

## 'A CONTEMPORARY EXPRESSION OF CLASSIC ARCHITECTURE'

It is difficult for me to conceive of a greater personal thrill than the formal opening of this building. Not only is it the most complex architectural problem my firm has ever attempted to solve, it is probably the single most important element in Southern California's cultural history, one which many in the community have sought to secure for nearly 20 years. To be selected as architect for such a structure, destined to be a landmark even before any architect was assigned, is a great honor. But to be chosen in one's own city to accomplish this is more than an honor — it is a great responsibility as well as a tremendous professional challenge. The most important aspect of the challenge was to resolve a program which would encompass the whole range of the performing arts within one structure. Initially, when we were selected, there was only one block of land and a desire for one building with adequate parking. Later, dreams of a grander scheme were developed by Mrs. Norman Chandler, chairman of the Building Fund Committee and the one single most important catalyst who made the entire project possible. The result is the present three-building complex which includes the 750-seat Mark Taper Forum and a 2100-seat Center Theater.

The 3250-seat Pavilion, largest of the buildings, had to fulfill the functions of three major halls—each with its own characteristics. Traditionally a symphony orchestra requires a concert hall with perfect natural acoustics. Grand opera requires a tremendous stage and as large a house as good sight lines permit. Light

### ARCHITECT'S EXPLANATION OF THE PAVILION'S FINE DESIGN CONCEPTION, THE ACOUSTICS AND LIGHTING, THE STAGE AND THE SEATING AS WELL AS THE KIND OF BUILDING MATERIALS

Photography by Korab

opera, ballet and similar presentations require a more intimate type of theater with an amplified sound system. Our most precarious task was to design a single auditorium which would combine these three different houses into one hall acceptable to all. The auditorium had to be large enough to be financially attractive to costly road shows, yet small enough to provide an intimate feeling. As a road show house it had to provide immense storage areas capable of accommodating the entire travelling repertoire of the San Francisco Opera. Anticipating the future cultural growth of Southern California, it also needed to provide the facilities of a producing house as well as outstanding facilities for performers. All of these features had to be enclosed in a structure which would create a positive esthetic image for the performing arts and an architectural landmark for Los Angeles, truly "A Living Memorial to Peace."

On studying The Pavilion, we felt that like the great music it was to house, its design needed a theme. We wanted the building to give the patron a feeling of elegance and beauty befitting the rich cultural adventures to be experienced

within and yet we wanted it to be contemporary and understated so that it would not overpower people. We felt that many contemporary exterior and interior designs were too stark and unimaginative for this type of building, so we studied the classical concepts of architecture as a point of departure. Thus, since it is meant to become a living cultural symbol for future decades, The Pavilion grew to be a contemporary expression of classical architecture.

Being at the crown of the Civic Center and a vital part of the cityscape imposed certain restrictions on the design. As is often the case, restrictions in budget or other matters often benefit the architect. We thus designed the main building as a Pavilion which means that all sides are basically equal. Since the building would be seen from all sides, we did not wish to turn our back on any part of the city. The most important part of the building, of course, is the auditorium, and the exterior of The Pavilion is designed with gracefully curving sides directly expressing the functional curve of the auditorium within. The structure is on the grand scale, 330 ft. long, 252 ft. wide and with 92-ft.-high columns from the plaza level. The walls of the structure are charcoal black granite and dark glass, providing strong visual contrast by day with the white textured surrounding columns and the broad roof overhang. At night the north side will sparkle from within, revealing the dramatic interior spaces and people, presenting a colorful spectacle to those on the Plaza. The columns which continue around the structure stand /Continued on Page 72

B Y W E L T O N B E C K E T , F A I A

Turn to Page 108 for picture of how the entire three-building complex eventually will appear

free of the building, extending from the plaza level to a soffit beneath the roof overhang. In this way they provide a covered promenade around the building on the mall level and an upper promenade leading off the Grand Hall. The columns were designed of precast exposed quartz chip concrete panels in a gently tapered, fluted, sculptured form. Part of The Music Center design was predicated on the fact that the tops of the buildings be so detailed that when viewed from

