The UX of the Paris Opera House

John Boykin
info@ApplegateLLC.com

Charles Garnier, architect

Studied how crowds

- circulate through public spaces
- interact
- loiter

Studied

- how far apart strangers need to sit and stand to feel comfortable
- why people went to the opera

Key insight

Most people did not go to the opera for the opera

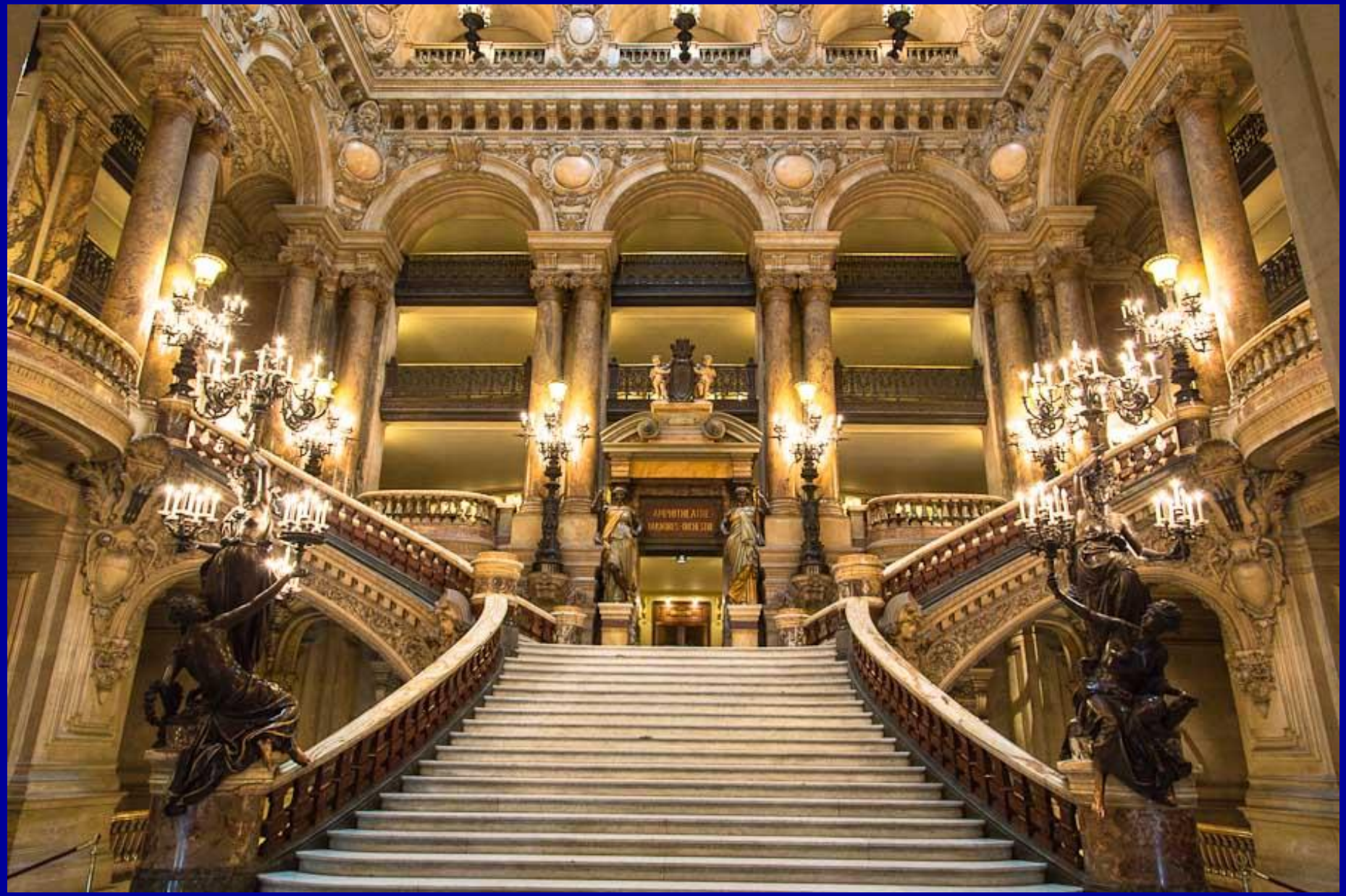
Most went for the social experience:

