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Chapter 1

Introduction: Changing Cities, Shifting Stages

Prologue

France, especially Paris, was in the throes of deep generational division as the 1820s drew to a close. The generation that had come of age under the Old Regime embraced traditional understandings of how society, in all its aspects, should function—with a hefty measure of form over substance, predictability over innovation, hierarchy over parity, and order over disarray. The elderly Charles X, the younger brother of King Louis XVI and King Louis XVIII, personified the Bourbon Restoration imposed by the victorious powers meeting in Vienna to construct Europe's post-Napoleonic settlement. Those who had come of age after the 1789 Revolution—and during Napoleon's rule—embraced the slogans of their era praising Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. They stood in stark opposition to all that the restored monarchy represented.

These political, social, and economic divisions found expression in the arts as "Classicists" defending the Old Regime's values faced off against a younger generation of "Romanticists" demanding a transformation to meet new realities. Romanticism—which favored individual expression, sentiment, and the heroic deeds of great people and historic epochs—had emerged in Germany and England during the last decades of the eighteenth century. The movement arrived in France early in the nineteenth century, where it became entwined with countless widening societal divisions in the wake of the Revolution and the rise of Napoleon.

By the mid-1820s, "Romantics" were striving to recreate every art form in their image. Their efforts generated bitter conflicts in

nearly every French cultural and educational institution. The Romantics produced a distinctive lifestyle of informality and indecorous behavior—an early model for the American Counterculturalists of the 1960s—that deeply offended their elders. As the march of generational change swept through France’s highly institutionalized artistic scene, the Old Royalists fought back. In the process, the Romantics discovered a wizard of their own: Victor Hugo.¹

Hugo was an odd idol for rebellious youth. The son of a general in Napoleon’s army, he was well connected among the country’s most powerful families. Indeed, he was the official poet at the 1825 Coronation of Charles X in Rheims. Furthermore, Hugo had been named a *chevalier* of the Légion d’Honneur. Aesthetically, however, he was proving to be a soul mate of his generation’s Romanticists.

Highly ambitious, Hugo deeply coveted a place in the prestigious Académie Française representing the legendary “forty immortals” of French language and literature. Being denied more than once—the academy elected him as a member only in 1841—he set out to storm the traditionalists’ ramparts. He began writing path-breaking novels, such as *Le Dernier jour d’un condamné* (*The Last Day of a Condemned Man*), which charted a new path to what would become a modern focus on the internal lives of literary protagonists. By the late 1820s, he agreed to an invitation from Baron Taylor, the freshly appointed director of the Comédie Française, to write a play to be performed at the company’s elegant new home, the Théâtre de l’Odéon, next to the Luxembourg Gardens.

Dating from 1680, the Comédie Française preserved the traditionalist Classicist dramaturgy of the Old Regime. Royalists filled the company’s audiences resisting newfangled notions of modernity. Hugo, perhaps inevitably, encountered opposition from the regime’s censors when he presented his first effort—a five-act play *Un Duel sous Richelieu* (later retitled *Marion de Larme*) in June 1829.

Initially, the theater’s reading committee accepted the play. The censors, however, balked at Act IV, which portrayed a dawdling Louis XIII reigning over his realm’s decline. Once the censors took issue, Hugo turned to Minister of the Interior Martignac to overrule his subordinate’s decision. Martignac feared that theater audiences would view the portrayal of Louis XIII as a thinly veiled slap at King Charles. Losing once again, Hugo turned to the king himself. By

mid-August, Charles similarly vetoed the proposed performance (though he offered Hugo a state pension as recompense). Hugo shared these exchanges with the public, firing up the young Romanticists in protest over censorship.

Rather than revise his first play, Hugo wrote another: *Hernani, ou l'Honneur Castillan*. The story is of a beautiful Castilian maiden who is subjected to the unwanted advances of a repulsive old man. Hugo's verse drew on idiomatic—even provocative—language of the day to move the action inevitably to the joint suicide of Doña Sol and her lover Hernani, a Spanish brigand and disinherited nobleman. Few spectators could miss the association of the desolate old man and the aging French monarch, Charles X.

