

György Szegő

National Concert Hall
Millenary City Centre – Cultural Block

Architect: Zoboki, Demeter and Co. Architects

General design, architecture, interior design: Zoboki, Demeter and Co.

Leading architect: Gábor Zoboki

Co-ordinating architect: Zoltán Turi

Leading architect, interior designer: János Erőss

Interior Designers: Nóra Demeter, Móni Simon, Gábor Szatmári, Csaba Valkai, Gyula V. Szabó

Fellow interior designers: Róbert Benke, András Dobos, Botond Dobos, Ferenc Fekete, István Ország, Tamás Torda Molnár, Gyula Varsányi

Public and working areas: Béla Rex-Kiss, Zsuzsa Szűts, Róbert Tóth, Ferenc Attila Vörös – Technoart Kft.

Panelling: Gyögy Jovánovics sculptor

Structure: Ferenc Gonda, Sándor Kákonyi – D 2 Office

Plumbing: Huba Kovács, Zoltán Virág – Duo Plan Kft.

Electrical planning: László Villányi, Péterné Bogár, Ferenc Némethi – VILLES Kft

Acoustical Adepts and Noise-Prevention: Russell Johnson, Federico Cruz Barney – ARTEC Consultants INC., New York

Stage-technology, lighting: Christopher S. Darland, Dr. Joel E. Rubin – ARTEC Consultants INC., New York; Vajda Ferenc, ARTEC Consultants INC, Budapest

Organ experts: István Baróti, László Fassang

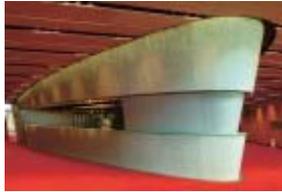
Expert for unhindered: Bendegúz Nagy – ESÉLY XXI. Kht.



The past 4-5 years brought about a significant upgrade also for the southern bank of the Danube on the Pest side. One of the reasons for this is the spadework done here in the area of the projected EXPO. On the demolition of the building stock of little value belonging to the milling industry and the light railway concentrated here, as well as the opening of the bridge in Lágymányos and the commercial discovery of the outer boulevard, the area has become a much honoured locality. As far as its situation and place value is concerned, the city section stretching between the two bridges resembles Újlipótváros grown in the 1920s and 30s. It is also linked to the boulevard, a development of an inwardly urban character .

The construction of today's Millenary City Centre has an economic background described in terms of processes fairly similar to those of Újlipótváros in many respects. Yet the scale and the pace witnessed here surpasses that by many times, and because it brings about the birth of significant institutions of culture, its irradiation is not only nationwide, but also of regional importance.

One and a half centuries before there was no cultural development of such volume seen in Hungary. It would be awkward to judge and form opinion of the project without considering the Congress Centre: in future élite tourism shall probably occupy and fill the palace. The main section of the latter is ready for criticism, yet an overall assessment would be far too early. This shall be an epoch-making moment, as – besides the Academy of Music which is due for renovation – Budapest has so far had no independent concert hall reserved exclusively for music which is also suited for high-standard requirements of acoustics and proper to the rank of Hungarian musical culture and of its musicians of the past and the present alike. The one-



time pleasant-sounding Vigadó lost this name-giving faculty on its reconstruction. The clients' needs resulted in several changes of the design, all of which share the requirement that the three institutions should also open from one and the same main entrance, so that the audience can have access to the main storey on either sides using a ramp or the stairs. Here the threshold of each cultural dimension can be crossed unnoticed: beyond the contents concentrating on musical and visual traditions as well as contemporary art welcome visitors offering a sensory experience.

This project has been drawn by designers much like the Yin-Yang symbol, yet – named „wood-blocked” after the model – this variation of positive (the wainscoted main hall and that of the museum) and negative forms (the outdoor area in front of the museum which bites on the cube of the block) also guards the primary architectural concept. Yet the delicate plasticity and the touchable surfaces of the house also keep to the order of positive-negative macro-forms.

Viewed either from the inside or the outside, the National Concert Hall gives us the impression of a „soft”, almost organic form which embodies more strikingly the counterpoint of the exterior transparent glass cube and the soft interior of the Nouvel building in Luzern, as well as their synthesis, because of its better look-on perspective. The shell of the house, its glass and stone face-work, their cool shades and tints, the pierced and broken hole-architecture as well as the stone design come to stand out strikingly against the walnut-wood panelling of the plastic art pieces seen in the concert hall with a warm palette and an almost anthropomorphous face.

This image is seen at its most effective in the intermediary spaces of the joint foyer, exerting its influence in the evenings, as viewed from the outside, looking inside. The „Musharab” character of the foyer – chosen by the architects to evoke the atmosphere of the Middle East – simultaneously offers the position of exterior comparison – already and still – the experience of the „totality” as well the intimate secrets of the interior. And – during the spectacle of those arriving here – it also presents a kind of experience of fulfilment. When it comes to a concert hall, this kind of sensory and yet abstract architectural quest for effects can be right and justified. Because music has had its roots in extatic and yet sublime psychological relations with the very base of sexuality known from time immemorial.

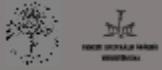
The concept itself – not only the face-work, the surfaces and the openings, but the space-perception as well: the exterior-interior stairs and the ramps also have the effects of the translucence and see-through perspective of „children’s lounge” and the „glass-room”. With the kind of theatrical quality known from the balcony scenes of Romeo and Juliet or Cyrano, they can truly express the more than three-dimensional character of the „intrusion” into the interior and upper worlds via the local energies of verticality. In the „prelude” the „Musharab” type of space reveals contrasted lights also contrasted with the dark shades of the seats. Farther in it is taken over by dark pieces of textile woven after the individual designs of the so-called sound- and light-traps, also functioning as sound insulation. Now the visitor is to enter the concert hall meant to evoke spatial effects similar to those one can experience in cathedrals. It is a non-profane adventure indeed.

The National Concert Hall was founded upon general principles worked out by the Hungarian AFT Acoustics, based on the professional advice of internationally acknowledged experts of acoustics. The springy solution of the floated building structure also promises the insulation of the noise caused by the nearby railway, yet with its scaleable sounding chambers, interior resounding panelling it also aims for top achievements meeting the most fastidious acoustic expectations. With its 25-metre height, 25 m width and 52 length, the hall has one of its main visual-functional element hung above the stage: the resounding unit, reaching well into the sphere of the auditorium, suited for rising, sinking and revolving. The headlights, the microphone-system for purposes of recording, the screen as well as the loudspeakers are also exposed out of this umbrella or chute, and are centrally controlled components. Positioned along a circle, the system of resounding chambers also serves adjustable acoustics. In order to influence acoustic effects, the structures of the concert hall, the interior height – 18 metres – of

the scope for action is computer-controlled.

The functional details reveal a wide variety of design ideas: facework, panelling, mobilia and illumination all treasure many a surprise. In his oeuvre, the accredited designer of the interior face-work for the main hall, Gyögy Jovánovics reveals a world almost born for the very purposes of acoustics. The powerful colouring of the pieces of plastic art is extraordinary, yet convincing, able to create harmony with the light tones of the maple-wood panelling and those of the seats.

The acoustics of the concert hall is to be accomplished by the installation of a top-quality organ which is a joint product of the Pécs-based Organ-Building Ltd. and the Mühleisen company. The visual effect experienced inside the building is already an elevating one.



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