



TOBIN CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

San Antonio, Texas

LMN Architects + Marmon Mok

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SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

Overview

Combining one of San Antonio's most beloved architectural icons with advanced technology to create one of the most flexible multi-purpose performance halls in the United States, the Tobin Center for the Performing Arts embraces the multi-faceted cultural identity of the city with a complex tapestry of form, materiality, light, and landscape. Drawing inspiration from San Antonio's rich vernacular of color, pattern and public celebration—the new performing arts center offers a diverse architectural experience capable of continuous transformation in response to programmatic and environmental influences.

The aspirations for the renovation/expansion project were threefold: to create a large, flexible, multi-use performance space with acoustics comparable to the world's finest concert halls; to renew the Spanish Colonial style historic building for future generations; and to create a vibrant connection between the city's main cultural venue and the River Walk. A passionate network of community stakeholders met this challenge, defining a vision for a "performing arts center for everyone" that was the underpinning for all planning and design objectives.

While retaining the Municipal Auditorium's treasured historic façade, the Tobin Center weaves a new 183,000-square foot facility into its framework of public space—including a 1,768-seat main performance hall, and a 231-seat studio theater. The tall, slender form of the main performance hall optimizes sightlines and provides the ideal geometry for rich, reverberant symphonic sound, while the stagehouse accommodates a sophisticated variety of modern stage systems.

Site and Historic Context

San Antonio's urban environment strikes a balance between built form and open space. In the tradition of Spanish city planning, the city is characterized by an intimate street grid punctuated with landmark buildings located in prominent locations and anchored by public squares for community gathering. Weaving through the grid is the San Antonio River, connecting a series of linked cultural destinations throughout the downtown area.

The north side of the site borders the River Walk, a network of walkways along the banks of the San Antonio River positioned one-story lower than the streets of downtown. The River Walk serves as the city's main social corridor for nightlife and festival activity—the centerpiece of its downtown civic identity and pedestrian life.

Location and Completion

San Antonio, Texas
2014

Client

Tobin Center for the Performing Arts

Architect

LMN: Design Architect + Prime Architect
Marmon Mok: Associate Architect

Project Size

183,000 sf
1,768-seat performance hall, 231-seat flat floor studio theater

Construction Cost

\$106 Million

Awards

2014 World Architecture News Civic Buildings Award Finalist
2013 Best Work in Progress, San Antonio Downtown Best Awards, Downtown Alliance
2012 American Architecture Award
2012 AIA Civic Design Award, Citation, Unbuilt Category

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The site design creates a new connection to the Center and provides a significant public gathering place along the River Walk.

Formerly known as the Municipal Auditorium, the south façade of the Tobin Center is one of the most recognizable historic structures in San Antonio and an important civic icon to generations within the community. Built as a World War I Veterans Memorial, the facility originally hosted grand civic occasions such as the Order of the Alamo's coronation of the Queen of Fiesta—a tradition that thrives to this day. Over the years, the city has added additional tributes to the Veterans Memorial Plaza located to the south of the building, deepening its significance as a community landmark. The Tobin Center renews the historical and civic connection between the landmark building and its venerated historic plaza to the City of San Antonio.

The Veil

The substantial facility reconfiguration called for a grand, unifying design gesture, combining new and old architectural components into a distinctive visual composition. The solution—a porous, shimmering metallic veil that enwraps the new program volumes—sculpturally expresses and celebrates the cultural life of contemporary San Antonio. With references to the filigreed forms of Spanish Colonial ironwork, the delicate lace of festival costumery and the filtered daylight of the River Walk landscape, the veil creates an unmistakable new architectural presence in the San Antonio skyline.

An important characteristic of the veil is its simplicity, blending with the color of the original façade, as well as the scale and patterning of its limestone blocks. Comprised of digitally designed and crafted aluminum panels, the façade both reflects the sky and captures daylight—imparting a diffuse, neutral expression that concedes first position to the historic stone façade. The veil also filters the bright South Texas sun, creating complex patterns of light and shadow—much like trees over an arroyo, or over the River Walk below. As night falls and the River Walk transitions into a festival-like atmosphere, the veil also transforms, becoming a scrim upon which integral, programmable LED's allow custom light displays to be choreographed with the evening's performance.

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River Walk and Outdoor Event Venue

Public open space along the west side of the building connects directly to the River Walk, anchored by a multiuse plaza with an outdoor event venue. The plaza faces a large video screen incorporated into the veil, where venue programmers can simulcast live performances, outdoor cinema, music and other curated events. The high, glass enclosed entrance lobby to the Alvarez Family Studio Theater overlooks the plaza, creating strong linkages between the different venue elements as an integral aspect to the arrival experience from the river.

McCombs Grand Lobby

Inside, the Tobin Center's social epicenter is the McCombs Grand Lobby, a towering sequence of volumetric spaces at the intersection of the historic building and new construction. Standing on the lobby floor with its distinctive, sweeping terrazzo pattern, one can look up through multiple levels humming with activity—a social experience animated by the interplay of balconies, sky bridges and sculpted surfaces.

Lobby circulation offers a diverse experiential journey through the existing stone façade and historic entry foyer. Beyond the foyer, the lobby greets visitors with an exquisitely detailed wall of sculptured panels. The wall follows the compound curvature of the performance hall as it swells outward to dramatically engage the full height of the lobby volume. A progressively shifting surface texture, expressed in algorithmic contours, recalls the flow of the river and reflects the cultural use of tile work in San Antonio. Midway to the ceiling, a row of small openings reveals the deep red color of the auditorium beyond.

