

6 Architects Are Candidates for Disney Hall

By JUDITH MICHAELSON,
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Six architects—two Americans and four Europeans—have been named as semifinalist candidates to design the Walt and Lily Disney Concert Hall, the future \$50-million home of the Los Angeles Philharmonic on Bunker Hill, it was announced Thursday.

The announcement was jointly made through a press statement issued by Frederick M. Nicholas, chairman of the Disney Hall Committee, and Richard Koshalek, director of the Museum of Contemporary Art and chairman of the architectural subcommittee.

Those named as semifinalists are:

—Gottfried Boehm, 67, of Cologne, West Germany, who won the prestigious Pritzker Architecture Prize in 1986. Boehm designed the Church of the Pilgrimage in Neviges, West Germany, and the Zublin Corporate Headquarters in Zurich.

—Henry Nichols Cobb, 61, of I.M. Pei & Partners, New York City, who designed the Portland Museum of Art in Portland, Me., and the Allied Bank Tower in Dallas.

—Frank O. Gehry, 58, of Frank O. Gehry and Associates Inc. of Venice, Calif., who designed the Frances Goldwyn Hollywood Regional Branch Library and New York's Madison Square Garden Site Redevelopment and South Tower.

—Hans Hollein, 53, of Vienna, winner of the Pritzker award in 1985, who designed the Museum of Modern Art buildings in both Frankfurt and Monchengladbach, West Germany.

—Renzo Piano, 50 of Building

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Workshop in Genoa, Italy, who designed the Menil Collection Museum in Houston and was part of the design team of the Centre Beaubourg, better known as the Georges Pompidou Centre, in Paris.

—James Stirling, 61, of James Stirling, Michael Wilford and Associates of London and Berlin, who designed the State Gallery and Chamber Theatre in Stuttgart, Germany, and the Clore Gallery in London.

"We didn't pick them for their experience in designing musical halls necessarily," Nicholas noted. "They were picked for their ability to problem solve, for their design talents, and for the fact that all six of these architects are at the peak of their abilities and production at this time in their careers."

The semifinalists were chosen, he added, exclusively by the five-member subcommittee. Besides Koshalek, the subcommittee consists of Earl A. Powell, director of the County Museum of Art; John Walsh, director of the J. Paul Getty Museum; Robert Harris, dean of the School of Architecture at USC, and Richard Weinstein, dean of the Graduate School of Architecture and Urban Planning at UCLA.

Acting as consultants were conductors Andre Previn, Zubin Mehta, Pierre Boulez and Simon Rattle. "I am delighted with the thoroughness and diligence of the architectural subcommittee and am pleased with the candidates who have been selected by the subcommittee," said Lillian B. Disney through a spokesman. Her \$50-million gift to the Music Center last May is making the construction of the new concert hall and related facilities possible.

F. Daniel Frost, chairman of the Music Center board of governors, called the subcommittee "outstanding." He said, "They have done brilliant work and have made a brilliant selection."

Ernest Fleischmann, executive director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, who sat in on each of the

subcommittee meetings, said, "These are six of the greatest architects in the world today, no question about that. What is marvelous, there hasn't been any hint of favoritism or chauvinism, whatsoever. They have really gone for the best, regardless of any consideration of politics, the usual intrigue that you get in this thing. Each of these is a giant in his profession."

Previn, who was rehearsing Mendelssohn's Fourth Symphony with the Philharmonic, said he was "very pleased and delighted that the process is going forward and going so smoothly."

Cobb was a semifinalist and Stirling among three finalists four years ago in the competition to design the new J. Paul Getty Center in Brentwood. That commission went to architect Richard Meier of New York, the 1984 winner of the Pritzker, which is considered the Nobel Prize of architecture.

"I am enthusiastic about all six semifinalists," said the Getty's Walsh, "and having been through a similar process not long ago I admire this one very much, because it's thorough and serious and the Music Center knows its own mind."

The County Museum of Art's Powell noted that the semifinalists came out of "a fairly consequential and long dialogue. They have familiarization with symphony halls and musical halls and a wide-ranging experience with projects. After all Disney Hall is a part of a large scheme."

The next step in the selection process, Nicholas said, will come in mid-March, when the architectural subcommittee will narrow the list to three or four finalists. The finalists will then be invited to submit schematic models and design drawings, he said. They will also be invited to Los Angeles to be interviewed.

The final choice is expected to be made in August. The construction phase of the project is anticipated to be from December, 1989, to Decem-

ber, 1991, Nicholas said.

Frost added that Mrs. Disney, as a member of the 10-person Disney Hall Committee, will participate at the end of the selection process. That committee also includes as a vice chair, her daughter Diane Disney Miller; her attorney Ronald Gother, Frost and Fleischmann.

If the architect ultimately selected is not from the Los Angeles area, he must associate himself with a Los Angeles firm as a condition of selection, Nicholas said. "The subcommittee felt that it was necessary to have local representation for any out-of-state or out-of-city architect because of building and safety requirements. A local firm will be preparing local drawings and easements," he said.

The subcommittee, Fleischmann noted, "made the choice absolutely, totally themselves. They did all the work from compiling the original long, long, long list and then paring it down."

Nicholas said that initially about 27 architects were sent letters requesting that they submit their credentials, client references, a list of projects, including slides of five recent projects, media coverage of their work and a written two-page description of why they were qualified to build a concert hall for the Music Center and how they would approach it.

"We had three to four months of intensive examination of the architects' work, slides, bibliographies and culling through an enormous amount of material," Nicholas said. "That entailed intensive research and investigation by the architectural subcommittee. We have invited the [semi-finalist] architects to Los Angeles to be interviewed by the architectural subcommittee," Nicholas added. "We're going to look at their slides and interview them, and then the architectural subcommittee is going to recommend three or four architects as finalists."

"The architectural subcommit-

tee will conduct a competition, and then will rate the architects and make recommendations to the Disney Hall Committee. The Disney Hall Committee will make the final determination," Nicholas said.

Asked about the specific experience each would bring to building a concert hall, Fleischmann noted that several of the architects had designed concert spaces but pointed out that "even those that haven't [designed concert halls] are great."

Fleischmann noted that Frank O. Gehry had built the Merriweather Post Pavilion in Columbia, Md., an open-air pavilion, and the Concord Pavilion near San Francisco. "We [the Philharmonic] performed there [in Concord] with Leonard Bernstein and found it terrific to play in." Gehry also redesigned the Hollywood Bowl in the 1970s, working on the shell and the amphitheater and acoustical spheres.

None of the six semifinalists could be reached immediately for comment. At his Venice office, Gehry's secretary said at noon Thursday that the architect, who was lecturing in Zurich, did not yet know of his selection. She added that a letter requesting an interview with Gehry had come in Thursday morning.