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## TAKEN BY DESIGN

Frank Lloyd Wright's Unity Temple is the "little jewel" of Oak Park

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**THE MAIN AUDITORIUM AT FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT'S UNITY TEMPLE GIVES WORSHIPPERS A FEELING OF INTIMACY.**

For years, culture lovers from around the globe have flocked to west suburban Oak Park to frequent the Oak Park Conservatory and the Ernest Hemingway Birthplace and Museum. But it is the remarkable Unity Temple, the last surviving major public building designed by groundbreaking architect Frank Lloyd Wright, located in the heart of this quaint community, that gets the most visitor attention.

Affectionately pet-named "my little jewel box" by Wright, this landmark building harkens back to what architecture aficionados know as Wright's "golden period." It was completed in 1908 for the Universalist Congregation and became an exemplar of modern architecture because of its innovative cubicle exterior and trailblazing interior design. Wright's blueprints (which had a meager construction budget of only \$40,000) kept all religious icons and symbols from emerging within the décor and design, instead emphasizing the public for whom the temple was built. This is best seen in the temple's remarkable auditorium, which, with its near-perfect

acoustics and intimate window and seating layout, is intended to give every observer a feeling of closeness and equilibrium with relation to the pulpit. The structure's interior linear patterns, made with richly stained oak joined with a fruit-inspired lighting scheme (think giant grape and cantaloupe fixtures) and a barrage of Wright's signature less-is-more motifs make traversing the temple an unforgettable experience.

Take a self-directed tour here (offered Mon.-Fri. from 1-4 p.m. and Sat.-Sun. from 1-3 p.m.), or call to arrange a guided tour for groups of 15 or more. Time your trip with the temple's "Holiday by Design Ornament Design Competition and Silent Auction," happening on Dec. 6, at which up-and-coming designers (no doubt inspired by Wright) will have their pieces judged, awarded and auctioned off to the highest bidders to benefit the restoration of the Unity Temple.


Unity Temple is located at 875 Lake St. in Oak Park. Call (708)383-8873, or visit [www.unitytemple-utr.org](http://www.unitytemple-utr.org) for more information. 



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