

AUDITORIUM THEATRE

CHICAGO'S LANDMARK STAGE® EST. 1889

50 E Ida B. Wells Dr
Chicago, IL
AuditoriumTheatre.org

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AUDITORIUM THEATRE BEGINS TO RESTORE ORIGINAL LOUIS SULLIVAN STENCILS

Stencil Work Represents Ongoing Commitment to Restoration and Preservation of the National Historic Landmark Theatre

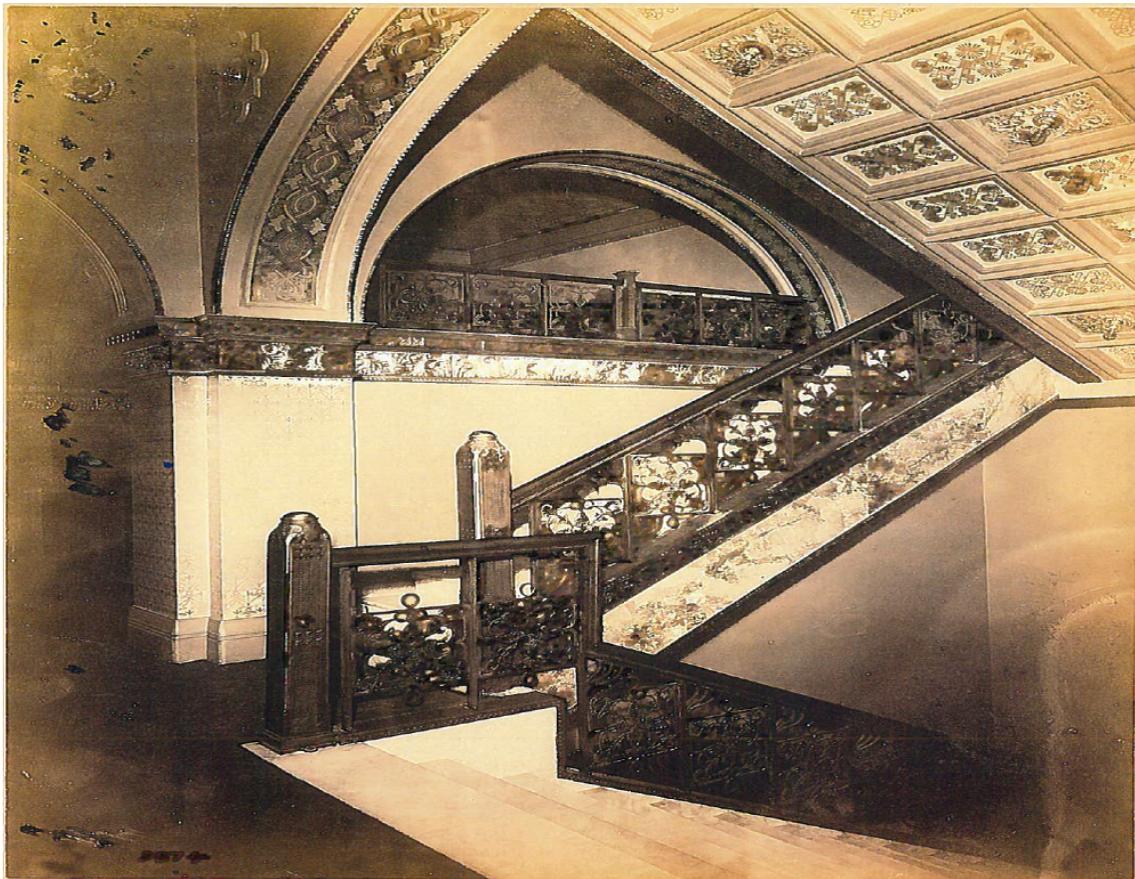


Photo from 1890 displaying Louis Sullivan's original stencil designs at the Auditorium Theatre.

(CHICAGO, IL) The Auditorium Theatre, a National Historic Landmark that celebrated its 129th birthday on December 9, 2018, recently restored intricate, **Louis Sullivan**-designed stencils in the theatre's north Dress Circle inglenook. Sullivan, considered the father of modernism and a mentor to Frank Lloyd Wright, is known for his ornate designs and painstaking attention to detail. In the theatre's earliest days, his designs covered the arches, ceilings, and columns of the Auditorium Theatre lobby spaces. The Auditorium Theatre will continue this restoration work in the south inglenook and the ceiling arches of the Dress Circle lobby, beginning in January.