A group of offended Classicist playwrights immediately petitioned the king, asking him to ban all Romantic plays at the Comédie Française. When that effort failed, members of the Académie Française mobilized against the play. Meanwhile, brigades of youthful Romanticists rose in Hugo's defense. His supporters mobilized to find their way into the theater to lend their vocal (and at times physical) support. The battle lines swirling around *Hernani* had been joined.

At just about 1:00 pm on the afternoon of the opening performance—February 25, 1830—lines formed surrounding the theater, closing nearby streets. Sporting long hair, beards, vintage clothing, padded jackets, and purplish velvet, the assembling swarm appeared unlike the usual well-groomed Comédie Française audience members of old. Those who could forced their way in before the police sealed off the theater at 3:00 pm.

With hours before the 7:00 pm curtain time, the intruders settled in for a long wait, chowing down on whatever food they had managed to sneak in concealed in their clothing. When offended usherettes refused to unlock the bathrooms, audience members relieved themselves on the auditorium floor. Theater staff went to the roof and threw garbage onto the crowd below. Later arriving traditional ticket holders found filth and chaos as they tried to make their way to their seats.

Calm did not descend as the curtain rose. Throughout the performance, the various sides shouted, booed, sang, and punched one another. The young Romantics won the hour, as the Classicists

in the audience beat a hasty retreat home. The battles continued throughout the play's thirty-nine-performance run, with audience members storming the stage, and the actors on many nights performing behind a line of soldiers, while some in the hall were bayoneted in the process. Conservative commentators railed against lunatics and devil-worshippers in the audience; their liberal counterparts vilified intransigent guardians of an old order.

Hugo would go on to become one of France's most illustrious authors; the Comédie Française remained among France's most hallowed theater companies. Charles X did not fare so well. Within weeks of the curtain coming down on *Hernani's* final performance, he was run out of the country in what became known as the July Revolution. Charles would die in Austrian exile a half-dozen years later. The new king, Louis-Philippe I, who would reign until the next revolution eighteen years later, marked the ascendancy of a rising bourgeoisie and new monied classes, which, in their own ways, represented the anthesis of both Old Royalist Classicists and Revolutionary Romanticists.

Fundamentally, the turmoil swirling around the premier of Hugo's *Hernani* reflected the arrival of a new aesthetic, together with its creators. The arts were changing, as were their audiences. France was changing, as was Paris. The old and new fell into disputation, which ended up by obliterating the Old Regime and its remaining supporters. A new France, Paris, and theater emerged in its place.

New Cities, New Arts

As this tale of early-nineteenth-century Paris and its theater culture illustrates, cities constantly change, as do the performing arts. Form, tastes, structural supports, economic realities, and political regimes all influence how cities, and the arts, evolve. So, too, do cities and the arts shape one another, especially at moments when change is happening at an accelerating pace. This volume explores the dynamic relationship between urban and artistic transformation; and it does so both by visiting the emergence of new performing arts institutions at moments when both urban growth and artistic evolution appear to be accelerating; and by discussing those moments

when changes on stage promote a broader transformation of their cities and communities.

More specifically, this volume examines these relationships through a limited number of case studies revealing in more detail how such change occurs both in cities and in theaters. The next four chapters chart the emergence of Montreal as a major center of performance dance, in tandem with Quebec's secularizing "Quiet Revolution"; the transformation of Washington's theater scene that accompanied the city's makeover from congressional fiefdom to home-ruled metropolitan hub; the rise of Toronto's stridently self-reverential theater community in accord with its growth from a provincial backwater of empire to national preeminence; and efforts in Kyiv after independence to reclaim a theater history that had been obliterated by authoritarian rule.

The influence of a changing city on its artistic scene can be direct. How cities define and consolidate themselves shapes audiences, funding sources, and legal institutions that determine how arts organizations exist and mature. The initial essays chart how these local externalities determine the ways in which residents pursuing the arts can do so. The effect of new performing styles and institutions on their cities is more diffuse, perhaps ethereal. By pursuing artistic expression and the organizational structures supporting it, theatrical entrepreneurs give symbolic and institutional form to what it means to be part of their cities. By examining moments of observable variation, these essays bear witness to the powerful relationship between cities and their artistic institutions.

