

HEINZ HALL

Heinz Hall, dedicated in 1971 and renovated in 1995, is the cornerstone of the Cultural District of Pittsburgh. This cultural-entertainment focal point of the Golden Triangle has helped spur the continuing economic and cultural revitalization of downtown Pittsburgh. With its international reputation for grandeur and excellence as a concert hall and showplace, the 2,676-seat Heinz Hall is home of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra.

The Hall is centrally located near Gateway Center, PPG Place, Dominion Tower, Fifth Avenue Place, Liberty Center, and within walking distance of the new sports stadiums. The Cultural District offers many restaurants, hotels and parking facilities within easy walking distance to the Hall.

The structure evolved from its origin in 1927 as the Loew's Penn Theater to its renovation and dedication as Heinz Hall for the Performing Arts in 1971—"a gift to the Pittsburgh Symphony Society from the Howard Heinz Endowment . . . to encourage, foster and perpetuate the performing arts in the Greater Pittsburgh area." Each year more than a half-million patrons attend symphony concerts and other attractions, ranging from Pops concerts to children's concerts to national Broadway touring shows.

Early History: 1880-1927

For 45 years prior to the origin of the Loew's Penn Theater, the building that stood at this location was the Hotel Anderson. From 1880 to 1925 this hotel provided both accommodations and entertainment. Before 1900 the hotel frequently housed traveling acting companies. The guest list ranged from visiting businessmen to Shakespearean actors. Prior to 1880 the name of the hotel was the St. Clair. Most probably, Edwin Booth (1833-1893), brother of John Wilkes Booth, and his acting company stayed at the St. Clair, or later at the Anderson Hotel, during their many tours across the United States. After 1900 the Anderson developed a somewhat seedy reputation, lost much of its appeal and met its demise.

Built on the same location as the Anderson, the Loew's Penn Theater was constructed in 1927. Motion picture magnate Marcus Loew hired the architectural firm of Rapp & Rapp to design the opulent movie house. Known as Pittsburgh's "Temple of the Cinema," the building was regarded as the most magnificent theater between New York and Chicago. Audible gasps from first-nighters would be heard as they entered the Grand Lobby on opening night of the rococo showplace. A marble staircase led from the Grand Lobby with its 50-foot-high vaulted Venetian ceiling supported by massive ornamental columns.

Bronze and crystal chandeliers and imported silk damask draperies and hangings

complemented the lobby artwork. An organ, which would be destroyed in a 1936 flood, was touted to be “the greatest musical instrument the world has ever known.” Those in attendance were treated to a two-hour silent film and live stage show.

Such spectacles were not restricted to Pittsburgh. In the early decades of the century, Americans flocked in droves to similarly designed theaters. These flamboyant and stately palaces were built of the most costly materials, embellished with gold leaf cherubs, crystal chandeliers, Carrara marble and Persian tiles.

With the advent of television, declining attendance and the rising costs of maintaining such landmarks, the Penn Theater, in line with the nation’s other great movie palaces, was forced to shut its doors in 1964. The building then sat vacant for five years. Destined to be demolished to make way for a parking lot, the building was nearly destroyed until the Pittsburgh Symphony intervened. The Orchestra was searching for a new home, having outgrown Carnegie Music Hall and the Syria Mosque, and the economic advantages to recycling the well-constructed theater were clearly apparent. To explore the feasibility of using the building, Henry J. Heinz II and Charles Denby, President of the Pittsburgh Symphony Society, toured the old movie palace. Together they had the vision to look past the rundown interior and see that with proper restoration the hall could be a brilliant cultural center. Along with Adolph W. Schmidt, President of the A. W. Mellon Educational and Charitable Trust, and Theodore L. Hazlett, Jr., representing the Allegheny Conference and the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh, these men worked with the architectural firm of Stotz, Hess, MacLachlan & Fosner to begin the construction.

Loew’s Penn Theater to Heinz Hall for the Performing Arts: 1967-1971

The \$10-million reconstruction took place over a three-year period, with much of the work completed by local craftsmen and artisans. Much of the basic architecture of the building remained unchanged from the original French Court style. The entrance to the theater was moved into the area that had once been a coffee shop. The 40-foot Alcoa window replaced the original entrance and rises above the Grand Lobby.

Breche opal and Lavanto marble, plush red velvet and shimmering crystal are the main elements in the decoration of the interior of the Hall. The gold detailing throughout is 24-karat gold leaf which was applied by two local craftsmen of the A. J. Vater Company, who worked on its application for 18 months. The two spectacular 15-foot chandeliers in the Grand Lobby, weighing more than one ton each and which were part of the original theater, were dismantled, redesigned and recrystallized. The crystals on these and all of the chandeliers were imported from J. & L. Lobmyer of Vienna. The acoustical consultant was Dr. Heinrich Keilholz of Salzburg, Austria. An adjustable orchestra pit, to accommodate 85 musicians and powered by a hydraulic lift, was added for opera and stage performances.

