top local talent and attract more professional actors, improving theatrical quality.⁶³

Through the 1980s, other groups, like the PSO, pushed to create professional, full-time organizations that retained top talent, but the process was shaky. The PSA hired conductor Theo Alcantara in 1978 to implement a seven-year plan upgrading the PSO to a full-time, professional operation, reflected in quality and salary. The symphony managed to operate successfully through 1983, when it made the transition to three-year contracts and daytime rehearsals. The contracts cost an additional \$6.5 million, but the board only planned to fundraise for \$5.4 million, creating a deficit that spiraled so badly

⁶³ "Decade by Decade: An Overview of ATC's 35 Years," *Arizona Theatre Company*, accessed July 15, 2001, <http://www.arizonatheatre.org/>; "Our History," *Actors Theatre*, accessed May 3, 2002, <http://www.atphx.org/>; VanderMeer, *Phoenix Rising*, 117.

the symphony would fold by March 1985. After several administrative changes, bank loans, community fundraising, donations from real estate developers, and pay cuts, the symphony survived.⁶⁴

Other professionalizing groups faced similar crises, though not as severe, and for many groups every season could have been the last in the late 1980s through early 1990s. The problem was not unique to Phoenix, and in 1983 the Ford Foundation formed the National Arts Stabilization Fund, contributing \$7 million towards helping theater, dance, symphonic, and opera groups find firm financial footing. The Andrew W. Mellon and Rockefeller Foundations also contributed \$1.5 million and \$500,000, respectively. In 1986 the organization brought the National Arts Stabilization program to Arizona, its only statewide venture. Arizona's Flinn Foundation and business leaders allocated the funds to eligible institutions statewide without help from public funding. The program had rigorous standards and brought experts to teach leadership business strategies and long-term planning, providing the city not only with professional arts groups but economically vital programs.⁶⁵

The program benefitted nine institutions including the PSO, Arizona Opera Company (AOC), ATC, and Actors Theatre Phoenix, totaling \$5.7 million statewide. In 1991, the AOC received a five-year, \$323,000 grant, helping with some of the \$100,000 debt it accrued by the end of the 1990-1991 season. Despite the grants, the AOC and

⁶⁴ Michael Dixon, "Securing the Symphony's Success," *Phoenix Magazine*, February 1985, 87; Michael Dixon, "Saving the Symphony," *Phoenix Magazine*, July 1985, 58, 140.

⁶⁵ Kathleen Teltsch, "Fund to Stabilize Arts is Organized," *New York Times*, July 25, 1983; Edward Lebow, "Edifice Complex," *Phoenix New Times*, March 1, 2001.

ATC had not retired their debts by 1996, and both turned to the community to raise the remaining money funds (\$100,000 for Opera and \$83,000 for ATC). The PSO was able to recover its \$700,000 debt by 1999. According to one board member from the Arizonans for Cultural Development lobby, “Basically, they forced these institutions into being good business people.”⁶⁶ A combination of the NAS fund, other arts grants, government funding, and community support saved Phoenix’s professional groups.⁶⁷

Where there were once only a few opportunities for performers to practice their talents, the Valley grew to host a rich variety of performing arts groups. The Arizona Opera, originally the Tucson Opera Company, was founded in 1971 and began offering programs in Phoenix and Tucson in 1976 in Symphony Hall. In 1986 three struggling ballet companies from Phoenix and Tucson – Phoenix Ballet, Arizona Dance Theatre, and Ballet West Arizona – merged into Ballet Arizona, which now joins the PSO and Arizona Opera at Symphony Hall. Additionally, the area had developed a flourishing choral music community over the years, featuring the Orpheus Male Chorus, ASU Choral Union, Phoenix Symphony Chorus, Arizona Masterworks Chorale, Phoenix Bach Choir, and Phoenix Boys Choir, many of which formed midcentury or earlier.⁶⁸ Phoenix had

⁶⁶ Lebow, “Edifice Complex.”

⁶⁷ James Reel, “Arts Groups Holding Up, Yet Seek New Ways to Bang Tin Cup,” *Arizona Daily Star*, April 12, 1992; James Reel, “Arizona Opera Company Gets \$323,261 Stabilization Grant,” *Arizona Daily Star*, January 24, 1991; Raina Wagner, “Arizona Opera, ATC Explore Paths to Escape Budget Pinch,” *Arizona Daily Star*, June 26, 1996; Christopher Reardon, “The Arts Mean Business,” *Ford Foundation Report* (1999), <http://www.creardon.com/archives/FFR/FFR22.html>.

⁶⁸ “About,” *Arizona Opera*, accessed November 5, 2013, <http://azopera.org/about/>; “About the Company: Ballet Arizona,” *The Kennedy Center*, accessed November 5, 2013, <http://www.kennedy->

developed a corps of dedicated artists by the 2000s, but organizations still struggled to find a consistent support system beyond their love for their craft. They needed major support from all segments of the community.

Conclusion

By the 2000s the older groups were well established as long-standing Valley institutions, and new groups and venues continued arriving. When artists arrived in the Valley before the war, there were few opportunities for professional development and hardly any groups or venues to showcase performances. Early performers and music educators created groups like the Musicians Club to help students hone their skills. Establishing a performing arts culture in the early decades made it easier for postwar groups to find some trained amateur talent, but only when Phoenix had a critical mass of performers could it host professional, full-time operations. Once the city was large enough to sustain multiple groups, venues, and audiences, performers had a variety of avenues to explore, ranging from the professional Phoenix Symphony Orchestra to the offbeat Nearly Nude Theatre to groups that serve specific communities like the Black Theatre Troupe. Phoenix's performing arts were as good as the artists, and as the city grew it was better able to foster that talent and signal cultural maturity. Civic leaders and cultural stewards have always known that performing arts groups are key to making Phoenix cosmopolitan; however, the definition of "performance art" is a constant negotiation between performers, patrons, and audiences. As was the case with all of these groups, artistic vision was only as good as the support behind it.

CHAPTER 3

PATRONS, VENUES, AND POLITICS

Important aspects of Phoenix's development can be traced to a few key individuals with the resources and influence to create the city they wanted. They took advantage of postwar prosperity to shape their ideal city, inspired by regional and national urban models. Civic leaders hoped to create a city based on Eastern definitions that would impress the nation; however, Phoenix's history, size, ecology and economy made its urban development different than in those older cities. The vast amount of surrounding land discouraged vertical growth, population density, and a centralized downtown. Although these conditions made it difficult to build a concentrated city center, the desert attracted the defense industry, which used the relatively uninhabited areas to test products – particularly useful for aeronautics companies like Goodyear. After the war these companies shifted to producing consumer electronics, encouraging thousands to relocate to sunny Phoenix for its job opportunities and recreational adventures. Civic leaders wanted to expand these prospects and created a deliberate and strategic vision to continue Phoenix's economic and cultural growth until it became a major urban center.

Phoenix leaders actively supported the performing arts, not only as patrons and audience members but sometimes as performers too. Like many other cities, wealthy Anglo civic leaders founded Phoenix's arts and cultural institutions – what sociologist Paul DiMaggio termed “cultural capitalists.”⁶⁹ Wealthy patrons often privately funded cultural institutions based on their personal collections, such as the Heard and the Heard

⁶⁹ Paul DiMaggio, “Cultural Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth Century Boston,” in Paul DiMaggio, ed., *Nonprofit Enterprise in the Arts: Studies in Mission and Constraint* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1986), 41-61.

Museum, and Valley National Bank president Walter Bimson's Phoenix Art Museum, thus dictating content through their own interests. Culture was important to them, and it was important that others saw them and their city as cultured. In creating a performing arts culture, patrons founded and ran organizations, built venues, and fostered financial support. Through their activities on the boards of directors, patrons fostered community outreach, civic connections and private donations for their organizations and provided performers the infrastructure necessary to develop quality organizations. As the organizations and the city grew, patrons had an increasingly difficult time determining what their groups needed to become artistically talented, financially stable, and culturally significant. Because many of the people populating the boards were also managing other aspects of the city, civic leaders used the performing arts to signal civic and cultural maturity, thereby serving the growth agenda.

Early Boosters

Early Phoenix may have lacked performers, audiences, and venues, but whatever scene it had resulted from the efforts of promoters determined to provide Phoenicians with the cultural amenities befitting a city. The Musicians Club, noted earlier for its efforts to cultivate local talent was also the greatest supporter of the performing arts in Phoenix's early decades. Their mission went beyond improving its members' interests, hoping to also "advance the interests and promote the culture of musical art in Phoenix."⁷⁰ They used their performances to advance civic causes, fundraising for local

⁷⁰ "Musicians' Club Great Factor in City's Culture," *Arizona Republican*, January 1, 1922.

hospitals and liberty bonds, greeting winter visitors, and providing scholarships.⁷¹ Club member Blanche Korrick arrived from New York in 1921, the wife of downtown's Korrick's Department Store owner Charles Korrick. Classically trained in music in Chicago and New York, she hoped to bring music to the city by joining the club and inviting people over for refreshments while hosting a local musical talent. Phoenixians came to enjoy these recitals, and fifty to seventy-five people listened to the city's best musicians in the Korricks' living room or garden.

Another woman with classical music training fostered public music performances. Mrs. Archer E. (Jessie) Linde, "the pioneer of the good things of the Phoenix concert stage," had Phoenixians coming out in droves to see the hottest talents.⁷² As a concert manager, booking agent, and ticket seller, Linde heavily influenced the cultural programming of the city, travelling 485,000 miles during her career to scout the best musical talents and bring them to the desert. A Midwesterner, she suffered from arthritis and like many early Phoenixians hoped the desert air would offer relief. Linde joined the Musicians Club and in 1939 agreed to help piano teacher Cornelia Hulburd run the Musical Events civic organization. This led to the Mrs. Archer E. Linde Concert Series, which presented the Ballet Russe, Charles Laughton, Leonard Bernstein, H. G. Wells, Liberace and other stars. Linde somehow convinced top talents to come to Phoenix (still the middle of nowhere), perform in the high school auditorium, and stay in her home. She came to exemplify what it meant to be an arts patron in midcentury Phoenix, pouring her

⁷¹ Kirkland, "Musicians Club," [ca. 1952], Musicians Club Records.

⁷² Charlotte Buchen, "Phoenix's Own Mrs. Archer E. Linde," *Point West*, December 1959, 33.

time and resources into every step of the process, from negotiating bookings to driving performers to their destinations. Before there were formal organizations with their own managerial staff, there was Mrs. Linde.⁷³

One of the city's major limitations in attracting performing artists was the lack of a suitable venue, for the high school auditorium was the only facility of any size with reasonable acoustics. The first attempt at a municipal civic center came as early as 1917, with Dwight Heard and a few others trying to obtain the land from a demolished central Phoenix school as part of a City Beautiful project. This civic center would have joined other public buildings to create a centralized municipal building block. The public killed the plan when it voted overwhelmingly against a \$50,000 bond to build the center.⁷⁴ Civic leaders did not discuss the idea again until 1940 when Mrs. Heard donated her land at Central and McDowell to the city. Mrs. Heard suggested the city erect a library, an art museum, and a venue for the Phoenix Little Theatre on the land. Barry Goldwater, then a young merchant running his family's department store Goldwater's, organized a drive for public funds, but had to abandon the project with the outbreak of World War II.⁷⁵

Postwar Optimism

The Valley was home to several military bases during the war, hosting thousands of troops who looked to Phoenix for entertainment. The region also attracted military

⁷³ Ibid., 33, 51; Stocker, "Mrs. Archer Linde," 95; Community and Civic Concert Series Programs, 1936-1952, Ephemera Collection.

⁷⁴ "A Passing Opportunity," *Arizona Republican*, January 27, 1917; "Civic Center to Come Before the University Club," *Arizona Republican*, January 29, 1917; "The First Phase," *Arizona Republican*, February 4, 1917.

⁷⁵ Stephen C. Shadegg, "Strictly Personal," in Oldendick and Uithoven, *Phoenix Little Theatre*, 29.

industry, with Goodyear Aircraft Corporation arriving in Litchfield Park in 1941 followed by AiResearch. After the war manufacturers shifted their focus to Cold War defense products and consumer electronics while more firms relocated to the Valley to take advantage of its good weather, outdoor recreation, open spaces, and business-friendly tax laws. Electronics plants like Motorola were ideally suited to the region, as they needed little water, were environmentally friendly, and created easily shipped products. Additionally, they brought well-trained, middle class workers and their families into the city.⁷⁶

Leaders wanted to maximize the boom's potential, and growth became both ideology and reality. Local government pushed geographic expansion, middle-class housing, industrial recruitment, and airport and highway improvements. Phoenix jumped 311 percent in population between 1950-1960, and grew from seventeen square miles to 187 square miles in the same period.⁷⁷ Annexation played a large part in these increases as the city gobbled up surrounding areas, increasing tax revenues and retaining human capital. John Beatty, who served as city planner for two decades, said leaders wanted to prevent businesses and residents from relocating to the suburbs. They annexed because, "We didn't want white flight, or brain drain, or whatever you call it."⁷⁸ Decentralizing war industries remained a national policy during the Cold War as a safety measure, and Phoenix actively courted businesses hoping to bring more industries to the wide Valley.

⁷⁶ Luckingham, *Phoenix*, 153-157.

⁷⁷ *County and City Data Book, 1962* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1962), table 6.

⁷⁸ Michael T. Kaufman, "Phoenix, Ariz., Grows to Be Bigger Than Chicago," *Sarasota Herald-Tribune* (Sarasota, FL), June 27, 1975.

The Valley lacked the necessary talent for skilled jobs, making it hard to compete with larger metropolitan areas; however, companies found if they posted a job notice for employees, they had a hundred qualified applicants willing to relocate immediately. As one journalist described it in 1972, “Everybody, but everybody, wanted to move to Phoenix and Arizona.”⁷⁹

The city hurried to meet the demands of its new residents. Housing and infrastructure became top priorities, allowing real estate developers and bankers to rise as the new civic elite. Because of ineffective government before and during the war, business and professional leaders began taking control of government operations by ousting incompetent officials and suggesting candidates who shared their economic vision. The nonpartisan Charter Government Committee successfully directed Phoenix politics for decades, nominating candidates who were committed to building the economy, not serving as career politicians. A list of CGC members boasts the most influential leaders in Phoenix, and the same people often led cultural institutions’ boards and topped donor lists. Though many genuinely loved the arts, and some were artists themselves, the performing arts fit the vision of the CGC. Therefore with these goals of attracting firms and human capital, they needed culture.

The formation of the Phoenix Symphony Association on May 20, 1947 reflects that ambition. As five of the eight board members of the new Association met in the Professional Building to sign the articles of incorporation. Board president Dr. Howell Randolph asserted, “This is a project that will contribute much to the already

⁷⁹ Edward H. Peplow, Jr., “The Four C’s to Cosmopolis: From Cow-Town Capital to a Cosmopolitan Center in Less than Three Decades,” *Phoenix Magazine*, August 1972, 71.

cosmopolitan atmosphere of our city and it should have the backing of every Phoenician.”⁸⁰ The board’s goals for improving the city’s culture and expanding its reputation were clear though their initial aspirations were regional, looking to become “the finest in the Southwest.” Given the city’s size just after the war and before the boom, it was wise to keep aspirations realistic.⁸¹

Following the first two successful seasons, the board felt it had a better sense of the direction the symphony should take: for the PSO to truly be a Phoenician institution, it needed a resident leader with community ties through a teaching position at nearby Arizona State College. Despite rave reviews for John Barnett, the board told him not to apply for the position, and speaking to the musicians before the last concert, Barnett claimed he would never apply to a job for which he had already proven himself. His reaction to his dismissal underscored the conflicting priorities of board and conductor. In his speech to the orchestra before his last concert in April 1949, Barnett claimed his dismissal stemmed, first, from his failure to attend a PSA party held after violinist Sidney Tretick’s performance in the second concert December 27, 1948. He wanted the party to be moved to the evening before the concert so he was not so tired. A second set of complaints involved his advocacy for performers: he rejected the proposal to broadcast concerts and not pay the orchestra extra, and he complained about the lack of dressing rooms and hotel accommodations for out-of-town performers.⁸²

⁸⁰ “Phoenix Symphony Group Incorporates,” *Arizona Republic*, May 21, 1947.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² “Barnett Fired as Orchestra Head He Says” *Arizona Republic*, April 26, 1949.

Barnett's grievances highlight the difference between the better-developed Los Angeles symphonies the conductor was used to, and the PSO's fragile state. Barnett gave the PSO credibility with a highly credentialed conductor who could professionally develop the musicians, but the PSA wanted a leader who could also promote and facilitate the organization. The board's desire for a resident conductorship matched their goals for a truly local operation. A resident conductor would provide full-time quality leadership, promote music in the Valley, and demonstrate its residents' musical talent. Barnett's controversial dismissal was only the first of many battles between conductors and the PSA; the board's new visions of development often dovetailed with social conflicts due to unclear expectations.

The reputation of the PLT, the second major cultural group, grew nationally as the oldest continually operating community playhouse. The operation was almost entirely volunteer-based, with only six paid staff members during the 1960s. The Board of Trustees comprised five lifetime members, while 25 civic leaders served three-year terms on the Board of Directors. The last names of the board members often matched the names of the businesses advertising in the programs. Programs were bursting with advertisements for Valley National Bank, First National Bank, Porters Store, Rosenzweig's, Goldwater's, Korricks, Diamond's, and other local businesses. Not only were the actors, crew, and staff community volunteers, but donors also shared an interest in supporting the community theater.⁸³

⁸³ "Phoenix Little Theatre, Phoenix, Arizona," *ENCORE: The Community Theatre Magazine*, September 1964, 17-19; Phoenix Little Theatre programs, 1955-1963, Phoenix Little Theatre Collection.