The final chapter examining Nashville reverses the causal arrows. Rather than examining instances when urban change fostered new creativity in the performing arts, the final case study exposes how the performing arts can transform their cities. Indeed, the arts attract attention, residents, and investment beyond whatever a city might otherwise have drawn.

All too often, we regard the performing arts either as a pleasant add-on to more serious aspects of life or as an economic engine generating income and driving economic development. The arts, of course, can be both; but their connection to our primal selves adds an additional—often-underappreciated—dimension.

Dancing to a New Identity

Chapter 2 explores the transformation of Montreal. Turning to the connection between urban change and the emergence of new artistic institutions, Quebec came out of World War II stuck in a time warp that placed La Belle Province at odds with much of North America. For more than a century, the province languished under a brokered allocation of colonial power that stymied its entrance into the contemporary world.² An Anglophone Protestant elite controlled the commanding heights of commerce from their imposing stone citadels. Spread out in fifty shades of gray granite, their control centers stretched along the downtown littoral of Mount Royal from McGill University to Windsor Station, where the commuter trains sat ready to whisk them away at 5:00 pm.³

French-speaking, black-robed Catholic clergy controlled the rest of the province, keeping their flock tied to the countryside for farming or, in many instances, the messier task of resource extraction. A nationalistic right-wing populist government under Premier Maurice Duplessis and his thuggish Union Nationale Party—together with corrupt police and officialdom—used its gerrymandered majority in the *Assemblée Nationale* to ensure that little would change.⁴

Transformation came as the rest of the continent increasingly developed into what would grow in a few years into the most dynamically mobile continental economy in world history. Even the forces of traditionalism so prevalent in Quebec could not resist. After Duplessis's death, the old system snapped during the "Quiet Revolution" begun in 1960 by a new Liberal government under Jean Lesage. Modernity arrived in Quebec, unleashing intense sociopolitical and sociocultural adjustments accompanied by secularization, the creation of a welfare state, and incompatible federalist and sovereigntist factions. Identities and values radically loosened as Quebec went, according to numerous surveys, from being the most religious to the most secularized society in North America.⁵

Nothing escaped this transformation, including performance dance. Beginning almost immediately after World War II, those Montrealers connected to continental trends in the arts began to push back against the repressive policies of Duplessis and the Church.

New Montrealers debarking from war-torn Europe brought their cultural tastes and expectations with them. French-language television arrived in the 1950s, programmed by the federal government bent on destroying the priestly grip of Québécois traditionalists.

Before 1945, the only serious dance reaching Montreal stages was performed by visiting companies made up of Americans, Europeans, and displaced Russians (including Ruth St. Denis, Mary Wigman, Charles Weidman, Isadora Duncan, Anna Pavlova, and various legacy companies from Les Ballets Russes).⁶ Dance, however, spoke to Montrealers across the city's deep linguistic divide between francophones and anglophones. By the 1960s, Montreal had its own classical company and the first of what would become a panoply of modern dance troupes.⁷

Claiming Presence Through Theater

Chapter 3 portrays the evolution of Washington, whose story begins when President George Washington named Thomas Jefferson as his first secretary of state. Several weeks after having been nominated for Washington's first Cabinet, Jefferson invited Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton and Virginia congressman James Madison to dinner at his New York City home. Beyond pleasantries, Jefferson sought to settle a noisome dispute over the location of the new country's capital city. The resulting Compromise of June 1790 followed, with southerners led by Madison agreeing to have the national government assume states' debt in exchange for the capital city decamping to the South.⁸ The agreement took place in "The Room Where It Happened," which is featured prominently in Lin-Manuel Miranda's musical *Hamilton* two-and-a-quarter centuries later.⁹

President Washington and his commissioners set out the following spring to identify a site for the new city along the Potomac upriver from his plantation at Mount Vernon. The final agreement was reached with local landowners in a Georgetown tavern room (now preserved within Ukraine's Embassy to the United States) allotting a payment of \$66.66 for each acre used by the capital. Major Pierre L'Enfant designed the 6,622-acre Federal