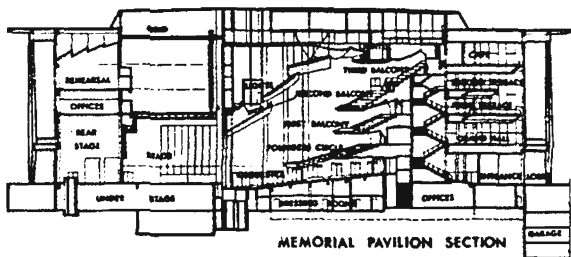
the orchestra floor we eliminated front-to-rear cross aisles which normally deprive a house of a large number of seats and also draw the performer's eye to the rear of the auditorium, making the hall seem even larger.

The result of our unconventional planning is that in a maximum Pavilion house, 90% of the audience is within 105 ft. of the stage and the farthest seat is only 130 ft. The orchestra level holds 1472 seats with the last row only 98 ft. from the stage. Yet we

clarity. By reverberance, we mean the feeling of being enveloped in sound. By clarity, we mean the ability to hear and appreciate the details of music. The different types of performances which were desired for The Pavilion needed different acoustical methods of reproduction, varying from the natural sound required by the symphony to the amplified sound used by Civic Light Opera. We designed the auditorium so that each type of performance would be able to have its own best possible acoustic values transmitted to the audience. So that this directional sound carries with it the same directional information as the source, we developed an acoustical canopy that extends outward from the top of the proscenium arch above the stage and acts as a low ceiling.

stage. For light opera, which requires electro-amplification, the acoustical canopy will be raised to its second position, which frees the speakers of the five-channel stereophonic electro-acoustical system. In the third position, the canopy moves forward, exposing a lighting gallery to the stage for use in special lighting effects required on occasion.

Another prime area of flexibility was the stage itself, which had to be designed to provide for any type of performance, as well as for requirements of performances not yet foreseen. To obtain this high degree of flexibility, we developed one of the largest and most diversified stages in the United States. The proscenium, for example, through use of stage portals, can vary from 36 ft. to 58 ft. in width and has a maximum



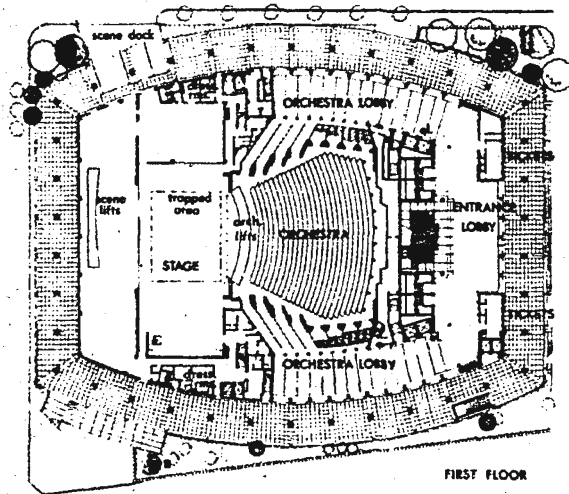
higher civic center structures the roofs are completely clean and provide a finished appearance.

As the most important part of The Pavilion, the auditorium must first of all present the audience with an aesthetic environment designed to make each person's view of every type of performance a superior one. It must also provide the performers with the finest possible technical facilities for staging all the varied performances slated to be presented. For example, it has been traditionally asserted that a good concert hall must be a narrow, rectangular shape and limited to an audience of 2400-2600 persons. Our program showed that The Pavilion must seat a minimum of 3200 (it actually seats 3250) to be economically feasible for the majority of the attractions which would be presented. A typical narrow concert hall would thus make a bad sight-line for a third of the audience, and the intimacy of performance would be completely lost. Thus we developed our auditorium design so that it is nearly square in plan. By utilizing continental seating on

maintained from 40 to 42 in. between the seats back to back so that movement in the aisles will not inconvenience those already seated. The orchestra floor is relatively steeply raked, both for superior vision and for minimum degradation of the sound as it passes over the audience. Since patron movement is from side to side, the rake is obtained without safety hazard. As a matter of fact, the entire orchestra floor can be emptied in the phenomenal time of one and one-half minutes.

