

GOING OFF THE RAILS: EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF THE RAILROAD
ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF MUSICAL CULTURE
IN KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI (1869–1905)

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Gabriella Roderer, Candidate for the Master of Musicology Degree

University of Missouri-Kansas City, 2021

ABSTRACT

Kansas City, Missouri, is a musical oasis in the United States. In addition to being considered one of the four original jazz centers, local audiences also enthusiastically welcome art music and experimental music of all kinds.¹ This deep appreciation for music and the arts can be traced to the development of the railroad in Kansas City and how it connected the city to the artistic lifeblood of the country. This thesis explores the existing research about the establishment of Kansas City as a railroad hub and the subsequent cultural blossoming experienced in the city at the turn of the century. This thesis project makes a connection between the railroad and the growth of music culture. The development of various aspects of music in Kansas City including, band, orchestra, opera, theater, vaudeville, music education, and music publications which the research in this thesis indicates is traced back to the societal impacts the railroad had on the frontier town in the last three decades of the nineteenth century. Next, this

¹ The three other original jazz centers are New Orleans, Chicago, and New York. Chuck Haddix, and Frank Driggs, *Kansas City Jazz: From Ragtime to Bebop--A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005) 1.

thesis project provides commentary on the function of demographics, including a brief consideration of gender, in the musical culture of Kansas City—specifically the way women defined culture and programming. Finally, this project summarizes and contextualizes the trends, habits, and preferences that make up the music culture in the city within the musical expectations and culture specific to the United States. The establishment of the railroad in Kansas City connected the city to the musical trends of the United States; because of this artistic connection, Kansas City developed into a musical microcosm of the United States’ musical narrative.

APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty below, appointed by the Dean of the UMKC Conservatory, have examined a thesis titled “Going Off the Rails: Exploring the Impact of the Railroad on the Development of Musical Culture in Kansas City, Missouri (1869–1905),” presented by Gabriella Roderer, candidate of the Master of Musicology degree, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This topic came into being as I listened to Dr. Katherine Preston present on the late nineteenth-century American love affair with English-language opera. It was then I realized that I did not know the full story of my own musical heritage. Additionally, this thesis topic combines many themes that are important to me as a musicologist. The interdisciplinary tilt of research reflects my commitment to topics that are relevant to people from musical and non-musical backgrounds alike. It also intertwines my love for Kansas City with my dedication to uncovering the real story and presenting the full, unscrubbed narrative. With such beginnings, it is appropriate that I would continue with the theme of English-language opera in the United States and add to that theme by focusing my research on the correlation between the social and economic developments that resulted from the establishment of the railroad, and the rich musical environment that benefitted from the transformation of Kansas City into a railroad hub.

The cornerstone of this thesis is the primary source research, to include review of a variety of newspaper articles, magazine articles, city directories, other local publications, photos, maps, and advertising cards. I have listed the primary resources and special collections I accessed at the start of the bibliography. Certain sources were more integral to the research, which I describe below.

City directories The only copies of city directories to which I had access were on microfiche. This meant that in order to gather data from the city directories, I had to manually scroll through each page, with content ranging from fifty-six to over 1,000 pages per volume. I scoured the texts, searching for any relevant references to music, musicians, theaters, opera

houses, music lessons, music schools, music stores, or music ensembles. With this data in hand, I tracked the musical growth in proportion to economic and population growth after the establishment of the railroad, as well as in comparison to other nearby towns.

Magazine articles The magazine articles were found through Répertoire International de Littérature Musicale (RILM), JSTOR, and other online article databases. The articles come from various magazines including *The Cosmopolitan: An Illustrated Monthly Magazine* and *The Independent* and allowed me to make inferences about the country's view of Kansas City during its transformation into a railroad hub and an urban center between 1869 and 1905.

The Kansas City Star (1880-2013) and *The Kansas City Times* (1884-1990) As most of the editions are available online through News Bank, and include an effective search engine, I was able to target my research toward specific subjects and gather general data across decades of newspaper editions. My research was in part guided by the excerpts quoted in Felicia Londré's *The Enchanted Years of the Stage: Kansas City at the Crossroads of American Theater, 1870-1930*.

Advertising cards Several advertising cards from the 1880s and 1890s are included in the Missouri Valley Special Collections as part of The Kansas City Public Library. These cards include data that I used to verify the data provided in the city directories. The advertising cards also grant a colorful glimpse into the real-time artistic and musical preferences of the day. The cards also allow me to contextualize Kansas City within the national historical narrative.

This research requires an intersection of several narratives, intertwining the histories of the Kansas City's railroad and the city itself with the histories of the city's various musical genres into a cohesive whole. In order to bridge the academic gaps between the histories, I use economic principles and data gathered from primary resources to draw connections between the

parallel narratives. Historical context becomes paramount, and therefore I begin the history of the city with its founding.

Kansas City was among several small settlements founded in the 1820s and 1830s to support the trade that took place on the Missouri and Kaw (Kansas) Rivers. Well-placed along the banks of the Missouri River, it became a popular stopping place for traders and travelers headed West on the Santa Fe Trail. It was not long, however, before the founders and town elites realized that they would need to procure railroad charters for their town if they wanted it to prosper. It took a combination of savvy political maneuvering, accessible terrain, visionary businessmen, and luck in the 1860s to put Kansas City on the map as a center for the railway, eventually connecting Kansas City to all major cities in the United States. Via this railway system, Kansas City came to function as a literal coupling between Sacramento and Key West, New York City and San Antonio. The social, economic, and artistic implications of the railroad in Kansas City, Missouri, were exponential.

During this period, when itinerant performers of all kinds—from minstrelsy groups, vaudeville troupes, circuses, to opera companies—were traveling the country, they moved by train, stopping at various cities along the route between New York and California. The railroad would bring performers and their music to the theaters and halls of Kansas City. Connecting Kansas City to the rest of the country via the railroad connected the city to the artistic lifeblood of the country, thereby transforming Kansas City into a musical microcosm of the United States at the turn of the nineteenth century.

A good deal has been written about the history of the railroad in Kansas City and about the cultural development that occurred at the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth; however, those histories only mention the connections between the establishment of

Kansas City as a railroad hub and the subsequent outpouring of musical culture in passing. This chapter will outline the research that has been completed concerning the connection between the rise of the railroad in Kansas City and the strong culture of musical excellence that remains a hallmark characteristic of Kansas City to this day. In order to track the initial musical evolution that occurred in the city from the establishment of the railroad and to identify trends that carry through the turn of the century, the focus of this research is 1869–1905.

Because this interdisciplinary topic relies on non-musical exploration, the research has not been previously consolidated. However, several of the individual aspects of various disciplines have been thoroughly researched. The history of the railroad in Kansas City is one such an example. This includes the variables that created the environment for the railroad’s successful production, as well as the major players who pushed for the railroad in Kansas City to become a reality. This includes an exploration into the legends and myths that surround the railroad and famous “the bridge of destiny.”¹ There is also an ever-growing body of research dedicated to music trends in the United States during the last half of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. On a local plane, several articles and books on the history of the theater and opera in Kansas City have been published. It is also on the local plane that the data gathered from the primary comes to the fore. Additionally, a substantial number of researchers have drawn a connection between the railroad and its influence on general culture, on musical culture, and beyond. These connections are not Kansas City-specific and tend to focus on only one genre. This literature also covers some of the changes and adaptations required by societal and urban

¹ The “bridge of destiny” refers to the Hannibal Bridge, which opened in 1869 and spanned the Missouri River. This railroad bridge connected Kansas City to Chicago. The bridge came to represent the victorious procurement of the railroad charters for Kansas City and a prosperous future for the town. Brent Trout describes it this way: “The elites in each city [Kansas City and St. Joseph], the railroad and the [Hannibal Bridge] represented destiny, the difference between becoming an urban metropolis or stagnating into mediocrity.” Brent Trout, “Rails of Destiny: Early Railroad Development in Kansas City, Missouri, 1840–1870” (MA thesis, Northwest Missouri State University, 2014), 5, <https://www.nwmissouri.edu/library/theses/2014/TroutBrent.pdf>.

infrastructures in order to compensate for the upheaval in economic, social, and identity issues that resulted from the establishment of the railroad in the United States. Finally, research has been completed on the social, psychological, and historical trends associated with the development and establishment of culture in general, and musical culture specifically.

The Railroad:

Charles N. Glaab covers the intricate web of local promotions and planning that culminated in the building and opening of the Hannibal Bridge across the Missouri river in 1869 in *Kansas City and the Railroads: Community Policy in the Growth of a Regional Metropolis*. It is the most comprehensive work published that addresses the entirety of the history of the establishment of the railroads in Kansas City.² Glaab's research serves as the basis for the historical context provided in this thesis. The opening sentence of a review of *Kansas City and the Railroads* states that "recent papers [were] arguing and rearguing the influence of railroads on American economic growth."³ This simple contextualization made in the review indicates that the connection between the establishment of the railroads and the economical shifts is real and has interested economists for decades. The economy in the United States is driven by, and shaped by, supply and demand. Entertainment and the arts are no different. By changing the accessibility of the supply, the dynamics of the demand shift as well. The opening of the Hannibal Bridge connected Kansas City to Chicago, but more importantly, the bridge became the symbol of economic possibility, radically altering the shape of supply and demand.

² Glaab continues his narrative beyond 1869 and the Hannibal Bridge to the 1890s by including information about a failed attempt at procuring more railroad charters leading to Memphis, and a discussion about the concern of some of the city's populace that the railroad and politics could not be separated.

³ Charles J Kennedy, "Kansas City and the Railroads: Community Policy in the Growth of a Regional Metropolis. By Charles N. Glaab. Madison, The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1962. Pp. Xii 260. \$6.50." *Business History Review* 37, no. 4 (Winter 1963): 466–66. doi:10.2307/3112727.

Brent Trout also wrote a thesis on the development of the railroad on Kansas City, and in it he relies heavily on Glaab's work. In 2014, Trout explained that to "the elites in each city [Kansas City and St. Joseph], the railroad and the [Hannibal Bridge] represented destiny, the difference between becoming an urban metropolis or stagnating into mediocrity."⁴ Unlike Glaab's broader strokes, Trout focuses exclusively on the events surrounding the Hannibal Bridge. Glaab and Trout together paint a clear picture: the goal of those who worked to bring about the railroad was economical, rooted in a desire to make something of Kansas City and to build the foundations of an urban center that would enjoy economic and cultural stature. In their book *K.C.: A History of Kansas City, Missouri*, Lyle W. Dorsett and Theodore A. Brown summarize many of the same events as Glaab and Trout but contextualize their history within the broader story of the growth of the city through the 1960s.

The Music:

Several different sources are relied on to build a cohesive musical narrative in Kansas City from 1869 to 1905. A comprehensive narrative reveals musical trends that I then overlay with the social, economic, and cultural shifts that occurred in Kansas City as a result of the establishments of the railroad.

Elbert R. Bowen, in his *Theatrical Entertainment in Rural Missouri Before the Civil War* explains that from the very beginning, music was a part of life in Kansas City, although it was not considered refined.⁵ Opera becomes a standard fare for the citizens of Kansas City in the 1880s. Katherine Preston provides various lists of performance itineraries of itinerate opera

⁴ Trout, "Rails of Destiny," 5.

⁵ Elbert R. Bowen, *Theatrical Entertainment in Rural Missouri Before the Civil War* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1959), 112.

companies in connection with her book, *Opera for the People: English-Language Opera and Women Managers in Late 19th-Century America*. The data in these lists support this timeframe.⁶ Many of the major opera companies were performing in St. Louis beginning around 1869, but this trend did not reach Kansas City until 1880.⁷ Harlan Jennings speaks to this delay when he states that “hardly any of these [traveling opera troupes] were willing to gamble on a far-flung trip to Kansas City. St. Louis...was still perceived as the extreme western edge of operatic profitability, San Francisco excepted.”⁸ Jennings’ articles also include details about the national and international touring opera companies that did visit Kansas City, from 1860–1879, including anecdotal accounts and repertoire performed.⁹

Felicia Hardison Londré verified, edited, and contextualized the theater memoirs of David Austin Latchaw, a theater critic from the 1880s who chronicled the rise of the “first golden age” of theater in Kansas City spanning from 1870 to 1930. The combination of Londré’s own research and Latchaw’s descriptive recollections provide colorful background and context for various artists and theaters that were prominent in Kansas City during between 1870 and 1930. The compiled writings cover several genres, including theater, opera, and vaudeville. It is

⁶ “Opera for the People: Resources,” Oxford University Press, accessed May 12, 2020, <https://global.oup.com/us/companion.websites/9780199371655/resources/>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Harlan states in full: “The construction of the Coates Opera House [in 1870], combined with Kansas City’s growing prosperity and increased accessibility by rail, did not immediately result in a surge of visits by opera troupes. In the first place, few such ensembles existed. Second, hardly any of these were willing to gamble on a far-flung trip to Kansas City. St. Louis...was still perceived as the extreme western edge of operatic profitability, San Francisco excepted. It should be remembered that opera impresarios at this time routed at their own financial risk. Kansas City therefore did not enjoy a steady parade of opera companies until the 1880s.” Harlan Jennings, “The Early Days of Grand Opera in Kansas City, Missouri, 1860–1879,” *The Opera Quarterly* 15, no. 4 (Autumn 1999): 686, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oq/15.4.677>.

⁹ Harlan Jennings, “Her Majesty’s Opera Company in Kansas City,” *The Opera Quarterly* 21, no. 2 (Spring 2005): 227–41, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oq/kbi021>.

clear that theater was an important part of entertainment in Kansas City, something that would not have reached a “golden age” without the railroad.¹⁰

Charles Munstedt provides insight into the establishment of a musical culture by discussing the publishers of music in Kansas City in the first fifty years after its founding. He mentions some of the implications indicated by the existence of music publishers in Kansas City who self-published music and the corresponding love of music that would have permeated the city. “Kansas City,” he states, “which began its existence as a frontier trading post in 1821, grew from a population of 6,500 in 1865 to a major metropolis with almost 325,000 citizens by 1920. The city’s musical life vividly reflects this expansion.”¹¹

Ernst C. Krohn published a semi-comprehensive compilation of the composers and musicians working in Missouri between the 1880s and the 1970s. While most of his data focuses on the music scene in St. Louis, his compilation includes information about several Kansas City musicians, teachers, and composers, providing enough data to allow for inferences about issues of gender to be made in the musical conversation in Kansas City explored in this thesis.¹² While the research in this thesis does include a discussion of different musical genres, it does not track the development of jazz.¹³

These sources work to flesh out the conclusions I have made based on the data collected through my primary source work. The *Kansas City Directories* for this study’s target dates

¹⁰ Felicia Hardison Londré, *The Enchanted Years of the Stage: Kansas City at the Crossroads of American Theater, 1870-1930*, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007) 1.

¹¹ Peter A. Munstedt, “Kansas City Music Publishing: The First Fifty Years,” *American Music* 9, no. 4 (1991): 354, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/3051686>.

¹² Ernst C. Krohn, *Missouri Music* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1971): 9–10.

¹³ The following is a resource that explores the development of jazz in Kansas City: Chuck Haddix, and Frank Driggs, *Kansas City Jazz: From Ragtime to Bebop--A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

contain information about individual Kansas City residents, including professions (music teachers or performing musicians), music societies, the existence of music groups such as bands and orchestras, music stores, music schools or studios, and theaters. The directories also include advertisements for various music stores and music schools. Moreover, early publications of *The Kansas City Star* (beginning in 1880) include information about theaters, advertisements for performances, commentary on music performances from a religious or moral perspective, and music reviews and criticism. Other magazine and newspaper articles from the period are also referenced in this thesis.

Digital reproductions of advertising cards dating to 1880–90 include the descriptions of musical instruments and merchandise sold at the music stores open in the city during the last half of the nineteenth century. The number and variety of the advertising cards provide commentary on the popularity of the music stores in the city during this period. Additionally, advertising card expert Mary Moore explains the social and economic function of the advertising cards in her article “Advertising Cards of the ‘80’s in Upstate New York.”¹⁴ The local sustainability of the advertising cards provides a platform for a comparison between fads popular in Kansas City and those in New York and indicate that Kansas City had indeed tapped into the artistic lifeblood of the country.

¹⁴ Mary Moore, “Advertising Cards of the ‘80’s in Upstate New York,” *New York History* 30, no. 4 (October 1949): 449, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23149457>.

The Infrastructure:

It is the economic data that acts as the connective tissue of my research. *The Commerce of Kansas City*, published in 1886, contains statistics and economical figures and information that track the explosion of growth that followed the establishment of the railroad in Kansas City. The publication also compares these statistics to other cities in the Midwest, including St. Louis and Chicago.¹⁵

Sally F. Schwenk explains that “the access to primary rail lines and the growing local agricultural businesses, particularly those relating to grain and livestock, placed Kansas City on the verge of becoming a national center for livestock and grain trade.”¹⁶ John Herron provides further details about the livestock and meat processing trades, which became a main source of income for Kansas City.¹⁷ Preston summarizes the vital connection between infrastructure and musical activity, stating: “These railroad-related developments helped stimulate both urban growth and westward expansion...Many middle-class Americans, with increased disposable income, were happy to spend it on performance by visiting entertainers.”¹⁸

¹⁵ S. Ferdinand Howe, *Commerce of Kansas City in 1886* (Kansas City: Ramsey, Millett, & Hudson, 1886), 10–11.

¹⁶ Sally F. Schwenk, “Railroad Related Historic Commercial and Industrial Resources in Kansas City, Missouri,” *National Register of Historic Places* (May 2018): 3, <https://dnr.mo.gov/shpo/nps-nr/64500308.pdf>.

¹⁷ John Herron, “Making Meat: Race, Labor, and the Kansas City Stockyards,” in *Wide-Open Town: Kansas City in the Pendergast Era*, ed. Diane Mutti Burke, Jason Roe, and John Herron (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2018), 122.

¹⁸ Preston states in full: “Small towns and hamlets all over the country were now connected with urban areas, and cities were linked with each other. This changed the country, as theatre historian John Frick put it, “from a collection of isolated, independent villages into an interconnected national community.” These railroad-related developments helped stimulate both urban growth and westward expansion, especially after completion of the first transcontinental line in 1869...the expansion of the railroad system helped to facilitate immigrant dispersal all over the country, including to many of the new cities of the West...During the late 1860s and early 1870s, however, prosperity and growth were the national economic watchwords. Many middle-class Americans, with increased disposable income, were happy to spend it on performance by visiting entertainers (including opera companies) who utilized the railroads for transportation and increasingly relied for communication on the telegraph lines that expanded at the

The Culture:

I focus the cultural aspect of my research on the changes and the evolutionary momentum in musical culture that occur between 1869 and 1905 as a result of the establishment of the railroad. In order to provide a fuller picture of this progression and to situate the musical narrative of Kansas City within the wider musicological and ethnomusicological context, I use the terminology as set forth by Bruno Nettl. Nettl explains that the process of researching music and culture has gone through several iterations, all in an effort to wrestle with defining something as fluid and abstract as culture.¹⁹ For the purposes of this research, I use three different categories of researching music and culture as described by Nettl: “music in its cultural context,” consisting of where music is performed and who performs it; the “cultural context,” which includes the “production, performance, and experience of music;” and “music in culture,” which contextualizes music in the overall culture of a town, city, or community.²⁰

In order to contextualize the musical trends of Kansas City in the national trends so as to identify the similarities, I have included sources that provide “music in its cultural context” commentary. John Springhall’s research on the show business in the United States includes commentary about mass culture in the United States and how the organization of show business

same time and along some of the same routes.” Katherine K. Preston, *Opera for the People: English-Language Opera and Women Managers in Late 19th-Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 38.

¹⁹ Bruno Nettl, ““That Complex Whole”: Music in Culture,” in *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Thirty-one Issues and Concept*, 2nd ed. (Champaign: The University of Illinois, 2005), 222.

²⁰ Nettl continues: “The successive appearance of these three approaches (“context,” “in,” and “as”) in the history of ethnomusicology is an indication of the way in which ethnomusicology often follows anthropological theory, sometimes lagging behind by a number of years. They are successive in another way, as the second approach usually depends on data generated by the first, and the third on the information derived in the second...Most approaches to the study of music in culture have actually used a static conception of culture. Music in or as culture implies a relationship...In all cases there is at least the implication of influence of one on the other, normally of culture on music, or of a time sequence, normally of music following culture.” Nettl, ““That Complex Whole,” 218–219.

in this period contributed to this rise and acceptance of mass culture as a standard in the United States. Springhall also compares the high art culture of Europe to the mass culture trends of the United States.²¹

Bowen's *Theatrical Entertainments in Rural Missouri* provides the musical backdrop for the advent of the railroad in Kansas City, establishing a cultural baseline to build upon. Krohn's work includes a similar reference point, drawing a comparison between the high art culture of Europe and the less refined culture of Missouri in the early days before the railroad would bring high art culture to the city.

Demographics:

The language and demographical focus of this thesis reflects the white middle-and upper-class residents of Kansas City, Missouri. But people of color are also an integral part of this narrative, although there are fewer historical references available.²² One of the first times an African American is listed as being a musician in the Kansas City Directories is in the 1871 edition.²³ Then, the 1880 *Kansas City Directory* lists the Kansas City Brass Band and specifies that the personnel are people of color.²⁴ Lincoln High School opened in 1890 and was the first all-black high school in the city. The high school featured a band and an orchestra.²⁵

²¹ John Springhall, *The Genesis of Mass Culture: Show Business Live in America, 1840 to 1940* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 3-7.