Two circular stairs rise through the façade's matching rotundas, landing on the second floor at the Ewing Halsell Foundation Founder's Lounge, and above that to the third-level balcony via sky-bridge connections. Ascending the stair rotundas to the upper levels, the interplay of old and new forms progressively unfolds to pull patrons up through the vertically interconnected lobby spaces. Plaster surfaces blend seamlessly together, forming graceful entry arches along with soaring vault ceilings. The façade's existing windows are refurbished, and ornate details of the historic architecture are juxtaposed with modern craft and sculptural expressions. Natural daylight filters through strategically placed openings in the veil, imparting a shifting landscape of light and shadow throughout the upper lobby. Tall windows frame views of the San Antonio skyline. At night, the windows provide a glimpse of the veil's LED light show, while broadcasting the excitement of the event to the city at large.

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H-E-B Performance Hall

Themes of transformation, adaptability, and diversity come to their fullest expression in the main hall, dubbed the H-E-B Performance Hall. Employing a variety of customized systems, the room can rapidly change its seating and stage geometry, lighting, color and acoustics to suit the unique qualities and objectives of each performance. The design creates virtually endless possibilities in room configuration and visual expression—in effect giving the city many venues in one and providing local arts groups with unlimited possibilities to attract new audiences with innovative programming.

The Gala moveable floor system, the most technically advanced system of its kind yet deployed in the United States, is central to the high level of programmatic and operational flexibility. Operated by computer-controlled presets, the system allows each seating row to be moved individually. The integral seats deploy automatically, and within 30 minutes the hall can be transformed to any configuration—symphony, cabaret, rock concert, opera, dinner theater, and conference gala, to name a few—with virtually endless sub-configurations available to suit the particular needs of the event.

Anticipating a wide range of uses, the hall's acoustical design creates a rich reverberance, characteristic of the world's great symphony halls. This is accomplished through the use of parallel sidewalls, a mix of high-density finish materials, along with careful calibration of acoustical volumes with the seating configuration. Appearing to the human eye as simple, graceful architectural form, the geometry of the balconies and side-boxes are deceptively complex to achieve the desired early, lateral acoustical reflections. The fascias of the three balcony tiers, defining the inner volume of the hall, provide optimal acoustical reflections through composite materials (Anegre wood veneer and dense polycarbonate resin) as well as geometric form. As the fascia's curve around the hall, a subtle change in their angle and height scatters sound reflections to produce an enveloping acoustical experience.

From this starting place, the acoustics are highly adjustable to suit the specific needs of each performance type. Tunable absorption elements can dampen the hall's resonance for performances where a more articulate sound is desirable, such as theater, spoken word, and amplified music. A carefully designed forestage reflector couples with the orchestra shell for symphonic music and has two settings that balances sound between the stage and orchestra pit for opera and ballet. In addition, an electronic sound reinforcement system—tailored to the room's acoustics—supports amplified performances such as touring Broadway shows and headliner acts.

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Lighting innovations further transform the hall. Adding to a full complement of theatrical and house lighting systems, perforations in the balcony fascias form a pixelated arabesque pattern. Virtually endless programming options are available to change the colors, light intensity and patterns in the pixels, affording the ability to dramatically change the mood of the room between performances or even during the course of a single performance. For instance, effects can range from a soft glowing candlelight ambiance for symphonic performance, to complete blackout for opera and ballet, to intense bursts of color for a popular music act.

Alvarez Family Studio Theater

Nested into the west side of the auditorium shell, the Alvarez Family Studio Theater adds further dimension to the programming possibilities. The flat-floor venue's 231 seats can be configured to create an end stage, center stage, or thrust stage. Sound absorptive panel cladding with a binary pattern of perforations and variable acoustic materials combine with a modular lighting system and catwalk grid to provide extensive adjustability with operational efficiency—accommodating a rich diversity of community-oriented programming, such as dramatic theater, acoustic and amplified music, lectures, dinner theater and banquets.

The 2-story studio theater occupies a zone between the historic masonry arcade and the new main performance hall, its elongated-hexagon shaped plan maximizing “found” space with a symmetrical layout that optimizes programmatic and technical functionality. A system of sound and light locks borders the studio theater, and a large vertical-lift door opens the performance space up to the theater's dedicated lobby—revealing the outdoor plaza, landscape and River Walk beyond.

Conclusion

As San Antonio continues to grow as one of America's great diverse cities, the Tobin Center for the Performing Arts stands ready to serve all-comers with a vast range of programming and theatrical experiences. Just as the main hall adapts to accommodate nearly any large-scale performance event with dazzling style, the studio theater and outdoor plaza create flexible niches for all sizes and artistic aspirations—truly accomplishing the ideal of a “performing arts center for everyone.”

LMN Architects

LMN provides comprehensive planning and design services for significant public places such as cultural arts venues, convention centers, higher education facilities and transit stations that enrich civic life throughout the United States and beyond. The firm is widely recognized for distinctive, integrated design solutions that are highly responsive to specific social, cultural, economic and environmental influences.

The firm's 120 staff members include architects, interior designers and urban planners as well as computer scientists. LMN has been recognized for its ability to deliver outstanding design for civic and public buildings, while seamlessly navigating the complexities of budget, schedule, and process. LMN projects have been recognized with more than 200 international, national, regional, and local awards. The firm has been honored for design, technical research, sustainability, urban planning, and community leadership. In the past two years, the projects have received 35 awards, including recognition by eight AIA components.