Three main levels of seating rise above the orchestra floor: the Founders Circle, the Loge and the Balcony. The first row of the Founders Circle is only 80 ft. from the stage, the Loge is 85 ft. back and the Balcony is 91 ft. from the curtain. While the stage is low by previous American standards, the angle of vision to the stage is never more than 27 deg. down, even from the last row of the Balcony's second tier. Every seat has a completely clear view to the mid-point of the house curtain at the floor line.

Acoustically, we sought a blend of reverberance with



Providing the acoustical design flexibility, the gilded fiberglass canopy is adjustable to three positions. In its lowest position, the canopy is a true acoustical shape for direct sound radiation with no need for electro-acoustical reinforcement. This position will be used for symphony orchestra and for grand opera among others. In addition, a specially designed fiberglass and wood acoustical shell will be assembled on stage to house the symphony orchestra to assure efficient projection of all sound generated on the

height of 28 ft. The main stage is 129 ft. wide by 63 ft. deep, the side stage is 40 ft. wide by 60 ft. and the back stage is 188 ft. wide by 40 ft. deep. When the backstage portal is opened the rear wall is 105 ft. from the curtain line. Additional flexibility is provided by the main house curtain, designed so that it can move up vertically or tableau back at each side. The stage rigging system is especially elaborate in order to provide facilities to fly scenery, backdrops and props for a per- /Continued to Page 74

formance of virtually any type or size. Grid height is 81 ft., 6 in. While a 45 ft. pipe batten for suspending scenery is normal, we can extend our battens to 65 ft. by adding a 10 ft. extension to either side for grand opera. Some 120 battens have been provided because of the immense size of the stage and each is secured by seven lines due to their length. The total result is 840 cables giving an ultimate number of control points. Eight loading bridges result in extreme ease in applying weights to the counterweight arbors.

Flexibility in lighting is achieved through stage lights in the light gallery above the acoustical canopy and near the proscenium, a second light gallery across the center of the auditorium, a lighting booth above the Balcony at the rear of the house and lights in the side walls of the auditorium which are exposed by a nearly imperceptible opening of doors in the wood paneling as the houselights dim. The stage lighting is so designed that any type of production can be done and is compatible to all other systems so that road shows can plug their own units into The Pavilion lights and utilize the controls.

The orchestra pit utilizes a hydraulically operated floor, divisible into two parts for flexibility depending on the size of the orchestra. The floor descends to the lowest level of the building, one level below the orchestra, so that musicians can enter the pit directly from their lounge. It then elevates the musicians to playing position. The floor of the pit can rise as high as the floor of the auditorium when it becomes desirable to extend the auditorium floor and add to the number of seats.

Scenery can be brought directly on stage from a loading dock at stage level on the Hope St. side, or can be elevated from the main scenery storage room below the stage via hydraulic lifts. The main storage area is served by a dock directly off Grand Ave.

Dressing rooms for stars are located on either side of the stage wings and on the mezzanine directly above. On the lowest level, we have provided well-furnished dressing rooms and showers for 100 ballet and 100 chorus men and women, separate lounges and instrument lockers for the men and women of the orchestra, a music library and press rooms. To achieve even greater flexibil-

ity of performances, there is a projection room at the rear of the auditorium capable of showing all types of motion pictures from 16mm to 105 mm and other wide-screen processes.