City on the basis of Louis XIV's design for Versailles.¹⁰ Together with the African American surveyor Benjamin Banneker, L'Enfant planned sweeping avenues cut through forests, marshes, and plantations dependent on slave labor. Despite any number of problems—including L'Enfant's dismissal, offset by Banneker's steady professionalism—Congress moved to its new Capital in 1800, giving birth to Washington, DC.¹¹

Aside from the tobacco ports of Alexandria and Georgetown, more of the "city" existed in L'Enfant's megalomaniacal mind than in reality. Retrocession to Virginia in 1846 of the lands south of the Potomac at the behest of Alexandria's slave merchants held out a model for abandoning the project altogether.¹² The city, however, grew as a front-line military encampment during the Civil War, and its status as capital was cemented by the martyrdom of President Abraham Lincoln at a local theater.

Congress retained control over the city, abolishing local home rule in 1874. For the next ninety-nine years, the city operated under the control of congressionally appointed commissioners dominated by officers of the Army Corps of Engineers.¹³ The city remained primarily a governmental and administrative center throughout these decades. This status began to change as the United States emerged from World War II.

The US government rapidly expanded during the 1940s and 1950s, as the "Welfare State" grew domestically and the "Security State" expanded internationally in response to the Cold War. As elsewhere in America, city residents began an exodus to the suburbs, a movement accelerated by the end of legal racial segregation in housing. By the late 1950s, Washington became the first major US city with an African American majority. The city was surrounded by predominantly white, middle-class suburbs increasingly defined by interstate highways, such as its surrounding Beltway.¹⁴

Further changes were afoot by the 1980s, as the city grew into a metropolitan region of some 6 million by the twenty-first century with an economy dominated by highly paid private-sector jobs in health and computer technology industries.¹⁵ As local techies proudly proclaim, the internet was invented in the DMV ("District-Maryland-Virginia") and not in California.

These profound transformations included the growth of a significant community of highly educated professionals who sought out the arts. These professionals – be they government workers, lawyers and lobbyists, medical or high tech researchers – provided a cultivated base with plentiful funds for the arts absent in most other American cities. Once a theatrical wasteland, Washington began to nurture inventive theater companies, with the region growing by 2020 into the second-largest theater market in the country.¹⁶

The Washington Theater Club was a pioneer among these newcomers, operating between 1957 and 1974.¹⁷ Over the course of a decade and a half, the club staged ninety Equity (union) productions and ten non-Equity shows, including ten world premieres, four American premieres, and thirty Washington premieres. During the mid-1960s, the company produced up to one quarter of all new works staged in American regional theaters. The club served as a proving ground for actors starting their careers, including several who would come to dominate the American stage and screen. Founded as an artistic expression of social activism, the club promoted Black theater and Black writers and artists. Despite artistic success, the club succumbed to financial constraints, internal conflicts, and the hostility of a local pre-home rule regime accountable to Congress rather than city residents. The club's story became intertwined with changes that were transpiring throughout a city fighting to liberate itself from congressional control through home rule.

Unleashing Diversity from the Stage

Chapter 4 describes the postwar transformation of Toronto. At the end of World War II, Toronto retained its reputation as “America’s Belfast.” Beset almost from its founding by sectarian conflict and violence among predominantly “Orange” English, Scotch, and Irish Protestant community members embedded in Britain’s colonial system and a largely “Republican” Irish Catholic immigrant working class, the city had a nasty reputation. The thuggish mentality of the Protestant Orange Lodges dominated the city’s story throughout its first century and a half, which began in 1793 when Governor John Graves Simcoe relocated Upper Canada’s colonial

capital for protection against American aggression. As late as 1955, the city's mayor, Leslie Howard Saunders, promoted Toronto as a Protestant bastion. There was nothing subtle about his message. Saunders listed himself in his campaign materials as "Protestant."¹⁸

Unsurprisingly, Toronto's soot-covered brick cityscape often seemed to glower under low, gray Canadian skies. A deeply provincial industrial colonial outpost, Toronto seemingly lacked the dynamism of its as-yet-flourishing rust belt partners across the border to the south (e.g., Rochester, Buffalo, Cleveland, Toledo, and Detroit). As industry grew, the local real estate market relegated thousands of working-class families—often Irish Catholics supporting the Hibernian Benevolent Society in opposition to the Orange Lodges—to substandard homes in neighborhoods such as "Cabbagetown." Their highly idiosyncratic, self-built homes lent a higgly-piggly feel to many a proletarian street.¹⁹