As part of the renovation, a new, five-story wing was added to the rear of the building, which added 28 feet to the stage, plus dressing rooms, music library and rehearsal room facilities. The main rehearsal room was designed to the exact dimensions of the stage area, and all of the rooms are soundproofed and equipped with acoustical panels.

September 10, 1971 was the Grand Opening of Heinz Hall for the Performing Arts. It was a celebration of ceremony and pageantry, with flowers, dinners, champagne and music. Many of Pittsburgh's most prominent citizens were in attendance for the festivities and Pittsburgh Symphony concert under the baton of William Steinberg. The guest list included such dignitaries as Marian Anderson, Samuel Barber, Charlton Heston, James Earl Jones, Agnes de Mille, Gregory Peck, Cyril Ritchard, Rudolf Serkin and Nancy Hanks, chairman of the National Council on the Arts.

Heinz Hall Annex and Garden Plaza: 1982

In February 1978, Henry J. Heinz II, Chairman of the Howard Heinz Endowment, announced the Endowment's plans to finance the construction of the Heinz Hall Plaza, a garden adjacent to Heinz Hall, as well as a four-story addition to the Hall. The same Pittsburgh architectural firm that designed the renovation initiated the Plaza project and the addition to the Hall, and its successor firm of MacLachlan, Cornelius & Filoni completed the design.

The Garden Plaza opened on May 7, 1982. The waterfall was designed by the architects, and the moving water sculpture *Quartet* is a design by Angela Connor of London. This addition to the hall consists of three main areas: The Garden Room, a first-floor bar and lounge that connects the Hall and the plaza; the Overlook Room, a second bar/lounge overlooking the plaza; and the Mozart Room, an elegant dining and meeting room. The two Regency Rooms, public areas in the lower level of the Hall, were refurbished in 1988, and are used as dining and reception facilities. In 2001 the Regency Rooms were renamed the "Dorothy Porter Simmons Regency Rooms."

Heinz Hall 15th Anniversary: 1986

The 1986-87 season was the occasion for a triple anniversary in Heinz Hall. It was the observance of the 90th anniversary of the Pittsburgh Symphony, the 60th anniversary of the Pittsburgh Symphony Society and the 15th anniversary year for Heinz Hall. The anniversary season culminated in a tribute to the late Henry J. Heinz II. All of the original constituent organizations of Heinz Hall joined with the Pittsburgh Symphony and the Pittsburgh Youth Symphony in saluting the man whose vision and leadership resulted in the creation of Pittsburgh's Cultural District. The occasion also marked the Heinz Hall farewell appearances of those constituents: the Pittsburgh Opera, Pittsburgh Ballet, Civic Light Opera and the Pittsburgh Dance Council. Their new home, beginning with the

1987-88 season, became the Benedum Center. The Benedum Center, restored from another grand movie house, the Stanley Theater, is one block from Heinz Hall and became the second performing arts center to open in the downtown Cultural District.

Heinz Hall 20th Anniversary: 1991

Following the tragic death of Senator John Heinz in April 1991, a tribute to the late Senator and celebration of the Hall's 20th anniversary were celebrated in Heinz Hall on October 2 of the same year. Guests from all points of the globe descended on Pittsburgh to participate in the celebration of the life of the late Senator and to toast the first two decades of the Hall as the flagship performing arts center in the city. The vision and lives of Henry J. Heinz II, architect of the dream of Pittsburgh's cultural district, and his son H. John Heinz III were honored. That evening the auditorium of Heinz Hall was named in honor of H. John Heinz III, with his wife Teresa and three sons in attendance for the tribute.

1995 Renovation Project

During 1995, Heinz Hall underwent a four-month, \$6.5-million renovation. Funding for the project was provided by a \$4-million grant by the Howard Heinz Endowment, plus Commonwealth of Pennsylvania funding of \$2.5 million under the Strategy 21 program. Architect Albert Filoni, of MacLachlan Cornelius & Filoni, and acoustician R. Lawrence Kirkegaard designed the plans for the acoustical, technical and aesthetic improvements to the Hall. The enhancements included a new orchestra shell, acoustical risers, new butterfly sound reflector, heating and air conditioning improvements, fresh paint, wallpaper and gold leaf, auditorium seats refurbished and realigned, new carpeting, a latecomer's gallery, and audio/visual refinements. The grand reopening of the newly refurbished hall was September 15, 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.

Heinz Hall remains home to the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, which performs more than thirty weeks of concerts in the Hall each season. The Pittsburgh Youth Symphony also performs in the Hall. The expanded Pittsburgh Broadway Series, which is presented by the Pittsburgh Symphony, the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust and Clear Channel Entertainment, continues to bring the best and most exciting national touring attractions to Heinz Hall and the Benedum Center. Additional presentations from all areas of popular entertainment fill the balance of the Heinz Hall season. In keeping with its grand tradition, Heinz Hall maintains its position as a world-class concert hall to be enjoyed by generations to come.

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