²² The Kansas City Directories list African American musicians, bands, and performers between 1869 and 1905 but they are fewer in number.

²³ *Kansas City Business Directory 1871*, (Kansas City: Corbett, Hoy & Co., 1871)

²⁴ Kansas City Brass Band with William Adams leader, located at 920 Charlotte. *Kansas City Directory for 1880*, (Kansas City: Ballenger & Hoyes, 1880).

²⁵ Anne Kniggendorf and Suzanne Hogan, "Students Learn The Story of 155 Years of Black Excellence At Kansas City's Lincoln High," *KCUR 89.3*, February 15, 2020, <https://www.kcur.org/community/2020-02-15/students-learn-the-story-of-155-years-of-black-excellence-at-kansas-citys-lincoln-high>.

Additionally, several prominent black musicians were musically active or moved to Kansas City after 1905.²⁶

Preston asserts that audiences of all social standings and race regularly attended the opera.²⁷ *The Kansas City Times* covered an incident in 1871 where an African American barber managed to purchase a ticket in the white section at the Coates Opera House, much to the discomfort of the white audience.²⁸ The entire situation was reported with some indignation in the paper the next day. In response, the opera house manager wrote a letter to the *Times*, explaining that the Coates segregated seating, just as any other theater in the United States,²⁹ further making clear that people of color indeed attended the opera during this period.

The development of Kansas City as a railroad hub also impacted the population of people of color in Kansas City. The stockyards, which developed as a direct result of the railroad, created jobs that brought immigrants to the city to live in the cattle-processing town Armourdale and work in the cattle processing plants.³⁰ In a 1919 survey of Armourdale, statements were

²⁶ These musicians include band master N. Clark Smith, jazz and blues singer and pianist Julia Lee, and actress and opera singer Etta Moten Barnett. The primary source documents from the later Pendergast years (1900-1939) in Kansas City contain more consistent and probably more accurate representations of the musical activity of the African American and other minority populations in Kansas City. The influx of references corresponds with the rise of jazz in the area. Missouri Bicentennial, "Kansas City Black History: The African American Story of History and Culture in Our Community," 2020-2021, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5075895f84ae84c1f4ec0443/t/5fd8d1cb58e44248ddf3951a/1608045009450/kblackhistory+V9+web.pdf>.

²⁷ Preston, *Opera for the People*, 134.

²⁸ He was nearly thrown out by security, but the mayor intervened, inviting him for drinks, which horrified the white audience members more than the barber sitting in their section. I was able to access this account through Londré's compilation. Londré, *The Enchanted Years of the Stage*, 43.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ In addition to building one of the most modern meatpacking plants in the country in Kansas City, James Joy, L. V. Morse, and Philip Armour also built a neighborhood, which they named "Armourdale," to house their workforce. It soon grew to capacity, housing nearly 5,000 residents by 1888. Although Armourdale does fall within the boundaries of Kansas City, Kansas, its existence supported a financial endeavor that was critical to the development of the city on the Missouri side. As an illustration of this, Armourdale was consolidated into Kansas City, Kansas, in

made about the musical outlets available in the city. The consensus was that there were none, much to the city's detriment. The report states that "no pavilion or opera-house is provided for such amusement, therefore most of the people either go to Kansas City, Kan., or to Kansas City, Mo., for this sort of recreation."³¹ This reference to the theater-going habits of the residents of Armourdale (which included people of color) also supports that people of color were regular audience members in the theaters and halls of Kansas City throughout the turn of the nineteenth century and beyond.

Although the musical stories and the preferences of people of color are clearly embedded in the evolution and development of the musical culture in Kansas City, my research focuses on the musical and financial contributions of the white upper-class members of the city.

In terms of gender, I have identified the huge impact and contribution women made on the musical culture of Kansas City between 1869 and 1905. I have teased out passing references

1902, and in 1903, the Kansas City, Missouri business directory included businesses from Kansas City, Kansas, which would have included Armourdale. (Kansas City Business Directory 1903, (Kansas City: Hoyer Directory Company, 1903), 17.) John Herron explains that "as a result of the challenges inherent in stockyard labor, the factories relied heavily on a malleable working class. Census data reveal that recent arrivals from Ireland, France, and Germany worked alongside Dutch, Scandinavian, and Italian laborers. The British Empire was well represented with Australian, Canadian, Indian, Scottish, and Welsh workers filling many different roles throughout the industry. After plant managers sent recruiters to central and eastern Europe, a trickle of workers from Russia, Bulgaria, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Slovenia, and especially Croatia became a steady flow. While publicly proclaiming that "nationality makes very little difference" in their labor force, Kansas City meatpackers continued to maintain a labor hierarchy. Germans and Swedes were considered "superior," and of the more recent immigrants, "the Russians are regarded as much more efficient than the Poles, and the Greeks are considered more efficient than the Italians, but not as good as the Croatians, Slovaks, and Lithuanians." Most employers approved of the Japanese "on account of their quickness and quietness while at work," and everyone agreed that the Greeks and the ever-troublesome Italians were "unsatisfactory." But in many ways, the most significant cohort of meatpacking laborers was African Americans. Blacks began arriving in the city in large numbers in the 1870s and were immediately drawn into livestock processing, a stark contrast to the later entrance of black workers into other meatpacking centers." John Herron, "Making Meat: Race, Labor, and the Kansas City Stockyards," in *Wide-Open Town: Kansas City in the Pendergast Era*, ed. Diane Mutti Burke, Jason Roe, and John Herron (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2018), 126.

³¹ Manuel Conrad Elmer, "Armourdale: A City Within a City," *Bulletin of the University of Kansas, Social Survey Series* 20, no. 5 (June 15, 1919): 67, <https://pendergastkc.org/sites/default/files/collections/24SMITHLOCNARAX/armourdalecitywi00univrich.pdf>.

and gathered data from across all the sources used in this thesis to provide commentary on the issue of gender in the musical culture in Kansas City.

The Focus of this Research:

My research shows that the cultural and societal consequences of the establishment of the railroad resulted in Kansas City becoming a musical microcosm of the United States. It also makes clear that the residents of Kansas City have always prized music and other forms of entertainment, and that audiences welcomed, with open arms and open pocketbooks, the influx of traveling performers and itinerant opera and theater companies. What is left then is to connect the dots between the economic changes after the railroad was built and the popularity that musicians enjoyed in Kansas City, Missouri, in the late nineteenth century and into the early twentieth, and to provide informed conclusions and commentary on the trends indicated by the data. Because of the railroad, Kansas City continued to grow into a full-fledged city with the culture and music rising to meet it.

CHAPTER 2

THE RAILROAD CONNECTION

By the latter end of the 1880s, Kansas City was a veritable musical microcosm of the music in the United States. But as late as the 1860s, it was still a rough-and-tumble cow town. It was the advent of the railroad and the resulting economic boom that would ensure the city's rise from cow town to sprawling metropolis, filled with rich and varied musical activity. In order to establish a connection between the establishment of the railroad, the ensuing economic boon, and the development of the musical scene in Kansas City, it is necessary to first situate city and railroad within their respective historical contexts.

The events that led to the establishment of the railroad in Kansas City were the result of a domino-like effect, in which several smaller events linked together culminated in a perfect storm that crowned Kansas City with the regional dominance to which its promoters had committed. In an oversimplified description, four major variables facilitated the growth of Kansas City into a prosperous and important city: the stockyards; trade as part of the trail westward; the city promoters; and the absorption of smaller settlements and unsettled land into the city's boundaries. If any of these variables had been removed, Kansas City may not have emerged permanently victorious in the struggle for regional dominance that was ongoing during the second half of the nineteenth century.¹ Each variable relied almost entirely on obtaining railroad connections through Kansas City; without them, the city's natural geographical position on the trail westward could have easily become outdated and obsolete. Without the railroad, no cattleman would have had reason to establish a stockyard in Kansas City, and had promoters in Leavenworth, Kansas successfully obtained the railroad charter instead, no amount of promoting

¹ Trout, "Rails of Destiny," 5.

would have been able to combat the influx of people that would have congregated there, bypassing Kansas City completely.

Most discussion about the establishment of the railroad in Kansas City, Missouri, revolves around the building of the Hannibal Bridge over the Missouri River. The bridge opened in 1869 to connect Chicago to Texas through the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad and the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy lines. From a wider perspective, the Hannibal Bridge was only one small part of a complex financial and political railroad puzzle, but it functioned as a key piece to everything that Kansas City's promoters were working towards. The building of the Hannibal Bridge has long been a source of local and urban legends, "complete with heroes, villains, a traitor, frantic journeys, and a dramatic confrontation of the enemy."² But the reality was more pedantic, "a pattern of false starts, obvious turning points, and fortuitous combinations of circumstances."³ Clearly, though, it was "neither the beginning of the rise of Kansas City, nor the end, but a continuation of the expansion of Kansas City's hinterland."⁴

The geographical accessibility of the area had long been recognized by the Native Americans. Before 1830, the Kansa or Kanza (now known as The Kaw Nation), Chickasaw, Illini, Ioway, Otoe-Missouria, Osage, Quapaw, Sac & Fox, Shawnee, and other American Indians may have lived and hunted around what is now modern-day Kansas City.⁵ The same

² In the legends and myths swirling around the building of the Hannibal Bridge, the town elites in Leavenworth, who were also vying for the railroad charters, became the face of the opposition—and therefore the enemy. Although less dramatic than an "enemy," the town elites in Kansas City had to work furiously to obtain the railroad charters before Leavenworth could procure them. Glaab, *Kansas City and the Railroads*, 2.

³ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁴ Trout, "Rails of Destiny," 110.

⁵ "Related Tribes," Kanza Cultural History, accessed May 23, 2021, <https://www.kawnation.com/culture/Culture/culthist.html>.
And

geographical virtues that attracted Native Americans also caught the attention of French fur trader François Gesseau Chouteau (1797–1838) in the late 1820s.⁶ Capitalizing on the newly founded city of Independence and the influx of people traveling west on the Santa Fe Trail, he established a trading post that would serve both the American Indians and the explorers.⁷ As a result of the Indian Removal Act of 1830, Native American tribes were driven from Missouri, and the Delaware, Wyandot, and Shawnee Indians were relocated to Kansas.⁸ A mission was established in what is now Johnson County, Kansas, headed by Baptist minister Isaac McCoy (1784–1846), meant to assist with the transition process.⁹ His son, John Calvin McCoy (1811–1889), was a businessman rather than a minister, and he too recognized the freight and trade potential of the area. In short order, he settled the town of Westport, cut a trail through the bluffs to a landing site near Chouteau’s trading post, and established Westport Landing. Westport soon became a crucial stop on the Santa Fe Trail, surpassing Independence in function and accessibility.¹⁰ Because it was the furthest landing site on the Missouri River in the Missouri River Valley, it became the preferred entry point to the Santa Fe Trail as it conveniently allowed travelers to cover more distance via the waterway.¹¹ The thrill of expansion, or sense of

“Indigenous Tribes of Missouri: Missouri’s Native Peoples,” Jefferson College, accessed March 12, 2021, <https://libguides.jeffco.edu/missouritribes>.

⁶ “KCQ: How Did Kansas City Come To Be?” The Kansas City Public Library, accessed March 12, 2021, <https://kchistory.org/blog/kcq-how-did-kansas-city-come-be>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

The Missouri River Valley, or Missouri Valley, refers to the area that follows the path of the Missouri River. This includes parts of Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, and Missouri. For the purposes of

“manifest destiny” that permeated the country at this time, was something to which John McCoy was not immune. Within five years of arriving in the Missouri Valley, John McCoy had joined with thirteen other early city investors to expand the reach of Westport Landing and to found the Town of Kansas, which would eventually be renamed Kansas City.¹²



Figure 2.1. 1845 Santa Fe Trail Map. Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1845_Santa_Fe_Trail.jpg.

The same year that Chouteau opened his trading post. Leavenworth was founded as an offshoot of Fort Leavenworth. Considered the “oldest continuously active military reservation

this paper, the terms refer to the area in the near vicinity to Kansas City that includes parts of Kansas, Missouri, and Iowa.

¹² Ibid.

west of the Mississippi River,”¹³ Fort Leavenworth was established in 1827. The connection to the military was beneficial for the city of Leavenworth and brought in trade that fueled the economy in the city. Had the railroad not become the driving force for growth and evolution in the United States, businessmen in Kansas City and Leavenworth may have contentedly settled into their towns’ respective orbits as stopping points on different trails to the West. Kansas City functioned as the gateway to the Santa Fe Trail and New Mexico while explorers stopped in Leavenworth before traveling to Denver, Colorado, along the Smoky Hill Trail to search for gold. But with the advent of the railroad, the entire game changed. The business and political elites in the Missouri Valley cities recognized quickly that if they wanted their towns to evolve into cities or to achieve regional dominance, they would need to bring the railroad to their respective towns. This understanding sparked railroad campaigns based in Kansas City, Leavenworth, and St. Joseph, with town elites working to attract the big railroad companies and secure the railroad terminals in their towns. Glaab summarizes the nature of these railroad campaigns, stating: “Charters, re-charters, bond issues proposed, bond issues authorized, maps and pamphlets, newspaper editorials, and public meetings all show determination to guide a growing town along a clear path toward a clear goal: attract the railroads so that the town will become a city.”¹⁴

Campaigns, pamphlets, newspapers, town meetings—whatever it took to obtain permission to satisfy negotiations, a core group of town elites were willing to do.¹⁵ Johnston

¹³ “U.S. Army Fort Leavenworth,” U.S. Army, accessed March 12, 2021, <https://home.army.mil/leavenworth/index.php>.

¹⁴ Glaab states in full: “The details of the railroad campaign were many and complex. Charters, re-charters, bond issues proposed, bond issues authorized, maps and pamphlets, newspaper editorials, and public meetings all show determination to guide a growing town along a clear path toward a clear goal: attract the railroads so that the town will become a city. Indeed, the “community” in this frontier settlement was represented by this one endeavor to attract the railroads.” Glaab, *Kansas City and the Railroads*,

¹⁵ Trout, “Rails of Destiny,” 110.

Lykins (1800–1876) first arrived in the Missouri Valley as missionary, accompanying the Baptist minister Isaac McCoy. Lykins established himself as a town elite as he bought up a great deal of real estate in 1851. In fact, he would become the town’s first mayor and encouraged politician and railroad organizer Milton Jamison Payne (1829–1900) to open *The Enterprise*, a newspaper dedicated to promoting the growth and virtues of Kansas City.¹⁶ Robert T. Van Horn (1824–1916) was a newspaper editor who visited Kansas City in 1855 for business and never left. He took over the editing of *The Enterprise* when Payne became mayor, and Van Horn published editorials about the benefits of the railroad. In fact, the business elite advocating for the railroad were not professional “railroad men,” but “paper railroad men; politicians, newspaper men, and businessmen.”¹⁷

St. Joseph was larger and older, and by 1854 much of its economy was dependent on wagon caravans. This dependency would have made the transition to railroads in this period difficult. Leavenworth was growing rapidly, was well placed geographically, and was a strong prospect for the coveted railroad, but the organization of the town’s businessmen and railroad promoters was haphazard due to inner conflict. Despite being described as a “cow town,” Kansas City on the other hand, was championed by the local leaders of the railroad campaign in the city who believed passionately in the future success of their city.¹⁸ The Kansas City railroad campaign was also made up of younger, more energetic people, which, according to Brown and Dorsett, made it more effective.¹⁹ By 1855, motivated businessmen in Kansas City were already

¹⁶ Ibid., 50.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., 110.

¹⁹ Theodore A. Brown and Lyle W. Dorsett, *K.C.: A History of Kansas City, Missouri* (Boulder: Pruett Publishing Company, 1978), 17–18.

working on paper railroads.²⁰ Even with the natural geographical advantages of Kansas City and the dedicated town promoters, it was never at any point, right up until the moment the contracts were finalized, guaranteed that Kansas City would obtain the railroad charters.

Even with the charters Kansas City still had much to overcome. In 1859, Henry Villard (1835–1900) visited and “could hardly imagine a more unfavorable site for a future city than the forbidding bluffs upon which the Missouri town had been located.”²¹ But town promoters worked tirelessly on booster projects that would attract railroad companies. Kansas City, like many other early frontier towns described as “small towns on the rim of civilization,”²² built hotels and established newspapers, disproportionate to the actual population of the town, to facilitate the shameless promotion and boosterism that were an essential component of future growth.²³ Additionally, in 1856, Kansas City established a Chamber of Commerce committed to realizing the future of Kansas City contemplated by the visionary business and political elite.

At the time, there were two main railroad companies that could establish railroad terminals in Kansas City: the Missouri Pacific Railroad coming out of St. Louis and the Hannibal and St. Joseph lines that connected with the Chicago, Quincy, and Burlington lines running out of Chicago. Kansas City business elites were convinced that the path to regional dominance was through the Missouri Pacific, and they worked tirelessly to procure the charter for their town.

²⁰ Paper railroads were railroad plans or companies that existed on paper only and were considered corporate entities. This allowed railroad companies to obtain investors through the selling of stock. There were many paper railroads that were never built. Brown and Dorsett, *A History of Kansas City*, 11.

²¹ Glaab, *Kansas City and the Railroads*, 95.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Brown and Dorsett, *A History of Kansas City*, 11.

Railroad charters were secured through negotiations. Town representatives would promise to bring money to the table, usually a combination of city or county bonds and money invested by businessmen and community members. Other promises might be made; for example, the large railroad companies agree to cover the costs of materials and in return the town representatives would promise to give over ownership of the railroad in that town.²⁴ Other incentives might also include promises of land holdings in the town or some assistance pushing through a governmental bill.²⁵ Some larger railroad companies tended to require funding to be provided, at least partly, at the city level before they would even consider agreeing to a railroad charter.²⁶ With all of the nuances of negotiation, it was imperative that the town or city seeking a contract with the railroad companies was organized enough to mobilize people or resources to meet the stipulations of the railroad companies. This type of organization was something at which the town elites in Kansas City excelled.²⁷

By summer 1860, Kansas City promoters had beat out Leavenworth and successfully negotiated contracts for railroad terminals with both the Missouri Pacific Railroad (through St.

²⁴ Trout, "Rails of Destiny," 101.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 100.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 99.

²⁷ Up until the 1850s, most of the inhabitants of Kansas City, Westport, and the surrounding areas were Southerners, venturing north into new territory. Slavery had been allowed in small towns and territories, as dictated by the Missouri Compromise of 1820, but this changed in 1854 with the Kansas-Nebraska Act, a political compromise that railroad promoter Stephen Douglas pushed through to guarantee that the nation's transcontinental railway system followed a northern route through Chicago. It allowed for "popular sovereignty" in Missouri and the Nebraska territories, and it effectively negated the Missouri Compromise. The fallout was fierce and bloody. Chaos ensued in the small towns that passage of the act directly impacted, leading to what is known as "Bleeding Kansas." Northerners and Southerners gathered into the territories, fighting to sway the votes in each respective territory to establish them as pro or anti-slavery, respectively. The town promoters worked diligently to keep politics out of business decisions, and this included the issue of slavery; town elites unified behind a wall of neutrality, despite their personal political views, trying to curry favor with both the North and South. But no matter how neutral the city promoters attempted to be, the fallout of the Kansas-Nebraska Act was a "prelude to civil war." "The Kansas-Nebraska Act," United States Senate, accessed March 12, 2021, https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/minute/Kansas_Nebraska_Act.htm.

Louis) and the Hannibal and St. Joseph lines (connecting to the Chicago, Quincy, and Burlington Railroad line through Chicago), effectively achieving their hopes to establish Kansas City as a railroad hub. But their success was short-lived. One year later, the Civil War came crashing down on their plans, wreaking havoc on Kansas City while promoters tried desperately to hold the town together, maintain political neutrality, and keep railroad charters intact; they were unsuccessful. Caught between the Union and Confederate forces, the trajectory of the city plummeted from growth to bare survival. The Confederate forces used Kansas City as a resource hub, and the Union enacted wartime laws that laid heavy fines on all members of the town's elite who had obvious Confederate leanings,²⁸ eventually forcing them to leave town until after the war. Confederate guerrilla forces took possession of Kansas City for a time, and the Battle of Westport, known as "the Gettysburg of the West" and the fight that regained the region for the Union, practically destroyed the town of Westport, crippling it permanently.²⁹ To add insult to tragedy, one of the stipulations of the hard-won railroad charters stated that the railroad had to be built within two years of the contract. Due to the war, this was impossible, and Kansas City lost all contracts with the railroad companies.

Leavenworth, on the other hand, prospered during the war, due mostly to its proximity to Fort Leavenworth.³⁰ The Union issued additional wartime laws, requiring the citizens of the area to gather around Leavenworth. Because of its association with the fort, Leavenworth was spared

²⁸ The town's elite were eventually able to get most of these fines lifted. Trout, "Rails of Destiny," 75.