The firm's work has been published in more than 400 articles in publications such as Architecture, Architectural Record, Metropolis, Environmental Design and Construction, Time, New York Times, and the Wall Street Journal. It has also been recognized in a number of books and journals internationally, including the UK, Greece, India, Canada, Italy, Turkey, Australia, Thailand, Korea, and Japan.

Recent public projects include the Museum of History and Industry in Seattle, the Cleveland Civic Core/Burnham Mall/Convention Center/Global Center for Health Innovation, Seattle Symphony's Benaroya Hall, Marion Oliver McCaw Hall (home to the Seattle Opera and the Pacific Northwest Ballet), Cincinnati Convention Center Expansion and Renovation, University of Iowa School of Music, and the Vancouver Convention Centre West in British Columbia (this project earned the distinction as the first convention center in the world to earn LEED® Platinum rating, as well as including one of the largest living roofs, over 5.5 acres, in all of North America).

For more information, visit www.lmnarchitects.com.

Marmon Mok

Marmon Mok, located in downtown San Antonio, is one of Texas' leading architectural practices specializing in architectural design, master planning and interior design. For more than 60 years, the firm has been responsible for many of the City's major building programs including the Alamodome, Lila Cockrell Theatre renovation and numerous projects at the San Antonio International Airport and the South Texas Medical Center. Marmon Mok is currently involved in the expansion of the City's largest civic project in its history, the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center as part of a design/build joint venture.

Since its founding in 1953, Marmon Mok has maintained a standard of excellence in creative design solutions recognized by over 100 design awards and a reputation for providing outstanding client service. Marmon Mok is the 2013 recipient of the Texas Treasures Business Award from the State of Texas. In 2008 the Texas Society of Architects honored Marmon Mok with their highest award -- the "Architecture Firm of the Year" for its "enduring, quality architecture, exemplary service and dedication to the profession and community." The firm has won four City of San Antonio Green Building awards and designed the City's first LEED Gold certified project for the Parman Library.

Our current work includes the Frost Westover Hills Corporate Office Complex, the Texas A&M University Student Recreation Center expansion, the University of Texas Health Science Center – San Antonio Center for Oral Health and Research, the Clarity Child Guidance Center campus expansion, the University Health System Heart and Vascular Institute and a first-year residence hall program for Trinity University.

The firm is led by six partners who oversee five specialty practice areas: civic/public assembly, education, healthcare, recreation/sports, and corporate/workplace interiors. Our partners and senior staff speak at industry and professional conferences and conduct research on planning, design and workplace issues for the clients we serve.

In addition to daily practice, our partners and staff are community and volunteer leaders serving more than 100 non-profit and professional organizations throughout the State of Texas. We are active in several mentorship programs for small businesses and university students.

For more information, visit www.marmonmok.com

Project Team

Client	Tobin Center for the Performing Arts
Project Management/Owners Representation	The Projects Group
Architect of Record/Design Architect	LMN
Associate Architect	Marmon Mok
Interior Design/Environmental Graphics	Sussman Prejza & Co.
Acoustical Consultant of Record	Akustiks, LLC
Theatre Consultant	Fisher Dachs Associates
Landscape Architect	Rialto Studio
Construction Manager	Linbeck Zachry Joint Venture
Civil Engineer	Pape-Dawson Engineers, Inc.
Mechanical/Plumbing Engineer	Timmons Design Engineers
Electrical Engineer	TTG
Structural Engineer	Walter P. Moore, Dallas, TX with Alpha Consulting Engineers
Architectural/Specialty Lighting Design	Horton Lees Brogden Lighting Design
Food Service Consultant-Design	Ricca Newmark Design
Foodservice Event Planning/Operations	Excellence in Foodservice Network
Vertical Transportation	Lerch Bates
Technology & Electronic Security Consulting	Sparling
ADA Consultant	Access by Design, Inc.
Code Consultant	Rolf Jensen & Associates
Historic Preservation Specialists	Fisher Heck Architects
Facade Consultant	Front Inc.
Cost Consultants	Venue
Photography	Ed LaCasse, Mark Menjivar, LMN, Definitive HDR

Manufacturers

Product	Manufacturer
Structural Steel Framing	Hirschfeld
Steel Floor Decking	Wheeling Corrugated
Cold-Formed Metal Framing	Clark Dietrich Building Systems
Channel (Unistrut) Framing	Unistrut
Catwalks	Phenix Architectural Woodwork
Architectural Woodwork	Fetzer Architectural Woodwork
Wood Veneer Paneling	Fetzer Architectural Woodwork
Solid Surfacing Materials	Okite and Corian
Plastic Panels	3Form
Fiber Glass Reinforced Wall Panels	Marlite
Acrylic Resin Panels	3Form, Light Art
Metal Wall Panels	Centria, Alpolic
Metal Plate Wall Panels	Kovach, Inc.
Thermoplastic Membrane Roofing	Johns Manville
Acoustical Smoke Vents	Nystrom
Hollow Metal Doors and Frames	American Direct
Access Doors	Karp Associates, Inc.
Sliding Aluminum Framed Glass Doors	Fleetwood Windows & Doors
Overhead Coiling Doors	Overhead Door Corporation
Sound Control Door Assemblies	Overly Door Company
Sound Control Vertical Lift Door	Overly Door Company
Sliding Wood Framed Glass Wall	NanaWall
Aluminum Entrance Doors	Kawneer
Glazed Aluminum Curtain Wall & Windows	Kawneer, Hankins & Johann (custom mullions)
Structural Glass Curtain Wall	Sentech Architectural Systems
Ticket Windows	Creative Industries
Acoustical Noise Control Windows	IAC
Power Door Operators	Besam ASSA ABLOY
Glass & Glazing	Viracon and Pulp Studio
Glass Fiber Reinforced Gypsum	Stromberg
Portland Cement Plaster	Cemco Steel Framing & Metal Lath
	Niles Building Products Co. (accessories)
	LaHabra (scratch & brown coats)
	Davis Wire Corporation (Bldg paper)
Gypsum Veneer Plaster	USG
	Niles Building Products Co. (accessories)
	Fry Reglet (accessories)
Gypsum Board	Thermafiber
	Guardian Building Products
	Hilti Firestop
Tile	Schluter Systems
Stone and Quarry Tile	Dal Tile, Piteq
Acoustical Panel Ceilings	USG, CertainTeed
Specialty Ceilings	BASWAphon Acoustic North America
Decorative Metal Mesh & Beaded Chain Ceilings	Cascade Coil Drapery, Inc., , Shimmer Screen
Epoxy Resin Terrazzo	National Terrazzo Tile and Marble Inc.