The Orpheus Male Chorus formed under the auspices of the YMCA and did not have the same social connections as the PSO and PLT. When Ralph Hess became director in 1947, he began building relationships with the business world by selling full advertisements in concert programs instead of listing Business Associates and performing for the Phoenix Jaycees' annual rodeo. A Rotary Club member, Hess had the group perform frequently for the Phoenix, Tempe, and Mesa Rotary Clubs, as well as the Elks, Kiwanis Club, and a few Women's Club chapters, where they were exposed to the same people supporting the symphony and theater. The OMC had the benefit of showcasing a highly portable talent and could permeate the community easily to gain exposure and sponsorships. The OMC, like the PSO and PLT, built a strong cultural presence through the 1950s, but Phoenix needed to increase its artistic legitimacy beyond amateur groups in multi-use rooms.⁸⁴

Building the Stage

Civic leaders' most visible achievements from the 1950s through 1970s were the venues they commissioned, which became Valley attractions in their own right. In addition to fulfilling a primary duty of the board to find space for its performers, patrons understood that a physical site provided a strong, cultural symbol. Inclusion of the PLT into the Civic Center plans, the PSO's use of Arizona State University's state-funded auditorium, and the city-built Civic Plaza/Convention Center in 1972 substantially

⁸⁴ Butler, "Orpheus Male Chorus," 21-22.

improved the city's artistic features.⁸⁵ However, while the theater and Symphony Hall are both downtown, they are one and a half miles apart, diffusing the arts district. The condition of the existing venues was so poor and funding limited, so civic leaders built when and where they could. Patrons needed to meet the growing audience's needs and build adequate venues for their groups, but the timing, location, and size of their venues were largely constrained by finances.

Postwar efforts by Phoenix leaders to revive the civic center project (their third try) included naming this incarnation the Arizona War Memorial Center at the Phoenix Civic Center. Lawyer and major civic leader Frank Snell headed the Civic Center Association, a group of professionals dedicated to completing the project. The project centered on a new central branch for the Phoenix Public Library, which had outgrown the space at the Carnegie Library as early as 1920, when the city had quadrupled in size in eight years. The city accepted the traditional responsibility for funding the library, using bond issues in 1938 and 1948, but it had no tradition of supporting art and theater facilities, so that two major Valley leaders spearheaded these efforts. Valley National Bank president Walter Bimson had long been advocating for an art museum, and he offered his personal collection, which, in addition to materials gathered during the WPA Art Project, would become the basis of the Phoenix Art Museum. PLT president Stephen C. Shadegg asked the PLT's Board of Trustees, led by former Standard Brands vice president and bibliophile Alfred Knight, to secure a long-term lease from the Civic Center Association to build a theater. Shadegg was a man of many talents – thespian,

⁸⁵ The project was originally called Civic Plaza, but the site is now called the Phoenix Convention Center and Venues. This paper uses its current name to make the distinction between the 1970s Convention Center sites and the 1950s Civic Center sites.

publicist, campaign strategist, and head of a pharmaceutical manufacturing firm – and he used his interdisciplinary background to convince the investors, architects, artists, and public that Phoenix needed a new theater. He appealed to the Civic Center Association and the public by presenting the PLT as a civic institution whose continued future would be the result of community enterprise, simply stating, “The Little Theatre belongs to Phoenix.”⁸⁶

The PLT needed to raise \$120,000 for its four hundred-seat venue. After Snell secured a lease for the PLT, Knight and the Civic Center Association committed \$50,000 with the stipulation the PLT must raise a matching amount. Shadegg and the PLT board sold \$70,000 worth of debenture bonds in \$25, \$50, and \$100 denominations bearing 3 percent interest payable annually that would retire in twenty years. Every year, the PLT board drew on its profits to pay the principal and interest on the obligations. Shadegg made careful budget calculations to ensure the board’s primary financial obligation was to the bondholders, noting, “In its twenty-three years of operation, the Little Theatre production schedule has never required subsidy. Operating income has always been sufficient to meeting operating expense.”⁸⁷ Though Shadegg estimated the new theater would net an annual surplus of \$2,085 including repayments, the bond obligations would remain a crucial aspect of the PLT’s budget until their repayment. Shadegg had friends at the Arizona Planning Mill create a design for the theater within the \$120,000 budget,

⁸⁶ Shadegg, “Strictly Personal,” 29; Michael Clancy, “Library of the Century,” *Arizona Republic*, June 14, 1998; Stephen C. Shadegg to the Phoenix Little Theatre Board, 14 June 1948, Box 9 Folder 14, Stephen C. Shadegg Papers; “A New Little Theatre for Phoenix,” [ca. 1950], Box 9 Folder 13, Stephen C. Shadegg Papers.

⁸⁷ Operating budget, [ca. 1950], Box 9 Folder 13, Stephen C. Shadegg Papers.

which he then presented to the Civic Center's architect Alden Dow, who agreed to the plans. Finally, he had friends of the theater buy and store the building materials before the Korean War threatened supply. Phoenix's wealthy and well-connected leaders gave the city its much-needed theater, and a Civic Center that would remain a key component in the city's cultural life.⁸⁸

The Civic Center project was a major step for the performing arts and cultural institutions, but the city still lacked a large, public auditorium. The PLT controlled their theater, and even if there was an open night during productions, the theater only sat four hundred. The Phoenix Union High School auditorium sat about two thousand, and people often could not buy tickets because seating filled quickly. Mrs. Archer E. Linde, at this time a thirty-year veteran of the Phoenix arts scene and the most ardent and persistent advocate for a larger cultural venue, succinctly described the progress on the auditorium: "Oh that! The men are at it now, and it's talk, talk, talk. When they get through talkin', the women will get the auditorium!"⁸⁹ Linde wanted to bring artistic groups like the Los Angeles Light Opera and the Sadlers Wells ballet to Phoenix, but the PUHS auditorium could not accommodate such productions. She specified that her ideal auditorium would be away from downtown traffic, have spacious parking, be along a bus line, and would

⁸⁸ "A New Little Theatre for Phoenix," Stephen C. Shadegg Papers; Shadegg, "Strictly Personal," 29-31.

⁸⁹ Buchen, "Phoenix's Own," 51.

only seat about 2,700 – anything larger would impair the acoustics. Mrs. Linde saw this ideal auditorium completed before her death in 1965, only it was in the wrong city.⁹⁰

Grady Gammage Memorial Auditorium's origin stories are numerous and intriguing. Arizona State president Grady Gammage's postwar plans had long included an auditorium to be located in the southwest corner of campus along US Route 60, now Apache Boulevard.⁹¹ In 1957 Gammage went to Taliesin West to meet with Frank Lloyd Wright about designing an auditorium, and Wright was excited at the prospect of designing a public building for his adopted home state, after the government recently rejected his redesign for the state capitol. At that time Wright was working on plans for an opera house and cultural center in Baghdad, but when the King Faisal II was assassinated during the 14 July Revolution in 1958, Wright had to scrap the plans. Gammage admitted he was unable to guarantee funding for the auditorium, but Wright was committed to helping Arizona State assert itself as a major university after Arizonans passed Proposition 200 in 1958, transforming the College into Arizona State University. At the convocation for Gammage Auditorium, Mrs. Frank Lloyd Wright recounted how her husband never made plans without promise of payment, but he liked Gammage, and believed he would make this auditorium happen.⁹²

⁹⁰ Reynolds, *Golden Age of Theaters*, 116; Hermine Megargee, "It's an Impresario's Job to Know Who's Who," *Arizona Republic*, March 28, 1954.

⁹¹ The auditorium would replace Victory Village, which since 1946 temporarily housed veterans and their families in trailer homes, as residence halls were full. "The New ASU Story," *ASU Libraries*, last modified December 2001, <http://www.asu.edu/lib/archives/asustory/index.html>.

⁹² Joseph M. Siry, "Wright's Baghdad Opera House and Gammage Auditorium: In Search of Regional Modernity," *College Art Association* 87, no. 2 (June 2005): 270,

Others also saw the value in building a major auditorium on ASU's campus. Frank Snell, banker Rex Staley, and retailer Robert Herberger agreed to help their friend Gammage carry out the project. After Lewis Ruskin and Walter Bimson promised to underwrite the initial fees, Wright modified the Baghdad design to include plazas, greenery, lakes, a band shell, a parking garage, and buildings for the music, graphic design, and fine arts departments. When Wright died in April 1959, Ruskin wondered about scrapping the idea. *Arizona Republic* and *Phoenix Gazette* publisher Eugene C. Pulliam agreed ASU should have an auditorium, and supported bringing the plans to the Arizona Board of Regents. The regents were initially skeptical: Wright's designs were controversial, and concerned citizens bombarded newspapers with their opinions. Ruskin, Bimson, and Gammage made concessions and rearranged budgets, only asking the Board of Regents to fund functional buildings, not aesthetic pieces like a statue atop the auditorium's dome. Sadly, Gammage died ten days after presenting the revised proposal to the regents in December 1959. In April 1960, the regents finally agreed to fund the project and appointed Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation architects under William Wesley Peters to draft plans for the \$2.46 million auditorium. Construction began on May 23, 1962, when Gammage's son Grady Jr. broke ground with a ceremonial shovel.⁹³

281-283; Olgivanna Lloyd Wright in "Convocation Dedicating Grady Gammage Memorial Auditorium," September 16, 1964, Ephemera Collection.

⁹³ Dean Smith, *Grady Gammage: ASU's Man of Vision* (Tempe, AZ: Arizona State University, 1989), 201; "A Wright Design Divides Arizona," *New York Times*, July 5, 1959; "About ASU Gammage," *ASU Gammage*, accessed November 4, 2013, <http://asugammage.com/about>; Tim J. Kelly, "No Small Dream," *Arizona Days and Ways*, November 29, 1964, 28-31.

Gammage Auditorium opened on September 16, 1964 to wide public acclaim. Governor Paul Fannin declared, “It will be one of Arizona’s greatest tourist attractions. It is said that visitors will most want to see two things when they visit our state – the Grand Canyon, and the Gammage Auditorium.” At the groundbreaking ceremony, Mrs. Wright praised the “spirit of men who fought for an ideal and won.”⁹⁴ Gammage and Wright garner the most praise for the auditorium as the primary driver and designer, but the support of powerful and determined citizens was essential to creating the political support and pressure to bring the vision to reality.⁹⁵

Gammage changed the possibilities for attracting and featuring top performing arts groups in the Valley, but if anything, this accentuated Phoenix’s need to build its own cultural center. To accomplish this, leaders in Phoenix, following development ideas generated in other cities, linked the auditorium/concert hall project with plans for a convention center to spearhead downtown redevelopment. In 1960 the Citizens’ Action Committee, comprised of civic leaders, had commissioned Stanford Research Institute to conduct an economic study that established the need for an auditorium and made planning recommendations. The group concluded Phoenix’s facilities were inadequate for attracting larger conventions (those with over two thousand delegates), and the city would need a center featuring an arena-convention hall, an exhibition hall, a theater, an assembly hall, and meeting rooms. If Phoenix wanted to compete with other cities to host

⁹⁴ Kelly, “No Small Dream,” 31.

⁹⁵ Paul Fannin in “Convocation Dedicating Grady Gammage Memorial Auditorium,” September 16, 1964, Ephemera Collection; Kelly, “No Small Dream,” 31.

big conventions – and possibly lure executives to relocate their business – it needed to build a large, state-of-the-art facility.⁹⁶

Gammage was designed, financed, and built in about six years, but the Civic Plaza project (known today as the Phoenix Convention Center and Venues) was municipally funded, not state funded, and took over a decade to finance and plan. City Council tacked a 1 percent sales tax onto hotels and a 0.5 percent sales tax on bars and restaurants, reasoning a convention center would significantly increase visitors patronizing these establishments.⁹⁷ This plan generated some opposition. In 1967 it became the major issue between the Charter Government slate, which supported the tax, and the Representative Citizens' Association of Phoenix slate, which opposed it.⁹⁸

Additional difficulties came from Newton Rosenzweig, who was allied with the CGC group and chairman of the Civic Plaza Building Corporation, and who supported the project but not the tax. He argued that 80-85 percent of bar and restaurant patrons were Phoenicians and revenues would comprise \$800,000 of the \$1 million annual financing costs – hardly fair for the people least likely to use the space. He advocated using general revenues and general obligation bonds, as the city had done with the Civic

⁹⁶ Eric E. Duckstad and Richard H. Raymond, *A Study of Auditorium and County Office Facilities for Maricopa County, Arizona* (Menlo Park, CA: Stanford Research Institute, 1960), 3.

⁹⁷ “Café Owners Hit Tax Boost,” *Phoenix Gazette*, December 1, 1966.

⁹⁸ “A Week’s News in Brief,” *Arizona Republic*, November 19, 1967.

Center and new Municipal Stadium.⁹⁹ Rosenzweig was committed to informing the public about the project's realities, writing countless letters clarifying reporters' facts, advocating saving taxpayer money, and never inflating the project's expected results. Board minutes, editorials, and personal correspondence reflect the vast difference between the civic leaders and the municipal government; the CGC selected the political officers, but these businessmen and professionals continued to run the city. When the CGC slate, featuring project supporters, passed in November 1967 it reiterated Phoenix leadership's influence on the city's cultural direction, and their power as performing arts patrons.¹⁰⁰

A key part of the Convention Center plans included an auditorium that would finally end the reliance on the PUHS and Phoenix Junior College auditoriums. The Stanford group updated their initial study in 1966, noting that Gammage was a valuable addition to the Valley's cultural sites, but arguing Phoenix needed its own civic facility. Gammage was a state university facility in another city. ASU had priority in booking events, and its faculty and students had priority at the box office. When the city was still developing plans for the auditorium in 1965, a group of Phoenicians petitioned the city to name the concert hall 'Linde Hall' in honor of Mrs. Archer E. Linde. City Council instead chose the generic Symphony Hall to avoid offending other arts patrons. However the Hall's Green Room features a portrait of Linde and plaque praising her work as a

⁹⁹ Newton Rosenzweig to Thurman Johns, 11 January 1967, Box 2 Folder 32, FM MSS 119, Newton Rosenzweig Papers, Arizona Collection, Arizona State University Libraries, Tempe, AZ.

¹⁰⁰ "Week's News in Brief."

“talented and tireless impresario.” Symphony Hall and Civic Plaza finally opened in 1972 after a decade of wrangling.¹⁰¹

The original plans for the Convention Center had also included a theater, but this aspect of the plan was dropped when the Phoenix Little Theatre and Arizona Repertory Theatre joined to create the Phoenix Theatre Center and expand facilities. The alternative, including a theater in the Convention Center site, could have strengthened the artistic footprint in the downtown area, and it might have saved Phoenix’s first chance at a viable professional theater. The Phoenix Theatre Center board consisted of eleven members, each group nominating three representatives plus a controller elected by a majority vote and a Civic Center Management Board member. The three groups maintained separate identities and boards but delegated facilities management to the PTC board, which set prices, scheduled usage, oversaw maintenance, and budgeted funds. ART members felt they lacked PTC executive board representation and claimed their delegates were “illegally nominated by an illegally constituted board of directors.”¹⁰² They discharged their delegates and instead nominated their manager Tom Quillen and two others to the executive board, but the clashing worsened. In May 1966 executive board member Kenneth W. Ball, not a member of the ART delegation, wrote his fellow board members claiming the infighting was due to lack of decisive leadership and “certain dislikes for

¹⁰¹ Eric E. Duckstad, *The Need for Convention-Cultural Facilities in Phoenix – A Reassessment* (Menlo Park, CA: Stanford Research Institute, 1966), 5-6; Kyle Lawson, “City Owes Its Cultural Life to Woman Named Jessie,” *Phoenix Gazette*, November 8, 1992.

¹⁰² “Arizona Repertory Theatre: A Resolution,” 30 March 1966, Box 9 Folder 14, Stephen C. Shadegg Papers.

and intangible jealousies of a group of competent actors.”¹⁰³ Ball suggested the city assume leadership, appointing a new board whose members were invested in the theater and would lease the venue to the three companies. It would have to be that, or the current members would have ignore their biases and focus on the theatre center’s mission. His suggestions came too late: the next day, May 12, ART dissolved their relationship with PLT and PCT.¹⁰⁴

Many of the Phoenix Theatre Center’s issues stemmed from board members struggling to allocate PTC funds among three groups and deciding how to assign the space they all were funding. The dissolution of the Center in 1966 left the PLT paying for the Arizona Repertory Theatre’s renovations, but ART’s leadership needed to find a permanent location to continue staging productions. This dilemma led to changes in ART leadership, and its new manager, Bob Aden, asked the Theatre Center if ART could return, but received no reply. A second possibility involved Richard Charlton, who was planning a performing arts center to save his flailing Sombrero Playhouse after he had lost the financial support from his wife Helena, a Woolworth’s heiress, who died in 1965. ART was unable to negotiate a deal with him, however, and the center soon failed. ART then presented its case at the Governor’s Conference on the Arts and Humanities in January 1967, hoping to become the resident repertory company for the State of Arizona. Walter Bimson agreed to help the group, and they finally found space in a small Baptist

¹⁰³ Kenneth W. Ball to Fred Steiner, 11 May 1966, Box 9 Folder 14, Stephen C. Shadegg Papers.