²⁹ Westport had been a town that rivaled the importance of Kansas City pre-Civil War. After the battle known as the "the Gettysburg of the West," the town never recovered enough to achieve that same competitive edge and would eventually become a part of the Kansas City city limits. *Ibid.*, 77.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 97.

the burning and destruction of farms and homes committed by the Union in order to slow the Confederate forces and hamper their access to essential resources.³¹

Despite the war-time difficulties, the negotiation and building of railroads resumed mid-Civil War. The Pacific Railway Act passed in 1862, providing funds for the Union Pacific and the Central Pacific railroad lines to construct a transcontinental line.³² The Act also promised funds to connect Kansas City to the Union Pacific Line.³³

Kansas City promoters focused much of their efforts on resecuring the terminal with the Missouri Pacific despite the severe and consistent financial setbacks the railroad company experienced.³⁴ Finally, in 1864, with promises of providing additional local funding, Kansas City won the charter with the Missouri Pacific. The railroad reached Kansas City in September 1864, even while the war raged on, prompting setbacks. In fact, Confederate general Sterling Price targeted the Missouri Pacific railroad, destroying over one million dollars' worth of track.³⁵ The Missouri connection was finally achieved in 1865 when the first trains from St. Louis arrived in Kansas City. But this one connection was not enough: the business elite in Kansas City wanted to establish the town as a railroad hub. Despite the uphill battle, the establishment of the

³¹ Ibid., 76.

³² "Landmark Legislation: The Pacific Railway Act of 1862," United States Senate, accessed March 12, 2021, <https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/PacificRailwayActof1862.htm>.

³³ Trout explains some of the implications of the Pacific Railway Act: "Besides the impetus of the development that the construction of the Union Pacific line gave to existing lines in Kansas and Missouri, the Pacific Railroad Act also authorized an additional route through Kansas to run parallel to the Union Pacific. Congress adapted the old Leavenworth, Pawnee, and Western charter into a funded line that stretched from Kansas City to Fort Riley, to connect with the main branch of the Union Pacific line." Trout, "Rails of Destiny," 78–79.

³⁴ Ibid., 82.

³⁵ Ibid., 84.

Missouri Pacific connection through Kansas City marked the first of the final domino that resulted in the emergence of Kansas City as dominant in the Missouri Valley.

Unsurprisingly after the war, Kansas City did not emerge as the natural choice in the bid for regional dominance and the location of the railroad hub in the Missouri Valley. In comparison to Leavenworth, St. Joseph, and other cities, Kansas City remained roughshod and unrefined, despite having gained the railroad charter through Missouri Pacific.³⁶ This did not, however, discourage the business elite in Kansas City. As a result of their Missouri Pacific victory, the backing of the Pacific Railroad Act, and land and ownership incentives offered to Samuel Hallett, president of the Union Pacific Eastern Division, they procured the Union Pacific Eastern Division terminus in 1866, snatching it out from under Leavenworth.³⁷ The businessmen of Kansas City often worked with neighboring cities to obtain funding for the various railroad charters, sharing railroad connections and the promise of prosperity with cities surrounding Kansas City.³⁸ The promoters were also fiercely unified, regardless of personal agendas. Leavenworth, on the other hand, was neither so generous nor so unified. Trout asserts that “in many cases, Leavenworth chose to abandon cooperation with other Kansas towns in order to construct lines that places Leavenworth as the sole eastern terminus.”³⁹

Leavenworth and Kansas City promoters during this same period worked in earnest to catch the attention of investors and the leaders associated with the Hannibal and St. Joseph lines. In 1865, they worked out an unofficial deal with Leavenworth, but that did not stop the business

³⁶ Brown and Dorsett, *A History of Kansas City*, 10.

³⁷ Trout, “Rails of Destiny,” 93.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 68.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 86, 89.

leaders in Kansas City from trying to secure an official deal out from under Leavenworth. The Kansas City promoters were acutely aware that if Leavenworth managed to obtain this charter, trade could bypass Kansas City completely, rendering Kansas City almost obsolete.⁴⁰

Awarding Kansas City with the Hannibal and St. Joseph terminus came down to several seemingly unrelated events and situations: Kansas City had caught the attention of James F. Joy, (the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy line representative, and the man who had the power to decide which city would win the connection to the Hannibal and St. Joseph line) because they already had obtained the Missouri Pacific and Union Pacific Eastern Division lines. He also had previously purchased a great deal of land directly surrounding Kansas City, in anticipation of the growth of Kansas City.⁴¹ Connecting Kansas City to the transcontinental railroad required crossing only one river, as opposed to the two rivers that stood between Leavenworth and the connecting railroad.⁴² Kansas City was able to promise city bonds, as opposed to Leavenworth's county bonds, which Joy found to be more dependable. The unity of the Kansas City promoters and the contrasting factious Leavenworth was clear to Joy; and Kansas City was able to follow through on stipulations Joy made in the official contract that awarded Kansas City the Hannibal and St. Joseph charter.⁴³ The contract was approved and made official on February 4, 1867. The railroad was completed by November of 1867. All that was left was the building of the Hannibal Bridge to cross the Missouri River into Kansas City, which was completed two years later. The

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., 98.

⁴² Ibid., 99.

⁴³ These stipulations consisted of adding the authorization of a bridge and Kansas City in a bill that was being passed in Congress. Robert van Horn, now Kansas City's representative, was able to do so, in part because Leavenworth's senator committed suicide just before the vote took place. Ibid., 101.

Kansas City promoters attained their vision for the town. With the advent of the railroads, the growth of Kansas City from town to major city and sprawling metropolis would begin.

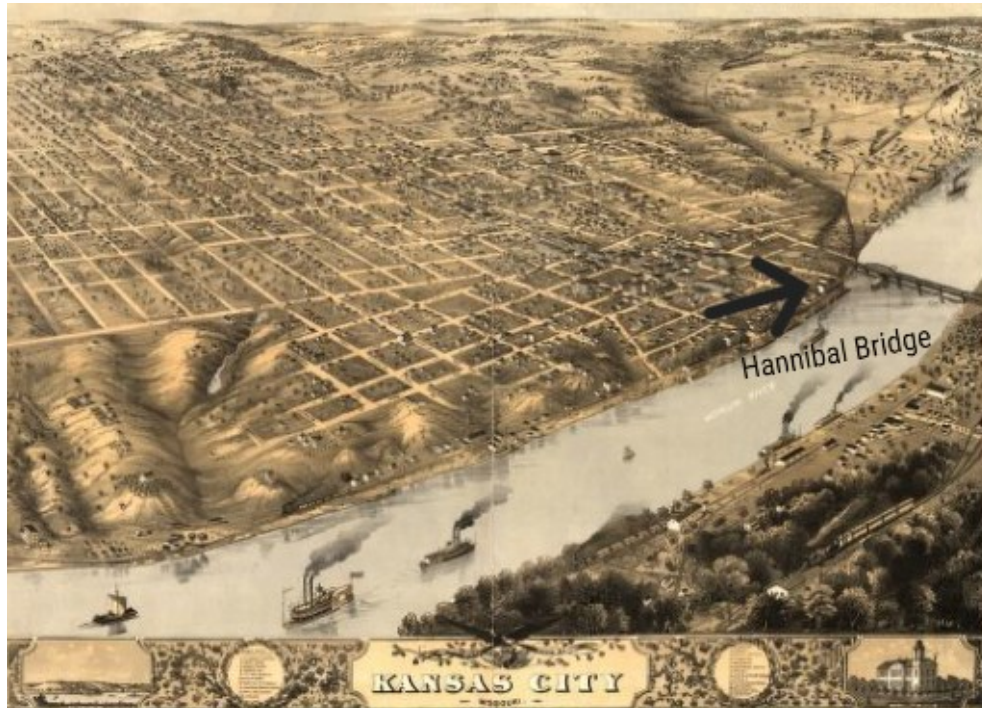


Figure 2.2. *Bird's Eye View of Kansas City, Missouri*. Drawn by A. Ruger, January 1869. Library of Congress. Ruger Map Collection, Library of Congress Geography and Map Division Washington, D.C. 20540-4650 USA dcu.

The procurement of the railroad charters and the building of railroad lines signaled to the rest of the country that Kansas City was a town with potential and worthy of economic investment. Sally F. Schwenk explains that the railroad “placed Kansas City on the verge of becoming a national center for livestock and grain trade...[and] meatpacking and milling rapidly emerged as a result of the city’s new economic environment.”⁴⁴

The Gross Domestic Product, or GDP, is the standard way economists measure the health of a city’s economy and explain—in economic theory—the correlation between the economy and

⁴⁴ Schwenk, “Railroad Related Historic Commercial,” 9.

musical development.⁴⁵ Several studies tout the correlation between the development of a city's infrastructure and its economic health, or its increase in GDP. Stéphane Straub also indicates that there are "direct channels from infrastructure capital," which allow formation of more private investments, thus increasing the health of the economy. The most relevant to this research include "Labor productivity," "Impact on human development," and "Economies of scale and scope."⁴⁶ Although only a cursory reference to GDP is made here, and it was not in use in the nineteenth century, the principles behind the process are useful in analyzing connections among the railroad, economic growth, and establishment of a musical culture in Kansas City. Stated simply and in context, the development of the infrastructure (by establishing Kansas City as a railroad hub) directly impacted the health of the workforce; the ease and economy of transporting larger items across longer distances in a shorter timeframe (including pianos); and an increased work efficiency that could leave more time for the seeking of entertainment.

⁴⁵ The GDP is measured by determining the "the monetary value of final goods and services" within a given time frame, such as at the end of a quarter or fiscal year. "Gross Domestic Product: An Economy's All," Finance & Development, International Monetary Fund, last modified February 24, 2020, <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/basics/gdp.htm/>.

⁴⁶ Straub states in full: "*Labor productivity*. Another posited channel is the potential effect on labor productivity due to reductions in time wasted commuting to work and stress, as well as to the more efficient ways of organizing work time as a result of improved information and communication technology, learning by doing, etc. *Impact on human development*. Numerous microeconomic studies have documented that better infrastructure induces improvement in both health and education, which increase labor productivity both in the short term by making the existing stock of human capital more effective, and in the medium and long term by inducing additional investment in education. *Economies of scale and scope*. A few examples include better transport infrastructure that, by lowering transport costs, leads to economies of scale, better inventory management and a different pattern of agglomeration...changes in the pattern of specialization of agents and incentives to invest in innovation as the transport and communication infrastructure, and therefore access to market, change; network externalities; more efficient market clearing and enhanced competition as a result of improved information flows..." Stéphane Straub, "Infrastructure and Growth in Developing Countries: Recent Advances and Research Challenges," *The World Bank Development Research Department Research Support Team*, January 2008, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/6458/wps4460.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

S. Ferdinand Howe's *The Commerce of Kansas City*, published in 1886, provides statistics relevant to determining the GDP in Kansas City before the turn of the century.⁴⁷ Simply the anticipation of the opening of the Hannibal Bridge and all its economic implications won Kansas City the fight for regional dominance. In 1860, Kansas City had a population of 4,400, St. Joseph 8,900, and Leavenworth 7,500. In 1865, the population of Kansas City had dropped to 4,000, while St. Joseph's population had increased to 15,000 and Leavenworth's to 15,400. Within five years, the population of Kansas City jumped to 32,300, while the populations in both St. Joseph and Leavenworth only increased to 19,500 and 17,900, respectively. Kansas City continued to grow. Charles Sumner Gleed (1856–1920) explains in an 1886 article that Kansas City's economic boom would begin six years after the opening of the Hannibal Bridge and the establishment of the city as a railroad hub. He describes the next decade as an era in which every real estate investment turned a profit, making Kansas City, for some, a very lucrative place to live.⁴⁸ While this real estate boom eventually crashed, the corresponding figures in *The Commerce of Kansas City* show this exponential growth. The assessed valuation of real estate in Kansas City in 1860 was \$1,812,480 with a population of fewer than 3,000. By 1885, with a

⁴⁷ These statistics go as far back as 1860, illustrating the arc of financial trajectory through 1885. As early as 1880, Kansas City was showing signs of a healthy economy, illuminated by comparison to Chicago and St. Louis. According to Howe, by 1880 Chicago had nine times the population of Kansas City (503,300) and St. Louis six times the population (350,500); Kansas City lagged behind at 55,000. However, Howe states that "Kansas City had more assessed wealth, according to population, than either Chicago or St. Louis," with Chicago at \$7.69 per capita, St. Louis at \$9.00 per capita, and Kansas City at \$28.37 per capita. Howe, *Commerce of Kansas City in 1886*, 10–11.

⁴⁸ Gleed states: "In about the year 1875 began what is known in Kansas City's history as the "boom." For ten years or more it was difficult to make any real-estate investment in the city that did not yield a profit—or offer to yield one. It is doubtful if any such carnival of city real-estate speculation ever occurred anywhere else in this country. The platted land about the city extended out and out until, if the lots had been well occupied, the city would have been almost as large as London. Prices went up and up. Every profit made the speculators bolder and this boldness stiffened prices." Charles S. Gleed, "The Central City of the West," *The Cosmopolitan* 29, no. 3 (1886): 301.

population of 105,042, the assessed valuation had jumped to \$31,678,520. The population increased by nearly 35,000 by the summer of 1886 alone.⁴⁹

By 1889, it was clear that Kansas City had not only piqued the curiosity but held the attention of the entire country. Joaquin Miller declared in an economic magazine in 1889 that “this audacious young beauty is the belle of the United States. There is no doubt of this fact left lingering in your mind ten minutes after you have set foot in Kansas City. Here she sits in the center of the world, with more railroads pointing right to her feet than are to be found pointing to any one other common center on the face of this earth.”⁵⁰ Ernest Ingersoll agreed, also writing in 1889 that “the whole West is partly jealous, partly proud, of Kansas City. The American worship of success find there a shrine.”⁵¹

The rise of Kansas City as a railroad hub made it an appealing shipping location. Within a year of the opening of the Hannibal Bridge, cattleman mogul Joseph McCoy targeted Kansas City as a rest stop for his cattle. In the same year, James Joy and L. V. Morse saw an opening for

⁴⁹ Howe, *Commerce of Kansas City*, 12.

⁵⁰ Joaquin Miller, “In Kansas City,” *The Independent* 41, no. 213 (1889): 6. The language he uses can be considered typical of articles written about the city during its economic boom. The positivity reflects the attitude of the city elites, as their optimistic tunnel vision spoke of Kansas City in terms of what it would or could eventually become, touting all of its economic possibilities. This coincides with the research of Richard Whol and Theodore Brown, when they state, “the primary concern, at first, was with economic history ... Extending over all of the written histories, there has been a dominant tradition, drawing its force from conceptions of what the city was supposed to be and what it was supposed to become.” R. Richard Whol and A. Theodore Brown, “The Usable Past: A Study of Historical Traditions in Kansas City,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 23, no. 3 (May 1960): 237–8, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3816521>.

⁵¹ Ingersoll stated in full: “The whole West is partly jealous, partly proud, of Kansas City. The American worship of success find there a shrine. There the energy of the New World points to its most brilliant result. Behold a city paying taxes on a hundred millions of assessed property, which means two hundred millions of actual wealth, where forty years ago stood a muddy village worth only half a million! Behold the vertex of thirty railways, with forty thousand miles of track, where a few years ago were a flatboat-landing and the Santa Fe trail! If this isn’t success, what is? If it is not to be admired, where shall a fit object of admiration be found? Last and feeblest of starters, the butt of ridicule, or the object of kindly solicitude on the part of its flourishing rivals of thirty years ago, Kansas City has far over-reached them all, and has absorbed, to a great extent, the best of their elements.” Ernest Ingersoll, “Kansas City,” *The Cosmopolitan; A Monthly Magazine* 8, no. 3 (December 1889): 141–152.

Kansas City to be included in the cattle trade and set to work marking off acres in the West Bottoms and designating them as a cattleyard. They had correctly identified the potential opening, as Kansas City became famous for its cattle processing plants and shipping.⁵²

Morse and Adams partnered with Philip Armour (1832–1901), the well-established meatpacker from Chicago, to build in the West Bottoms of Kansas City one of the most modern meatpacking plants in the country. By 1900, the plants in Kansas City were processing approximately five million animals a year.⁵³ At its peak, the Kansas City cattleyards would rival those of Chicago.⁵⁴ According to Herron, “civic boosters pointed to the city’s paved streets, distinctive architecture, and public parks as evidence of their community’s maturation and development, but as Kansas City entered its ‘Golden Age,’ it was livestock that made the city hum.”⁵⁵



Figure 2.3. *Stockyards, Kansas City*. 1900, General Collection (P1), Stockyards, Number 5, Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.

⁵² Between McCoy, Joy, and Morse, in short order, the city became the waystation for over 100,000 cattle. “Making Meat,” 122.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ In 1918, Kansas City broke all world records for cattle processing. *Ibid.*, 119.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

The meatpacking plants as an important fixture in Kansas City and the city as a “one-stop shop” for all cattle processing, rendered the cattle trade obsolete. The processing plants required a more permanent labor force, rather than visiting cattlemen. This shift from transients to more permanent residents directly influenced the type of performances billed in the theaters in Kansas City. One such example is the Coliseum Theater, which Londre explains catered to male-dominated audiences and provided entertainment that “was never refined” up through the mid-1880s.⁵⁶ It was at this point that the theater’s success shifted with the change in workforce. Londre continues: “the decline of the Coliseum resulted primarily from the decline of the cattle trade, for visiting cattlemen with ready cash to throw around had long sustained it.”⁵⁷ As the cattle processing plants negated the need for visiting cattlemen to travel through the city, the Coliseum Theater lost nearly its entire audience base. The decline of the Coliseum opened the way for more affordable and family-friendly shows to become more popular at the cheaper theaters.⁵⁸

The change in the socio-economic landscape of the city is an important part of the musical narrative for a variety of reasons. This “new economic environment” increased the number of rich and affluent residents able to afford tickets to the Coates Opera House and prompted the investment in several large theaters and opera houses; it encouraged multiple music publishers to choose Kansas City over other cities in the region as the location of their music

⁵⁶ Felicia Hardison Londré, *The Enchanted Years of the Stage: Kansas City at the Crossroads of American Theater, 1870-1930*, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007) 139.

⁵⁷ Ibid

⁵⁸ More of this topic will be discussed in Chapter Four.

stores; and, the demographic shift and the transformation from cow town to urban center directly impacted the performance bills offered by the various theaters in the city.⁵⁹

Even at this early juncture, the actions of town elites illuminated the importance of music in Kansas City culture and also how music contributed to the economic success of the city. Additionally, their actions indicate that the effects of railroad establishment created an environment where music and economic development were intertwined. In 1870, only one year after the opening of the Hannibal Bridge, Colonel Jersey and Sarah Coates invested in the future of Kansas City by building an opera house. While Mrs. Coates appears to have been motivated by the music itself, the Colonel's motivations were much more pragmatic and economical. Londré explained that "many scoffed at Coates's decision to build an opera house in a cow pasture with a pond. Yet the visionary business leader saw from the beginning that the arts were necessary to the creation of a great city."⁶⁰ The Coates' dedication to music, opera, and the theater altered the course of musical culture in Kansas City in this period, and before the turn of the century, they are at the very least indirectly responsible for many of the finest musical performance opportunities afforded to performers and audience members alike. But it was not due to a love of music. Londré explains that "Colonel Coates himself probably had little passion for the theater as an art form, but he understood its value as a magnet for businessmen from out of town and thus as a stimulus to commerce."⁶¹ The Coates Opera House may have facilitated a stimulus to the city's commerce, but it was not necessarily a financially lucrative investment for Coates personally. Londré continues:

⁵⁹ The theater and opera house managers booked acts and personnel that sold the most tickets. As a result, as the interests of the local audiences shifted, the managers adapted their seasons to fit. Londré, *Enchanted Years*, 72.

⁶⁰ Londré, *The Enchanted Years*, 34.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 42.

His visionary commitment to the opera house never flagged, and he always made up any deficit that it incurred. That first season, 1870–1871, cost him \$7,000. His daughter Laura Coates Reed later recalled that Coates family members often took items from their own home for use onstage, and that by this means they lost a valuable pair of brass candlesticks. In response to a compliment about the magnificence of the opera house, Colonel Coates once joked: “Yes, but it costs me fifty dollars every time the curtain goes up.”⁶²

If Colonel Coates and his wife had not built the Coates Opera House, another of the local urban elites would have quickly filled the void, as other financially endowed civic leaders funded, oversaw, and built opera houses around this period, all which would facilitate a continued evolution of musical culture. On a greater scale, many of the musical developments in Western classical art music throughout history can be traced back to the generous financial backing of elite patrons. Unlike most of these elite patrons, and as previously mentioned, Colonel Coates’ motivation was utilitarian, couched more in the ideology of manifest destiny than the support of great musical innovations.

⁶² Ibid.

CHAPTER 3

MUSICAL GROWTH

The establishment of the railroad in 1869 led to an economic boom that began in 1875. This boom affected the music scene in Kansas City in a variety of ways. From audience demographics to the number of music stores in business, to the numbers and size of theaters built in the city—all these changes can be traced to economic shifts caused by the advent of the railroad. And while in some cases the timeline of the musical changes is offset from the timeline of economic shifts (usually delayed), the correlation remains firm. The musical data related to Kansas City indicates that professional or semi-professional music-making was a consistent and regular part of the life in Kansas City as early as 1858, but it was in the 1880s, 1890s, and leading into the turn of the century that this musical activity blossomed. This chapter tracks the development of several musical influences to show the evolution and growth between 1869 and the late 1890s.