Manufacturers Continued

Product	Manufacturer
Carpet Tile	Interface, Mannington Commercial, Tandus Flooring
Broadloom Carpet	Tandus Flooring, Bentley Prince Street, Karistan Carpet
Acoustic Wall Covering	Tri-Kes Dallas
Stretched Fabric Acoustical Wall Panel Systems	Knoll Textiles
Exterior Acoustical Panel System	Noise Control Systems
Acoustic Wall Panels	RPG Diffusor Systems, Pinta Acoustic
Sound Absorbing Ceiling Panels	RPG Diffusor Systems
Paintings & Coatings	Sherwin Williams, USG
High-Performance Coatings	Tnemec
Toilet Compartments	Bobrick
Wire Mesh Partitions	Acorn Wire and Iron Works
Wall and Corner Protection	Koroseal Wall Protection Systems, Construction Specialties
Toilet Accessories	Bobrick, Koala Kare
Food Service Equipment	Ikoniq
Orchestra Shell	Wenger
Demountable Platforms	Staging Concepts
Stage Rigging	Texas Scenic Company, Inc., Carol Brand Canare Corp., Texas Scenic Company, Inc.
Stage Draperies	Texas Scenic Company, Inc., iWeiss
Concert Lighting Fixtures	ETC, Philips, SeaChanger, Doug Fleenor Design, TMB, Safer Sidearms
Theatrical Lighting Controls	ETC
Horizontal Louver Blinds	Bali Blind
Roller Window Shades	Hunter Douglas
Fixed Auditorium Seating	Series International, JB Martin
Entrance Floor Mats and Frames	Arden Architectural Specialties, Inc.
Machine Room Less (MRL) Elevators	Otis
Hydraulic Elevators	Otis
Seating Riser System	Gala Systems
Specialty Lighting	Traxon