While our interior design was conceived to present the patron with a feeling of elegance and beauty, the main public areas are purposely understated to provide a foil for the color and movement of the people themselves. Main entrance to The Pavilion and the orchestra level is into the Foyer, directly off the Mall Plaza. The Foyer wraps around either side of the north half of the structure, where a series of doors provide entrance into the sides of the orchestra level as required by the continental seating. The side foyers also have doors directly to the exterior Plaza Promenade. Patrons wishing to reach the Grand Hall, the First or Second Terrace, can either ascend the mirrored grand stairway, which rises above a reflecting pool, or use one of four elevators arranged two on either side of the Foyer. Four more sets of stairs have been provided at the north end of the building for additional safety. Also leading from either side of the Foyer are a set of broad,

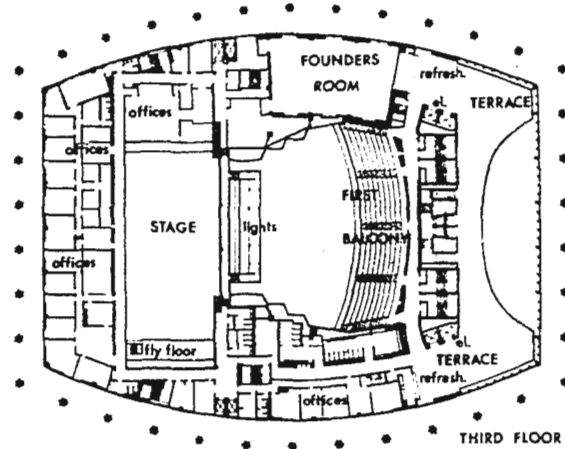
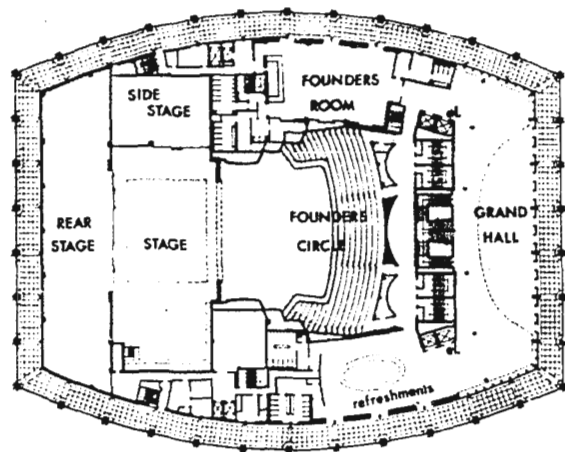
gently descending stairs serving the Green Room, the main public lounge, located on the lower level. The Green Room, decorated in a soft, relaxing motif, serves spacious, colorful rest-rooms.

The Grand Hall, one level above the Foyer, is the main indoor promenade area. It leads to the Oval Room, which is the main refreshment area on the east end; and the Founders, the club for founding and associate members of The Music Center, on the west end. The Grand Hall also provides direct access to the second-level Upper Promenade and to the lounge serving the Founders Circle seating. We have conceived the Grand Hall as a truly elegant, spacious and dramatic area for gathering and promenading before and after performances and during intermissions. It is three stories high and is overlooked by the First and Second terraces which become curved gallerias as they extend over the main room. Three huge crystal chandeliers hang from the high ceiling, adding to the grand feeling.

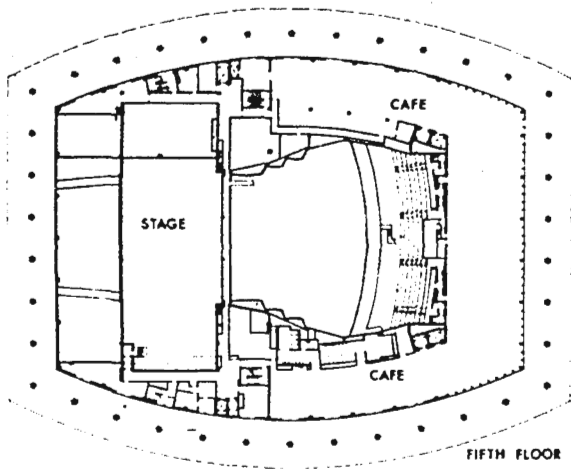
Materials have been selected not only for their inherent richness and beauty but also for their durability.