¹⁰⁴ Charter: Phoenix Theatre Center, September 1, 1965, Box 1 Folder 1, Phoenix Little Theatre Records; Phoenix Theatre Center executive board meeting minutes, May 12, 1966, Box 9 Folder 14, Stephen C. Shadegg Papers.

church on North Central. One *Phoenix Magazine* reporter presciently observed, “Phoenix seems to be in the peculiar position of having an excellent professional company and not knowing quite what to do with it. Let us hope that by fall someone will have found the answer. Or we may find ourselves in the position of having no professional company at all.” The author was right: lacking substantial financial and administrative support, they never found a theater, and the group dissolved.¹⁰⁵

Civic, city, and university leaders worked together through the 1950s and 1960s to create venues befitting a growing city with expanding cultural offerings. The government helped through bond measures, taxes, and other funding, but civic leaders were integral in proposing plans, researching possibilities, mobilizing community support, and using their resources and influence to physically manifest the performing arts in Phoenix’s built environment. The midcentury performing arts venues embodied the vision postwar civic leaders held for making Phoenix into a major urban center replete with the necessary cultural amenities.

Towards Civic Maturity

Phoenix performing arts boards were tasked with organizing and administering groups that would advance the city’s culture, but their efforts were restricted by a lack of talent, audience, funding, and venues in a city constantly growing in population and size. They not only had to foster a vibrant, quality arts scene, but also had to generate enough revenue to keep their groups operating by anticipating the cultural tastes of the audience and convincing donors their cause was worthwhile. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s

¹⁰⁵ Anita Welch, “Homecoming for A.R.T.” *Phoenix Magazine*, May 1967, 19; Reynolds, *Golden Days of Theaters*, 122, 126-127.

boards struggled to accomplish their basic administrative functions and realize their goals. Typically, performing arts boards had ten to thirty members whose duties included: promote the musical or theatrical knowledge of the public through educational activities and performances; establish, maintain, and operate a group of performers; secure loans and bonds; and rent or own, maintain, and operate a suitable venue or venues. Auxiliary groups also performed key roles, like the PLT First Nighters, who volunteered at performances, and the Phoenix Symphony Guild, dedicated to encouraging musical education for local youth and fundraising for the PSO. Fundraising activities included hosting social events like the annual Symphony Ball, which *Phoenix Magazine* declared “traditionally a highlight of the spring season in Phoenix.”¹⁰⁶ The PSO and PLT had numerous supporters serving a variety of functions. Board members are vital to the success of their organizations by directing them towards improvement, but they can also generate problems if too many big personalities believed that only their way was best.¹⁰⁷

The PSA found difficulty defining the role of its auxiliary group. Some members felt the Guild’s primary responsibility was improving the standards for young musicians, but the PSA Board under Ruskin felt all of the Guild’s funds should go towards the PSO

¹⁰⁶ “Orchids to... Phoenix Symphony... Arizona Biltmore...” *Phoenix Magazine*, May 1967, 35.

¹⁰⁷ Articles of Incorporation of Phoenix Symphony Association, May 20, 1947, Box 2 Folder 1, Phoenix Symphony Orchestra Collection; Charter: Phoenix Theatre Center, September 1, 1965, Phoenix Little Theatre Records; Board Minutes, 1978-1979, Box 1 Folder 4, Phoenix Little Theatre Records; Board of Directors, 1979-1983, Box 1 Folder 3, Orpheus Male Chorus Records.

first, and only after that to the youth.¹⁰⁸ Former Guild members Monica Agnew and Jeanne Herberger both described a managerial culture where financial and political leaders made artistic decisions without understanding the consequences; board president was merely “a title to be added to a very busy businessman’s schedule.”¹⁰⁹ The Guild strongly protested dismissing Guy Taylor, believing it would ruin the symphony.¹¹⁰ Agnew recognized the board members truly loved music, and that a good board balances business and artistic goals, but Herberger claimed the board was really “a closed circle of people and there was very little developmental work... it was for the one percent and that was it.”¹¹¹ Twenty years after Barnett’s dismissal, the PSA’s goals were moving past the initial goal of cultivating a musical community towards growing the organization.¹¹²

The PSO’s conductor turnover rate stemmed less from the actual state of the symphony, or disagreements over its artistic vision, and more from personal problems between board members and the conductors. Barnett’s two successors, Hodge and Taylor, both left because of social tensions. Despite seven seasons of largely favorable reviews, board member Lewis Ruskin felt Hodge did not know how to conduct and was “very

¹⁰⁸ Monica Agnew, interview by Bryan Carrol Stoneburner, September 4, 1980 Box 1 Folder 2, transcript, Phoenix Symphony Orchestra Collection.

¹⁰⁹ Jeanne Herberger, interview by Bryan Carrol Stoneburner, May 1, 1980, Box 1 Folder 3, transcript, Phoenix Symphony Orchestra Collection.

¹¹⁰ Richards, interview.

¹¹¹ Herberger, interview.

¹¹² Agnew, interview; Herberger, interview.

amateur.”¹¹³ Ruskin urged the board’s executive committee to investigate Hodge’s credentials, and it discovered that Hodge had lied about receiving his doctorate from the University of Melbourne, having only studied there for three years. Whether Hodge voluntarily resigned or was pressured by the PSA is unclear, but the official story was Hodge accepted an offer to conduct in Yugoslavia, leaving “with the board’s full support.”¹¹⁴ If the board was happy with Hodge’s performance, as it presumably was if they allowed him to stay a final season, Ruskin (one of the symphony’s most generous patrons) must have carried great influence on the board. Revealing their careless mistake would have harmed the board and the symphony’s credibility, so it was beneficial for the PSA and Hodge to keep the details vague; however, it reflected the board’s poorly defined expectations for its conductors and fostered board tensions that would erupt during the next conductor’s tenure.¹¹⁵

Guy Taylor’s dismissal was the most controversial change in leadership. By 1968 Ruskin had served three seasons as PSA president and had been appointed board chairman in 1965, a position he held for fourteen years. When Taylor was fired many board members had no advance knowledge of the decision. Agnew told *Phoenix Magazine* Ruskin wanted a say in programming decisions and convinced the board that

¹¹³ Lewis Ruskin quoted in Roberta Bender, “Turning Up,” *Phoenix Magazine*, October 1979, 69.

¹¹⁴ When Guy Taylor learned his contract would not be renewed, he said he would lie and claim he resigned to study in Europe, explaining this was industry code for ‘fired.’ Taylor, interview; “Offers Abroad Lure Phoenix Conductor,” *Arizona Republic*, May 2, 1958.

¹¹⁵ Bender, “Turning Up,” 69, 164; R. D. Speechley (University of Melbourne) to Bryan Carol Stoneburner, May 27, 1981, Box 1 Folder 6, Phoenix Symphony Orchestra Collection.

most symphonies had an advisory committee, something which the article's author disputed. Agnew argued that, "no conductor worth his salt" would agree to anything but complete autonomy, and that PSA policies reinforced such artistic license.¹¹⁶ Taylor conceded the PSA could do what they pleased, since they paid for everything, but argued that it was unwise for them to make artistic decisions. Ruskin was upset by Taylor's refusal to consider other programming suggestions and spoke ill of Taylor in public and private. Ruskin's vision of Symphony operations differed from what the conductors expected from the position – and sometimes from how the rest of the PSA envisioned board involvement. Agnew commented, "Mr. Ruskin's vision has prevented this orchestra from having its place in the sun that it deserves, because he has no vision, really; he has a vision of the box office."¹¹⁷ Agnew's condemnation of Ruskin's commercialism is complicated, however, by the reality of conditions at the time. Ruskin's "vision of the box office" had made Gammage a reality, thereby quadrupling season ticket sales and allowing for its most successful seasons yet. In a speech to board members PSA president Wade Hampton pointed out Taylor was not totally responsible for the symphony's improvement, and multiple factors (which the board facilitated) contributed to its success, including Gammage, new donors, and professional salaries.

¹¹⁶ Ginger Arlington Hutton, "The Phoenix Symphony: At the Crossroads," *Phoenix Magazine*, August 1968, 12.

¹¹⁷ Agnew, interview.

PSA/PSO leadership suffered in the first two decades because the board struggled to define what the symphony needed as the group and the surrounding city matured.¹¹⁸

The PSO's problems differed from many other city orchestras because it developed with a city undergoing tremendous growth. Taylor said Phoenix's explosiveness attracted him to the job, even though his position with the Nashville Symphony offered better quality musicians.¹¹⁹ Herberger compared the Board's priorities to the city's, claiming: "There weren't any priorities. It's like everything else in this city. The chamber of commerce can say yes to business, that we have a symphony orchestra, yes, we have an art museum, yes, we have the sun, the stars, and the desert. But there was no real interest in doing any more than that... It was like, well, he's the bank president so he can sit on the board. There was no focus and direction; there was [sic] no goals and objectives."¹²⁰ In reality, the Board did have a general vision, if not a specific artistic vision: they knew the symphony was an important part of a sophisticated city, and they knew they wanted the PSO to grow. Two decades and four conductors later the symphony was making progress, with a somewhat professional orchestra and plans for a new concert hall, but they were still stumbling along the path to achieve its goals.

The PSO and the other two cultural institutions also struggled partly because they lacked a reliable funding base. When the OMC was fundraising for their trip to the

¹¹⁸ Hutton, "The Phoenix Symphony," 12; Taylor, interview; Agnew, interview; "Phoenix Symphony Orchestra Season Ticket Sales, 1947-1978," Box 2 Folder 2, Phoenix Symphony Orchestra Collection; Hampton, Statement to Phoenix Symphony Association Board of Directors, Phoenix Symphony Orchestra Collection.

¹¹⁹ Taylor, interview.

¹²⁰ Herberger, interview.

Austrian International Song Festival in 1958, Barry Goldwater, John Rhodes, and Carl Hayden all pointed director Ralph Hess to possible funding sources, including the State Department, the military, and a New York grant program, but none provided any support. Ultimately, the OMC found funding from local Goodyear Tires, publisher Eugene Pulliam, and private donations after a plea in the *Arizona Republic*.¹²¹ In 1966 Governor Samuel P. Goddard created the Arizona Council on Arts and Humanities, later the Arizona Commission on the Arts, complying with the newly created National Endowment for the Arts' mandate that each state create an arts agency to manage funding. The council consisted of 35 appointed officers who distributed state and federal funds, encouraged professional development, fostered opportunities in small communities, and through these actions defined the arts scene in the state. Goddard campaigned on his arts support, advertising in PLT programs that featured his photo and read, "Support the Living Theatre – SAM GODDARD."¹²²

Arizona was one of the last states to create an arts commission, signaling its delayed cultural maturity and reliance on private patronage. In Phoenix, the lines were blurred between artist, donor, private citizen, and public official. For example, Newton Rosenzweig was a founding member of the PSA, served on the CGC and influenced city politics, led the Civic Plaza Building Corporation which built a hall for the PSO, all while

¹²¹ Ralph Hess correspondence, 1958, Box 3 Folder 44, Orpheus Male Chorus Collection; Butler, "Orpheus Male Chorus," 35-38.

¹²² Samuel P. Goddard, "Executive order No. 66-1: Arizona Council on the Arts and Humanities," January 24, 1966, Executive Orders, GV 1.3:E 93/1966, Law and Research Library, Arizona State Library, Archives, and Public Records, Phoenix, AZ; Samuel P. Goddard, "Executive order No. 66-8: Arizona Commission on the Arts and Humanities," November 16, 1966, Executive Orders; Phoenix Little Theatre programs, 1962-1963, Box 6 Folder 64, Phoenix Little Theatre Collection.

running a successful family jewelry business, which he advertised for in various programs. Boards turned to government and philanthropic support through bond drives and foundation grants when necessary, but they strived to create strong organizations that generated enough revenue to sustain operating costs. The arts commission aided the state's cultural development and grew as the National Endowment for the Arts program expanded and Arizona's government committed more money to programs. By 1975 Arizona performing arts programs had received just over one million dollars from federal and state grants through the agency.¹²³ Still, government funding had been slow arriving and relatively limited, so during the two decades following the war civic leaders built and supported the arts scene they wanted. Once they were gone, Phoenix would need government agencies, or new patrons, if its institutions were going to survive.

A New Generation of Patrons

Losing the first generation of arts supporters, a poor economy, and rising cultural expectations in the 1970s made it difficult for performing arts groups to earn community support. Phoenix had grown exponentially since the 1950s, and it was now competing with the nation's top urban centers for business. Through that time civic leaders maintained the growth vision but lost the steps they needed to get there. Instead of creating a diverse economy with high-tech firms supported by a strong educational system, leaders allowed unplanned growth and prioritized quantity of students over quality of education. Further, they ignored programs like the arts – a civic feature that intrigued high-tech executives like Motorola's Dan Noble – in recruiting tech firms to the

¹²³ "Arizona Commission on the Arts and Humanities Annual Report to the Governor," 1975, Ephemera Collection.

point where, as VanderMeer described it, the “postwar high-tech suburban vision” became a “fixed stare.” Phoenix was too fragmented for leaders to control all of the pieces of the vision.¹²⁴

In 1975, Margaret Hance became the first non-Charter Government candidate to become mayor, while four of the six city council seats were also won by independents, effectively ending the CGC’s influence. Through the CGC, the elite had controlled city policies, pushing their vision of what the city should look like. Political change came, in part, because the city had expanded for so far in space and population – the city spanned three hundred square-miles and included 750,000 people – that the old elite no longer expressed an agreed upon vision.

A second part of the change involved the economy. The industries that helped Phoenix grow were collapsing by the 1970s and 1980s: the rush of skilled employees and high-tech firms plateaued, construction companies overbuilt, and local businesses like Korrick’s and Goldwater’s were absorbed by large chains. Businesses and employees found cities like Austin and San Diego more desirable. Such changes had an impact on the arts, for as local leaders retired or died arts organizations lost their top patrons, and others did not automatically fill their positions. National chains were not invested in Phoenix’s community arts scene, so when the old elite left private funding decreased. In order to continue performing, groups turned to government funding to compensate for the loss. Federal and state spending on the arts had increased since the NEA and Arizona Commission on the Arts in the mid-1960s, so there was more aid available beyond the local elite. However, new civic leaders, now largely public officials, needed to promote

¹²⁴ VanderMeer, *Desert Visions*, 296.

economic recovery and develop a new strategy, one that would sharpen rather than merely identify Phoenix's strengths. But because leaders built their new vision around a poor economy, and the group lacked the same cultural priorities as the old guard, they abandoned the arts. The performing arts needed a formal commitment from government officials who understood culture's role in the rapidly changing city, but competing interests made it difficult for groups to secure the same level of support. The government – at all levels – became a vital supporter for the arts out of necessity.¹²⁵

The PLT had the greatest difficulties with fundraising. After it failed to professionalize, funding organizations no longer wished to help the flailing theater. The Arizona Commission on the Art felt the PLT was not professional enough to warrant underwriting. The local business community neglected the PLT, not wanting to pour money into an organization that continually proved financial unstable. The PLT owed Valley National Bank \$60,000 from the Theatre Center plan, and additionally owed the Phoenix Art Museum \$20,000 – with no ability to repay either debt. Local sponsors, quick to help before the professionalization debacle, no longer saw the theater as a worthy investment compared to other cultural ventures.¹²⁶

Despite the struggles, the theater continued producing during this time, for it still had an audience and some sponsorship. The theater had been struggling for so long that it was no longer fashionable to fundraise through traditional venues – everyone could assume the PLT always needed more money. In the mid-1970s PLT solicited corporate support for productions by making one business a producer. The company would pay up

¹²⁵ VanderMeer, *Desert Visions*, 304-309, 314.

¹²⁶ Vetrie, "Theatre Phoenix Concept," Phoenix Little Theatre Collection.

front to receive special billing in the program and advertising, for example, “Special Thanks to Our Producer-Sponsor for ‘Barefoot in the Park’ – The Arizona Bank” (September 1975). The program ended when the Ramada Inn withdrew support if the theatre because their name was on a particularly poor production of *Life with Father*. The theatre would have to improve in quality before it could raise more money, and it could not attract the necessary personnel without providing compensation. It was a cultural catch-22. Michael Vetrie demonstrated innovative and successful financial strategies. After his first year as manager, the PLT had a net operating profit of \$20,624 (before loan obligations). Vetrie secured \$43,400 in federal funds from the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act, which provided training for public service jobs, and he was able to hire more staff. Vetrie helped the PLT stabilize and improved its quality during his short tenure, but in a situation reminiscent of Guy Taylor and the PSA, he refused to tolerate the board’s increased encroachment on day-to-day operations and programming choices, and he left the theater.¹²⁷

Phoenix did provide some public support for the arts. Its Parks and Recreation department housed a Music Unit and a Drama Unit, and like the private institutions both were crippled by the poor economy of the late 1970s/early 1980s. Budget cuts eliminated projects like the Lillyput Pops, which provided free monthly concerts for children at the Convention Center featuring a variety of professional artists, and the People’s Pops, the

¹²⁷ Ibid.; “Phoenix Little Theatre Presents Barefoot in the Park,” September 1975, Box 7 Folder 79, Phoenix Little Theatre Collection; Phoenix Little Theatre board minutes, March 7, 1979, Box 1 Folder 4, Phoenix Little Theatre Collection; Bonnie Bartak, “Council Tentatively Approves \$43,400 for Phoenix Little Theatre Program,” *Arizona Republic*, September 12, 1978. Hardy Price, “Phoenix Little Theatre Director Resigns Over Dispute,” *Arizona Republic*, November 9, 1979.