"We are committed to the restoration and preservation of our landmark theatre," says **Rachel Freund**, Interim Chief Executive Officer of the Auditorium Theatre. "By restoring these original stencils, designed by Louis Sullivan himself, we stay true to this mission and get another step closer to returning the theatre to its original splendor. We look forward to continuing this important work."

On Wednesday, December 12, Chicago cultural historian and director of the Chicago Architectural Preservation Archive **Tim Samuelson** discussed the significance of this work with **Anthony Kartsonas** of the art restoration firm Historic Surfaces, who oversaw the stenciling and painting process, and **Matthew McNicholas**, Auditorium Theatre board member and co-founder of MGLM Architects.

“Putting these stencils back really calls into play what made Sullivan a special architect and also what makes this one of the greatest buildings on the planet,” Samuelson said.

In 2014, the theatre began to renovate its second floor Dress Circle lobby – now named the Elissa Lobby, in honor of **Elissa Efroymsen** of the Efroymsen Family Fund. During this process, photographs taken in 1890 were unearthed, depicting Sullivan’s stencil work that had since been painted over. The Auditorium Theatre was then able to find Sullivan’s original stencils, and specialists at Historic Surfaces replicated and repainted the stencils over the summer of 2018.

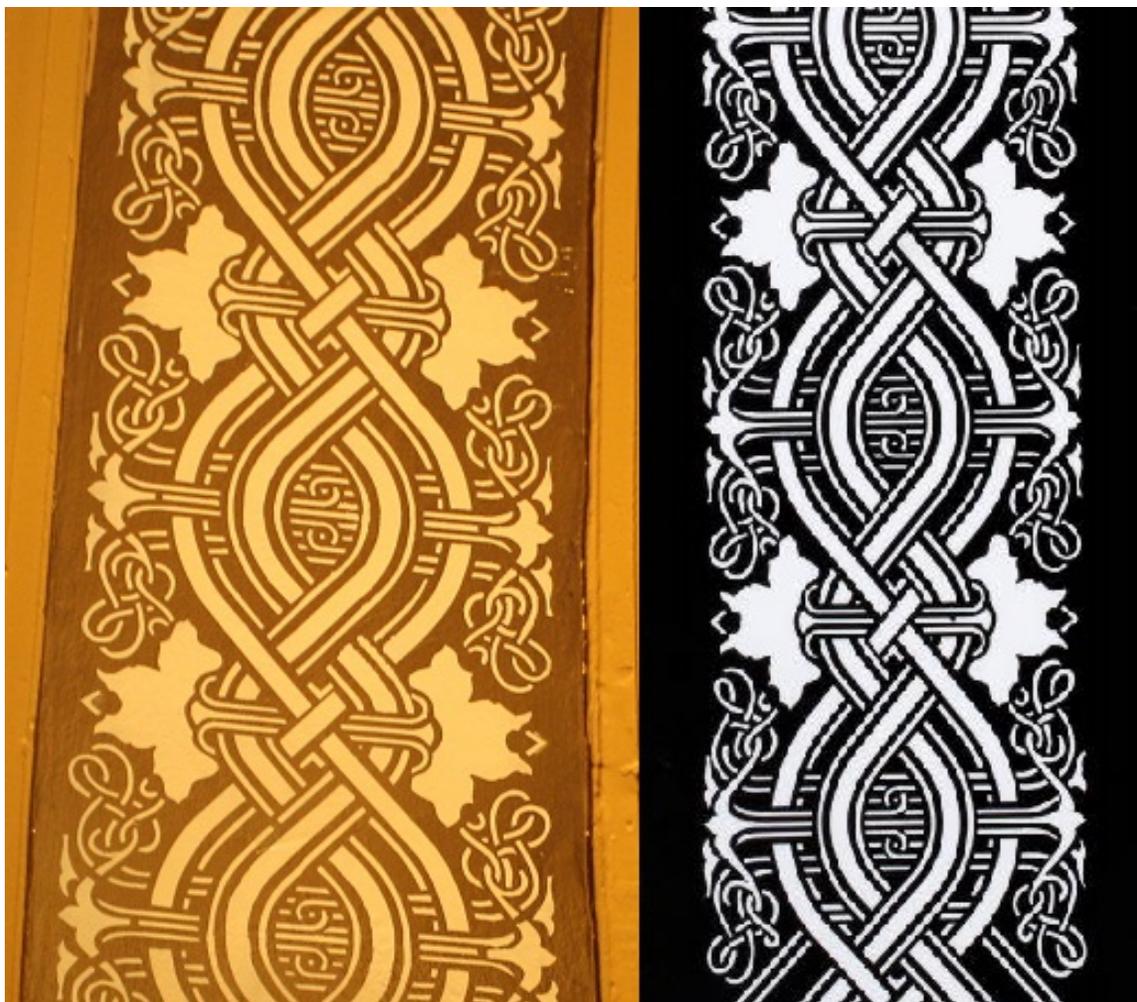
Samuelson, who witnessed the theatre’s major renovation in the 1950s and 1960s and its subsequent 1967 re-opening (following a nearly 26-year closure), noted that many of Sullivan’s stencils were recovered during that time. “But the money wasn’t there to put them back,” he explained. “The place still looked great ... but it was like having the finest Stradivarius but it’s a little out of tune. What we see here will give you an idea of what happens when you tune her up.”