- Who else is here?
- Who are they with?
- How do they look?
- Show off my finery, jewels, partner, grace

So Garnier designed first for people to see and be seen

Aesthetics and music came in second

Stairway

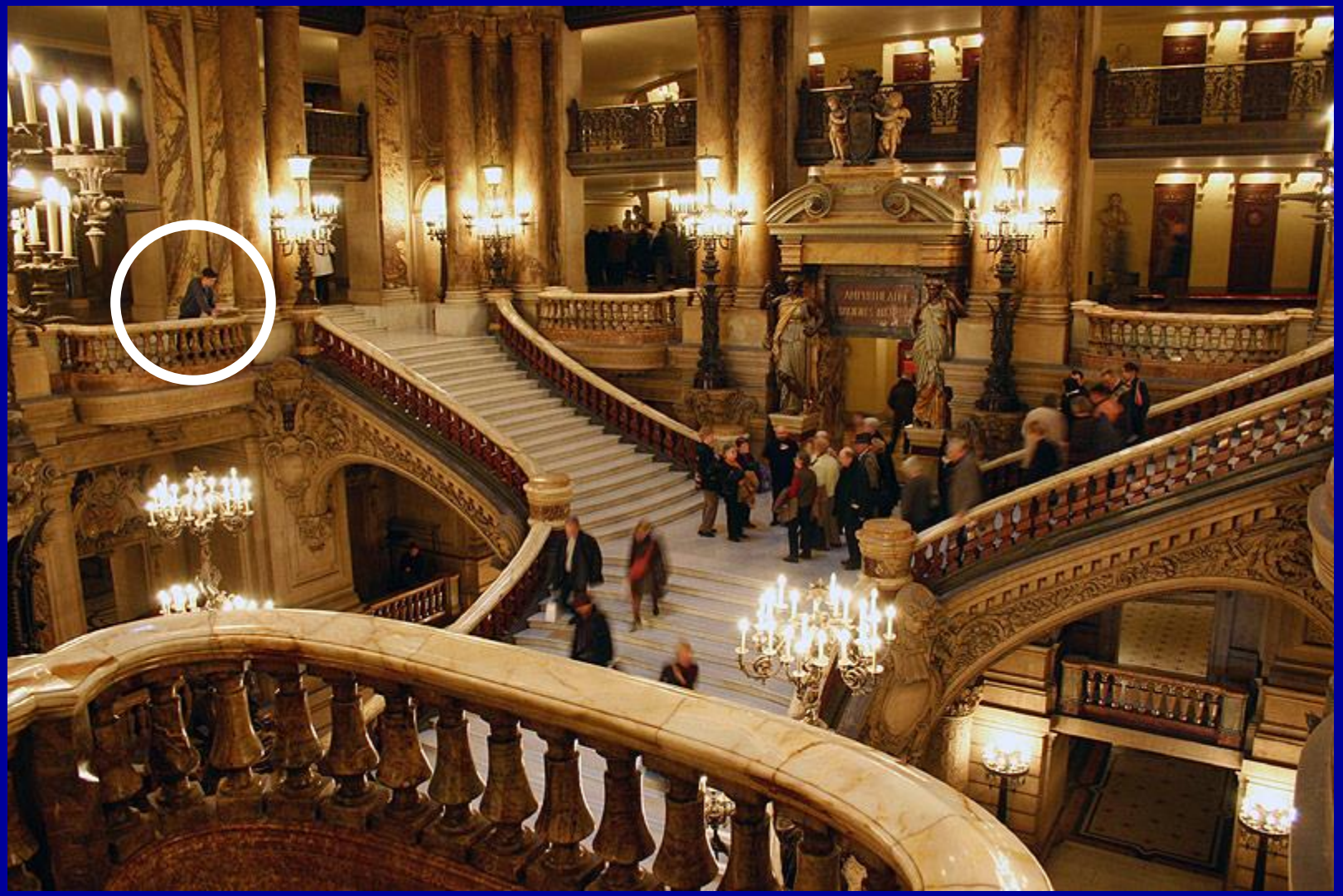


Stairway

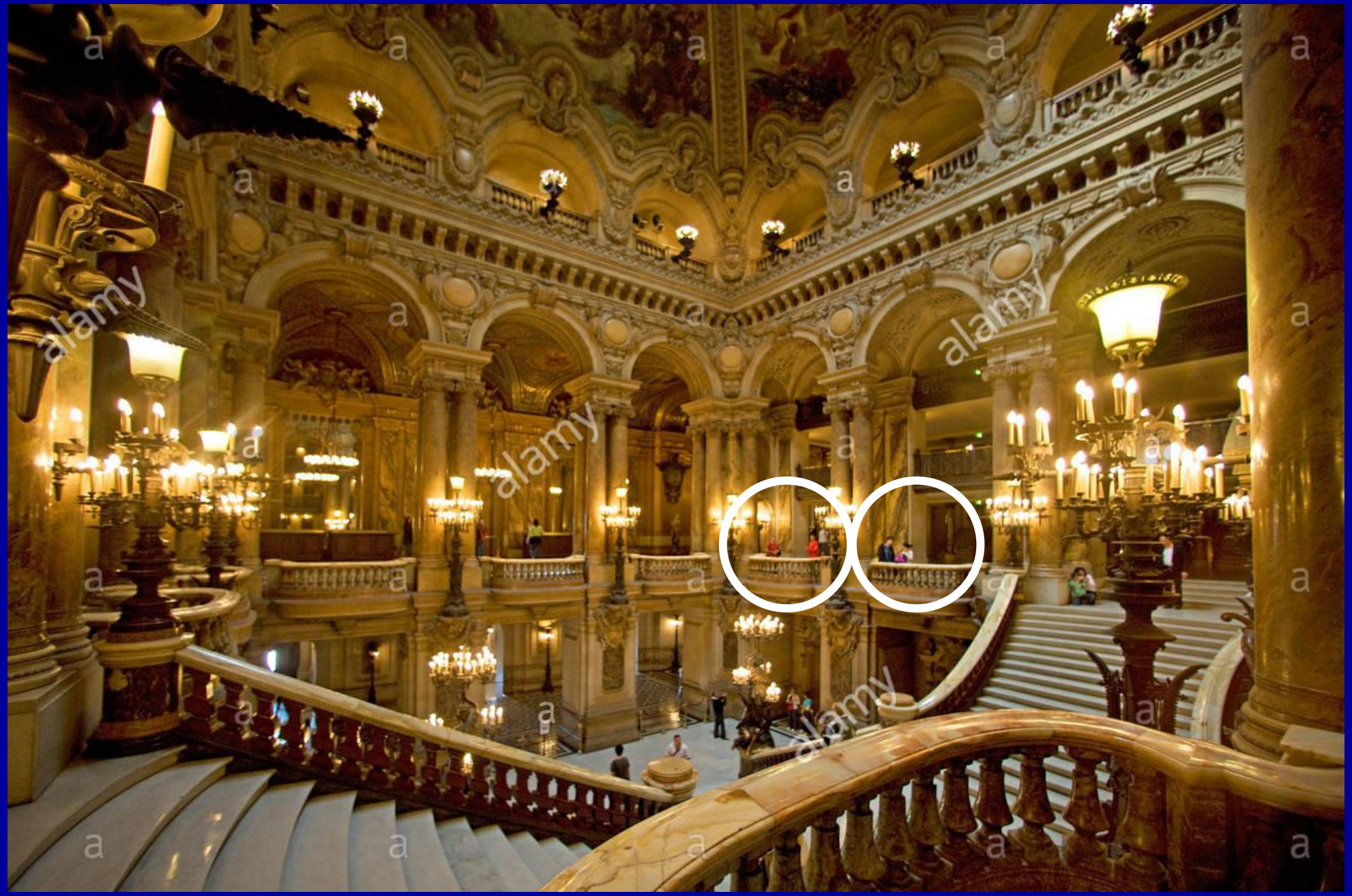
Short steps so women in gowns can step gracefully