PSO's free monthly concert. The Children's Opera received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, but when the city was unable to provide matching funds in 1979 the group had to return the grant money. Theresa Perez, music coordinator for the city, posed the important question: "Can you measure music and the arts against layoffs? You're going to look like some kind of monster if you say music is as important as people's bread and butter." If the performing arts were going to survive, they needed civil servants like Perez who had a vision of business, government, and the arts working together.¹²⁸

The performing arts found an ally in Terry Goddard, a young lawyer and son of former governor Sam Goddard, who became mayor in 1984. Goddard was the last piece in an evolving administration more representative of Phoenicians, garnering 53.8 percent of the vote in one of the city's most heated mayoral elections. Goddard was an instrumental arts supporter. In 1985 he appointed Edward "Bud" Jacobson, an attorney who had led the Heard Museum and Phoenix Art Museum boards, head of the Phoenix Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on the Arts. The committee formed a five-year plan for the city's arts, which included creating the Phoenix Arts Commission and tagging a percentage of the construction budget for the arts. Previously, support only came from the Arizona Commission on the Arts and Humanities, established by Goddard's father. Some city officials were reluctant to support a commission that would primarily serve

¹²⁸ Michael Dixon, "Music in a Tough Economy: Do Bread and Butter Come First?" *Phoenix Magazine*, April 1981, 72.

downtown, but Goddard and Jacobson, echoing rhetoric from earlier civic leaders, argued the city's tax base would only increase if people found Phoenix livable.¹²⁹

Goddard and his staff were also crucial in creating an official arts district within the city. Phoenix had unofficial arts districts for decades, notably the area including the Heard Museum and the Civic Center, but in 1986 public and private stakeholders formulated a plan to create one recognized and easily accessible district. The Heard and the Civic Center's organizations were the largest supporters from the arts community, as the Phoenix Art Museum, Phoenix Little Theatre, and Phoenix Public Library all hoped the designation would increase funding to improve their facilities, nearing forty years of use. Privately, neighborhood associations particularly representatives from the Willo, Roosevelt, and Alvarado districts, were looking to improve quality of life and maintain property values through the arts district and historic designation. The Roosevelt neighborhood was designated a Special Planning District, and city planners worked to protect its historic integrity while reversing declining trends, eventually creating the Roosevelt Row arts district. The pro-growth elite understood that good neighborhoods attract executives who want to invest in a strong community for their families.¹³⁰

City leaders capitalized on the cultural momentum throughout the 1980s, ensuring groups had solid municipal support, but they were building from a low base. Phoenix

¹²⁹ Joel Nilsson, "Goddard Coasts to Easy Win," *Arizona Republic*, November 2, 1983; E. J. Montini, "Panel Frames Design to Upgrade Art in Phoenix," *Arizona Republic*, April 14, 1985.

¹³⁰ Marshall, "Cultural District Formation," 124-125, 128, 132; Harvey L. Molotch, "Strategies and Constraints of Growth Elites," in *Business Elites and Urban Development: Case Studies and Critical Perspectives*, ed. Scott Cummings (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 40; *General Plan for Phoenix, 1985-2000* (Phoenix: City of Phoenix, 1985), 38.

lagged in per capita arts spending compared to other Valley cities, spending only \$0.94 in 1984-1985 compared to \$10.50 in Scottsdale, \$2.48 in Mesa, and \$1.56 in Tempe.¹³¹ The 1984 bond ballot included two bond proposals: one to renovate the former PUHS buildings, including the auditorium, for adaptive reuse (\$13.5 million), and one to improve various downtown structures such as the Orpheum Theater (\$32.6 million). Both failed. In 1986 City Council narrowly passed an ordinance imposing 1 percent of the city's capital construction budget to be spent on art.¹³² By 1988, the economy had improved, and Phoenixians were more open to spending on cultural improvements. The arts and culture bond (\$61 million) passed with 52.6 percent support and expanded the Phoenix Little Theatre and Phoenix Art Museum, improved Symphony Hall and the Orpheum Theater, and funded the new Arizona Science Center and Phoenix Museum of History. The parks and library bond (\$139.2 million) passed with 58 percent approval and built a new Central Library in Hance Park and three new library branches and improved parks.¹³³ Under Goddard's leadership, the arts community, private, and public interests collaborated with intentions that echoed the initial push for the arts in the postwar era.

The city support helped facilities, but many groups struggled to cover basic operating expenses, particularly groups with professional payrolls. By the late 1980s the Arizona Theatre Center had accumulated crippling debt. In March 1989 ATC told

¹³¹ Montini, "Panel Frames Design."

¹³² Deborah Shanahan, "PUHS, Downtown Bids Fail; 16 Other Questions Approved," *Arizona Republic*, June 6, 1984; Hal Mattern, "Phoenix Council Approves 'Percent-for-Art' Ordinance," *Arizona Republic*, November 26, 1986.

¹³³ Dee Michaelis, "Election Covering All Basis," *Arizona Republic*, April 17, 1988; Dee Michaelis and Venita Hawthorne James, "Phoenix Voters OK 14 of 17 Bond Proposals," *Arizona Republic*, April 20, 1988.

audiences that unless it raised \$972,000 by June 30, it would fold. In a *Phoenix New Times* article, Deborah Laake attributed the debt to the poor economy, preventing top donors from contributing, and to dramatic programming Phoenix audiences found depressing and repellant. But Laake argued that the main problem was managerial infighting, as with the PSO and failed Phoenix Theatre Center. ATC insiders claimed artistic director Gary Gisselman's wanted to be *the* face of the company, causing infighting with two managing directors and ultimately distracting administration from the budget issues. It was also part of a national trend of performing arts institutions closing due to lack of funding, paying the price for bringing art to communities starved for it.¹³⁴ Phoenix still lacked the infrastructure – funding, personnel, and audience – ATC needed to realize their vision, but the ATC barely managed to survive. Before the June 30 deadline they were able to raise \$1,003,415 in donations, mostly from individuals and became the main tenant of the new Herberger Theater Center in the fall of 1989, proving the Valley cared to keep professional theater.¹³⁵

The transition from postwar business and professional leaders as patrons to government leaders as advocates in the 1980s shifted the way patrons supported performing arts groups. As the city expanded, so did the performing arts scene, making it more difficult for organizations to secure patronage and establish their cultural identity. Behind the sea of new groups and venues, there were more funding opportunities ranging

¹³⁴ William H. Honan, "Arts Dollars: Pinched as Never Before," *New York Times*, May 28, 1989.

¹³⁵ Deborah Laake, "Anatomy of a Crisis," *Phoenix New Times*, May 10-16, 1989; Richard W. Bruner, "Arizona Theater Group Finds Arts Funds Tight," *Christian Science Monitor*, July 10, 1989.

from private donors like the Herbergers to direct government support from entities like the Arizona Commission on the Arts. Philanthropic organizations like the Arizona Grantmakers Forum culled resources from multiple foundations to provide additional resources to competitive organizations. The state's larger, more professional groups like the PSO, ATC, and Arizona Opera were helped by the \$5.7 million National Arts Stabilization grant that taught leadership how to manage the organizations as a business. Between 1998 and 2001 the city waived over \$2 million in rent and parking waivers for the PSO, recognizing its financial need. It has had similar rent-free deals for the Arizona Opera and Ballet Arizona's use of Symphony Hall, and gave \$100,000 to help Phoenix Theatre meet its payroll.¹³⁶ New venues like the Herberger Theatre, Mesa Arts Center and Tempe Center for the arts, all providing their own programming and demanding their own forms of support. Since the 1970s, the individuals and groups patronizing the performing arts were more diverse and differ in function, size, affiliation, and mission. Subsequently, their ideas of the performing arts' role in Phoenix's development were varied, no longer unified under the pro-growth banner of postwar civic leadership. Despite increased opportunities, Phoenix still needed the core group of supporters who see the performing arts have an integral role in the city's growth.

Conclusion

Supervising a performing arts group through postwar Phoenix required flexibility in a rapidly evolving city. Postwar civic leaders dictated how the city grew, and in their role as arts patrons they steered groups grow with that vision. Patrons donated not only

¹³⁶ Elvia Diaz, "Phoenix Poised to Aid Symphony," *Arizona Republic*, May 15, 2001.

their money, but also their time and resources to build quality, sustainable arts programs. When they retired or died, they left a leadership vacuum in the city and arts groups who were unable to support themselves without increased government funding. The performing arts groups who survived in the 1980s did so because the groups and their leaders got creative, and often generated just enough support to eke out a season. Postwar civic leaders made significant strides in enriching Valley culture, but transitioning to city leaders meant it was more difficult for the performing arts to prove their worth to new benefactors. It was easy to support the arts during times of prosperity, but when elected officials had to divide scarce resources, the arts were often the last priority. One community leader and Phoenix 40 member suggested arts groups slash their budgets, and when questioned about how this would affect quality, he responded, “You know what? Most people won’t know the difference.”¹³⁷ Forty years after the postwar artistic vision, arts supporters still had to prove to politicians and residents that the arts were not only vital culturally, but economically. Performing arts organizations not only needed financial support; donations and funding needed to come from understanding that culture would improve the city.

¹³⁷ Deborah Laake, “Anatomy of a Crisis,” *Phoenix New Times*, May 10-16, 1989, 24.

CHAPTER 4

PUBLIC RECEPTION AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

Civic leaders supported the arts to give Phoenix a good cultural reputation. The last piece of that puzzle for the young city, after forming organizations, importing performers, building venues, and establishing funding sources, was to develop a relatively large, sophisticated audience who appreciated high culture. Civic leaders deliberately built the postwar performing arts scene around a culture that would appeal to their ideal citizen. Their vision hinged on attracting an intelligent group of people who actively participated in Phoenix culture, specifically the high culture of theater, symphony, ballet, and choral music. These audiences would likely be involved in civic organizations, flood technological businesses with their skilled labor, pay their taxes and invest their lives in a bright future for the city. Wealthy civic leaders could host parties for themselves if they wanted to see their favorite performers, but if they wanted a city recognized for its fine arts, they needed to convince residents of its value. Patrons and performers struggled to find a successful formula partly because audience's taste changed rapidly as population and diversity increased and Phoenicians became accustomed to different modes and qualities of performance art.

Initially, high culture was top-down: civic leaders sponsored theater, symphony, chamber music, choirs, ballet, and opera because they understood these programs as necessary urban cultural institutions. Phoenician culture amalgamated Southwestern, Western, Indian, and Hispanic identities with the cultures migrants brought from other parts of the nation, largely the Midwest. Phoenix developed later than other major cities and its local, semi-professional performing arts scene arrived after radio, television, and

film. In order to establish high culture, arts advocates had to compete with the mass culture these mediums provided. Additionally, the performing arts developed in Phoenix while postwar consumerism boomed nationally, giving consumers and their dollars more power to influence programming. Because groups struggled for money, the interactive process between audience's influence on art and art's influence on audience skewed, preventing groups from staging challenging productions in favor of guaranteed revenue from pops or comedies. Phoenix's later urban development meant a performing arts culture was not engrained in its residents, so civic leaders and arts organizations catered to their audience's desires while trying to showcase quality performances. Once the audience appreciated and invested in these institutions, performers, patrons, and the public could build the city's cultural atmosphere.

A Tough Crowd

Early Phoenixians were not all rough-and-tumble. Miners and farmers engaged in the performing arts scene, though was mostly lowbrow. It began in the 1880s when saloonkeepers used entertainment as a front for gambling, which was outlawed in the territory. Acts ranged from a man playing the piano while balancing a drink on his head to blackface minstrel shows to legitimate theatrical and musical performances by touring groups. Phoenix was rough and disproportionately male, and the audience was often distracted by the noise from the saloon, or preoccupied with the escorts they rented for an entertainment fee. Sometimes, the female performers' duties were twofold, as they entertained men on and off the stage. Even as the arts were legitimized, with groups like the Phoenix Players Club (1897), Phoenix audiences engaged with the arts the most when actors partied with the public after the show, dancing in the foyer of large halls like the

Park Theater. The nation's largest cities had well-established symphonies before 1900 – the New York Philharmonic (1842), the Boston Symphony Orchestra (1881), and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (1891), but at the turn of the century Phoenix was just a town of 5,544 people and had only existed for thirty years. It would be decades before its citizens had the wealth, education, sense of community and critical mass to make the performing arts a top priority.¹³⁸

Even if a determined few brought the top acts, they still needed an appreciative audience. When Blanche Korrick joined the Musicians Club, others told her the Phoenix social set drank tea and played cards; “music was not the thing” in the 1921.¹³⁹ Women like Korrick in the Musicians Club brought performers to the people, inviting musicians to hold recitals at social events. Club member Mrs. Archer Linde expanded the mission, and her unwavering attitude brought big enough talent that Phoenicians flocked to the PUHS auditorium. She set up her Linde Box Office in Goldwater's and later other department stores, creating a convenient stop for her customers. An expert businesswoman, Linde memorized the seating chart and knew everything about the tickets. She literally taught Phoenicians to care about the arts, taking the stage to shake

¹³⁸ “No Biz Like Show Biz in the Old Days!” *Phoenix Magazine*, August 1970, 5; “Phoenix, 1890: This Was News 75 Years Ago in Phoenix,” *Phoenix Gazette*, October 22, 1965; Reynolds, *Golden Days of Theaters*, 19-21; “Phoenix, 1900: This Was News 75 Years Ago in Phoenix,” *Phoenix Gazette*, August 30, 1975; *U.S. Census of Population, 1900: Vol. I, Population: Population of States and Territories* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1900), 64

¹³⁹ Blanche Korrick, interview by Nancy Edwards, July 18, 1977, transcript, AHS-Tempe Oral History Collection, Arizona Historical Society – Papago Park, Tempe, AZ.

her finger and lecture on the importance of culture.¹⁴⁰ Linde ignored segregation laws to bring performers like Marian Anderson, and told her patrons, “There may be a Negro person sitting next to you at the concert. If you don’t like that, don’t come.”¹⁴¹ One admirer mused, “There were times when Mrs. Linde simply couldn’t stuff culture down Phoenix throats. But she tried.”¹⁴² Linde brought the day’s hottest acts, but used her popular concert series to introduce Phoenix audiences to high culture and instill appreciation for the performing arts.

Linde and Korrick offered their arts programming to supplement the mass culture audiences absorbed through radio, television, and film. Movie theaters were in their heyday during the 1920s and 1930s, when they served their original purpose as vaudeville stages in addition to presenting films. Film palaces lined Washington Street, featuring still recognized institutions like the Fox Theater, Orpheum Theater, and Rialto Theater. Theaters proliferated to accommodate the high demand for entertainment, and the larger theaters sat as many as 1,800 people. Residents flocked downtown to Washington Street, the main entertainment district where people could listen to bands and dance, and watch movies, variety shows, and circus acts, while plugging them into the larger movie scene sweeping the country. The varied entertainment experience encouraged legitimate theater, as touring stock companies stopped to play a show in Phoenix between their Los Angeles and El Paso bookings. Phoenicians also turned to the

¹⁴⁰ Pauline B. Yearwood, “Profile: Gerry Kroloff: Pointe Woman for Ballet Arizona’s New Image,” *Jewish News of Greater Phoenix*, June 18, 1993.

¹⁴¹ Lawson, “City Owes Its Cultural Life,” November 8, 1992.

¹⁴² Stocker, “Mrs. Archer Linde,” 95.

radio for entertainment. Stations like KTAR and KOY broadcast in-studio and remote orchestra performances but mostly featured national news, entertainment, and music programs, further cultivating mass culture in the Valley. Prewar Phoenix had a performing arts culture, but it lacked the unique identity Phoenix needed if it wanted to top the regional urban hierarchy.¹⁴³

A Broader Audience

Demographics changed dramatically following the war, shifting the audience's composition. Phoenix's growth mission included annexing suburbs, bringing more residents into the fold of the big (now bigger) city. Out-of-state migrants were the biggest contributors to the population boom. In 1960 only 28.9 percent of Arizona residents living in Phoenix had been born in the state. Even more telling, 61.5 percent of Phoenicians in 1960 had a different address in 1955, with just over half of those migrants coming from inside the state. Another 48 percent emigrated from other states, and Midwesterners comprised almost half that group.¹⁴⁴ The 1964 Republican presidential nominee and Arizona favorite son Barry Goldwater described the phenomenon to the Associated Press during his campaign: "Arizona gets under your skin. California still accounts for most of our population boom – we get the backlash of the disenchanted and the smog weary – but after that come Illinois and most of the midwest, people seeking a new life in a new land, uprooting themselves and their families in the old frontier spirit of

¹⁴³ Reynolds, *Golden Days of Theaters*, 66-67, 79, 82, 88; VanderMeer, *Desert Visions*, 66-68.

¹⁴⁴ *U.S. Census of Population, 1960: Vol. I, Characteristics of the Population: Pt. IV Arizona* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1963), 133.

the American dream.”¹⁴⁵ People migrated because of Arizona’s beautiful natural resources, economic opportunity, and that intangible Goldwater mentioned, the “frontier spirit.”

Phoenix had been evolving from its all-American mass culture to a deliberately Western identity since the 1930s, the beginning of a postwar trend where popular culture originated in the West, not the East. Building on the Valley’s agricultural history, civic leaders promoted romanticized images of the region’s Western roots to boost tourism, particularly in Scottsdale where the city’s Chamber of Commerce dubbed it “The West’s Most Western Town.” Valley residents and tourists could experience the West through rodeo, welcome wagons like the Scottsdale Chamber of Commerce’s Howdy Dudettes, themed restaurants like the Lulubelle, or immerse themselves completely in the theme park Legend City and “town” of Rawhide. Phoenix’s outdoor, recreational culture was a large part of its appeal, and parks, pools, tennis courts, and golf courses proliferated after the war. Major League Baseball’s annual Cactus League spring training series remains a hugely popular attraction for residents and tourists. Civic leaders establishing high culture activities had to compete with an increasing number of popular, recreational activities, many of which were cited as big draws for tourism and migration.¹⁴⁶

The PSA hoped to capitalize on these new residents and visitors with symphony concerts. The “vacation-bound Easterner,” was well acquainted with Phoenix and would

¹⁴⁵ Hugh A. Mulligan, “AP Writer Looks at ‘Barryland:’ Republican Candidate’s Political Views Reflect Lore of West,” *Arizona Republic*, August 30, 1964.