Other recent restoration and renovation work around the theatre that enhances visitor and artist experience includes the installation of new hot water heaters and the purchase of a new Harlequin sprung dance floor for the theatre’s landmark stage. Additionally, the theatre repainted each of its six lobby levels over the summer, brightening and refreshing these spaces following the 2015-16 installation of new LED lighting that adheres to the original color temperature of the Auditorium. In the Dress Circle lobby, the theatre also installed new carpeting, created to match the original colors and design from 1889, and repaired plaster walls and columns.

Visitors can see the stencil restoration during [performances and events](#) at the Auditorium Theatre or on a [historic theatre tour](#), offered on Mondays at 10:30AM and noon, Tuesdays at 5:30PM, and Thursdays at 10:30AM.

**Elissa Lobby Restoration Partners:
Efroymsen Family Fund
National Trust for Historic Preservation
Historic Surfaces
Auditorium Theatre Historian Bart Swindall**

**Additional major restoration and renovation support generously provided by
Denise Littlefield Sobel and The Baryl Family.**



Newly painted detail in the Auditorium Theatre's south inglenook, compared to the stencil designed by Louis Sullivan.

Upcoming Events at the Auditorium Theatre

December 13-30: [The Joffrey Ballet – The Nutcracker](#)

January 19+20: [Too Hot to Handel: The Jazz-Gospel Messiah](#)

January 24: [National Geographic Live – Pink Boots and a Machete](#)

February 1: [Shhh...Trivia Night!](#)

February 2: [Trinity Irish Dance Company](#).

February 13-24: [The Joffrey Ballet – Anna Karenina](#)

March 2+3: [Hubbard Street Dance Chicago/Malpas Dance Company](#).

March 6-10: [Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater](#)

