

FACT SHEET

HEINZ HALL

Heinz Hall, owned and operated by the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra (PSO), is the cornerstone of the Cultural District of Pittsburgh and is the home of the Pittsburgh Symphony.

Early History

- The Hotel Anderson (1880-1925) originally stood on the Heinz Hall location. Prior to 1880 the name of the hotel was the St. Clair.
- Heinz Hall was originally an opulent movie palace, the Loew's Penn Theater, built by motion picture magnate Marcus Loew.
- Loew's Penn opened September 6, 1927, one night later than planned due to Marcus Loew's untimely death on the originally scheduled Grand Opening Night, September 5. Those in attendance were treated to a two-hour silent film and live stage show.
- The movie theater was known as Pittsburgh's "Temple of the Cinema," deemed the most magnificent theater between New York and Chicago.
- The theater not only showed films, but presented numerous vaudeville and stage presentations. Admission was 25 cents.
- The last production in the Loew's Penn Theater was the Broadway production of *Hello Dolly*, starring Carol Channing, in 1967.
- Installed in Loew's Penn Theater was a majestic organ, described as "the greatest musical instrument the world has ever know." Unfortunately, the organ was destroyed in the flood of 1936.

Restoration

- The Pittsburgh Symphony Society won the support of the Howard Heinz Endowment and every corporate giant in the city to secure funds to establish a permanent home for the Orchestra, having outgrown their previous home in the Syria Mosque. The \$10-million transformation from the Loew's Penn Theater to Heinz Hall took place over three years and was performed by the architectural firm of Stotz, Hess, MacLachlan & Fosner.
- The Box Office and lobby was once the Mayflower Coffee Shop.
- Heinz Hall's famous Golden Triangle carpeting was designed by Sewickley native Verner Purnell, who selected all of the wallpaper, draperies and furniture for the renovation project.
- H. J. Heinz II planned ahead and ordered twice the amount of carpet needed, then stored the remaining half in a climate-controlled storage area, anticipating the need for new carpet during the years ahead.
- The gold detailing throughout the Hall took two craftsmen from the A. J. Vater Company more than 18 months to complete.
- The Grand Opening Celebration of Heinz Hall for the Performing Arts was September 10, 1971. James Earl Jones, Charlton Heston and Gregory Peck were among the notable guests.
- Prior to the expansion of the Cultural District, six performing arts organizations shared Heinz Hall with the Pittsburgh Symphony: Pittsburgh Opera, Pittsburgh Ballet Theater, Civic Light Opera, Pittsburgh Youth Symphony, Pittsburgh Dance Council and the Mendelssohn Choir of Pittsburgh. The Pittsburgh Youth Symphony and the Pittsburgh Broadway Series still perform in Heinz Hall.

Interior

- Italian marble, plush red velvet and shimmering crystal are the main elements in the lavish decoration of the Hall's interior. The marble in the lobby is the original that was imported from Italy in 1927.
- The two spectacular 15-foot chandeliers in the Grand Lobby also were part of the original theater. The chandeliers, which weigh more than one ton each, are lowered by hand and cleaned once a year. The crystals on all of the chandeliers in Heinz Hall were imported from Vienna, Austria.

Auditorium

- The H. John Heinz III Auditorium was named in honor of the late senator on October 2, 1991 during the 20th anniversary celebration of Heinz Hall.
- The auditorium seats 2,676 people.
- The proscenium of the stage rests on a hydraulic lift that can be lowered 11 feet to create an orchestra pit, accommodating 70 musicians. This section also is used to raise and lower the Steinway piano used for concert solos.
- The stage is 60 feet wide and 27 feet deep (with an additional 30 feet beyond the shell wall).
- There are five “star” dressing rooms and eight chorus dressing rooms.

Plaza

- In 1982, the Garden Plaza opened, complete with waterfall, a cantilevered water sculpture, flowering plants and wrought-iron furniture, on the original site of Woolworth’s 5 & 10.
- The water sculpture *Quartet* was designed by Angela Connor of London.
- The waterfall and water sculpture in the Garden Plaza utilize 10,000 gallons of recirculated water.
- Water for the waterfall and water sculpture is supplied from an underground river (technically an aquifer, not a river). It also supplies water to the fountain at Point State Park, all the water to the H. J. Heinz Company and several office buildings. This “fourth” river has no name and is a remnant of the Wisconsin Glacier.

Renovation

- During the summer of 1995, Heinz Hall underwent a \$6.5-million renovation project.
- The architectural firm of MacLachlan Cornelius & Filoni and acoustician R. Lawrence Kirkegaard designed the plans for the technical, acoustical and aesthetic improvements to the Hall.

- Enhancements included a new orchestra shell, heating and air conditioning improvements, fresh paint, wallpaper, gold leaf, new carpeting and audio/visual refinements.
- A Latecomers Gallery also was installed.
- During the renovation, every seat in the auditorium was removed in one day to make way for scaffolding that would reach from floor to ceiling. All of the seats were reupholstered and realigned.
- All the gold detailing was repaired by the same artisans who worked on the original Heinz Hall construction.
- Seven hundred gallons of paint were used in this renovation.
- The introduction of wood into the decor is included on handrails, doors and the stage shell.
- The grand reopening of the newly refurbished Heinz Hall took place September 15, 1995, which was Opening Night of the Pittsburgh Symphony's 1995-96 Centennial Season. Dignitaries present for the ribbon-cutting ceremony included Governor Tom Ridge and Teresa Heinz, wife of the late Senator John Heinz.

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