¹⁴⁶ Carl Abbott, *How Cities Won the West: Four Centuries of Urban Change in Western North America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), 10; VanderMeer, *Desert Visions*, 164-167.

enjoy great music, but the PSA claimed the symphony would help manufacturers realize the city was not a seasonal destination but a “substantial, cosmopolitan city.” They claim the PSO formed in response to a national demand for live music; a generation prior there were only fifteen city orchestras, but by the late 1940s there were 150. At the time the PSA was not able to envision Phoenix could grow as large as some of these cities, but they boasted its wide variety of activities – which other cities hosted baseball, rodeo, theater, *and* a symphony? According to the PSA, Phoenix had it all.¹⁴⁷

New Phoenicians could embrace the performing arts through numerous avenues. In addition to attending shows, they could get involved directly with the organization as a performer, event worker, or board or auxiliary group member. The groups often went into the community, performing at public schools, club meetings, rodeos, and festivals. The OMC and Musicians Club (as the most portable groups) greeted winter visitors with performances at hotels and airports. These performances helped the groups practice and were a good marketing tool, but more importantly, they made residents and visitors feel part of the experience. Community involvement was key to keeping skilled workers living inside the city. Performers’ community outreach efforts exposed Phoenicians to one aspect of civic involvement.

The community spirit brought the PSO into local schools, instilling the performing arts in the next generation of Phoenicians. The Musicians Club sponsored four music clubs for collegiate, high school, and grade school students. In the spring of 1949 PSO commentator and Arizona State College music teacher Mike Dreskell hosted a

¹⁴⁷ “Phoenix Symphony Orchestra, First Concert, First Season, 1947-1948,” *Phoenix Symphony Orchestra: 1st – 8th Seasons*, (Phoenix: Phoenix Symphony Orchestra, 1947-1955).

free series for five hundred Valley school children teaching them about the symphony. Dreskell continued the program in the fall, and with the help of the Junior League of Phoenix and the American Federation of Musicians hosted a PSO concert for two thousand students in the PUHS auditorium. The Phoenix Symphony Guild also started the Phoenix Symphony Youth Orchestra in 1952, featuring students from thirty-two Valley high schools. The increased population and increased quality of music education made the group a host of Phoenix's top musical talent. By 1977, half of its alumni were in musical careers, either with professional symphonies or as educators.¹⁴⁸

Similarly, the Phoenix Theatre Center used its combined resources to help students of all ages pursue the dramatic arts. In addition to Phoenix Children's Theatre's three annual productions, the PLT hosted its first scholarship night in 1964, with the entire proceeds from the evening (the best seats cost \$10) going to three drama students – one from ASU and two from Phoenix Junior College. They also donated one thousand tickets to the Careers for Youth program, which introduced teens to jobs in cultural institutions. These student programs provided access to students otherwise might not have been exposed to the arts through their families. Students could ask musicians questions, peek behind the scenes, or emulate their favorite stars on stage with their

¹⁴⁸ "Musicians Club Outlines Programs, Other Activities," *Arizona Times* (Phoenix, AZ), Sept. 2, 1949; "Phoenix Symphony Orchestra, Fourth Concert, First Season, 1947-1948," *Phoenix Symphony Orchestra*; "Phoenix Symphony Orchestra, First Concert, Second Season, 1948-1949," *Phoenix Symphony Orchestra*; Louise Gacioch, "Phoenix' Top Young Musicians," *Phoenix Magazine*, February 1977, 39, 62.

classmates; even if they did not become famous performers, these future Phoenixians had a better understanding of the performing arts.¹⁴⁹

The Orpheus Male Chorus was very much a civic organization, dedicated not only to performances but improving the community as stewards of cultural citizenship. Particularly under Hess' leadership, the OMC prioritized both cultural and civic duties, performing nationally, locally, and abroad as Phoenix's Cowboy Ambassadors in addition to community performances. Every level of government recognized the OMC's efforts, even internationally, and the group earned the moniker "America's Goodwill Ambassadors." The group performed for a wide range of organizations and events, at fraternal clubs, Carl Hayden's golden anniversary dinner, Williams Air Force Base, the Phoenix Baptist Children's Home, the Arizona State Hospital, the State Penitentiary, and in local schools. Through the 1960s the OMC exemplified the symbiotic relationship between performing arts, government, civic leaders, and audience. Each entity contributed to creating a culturally sophisticated and civically involved Phoenix community.¹⁵⁰

Groups often sponsored contests for local writers and composers. John Barnett believed it was important to feature an American composition at each concert, and the PSA and the Musicians Club hosted a contest for an original composition to be played during the PSO's third concert in the second season. They selected University of Arizona and Columbia University alumnus Ulysses Kay's "Portrait Suite"; however, the performance is mysteriously absent from the concert's program. The Musicians Club held

¹⁴⁹ "Phoenix Little Theatre," 20.

¹⁵⁰ Butler, "Orpheus Male Chorus," 22-23.

an annual statewide contest awarding \$25 to the best composition for a small ensemble. The Phoenix Little Theatre also hosted an annual Original Play Contest with a \$500 reward and promise of production. The groups existed to entertain Phoenix audiences, but their true mission was cultivating and encouraging emerging artists, especially in the community.¹⁵¹

Migrants had the chance to build a new city and a new culture, but it was a struggle to create a public fully invested in the performing arts. Former Ballet Arizona managing director Gerry Kroloff commented on the difficulties, observing that, “People didn’t come out here for the ballet and the symphony. They come here to play golf.” More importantly, she noted a key characteristic and difficulty plaguing the development of arts in Phoenix: “‘Winter people’ give money to the arts in their home towns, not here. We don’t have the old foundation wealth to call on for the arts.”¹⁵² It was even more difficult to find a new audience as more organizations formed every year. The Phoenix Boys Choir, ASU Choral Union, Phoenix Bach Choir, and the Scottsdale Players were a few examples, in addition to programming from touring productions at Gammage. New Phoenicians patronized the existing cultural programs, but soon realized there were other personal and civic priorities and that there needed to be a serious increase in quality before the arts could be a thriving sector of city life. If Phoenicians wanted culture, a hallmark of urban life, audiences needed to stop viewing performances as good enough

¹⁵¹ “Phoenix Symphony Orchestra, Fourth Concert, First Season, 1947-1948,” *Phoenix Symphony Orchestra*; “Phoenix Symphony Orchestra Program, Second Concert, Second Season, 1948-1949,” *Phoenix Symphony Orchestra*; “Phoenix Symphony Orchestra Program, Third Concert, Second Season,” *Phoenix Symphony Orchestra*; “Musicians Club Outlines Programs,” Sept. 29, 1949; “Phoenix Little Theatre,” 20.

¹⁵² Yearwood, “Gerry Kroloff,” June 18, 1993.

for Phoenix and invest their support in creating organizations that were competitive nationally.

Packing the House

It is a testament to Phoenixians' cultural sophistication that they continuously filled school auditoriums, but as Phoenix grew, so did its audiences expectations. Before the Civic Center, audiences watched the PLT in the Old Coach House (the old Heard stables). Attendees brought blankets in the winter and fans in the summer, and even though the theater installed a swamp cooler, it was so loud it could only run during intermission. The old backless wooden benches were replaced with folding chairs "whose contours consistently disagreed with the human form."¹⁵³ Audiences no longer fit inside the venues, and groups needed to meet rising demand for entertainment and develop auditoriums worthy of a city Phoenix's size. The Civic Center Association sold their plans by stating, "No greater permanent growth in population ever comes than that which is provided for in adequate cultural facilities... To attract cultured people to the state we need to emphasize on cultural advantages."¹⁵⁴ City leaders needed to make their venues – and the city – a desirable destination for tourists and residents.

During the planning process for these venues, it was important to recognize the buildings would have to be multifunctional to justify cost and space and to best serve the community's varied needs. The PLT staged seasons of eight shows for one week each, and the PSO held approximately ten concerts per season, leaving plenty of nights for other parties to rent the spaces. In addition to earning more revenue, the venues benefited

¹⁵³ Oldendick and Uithoven, "Phoenix Little Theatre," 4-6.

¹⁵⁴ The Arizona War Memorial Center, [ca. 1946], Ephemera Collection.

from multifunctional design, as they became communal meeting places. The Civic Center, Gammage, Sombrero, and Convention Center buildings all included rooms for classes and meetings. Running through the Civic Center is a grass mall that fits four thousand people, ideal for pageants, concerts, and community gatherings. Stephen Shadegg argued that although the PLT would need the space virtually every night during the season to rehearse, he and the Board welcomed community requests for use, reasoning it would expose more people to the group. Parking was another design consideration. The Stanford Research Institute recommended a two-thousand-stall lot, and if there were three people per car and each Convention Center site was at capacity, about one third would have to find parking elsewhere; however, such a night would be rare.¹⁵⁵

Venues also needed attractions beyond modern comforts if they were to become destinations in their own right. Gammage lured visitors as a Frank Lloyd Wright design, and the excitement drew repeated sell-out crowds and record-breaking season ticket sales during the PSO's 1964-1965 season.¹⁵⁶ Guests could peruse the art galleries in Gammage, Symphony Hall, the Little Theatre and other Valley venues, a practice that continues today, usually featuring local artists. The Sombrero had the Helena Charlton Galaxy Gallery, a rotating exhibit space for painting and sculpture, and each production at the Phoenix Theatre Center featured an exhibit by a local artist. Venues also needed amenities outside the auditorium to be considered attractive destinations. The Sombrero

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.; Stephen C. Shadegg to the Phoenix Little Theatre Board, 14 June 1948, Box 9 Folder 14, Stephen C. Shadegg Papers; Duckstad and Raymond, *A Study of Auditorium and County Office Facilities*, 68-69.

¹⁵⁶ Stoneburner, "Phoenix Symphony Orchestra," 42.

had the Backstage Club Restaurant behind the theater, where guests could mingle with Hollywood elite after the show, and later The Islands Polynesian restaurant next door.¹⁵⁷ The top criteria for the Convention Center site were a central location, adequate highway and public transportation access, sufficient parking, and close proximity to hotels, restaurants, and retail stores. Symphony Hall benefitted from being part of the Convention Center project because the primary concern was the space's use as a convention destination; symphony patrons had the same benefits of nearby restaurants, retail, and lodging intended to attract visitors.¹⁵⁸

Beyond providing a home for the symphony within Phoenix, the Civic Plaza/Convention Center development was part of a broader initiative starting in the 1960s to revitalize downtown. Postwar suburbanization left downtown ignored, with residents and eventually retailers avoiding the congestion and blight and favoring free parking and convenient shopping centers in the suburbs. This phenomenon was common across the country, and many cities built special activity venues, such as convention centers and stadiums, throughout the 1960s and 1970s to bring people (and money) back downtown. These venues were meant to encourage more businesses to return to the area, with hotels and restaurants hoping to capitalize on new tourism.¹⁵⁹ The strategy worked

¹⁵⁷ Reynolds, *Golden Days of Theaters*, 111; Justin Levine, "Sombrero Playhouse," *Cinema Treasures*, accessed August 25, 2013, <http://cinematreasures.org/theaters/11158>.

¹⁵⁸ Duckstadt and Raymond, *A Study of Auditorium and County Office Facilities*, 80, 87.

¹⁵⁹ Kent A. Robertson, "Downtown Redevelopment Strategies in the United States: An End-of-the-Century Assessment," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 61, no. 4 (1995): 433-434.

somewhat in Phoenix: after the Convention Center's completion in 1972, the Adams Hotel (1974) and Hyatt Regency (1975) were constructed nearby and retailers and restaurateurs moved back into downtown. Downtown redevelopment also eliminated Phoenix's skid row, the Deuce, cleaning up a blighted city block which remaining business owners blamed for discouraging consumers. Although this did not eliminate Phoenix's poor and homeless problems, the area became more attractive and safer for tourists and suburbanites visiting downtown; however, for the first few years Convention Center facilities coexisted with dive bars and flophouses across the street. Downtown Phoenix started to regain its prewar status as a destination for Valley residents and visitors alike.¹⁶⁰

New complexes were important to revitalizing downtown, but leaders and developers also capitalized on the city's past by preserving and reusing its historic built environment. In September 1968 Phoenicians returned to the "new" Palace West Theatre. Some residents had been there earlier when it was the Paramount movie theater, and some even earlier when it was the Orpheum vaudeville house. An August 1968 *Phoenix Magazine* article about Palace West raised some concerns, particularly regarding parking and performance quality. Manager Phyllis Robbins assured theatergoers they would readily find parking for the 1,800-seat theater, as she counted the spaces herself. Additionally the article clarifies the performances will be touring Broadway productions – not the "stock company productions which have too often played here in the past!"

¹⁶⁰ Danette Turner, "Area's Dark Past a Part of Phoenix History," *Arizona Republic*, June 21, 2008; Edward H. Peplow, Jr., "The Downtown Vision," *Phoenix Magazine*, August 1973, 78, 139; Jay Brashear, "Time for Community to Plan Redevelopment of Skid Row," *Phoenix Gazette*, October 23, 1974 VanderMeer, *Desert Visions*, 273.

Having Broadway shows in a theater managed by a New York family (the Nederlanders of New York's Palace Theatre) signaled a returned interest in downtown. The article claims Palace West was the status symbol downtown so desperately needed, and Robbins agreed, "We're here to stay. We're investing in the future of Downtown Phoenix."¹⁶¹

The first Orpheum/Palace West restoration did not signal a major change in downtown vitality, and the theater was once again in disrepair by the early 1980s. Palace West was an early example of the preservation and adaptive reuse projects in Phoenix in the 1980s. Preservation programs benefitted performing arts programs either directly with new venues or indirectly by developing the cultural and historic character of downtown. Before the city had a formal preservation program, Phoenicians preserved their historical and natural resources through outright purchase with public and private funds.¹⁶² Instead of focusing specifically on preservation, City Council's Ad Hoc Downtown committee looked to create a cultural-historic district using Phoenix's built past to house its cultural present. The most notable example is the city's restoration of Palace West, which went out of business in the 1970s. The twelve-year project returned it to its glory as the

¹⁶¹ Anita Welch, "Palace West: Blazing the Trail," *Phoenix Magazine*, August 1968, 15.

¹⁶² The Camelback Mountain Foundation, a private nonprofit backed by Senator Barry Goldwater, and the State of Arizona through its Department of the Interior, purchased Camelback Mountain to stop further development in 1968. The Junior League of Phoenix and the City of Phoenix under Mayor John Driggs purchased and restored the Victorian structures in Heritage Square, including the Rosson House, in 1976. Ian Patrick Johnson, "Historic Preservation in the Phoenix Metro Area: History, Current Challenges, Ongoing Stuggles" (master's thesis, Arizona State University, 2007), 21, 24.

Orpheum Theatre, now home to the Phoenix Metropolitan Opera.¹⁶³ Architect and committee chairman Rod Engelen expressed urgency over finding homes for museums and performing arts groups: “We’ve got a number of (cultural) institutions footloose and beginning to feel antsy. They’ve outgrown their facilities and are saying, ‘We’ve got to do something.’” Renewing downtown would also spur private investment and create nightlife in the area. The council needed to show voters why renovating buildings for cultural use was important. Scottsdale had a performing arts center and Mesa was pushing for one. Citizens’ committee member Marilyn Hinkins stressed, “We’ve got to keep Phoenix the center of the state and downtown the center of Phoenix.”¹⁶⁴

Finding the Fan Base

By the 1960s eighty years had passed since the wild saloon days, and Phoenicians were learning how to be a sophisticated audience invested in its cultural offerings. Subsequently, their expectations grew. Guy Taylor explained the whole point of audience growth is exposing people to the music, and during his tenure he had adults telling him they saw him years earlier at the student concerts, thus building a more appreciative audience with potential for lifelong support.¹⁶⁵ The *Arizona Republic* was surprised at how well Gammage’s opening night crowd behaved themselves, writing, “The audience was what is usually termed a society audience, but it arrived for the most part on time and

¹⁶³ The Phoenix Metropolitan Opera, though representative of the city’s high culture performing arts offerings, arrived after the period of study, in 2006.

¹⁶⁴ Deborah Shanahan, “Cultural-Historic District Proposed for Downtown,” *Arizona Republic*, Feb. 20, 1986.

¹⁶⁵ Taylor, interview.

it behaved with more politeness than average.”¹⁶⁶ Audiences, critics, and donors equated professional groups with quality groups, reasoning artists who were able to devote themselves to craft full-time produced better work. Professional companies were typically interested in staging artistically significant or challenging performances, or debuting new works, not musicals and pops. Tension between popular culture and high culture increased as performing arts groups grew in number and size, spurring more competition for a growing audience with varied tastes.

When the Phoenix Little Theatre finally had a grand stage at the Phoenix Civic Center in 1951, they had the resources to expand operations. Season ticket sales peaked in the late 1950s, when programming featured mostly comedies, an artistically boring but financially successful choice. As America entered the turbulent 1960s, attitudes changed. Critics and audiences praised dramas like Tennessee Williams’ *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1961) and the theater’s first all-black production, *A Raisin in the Sun* (1963). Despite these two hits, PLT continued staging “fluff” productions like *Marriage Go-Round* (1961) and *Cinderella* (1963). Reporter Tim J. Kelly bluntly said of PLT’s annual (and locally praised) Shakespeare Festival, “Now let’s be sensible. Is it likely that any Bard lover, who can afford the travel expense involved, is going to forego the Shakespeare Festivals of, say, Stratford, Conn., San Diego, or Ashland, Oregon, for us? If the argument is that these are professional companies, then what business have we to give the

¹⁶⁶ William J. Nazzaro, “Gammage Auditorium Passes Test,” *Arizona Republic*, September 19, 1964.

illusion that ours is anything but an amateur effort?”¹⁶⁷ Serious actors and cultured audiences were ready for bolder, more mature programming.