Perhaps most irritating for the local creative class, local ordinances shut down all manner of sporting and cultural events on Sundays, while limiting the consumption of alcohol in public. There would be no traditional stand-up bars in "Toronto the Good" until the 1960s because alcohol consumption was prohibited without the purchase of food.²⁰ Those Torontonians who wished to drink at home had to apply for a government-issued license to purchase alcohol. The Polish physicist Leopold Infeld, who collaborated with Albert Einstein and Max Born during his career, perhaps best captured the city's atmosphere. Reflecting on his time teaching at the University of Toronto during the 1940s, Infeld observed that "it must be good to die in Toronto. The transition between life and death would be continuous, painless, and scarcely noticeable."²¹

A robust, largely Eastern European Jewish immigrant community proved to be the first harbinger of change when it arrived during the early years of the twentieth century. Largely concentrated at the foot of Spadina Avenue in an area dominated by the needle trades and nearby Kensington Market, Toronto's first Jewish residents were impoverished, having traveled more or less directly from the harsh *shtetls* of the Russian Empire.²² Both Orange and Catholic Torontonians greeted them unkindly, a hostility exemplified by the infamous August 1933 Christie Pits Riots, which erupted when National Socialist wannabe Swastika Clubs attacked

“foreigners” at a baseball game between Jewish and Italian community teams.²³

World War II transformed the city forever. The war solidified the presence of the city’s financial institutions, which were increasingly huddled around a portion of Bay Street dubbed by dispossessed Western farmers just a few years before as “Canada’s Wall Street.” The city’s industrial base expanded, as Toronto became one of the chief shop floors for the British war effort. The war similarly nurtured the nascent communications sector, which would grow to rival similar hubs across North America. A young city in a young country, Toronto was ready for change.²⁴

Immigrants were beginning to make their presence felt in new ways. More successful members of the Jewish community began to move uptown—and uphill—to the small, independent, wealthy enclave of Forest Hills. The floodgates of Italian immigration were about to open, luring tens of thousands of those impoverished by war. Moreover, English Canada began to integrate into a booming continental postwar American economy untouched by the ravages of war.

Still tied politically, economically, and psychologically to the imperial Mother Ship in London, Toronto nonetheless was beginning to create its own identity. The domination of Protestant hardliners organized around the Orange Lodges continued to exert control over public institutions; as did the imperial “Old Compact” families that had forged the Canadian confederation less than a century earlier and were now housed in neighborhoods with names such as “Rosedale.”²⁵

How is it, then, that a child born in postwar Toronto wakes up on any morning a lifetime later as a resident of one of the most successfully diverse cities in the world? A city that has become one of the English-speaking world’s most vibrant theater towns, no less.²⁶ Chapter 4 examines these changes through the creation of Toronto’s astonishing alternative theater scene during the 1960s and 1970s.

From Provincial City to International Capital

Chapter 5 explores Kyiv's growth from provincial city to international capital. Ancient Kyiv, founded over a millennium and a half ago, simultaneously is a young city. The city's glory days were long past, when the city passed to Russian suzerainty after the 1654 Treaty of Pereyaslav. The Russian Orthodox Church attained considerable daily control of the city to protect some of Orthodox Christianity's holiest pilgrimage sites. Russian expansion to the south begun under Catherine II elevated the city's importance to imperial powers in Saint Petersburg. The city emerged as an important religious, educational, and military center throughout the nineteenth century, as its role as a logistical hub of empire grew ever more important.²⁷

Kyiv thrived as a transportation and industrial center by the end of the nineteenth century, growing to about 130,000 residents, the vast majority of whom spoke Russian. Beyond ethnic Russians, the local population included significant Ukrainian, Jewish, and Polish communities. The city suffered greatly with the collapse of imperial authority in 1917. Over the next five years, the city changed hands among Red and White Russian forces, Ukrainian nationalist legions, and German and Polish armies eighteen times. Recovery proved anemic until the Soviet government moved the capital of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic from Kharkiv in 1934. Kyiv leveraged its new status to emerge as a significant industrial center by the time the Wehrmacht crossed the Soviet-Polish border in June 1941.²⁸