City Directories:

Nettl explains that in Ethnomusicology, the study of music and culture can often be grouped into one of three categories. One category, “cultural context,” includes the “production, performances, and experience of music.” Another, “music in its cultural context,” explores where music is performed, who performs it, and the social status of the musicians.¹ These two categories intersect in the data contained in the Kansas City business directories.

¹ Nettl, ““That Complex Whole,”” 222.

The city directories of the frontier towns in the Missouri River Valley are an invaluable source of information that assists in directing these branches of inquiry.² The directories were not always published by the same company, which meant that the organization and abbreviations differed slightly from year to year, making it difficult to determine if some information about musicians, music stores, and music societies is left out or edited. Certain aspects, however, remain consistent. The early directories include a (sometimes lengthy) history of the establishment of Kansas City, a list of organizations categorized by type, an explanation of city streets, and a listing of each adult member of the town by indicating profession (if applicable), residential or business address, marital status of all female town members, and skin color.³

In 1865, Kansas City was on the cusp of becoming a railroad hub in the Midwest, connecting the East to the West, via a transcontinental railroad line. The successful acquisition of the railroad charters for the town would prompt an influx of people and resources into Kansas City. In the fall of 1865, the population of Kansas City numbered approximately 10,000; by the end of the next year, the population had increased to 15,000. Over the next twenty years, the population would increase by another 40,000 and would continue to grow. In fact, by 1900, Kansas City was listed as the twenty-second largest city in the country.⁴

In 1865, Kansas City was home to one music society (the Orpheus Singing Society), one brass band (the Kansas City Brass Band with ten listed members), one store by the name of T.

² Because the data that is provided in this section is a summary of hundreds of pages of text, in many cases, only the general citation for each directory will be offered here.

³ The city directories only indicated if the citizens “colored.” According to a survey from 1919, the term “colored” may also have been used to describe people of Asiatic or American Indian descent. The survey describes some residents of Armourdale, Kansas, as “colored, including Chinese and Indians.” Elmer, “Armourdale: City Within a City,”¹⁵. If nothing was specified, it was assumed that they were white.

⁴ “Top 100 Biggest US Cities in the Year 1900,” US Demographics, accessed April 10, 2021, <https://www.biggestuscities.com/1900>.

W. Letton that sold pianos, melodeons, and organs, in addition to selling stationary, one listed music teacher, a Miss Emma F. Foster, and one half-page advertisement for T. W. Letton.⁵ In contrast, the 1865 city directory for Leavenworth, Kansas, which in this period was still considered to be a stronger contender for regional dominance, tells a different story: five music stores, one theater (Leavenworth Theater), two music teachers, and six listed musicians. The city directory also includes two full-page advertisements—one for W. S. Clow (selling sewing machines, organs, and Steinway pianos), and J. J. Deckelman (selling watches, jewelry, silverware, clocks, pianos, and melodeons), respectively.⁶

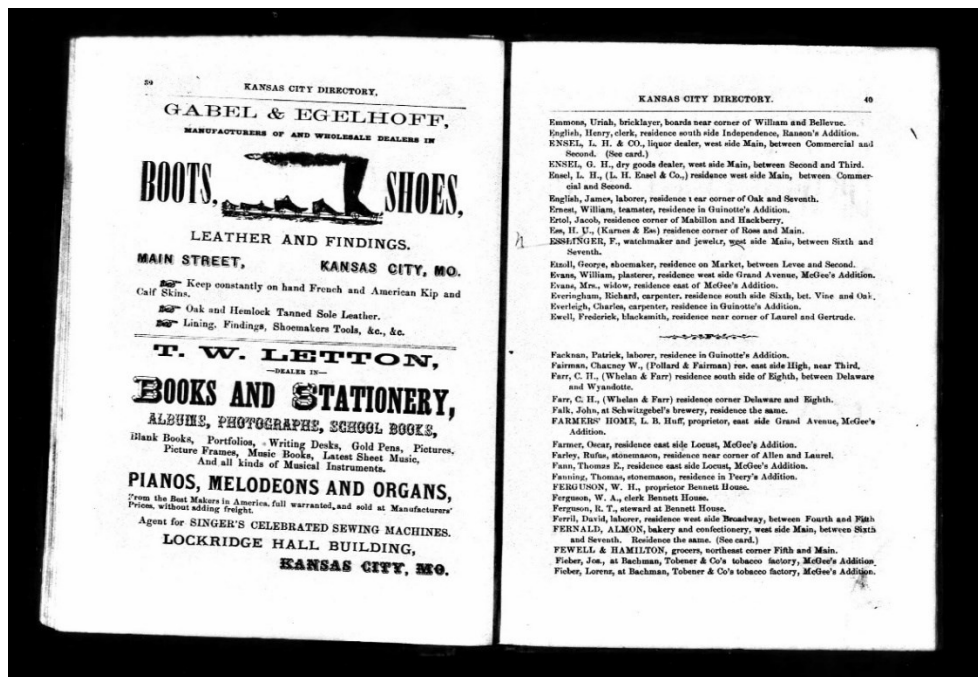


Figure 3.1. Advertisement: T. W. Letton. Millett & Sloan, 1865. Kansas City Business Directory and Mirror, Including: Kansas City, Missouri, for 1865, 39.

⁵ *Kansas City Business Directory and Mirror, Including: Kansas City, Missouri, for 1865*, (Kansas City: Millett & Sloan, 1865).

⁶ A melodeon is a button-key accordion. “Basic Information,” *The Magazine for Traditional Music throughout the World*, accessed March 12, 2021, <https://www.mustrad.org.uk/basic.htm>.

Leavenworth Business Directory and Mirror 1865, S. Ferdinand Howe, (Leavenworth: Barunhold & Crowell 1865).

Within two years, Kansas City's musical scene increased to include two performing groups (Kansas City Brass Band and Kansas City String Band), a new music society (Philharmonic Society), two stores selling musical instruments, two listed musicians, two music teachers, and an advertisement explaining that the St. Teresa's Academy, conducted by the Sisters of St. Joseph, was offering vocal and instrumental courses.⁷ The town history positioned at the beginning of the directory also boasts of the paper mill that was being built there, drawing special attention to the fact that it would be the first paper mill in Missouri.⁸ The music publishing implications here are important.

The city directory for Kansas City in 1869 indicates a jump in musical activity: five stores selling pianos and other musical instruments, three performing groups (Kansas City Silver Cornet Band, Kansas City Brass Band, and Kansas City String Band), seventeen listed musicians, a handful of music teachers, St. Teresa's Academy offering vocal and instrumental (piano, guitar, and harp) music instruction, as well as six halls, many of which were used for musical rehearsals and performances.

The 1880 Kansas City directory reveals a thriving musical community with the Arion Singing Club, the Kansas City Brass Band (listed as African American), four theaters (Coates Opera House, Coliseum Theater, Kansas City Theater, and Theater Comique), seven stores selling exclusively musical merchandise, four listed piano tuners, five music schools (Schultze's

⁷ The bands appear to be more professional than the Philharmonic Society. The bands are categorized under the "Miscellaneous" category along with Kansas City Gas Works, Western Union Telegraph, and others. The Philharmonic Society is listed under "Societies" which indicates a community-oriented performing groups rather than a strictly professional one. *Kansas City Business Directory 1867*, (Kansas City: Excelsior Book and Job Office, 1867), 180.

⁸ This was not actually true.

Kansas City Business Directory 1867, (Kansas City: Excelsior Book and Job Office, 1867), 9–17.

School of Musical Art, A.P. Fassbender’s School of Music, Joseph Sherlock’s Academy of Music, J.S. Black Voice Builder, and Burmeister’s Academy of Music), twenty listed music teachers, and twenty-one listed musicians.⁹ According to the 1880 Leavenworth city directory there were two music schools (String and Press Music and Kansas Conservatory of Music), two music societies (Cecilian Singing Society and Leavenworth Manner Gesangverein), two opera houses, a handful of public halls that could have house musical events, four music stores, one listed piano tuner, seven music teachers, and four listed musicians.¹⁰ These numbers indicate that by 1880, Kansas City was the site of more local musical activity than Leavenworth.

Table 3. 1. Consolidated Data from Kansas City Directories¹¹

KANSAS CITY	POPULATION	MUSIC STORES	MUSIC TEACHERS	THEATERS	HALLS
1865	4000-6000	1	1	0	2
1870	32,300	7	5	2	6
1880	55,785	7	20	4	6+
1890	132,716	15	100+	11	6+

Table 3. 2. Consolidated Data from Leavenworth Directories¹²

LEAVENWORTH	MUSIC STORES	MUSIC TEACHERS	THEATERS	HALLS
1865	5	2	1	-
1871	3+	9	1	-
1880	5	7	2	4

⁹ *Kansas City Directory for 1880*, (Kansas City: Ballenger & Hoyes, 1880).

¹⁰ *Edwin Green’s City Directory of the Inhabitants, Institutions, Manufacturing Establishments, Business Firms., in the City of Leavenworth and Fort Leavenworth for 1880–81* (Leavenworth: Times Steam Job Printing House 1880).

¹¹ The population statistics have been supplemented with figures found in the 1901 U.S. Census Bulletin. U.S. Census Bureau, “Population of Joplin, Kansas City, St. Joseph, and St. Louis: 1820 to 1900,” 1901 Population of Missouri by Counties and Minor Civil Divisions, table 6, accessed May 26, 2021, <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1900/bulletins/demographic/32-population-mo.pdf>.

¹² Because of the nature of the primary research process, these figures are considered approximate. The dashed indicate that the numbers are unknown.

There directories indicate fluctuation in the number of music teachers and resident musicians from year to year, and the fluctuations are substantial enough to raise questions of record-keeping, although nothing else in the directories seem to indicate that anything egregious was omitted. The number of music societies and organized performance groups also changes drastically from year to year. While this is more plausible, it still raises questions. These fluctuations warrant further research, including comparison to other primary sources, as references to other groups and local societies are made in *The Kansas City Star*, *The Kansas City Times*, and other newspapers and publications of the era. Despite these fluctuations, the overall data still supports an increase in musical activity in Kansas City beginning in 1865 and continuing well into the twentieth century.

Non-music specific societies listed in the directories also warrant additional research, as many of these societies would have included music as part of their meetings. One such an example is from *The Kansas City Times* in May of 1883:

MONSTER PICNIC

At the Tivoli Gardens, Sunday, May 27, 1883, Under the Auspice of the Kansas City German Educational Society.

Procession from market square to picnic grounds at 10 a.m.

Programme beging [sic] at 2 p.m. in the following order

1. Overture.....Orchestra
2. Callistenenie Exercises.....Turner Society
3. Sleight of hand performances.....Ed the Wizard
4. Parallel bar exercises.....Youth Class Turner Society
5. Song.....Arion Singing Society
6. Horizontal bar exercise.....Prize Turners
7. Acrobatic feats.....Special Artists
8. Song.....Arion Singing Society
9. Athletic sports.....Turners and Youths

This entertainment having been arranged by all the German societies of Kansas City for the purpose of aiding the building fund of the Kansas City Educational society, who now have in course of erection a school building at the corner of Tenth and McGee, it is hoped that it will meet with the general encouragement its purpose deserves. Refreshments of all kinds will be served and no need hesitate to spend a social afternoon with us.

THE INVITATION COMMITTEE¹³

Because of the connection between the various groups and societies and musical performances, the increase of societies and social groups in this period also indicate a continuing rise in musical events—and therefore in musical culture.

Advertising Cards:

Advertising cards, or trading cards as they were called, date back to seventeenth-century England.¹⁴ Just as the name implies, these cards were used as a marketing stunt, with the intent of increasing business for the company or product referred to on each respective card. In the late 1770s, the cards would have been printed simply, in black-and-white, with lettering only, but the design complexity evolved as printing capacities developed. Springhall states that with the “development of inexpensive forms of public transport in expanding urban areas, the availability of gas and later electric light, and especially the invention of cheap color printing and lithography for advertising, poster, and song sheet illustrations.”¹⁵ While he is speaking about the development of vaudeville throughout the United States, it reveals something important about the connection between the growth of Kansas City and the advertising cards: the cheaper color printing and lithography allowed for the printing, and increased popularity, of the advertising

¹³*The Kansas City Directory* for 1880 lists an “Arion Singing Club” as opposed to an “Arion Singing Society.” I assume that they are one and the same. *Kansas City Directory for 1880*, (Kansas City: Ballenger & Hoyes, 1880).

The German societies of the Kansas City active in the city continued to facilitate musical performances in Kansas City.

“Monster Picnic,” *The Kansas City Times*, May 24, 1883, 4.

¹⁴ Bruce Roberts, “The Development of the American Advertising Card,” *Readex: A Division of Newsbank* 6, no. 2 (April 2011): <https://www.readex.com/readex-report/issues/volume-6-issue-2/development-american-advertising-card>.

¹⁵ Springhall, *The Genesis of Mass Culture*, 129.

cards; popularity in the United States peaked in the 1880s and 1890s with the advent of color printing and became irrelevant by the turn of the century. Printing and distributing colorful and whimsical trading cards became so popular in part because they became collectibles, and families across the country had albums dedicated to the collection of the cards.¹⁶ Freelance writer and advertising card expert Mary Moore provides a lively description of the popularity of the advertising card. She explains that the advertising cards were a welcome and colorful distraction in a period when “home was drab. Clothing was drab.”¹⁷ The development of lithography allowed for these cards to be printed and paved the way for a new form of advertising.¹⁸

The advertising cards were the size of a postcard and were often two-sided: the front side featured a colorful picture, scene, puzzle, or joke, where being eye-catching was prioritized over any relevance to the product or business being advertised.¹⁹ The back side offered either details about the product or business and included an address for a nearby location or would be blank

¹⁶ This is similar to the merchandise dedicated to the collecting and displaying of all the limited-edition United States quarters, released 1999–2008, representing each of the fifty states.

¹⁷ Moore, “Advertising Cards of the ‘80’s,” 449.

¹⁸ Moore states in full: “Ostensibly, as gifts to children of customers, they [the advertising cards] entered every home, where under the hanging lamp they were eagerly examined by each member of the family and gave their clear message associated with beauty, color, humor or information of nationwide interest. So popular did these cards become that not only did the children, their parents and friends react amazingly but the storekeeper, the agents, the jobbers, the manufactures and the lithographers themselves were startled into a whirl of activity almost unbelievable but apparently few recognized it as the time, as a new era in advertising. The time was ripe for such an era. Home was drab. Clothing was drab. Steel engraving at which they had gazed with pride, were colorless. And most fortunately the time was propitious for lithography to supply the need. Good colored pictures were indeed scarce but [lithographers] were already producing on stone exquisite greeting cards that through a commercial printing of adaption of design, could become advertising.” Ibid.

¹⁹ Moore goes on to explain that there were two kinds of advertisement cards that developed in this era: “Two kinds of cards developed from this new advertising era. There were true advertising cards, with exclusive design easily associated with products and stock cards with various general designs: floral, scenic, lovely women, children, animals, comics and copies of popular engravings and of popular paintings. Stock cards bore no relation to the product advertised.” Ibid., 450.

except for a stamp of the business address. Each business capitalized on the collectable nature of the cards by exploiting the novelty of the cards in different ways.

One advertisement card for Kansas City music store F. G. Smith, located at 1000 Walnut Street, boasts of selling and renting “the old reliable Bradbury and the celebrated Henning pianos” and being the “western representative of the world-renowned Steinway pianos.”²⁰ The advertisement card is titled “Spring” and indicates that it is a part of a series that will include different cards for each season.

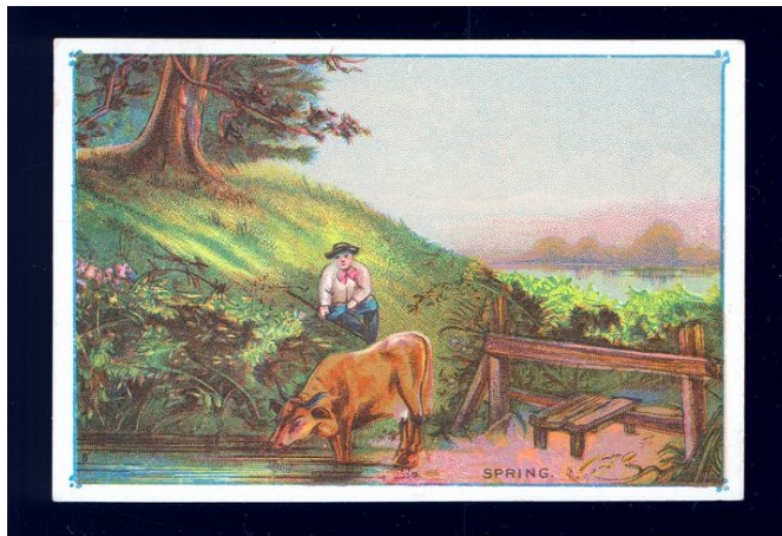


Figure 3.2. *Spring*, F. G. Smith, 1885 ca. Advertising Cards (SC3), Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.

Martin, Snyder & Co., a seller of pianos and organs located at southeast corner of 11th and Walnut Streets, published multiple whimsical advertisement cards that featured figures with

²⁰ “F. G. Smith,” Missouri Valley Special Collections, The Kansas City Public Library, accessed March 12, 2021, https://kchistory.org/islandora/object/kchistory%3A20191009-239?solr_nav%5Bid%5D=a36d4ace59184b72ed92&solr_nav%5Bpage%5D=0&solr_nav%5Boffset%5D=2.https://kchistory.org/islandora/object/kchistory%3A122556?solr_nav%5Bid%5D=959c47ce5771603bd754&solr_nav%5Bpage%5D=1&solr_nav%5Boffset%5D=2

root vegetables for heads, such an onion and a potato, respectively.²¹ J. W. Jenkins' Sons Music Co., which sold pianos, organs, sheet music, and other musical merchandise, was located at 921–923 Main Street; one of their advertisement cards featured a three-fold card, which when folded, imitated the look of a crocodile-skin wallet; on the other side, both verses of the nursery rhyme “Jack and Jill” were colorfully illustrated.²² A. H. Whitney Co., which sold pianos and organs and was located at 18th West and 12th Street, used a different approach. The front side of the advertisement card is a portrait of the famous and beloved Emma Abbott, founder, director, and star of the Emma Abbott Opera Company, an itinerant opera outfit based in the United States that toured the country, putting on performances of well-known operas translated into English.

Some companies that were not actually music stores still included depictions of instruments of musicians on their advertisement cards. For example, E. T. Slaughter, the local distributor of the Gold Coin Ventiduct Square Base-Burner, manufactured by Chicago Stove Works and located at 1221 Grand Avenue, printed an advertisement card that presents a child in a clown outfit playing the drums.²³

These advertisement cards indicate two important facts about Kansas City in the 1880s and 1890s. First, within fifteen years of the establishment of Kansas City as a railroad hub, the businesses in the city had access to all the necessary resources to “keep up” with, in real time, the

²¹ *Onion*: “Martin, Snyder & Co.,” Missouri Valley Special Collections, The Kansas City Public Library, accessed April 17, 2017, https://kchistory.org/islandora/object/kchistory%3A20191009-227?solr_nav%5Bid%5D=05cde690ab8801bc0810&solr_nav%5Bpage%5D=1&solr_nav%5Boffset%5D=6.

Potato: “Martin, Snyder & Co.,” Missouri Valley Special Collections, The Kansas City Public Library, accessed March 12, 2021, https://kchistory.org/islandora/object/kchistory%3A20191009-226?solr_nav%5Bid%5D=05cde690ab8801bc0810&solr_nav%5Bpage%5D=1&solr_nav%5Boffset%5D=7.

²² “J. W. Jenkins' Sons Music Co.,” Missouri Valley Special Collections, The Kansas City Public Library, accessed March 12, 2021, https://kchistory.org/islandora/object/kchistory%3A20191009-328?solr_nav%5Bid%5D=25a1a7c62a851355b6b9&solr_nav%5Bpage%5D=0&solr_nav%5Boffset%5D=13.

²³ “E. T. Slaughter,” Missouri Valley Special Collections, The Kansas City Public Library, accessed March 12, 2021, https://kchistory.org/islandora/object/kchistory%3A20191009-302?solr_nav%5Bid%5D=3a36ae1b8c134e48b32b&solr_nav%5Bpage%5D=0&solr_nav%5Boffset%5D=0.

social fads trending in the United States. Second, multiple music stores in Kansas City had the funds and resources to print and distribute several advertisement cards during the 1880s and 1890s, an implication of the financial stability and success of music stores in Kansas City. The advertising cards provide evidence that Kansas City was mirroring the experiences of the country exactly.

