

## Four Different Visions of Disney Concert Hall

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Design models by four international architects—one of whom will be named to build the new Walt Disney Concert Hall on Bunker Hill—were unveiled Wednesday. "What we're after here is a concert hall that is a work of art," said Richard Koshalek, director of the Museum of Contemporary Art and chairman of the building's architectural subcommittee.

The four finalists are Gottfried Bohm of Cologne, West Germany; Frank O. Gehry, of Los Angeles; Hans Hollein of Vienna; and James Stirling of London. The choice of the 10-member Disney Hall Committee will be announced at the Music Center on Monday.

Koshalek said Wednesday that the architectural subcommittee has already rated the architects' work, listing choices in order from top to bottom, and presented them to the Disney committee.

The key member of the committee is Lillian B. Disney, whose \$50-million gift for a new concert hall in May, 1987, is making possible the construction of the new home for the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Asked about the selection process and Mrs. Disney's role in it, Frederick M. Nicholas, chairman of the committee, said: "She can have a veto, and has the right to choose the architect." Nicholas said he expects that the gift will eventually appreciate to \$65 million.

The four architects chosen as finalists in the \$50-million Walt Disney Concert Hall competition display a striking individuality in the way they have handled the architectural opportunities presented by the high-profile site on Grand Avenue opposite the Music Center.

Designs by Austria's Hans Hollein, West Germany's Gottfried Bohm, Britain's James Stirling and Los Angeles' Frank Gehry offer differing approaches to the Disney Hall competition's three major challenges:

-To design a 2,500-seat concert hall that is both musically and architecturally superb.

-To establish a strong connection between the new concert hall and the existing Music Center across 1st Street.

-To ensure that the total Disney Hall complex acts as a vital visual pivot linking downtown's major commercial, civic and cultural sectors on the crest of Bunker Hill at the intersection of Grand Avenue and 1st Street.

Hollein, who first made his name with a series of sleek Viennese boutiques, crowns Bunker Hill with a Post-Modern tiara spiked with upthrusting green glass shafts, purplish metallic cylinders and red sandstone. A glittering silhouette on the downtown skyline, Hollein's jeweled design would sparkle between Arata Isozaki's Post-Modern Museum of Contemporary Art and Welton Becket's mock-Parthenon Dorothy Chandler Pavilion.

The main concert hall in Hollein's scheme is intended to be "light, exuberant and joyful with a touch of splendor," the architect writes. The finishes that would surround the audience in the hall's uneven hexagonal shape offer a sensual contrast of rough and slick, including stucco and gilded metal.

By contrast with this richly intimate Austrian confection, Bohm's Wagnerian high-tech design is muscular and immense. A vast, open-web cupola of concrete ribs and tinted glass, Bohm's design conjures up the image of a huge Brunnhilde bra cup in an Olympian-scale performance of the Twilight of the Gods.

From Grand Avenue, the concertgoer penetrates the bosom of an ample plaza surrounded by a glazed ring structure supported on a series of stair towers. The ball-shaped concert hall and separate chamber music auditorium float dramatically free within the framework of the 200-foot-high ribbed cupola. The concert hall's circular interior is divided into symmetrical segments of balconies and loges overlooking a central platform.

Bohm ignores the major Grand Avenue-1st Street intersection and provides no bridge to the Music Center. His design is "a concentration of energy," his text declares, "attracting the human interaction."

Stirling's Disney Hall complex is a cluster of pure yet playful Platonic geometries, tightly locked as a Rubik's Cube. In contrast to the architect's more recent Post-Modern designs, such as the Stuttgart State Gallery, his Disney Hall style is almost a reversion to the strict Cubist modernism of his work in the 1960s and early '70s.

In Stirling's Disney Hall design, the Grand Avenue-1st Street corner is enlivened by a square box office topped by a rotating electronic billboard. This Hollywood-style extravaganza anchors the edge of a spacious concourse that covers much of the site.

The drum-shaped concert hall, clad in a red sandstone to match the skin used on nearby MOCA, is poised above a concourse-level lobby that acts as an urban gathering place for musicians, artists and the public. Described as a "snowflake," the concert hall features three tiers of interlocking balconies clustered around the central stage.

Gehry's Pop-Modernist scheme is focused upon a large, fully glazed "conservatory" that encloses all the main foyer spaces. Gehry's design, described as "a lush garden oasis nestled among towers," is floral all the way through.

The concert hall is a giant walk-in Easter lily with walls like spreading petals and a ceiling of leafy acoustic baffles. The mass of the building is stacked in irregular limestone-covered layers, succulent as cactus segments. The paving on the great plaza that opens up the major intersection opposite the Pavilion radiates in a fan-palm pattern.

The conservatory-foyer, conceived as "a space for lighthearted performances open to the light of the sky," is a great outdoor room that acts as an easy transition between the life of the street and the social and artistic activities within.

Gehry's concert hall complex turns a blank face to the other three edges of the site, along 1st, 2nd and Hope streets. The Grand Avenue frontage, by contrast, is punctuated by architectural events, including a bubble-shaped glass cafe that pivots the passer-by toward the outdoor plaza.

Acoustically, all the concert hall designs were forced into a typical compromise between the desire for good sound and a modern audience's urge to be as close to the performers as possible. To seat 2,500 people who can hear echo-free notes and see the sweep of the first violinist's bow, the shape of the hall tends to be a variation of a circle with the orchestra seated more or less at center stage.

A legion of computer-calculated baffles and reflectors is required to make a circular hall produce an unfuzzy sound. Performers generally agree that many large modern concert halls fail to make good music.

All the entries provide underground parking for 3,500 cars, as the program required. All four architects also made a stab at organizing the adjoining county-owned blocks east of the Disney Hall site along 1st Street, which are to be developed with a high density of office towers, hotels and retail areas.

A long road ahead remains for the winning architect selected by the Music Center board.

"We are not looking for a final design at this stage," said Fred Nicholas, chairman of the Disney Hall Committee, "so much as a way to judge the architect's ability to solve problems and work with the client group. After the architect is chosen, the real design process, which may take a year or more, will begin."

### **[Illustration]**

PHOTO: FRANK GEHRY-Los Angeles-based Gehry's Pop-modernist scheme focuses on large, fully glazed "conservatory" facing Music Center's Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, right, across 1st Street.; PHOTO: HANS HOLLEIN-Austrian Hollein crowns Bunker Hill with a Post-Modern tiara spiked with upthrusting green glass shafts, purplish metallic cylinders and red sandstone.; PHOTO: GOTTFRIED BOHM-From Grand Avenue, the concertgoer penetrates the bosom of an ample plaza surrounded by a glazed ring structure supported on a series of stair towers.; PHOTO: JAMES STIRLING-Stirling's design is a series of geometries enlivened by a square box office, right, facing 1st and Grand. The box is topped by a rotating electronic billboard.