Theater programming choices were based on anticipated popularity and guaranteed income; a proven comedy was a safer bet than a challenging or controversial play. By the 1960s the Valley hosted numerous performing arts groups, each claiming to fill a cultural void. The Phoenix Musical Theatre and Scottsdale Chamber Opera Theatre both formed to present Grand Opera but soon switched to musical theater, which proved more popular.¹⁶⁸ Kelly observed that meeting public demand is not tantamount to fulfilling its cultural needs. He explained that commercial theaters, focused on profit, typically performed popular but trivial works while community theaters developed local talent with works of literary value. In Phoenix, the opposite proved true, as ART was committed to serious dramas and PLT stuck to formulaic comedies. The PSO followed a different strategy. It held pops concerts featuring big names like Eddie Arnold, Jack Benny, and Liberace, but they were less frequent than regular season concerts, and revenues from those sold-out performances allowed the PSO to continue classical

¹⁶⁷ Tim J. Kelly, “Aren’t We Wonderful! An Unpopular Look at the Amateur Stage in Phoenix,” *Point West*, February 1962, 36.

¹⁶⁸ Grand Opera features large-scale, elaborate productions that include a ballet episode, choral performance, and lavish scenery. The Paris Opera popularized the style in the nineteenth century. It is also an informal term for highbrow opera, implying it is a more legitimate art form than operettas or musicals. *The New Penguin Dictionary of Music Online*, s.v. “grand opera,” last modified 2006, http://literati.credoreference.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/content/entry/penguinmusic/grand_opera/0.

programming. If groups wanted to continue performing, they needed to offer what people were willing to purchase.¹⁶⁹

The professional theaters remained committed to challenging productions, but were ultimately unable to continue operating. The Sombrero had a big year in 1962, selling 34,569 tickets, twelve thousand more than the previous year, with many of them to students. It debuted William Inge's *Natural Affection*, a tense drama about a mother and her illegitimate son that climaxes with the random murder of a young woman – hardly a trivial comedy. It also staged *The Complaisant Lover*, a Graham Greene comedy about marriage and adultery. *The Hollywood Reporter* reviewed the Phoenix production, remarking it was “an odd choice for a community of upper middle class respectability, even one with the sophisticated fringe that Phoenix has.”¹⁷⁰ The Sombrero challenged audiences, but it could afford to take financial risks because it had support from Richard Charlton's wealthy wife.¹⁷¹

ART followed the Sombrero's lead. In 1965 they staged *Long Day's Journey into Night*, Eugene O'Neill's semi-autobiographical play about his dysfunctional family. Arts critics predicted Arizona was not ready for this type of performance, or that ART was not the company to stage it. It debuted in Sedona to rave reviews, but Phoenix was less receptive. Phoenixians arrived in droves for 1966's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*,

¹⁶⁹ Kelly, “Aren't We Wonderful,” 36-37; Lombardi, interview.

¹⁷⁰ James Powers, “Play Reviews: The Complaisant Lover (Sombrero Playhouse)” *The Hollywood Reporter*, March 20, 1962.

¹⁷¹ Sombrero Playhouse attendance breakdown, 1962, Ephemera Collection; Helen Wallace Younge, “Arizona Theater's Growing Up,” *Arizona Star*, January 21, 1962.

earning ART \$9,181 in ticket sales over three weeks, as opposed to PLT's poor turnout for *Doll Face* the same season, which garnered only \$1,954 in box office revenue. However, *Virginia Woolf* was the exception, and comedies were often financially safer choices. Ultimately, neither ART nor the Sombrero survived the 1960s: serious works could not sustain ART, and Charlton could not find enough successful programming for live performances. Phoenix audiences were raising their expectations, but they were still unwilling to attend more serious dramatic pieces.¹⁷²

Guy Taylor's dismissal in 1968 prompted the Phoenix community to engage publicly in a discussion about quality culture. This terribly controversial decision inspired numerous letters to the newspapers both supporting and opposing the decision. The PSA opted to ignore the protest, believing a series of guest conductors, a national trend, would appeal to audiences and help stale box office numbers which had spiked with Gammage's opening. One letter argued the drop in numbers testified to the growing culture in Phoenix: with so many options for music, theater, and sports, expecting a sell-out crowd was unrealistic. Twenty-seven concerned citizens petitioned the PSA's decision, and president Wade Hampton argued only two of those people were donors and four other were season ticket holders; therefore, they must not be very committed supporters. *Arizona Republic* critic Thomas Goldthwaite suggested the board was angry that Taylor was unwilling to take the necessary steps to build audience and reputation and bring the PSO to major orchestra status, namely through recordings and tours. Regardless of

¹⁷² Jeanne Williams, "ART Provides Creative Outlet," *Arizona Republic*, May 25, 1965; ART Box Office Report – "Virginia Woolf," March 18, 1966, Box 9 Folder 14, Stephen C. Shadegg Papers; Box Office Report – "Dollface," February 24, 1966, Box 9 Folder 14, Stephen C. Shadegg Papers.

outcome, the Guy Taylor controversy illustrated the community's investment in their local symphony – precisely the PSA's goal when they dismissed Barnett twenty years earlier.¹⁷³

For two seasons the PSO featured guest conductors, none of whom advanced quality or ticket sales. One of those conductors, Eduardo Mata, became Principal Conductor for seven seasons (1971-1978), during which time he only conducted 40 of 93 subscription concerts.¹⁷⁴ Musicians and critics agreed Mata significantly improved the quality, but his other commitments made it difficult for the community to see him as their conductor, and not a guest.¹⁷⁵ Mata forged relationships with the Hispanic and Indian populations in Arizona, making periodic trips with musicians to perform for families on reservations. A Mexican native, he wanted to demonstrate the importance of Mexican composers in the classical music canon. Yet Mata had other professional obligations that made it difficult for him to build community presence, reminiscent of Barnett's tenure. The PSA made decisions based on what they thought would drive ticket sales – a series of guest conductors, an internationally popular conductor, and blockbuster operas. They were stuck in the same dilemma plaguing other Valley performing arts groups: quality or popularity?¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ William E. Gary, letter to the editor, *Phoenix Gazette*, June 19, 1968; Hampton, Statement to Phoenix Symphony Association Board of Directors, Phoenix Symphony Orchestra Collection; Goldthwaite, interview.

¹⁷⁴ Stoneburner, "Phoenix Symphony Orchestra," 61.

¹⁷⁵ Herberger, interview.

¹⁷⁶ Stoneburner, "Phoenix Symphony Orchestra," 61; Herberger, interview; Devon Leal Bridgewater, "The Midas Touch of Mata: Eduardo Mata and the Phoenix

The performing arts scene grappled with the art of criticism. The local media was disenchanted with the PLT by the 1970s, no longer allowing it use the amateur excuse. Critics wanted the theater to do well and live up to its potential, but when it didn't, they felt betrayed and reacted personally to its lack of success. Reporters could not guarantee the quality of productions, so they did not bother to publicize an upcoming production too much for fear of being embarrassed over encouraging people to attend what turned out to be a poor show. The impact of critical review also affected the PSO. Some musicians felt the local critics were unsupportive, and by taking their role as critics too seriously they poorly introduced the PSO to the public, discouraging attendance. The musicians described critics as inconsistent: some understood musical criticism, some recognized the symphony was still developing, some were too easy on the group, and others hated it no matter what. Jeanne Herberger blamed the inconsistency on the lack of leadership in the press, arguing they needed to have the goal of enhancing the artistic value of the community. However, the musicians (speaking after their tenures) conceded that once they had professional, quality performers, critical and community support would follow.¹⁷⁷

Giving the people what they wanted in order to generate profit proved even worse for cultivating culture, evidenced by PLT's financial struggles during the late 1960s and 1970s. This consumption-driven mindset permeated postwar America, affecting much

Symphony Orchestra, 1969-1978) (master's thesis, Arizona State University, 2009), 80-81, 87-88.

¹⁷⁷ Vetrie, "Phoenix Theatre Concept," Phoenix Little Theatre Collection; Agnew, interview; Filigenzi, interview; Cummings, interview; Herberger, interview.

more than arts programming.¹⁷⁸ The PLT formed during the Progressive Era's Little Theatre Movement, supporting non-commercial, reform-minded productions, but profiting during postwar consumerism allowed audiences to dictate programming by voting with their dollars, forcing groups to pander to audiences' personal tastes. Midcentury Americans were unsympathetic to highbrow tastes, but paradoxically had upward cultural aspirations. A 1975 Gallup poll found 46 percent of those surveyed identified their tastes as upper-middle brow, and only 6 percent claimed highbrow interests.¹⁷⁹

Groups controlled their programming, but they were too afraid of failure to exhibit challenging pieces. The PLT continued staging comedies and musicals like *My Fair Lady*, *West Side Story*, and *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*. If Phoenix was going to develop a cultured, educated audience with a critical eye for quality art, groups needed to show them something that required more than attention, but real thought. The semi-successful formula quickly became stale, and season subscriptions and ticket sales dropped in the 1970s. Meanwhile Phoenix continued to grow at a rapid pace and by 1976 there were five other little theaters in the Valley, saturating the region with community productions. Although the PLT had provided Phoenix with theater for half a century, its audience, critics, and patrons – rapidly growing and always changing – remained unconvinced the amateur theatre could hold its increasingly sophisticated tastes. Regardless of whether it paid its actors, it was difficult for the PLT to escape the

¹⁷⁸ Lizabeth Cohen discussed postwar consumption and how it enabled consumers to affect political and social change in *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003).

¹⁷⁹ Kammen, *American Culture*, 42-43.

pattern of staging light, popular works in order to stay afloat while swimming in debt, contributing to its reputation as a substandard theater.¹⁸⁰

Recommitment to the Arts

Groups struggled to maintain a reliable audience through the 1980s because Phoenix still lacked large-scale support for the arts. Without support from the old civic leaders, which included donations, advertisements, season tickets, and general boosterism for these groups they cared for, the performing arts relied on the government for support. The 1988 bond measure presented Phoenicians an opportunity to decide their city's cultural future. After the 1984 bond measure failed, city leaders had to be especially careful when presenting the public with a new proposition. Phoenix Newspapers, Inc. surveyed 603 county residents on their willingness to donate to various community causes and found people favored giving to education, hunger relief, and people with disabilities over meeting the needs of arts and culture or downtown development. Voters feared that too much focus on downtown development would neglect their needs in the rest of the city. Bud Jacobson presented the city's new ventures as a chance for citizens to lay the brick and mortar for the cultural climate. A key supporter for the 1988 bond measures was the Phoenix Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce, which could usually be counted on to oppose tax increases. The group saw the bonds as crucial to the city's future, with spokesman Kevin DeMenna saying, "Do [voters] want the city to provide the cultural amenities to make this a great city, or do they just want the city to pave streets

¹⁸⁰ Oldendick and Uithoven, "Phoenix Little Theatre," 54; Mike Petryni, "Up and Down the Community Stage," *Arizona Republic*, November 7, 1976; Vetrie, "Phoenix Theatre Concept," Phoenix Little Theatre Collection.

and build sewers? Frankly, there are two schools of thought out there, and I'm not sure who will prevail.”¹⁸¹

The 1988 bond measure passed because leaders like Mayor Goddard and Jacobson were able to garner the support of influential groups like the Chamber of Commerce, Valley Partnership, Junior League, and Greater Neighborhood Association of Phoenix. Supporters echoed the same rhetoric used by postwar boosters. David Bixler of the Valley Partnership recognized cultural institutions would help transplants finally identify Phoenix as their home, while Kathleen Eaton of the Greater Neighborhood Association felt a city Phoenix's size was obligated to develop its cultural programs. They just had to convince the voters. A coalition of groups established an office on Central Avenue, operating phone banks and mailing fliers. The *Arizona Republic* published a series of articles in the weeks before the election supporting the bonds. Jacobson printed 30,000 buttons (he believed that was the number of votes necessary, though it was too low) at personal cost and with the help of the Junior League and Central Labor Council passed them all out. Arts advocates had finally convinced Phoenicians why the arts were important to the city overall.¹⁸²

By the 1980s specific performance groups and larger arts organizations began taking a more careful market approach and hired the Behavior Research Center to better understand their audiences. Often these surveys were done to answer very specific

¹⁸¹ Charles Kelly, “Education, needy lead charity poll,” *Arizona Republic*, October 9, 1987; E. J. Montini, “Panel Frames Design to Upgrade Art in Phoenix,” *Arizona Republic*, April 14, 1985; Dee Michaelis, “Chamber's Tune Changes Pitch: Bonds Crucial,” *Arizona Republic*, April 10, 1988.

¹⁸² Michaelis, “Chamber's Tune”; Marshall, “Cultural District Formation,” 118-119.

questions, such as determining the best time to start shows or learning why season ticketholders opted not to renew. Based on the survey responses the average patron for symphony, theater, opera, and ballet performances during the late-1980s/early-1990s was a male, age thirty to forty-nine, earned more than the state median income, attended at least two years of college, and attended at least two events per year. Civic leaders understood the demographic they wanted to attract. This patron was prime human capital: young, educated, and with a good job. He enjoyed cultured evenings in the city, and was willing to attend a couple times per year (women also had these same characteristics, they just attended less frequently). If Phoenix wanted to retain and attract more patrons like this, they needed to continue investing in and developing the cultural scene.¹⁸³

In 1985 art critic Lynn Rigberg wrote, “Indicators are amassing that Arizona and Phoenix are becoming committed to developing the arts.” She cited the increased funding to the Arizona Commission on the Arts and the 1 percent allotment from capital building funds for the ACA and the city’s bond attempts and cultural committees as evidence of changing attitudes. She quoted a friend who asserted Phoenix’s Western identity was sufficient, and that modern architecture or oriental art would detract from an already clear culture. Supposing many others felt this way, Rigberg argued Phoenix’s increased diversity merited multiple tastes and styles; assuming millions would share the same culture was “elitist and unrealistic.” Organizations like the Black Theatre Troupe and El Teatro Bravo! diversified the performing arts scene, making it easier for Phoenixians to see themselves in the arts. Increased funding allowed for more performances, more

¹⁸³ Arts/Entertainment Projects, 1987-1993, Boxes 2-3, FM MSS 144, Behavior Research Center, Inc. Records, 1965-2006, Arizona Collection, Arizona State University Libraries, Tempe, AZ.

venues, more diverse groups, and more community outreach. Phoenix was finally warming up to the postwar vision, summarized by Rigberg: “Virtually every city in which art has become an important community resource has profited mightily. It’s our turn, if only we’ll take advantage.”¹⁸⁴ City government had found a way to support the arts after civic leaders had largely managed the task for three decades, and the city and state continued promoting arts and culture through direct funding, building and renovating venues, improving infrastructure to bring audiences downtown, and modifying zoning and rental fees to encourage more artistic growth in the city.

Conclusion

Performing arts groups were tasked with exposing residents to culture, but the public played a large role in groups’ evolution, primarily through their dollars. In the immediate postwar years, the performing arts scene ran on volunteer power from the community. New Phoenicians supported amateur productions because they understood the arts scene was still developing. Since there were not as many options for evening entertainment, the audience’s expectations were lower than they would be once the city reached a later stage of development. As Phoenix grew, residents used taxes or bonds to help organizations and leaders build new auditoriums, and their community input influenced location and amenities to maximize venue use (and profits). When groups realized that audiences preferred fun, fluffy pieces to serious drama, they traded art for pop to maintain revenues. By the 2000s, the Valley hosted a myriad of performing arts groups and events, ranging from professional to amateur, high to popular culture, and

¹⁸⁴ Lynn Rigberg, “Coming of Age,” *Phoenix Magazine*, June 1985, 57, 129.

traditional to unconventional. Despite the range of performing arts options, Phoenix still lacked a clear cultural identity shaped by citizens and leaders who prioritize the arts.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION: APPLYING THE POSTWAR ARGUMENT IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Phoenix's later urban development allowed its leaders to model their city on the successes and failures of other major cities established in the nineteenth century or earlier. One piece of that vision included developing Phoenix's culture to attract skilled workers and technology firms. This goal constituted developing performing arts groups that served as cultural activities for its growing population and also appealed to business by demonstrating Phoenix's urban status. The civic commitment to the performing arts waned as the original supporters retired or died, and the city needed a new generation of artists, advocates, and audiences who envisioned a role for the performing arts in the city's future. In the 1980s and again in the 2000s the city returned its focus to the arts, citing an argument similar to the postwar civic leaders' vision: bring highly skilled workers and high-tech industry to the Valley by developing a high quality of life that includes cultural vibrancy. To bring this vision into the twenty-first century, the Phoenix arts scene initiated an effort to develop beyond merely offering programming to contributing to a clearly defined artistic culture recognized and supported by leaders and residents. As the city grew, the economic base shifted, and tastes changed, the vision evolved from using the cultured image of performing arts to attract high-tech workers, to understanding the arts as intrinsically economically beneficial for recruiting workers and firms, promoting tourism, and raising the overall quality of life. The postwar vision largely worked, as the performing arts culture remained in the Valley, despite internal conflicts and external interests, and the small city became a major urban center. In the

twenty-first century the vision began to be modified again and applied to a new type of community.

Although this thesis focuses on the performing arts, they existed within a broader arts and cultural context, and this is evident in the significant reports from philanthropic, government, and cultural organizations on arts and culture in the Valley. . The definitions of art and culture have shifted, and by broadening the criteria to include entities like for-profit organizations, festivals, and sports, these reports found Valley residents have higher levels of participation than previously reported. Arts and culture were traditionally seen to include theater, symphony, fine art, libraries, and museums, but a more accurate perspective also includes science centers, zoos, for-profit organizations, and a wider variety of cultural venues. By this measure, there were 1,070 arts, entertainment, and recreation businesses in Maricopa County in 2011.¹⁸⁵ The performing arts are one piece of the larger arts and culture scene in the Valley, and by 2000 they began working with other institutions, private business, nonprofit organizations, and the government to create a long term arts and culture vision not only benefitting their institutional missions but also creating a better quality of life in the Valley and making Phoenix nationally competitive culturally and economically.