Music Publishers:

A strong indicator of how integral music is to a city's culture is the music-making habits of the audience members. Performers come and go, music concert seasons get cancelled, but the habits of the permanent residents reveal much about the function of music in their society. One way to track these habits is through music retail statistics. Peter Alan Munstedt indicates that between 1869 and 1904, there were eighteen music publishers active in Kansas City. These publishers were important to the overall music publishing history for the entire country, printing music that were printing music that was enjoyed throughout the country.²⁴

According to Munstedt's research, the majority of the music being produced by these eighteen publishers was either written by local or regional composers or written by the publishers. "The abundance of Kansas City composers published by Jenkins reflects the city's active musical community."²⁵ A sample summary of Kansas City publishers and music sold is

²⁴ Munstedt states in full: "Music was a major source of entertainment for these new [Missouri Valley] settlements. While at first music was imported from the East—either as published music or as recollections of tunes heard before emigration—soon the settlers were creating their own music as well. This music, when it was published at all, was most often published locally. If it appeared to be "shallow in places" and not invariably "majestic in its expansiveness and importance," it nevertheless would be heard across the entire United States, taking the forms of premium ragtime, still-sung popular songs, and music that defined the repertory of the village band. Many cities on or near the Missouri played their part in the history of American music publishing: Leavenworth, Kansas; St. Joseph, Missouri; Sedalia, Missouri; and, most important, Kansas City, Missouri." Munstedt, "Kansas City Publishing," 353.

²⁵ Ibid., 358.

provided here to indicate the trends. Abram Kimmell began publishing in 1869 and offered “popular vocal and instrumental music...waltzes, polkas...marches...piano technique books, piano sonatinas” and the first opera published in Kansas City, *An Artist of Flanders* (1883).²⁶ The Conover Brothers began publishing in 1874, offering piano music and popular vocal music.²⁷ Munstedt considers J. W. Jenkins the most important music publisher in Kansas City in this time period. In the late 1870s, Jenkins was living in Leavenworth and was trying to decide among St. Joseph, Leavenworth, and Kansas City as the permanent of his music store. Munstedt explains that Jenkins chose to settle in Kansas City as he “correctly anticipate Kansas City as having the greatest potential to support his music business.”²⁸ It was only two years before Jenkins made his decision that Kansas City began to experience its economic boom. Jenkins had spent time in Kansas City before he made his decision, and he would have been aware of, in real time, the growth, both musically and economically occurring in the city. As the economic boom was a result of the establishment of the Kansas City as a railroad hub, Jenkins’ confidence in Kansas City’s future too, was a byproduct of the railroads in Kansas City. Beginning in the early 1880s, J. W Jenkins offered sheet music for the mandolin, guitar, and later, solo piano pieces, songs, two-step, ragtime, blues, and music for hotel orchestra and community band.²⁹ They also offered a limited selection of classical music, such as arrangements of opera music by Wagner, Gounod, and Donizetti. But these were not particularly lucrative, and more time was invested in the publishing and selling of popular music. The J. W. Jenkins music store would become one of

²⁶ Ibid., 355.

²⁷ Ibid., 355–6.

²⁸ Ibid., 357.

²⁹ Ibid., 357–60.

the leading music stores in the Midwest, with sixteen locations and 535 employees across the Midwest and Southwest.³⁰ J. R. Bell began publishing in 1884, and in addition to offering “marches, waltzes, and sentimental parlor songs” they published several of Kansas City’s local composers: Ernest W. Berry, Charles L. Johnson, H. O. Wheeler, and Louis Weber.³¹ C. W. Dalbey and Ernest W. Berry also began publishing in 1884 and specialized in band music.³² George Southwell was the premier publisher of amateur or community band music in the Kansas City area beginning in 1887.



Figure 3.3. *J. W. Jenkins' Sons Music Company*, 1885 ca. General Collection (P1) Oversize Negatives, Jenkins Sons' Music #7, Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.

The well-established Carl Hoffman began publishing in Kansas City in 1894, offering piano pieces, popular songs, two-step, some sacred works, and ragtime. In fact, Hoffman was the

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 360.

³² Ibid.

first to publish a work by Scott Joplin: in March 1899, he published Joplin's "Original Rags."³³ The Legg Brothers, who started publishing in the 1890s, sold mostly "sentimental parlor music."³⁴

This data illuminates some of the trends in the music-making habits of Kansas City residents. In the almost fifty-year span covered by this research, the core preferences did not change. Whether it was 1869 or 1905, the best-selling sheet music were the marches, waltzes, piano pieces, and sentimental parlor songs.³⁵ There was a lean towards accessibility and a cultural appetite for the reproduction of music that can easily be classified as "Americana." This includes band music that could be performed by amateur bands and music societies and "sentimental parlor music," perhaps indicative of the more serious numbers included in a musical or in melodrama, variety shows, or vaudeville performances. As Munstedt states, much of the music published by the above-mentioned music stores was written locally, often by the publishers. These local composers and musicians would write or arrange music that 1) was most familiar to them or 2) would be the most likely to be purchased. This is the only way that these music stores and publishing companies would have been able to stay afloat.

One important context is indicated by American musical theater scholar Thomas S. Hischak. In an article about music publishing and Tin Pan Alley, he states that "sheet music publishing had flourished in the United States since 1885."³⁶ The data Munstedt provides reveals

³³ This would be the only work by Joplin that Hoffman would publish. *Ibid.*, 363–4.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 365.

³⁵ This list also will include the later additions of two-step, ragtime, and jazz.

³⁶ See Thomas S. Hischak, "Tin Pan Alley," in *Oxford Music Online, Grove Music Online*, accessed April 7, 2021, www.oxfordmusiconline.com.

that the music publishing business trends in Kansas City fall right in line with broader national music-making habits.

Band:

Raoul F. Camus wrote extensively on the importance of band in the 19th century United States, explaining that “the presence of a band was a status symbol.” He also quotes William H. Dana, who states “a town without its brass band is as much in need of sympathy as a church without a choir. The spirit of a place is recognized in its band.”³⁷

It was no different in Kansas City. Bantie’s Band is one of the city’s earliest documented local musical groups, active as early as 1858 if not before. According to the *Western Journal of Commerce*, D. W. Bantie (or Banta) would host “twice-weekly dances at which he instructed “devotees of the light fantastic toe” in “all the most fashionable dances of the day.”³⁸ The band was also documented as having performed to an audience of 3,000 at the Fourth of July celebration in 1858. Camus explains that no civic or community event was complete without music.³⁹ The *Kansas City Directory* lists Bantie and his band as active up through 1871, meaning it was a staple at local community and civic events and dances for the next twenty

³⁷ Camus states in full: “The presence of a band was a status symbol. G. F. Patton, writing in 1875, stated, “it is a fact not to be denied that the existence of a good Brass Band in any town or community is at once an indication of enterprise among its people, and an evidence that a certain spirit of taste and refinement pervade the masses.” William H. Dana, in his *Practical Guide* of 1878, wrote: “a town without its brass band is as much in need of sympathy as a church without a choir. The spirit of a place is recognized in its band.” Camus, “The Brass Band in the Nineteenth Century,” 26.

³⁸ Londré, *Enchanted Years*, 116.

³⁹ Quoted in full: “No military, civic, festive, or holiday occasion was complete without music. Taverns, coffee houses, theaters, and especially pleasure gardens all attracted customers; to entertain them, bands performed selections of popular stage works, medleys, battle pieces, transcriptions of orchestra works, original compositions, marches, dances, and patriotic songs.” Camus, “The Brass Band in the Nineteenth Century,” 29.

years.⁴⁰ In 1865, the band listing names ten members: Daniel W. Bantie (band leader), Adam Long, Richard Smith, W.F. Beddow, John Long, Charles Long, Chris Berger, William Gabel, Mr. O'Malley and Charles Baude.⁴¹ While no additional information on these individual players is available, it is clear that this band would have enjoyed immense popularity while actively performing in the city.

Bantie's Band (and other bands that would be active during this time) were called upon to play for a variety of situations. Colonel Coates had the band play outside of his house under the window to accompany a dance he and his wife hosted in their home.⁴² *The Kansas City Star* ran an article about a large, city-wide baby shower that one expectant mother wanted to hold in St. Louis: while a misunderstanding with the father-to-be forced the cancelation of the shower, the paper quotes her as describing some of her plans for the baby shower:

GRAND FREE-FOR-ALL BABY SHOW,

Open to all children between the age of one day and five years; (negroes must have certificates).

1st premium for best baby, bottle Winslows' syrup.

2nd premium for fattest baby, ditto.

3rd premium for prettiest baby, as above.

4th premium for sweetest baby, likewise.

...I can imagine the joy of the father of the young one, as on the home run on the night of show, the prize baby, his baby, is handed to him with a blue ribbon tied to it (but come to think about it it [sic] is a girl, well we will tie the ribbon on it all the same) and a bottle of soothing syrup in its little hands, and the band (of course we will have a band) playing "Baby Mine." It will be a proud moment for him...⁴³

⁴⁰ Although by then, the band was under different leadership. *Kansas City Business Directory 1871*, (Kansas City: Corbett, Hoy & Co., 1871).

⁴¹ *Kansas City Business Directory and Mirror, Including: Kansas City, Missouri, for 1865*, (Kansas City: Millett & Sloan, 1865), 17.

⁴² Londré, *Enchanted Years*, 33.

⁴³ "A Baby Show Busted by an Indignant Husband, and the Manager Pursued with a Shot-Gun," *The Kansas City Star*, October 8, 1880, 1.

Clearly, a band was considered mandatory for any celebratory occasion.

The Third Regiment Band of the 140th Missouri Infantry was active in Kansas City, at least during the 1880s and 1890s.⁴⁴ They recorded exclusively with the city's recording company, Kansas City Talking Machine. The 1898 product catalogue for Kansas City Talking Machine describes the Third Regiment Band with the following statement: "The Third Regiment Band plays exclusively for the Kansas City Talking Machine Company Co., and their original records can only be purchased from us. The records are loud and clear, and in musical excellence are not surpassed. The reputation of the band will speak for the merit of the records."⁴⁵ They recorded timely hits such as: *Kansas City Commercial Club March*; *Sextette Lucia De Lammermore*; *Sousa's Triumphal March*; *The Blue Danube (waltz)*; *Rock of Ages*; *Black America March*; and *Kansas City Star March*.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ It is unclear if the Third Regiment Band that recorded for Kansas City Talking Machine was a band by the same name that was active in Kansas City during this same period, as the Kansas City Talking Machine Company brought in performers from around the country to record for their label. But photos taken in 1885 and the Kansas City-themed repertoire choices seem to indicate that this band was indeed local. Kansas City Talking Machine, "Kansas City Talking Machine," (August 1898): 1, <https://archive.org/details/KCTMC98/mode/2up>.

⁴⁵ Kansas City Talking Machine, "Kansas City Talking Machine," (August 1898): 1, <https://archive.org/details/KCTMC98/mode/2up>.

⁴⁶ Ibid.



Figure 3.4. *Third Regiment Band*. 1885 ca., Photograph Scrapbook Collection #1 (P8), Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.

Several touring bands were also welcomed to Kansas City. In 1899, for the grand opening of the city's first Convention Hall, the celebratory program included a performance by the famous John Philip Sousa Band.⁴⁷ It is important to note that this was not exclusively a male-dominated field. There were several all-women bands active in the area, and several female soloists who toured the country, including Kansas City.⁴⁸ Regardless of gender, these touring soloists and bands would have utilized the railroad as their mode of transportation.

⁴⁷ Londré, *Enchanted Years*, 254.

⁴⁸ Jill Sullivan is the foremost musicologist publishing about women in brass music in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Please see her book for more information. Jill M. Sullivan, *Women's Bands in America: Performing Music and Gender* (Washington, D.C.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016).

This thesis includes the research of Galvin Holman as Sullivan deals with Kansas City more generally, while Holman includes specific information about performers who played in Kansas City. Gavin Holman, "Soft Lips on

Orchestra:

The documented history of the orchestra in Kansas City appears to begin about two decades after the emergence of band music.⁴⁹ *Kansas City Directory* lists a Kansas City String Band emerging in 1867 and shows it was active through 1871, and there was a Philharmonic Society in 1865 and 1867 but not in 1866. The most specific documentation of orchestral music in Kansas City is tied closely to this ensemble's presence in theaters and opera houses, since opera and many theater productions required orchestral accompaniment; in fact, it was not uncommon for a night at the theater to include a play alternating with selections performed by the orchestra alone. The theater orchestras were typically a mix of stock players, local musicians, or current residents who played for a specific theater, as well as personnel brought into the city by the various itinerant troupes and companies. When listing an individual's profession as a musician, the city directories often specify which theater he or she played for, implying that orchestral affiliation. Preston explains that "to American theater-goers of the early nineteenth century music was a normal and important part of all dramatic productions [and] compositions were frequently performed before and after either the dramatic work or afterpiece."⁵⁰ In addition to an evening at the theater beginning with an overture and ending with a short afterpiece, it was also standard practice to add songs and dances to the featured "full-length dramatic piece."⁵¹

Cold Metal: Female Brass Soloists of the 19th and Early 20th Centuries," *The History of Brass Bands* (October 2018): 8, <http://dx.doi.org/10.17613/fdvj-5r78>.

⁴⁹ There are passing references to orchestras who performed on steamboats that were traveling up and down the Missouri River. They were also listed as African American.

⁵⁰ Katherine K. Preston, *Opera on the Road: Traveling Opera Troupes in the United States, 1825–60* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 1–2.

⁵¹ Preston provides further detail about the various musical offerings possible at a night at the theater: "As a matter of course theaters employed orchestra, singing actors and actresses, and musical directors and relied heavily upon

The reviews of theatrical bills included in the local newspapers also included commentary on the music performed over the course of the evening. One example of this occurred in summer 1887, when the famous French actress Sarah Bernhardt performed *Camille* at the Gilliss Opera House. The fiery Bernhardt got into an argument between acts with a carpenter named Charley after an issue with the curtain. It escalated to the point that Bernhardt demanded that Charley be removed from the premises or she would leave the theater without completing the performance. The rest of the cast threw themselves at her feet and begged her to stay. She finally relented and consented to finishing the performance. All the while, the orchestra played intermission music, placating the audience. The article explains: “So the madam finally relaxed, and gave orders that the curtain might go up, just as Dr. Behr’s orchestra had finished its repertoire, and was preparing for a second round.”⁵²

The notorious Theater Comique opened in 1872, housing the supposedly less respectable forms of entertainment available in Kansas City. Despite the dubious morality of the entertainment, the orchestra at the Theater Comique was described by Londré as “top-notch.”⁵³ In the early twentieth century, the orchestra at the Orpheum Theater was also described as being the best in the city. Latchaw (as quoted by Londré) recalls that the “orchestra became one of the most attractive features of the theater [, and] was especially skillful in the varying

them in their productions. A standard theatrical bill of fare from either the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century consisted of an instrumental overture (often from an opera), a full-length dramatic piece with added songs and dances (either interpolated into the action or performed between the acts), and an afterpiece (a farce, burletta, one-act opera, dance, pantomime, or masque) that often was musical in nature. In addition, dances or musical compositions were frequently performed before and after either the dramatic work or afterpiece.” Ibid.

⁵² “Now, Then, Camille,” *The Kansas City Times*, May 11, 1887, 10.

⁵³ Londré, *Enchanted Years*, 122.

accompaniments...sprightly rhythms for the dances, explosives for broad farce and shivery stuff for the acrobats.⁵⁴

The orchestra at the Willis Wood Theater (opened 1902) was also of high quality, described by Latchaw as “small but excellent.”⁵⁵ Londré mentions no such glowing and specific descriptions of the orchestra associated with the Coates Opera House; in fact, with the popularity of the Grand Opera House (known for its clean, family-friendly, and affordable programming), the conductor of the Coates orchestra, Z. T. Hulett, left Coates to become the first conductor at the Grand.⁵⁶ Londré provides no reasons for this disparity in orchestral excellence.

Multiple large-scale orchestral events were staged in Kansas City in the beginning of the twentieth century. In summer 1901, the “greatest musical event in the history of the west” occurred on May 15, featuring an orchestra of ninety members and a choir of 1,100 singers who premiered *League of the Alps, a Cantata for soli, chorus, and orchestra*, composed by Kansas City local Carl Busch.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Latchaw states in full: “He [Manager Lehman] gave Kansas City its best theatre orchestra, conducted by Michael Lenge. The orchestra became one of the most attractive features of the theater. It could play between-act music delightfully, but was especially skillful in the varying accompaniments, which included support of excellent soloists, sprightly rhythms for the dances, explosives for broad farce and shivery stuff for the acrobats.” *Ibid.*, 230.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 266.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 212.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 258.

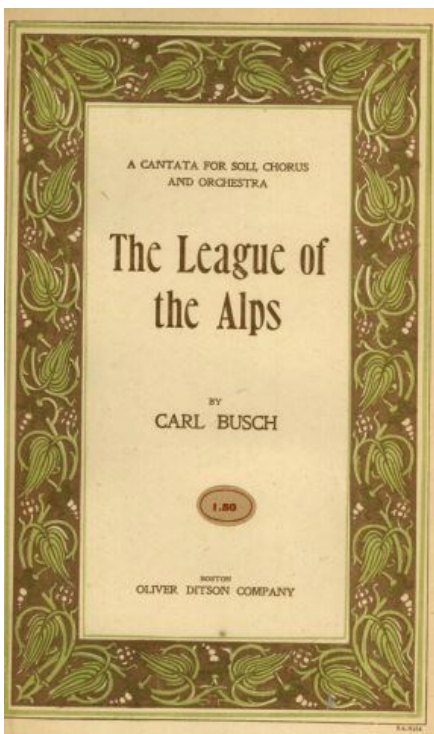


Figure 3.5. Carl Busch, *The League of the Alps* a Cantata, libretto by Felicia Hemans, (Boston: Oliver Ditson Company, 1901).

The *Kansas City Directory* for 1867 lists a Kansas City String Band and a Philharmonic Society. *The Kansas City Star* and *The Kansas City Times* include several references made to the Philharmonic Society between 1867 and 1885. William A. Everett explains that the “primary activity” of the Society was “sponsoring a choir.”⁵⁸ As the years progressed, the articles begin to indicate that there was dissension in the ranks. Early in 1885, “too many irons in the fire and too long waits between the meetings” led to the dissolution of the philharmonic.⁵⁹ In October of the same year, the philharmonic appears to have been reformed. In response, the *Kansas City Times* published the following article:

⁵⁸ William A. Everett, *Music for the People: A History of the Kansas City Philharmonic Orchestra, 1933–82* (Kansas City: Rockhill Books, 2015), 1.

⁵⁹ “Concerts; Philharmonic; Meetings; Kindled; Organization,” *The Kansas City Times*, February 25, 1885, 4.

THE NEW MUSICAL SOCIETY

The present effort to establish the Philharmonic society in Kansas City is creditable to the musicians who have promised to lend their aid. The people of a western wonder have enough music in their soul to enjoy the singing of an oratorio by a well trained chorus, or the playing of a symphony by a well balanced orchestra. If they have not, or if the leisure for that sort of enjoyment be wanting, yet as a matter of municipal pride they should keep up a local society whose work can stand the comparison with what cities of half the population further east boast about. There are amateurs, semi-professionals and professionals enough in Kansas City to organize a strong society. Two things must be added before the material can be welded into an effective body. Popular support is the first and concert of action the second. The first will not be withheld. The second is the rock upon which nearly all musical societies split. There will be a half-dozen directors instead of one; a hundred soloists instead of four; there will be jealousies and little tiffs until the pursuit of art is lost sight of and the whole organization is resolved into its original atoms.

If the new philharmonic can escape this danger, Kansas City may have the pleasure of listening to a series of concerts this winter which will be a pleasure and a pride.⁶⁰

Based on reviews included in *The Kansas City Star* and *The Kansas City Times*, the Philharmonic Society succeeded,⁶¹ and it appears to have remained the staple local orchestra until 1891 when clarinetist John Behr founded a new ensemble, which disbanded after less than one year due to disappointing ticket sales.⁶² But that did not stop Behr, who would work to found a new orchestra in 1894 through the Beethoven Club. This orchestra would last until 1905.⁶³ Sir Carl Busch would also create multiple orchestras. The first would be a High School Orchestra in 1890, and then the Philharmonic Orchestra of Kansas City in 1895.⁶⁴ This orchestra would also disband in 1909. Everett describes Busch as programming new and “splashy” and

⁶⁰ “The New Musical Society,” *The Kansas City Times*, October 8, 1885, 4.

⁶¹ “The Orchestral Concert,” *The Kansas City Star*, February 25, 1885, 4.

⁶² Everett, *Music for the People*, 3.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

focused on “large-scale, late-Romantic works” while Behr programmed more standard and “conservative” symphonies.⁶⁵

Between 1880 and 1905, the word “orchestra” is mentioned in *The Kansas City Star* approximately 10,539 times, with another 1,000 references to “philharmonic.” The majority of these references appear to be advertisements for various rehearsals, concerts, operas, vaudevilles, and civic events. Some are articles that contain news (i.e., death or stardom) about well-known orchestras or performers as well as other types of gossip. For those twenty-five years, the term “orchestra” was mentioned in the paper almost every day, sometimes multiple times in one issue. The implications of these statistics are enormous: orchestras, and orchestral music, were a standard and integral part of the every-day lives of Kansas Citians.