The city found itself on the front lines, having been occupied by the German invaders, who were later driven out by the Red Army. The German occupiers exterminated the city's Jewish population—including murdering over 33,000 Jews at the Babyn Yar ravine between September 29 and 30, 1941. In all, the German army is thought to have massacred between 100,000 and 150,000 Jews, prisoners of war, communists, and Romani people at Babyn Yar between September 1941 and the city's liberation by the Soviet Army in November 1943.²⁹

The Soviet government rebuilt Kyiv as a showcase after the war. The city's status as a republic capital heightened its cultural

and economic importance. Ukraine even became one of the founding members of the United Nations, making Kyiv theoretically an international capital. The city became the Soviet Union's third-largest and one of its most productive, with an economy revolving around defense industries, scientific research, and administration. The city's population grew to over 2.5 million by the end of the Soviet period. While Ukrainians now constituted the largest ethnic group, the city remained primarily Russian speaking.³⁰

Politically and culturally, late Soviet Kyiv was a city more partitioned than it appeared. Concerned with rising Ukrainian nationalism, late Soviet leaders in Moscow discouraged use of the Ukrainian language and exercised control over the smallest hints of nationalistic intent. Discontent—economic, philosophical, and linguistic—percolated out of view. The April 1986 nuclear accident at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant 60 miles north of Kyiv became an inflection point. Growing concern accompanied rumors of the disaster, especially after local Communist Party leaders went ahead with the planned May Day demonstrations and parades a few days later. Kyiv's population was no longer quiescent and loyal. Increasingly, city residents wanted as little to do as possible with the Soviet Union.³¹

On a warm July 1990 day, as a crowd of perhaps 30,000 or 40,000 watched, a lone Kyiv city council deputy purposefully walked through City Hall's front door, having heard that the republic's Verkhovna Rada had adopted a declaration on state sovereignty a few minutes before. Climbing lampposts, clambering atop city buses, running every which way—thousands upon thousands watched in anticipation and disbelief as the young man approached the city's official flagpole. Slowly, the Soviet hammer-and-sickle came down, followed by a few fumbling movements. A spray of blue-and-yellow began to flow from the deputy's hands. With every hoist higher, the rising banner of an as-yet-not-fully born independent Ukraine unfolded into view. As the blue-and-yellow flag rose skyward, many in the crowd understood that they were no longer Soviet.³² By December 1991, Kyiv would be the capital of an independent Ukraine. Theater artists now were free to tell their own stories as they wished.

Music Makes the Town

Chapter 6 explores burgeoning Nashville. As recently as 1960, very little distinguished Nashville from any number of medium-sized American cities. Nashville hardly stood out among American state capitals, themselves a rather undistinguished grouping of urban communities. For much of its history, the city rested comfortably according to various measures of urbanity among other state capitals, such as Columbus (Ohio), Montgomery (Alabama), Raleigh (North Carolina), Sacramento (California), and Trenton (New Jersey). Only a few capitals—such as Atlanta (Georgia), Boston (Massachusetts), Saint Paul and neighboring Minneapolis (Minnesota), and perhaps Phoenix (Arizona), Denver (Colorado), and Indianapolis (Indiana)—differentiated themselves at the time as worthy of a second look as a metropolitan center of any significance.

Not much about Nashville seemed noteworthy, aside from William Crawford Smith's full-scale replica of the original Parthenon in Athens built in 1897, a more distinguished local university scene than most (including two denominational schools founded in the aftermath of the Civil War, for whites—Vanderbilt University—and Blacks—Fisk University), a particularly powerful radio station, and a long and continuing history of white supremacist ideology and African American resistance. That radio station, however, turns out to have changed the city's trajectory entirely. The city's population remained stagnant, even falling during the 1960s, before its unprecedented growth throughout the 1970s that catapulted the city and region into an entirely different urban category.³³

James Robertson and John Donelson founded the city in 1779 at the site of an earlier settlement of French fur traders and Native American campgrounds. Established during the American Revolution as one of the first settlements west of the Appalachian Mountains, its founders named their modest community for the Continental Army's General Francis Nash.³⁴ These early settlers would capitalize over time on the site's convenient location for river transportation. This ease of transportation led to the city being named the permanent capital of Tennessee in 1843. The coming of the railroads during the mid-nineteenth century solidified this advantage, encouraging the formation of a small but robust manufacturing

center and various subsidiary financial institutions after the Civil War.