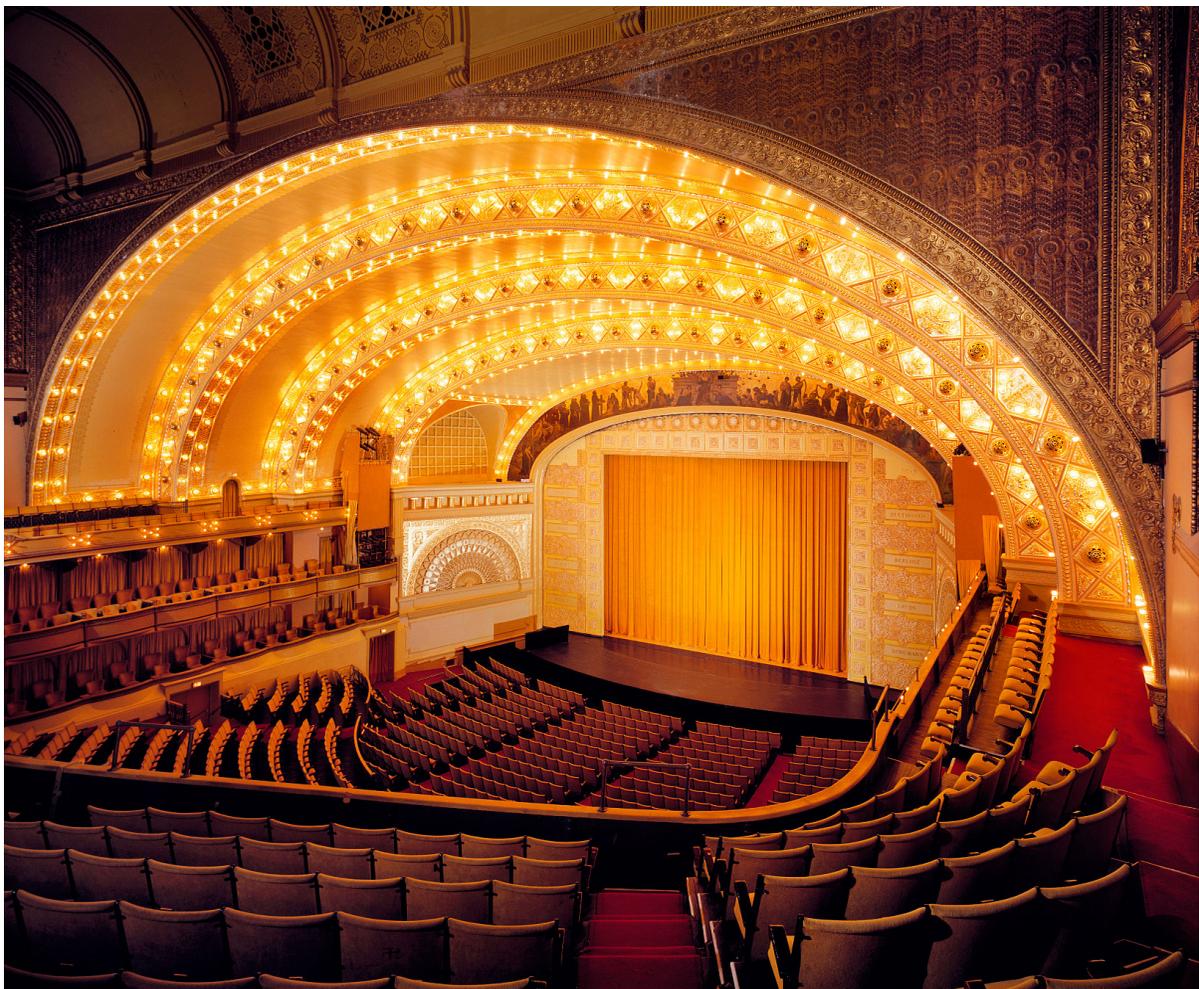
March 16: [ICCA Great Lakes Semifinal, presented by Varsity Vocals](#)

March 30: [A Whole New World of Alan Menken](#)

About The Auditorium Theatre

The Auditorium Theatre, located at 50 E Ida B Wells Dr at Roosevelt University in Chicago, is an Illinois, not-for-profit organization committed to presenting the finest in international, cultural, community, and educational programming to all of Chicago and beyond as **The Theatre for the People**. The organization also is committed to the continued restoration and preservation of the **National Historic Landmark**.

The Auditorium Theatre 2018-19 Season is made possible in part with support from the **John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation**, the **Illinois Arts Council**, **The Chicago Community Trust**, and the **Palmer House, a Hilton Hotel**. **Michigan Avenue Magazine** is the official magazine sponsor. For more information about programming, volunteer, and donor opportunities or theatre tours, please call 312.341.2310 or visit AuditoriumTheatre.org. For a complete listing of events at the Auditorium Theatre, please click [here](#).



1890 photo of the Auditorium Theatre and stencil photos and detail, courtesy of the Auditorium Theatre. Auditorium Theatre, photo by James Steinkamp.



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