Vaudeville, Minstrelsy, and Variety Shows:

In all the scholarly literature concerning the theater, opera, vaudeville, or minstrelsy, scholars are quick to specify that unlike vaudeville and minstrelsy, opera (including operettas and light opera) and certain plays were considered “legitimate theater.”⁶⁶ The historical narrative indicates that this term would be based on several variables—partly on issues of morality, partly on format, and partly on the level of professionalism of the production. In essence, something that was considered acceptable for women to view would be “morally acceptable” and therefore more likely to be considered “legitimate.” Springhall explains that the more expansive city

⁶⁵ Everett states in full: “Thus, at the turn of the twentieth century, Kansas City supported not one but two concert orchestras: Behr’s Kansas City Symphony and Busch’s Kansas City Philharmonic. Players were drawn from local musicians, including the many who played in the various theater orchestras in town. The distinctive stamp of each conductor’s personality was imprinted on his orchestra. Busch promoted the splashy, large-scale, late-Romantic works that were still fairly new, while Behr relished in the flow of symphonies and works that were generally more conservative in nature.” Ibid.

⁶⁶ Londré, *Enchanted Years*, 38.

infrastructures that the railroad facilitated led to “innovations in printing, manufacture,” which would affect patterns of leisure. With these innovations developed the social expectation to ensure that the morality of the entertainment could be controlled.⁶⁷ This would be the case in Kansas City as well.

Londré summarizes that there were “eighty different minstrel companies playing 161 engagements in Kansas City between 1856 and 1900...and [that] thirty-eight different circuses came to Kansas City between 1856 and 1880.”⁶⁸ Vaudeville would eventually become more popular than the “legitimate theater” performances available to audiences in Kansas City, but this would not happen until the 1910s and 1920s.⁶⁹ On a national level, according Springhall, vaudeville “became America’s premier mode of live entertainment from the mid-1880s until at least the early 1920s (although lasting for much longer).”⁷⁰ Londré conducted a comparison of the timelines and revealed that Kansas City was almost twenty years behind the East Coast in obtaining consistent access to vaudeville performances, although audiences would have seen the occasional vaudeville acts as performed by the stock company at the Gillis Opera House.⁷¹ In 1898, the Ninth Street Theater was leased to Gustav Walter and his business partner Morris Meyerfeld; they were acquiring a “chain” of theaters throughout the country to dedicate

⁶⁷ Springhall states in full: “Improvements in rail travel and other communication networks, as well as innovations in printing, manufacture, and corporate marketing, transformed Gilded Age leisure patterns and also saw the emergence of a new managerial class that, as will be revealed, tried hard to control the moral content of entertainment.” See Springhall, *The Genesis of Mass Culture*, 129.

⁶⁸ Londré, *Enchanted Years*, 17–8.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 222.

⁷⁰ Springhall, *The Genesis of Mass Culture*, 129.

⁷¹ Londré, *Enchanted Years*, 222.

exclusively to vaudeville. They named each of the theaters in the chain “Orpheum,” and the Ninth Street Theater would follow suit.⁷²

The conservative Midwesterners in Kansas City were not so quick to accept vaudeville, because, as Londré states, “people in the American heartland regarded vaudeville with suspicion, for they associated it with the old type of variety presented in concert saloons and honky-tonks.”⁷³ The management for the theater fell onto Martin Lehman, who recognized that the only way the theater would turn any kind of profit was to design the performances to attract female audiences instead of the male-dominated crowd that attended some of the first performances. The bill for the inaugural performance of the theater’s name change reflected this intention. Londré provides a description of the program based on Latchaw’s memoirs, stating that the rather tame “inaugural bill at the Orpheum (6–23 February 1898)” included “the Knaben Kapelle as headliners, fresh from the West Coast...the Vesuviano Operatic Quartet, direct from the San Carlo Opera House, Naples; Miss Ola Hayden, the famous contra-tenor,” and more.⁷⁴

Even though the program contained nothing that would be considered on the level of a variety show, Kansas City audiences remained unconvinced, and for several weeks few patrons frequented the theater. Despite the heavy losses that first season, Lehman was convinced he could change the mind of Kansas Citians. His solution was to walk from house to house and

⁷² Ibid., 223.

⁷³ Ibid., 222.

⁷⁴ “The inaugural bill at the Orpheum (6–23 February 1898) suggests a fairly cautious approach to programming with the Knaben Kapelle as headliners, fresh from the West Coast. This was a Hungarian Boys’ Imperial Military Band, “40—Natural-Born Musicians—40,” under the direction of Niklas Schilzenyi. Also on the bill were Sevais Le Roy, Europe’s greatest illusionist and magician in his American debut; the Vesuviano Operatic Quartet, direct from the San Carlo Opera House, Naples; Miss Ola Hayden, the famous contra-tenor; Matthew and Harris, mirth provokers; Prof. Gallandro, lightening clay modeler; Gruet, Beers, and Gruet, grotesque comedy acrobats; and realistic scenes in moving pictures.” Ibid., 224.

explain the type of entertainment that would be booked at the Orpheum. He handed out complimentary tickets, to the ladies in particular.⁷⁵ That grit and determination eventually paid off: the second season at the theater nearly broke even, and the third made a profit. Public opinion would flip and the Orpheum, according to Londré, became “widely regarded as one of the best houses on the Orpheum circuit, which numbered seventeen theaters by 1905.”⁷⁶

Advertisements that ran in *The Kansas City Star* support these figures. In 1881 and 1882 there were only two references made to vaudeville and both referred to vaudeville in Paris, France. In 1899, by contrast, there were over 600 references, some advertisements, some debates about morality, and some commentary on musical trends at the Orpheum Theater.

The eventual acceptance of the vaudeville performance experience and its aspects of mass culture were in essence the acceptance of a musical genre that was in many ways shaped by the development of the railroad throughout the United States.

In many ways, the audiences in Kansas City cannot be blamed for their cautiousness.⁷⁷ Springhall explains that the most accurate way to research vaudeville, variety shows, and other traveling troupes is to contextualize these genres within the corresponding social landscape. “Minstrelsy, vaudeville, circuses, dime museums, and wild west shows, were inextricably intermingled...[and] borrowed heavily from one another.”⁷⁸

The “intermingling” in Kansas City is complex, and according to Londré, especially difficult to separate, as “ownership, management, and names of establishments changed

⁷⁵ Ibid., 225–6

⁷⁶ Ibid., 226.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 119.

⁷⁸ Springhall, *The Genesis of Mass Culture*, 8.

frequently. Some buildings operated briefly as variety houses and then were converted to other uses.”⁷⁹ The “cow town,” as a stop on the Santa Fe Trail and its function as a transportation hub, would have attracted specific kinds of residents, the majority of whom were male, several of whom were transients, and all of whom would be looking for cheap entertainment. In the 1870s and 1880s, even the term “theater” implied less refined entertainment.⁸⁰ In 1880 Kansas City local John P. Gilday explained that “the city was wide open for the pleasure of cowboys, farmers and gamblers...[The theaters Comique and Coliseum] were much frequented by the tired businessmen of the ‘80s, though they didn’t always tell about it.”⁸¹ To some, Kansas City was “the best town this side of hell.”⁸²

Variety shows were an important part of the entertainment fare available to the residents of and visitors to Kansas City. Londré’s compilation indicates that in 1879, there were three theaters or establishments offering variety performances: Theater Comique, Tivoli Summer Garden (which was under the same management as the Comique), and the New Coliseum Theater. The management at the Comique faced serious competition with opening of the Coliseum in 1879, as the Coliseum (located across the street on the opposite end of the same block) undercut the Comique’s prices while still staging some of the same actors. This led to a competition between the respective managements. As a form of live advertising, meant to attract the attention of the “cowboys, farmers, and gamblers,” the two theaters would keep “a rope

⁷⁹ Most of these changes are not specified here. Several details can be found in “Expositions, Priests of Pallas, Variety Saloons” Londré, *Enchanted Years*, 119.

⁸⁰ Londré, *Enchanted Years*, 119.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 134.

⁸² *Ibid.*

stretched across the street at the second-story level. Each night the band would play, and above the heads of the crowd would be a ‘grand tightrope walking exhibition.’”⁸³

The Comique charged no admission fee, instead relying on, among other things, the patron’s alcoholic purchases to turn a profit.⁸⁴ The Comique was well known for hundreds of miles, which led to Dodge City, Kansas; Leadville, Colorado; and Butte, Montana soon opening a Theater Comique as well.⁸⁵ One popular act on the bill at the Theater Comique was local Hale family. All three Hale brothers were firemen, and two of them, Lon and Billy, were nationally acclaimed clog dancers. Other acts who performed at the Comique include “Song-and-dance lady Miss Nellie Zoe, the wonderful Egyptian Jugglers, [and] the armless song-and-dance artist Charles Perham, [among others].”⁸⁶

Valentine Love, the manager of the Comique would scout the country for dynamic acts and book them for an entire season. But, knowing that his Kansas City audiences required variety, he sent his hired acts to the other Comique locations in Kansas and Colorado where they

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Gilday also stated: “[The] night life was made vivid and quite often riotously hilarious by Clark’s Coliseum and Valentine Love’s Theater Comique, two burlesque show houses of the ‘free and easy’ variety... ‘Minstrel fronts’ and ‘olios’ were the main business of the stage, but the revenues were derived from the bars attached to the rear of the house. At the end of each act the curtain was lowered and the admonition displayed, ‘Do not forget to patronize the bar.’ The frequenters seldom forgot.” Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 121.

⁸⁶ “Song-and-dance lady Miss Nellie Zoe, the wonderful Egyptian Jugglers, the armless song-and-dance artist Charles Perham, celebrated song-and-dance artists Jem and Dan Powers, the sweet sing of charm songs Miss Flora Marcey, the champion equilibrist Happy Dave McCoy, acrobatic song-and-dance artists Fairchild and Hendle, a comedian Nick Morton, the ever-popular singer Carrie Aery, the patriotic flag waver Ceni Havre, Irish sketch artists Donnelly and Drew, Mason and West doing Dutch songs and dances, Miss Hattie Ellis and her troupe of trained dogs, contortionist Charles Omeveg, the champions of the world among delineators of German character Morris and Fields [among others].” Ibid., 130–131.

would continue to perform.⁸⁷ By 1882, there were railroad lines that connected Kansas City to Dodge City, Leadville, and Butte. It stands to reason that the hired acts would travel by rail.

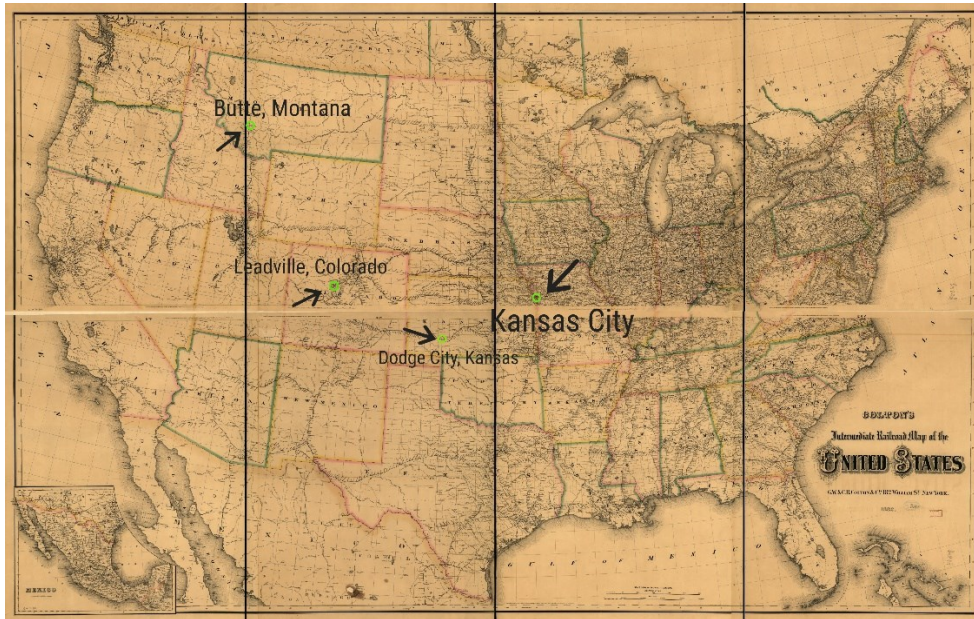


Figure 3.6 Colton's *Intermediate Railroad Map of the United States*, Published by G.W. & C.B. Colton & Co., 1882, Library of Congress Geography and Map Division Washington, D.C. 20540-4650 USA dcu.

Often what played at these theaters, other halls and theaters in the city, and even sometimes at the Coates Opera House came down to money, and any changes in repertoire, management, and theater names reflect these shifts. Managers like Love were constantly looking for new acts to add to their variety shows, in order to keep Kansas City audiences engaged. The rivalry between Coliseum's Hank Clark and Love's Comique meant that each manager was acutely aware of what was received favorably in each theater, and in some cases, the manager of one theater would bring back acts that had been successful in the rival theater the year before.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Ibid., 129–31.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 134.

With the local demand for variety, this required the theater managers to bring in several different groups and acts during the course of one season—via the railroad.

While the railroad played a role in supporting the variety theaters in the city by bringing the performers (and often the audiences) to the theaters, it was also the railroads that inadvertently led to their closure. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, as the economy shifted around the repercussions of the railroad, the city's socio-demographic variables began to change, and the entertainment needs followed suit.⁸⁹ Londré explains that “as amusement-seeking men began to shy away from the Fourth Street dives [including the theaters Comique and Coliseum], growing numbers of working-class women sought entertainment outside the home...and thus there was a need for a venue that would provide legitimate drama at popular prices.”⁹⁰

H.D. Clark's Ninth Street Theater, the Gilliss Opera House, the Grand Opera House, and The Auditorium Theater were some of the theaters that would fill this need. As time passed, Londré explains, “Kansas City finally succumbed to vaudeville's allures—visual spectacle, constant turnover of acts, inoffensive material that pose no mental challenge—there was no looking back.”⁹¹

⁸⁹ As can be expected, there was overlap between the fall of the variety shows and the rise in popularity of affordable moral entertainment. The complexities of these issues are not explored in this thesis.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 140.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 222.

Theater:

One of the most important threads in the city's musical tapestry at the end of the eighteenth and into the nineteenth century is the history of the theater.⁹² According to Douglas McDermott, there are three chronological phases of theatrical growth, and John Hanners summarizes the developmental phases of theater as argued by McDermott. Hanners explains that phase one consists of the local or regional groups that are not professionally trained. Phase two expands to small traveling troupes made up of professional personnel, and finally phase three, the establishment of permanent stock companies.⁹³

Hanners goes on to quote Seldon Faulkner, who declared that the "third phase" companies, the stock companies who lived and performed almost exclusively in one city, were the "mainstay of nineteenth-century American theater, particularly in cultural outposts...far from the populous cities of the Northeast."⁹⁴ The trajectory of theatrical entertainment in Kansas City follows many of these patterns, which warrants some examination as it is such an important part of the artistic and musical scene in Kansas City; moreover, the development of phases was dependent on the urban growth that resulted from the establishment of the railroad in Kansas City.

⁹² "Theater" in this context, appears to be interchangeable between plays or musical productions.

⁹³ Hanners states in full: "Phase one consisted of small troupes of itinerant actors and entertainers with little or no professional background. These vagabonds...engaged in a variety of amusements and usually performed a limited play repertory in public buildings converted into theatrical spaces. During phase two, companies of perhaps two dozen professionally-trained actors and stagehands traveled extensively throughout the Ohio and Mississippi River Valleys, following the major river systems—the Allegheny, Arkansas, Cumberland, Missouri, Ohio, and Wabash—and performed a repertory of two or three dozen plays in regular theaters. In the third phase, permanent stock companies with as many as twenty-four major actors performed in often elaborate urban theaters." John Hanners, *"It Was Play or Starve": Acting in the Nineteenth-Century American Popular Theater* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1993), 97.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

Phase One (1820–1856): Londré describes some of the arts and entertainment available to the early inhabitants of Kansas City. The 1820s (before the founding of the Town of Kansas that would eventually become Kansas City) were defined by the musical tastes of Bérénice Chouteau, music lover and wife of French fur trader François Gesseau Chouteau. This would change when the Town of Kansas was established in 1835, but for two more decades, the area would stay in phase one.⁹⁵

Londré implies that traveling companies chose to tour a town based on its size, as this determined if the audience would be large enough to warrant the cost and time commitment of travel. Londré explains that while the Town of Kansas was large enough in the 1840s to warrant the performances of traveling companies (the population had reached approximately 700 in the 1840s), none arrived. She states that there was “no documentation of such visits to Missouri’s western border area...It is possible that the small companies that played in rural Missouri in the 1840s were simply daunted by the rough-and-tumble nature of life in a town where steady upriver and downriver traffic meant that unsavory strangers were constantly passing through.”⁹⁶ With no railroad leading to Kansas City at this point, these small companies would have traveled by steamboat or stagecoach.⁹⁷ However, with the advent of the railroad, Kansas City became

⁹⁵ Londré explains: “Most entertainments...were still homegrown amusements, created by amateurs: literary societies, singing societies, debating clubs, balls, and band concerts. The decade did bring various kinds of traveling shows to the small communities west of the Mississippi, but St. Joseph boasts more documented performances than the Town of Kansas in those days,” Londré, *Enchanted Years*, 15.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Kansas City began as an extension of Westport, which was a steamboat landing on the Missouri River. Ibid., 107.

more accessible and more established as a city, and the itinerant troupes felt more comfortable risking the time and money to travel out to Kansas City to perform.⁹⁸

Phase Two (1856–1869): The first touring group known to have visited Kansas City was the Badger Circus which came in 1856.⁹⁹ Their arrival in fact marks the beginning of phase two. Table 4.1 is a summary of the touring groups that Londré lists as having performed in Kansas City between 1856 and 1863 (see Table 3.3). While she does not list every performance, leading to gaping holes in the table, she does track the developments and the first documented arrivals of various groups.

Table 3.3. Performance groups that toured in Kansas City, 1856–1863.

	Bands	Circus	Minstrels	Musical Groups	Theater Groups	Touring International Stars
1856		Badger Circus				
1857		<i>various, unspecified</i>	Christy's Minstrels	Alleghenians		
1858	Daniel W. Bantie's band (local)	<i>various, unspecified</i>	Campbell's Minstrels	Ancient Druid Ox Players	D. L. Scott Theatrical Troupe	
1859		<i>various, unspecified</i>	<i>various, unspecified</i>		Cleveland Family Comedy; J. S. Langrishe Troupe	
1860		<i>various, unspecified</i>	World Star Minstrels	Peak Family Vocalists		Anna Bishop
1863		<i>various, unspecified</i>	<i>various, unspecified</i>		Union Theater; National Theater	

⁹⁸ Harlan explains: “The construction of the Coates Opera House [in 1870], combined with Kansas City’s growing prosperity and increased accessibility by rail, did not immediately result in a surge of visits by opera troupes. In the first place, few such ensembles existed. Second, hardly any of these were willing to gamble on a far-flung trip to Kansas City. St. Louis...was still perceived as the extreme western edge of operatic profitability, San Francisco excepted. It should be remembered that opera impresarios at this time routed at their own financial risk. Kansas City therefore did not enjoy a steady parade of opera companies until the 1880s.” Jennings, ““The Early Days,”” 686.

⁹⁹ Londré, *Enchanted Years*, 17.

The gap between 1860 and 1863 is due to the struggles the city experienced during the Civil War; touring was suspended in the city during those years as the area was, on more than one occasion, transformed into a battleground. Groups started to come to Kansas City again by 1863, and between 1863 and 1869, touring troupes were common, often staying in the city for a month at a time, performing upward of seventeen different shows over the span of eleven days.¹⁰⁰

Kansas City moved into phase three of McDermott's system with the opening of the Coates Opera House in 1870. Only one year after the opening of the Hannibal Bridge, city socialites Colonel Kersey and his wife Sarah Walter Chandler Coates, financed the construction of the Coates Opera House, which cost \$105,000¹⁰¹ and took under eighteen months to build. Londré explains that for a few years, this opera house held the distinction of being the "finest theater between the Mississippi and the Pacific coast."¹⁰² This was not the beginning of the Coates' involvement in the music scene in the city; in many ways, Sarah Coates fulfilled a similar social role to Bérénice Chouteau's in the 1820s. The Coates' arrived in Kansas City in 1856 and with each building they took on, they redefined the city, from the location of their home at 10th and Pennsylvania, which became known as Quality Hill, to cofounding the city's first bank, to starting their own kiln so they could build a first-class hotel, and eventually, an opera house.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 19.

¹⁰¹ This would be the equivalent of \$2,108,127.48 in 2021. Ian Webster, "CPI Inflation Calculator," accessed April 18, 2021, <https://www.in2013dollars.com/us/inflation/1870?amount=105000>.

¹⁰² Londré, *Enchanted Years*, 32.

¹⁰³ Londré explains that "surviving the war and financial setbacks, Colonel and Mrs. Coates emerged as civic and social leaders. The still unfurnished parlor of their home was the scene of lively dances, sometimes French-style

The opera house was modeled on the Detroit Opera House, with a stage area that may have been among the largest in the West¹⁰⁴ and an audience capacity of at least 1,800, which included standing room for 600.¹⁰⁵ The grand opening of the theater took place on October 8, 1870 and featured the singing of the national anthem by the stock company and a short speech by Coates. Gifford's orchestra performed after and the event concluded with the full-feature comedy *Money*.¹⁰⁶

From the first evening, and for the next three seasons, the Coates Opera House employed a stock company that performed at the opera house to supplement the touring companies that manager Charles Pope booked. This first stock company was made up of eight women and twelve men, none of whom were locals.¹⁰⁷

with a couple of fiddlers, other times accompanied by Bantie's Band (also known as Banta's Band) playing outside the windows." Ibid., 33.