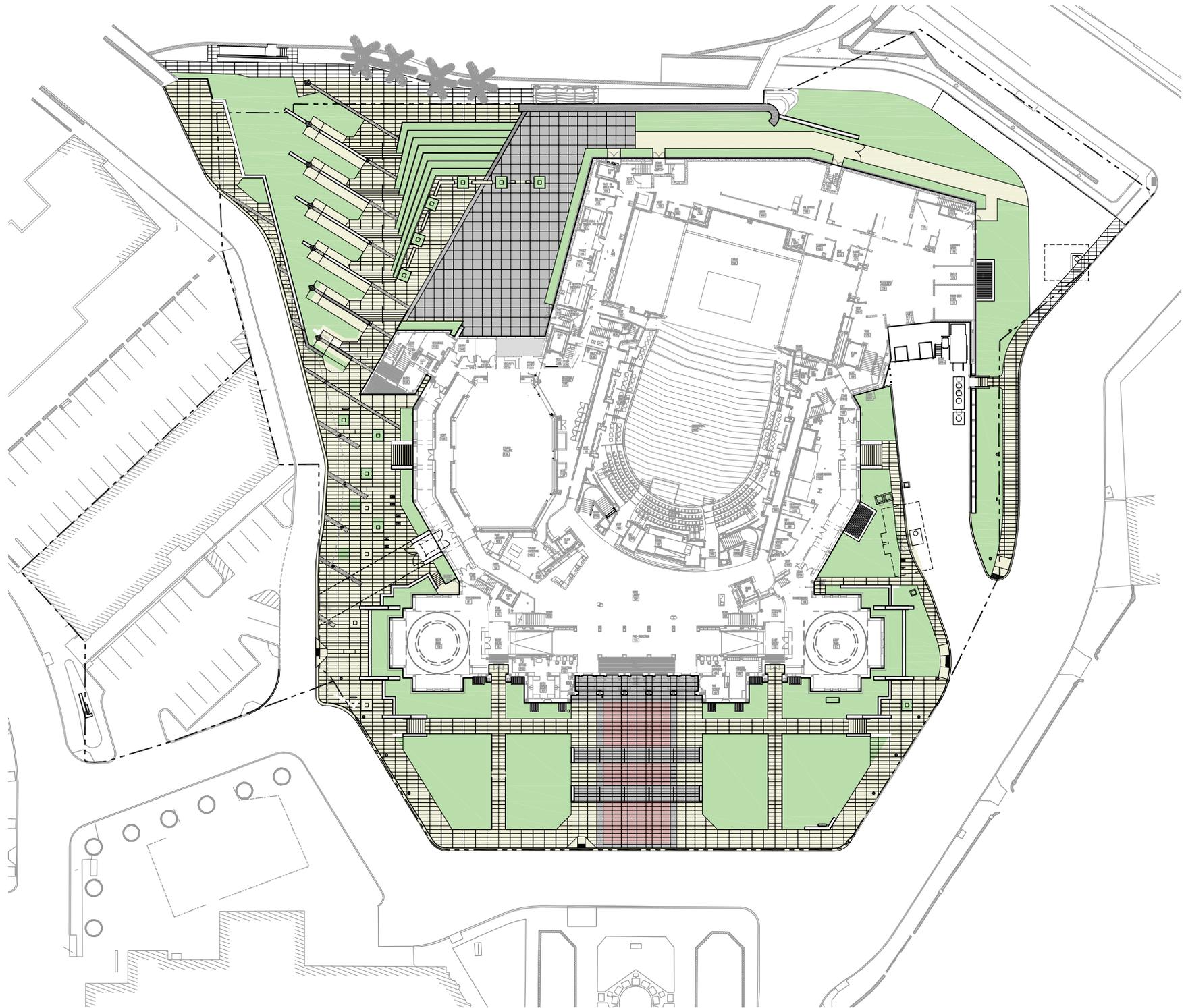
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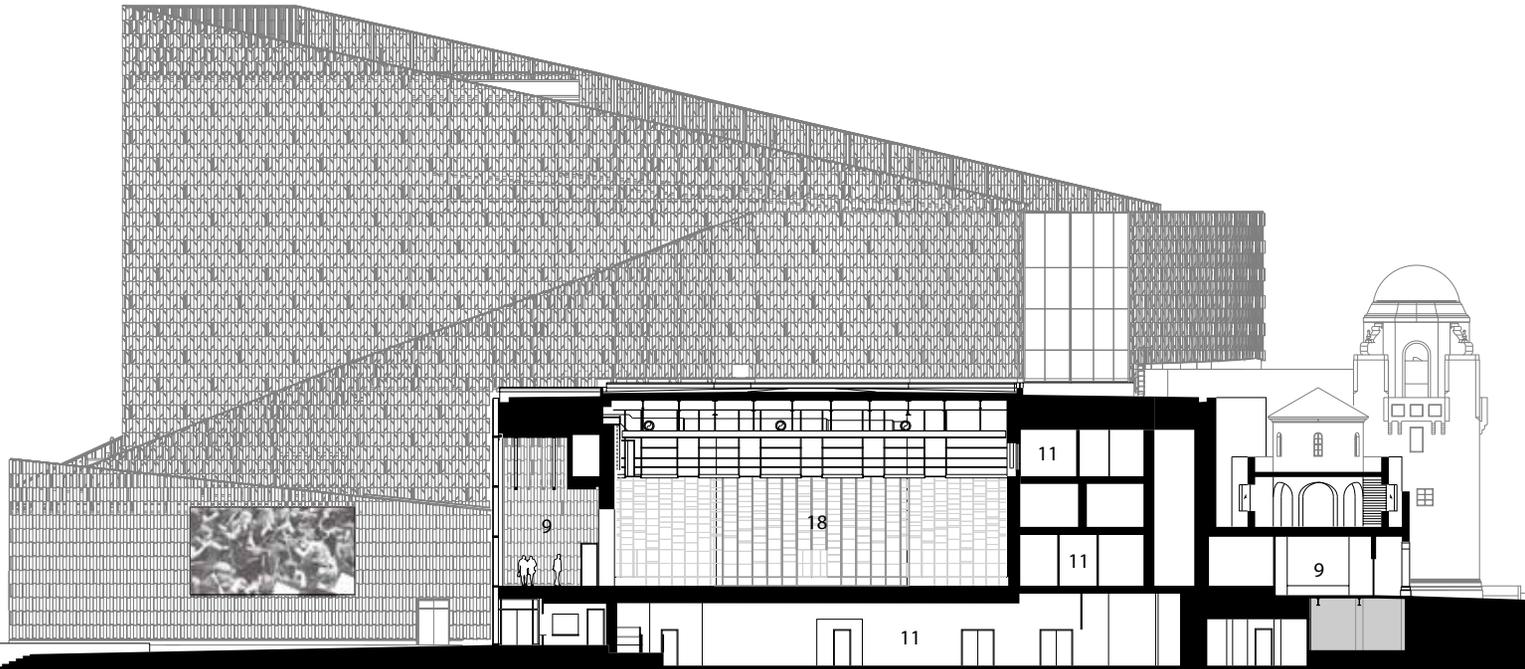