Walls of the Foyer and Grand Hall are honey-toned onyx imported from Mexico and columns are faced in delicate Italian Byzantine tiles in a pattern of gold and white. While the Foyer has a terrazzo floor, the side orchestra foyers, the grand stairway, the Grand Hall and other public areas have carpeting specially designed by our firm to withstand heavy traffic while presenting custom designs and colors. The auditorium interior decor continues the theme of distinctive elegance through simplicity. Basic colors are gold, deep coral and beige, with the gold introduced by the brilliance of the stage curtain, designed by Tony Duquette, and the gold leafed acoustical canopy above it, the coral represented by the seat fabrics and the carpeting, and the beige of the rich butternut wood paneling and silk textured vinyl covered walls. Seating and carpeting in the Founders Circle repeat the gold.

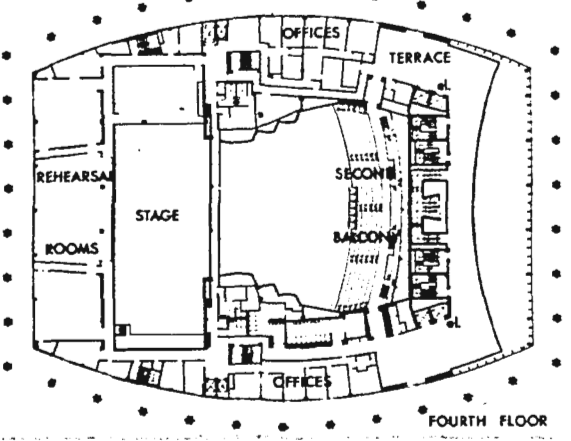
Two fine restaurants have been included in The Pavilion so that patrons can enjoy dining before or after performances. The Pavilion Restaurant has been located at the top level to take maximum advantage of the view. We



THIRD FLOOR



FIFTH FLOOR



FOURTH FLOOR

designed this restaurant to be one of the most elegant in Los Angeles, basing the decor on a crystalline atmosphere. The 170-seat dining room is divided into intimate areas and adjoins a 100-seat cocktail lounge, which shares the panoramic view. Two banquet rooms, the Eldorado with 170 seats and the Blue Ribbon with 220 seats, are also on the west side of this level for use of private groups or club meetings.

Due to the sloping nature of the site, the Grand Ave. level, while beneath the Mall Plaza level, is open to Grand Ave. on the east side. The Curtain Call, a 130-seat restaurant reminiscent of a Los Angeles music hall of the early 1900's, is located here, and has a 65-seat cocktail lounge as well as a 62-seat garden-atmosphere coffee shop which opens to an outdoor terrace. These installations will perform a fine public service.

We were able to use the steeply sloping seven-acre site to our advantage by designing a podium-like base for the complex with parking beneath much of the base. While the top of the podium is level with Hope St. on the west side, it is one story above Grand Ave. on the east side. As a result, entry to the four

levels of parking for 2000 automobiles located beneath the Mall Plaza and the two smaller theaters is on-grade at both Grand Ave. and Hope St. Theater patrons entering the parking garage can enter at any of nine access points without the feeling of going down into an underground tunnel.