¹⁰⁴ According to Londré: "The stage area, thirty-six by seventy-two feet, was said to be one of the largest in the west." Ibid., 35.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 36.

¹⁰⁶ Londré states in full: "[It was] a great forward leap in the city's social and cultural life...The inaugural evening began with the stock company's singing of the national anthem, punctuated with vigorous applause after each stanza. The Honorable T. Dwight Thatcher addressed the audience, complimenting the citizens on their enterprise and their recognition of the worth of culture in support of business, and culminating in a tribute to Colonel Coates, who had put those ideals into practice. Thunderous applause accompanies calls for "Coates," who then left the private box where he sat with his family. Stepping onto the stage, he made some brief, gracious, impromptu remarks. Gifford's orchestra played, and then the stock company performed Edward Bulwer-Lytton's popular comedy *Money*, the title of which would seem to reflect with singular appropriateness the driving motive behind Kansas City from its inception, though the play actually spoofs commercialism. The audience's ecstatic response to the performance and Pope's well-received curtain speech clearly signaled that the cultural enterprise was off to a great start." Ibid., 38.

¹⁰⁷ Londré states: "Pope's leading lady, Miss Alice Gray, had just come from a season with Ben DeBar (to whom she would return the following season); she is remembered in theater history largely because John Wilkes Booth had her daguerreotype in his wallet when he was killed after his assassination of President Abraham Lincoln. Frank Murdoch from the Boston Museum theater was a strong supporting actor. Lena Prentice came from Philadelphia's famed Walnut Street Theater. Mrs. Agnes Naylor had performed at Booth's Theater in New York. Others came from Boston, Cincinnati, Baltimore, Louisville, and California. For a few, the season at the Coates was an opportunity to move up to legitimate theater from variety." Ibid., 38.

Plays made up a great portion of the productions put on at the Coates Opera House, including the comedy *The Serious Family* by Morris Barnett, *The Duke's Motto* by John Brougham, the French drama *The Marble Heart* by Théodore Barrière's and translated by Charles Selby, *Rosedale* by Lester Wallack, and several Shakespeare plays.¹⁰⁸ This also marked the beginning of a parade of stars that passed through Kansas City, gracing the local stages with their stardom. They included Lawrence Barrett, Edwin Booth, Lotta Crabtree, Edwin Forrest, William Gillette, John McCullough, Richard Mansfield, Julia Marlowe, Carla Morris, Joseph Jefferson III, James O'Neill, Otis Skinner, and perhaps the most famous of them all, Sarah Bernhardt, performing works such as *Fédora*¹⁰⁹ by Victorien Sardou, for which Bernhardt was internationally known, and *Camille* (or *La Dame aux Camélias*) by Alexandre Dumas, which was also a tragedy.¹¹⁰ These stars traveled to Kansas City in the most convenient way they could—via the railroad. The railroads running through Kansas City in many cases made it logistically possible for the stars and traveling troupes and companies to perform in Kansas City, as the railroad allowed them to transport the crucial sets, costumes, and scripts.¹¹¹

In 1883, *The Kansas City Evening Star* published the following commentary on the theater in Kansas City, stating: “Kansas City can not [sic] always be depended upon to boom the

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 40.

¹⁰⁹ *Fédora* is a Russian tragedy about a woman avenging her husband's death. Apparently, Bernhardt would help put the fedora (the hat) on the map, as it was her performance that would make the fedora famous, and it then became a popular men's accessory. Phil Edwards, “The Gender-Bending Superstar and Hustling Hatter who Invented the Fedora,” *TRIVIA HAPPY*.), May 7, 2014, <https://triviahappy.com/articles/the-gender-bending-superstar-and-hustling-hatter-who-invented-the-fedora>.

¹¹⁰ Londré, *Enchanted Years*, 63.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 73.

legitimate drama. but when it comes to spectacle and melodrama, she looms up strong; our wild western appetite craves something bracing in the theatrical line.”¹¹²

Opera:

Preston draws a connection between the history of the opera and the history of the theater in the United States. She states that “the history of opera in nineteenth-century America—especially during the antebellum period—is inextricably intertwined with the history of American theater. Opera, as musical theater, was a normal part of the American theatrical repertory of the time.”¹¹³ This was the case for Kansas City as well. As can be seen from Table 3.3, as opportunities for theatrical performances became more prevalent, the appearance of operatic performance also increased (see Table 3.3).

Ronald L. Davis wrote about the opera houses active in the Midwest between 1870 and 1920. He focused his research on opera houses in Kansas, Nebraska, and the Dakotas but indicated that the patterns he explored can be applied generally to small-town America in this period. He explains that the term “opera house” was in many ways misnomer and simply indicated that the hall would be programming legitimate drama. This term was used in contrast to the term “theater” which was associated with entertainment of lower or dubious morality. Additionally, the local opera house “was viewed as the crowning achievement in the community’s social and cultural life, symbolic of civilization in the most exalted sense.”¹¹⁴

¹¹² Ibid., xvii.

¹¹³ Preston, *Opera on the Road*, xii.

¹¹⁴ Davis states in full: “As the last frontier approached an end, nearly every town of any distinction on the Plains boasted an opera house. The term “opera house” was preferred over “theater” since opera was considered a highly respected art form rather than mere popular amusement, even though grand opera itself was seldom actually performed in the Great Plains. What the management offered on its stage depended primarily on the town’s

In many ways, Davis could have been writing of the Coates Opera House and the other theaters active in Kansas City between 1870 and 1905. These spaces were symbols of status and progression for the people and city elites, and the Coates Opera House was held in highest regard. Additionally, many of the shows performed onstage at the Coates, supplementing the stars booked by management, were described by Londré as “a mix of classics and melodramas by minstrel companies, lectures, and concerts, as well as...occasional presentations for one night only by Kansas City’s two leading amateur groups, the Kemble Club and the Siddons Club.”¹¹⁵ Opera is where Kansas City’s musical narrative deviates from the summary provided by Davis. The city is a prime example of the exception admitted by Davis. Kansas City’s proximity to the railroad directly impacted the sheer number of touring professional opera companies and troupes performing in the city.

The first record of opera being performed in Kansas City occurred when Anna Bishop, the famous English opera singer, gave two concert performances in Kansas City in summer 1860. Known as “Madam Bishop,” she spent most of her long, illustrious—and sometimes scandalous—career on tour, traveling all through Europe, parts of South America, Australia, and throughout the United States and Canada. She was known for her Italian arias.¹¹⁶ Her selections

proximity to a railroad, which in the late nineteenth century served as the major link to the outside world. Whether or not opera troupes ever sang for local audiences, a town’s opera house—on the Plains, as throughout small-town America—was viewed as the crowning achievement in the community’s social and cultural life, symbolic of civilization in the most exalted sense. More a monument to local dreams of grandeur than a profitable business, the opera house became a rallying point for civic boosterism, tangible proof that a town had come of age. Civic pride knew few limits.” Ronald L. Davis, “Opera Houses in Kansas, Nebraska, and The Dakotas: 1870–1920,” *Great Plains Quarterly* 9, no. 1 (Winter 1989): 1, <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/188059943.pdf>.

¹¹⁵ Londré, *Enchanted Years*, 42.

¹¹⁶ The Kansas City Journal of Commerce enthusiastically advertised her upcoming performance: “Accompanying Madame Bishop were F. Rudolphson, baritone, and Thomas Aug. Hogan, pianist. The concerts, originally scheduled for Lockridge Hall (the city’s first public theater, erected in 1859 and situated as the southeast corner of Fifth and Main Streets), were moved to an unknown location referred to as Concert Hall. Frederic Shattner, a German

for the first evening included “Robin Redbreast,” “Oft in the Stilly Night,” and “Home, Sweet Home.” Kansas City audiences were delighted.¹¹⁷

The summary of opera companies, years they toured Kansas City, and the theater that housed their productions contained in Table 3.4 was compiled from information provided by Jennings, Lyle Kennedy, Londré, Preston, and *The Kansas City Star* (see Table 3.4):¹¹⁸

Table 3.4. Opera Companies that toured in Kansas City, 1868–1901.

	Opera Company/Troupe	Theater/Opera House	Repertoire
1868	Fairies Great Comic Opera Company	Franks Hall	
1869	Brignoli Italian Opera Company	Franks Hall	Selections from <i>Lucia di Lammermoor</i> and <i>Faust</i> , and the entirety of <i>The Barber of Seville</i> in Italian
1872	Aimee Boulette and her French Opera Bouffe Troupe	Coates Opera House	<i>La Perichole</i> , Offenbach They did NOT end up performing, due to inclement weather.
1873/4	Oates Comic Opera Company	Coates Opera House	
1874	Redpath English Opera Company	Coates Opera House	<i>Martha</i> , Flotow
1874	Adelaide Phillipps Opera Company	Coates Opera House	Excerpts

immigrant and prominent Kansas City music teacher, loaned his piano for the performances. General admission sold for fifty cents; reserved seats were a dollar. Predictably, the [Kansas City] Journal [of Commerce] urged the public to attend: “We cannot do a greater favor to the lovers of music, than to call attention to the Concert of Madame Anna Bishop to-morrow night. It is the first time a Kansas City audience have had offered to them the privilege of hearing one of those who stand in the list of great artistes... We shall look upon her audiences as a test of the musical tastes of our people, and...we expect to see the largest, most fashionable and brilliant audiences ever known here, to greet her during her short stay in this city.” Harlan Jennings, “The Early Days of Grand Opera in Kansas City, Missouri, 1860–1879,” *The Opera Quarterly* 15, no. 4 (Autumn 1999): 679, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oq/15.4.677>.

She is also famous for having survived a shipwreck while traveling from California to Guam, Hong Kong, Singapore, and India. See Nicholas Temperley, “Bishop, Anna,” in *Oxford Music Online, Grove Music Online*, accessed April 7, 2021, www.oxfordmusiconline.com.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Not all of these dates are exact and most of the data only includes what was performed at the Coates Opera House, until it burned down in 1901. This table is meant to show the approximate data, as summarized based on the information provided by Jennings, Kennedy, Londré, Preston, and *The Kansas City Star*. Table 3.4 is meant to reflect that 1) Boston Ideal Company played at the Coates every season during most of the 1880s 2) McCaull Opera Company played at the Coates every year during most of the 1880s and 3) Abbott Companies played 15 engagements between 1879–1889.

Table 3.4. Opera Companies that toured in Kansas City, 1868–1901. Continued.

	Opera Company/Troupe	Theater/Opera House	Repertoire
1877	Richings-Bernard Grand English Opera Company		<i>Trovatore</i> ; <i>Martiana</i> by Wallace; <i>Bohemian Girl</i> by Balfe
1878	C. D. Hess Grand English Opera Company	Coates Opera House	<i>Bohemian Girl</i> by Balfe; <i>Fra Diavolo</i>
1878/9	4 unspecified opera companies (some listed below)		15 productions
1879	C. D. Hess and Co. (included additional personnel, including Emma Abbott)	Coates Opera House	
1879	Emma Abbott English Opera Company	Coates Opera House	
1879	New York Juvenile Opera Company	Coates Opera House	<i>H.M.S. Pinafore</i> by Gilbert and Sullivan
1880	Emma Abbott English Opera Company (performed twice in 1880)	Coates Opera House	<i>Mariana</i> ; <i>Il Trovatore</i> by Verdi; <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> by Gounod; <i>Les Cloches de Corneville</i> by Planquette
1880	Strakosch and Hess Opera Company	Coates Opera House	
1881/2	7 unspecified opera companies (some listed below)	Coates Opera House	30 productions, including <i>Aida</i> by Verdi
1881	McCaul Opera Company	Coates Opera House	
1881	Strakosch and Hess Opera Company	Coates Opera House	<i>Aida</i> by Verdi; <i>Fra Diavolo</i> by Auber; <i>Mignon</i> by Thomas, <i>Il Trovatore</i> ; <i>Mefistofele</i> by Boito
1882	Boston Ideals Opera Company	Coates Opera House	<i>Fatinitza</i> by Suppé; <i>Patience</i> ; <i>Marriage of Figaro</i> ; <i>The Musketeers</i> by Somerville; <i>Pirates of Penzance</i> by Gilbert and Sullivan; <i>Bohemian Girl</i> ; <i>The Mascot</i> by Audran
1882	Emma Abbott English Opera Company	Coates Opera House	<i>Martha</i> by Flotow; <i>Mariana</i> ; <i>Bohemian Girl</i> ; <i>Olivette</i> by Audran; <i>Patience</i> by Gilbert and Sullivan; <i>Faust</i> by Gounod
1882	Emma Abbott English Opera Company (second time)	Coates Opera House	<i>King for a Day</i> Verdi; <i>La sonnambula</i> by Bellini; <i>Les Cloches de Corneville</i> , <i>Rigoletto</i> , <i>Bohemian Girl</i> , <i>Fra Diavolo</i> by Auber, <i>Martha</i>
1882	McCaul Opera Company	Coates Opera House	
1883	McCaul Opera Company	Coates Opera House	<i>Queen's Lace Handkerchief</i> ; <i>Merry War</i> by Strauss II

Table 3.4. Opera Companies that toured in Kansas City, 1868–1901. Continued.

	Opera Company/Troupe	Theater/Opera House	Repertoire
1883	Emma Abbott English Opera Company	Coates Opera House	<i>Iolanthe</i> by Gilbert and Sullivan; <i>Paul and Virginia</i> by Massé
1883	Boston Ideals Opera Company	Coates Opera House	
1883	C. D. Hess Opera Company	Coates Opera House	<i>Bohemian Girl</i> ; <i>Mariana</i> ; <i>H. M. S. Pinafore</i>
1883	Ford's Comic Opera Company	Coates Opera House	
1883	Maurice Garu's French Opera Company	Coates Opera House	
1884	Emma Abbott English Opera Company (performed twice in 1884)	Coates Opera House	
1884	McCaull Opera Company	Coates Opera House	<i>The Beggar Student</i> by Millöcker
1884	Boston Ideals Opera Company	Gillis Opera House	
1884	Boston Ideals Opera Company	Coates Opera House	
1884	C. D. Hess Opera Comique Company	Coates Opera House	
1884	Carleton's English Opera Company	Coates Opera House	<i>La Fille du Tambour Major</i> by Offenbach; <i>The Pavement of Paris</i>
1885	McCaull Opera Company	Coates Opera House	
1885	Emma Abbott English Opera Company	Coates Opera House	
1885	Boston Ideals Opera Company	Coates Opera House	
1885	The Thompson Opera Company	Coates Opera House	<i>The Mikado</i> by Gilbert and Sullivan
1886	McCaull Opera Company	Coates Opera House	
1886	Boston Ideals Opera Company	Coates Opera House	
1886	J. C. Duff's Comic Opera Company	Coates Opera House	
1887	McCaull Opera Company	Coates Opera House	
1887	American/National Opera Company	Coates Opera House	
1887	Emma Abbott English Opera Company	Coates Opera House	
1887	Boston Ideals Opera Company	Coates Opera House	
1888	McCaull Opera Company	Coates Opera House	

Table 3.4. Opera Companies that toured in Kansas City, 1868–1901. Continued.

	Opera Company/Troupe	Theater/Opera House	Repertoire
1888	Conreld's English Opera Company	Coates Opera House	<i>Amorita</i> by Czibülka; <i>The Vice Admiral</i> ; <i>The Black Hussar</i> by Millöcker
1889	Emma Abbott English Opera Company (performed twice)	Coates Opera House	
1889	J. C. Duff Comic Opera Company	Coates Opera House	
1889	Conrad Comic Opera Company	Coates Opera House	<i>The King's Fool</i> by Müller
1890	McCauill Opera Company	Coates Opera House	<i>The Black Hussar</i> ; <i>Clover</i> ; <i>The Seven Suabiana</i>
1890	The California Opera Company	Coates Opera House	
1890	C. D. Hess Grand Opera Company	Coates Opera House	
1890	Decal Opera Company	Coates Opera House	
1891	Willard Spencer's Comic Opera Company	Coates Opera House	<i>The Little Tycoon</i>
1891	The Bostonians	Coates Opera House	<i>Robin Hood</i> by De Koven; <i>Suzette</i> ; <i>Carmen</i> by Bizet; <i>Fatinitza</i>
1891	Paulton Opera Company	Coates Opera House	<i>The Sheik</i>
1891	Grand German Opera Company	Coates Opera House	<i>O Mother-in-Law</i>
1892	W. T. Carleton Opera Company	Coates Opera House	
1896	Della Fox Opera Company	Coates Opera House	<i>Fleur-de-lis</i>
1896	The Mario Tavary Grand Opera Company	Coates Opera House	
1898	The Del Coute Italian Opera Company	Coates Opera House	<i>The Barber of Seville</i> by Rossini
1898	International Grand Opera Company	Coates Opera House	
1899	Lambardi Opera Company	Coates Opera House	
1901	The Bostonians	Coates Opera House	<i>The Serenade</i> by Herbert; <i>Robin Hood</i>

It was in the 1870s that the Coates Opera House first started offering matinees to appeal to the women and children. As Jennings explains, this was because management was “aware that

women had rarely attended theatrical events in Kansas City prior to 1870.”¹¹⁹ This is incredibly revealing and highlights the quick social turnaround that occurred as the result of establishing Kansas City as a railroad hub. The attempt of Coates’ management to appeal to women and children indicates a swift transformation from trade town to urban metropolis. In 1865, with a population between 4000 and 6000 (accounts vary greatly, even within the resources used in this thesis which Whol and Brown state is typical of histories of Kansas City), the *Kansas City Directory* indicates that there were fewer than forty permanent female residents.¹²⁰ Then, within five years, the management at the Coates Opera House adjusted the format of their entire performance schedule to appeal directly to the women and children populations of the city. As mentioned in the discussion on vaudeville and other popular entertainments, the fall of theaters such as Theater Comique and Fountain Theater was due partially to the dwindling numbers of cattlemen who were simply passing through the city, and it was the greater number of urban families in residence that increased the need for “legitimate theater.” With this more universal appeal, Jennings concludes that “soon the Coates Opera House became a gathering place for Kansas City society and remained the community’s premiere theater until the end of the century.”¹²¹

The performance by the Richings-Bernard Grand English Opera Company in 1877 marks the first full-scale opera production that was performed translated into English. It was not an

¹¹⁹ Jennings, “The Early Days of Grand Opera,” 685.

¹²⁰ Whol and Brown, “The Usable Past,” 2–3.

Kansas City Business Directory and Mirror, Including: Kansas City, Missouri, for 1865, (Kansas City: Millett & Sloan, 1865).

¹²¹ Jennings, “The Early Days of Grand Opera,” 687.

immediate success, due mostly to inclement weather and muddy streets outside of the Coates Opera House.¹²²

There is some lack of clarity between Jennings and Kennedy on various dates. Jennings states that “following the 1869 visits of the Brignoli organization, five years elapsed before Kansas City heard a complete performance of an opera. In the meantime, several concert companies came courting, not always with agreeable results.”¹²³ Kennedy indicates that Aimee Boulette and her French Opera Bouffe Troupe may have arrived within four years.¹²⁴ Jennings also states that only one opera company visited Kansas City in 1878 and one in 1879, but Kennedy insists that there were at least four companies in the 1878–1879 season but does not specify which companies and when they arrived. It is also possible that Kennedy is including the two or three concertizing individuals who performed in Kansas City during this period, but it is unclear.¹²⁵ In each case, it may have only been the difference of a few months, but this does imply that the records were not always exact.

Jennings also explains that the increased number of theaters in the city contribute to the “opera bonanza” that led to the “golden age” of opera.¹²⁶ English-language itinerant opera

¹²² Ibid., 689.

¹²³ Ibid., 686.

¹²⁴ Lyle Kennedy, “Opera in Kansas City,” University of Missouri-Kansas City, accessed April 4, 2021, <http://p.web.umkc.edu/pogemillerl/kcopera.htm>.

¹²⁵ The Croatian soprano Ilma di Murska performed in Kansas City in 1878, but she was not well received and never came back. Carlotta Patti performed in Kansas City in 1879, rounding out the concertizing opera stars that visited the city between 1878 and 1879, according to Jennings. Jennings, “The Early Days of Grand Opera,” 690, 692.