ORIGINAL AUDITORIUM



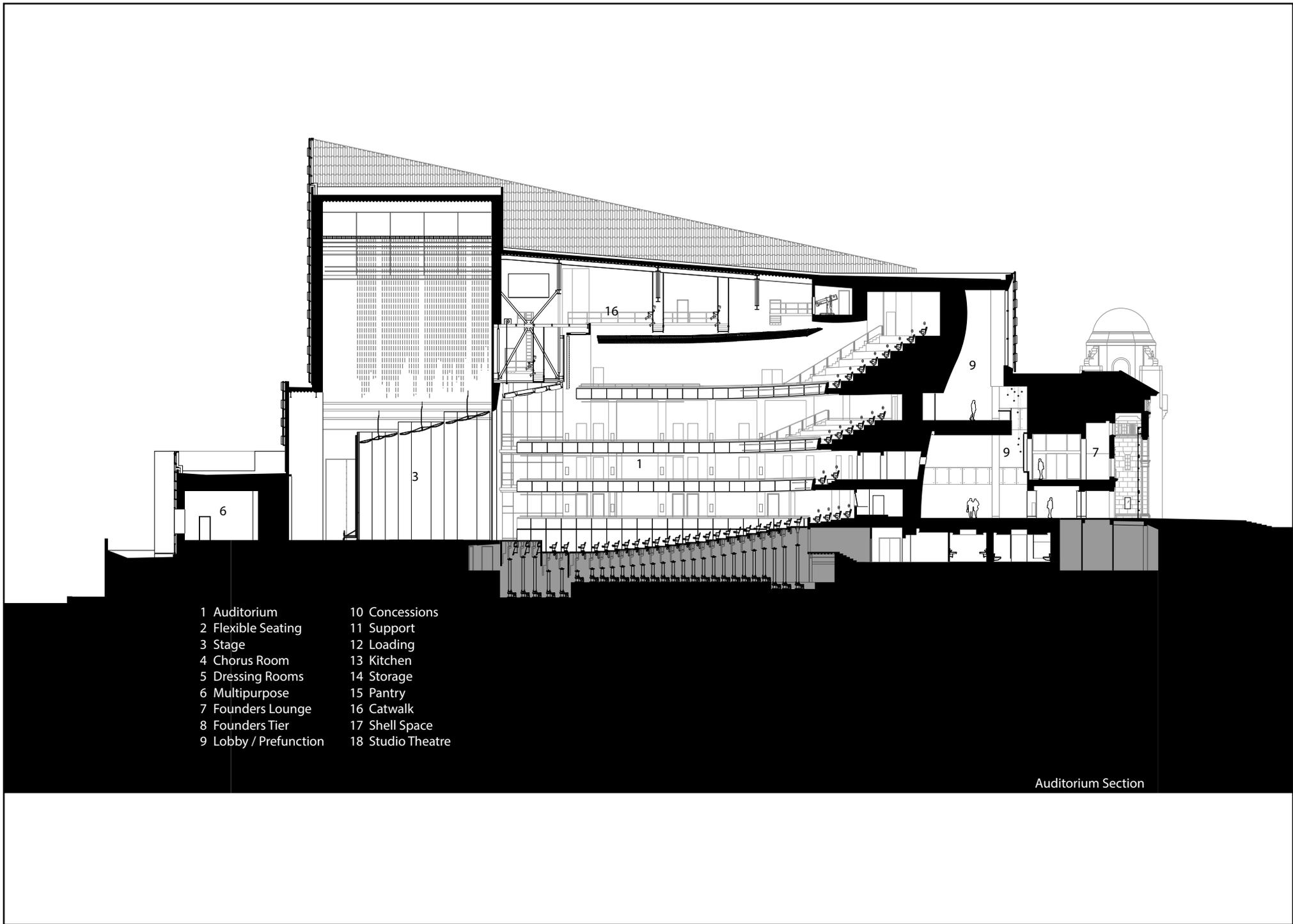
ORIGINAL ENTRY





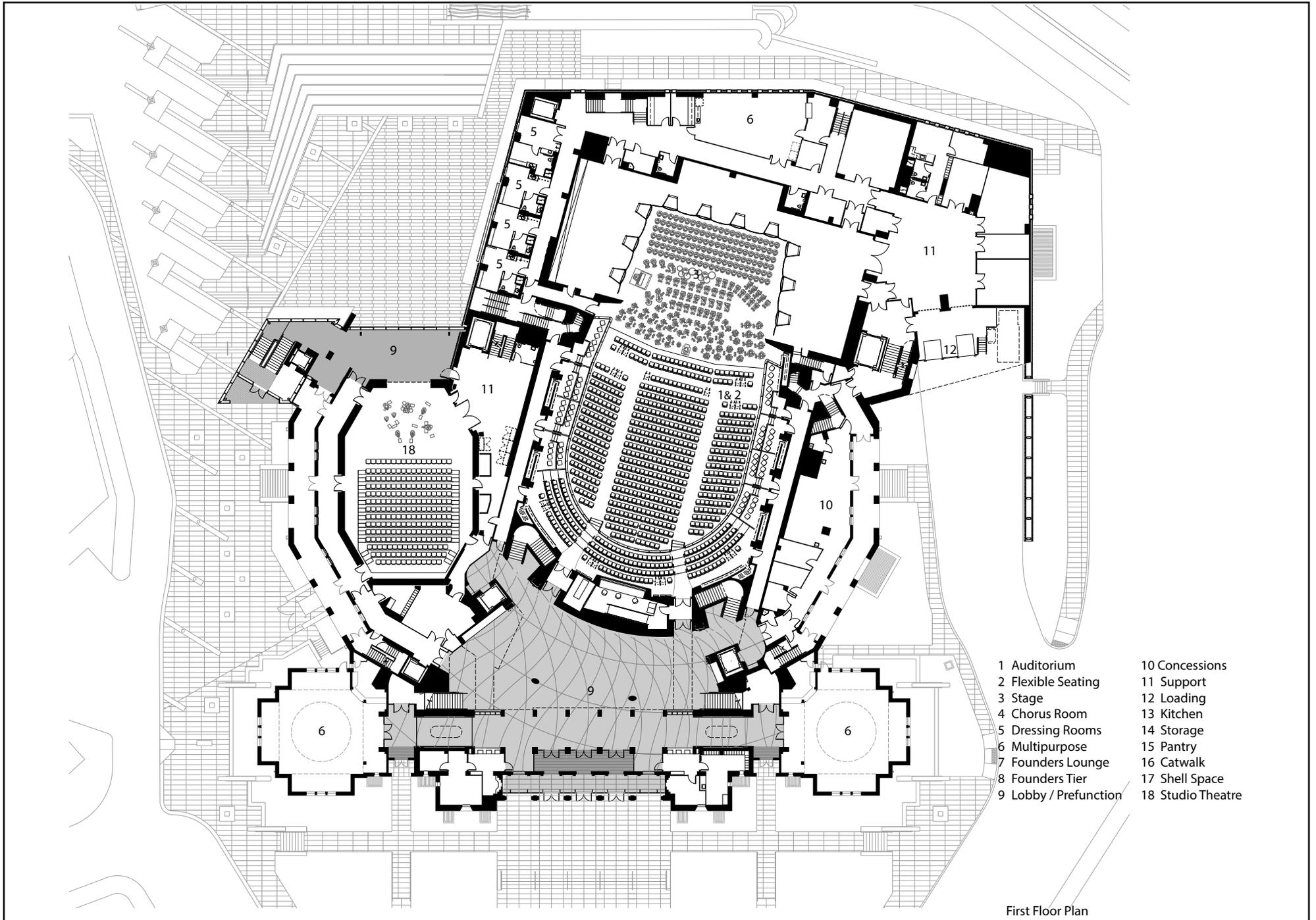
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|-----------------------|-------------------|
| 1 Auditorium | 10 Concessions |
| 2 Flexible Seating | 11 Support |
| 3 Stage | 12 Loading |
| 4 Chorus Room | 13 Kitchen |
| 5 Dressing Rooms | 14 Storage |
| 6 Multipurpose | 15 Pantry |
| 7 Founders Lounge | 16 Catwalk |
| 8 Founders Tier | 17 Shell Space |
| 9 Lobby / Prefunction | 18 Studio Theatre |