By the first quarter of the twenty-first century, Nashville anchored a metropolitan region of more than 2 million inhabitants that had become an economic powerhouse, emerging as one of the fastest-growing metropolitan regions in the country, home to offices of dozens of *Fortune* 500 companies, one of the country's largest concentrations of health care companies, and several major automobile plants.³⁵ The city's music industry stands at the center of this explosive growth.

By the 1920s, Edwin Craig, the son of the founder of the National Life and Accident Insurance Company, took note of the success of rising radio stations around the country that were attracting listeners by featuring an amalgamation of roots music that record companies were branding "Hillbilly Music." Businessmen launched radio stations in Kansas City (KFKB), Iowa (KFNF), and Chicago (WLS) at the dawn of the new broadcast industry (Pittsburgh's KDKA having secured the nation's first broadcast license in 1920). Craig convinced his skeptical father to set up a studio, which began broadcasting under the call letters WSM (for "We Shield Millions") in October 1925.³⁶

To the horror of his family and social equals, Craig recruited George D. Hay from Chicago's WLS to take over programming. Hay garnered the title of America's favorite announcer broadcasting on the Windy City's powerful new station, where he brought the sounds and music of everyday America to listeners. Hay planned to end WSM's rather staid programming, ranging from Vivaldi to popular tunes. Within a month of the station's inaugural broadcast, Hay was scheduling white fiddler "Uncle Jimmy" Thompson and Black harmonica player DeFord Bailey, establishing a new program format: *WSM Barn Dance*. The show soon would be renamed *The Grand Ole Opry*.

This new format led Craig and Hay to build connections throughout the region's music community, drawing in undiscovered performers as well as those recently recorded by the Victor Talking Machine Company and the breakaway Okeh label. The station sent these musical groups on tours into the surrounding hinterlands to attract attention and, more importantly, sell insurance

policies. Nevertheless, the Nashville station was not sufficiently powerful to compete with Atlanta's powerhouse WSB and the ever-more-powerful WLS, broadcasting from Chicago.

WSM's—and Nashville's—trajectory changed during the early 1930s. Radio audiences expanded as the new media attracted thousands of listeners to its free format as Depression-era privations began to bite into disposable income. Craig and the National Life and Accident Insurance Company successfully bid on one of only three federal licenses in the South for powerful 50,000 watt “clear channel” broadcasting.³⁷

The Grand Ole Opry show emerged as WSM's signature broadcast, winning fans throughout the South and beyond (listeners could tune in across thirty states, primarily on the East Coast). With the station's studios no longer able to accommodate the expanding audience, it moved to ever-larger venues, such as the Hillsboro Theatre, the Dixie Tabernacle, and the War Memorial Auditorium.

In June 1943, WSM set up shop in the Ryman Auditorium (the former Union Gospel Tabernacle), which had begun hosting nonreligious shows, lectures, and sporting events during the early twentieth century to pay off debts. *The Opry* remained at the Ryman until 1974, when the country show moved to the special-built Opryland entertainment complex east of town.³⁸

The show, radio station, and auditorium became hubs around which the new country music industry grew. By the twenty-first century, Nashville had become a leader within the music and recording worlds, regularly ranked first, second, or third with New York and Los Angeles, depending on the indices. Music made Tennessee's modest capital into a major global cultural center. If previous stories reveal how growing cities spawn new theater and dance scenes, music made the town in Nashville.

The first four case studies that follow illustrate how urban growth creates new wealth and nurtures the audiences necessary to support the arts. In each instance, the arts, in turn, help communities work through the divisions of language, race, generational change, and postcolonialism. The fifth case demonstrates how the success of the performing arts—especially of a commercialized performing art form, such as country music—can elevate a city to previously unimagined heights.