Stairway

Surrounding balconies to watch

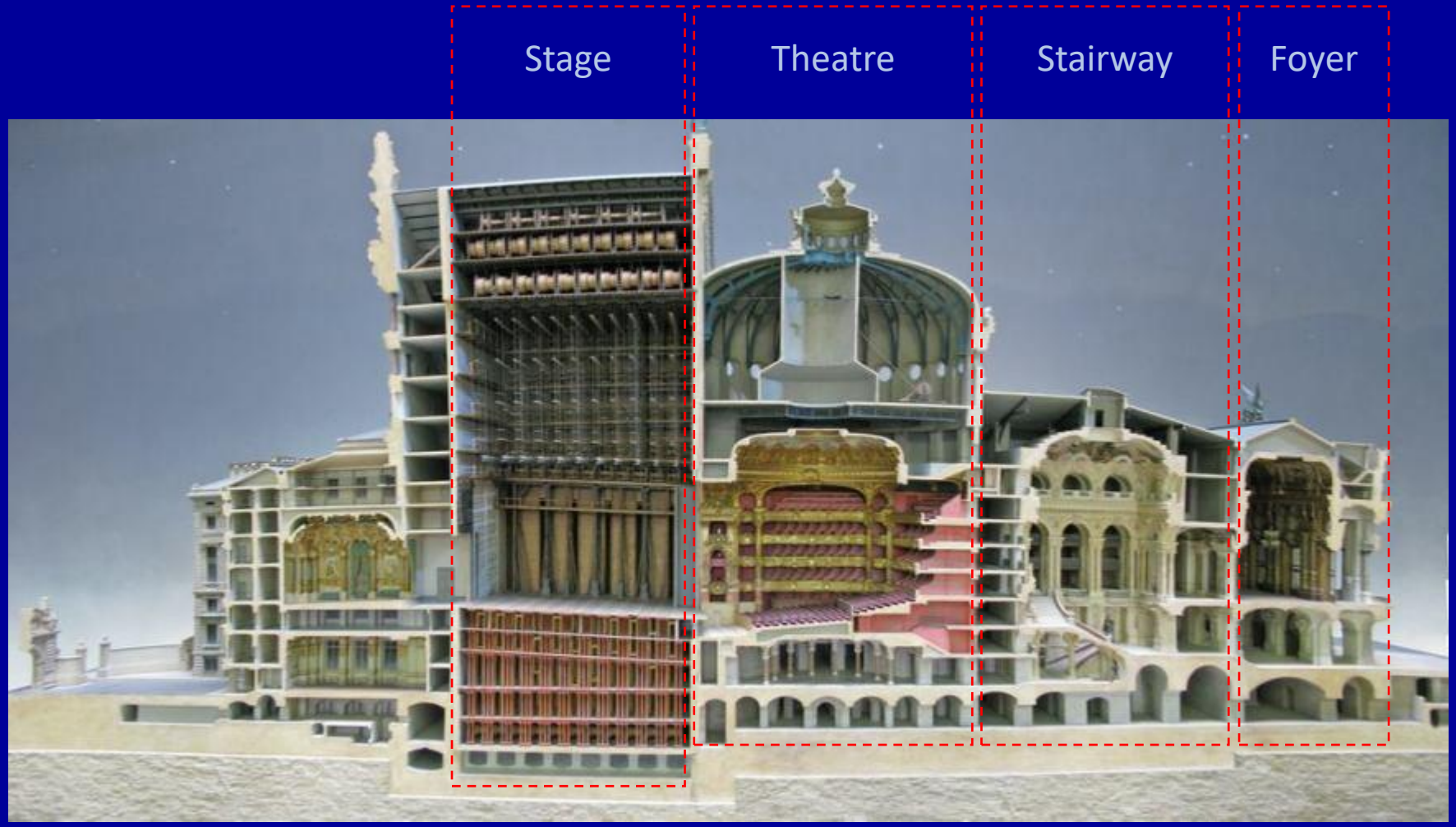


Stairway



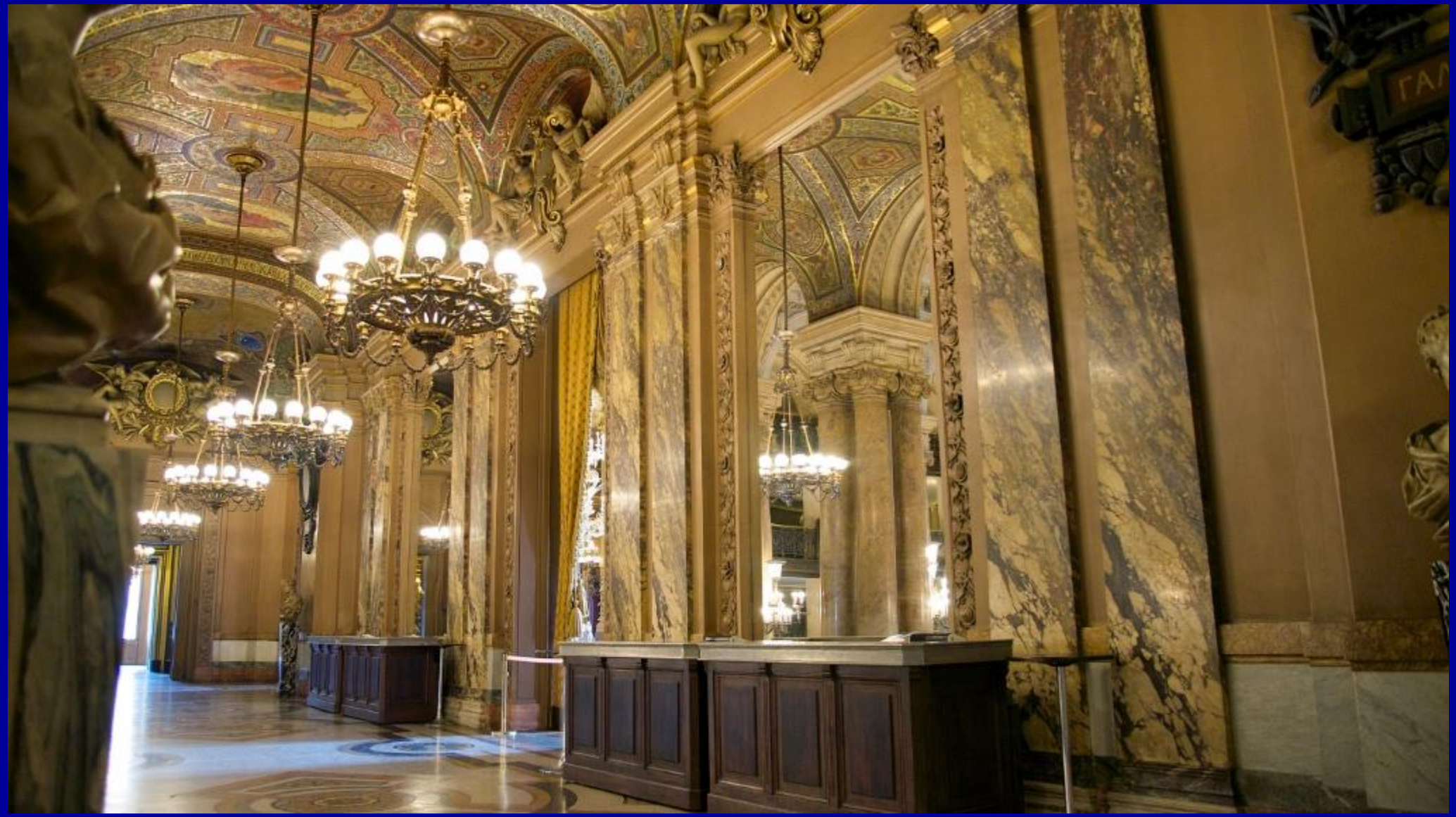
Cross section of huge building

Theatre seats only ~2,000



Foyer

Mirrors

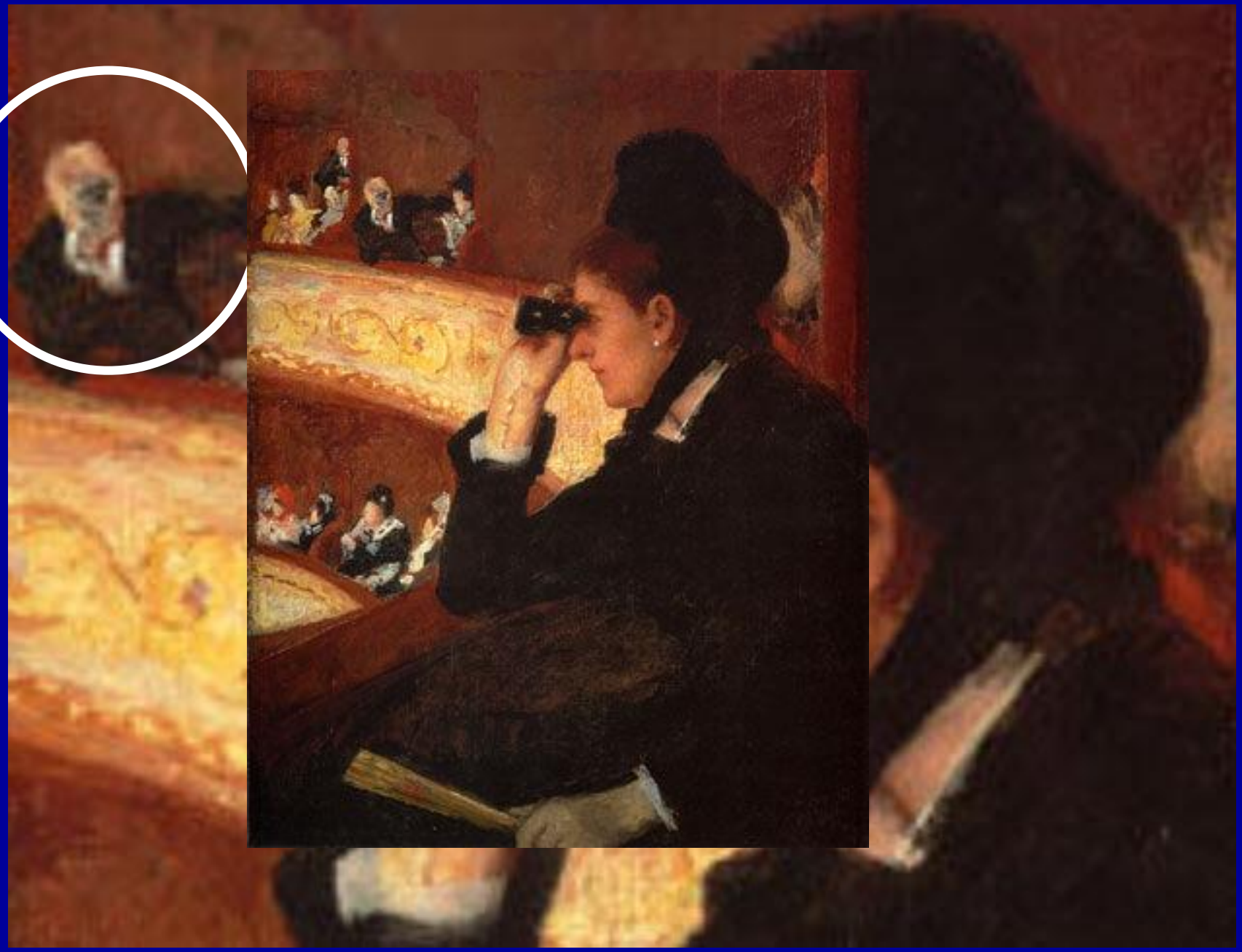


Theatre

Horseshoe shape so everyone can see everyone

Theatre

Horseshoe shape so everyone can see everyone



Theatre

Curved rows so everyone can see everyone

Red upholstery is to reflect pink light to make ladies look their best

Theatre

Boxes arranged so everyone can see everyone

See and be seen

By designing first for the real job to be done, Garnier

delighted patrons

created the model for most concert halls to come

set a good precedent for designing anything