¹²⁶ Jennings states in full: “In 1883 the Gillis Opera House at 5th and Main was completed, so that between the Gillis opera House and the Colonel Kersey Coates Opera House once could see ten companies with forty different operas. By 1884 the Music Hall had been completed at 9th and Broadway and the opera lovers of Kansas City were being treated to 45 different operas given by 13 different companies. With all these additional theaters being completed the result was an opera bonanza and the beginning of the “Golden Age” of opera in Kansas City.” Ibid.

companies contributed heavily to this “Golden Age” in Kansas City. Preston explains that in the late nineteenth century, many music critics were publishing articles, calling for more English-language opera performances. These critics cited several reasons for believing that opera companies should perform translations of the European operas, including appeal to middle-class Americans, as that economic bracket would be paying for the majority of tickets.¹²⁷

This call by the critics, and echoed by the public, was answered by several female American opera singers who, upon seeing that potential, began to manage their own English-speaking companies. Many “middle- and professional-class Americans...continued to be interested in opera as long as it was performed in the vernacular and without the pretensions and high prices of the fashionable foreign-language troupes.”¹²⁸ As indicated in Table 4.2, the touring opera troupes that were welcomed back year after year by the Kansas Citians were the English-language opera troupes, and none was more welcome than the Emma Abbott Companies. The Abbott English-language company first performed in Kansas City in 1880 and would return to perform approximately fourteen more times in the decade leading up to Abbott’s death. Abbott, American soprano and manager of the Emma Abbott Companies, had appeared in Kansas City the year before (1879) with the C. D. Hess and Co. opera troupe. While she had not yet reached the height of the fame and fortune she would soon enjoy, Kansas City audiences

¹²⁷ Preston states in full: “Opera, as an art and a business, would succeed only if middle-class Americans supported it; reaching out to the “masses” required performances in English because foreign-language opera was incomprehensible; popular support for opera in English would foster American musical culture. Others noted that foreign-language companies regularly mounted translated works (sometimes poor versions) and that the translation of opera into the vernacular should be acceptable in the United states because it was a regular practice in Europe.” See Preston, *Opera for the People*, 1–2.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

were already deeply impressed with her.¹²⁹ The next year, *The Kansas City Star* published an article about the “overwhelming success” of Abbott’s performance at the Coates. She and her company had performed Gaetano Donizetti’s *Lucia di Lammermoor*, which would become a Kansas City favorite.¹³⁰ Abbott’s name was printed over 500 times over the next twenty years, and the city’s idolization of her proves the popularity of English-language opera in Kansas City during this period. In fact, Abbott was such a recognized fixture of Kansas City’s musical culture that, as previously mentioned, one local music store, the A. H. Whitney Co., printed an advertising card featuring her portrait. To further contextualize her popularity within the overarching social culture in Kansas City and the Midwest, it is important to note that Abbott was known for being an honest, decent, and upright woman, in addition to a wonderful and talented musician. “Goodness” was a trait that sold tickets and made performers famous in the Midwest. One of the great favorites was Emma Abbott, who was just as well known for her good character as her talented singing capability. In another instance, local audiences refused to see an 1883 production of *The Queen’s Lace Handkerchief*, as the advertent gave the locals the impression that it was a “leg show.”¹³¹

¹²⁹ The *Kansas City Journal* ran an article describing her performance in the Kansas City premier of Gounod’s *Faust*: “Those who had seen Miss Abbott in concert were not prepared for the dramatic force which she displayed throughout the piece. Thoroughly conscientious at all times, she sings in good taste...In the stronger dramatic passages she showed a power far beyond that which is usually seen in opera.” Jennings, “The Early Days of Grand Opera,” 691.

¹³⁰ “Coates Opera House,” *The Kansas City Star*, October 14, 1880, 4.

¹³¹ As described by Londré, “Popular attractions at the Coates in the 1880s included grand opera, which singer Emma Abbott...did much to popularize. The lovely Abbott’s repertoire of French and Italian operas along with carious operettas never failed to fill the Coates, which she played fifteen engagements between 1879 and 1889. McCaull Opera Company returned yearly through most of the 1880s to play Coates Opera House and was regularly well received. Strangely however, opening night of “the beautiful opera” *The Queen’s Lace Handkerchief* in 1883 played to less than half a house. Producer John McCaull learned something about Kansas City—or at least about Coates clientele—when it was found that ticket buyers had been deterred by the poster “showing two girls dressed as pages, holding a magnified lace handkerchief between them, on which appeared the title of the opera.” It seems

Musical trends in the United States indicate that the audiences who attended performances by these English-language opera troupes came from all walks of life—from white, to black, slave to free citizens, and men and women from all social standings. This appears to be the case in Kansas City as well, although some audience members chose not to attend performances at the Coates, choosing instead to frequent one of the other theaters in the city, whether it be for cost, or comfort level, as mentioned previously.

The last two decades of the nineteenth century also included performances by “homegrown” opera stars who relied on the railroad to leave the city to find fame. Soprano Alice Nielsen (1871–1943) was a Kansas City native who enjoyed a successful career with the Boston Ideal Opera Company, which only added to the city’s warm reception of the company. Felice Lyne was another Kansas City native who enjoyed great success. She studied in Paris and sang the role of Gilda in *Rigoletto* in London as a result of her contract with Oscar Hammerstein I. A group of amateur musicians also put on a production of the comic opera *Chanticleere*, which had been written by two local composers. It was performed at the Coates on September 7–8, 1891.¹³²

Women:

One of the most important aspects of musical culture in Kansas City that the trends and data gathered in this research revealed is the role women—and women’s tastes (or assumed tastes)—played in the development and evolution of music-making, music-listening, and entertainment-seeking habits of the city; notably, these changes are also wrapped up in the establishment of the railroad.

that “a lot of nice Coates patrons had interpreted the picture to mean that The Queen’s Handkerchief was a ‘leg show!’” Londré, *Enchanted Years*, 100.

¹³² Ibid., 101.

From its founding, women have been at the center of musical trends and activity in Kansas City. The home of Bérénice Chouteau, the wife of the French fur trader, was the center of all musical activity in the area the 1820s. She owned a spinet and would host dances at her home, where guests could dance to lively violin music.¹³³

In 1856, Sarah Walter Chandler Coates arrived in Kansas City, and amidst the wildness of the West, was considered the height of refinement. She and her husband, the Colonel, would host dances in their home, accompanied by Bantie's Band, who would situate themselves under an open window outside for optimal acoustic effect.¹³⁴ It was the Coates Opera House, completed in 1870, brought the first of the music stars of exceptional quality to Kansas City. It was also the Coates Opera House that would help convince itinerant musical companies of all sorts that Kansas City was a city worth visiting. Much of the best music performed in Kansas City was in part facilitated by Sarah Coates and her husband. Perhaps more impressive, if the Coates' had not filled this musical and civic role, another town leader and his wife would have stepped in instead, for the town elites instinctively knew how important music was to the development of their town.

In the Kansas City Directories, a specification of "Mrs." or "Miss" is included for all of the women, which facilitated more exact data extraction. Despite the fact that under forty women were listed in the Kansas City Directory for 1865, the only music teacher listed was female.¹³⁵ In many of the subsequent directories, nearly half of the music teachers listed were female.

¹³³ Ibid., 15.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 33.

¹³⁵ *Kansas City Business Directory and Mirror, Including: Kansas City, Missouri, for 1865*, (Kansas City: Millett & Sloan, 1865).

Many of the most famous and revered performers that graced the halls in Kansas City were female. These include Emma Abbott, who, almost singlehandedly, made English-language popular in Kansas City, and the illustrious French actress, Sarah Bernhardt. Kansas City also welcomed several female brass soloists, including Linnie Biggs, a cornet soloist who performed in Kansas City several times, between 1897 and 1899.¹³⁶ She also made over twenty recordings for the Kansas City Talking Machine Company, whose catalogue describes Biggs as “the first we have ever listed as played by a female. They possess the distinct tones of the cornet as played by a master hand and with variations as only can be made by an artist.”¹³⁷ Additional female cornet soloists who performed in Kansas City include Daisy Delmore (January 1899) and Etta Flower-Berst, (July 1898). Trombonist Gladys Kirksmith and her eight sisters were Kansas City locals and toured the United States from California to Connecticut between 1904 and 1923. They also gave educational concerts associated with the Chautauqua circuit and performed in vaudeville theaters.¹³⁸ These traveling female performers would have utilized the railroad, as they toured, making their mark at the turn of the nineteenth century.

Even from the seats in the audience, women changed the way music was experienced. The Coates Opera House in 1872 added matinee performances, in order to appeal to the female audience demographic.¹³⁹ As the economic landscape changed due the impact of the establishment of the railroad, and more women began working outside of the home, the theaters adapted to meet the rising need for more affordable and wholesome entertainment. In a sense,

¹³⁶ Holman, “Soft Lips on Cold Metal,” 8.

¹³⁷ Kansas City Talking Machine, “Kansas City Talking Machine,” (August 1898): 6, <https://archive.org/details/KCTMC98/mode/2up>.

¹³⁸ Holman, “Soft Lips on Cold Metal,” 32, 34, 38.

¹³⁹ Jennings, “The Early Days of Grand Opera,” 685.

the women became both the moral and musical compass for Kansas City, as many of the managers of the theaters in Kansas City made decisions to appeal to the female audiences in the city.

Sheet music that was most popular in Kansas City included waltzes and sentimental songs, touting a decidedly feminine aesthetic.¹⁴⁰ It is in these ways, and many others, that the women in Kansas City defined all aspects of musical culture in Kansas City at the turn of the nineteenth century. To do justice to this platform is out of the realm of this thesis project by the information provided here invites further research into the ineffaceable impression women left on the musical culture in Kansas City.

¹⁴⁰ Munstedt, "Kansas City Publishing," 355.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

Music has always been part of the lifeblood of the residents of the Kansas City area. Berenice Chouteau loved music and brought the first spinet¹ into the area and held dances that were accompanied by violin.² Traveling troupes were performing in Kansas City by 1857, professional groups were in the city by 1859, and in 1870, city civic leaders such as Colonel Coates opened the Coates Opera House, a theater that would rival any theater in hundreds of miles. The 1880s brought a great influx of itinerant opera companies and vaudeville troupes, plus music education, music publishing, music societies, orchestras, bands (both professional and amateur), and the beginnings of ragtime and jazz. Kansas City audiences received music as it was made available to them, usually with a short transition or integration period.³ The establishment of the railroad there allowed the residents greater access to a wider variety of music genres, and they would welcome it all.

The history of Kansas City is also riddled with cultural contradictions that result from how quickly the establishment of the railroad pulled Kansas City from mud town to “Belle of the country.”⁴ The town of Kansas City was established to better facilitate the trade and revenue generated by serving travelers headed further West. Almost immediately, the town’s founders were thinking ahead and envisioning Kansas City as a great, sprawling metropolis. The local elites were championing a town in the 1850s and 1860s that was described as scrappy, a “rough-

¹ A spinet was a small seventeenth-century harpsichord.

² Londré, *The Enchanted Years*, 15.

³ Referring here to the delay in the acceptance of vaudeville for fear of its immorality.

⁴ Miller, “In Kansas City,” 6.

and-tumble cow town,”⁵ with rivers of mud in the streets and pigs running wild. One of the town’s most famous elites, Colonel Kersey Coates, brought his wife to Kansas City in 1856, which was a culture shock for Mrs. Coates.⁶ Somehow undeterred, the Coates would become important local elites and built both a grand hotel (1868) and the town’s first opera house (1870). But Kansas City was still a cow town in 1870. Londré describes the local experience of attending a performance at the Coates Opera House:

During the first decade of its operation, going to Coates Opera House was a somewhat daunting trek for theatergoers who could not afford a carriage. There were no streetlights, so those who came on foot would carry their own coal oil lanterns. Nor was there any pavement or even wooden sidewalk. When the thoroughfare was not slick with winter ice and snow or ankle-deep in summer dust, the normal surface condition was mud. Yet crowds of culture-seekers of the 1870s would put on rubbers over their shoes, hoist their trouser legs and skirts, and make their precarious way up the hill to Coates Opera House. Often one could see rows and rows of muddy rubbers lining the hallway of the opera house along with the lanterns deposited there. Sometimes theatergoers would forget to shut down their lantern flames when they went into the auditorium. To minimize the smell of burning oil, the janitor made it part of his regular rounds to check the lanterns in the hallway and extinguish them.⁷

Anthropologist and cultural studies scholar Amber R. Clifford-Napoleone provides insight into this “music in culture” narrative, stating that Kansas City was home to a variety of social binaries “because Kansas City was an “eastern” city within a rural “western” world, [and]

⁵ Londré, *The Enchanted Years*, 32.

⁶ Londré states: “Upon arrival, Mr. and Mrs. Coates checked into the Gilliss House. Sarah Coates may have been the first well-bred woman to lodge in that hotel. While her husband was out on business, from the window of her tiny second-floor room she could watch the steamers come and go. The gently reared Quaker also heard profanity, drunken caterwauling, and gunshots. Moreover, huge gangs of southerners would ride past the hotel calling for death to all Yankees. Like other hotel guests, the couple slept with revolvers under their pillows.” Londré, *The Enchanted Years*, 33.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 35.

it became a city of experimentation and adventure for rural and urban citizens alike.”⁸ This was facilitated by the advent of the railroad lines in Kansas City and butting up social and economic expectations from all kinds of people from all walks of life. Gordon offers one reason for this, explaining that the railroad “extended the dominance of the crowd throughout the country.”⁹ These binaries help position the musical environment in Kansas City as a microcosm of the nation’s culture, since the country as whole was experiencing a social and cultural clash as towns and cities grappled with the trains and how to utilize them.

To contextualize the music being made and written in Kansas City within the broader musical cultural conversation, both on the national and international scales, is another cultural important aspect of the “music in culture” narrative. European music-making has historically been set as the qualitative bar to which all other music is compared.¹⁰ Ernst C. Krohn compiled an extensive list of the composers and performers who were native to, or spent substantial time in, Missouri. He explains that “American music history is not meant to be studied for absolute

⁸ Clifford-Napoleone states in full: “As home to native farmers and immigrant meatpackers, cowboys and congressmen, future presidents and prostitutes, Kansas City combined rural sensibility and urban modernity. Because Kansas City was an “eastern” city within a rural “western” world, it became a city of experimentation and adventure for rural and urban citizens alike.” Amber R. Clifford-Napoleone, “Prostitution and Reform in Kansas City, 1880–1930,” In *The Other Missouri History: Populists, Prostitutes, and Regular Folk*, ed. Thomas Spencer (Columbia: University of Missouri Press: 2004): 214.

⁹ Gordon states in full: “In social terms, most of the urban environment represented public space...Railroads, of course, had made this possible. They brought crowds from all parts of the nation and delivered them to the station doors of every large town or city. From there the business interests of the cities organized the social aspects of crowded urban living. Railroads extended the dominance of the crowd throughout the country and encouraged the development of ways to house, feed, and otherwise serve large numbers of people.” Gordon, *Passage to Union*, 282.

¹⁰ As a point of reference, some of the active composing or performing years of European composers such as Johannes Brahms, Sergei Rachmaninoff, Giuseppe Verdi, and Claude Debussy fall within the period of this research, 1869–1905.

musical values...Our music history is to be studied as one of the many aspects of *Kulturgeschichte* of this glorious country.¹¹

Bowen, who echoes this almost apologetic justification for researching music that was not considered high art, focused his research on musical culture in Missouri before Civil War. He explains that “Rural Missouri, was, of course, not a sophisticated society,” and references Colonel Waugh’s reasons for a “cultural void” that existed in Missouri pre-Civil War.¹²

While some elements of these quotes are accurate, they do not tell the full story. It can be argued that although the residents of Kansas City may not always have enjoyed music from the Western classical art world in its purest or most “refined” form, they were able to enjoy the music on more than one level of function. On one level, as civic leaders recognized, the “legitimate” and “women friendly” repertoire increased the level of educated refinement of the city (at least to those able or willing to access it), elevating the city to a level of respectability recognized by out-of-town businessmen and prospective future residents. On another level, the Western classical art music available for consumption in the city was available as part of a colorful musical mosaic.

¹¹ Krohn states in full: “Those European musicologists who smile indulgently at research in the history of music in America miss the point entirely. American music history is not meant to be studied for absolute musical values. We have no Beethoven, no Mozart, no Haydn. Rather, our music history is to be studied as one of the many aspects of *Kulturgeschichte* of this glorious country. Specifically in the Middle West. The transformation from the crudities of pioneer life to the more advanced stages of a truly sophisticated musical appreciation occurred during the fading of the eighteenth and the dawn of the nineteenth century. This development occurred more swiftly in the urban centers than in the country at large.” Krohn, *Missouri Music*, 9–10.

¹² Bowen explains that “Colonel Waugh, the wandering artist who spent a good deal of time in the Missouri River towns, particularly Lexington, was depressed by the absence of culture on the Missouri frontier...Waugh explained this cultural void by saying that the people of Missouri were still too concerned with obtaining “necessaries” and “comforts” rather than “refinements” or “Fine Arts.” It was his understanding that society is not concerned with refinements until it has a sufficiency of the necessities and a satisfactory amount of the comforts of life.” Elbert R. Bowen, *Theatrical Entertainment in Rural Missouri Before the Civil War* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1959), 112.

Demographics had a huge impact on the variety of performance available to the residents of Kansas City. As the city's economy boomed in the 1880s, the social structure of the city changed. Londré explains that the popularity of the variety shows, such as presented at the Coliseum, lessened "primarily [due to] the decline of the cattle trade, for visiting cattlemen with ready cash to throw around had long sustained it."¹³ To stay afloat, the theaters adapted their play bills, shows and repertoire based on the interest of the intended audiences. The Gilliss Opera House (opened in 1883) was intended to be a first-class theater but transitioned to melodrama. H. D. Clark's Ninth Street Theater was also intended to house legitimate drama, such as Shakespeare, but management soon, within one year, changed the bills to "popular fare." The Grand Opera House (opened 1891) was managed by Abraham Judah, who understood from the opening of the theater what the majority of audiences would be searching for, and from the first performances, "presented low-priced moral entertainment for the whole family."¹⁴ These changes came as a result of the railroad, with the demographics shifting as the town became a city. This too, situates Kansas City as a musical microcosm of the United States.

One way to connect the musical trends of Kansas City to those of the entire United States is through principles of mass culture. Springhall explains that "from the end of the nineteenth century...most European intellectuals...were convinced that...America bore the primary responsibility for foisting on the rest of the advanced world a new kind of entertainment culture." This entertainment culture was focused on mass appeal and a "standardized."¹⁵ Springhall lists

¹³ Londré, *The Enchanted Years*, 139.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 140.

¹⁵ Springhall states in full: "From the end of the nineteenth century, if not before, most European intellectuals—then almost by definition elitist and hostile to the democratization of society—were convinced that a distastefully egalitarian and democratic America bore the primary responsibility for foisting on the rest of the advanced world a new kind of entertainment culture: one based not on high art but on the consumption of a standardized marketable

circuses, dime museums, carnivals, minstrelsy, wild west shows, and vaudeville as musical genres that fall under the spectrum of mass culture. While aspects of musical culture developed that would prove unique to the city, the advent of the railroad brought all the elements of American mass culture to Kansas City; in other words, much of the music that Kansas City residents enjoyed and celebrated, they shared with the rest of the United States, two prime examples being Emma Abbott and other itinerant English-language opera companies, and the chain theater, the Orpheum.

Establishing Kansas City as a railroad hub did what the civic leaders hoped it would: it connected Kansas City to the artistic wellspring of the country. In turn, Kansas City became a microcosm of the culture in the United States as a whole. Because of the railroad, Kansas City grew from a “cow town” to a sprawling metropolis, a metropolis that would support the education, performance, and experimentation of the musical arts. The cultural nuances, trends and fads, the residents’ appreciation of touring stars, and the eventual tendency towards standing ovations all point to cultural mannerisms that prove indicative of the general musical culture in the United States at the end of the eighteenth and spanning into the twentieth century. From the theater to band music, and music publishing, “Kansas City exactly parallels that of America... as a whole.”¹⁶ Connecting Kansas City to the railroad facilitated its growth into an all-American

product...intended to reach the widest possible audience. On the assumption that all commodities produced were conventionally depicted by the intelligentsia as shoddy and inferior, just as the unsophisticated American society was considered the most responsible for the potentially harmful dissemination of these commodities. This ongoing European critique of mass society as commercialized, uniform, or homogeneous came from a variety of sources that stretched from occasional visitors to the United States such as English literary critic Matthew Arnold, German sociologist Max Weber, and Dutch historian Johan Huizinga, to long-term Jewish and/or Marxist exiles from Germany and Nazi-conquered Europe, among whom were Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Leo Lowenthal, and Herbert Marcuse.” Springhall, *The Genesis of Mass Culture*, 5.

¹⁶Londré: “This history then is emblematic of a larger history of American theater during the era when the brightest stars of the stage played the road and when theater was integral to the life of a community at all social and economic

homegrown city. Its musical story is the story of the entire county. As Londré states, “the local is indeed the universal.”¹⁷

levels...In terms of chronology as well as geography, the development of theater in Kansas City exactly parallels that of the American theater as a whole.” Londré, *The Enchanted Years*, 1.

Munstedt: “This music...if it appeared to be “shallow in places” and not invariably “majestic in its expansiveness and importance,” it nevertheless would be heard across the entire United States, taking the forms of premium ragtime, still-sung popular songs, and music that defined the repertory of the village band. Many cities on or near the Missouri played their part in the history of American music publishing: Leavenworth, Kansas; St. Joseph, Missouri; Sedalia, Missouri; and, most important, Kansas City, Missouri.” Munstedt, “Kansas City Publishing,” 353.

Camus: “without question, bands were the most important musical organizations in 19th-century U.S.” Camus, “The Brass Band,” 26.

¹⁷ Londré, *The Enchanted Years* 2.

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