Phoenix's Changing Economy

The idea guiding civic leaders to start the Phoenix Symphony Association and build the Civic Center remains the same: the performing arts stimulate the economy by attracting human capital. Performing arts were one piece of the postwar high-tech

¹⁸⁵ This estimate includes outdoor recreation and sports, including the four professional sports teams. "2011 Business Patterns (NAICS)," *U. S. Census Bureau*, accessed November 2, 2013, <http://censtats.census.gov/cgi-bin/cbpnaic/cbpdetl.pl>.

suburban vision; tech firm CEOs and their skilled workers would be attracted to the Valley's desirable assets – housing, recreation, art and culture, economy, climate – and would invest in their new community. As Arizona's economy shifted from manufacturing to high-tech and knowledge economy industries, the arts became increasingly important for attracting specific companies and workers who value cultural amenities that promote creativity, transforming the Valley's arts scene.

The Valley's high-tech economy was centered on manufacturing, largely producing electronics and aerospace technology. Motorola's decision to relocate to the relatively underdeveloped Valley in 1949 encouraged research at Arizona State and built a population of engineers and other skilled workers, leading to tech firms like Sperry Rand, General Electric, and Honeywell establishing Valley bases later. But by the 1970s the Phoenix companies struggled to shift from mainframe to microcomputer production, prompting GE to sell its Phoenix operations to Sperry Rand in 1970 and Honeywell to cut employment significantly throughout the decade. Intel, which arrived in 1979, managed to do better than other electronics firms, and aerospace manufacturers Honeywell and Boeing survived, but in the 1990s Valley high-tech firms were failing and by 2000 they accounted for only 6 percent of the nonagricultural workforce. This was not helped by Motorola's disastrous decline from twenty thousand Valley employees in the 1990s to one thousand in 2007. The postwar vision broke down because the initial leadership was unable to oversee the high-tech – and performing arts – industries transition to the national level. Civic leaders needed to revamp arts and culture in addition to education

and infrastructure to attract a new generation of Daniel Nobles who would make Phoenix a leader in the knowledge economy.¹⁸⁶

The knowledge economy differs from postwar high-tech manufacturing in that products and services are focused on information production and dissemination. This type of work relies on intellectual capability instead of physical input or natural resources.¹⁸⁷

Although Phoenix hosted its early incarnations in the 1950s, especially with personal computer production in the 1970s, the industry's downfall in the last quarter of the century prompted city leaders to find new ventures to rebuild the economy. Beginning in the late 1990s Arizona, like thirty-nine other states, turned to biosciences where Phoenix was able to quickly gain an edge largely due to government and private funding that developed ASU's programs. Updating the high-tech vision for the twenty-first century meant updating its components. One aspect of that plan involved redefining and developing an arts and culture scene that would contribute to Phoenix's identity as a desirable locale with a high quality of life and strong community, appealing to knowledge industry workers.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶ Collins, *Emerging Metropolis*, 172-173; VanderMeer, *Desert Visions*, 305-308.

¹⁸⁷ Walter W. Powell and Kaisa Snellman, "The Knowledge Economy," *Annual Review of Sociology* 30 (2004): 201.

¹⁸⁸ *Making Arizona Competitive in Science, Engineering, Medical Research and Innovation: Understanding the Pathways to Success* (Phoenix: Morrison Institute, February 2006), 4-5, 20; "State Needs Homestead on Biotech Frontier," *Arizona Republic*, February 17, 2002; Max Poll, "ASU Plan is a Boon for South Scottsdale," *Arizona Republic*, July 26, 2004; VanderMeer, *Desert Visions*, 313.

Performing Arts Attract the Creative Class

The city's planners realized that this new economy demanded a new kind of employee. As in the 1950s, Phoenix needed a strong base of young talent educated in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM fields) to fill the ranks of the businesses it recruits. Richard Florida's popular theories about the changing nature of the economy and workforce are connected to a city's cultural scene, and his work is often cited in advising reports concerning developing Phoenix's arts and culture to spur economic growth. He coined the term "creative class" to describe the individuals who as of 2002 comprised 30 percent of the workforce. "Creative" does not necessarily connote artistic creativity, but people in the knowledge economy who are paid to produce ideas and information, like doctors, lawyers, scientists, and entrepreneurs. Paul Romer, professor of economics at New York University, succinctly explained that "the relatively well educated and relatively creative are disproportionately important" to economic growth.¹⁸⁹ But unlike the workers Phoenix attracted in the postwar decades, the creative class does not respond to the conventional economic theory that the best talent goes where there are better, higher paying jobs. Instead, they also value the nature of the communities in which they live, looking for cities with tolerant environments and diverse populations. This means cities like San Francisco, Austin, and Seattle will dominate cities like Cleveland and Detroit (or in a closer race, Phoenix) because they are able to combine

¹⁸⁹ Emily Eakin, "The Cities and Their New Elite," *New York Times*, June 1, 2002.

tolerance, talent, and technology (Florida's three T's) to create a high quality of life for its residents – a top priority for knowledge economy workers and firms.¹⁹⁰

A creative type's high quality of life consists of participatory experiences, making the performing arts more important to a city's cultural scene and potentially changing their format. Florida's *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002) and B. Joseph Pine and James H. Gilmore's *The Experience Economy: Work is Theater and Every Business a Stage* (1999) detail how experiences have taken precedence over goods as commodities and participatory recreation over spectator activities. Experiences need to be not only stimulating, but also authentic. Creativity is more valuable in the workplace, which is reinforced in leisure activities that foster this competitive advantage. Joining a soccer league is preferable to watching a game on television, and playing music with friends in a coffee shop is more fun than watching the symphony. Traditional cultural art forms are still valuable, but they need to be reframed as multidimensional, accessible and diverse experiences, not as elitist, high culture. Phoenix has marketed itself as a recreation destination since before World War II, which is especially advantageous as Americans spent 200 percent more leisure time doing sports and exercise in 1995 than they did in

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

1965.¹⁹¹ Though Phoenix has a strong recreational culture, it has had to work harder to build the city's artistic offerings.¹⁹²

The shift towards consuming experiences instead of goods had affected the performing arts since the 1960s. Since the 1990s, community leaders refocused the art and culture vision to adapt to a changing economy and new definitions of art. Civic leaders, government officials, educators, and the art and culture community have redefined what constitutes performance art to include a wide variety of offerings beyond the traditional symphony, theater, ballet, and opera standards. The broader definition signaled the Valley's increased cultural offerings, and altered criteria for qualifying for arts and humanities funding, allowing more groups to earn support. Florida demonstrated why valuing certain art forms over others is a problem. For much of the twentieth century the sign of a modern city was an art museum and an SOB (symphony orchestra, opera, and ballet); however the creative class no longer values the static nature of a permanent collection or the classical music of centuries past. Phoenix only managed to hold the art museum and symphony for any significant amount of time, until opera and ballet professionalized and relocated in the 1970s/1980s. Florida suggested cities encourage institutions to reach new audiences, for example by staging symphony concerts in unusual and accessible venues like parks. Cities must also cultivate street-level culture that incorporates multiple scenes (music, film, art, nightlife) into a variety of venues

¹⁹¹ John P. Robinson and Geoffrey Godbey, *Time for Life: The Surprising Ways Americans Use Their Time*, 2nd ed. (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 343.

¹⁹² Florida, *Creative Class*, 166-170; B. Joseph Pine and James H. Gilmore, *The Experience Economy: Work is Theatre and Every Business a Stage* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1999), 2, 11.

(coffee shops, bars, bookstores, galleries). Florida stressed the creative class desires fluidity: flexible schedules, dynamic programming, and multiple modes of participation. They do not value the generic culture of the suburbs or antiquated entertainment. Just as Michael Kammen observed the rise of middlebrow culture in the twentieth century based on class issues, Florida noticed the return of “popular” culture (in the democratic sense that Kammen defined it) for the twenty-first century with the rise of the Creative Class.¹⁹³

The Creative Class Values Cultural Diversity

Florida’s creative capital theory states creative people drive regional economic growth and they favor areas with diversity, tolerance, and openness. He and Gary Gates ranked the fifty largest American cities against a Gay Index, Bohemian Index, and Foreign-Born Index and compared the scores to the largest concentrations of high-tech industries according to the Milken Tech-Pole Index. They found cities with high tolerance and diversity also had a strong concentration of high-tech industry, not necessarily because gays and bohemians are knowledge economy workers but because cities with high populations of gays and bohemians (authors, artists, and musicians) signal a progressive and diverse community – a necessity for the creative class. Phoenix ranked in the twenties in all three categories: not the most diverse, but not the least. The authors offered Austin as a prime example: the city invested in cultural scenes as well as research and development through the University of Texas at Austin, creating an environment appealing to technology firms with its education populace and image as the

¹⁹³ Florida, *Creative Class*, 182; Kammen, *American Culture*, 28-34.

Live Music Capital of the World.¹⁹⁴ According to Florida's theory, Phoenix will be unable to truly compete for the creative workforce it needs until it fully develops a vibrant culture. In a 2002 interview Florida bluntly stated, "You cannot get a technologically innovative place unless it's open to weirdness, eccentricity and difference."¹⁹⁵

The Valley's expansion over the past six decades has resulted in changing demographics and increased diversity, leading to varied tastes among residents and higher expectations given Phoenix's major city status. The old and young segments of the population have grown faster than the working-age population, and have shown more interest in settling in the city than the suburbs, signaling a return to downtown. The arrival of ASU's downtown campus in 2005 spurred residential development, attracting young professionals, single or married without children.¹⁹⁶ In 2010 66.4 percent of Phoenix families were not living with their own children under age eighteen, indicating a majority were either not having children, or had grown children.¹⁹⁷ Between 2000 and 2010, the population of baby boomers (born between 1946 and 1964) declined at a far steeper rate in areas forty to eighty miles outside the nation's fifty largest cities than

¹⁹⁴ Richard Florida and Gary Gates, "Technology and Tolerance: The Importance of Diversity to High-Technology Growth," in *The City as an Entertainment Machine*, ed. Terry Nichols Clark (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2004), 200-214.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 213; Eakin, "Cities and Their New Elite."

¹⁹⁶ Ginger D. Richardson and John Stearns, "Downtown Rocks: Area is Abuzz with Lofty Plans," *Arizona Republic*, May 15, 2005.

¹⁹⁷ "American Fact Finder: Phoenix city, Arizona," *U.S. Census Bureau*, accessed November 10, 2013, <http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk>.

within five miles of the center.¹⁹⁸ The city's 2004 downtown redevelopment plan included building to attract "affluent and 'cool'" baby boomers.¹⁹⁹ Retired baby boomers are less interested in golf and retirement communities and are looking to move into downtown apartments instead, packing the city with a blend of retirees and young professionals looking for varied entertainment. Both of these groups typically attend performing arts functions more than young families, driving the demand for downtown development and urban arts and culture.

Phoenix not only had residents with new tastes, but new residents representing diverse backgrounds. Phoenix's Hispanic community grew 90 percent between 1990 and 2000 and by 2010 comprised 40.8 percent of the city's population.²⁰⁰ Their influence was hard to ignore, accounting for \$15 billion in the state's economy in 2008. Foreign-born residents accounted for 14.1 percent of the population, marking the region a new immigrant gateway and contributing to one of the benchmarks Florida and Gates attribute to high-tech cities.²⁰¹ Regarding the biggest indicator of tolerance and technology, same-

¹⁹⁸ Nancy Keates, "Hip, Urban, Middle Aged," *Wall Street Journal*, August 13, 2013.

¹⁹⁹ *Downtown Phoenix: A Strategic Vision and Blueprint for the Future* (Phoenix: City of Phoenix, 2004), 15-16.

²⁰⁰ Betsy Guzman, "The Hispanic Population: Census 2000 Brief," *U. S. Census Bureau* (Washington, D. C.: U.S. Census Bureau, 2001) <http://www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/c2kbr01-3.pdf>, 7; "State and County Quick Facts: Phoenix (city), Arizona," *US Census Bureau*, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/04/0455000.html>.

²⁰¹ Grady Gammage, Jr., John Stuart Hall, Robert E. Lang, Rob Melnick, and Nancy Welch, *Megapolitan: Arizona's Sun Corridor* (Phoenix: Morrison Institute for Public Policy, 2008), 26; Nancy Welch, Suzanne Taylor, Walter Valdivia, Patricia Gober,

sex couples, the Census Bureau's 2005 American Community Survey reported an estimated 11,658 same sex couples in the Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale area, with gay, lesbian, and bisexual (GLB) residents comprising 4.8 percent of the region's population. This was slightly higher than the 4.5 percent of GLB residents in the state. Phoenix had the largest concentration of GLB individuals at 6.4 percent.²⁰² The Valley's shifting demographics reflected the potential for cultural vibrancy and attracting creative workers, and impacted programming decisions for arts and cultural organizations.

Despite this increased demographic diversity, the Valley has been segregated by income and ethnicity, making it difficult to tout these figures as meaningful. Income and education levels were highest in the Paradise Valley, Scottsdale, and Ahwatukee Foothills areas, while Latinos were strongly concentrated in the southern part of the Valley with non-Hispanic white residents populating the north (the division marks not only the Valley but largely the state too). Education, age, and income have been strong indicators of arts and culture participation, but as definitions of culture and attitudes towards it changed, levels of participation among Valley residents were becoming better reflections of the region's diversity.²⁰³

Dwight Walth, and Nancy Dallett, *A Place for Arts and Culture: A Maricopa County Overview* (Phoenix: Morrison Institute for Public Policy, 2003), 7.

²⁰² Gary J. Gates, "Same-sex Couples and the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual Population: New Estimates from the American Community Survey," *The Williams Institute*, October 2006, 14.

²⁰³ Gammage et. al., *Megapolitan*, 26-30; Adrian Ellis, Joe Hill, and Jeanne Bouhey, *The Arts in Arizona: A Discussion Document* (Phoenix: AEA Consulting, 2002, 2; Welch et. al., *A Place for Arts and Culture*, ii-iii.

The New Cultural Vision for Phoenix

In order to continue Phoenix's momentum in the high-tech and bioscience industry, state and local governments have researched and began implementing policies that encouraged cultural vibrancy and demonstrated the performing arts' economic value. Various organizations and institutes representing local government, education, the arts and culture community, and high-tech research have partnered to research the Valley's culture, its impact, and how it compared to other cities since the 1990s. The Maricopa Regional Arts and Culture Task Force formed in 2003 to perform comprehensive research on the status of arts and culture in the Valley. Flinn Foundation executive director John Murphy and Virginia G. Piper president and chief executive officer Judy Jolley Mohraz recognized knowledge workers require a rich cultural atmosphere and, encouraged by the arrival of the Phoenix Bioscience Center, joined other nonprofits in learning how to attract more creative employees, underwriting over a quarter million dollars in expenses for the task force. The nonprofits came from varied backgrounds, including: the Flinn Foundation, a grantmaking organization supporting bioscience research, arts, education, and civic leadership development; the Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust, honoring the philanthropic legacy of Motorola founder Paul Galvin's widow; and Prescott nonprofits the Margaret T. Morris Foundation and J. W. Kieckhefer Foundation.²⁰⁴ ASU's Morrison Institute for Public Policy prepared the report with representatives from the school's Department of Geography and Public History Program and from the Phoenix Arts Commission. The broad range of organizations interested in learning how they could improve the arts and culture in the Valley demonstrated

²⁰⁴ Michael Lacey, "Us vs. Them," *Phoenix New Times*, October 2, 2002.

community members, funders, and civic leaders understood how arts and culture impact the overall quality of life in the Valley beyond an entity's entertainment value. The study's findings informed other policy recommendations from the Morrison Institute, and private philanthropies, arts leaders, schools, and government have worked together to continue creating a strong body of literature since the 2000s, providing new arguments for arts support.

The reports consistently identified a few key areas of cultural improvement for the city, county, and state. Government, civic, education, and arts and culture leaders have been implementing the strategies and policies since the 1990s. Both the postwar arguments and those employed in the 1990s and 2000s encouraged developing the arts to stimulate economic growth, but the strategy has evolved to highlight the arts as its own intrinsically valuable economic sector. This new strategy strengthened support for the performing arts by explicitly demonstrating its value and augmented the original purpose of arts development, which was creating a cultured city by developing quality organizations, attracting committed patrons, and educating an appreciative audience. By implementing these components leaders hoped to create a stronger sense of community and a clear cultural identity, making Phoenix a place residents and business want to be. The city (and state) adopted the arguments found in these reports, including Florida's theory, and have increased their role in supporting the arts as well as the role of the arts in the city's overall development. What follows are some of the major findings and how the city applied the information.

Arts and Culture Are Intrinsicly Valuable

After decades of struggling to demonstrate worth and find stable support, performing arts groups began arguing they are significant to the city not only culturally, but also economically. Changing attitudes about the sector's importance encouraged groups, patrons, and the government to monitor how much these ventures contributed to the economy. Whereas arts and culture was once seen as an extra civic feature, groups, government, and donors now understood its intrinsic value. In fiscal year 2010, Phoenix nonprofit arts organizations had \$165 million total economic impact of expenditures and contributed \$15.2 million in tax revenue to local and state governments. Resident audience members (85.2 percent of attendees) spent an average \$22.15 per person while nonresidents (14.8 percent of attendees) spent \$51.85 per person, totaling \$96.7 million spent at Phoenix arts and cultural events.²⁰⁵ As of 2010 the state arts and culture industry hosted 11,600 organizations utilizing 47, 712 employees; the performing arts had 1,754 organizations employing 9,031 people.²⁰⁶ It is difficult to chart long-term economic impact because organizations only recently began tracking the data, and because it is hard to define which businesses fit the category. Recent reports used varied definitions of art and culture and used different categories and measurements, like including sporting

²⁰⁵ 60 of Phoenix's 141 eligible institutions participated in the study. "Arts & Economic Prosperity IV National Statistical Report," *Americans for the Arts* (Washington, D.C.: Americans for the Arts, 2012), B-51, B-61, B-135, B-145, http://www.americansforthearts.org/pdf/information_services/research/services/economic_impact/aepiv/NationalStatisticalReport.pdf.