Studio Theatre Section



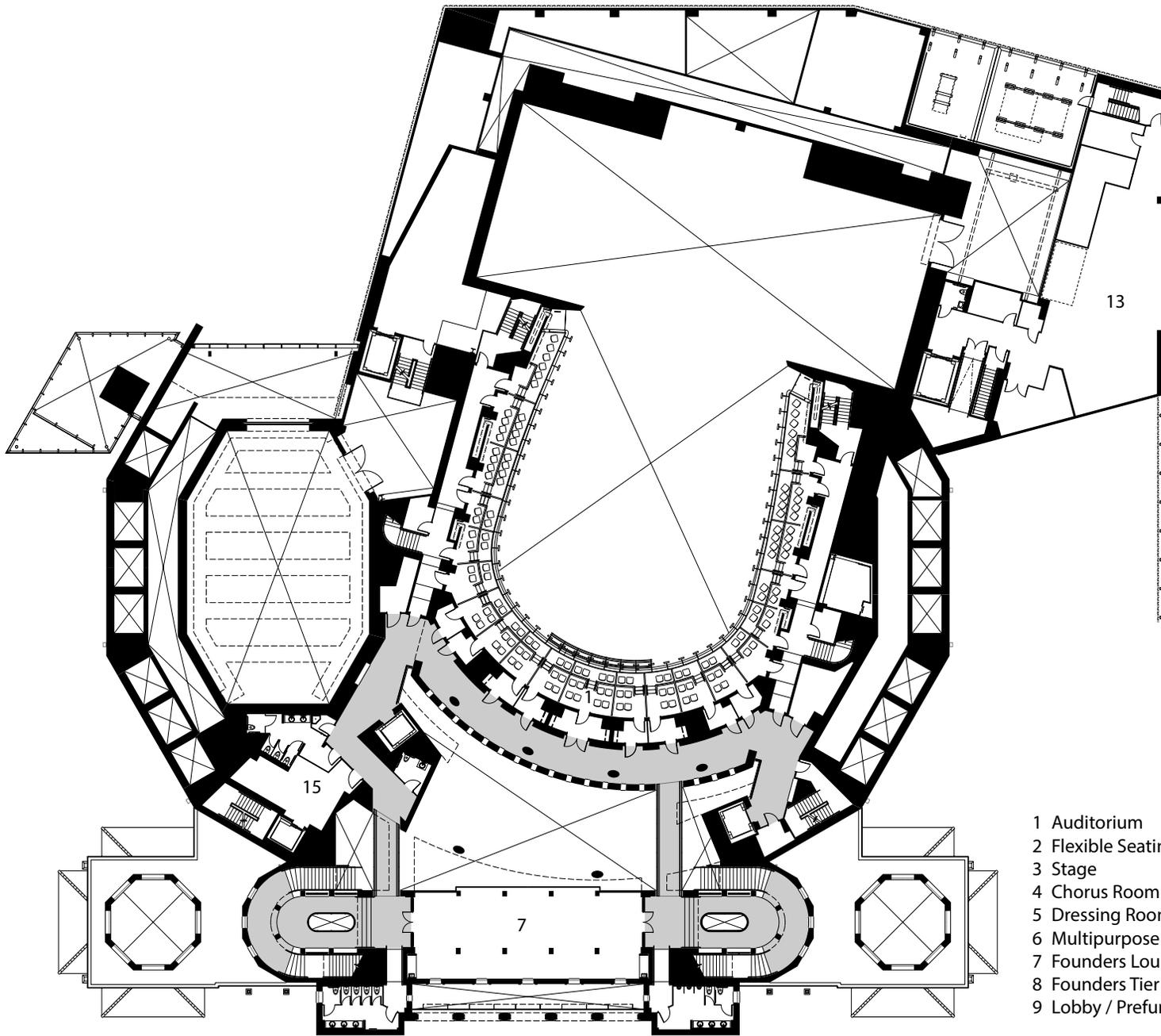
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Auditorium Section