I have long believed that Southern Californians do not take enough advantage of our incomparable climate by developing more outdoor facilities. The Mall Plaza provides a spacious formal courtyard for outdoor relaxation before and after performances and during intermissions. We created it as an integral part of the total complex, placing The Pavilion on one side and the two smaller buildings on the other. The Mall Plaza is located so that it forms a unit with the overall Civic Center Mall and the podium of the Department of Water and Power building. The result is what we believe to be the largest open, landscaped area of any downtown in American inspiration experience, with The Pavilion rising majestically at one side and the civic center spread out below toward the east. As the focal point of the grand space, we designed a 75 ft.

square reflecting pool with softly falling fountains to produce simultaneous movement and relaxation. Future plans include a beautiful sculpture in the center.

Twenty trees, arranged in circular concrete planters on either side of the reflecting pool, will provide shade during the day and be lit at night from below to produce a warm, inviting effect. When fully grown the ficus retusa trees will form two covered arcades, shading the terrazzo benches around the pool.

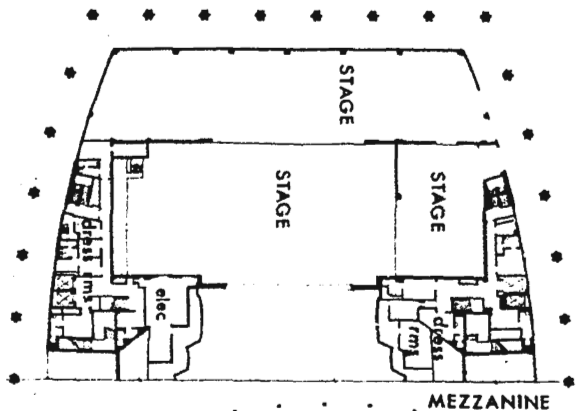
We have been fortunate throughout the past years during which we have labored to meet the challenge of creating this structure in having selected a dedicated group of outstanding consultants. These include Paul Veneklasen, Dr. Vern O. Knudsen and Dr. Robert Leonard, acoustics; Ben Schlanger, seating; William P. Nolan, stage engineering; Jean Rosenthal, theater lighting; Stacy & Skinner, structural engineering; and Cornell, Bridgers and Troller, landscaping. The difficult job of making the building a reality was in the capable hands of Peter Kiewit Sons' Company.

The two most important Music Cent-

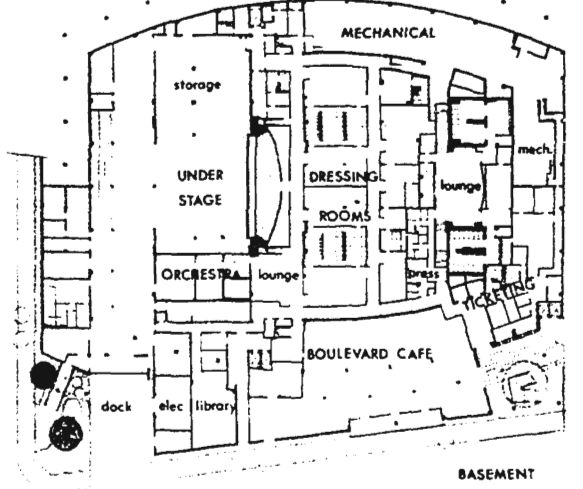
er committees with whom we have worked are the Advisory Board of Design and the Art Committee. The Advisory Board has met with us constantly throughout the project and is in no small measure responsible for the success of the project. The Art Committee is still meeting regularly to choose distinguished works of art which will be placed in areas of The Music Center where they will complement its design.

It has been a tremendous experience for all of us working on The Music Center to have daily contact with so many who have simply said, "Call on us if we can be of any help." We hope these unnamed associates will be proud of the results of their effort.

While the past six years of working on The Music Center have been most gratifying to us professionally, and we are happy that The Pavilion is opening tonight on schedule, tomorrow morning we must go back to work. Construction will begin shortly on the two remaining buildings of The Music Center, the Mark Taper Forum and the Center Theater. Until they are completed in 1966, we cannot really sit back and take time out to be proud.



MEZZANINE



BASEMENT