²⁰⁶ *Creative Industries: Business and Employment in the Arts* (Washington, D.C.: Americans for the Arts, 2011), http://www.americansforthearts.org/information_services/research/services/creative_industries/default.asp.

events with the performing arts, or excluding for-profit institutions from data. However, research in the past two decades illustrated arts and cultural organizations were economically beneficial and signaled the increased recognition by supporters, government, the public, and groups that the arts are important to Phoenix beyond indicating urban status.

Additionally, arts and culture bolstered tourism, a vital component of the Valley and state's economy. In 2012, Maricopa County visitors spent \$1.1 billion on arts, entertainment, and recreation.²⁰⁷ By 2003, one third of the area's three hundred arts and culture organizations were considered regional, attracting new dollars to the region and continuing the infrastructure and status necessary to maintain services and growth. Institutions like the Arizona Theatre Company, The Heard Museum, and Desert Botanical Garden featured prominently in Arizona's tourism.²⁰⁸ Despite being a key component of one of the city's top industries, most arts and cultural organizations struggled to find a stable funding base; however, arts supporters used these arguments to attract more public and private funding, altering the argument from using the performing arts to indirectly stimulate other industries to bolstering arts and culture so they become a destination and economic driver.

Quality Performing Arts Require Private and Government Support

Despite their economic impact, nonprofit arts organizations inherently operate at a loss and continue to require public and private support. Most of an institution's earned

²⁰⁷ "Arizona Travel Data," *Dean Runyan Associates*, accessed November 3, 2012, <http://www.deanrunyan.com/AZTravelImpacts/AZTravelImpacts.html>.

²⁰⁸ Welch et. al., *A Place for Arts and Culture*, 13.

income comes from ticket sales, and most donations are from individuals.²⁰⁹ Although they earn substantial revenue from ticket sales, concessions, subscriptions, memberships, and contracted services, the income insufficiently covers operating costs. Valley organizations utilized a broad base of funding to compensate for this loss, drawing from public and private sources to continue operating. Private donations from individuals, corporations, and philanthropic foundations accounted for \$123.4 million in contributed revenue, comprising the bulk of institutions' earned revenue.²¹⁰ Still, it is harder for Arizona institutions to court private donors. Arizona's groups are relatively young, and their relationships to philanthropists are still forming. Most of the larger local businesses that once supported the PLT and PSO either closed or were absorbed by national firms not tied to the community beginning in the 1970s. Many performing arts fans were not from the Valley or only lived there in the winter, and still supported their home institutions. The Maricopa Regional Task Force found compared to ten like-sized cities, Phoenix ranked last in private donations.²¹¹ The reports argued increasing government support would improve institutions' infrastructure, quality, and marketing, creating

²⁰⁹ *What Matters: The Maturing of Greater Phoenix* (Phoenix: Morrison Institute for Public Policy, 2004), 44.

²¹⁰ "The Scope of Our Arts & Cultural Sector," *Arizona Cultural Data Project*, last modified June 1, 2013, <http://www.azculturaldata.org/home.aspx>.

²¹¹ Nancy Welch, Walt Plosila, and Marianne Clark, *Vibrant Culture Thriving Economy: Arts, Culture, and Prosperity in Arizona's Valley of the Sun*, (Phoenix: Maricopa Regional Arts and Culture Task Force, 2004), 12.

greater incentive for individuals and corporations to invest in the Valley's cultural resources.²¹²

Arizona's institutions have received comparatively little public funding. When the NEA first awarded basic state agency grants to the Arizona Commission on the Arts for 1966-1967, they allotted \$12,053 for thirty-two qualifying events. By 1974-1975, funding increased to \$200,000 for 1,457 events, the standard award for each state commission.²¹³ In 2007 direct government funds accounted for 13 percent of an average American nonprofit arts institution's total budget; in Arizona, it only comprised 2-8 percent. By 2011 Arizona ranked forty-ninth in the nation in annual arts support, spending only ten cents per capita. The National Endowment for the Arts awarded Arizona \$1.3 million, including \$938,600 in Partnership Agreement competitive grants in 2010. The state's NEA-mandated body, the Arizona Commission on the Arts, appropriated those funds based on factors like size, services, contribution to the community, and success in the competitive grant process, making them an important body for deciding which groups survive.²¹⁴ Although the state had more money for the arts, it also had significantly more

²¹² Rob Melnick, Nancy Welch, and Bill Hart, *How Arizona Compares, Real Numbers and Hot Topics* (Phoenix: Morrison Institute for Public Policy, 2005), 54.

²¹³ The NEA also awarded the Arizona Commission on the Arts \$25,000 for planning and a state survey. The state agency grant does not include grants made to individual organizations. Arizona Commission on the Arts and Humanities Annual Report to the Governor, 1975, Ephemera Collection; *National Endowment for the Arts/National Council on the Arts Annual Report* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975), 43.

²¹⁴ Phoenix's relationship with its arts scene fits a national trend of public arts funding and how government defines art. Alice Goldfarb Marquis reviewed public arts funding since World War II and concluded that systems of funding are flawed. They have had mixed success in the past, but the current model is not sustainable. She argued that

groups and events, not only in the initial categories from the 1960s and 1970s (theater, music, dance, visual arts, education), but also participants in broader categories (literature, architecture, museums, film).²¹⁵

Since the late 1990s, Arizona's arts funding came from legislative appropriation, the Arts Trust Fund, and interest from the Arizona ArtShare Endowment. The Arts Trust Fund was established in 1989 under Governor Rose Mofford and allocated \$15 from every Arizona Corporate Commission filing fee to the Arizona Commission on the Arts. The ArtShare Endowment was a public/private-funding model created in 1996 under Governor Fife Symington. The state committed \$20 million through 2008, with interest going to the state arts commission, while arts organizations could use the state's commitment and clearly defined standards to leverage private donations. The program greatly improved arts funding throughout Arizona, but after the state fulfilled its obligation it extricated all public funds from the endowment to balance the budget during the state's financial crisis in 2009. The economic recession made public arts funding in Arizona extremely difficult. The Phoenix Office of Cultural Affairs estimated 72 percent less funding from the city since 2009. Decades after the original patrons left, Arizona arts organizations still looked to the government for funding and stabilization, hoping to

the National Council on the Arts once comprised "cultural czars" but as a group it is now simply marginal. Programs like the National Endowment for the Arts prioritize certain types of art over others, deeming particular modes or groups more artistically valuable than others. Alice Goldfarb Marquis, *Art Lessons: Learning from the Rise and Fall of Public Arts Funding* (New York: Basic Books, 1995).

²¹⁵ Jaime Dempsey, "American Arts Funding and the Delivery of Arts Funding in Arizona: A Primer," in Arizona Academy, *Capitalizing on Arizona's Arts and Culture: Ninety-eighth Arizona Town Hall* (Phoenix: Arizona Town Hall, 2011), 37, 40-41.

leverage the support for more private donations and ideally a new group of dedicated patrons.²¹⁶

Arts Education Supplements STEM Programs

The authors of the reports identified education as critical for creating knowledge economy talent as well as arts and culture patrons and audience. Arizona's (and the nation's) push for STEM in schools is necessary for developing the talented workforce that will fill the ranks of the knowledge economy. When Arizona was first vying for the defense industry in 1940, the state was ranked fourth for college-educated workers; in 2011, it was twenty-seventh, and much of the decline has occurred since the 1990s. Part of the problem is qualified graduates will leave the state if there are not enough opportunities, but college-attainment rates are declining among the non-Hispanic population and have been below average in the increasing Hispanic community since the 1980s. Quality education, technology in classrooms, and students ready to start and stay in school create an educated citizenry and attract high-tech businesses that want to be near a knowledgeable workforce. But putting more technology in classrooms and improving the region's infrastructure will not fully bring the Valley into competition with Austin, Denver, Portland, Salt Lake City and other cities vying for knowledge economy industries. College Board data showed students who took four years of art and/or music classes in high school scored ninety-one more points on their SATs than students who did a semester or less. Supplementing STEM courses with arts courses cultivated students'

²¹⁶ Ibid., 42-43; Welch et. al., *A Place for Arts and Culture*, 14.

creativity and innovation, both preparing them for the new economy and instilling appreciation for the arts.²¹⁷

In 1996 Arizona adopted voluntary K-12 academic standards for drama, music, visual art and dance and updated the requirements in 2006. The Arizona Board of Regents adopted a rule requiring one unit of fine arts for admission to any of the state's public universities. However, Arizona's decentralized school system made it difficult to implement the standards statewide. For every outstanding program like Sylvester H. Herrera Elementary School (Phoenix) and Tucson Unified School District's Opening Minds Through the Arts, there were many rural and urban schools that struggled to meet the minimum requirements. As of 2009, only 56 percent of Arizona schools had updated their curriculum to align with the Arizona Academic Arts Standards, and 20 percent of schools still offered zero arts courses. Many schools have much more pressing issues to address before they can integrate an arts curriculum, harming their students' chances of entering the state's public universities. The tough economy forced school districts to prioritize funding certain subjects over others, harming Arizona's knowledge economy

²¹⁷ George W. Hammond, *Troubling Trends in Arizona's College Attainment Rate* (Tucson: Economic and Business Research Center, 2013), http://ebr.eller.arizona.edu/research/Trending_College_Attainment_in_Arizona_9_2_13.pdf, 1-2; Mary Jo Waits, "Making Public Policy Choices for People and Places," in *The New Economy: A Guide for Arizona*, N. Joseph Cayer and Nancy Welch, eds. (Phoenix: Morrison Institute for Public Policy, 1999), 35; Mandy Buscas and Lynn Tuttle, "Arizona Arts Education," in Arizona Academy, *Capitalizing on Arizona's Arts and Culture*, 69.

base in the future and stalling decades-long programs that have brought local arts groups into classrooms.²¹⁸

Culture Forms Communities and Creates Sense of Place

Critics joke that Phoenix is a cultural desert, and even though the city has had numerous developments in its arts and culture, the witticism reflects people's attitudes about the arts. Between 1997 and 2004, the Morrison Institute for Public Policy surveyed Valley residents' opinions on factors contributing to their quality of life. They consistently named education, public safety, and crime as top concerns, while arts, culture, and recreation was the lowest priority. Although residents saw the quality of life improving overall, they thought their cultural institutions were developmentally stagnant. Part of the problem was Valley residents were disconnected from their cultural institutions. Decades after the significant postwar migration, two thirds of Valley residents were born elsewhere, making it difficult to cultivate a strong sense of community. Arts programs are one solution to fostering social capital, improving quality of life, and building the community. People who are involved in arts and cultural activities also have high participation levels in other aspects of community life. The arts can also connect communities across the region and state, the way sports do. Just as the Arizona Diamondbacks bring statewide fans together through a common interest, the Arizona Opera and Arizona Theatre Company connect the Phoenix and Tucson arts

²¹⁸ Gammage et. al., *Megapolitan* 35, Ellis et. al., *The Arts in Arizona*, 3; Colleen Sparks, "Best Schools 2010," *Phoenix Magazine*, August 2010, 106; Buscas and Tuttle, "Arizona Arts Education," 68-71.

communities, broadening audiences. Modern groups foster community the same way early Phoenicians bonded over their love of music and theater.²¹⁹

One way the city supported the arts community is by physically building an arts community. The Roosevelt area was full of boarded up shops and empty lots in the 1980s when Mayor Goddard and the city designated it a Special Planning District to revitalize the neglected area. It attracted artists looking for cheap working and living spaces, and the city capitalized on the budding arts district formation. In 2006, under Mayor Phil Gordon, the city hired Dyett & Bhattia Urban Regional Planners to redevelop the 1,500 acres between Seventh Avenue and Seventh Street to the east and west, and McDowell Road and Buckeye Road to the north and south. The area included the older arts districts – the Civic Center and Convention Center – plus other cultural districts like Heritage Square, the Warehouse District, and Roosevelt Row. Phoenix was previously zoned parcel by parcel in a way that only allowed commercial or residential areas, but since 2006 the city has rezoned the area to create mixed-use districts that encouraged an arts district with galleries, workspaces, lofts, and businesses like grocery stores and coffee shops. The traffic plan included narrowing streets to encourage walkability, and the light rail played a large role in bringing people directly into these neighborhoods. The monthly First Fridays festival brought Valley residents into the Roosevelt community and displayed galleries, businesses, and cultural institutions. The plan not only created an arts

²¹⁹ *What Matters*, 8, 43; Welch et. al., *Vibrant Culture*, 8; Chris Walker, Stephanie Scott-Melnyk, Kay Sherwood, *Reggae to Rachmaninoff: How and Why People Participate in Arts and Culture* (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, 2002), 7-8; Gammage et. al., *Megapolitan*, 39.

destination within the city, it cultivated a sense of place and identity for downtown culture.²²⁰

Defining the area's culture and cultivating sense of place is important for increasing urban appeal and attracting residents and industry. Instead of being close to material resources, knowledge economy businesses seek locations with a critical mass of creative talent. An appealing city has research institutions, technology infrastructure, intellectual and social capital, and a desirable quality of life. Phoenix has always used its climate and natural environment as a selling point, and ASU has grown as a Research I institution with bioscience and sustainability institutes; however, arts policy leaders stressed the city needs to develop a stronger cultural brand if it is going to compete with other cities for talent and industry. The Valley has nationally recognized organizations and programs, but the cultural identity needs to be clearer.²²¹

Competing with Benchmark Cities Requires Arts Development

The Batelle Memorial Institute's 2003 study for the Maricopa Regional Task Force compared Phoenix to nine benchmark regions: Atlanta, Austin, Charlotte, Denver, Indianapolis, Portland, Salt Lake City, San Diego, and Seattle. Many of the regions faced the same issues as the Valley, including struggling to find steady financial support for arts and culture. Because the Valley is much more decentralized than other regions, it is hard to identify a central hub for arts and cultural the way other cities have clearly

²²⁰ Michael Tulipan, "Reviving Phoenix Through Art," *New York Times*, January 31, 2010; *General Plan*, 38; Megan Irwin, "Phoenix Rising?" *Phoenix New Times*, November 30, 2006; Gail Brinkman and Nichelle Zazueta-Bonow, *Roosevelt Row Design Guidelines* (Phoenix: City of Phoenix, 2011), 10, 12-13.

²²¹ Waits, "Making Public Policy Choices," 30-35; Welch et. al., *Vibrant Culture*, 8.

defined districts. One of the key lessons learned from other cities was that sustained leadership is important: arts and culture need clear champions fighting to keep their needs a priority. Phoenix has learned this lesson multiple times whenever civic leaders were no longer able to advocate for the arts. Just as postwar leaders built the performing arts based on other cities' models, twenty-first century arts and culture advocates looked to similar regions to realistically determine how to build cultural infrastructure and make Phoenix more appealing to knowledge economy workers than its competitors.²²²

Epilogue

Early arts supporters' legacies live on through the groups they established and the culture they created. Although Phoenix is still developing its cultural identity, what exists is the product of decades of dedication to growing the city. Phoenix Theatre offers a full season of professional theater in their Mainstage Theatre and Black Box Theatre, plus their Cookie Company productions for families. The Phoenix Symphony Orchestra is in its sixty-sixth season under director Michael Christie, and remains Arizona's only full-time professional orchestra. The PSO shares the Symphony Hall stage with professional companies Ballet Arizona and the Arizona Opera. ASU Gammage presents touring Broadway productions and smaller performing arts shows and guest lectures through its ASU Gammage Beyond series. Combined with ASU's Herberger College of Fine Arts, the university is one of the largest presenting organizations in the country. Suburban residents have more chances to view performances with venues in their own cities, such

²²² Technology Partnership Practice and Batelle Memorial Institute, *Learning from Others: Benchmarking the Maricopa Region Against Other Regions' Efforts to Build a Vibrant Arts and Cultural Sector* (Peoria, AZ: Batelle Memorial Institute, 2003), 2, 19-20.

as the Scottsdale Center for the Performing Arts, Mesa Arts Center, Chandler Center for the Arts, and the Tempe Center for the Arts. Leaders are also cultivating culture downtown, with the Valley Metro Light Rail conveniently bringing people into the city for art, sports, dining, and ASU's downtown campus offerings. First Fridays highlight these amenities and allow guests to preview cultural institutions for free, introducing people to the Roosevelt Row and Heritage Square districts.

Leaders from multiple industries are working hard to further develop Phoenix's arts and culture, and they recognize the sector's role in advancing the city's economic goals. Residents and leadership must be fully committed to the mission or it will not work – after all, a performance demands an audience. Opting to allocate taxpayer funds to a group's operating costs, or deciding to spend money on a night at the theater is difficult when today's art consumers are not reaping the benefits of a booming economy. Because arts and culture are not viewed as vital, they are the easiest to eliminate when the economy fails. Postwar leaders had the benefit of a strong economy when they first established the cultural scene, but they understood the arts as a vital urban component, not a luxury. Arts supporters used the same argument in the 1980s to once again convince Phoenicians the city needed the arts. The performing arts have evolved tremendously since the first stock companies rolled into town thanks to tireless work by many to force culture on the city's residents. The crusade to develop a strong arts and culture scene continues, its supporters still fixated on making Phoenix the high-tech, sophisticated urban center they believe it can be.

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