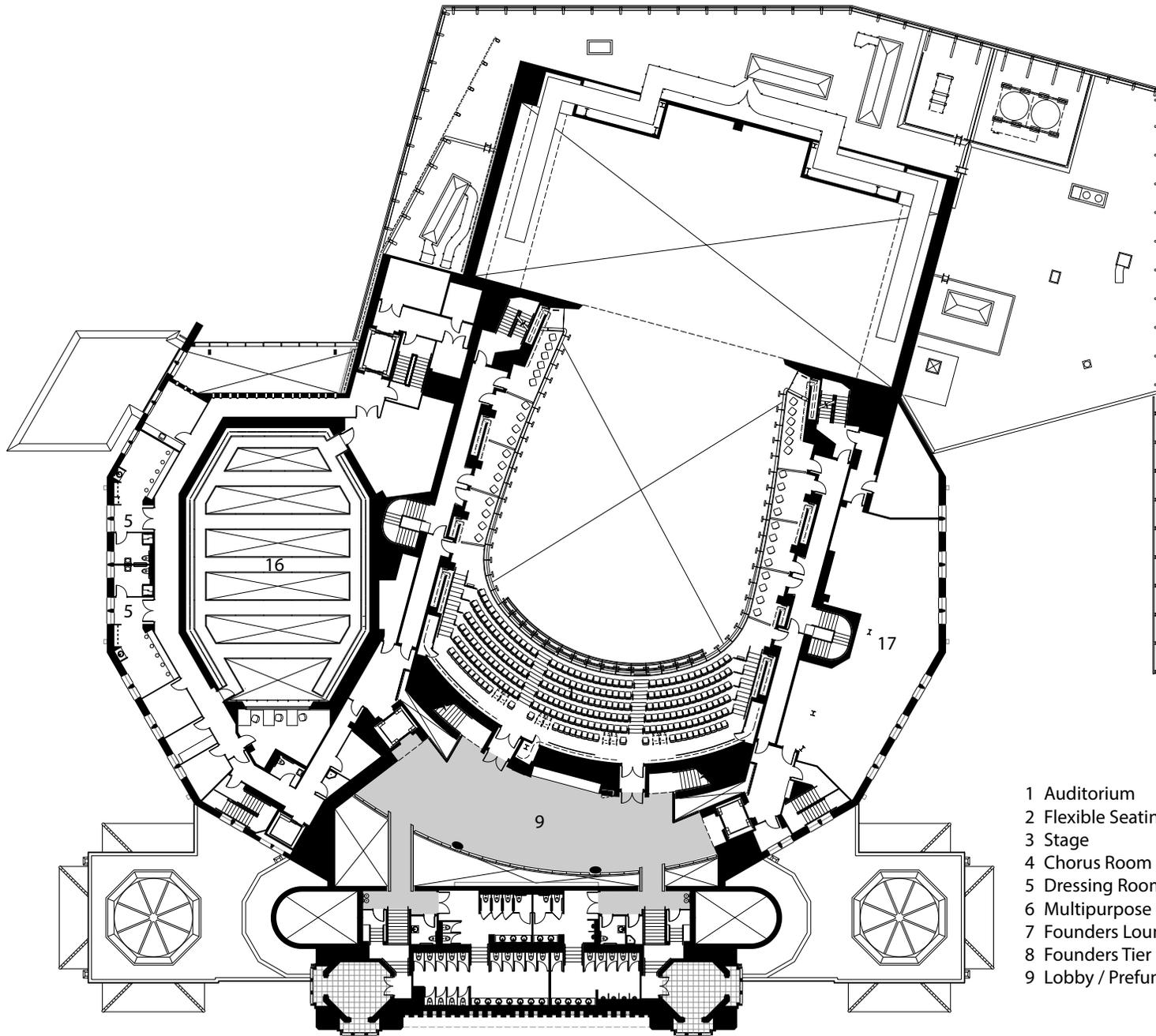
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| 8 Founders Tier | 17 Shell Space |
| 9 Lobby / Prefunction | 18 Studio Theatre |

First Floor Plan



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|-----------------------|-------------------|
| 1 Auditorium | 10 Concessions |
| 2 Flexible Seating | 11 Support |
| 3 Stage | 12 Loading |
| 4 Chorus Room | 13 Kitchen |
| 5 Dressing Rooms | 14 Storage |
| 6 Multipurpose | 15 Pantry |
| 7 Founders Lounge | 16 Catwalk |
| 8 Founders Tier | 17 Shell Space |
| 9 Lobby / Prefunction | 18 Studio Theatre |

Second Floor Plan



- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| 1 Auditorium | 10 Concessions |
| 2 Flexible Seating | 11 Support |
| 3 Stage | 12 Loading |
| 4 Chorus Room | 13 Kitchen |
| 5 Dressing Rooms | 14 Storage |
| 6 Multipurpose | 15 Pantry |
| 7 Founders Lounge | 16 Catwalk |
| 8 Founders Tier | 17 Shell Space |
| 9 Lobby / Prefunction | |

Third Floor Plan

