

# Co-sponsored Meeting Reports

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Fig.1 Attendees of the 2010 Summer Institute of the Concert Hall Research Group

The 2010 Summer Institute of the Concert Hall Research Group (CHRG) was held in Santa Fe, New Mexico, 25–29 July 2010. This was the 4th Summer Institute since the initial conference was held at Tanglewood in 1999. The 2010 conference was held at the historic La Fonda Hotel, on the Plaza in downtown Santa Fe. There were 70 participants, which included faculty, professional consultants, university students, and accompanying persons (See Fig.1). The highlights of the week were three listening experiences—Santa Fe Opera, Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, and a private demonstration of the reverberation enhancement system in the Lencic Theater.

The Santa Fe Opera has a worldwide reputation for excellent production values, superb acoustics, and a beautiful setting in the hills outside Santa Fe. The audience area has no side walls, yet the singers are loud and clear throughout the 2200-seat opera house without sound reinforcement. The

group took a private tour of Santa Fe Opera led by production director Paul Horpedahl (See Fig. 2), and attended an evening performance of *Life is a Dream* by Lewis Spratlan. Three members of the design team for the 1999 additions and renovations made presentations about their work on the project and the unique design features of the Santa Fe Opera. These presenters were Tim Hartung, the project architect from the Polshek Partnership (now Ennead Architects), Len Auerbach of Auerbach Pollock Friedlander theater consultants; and Tom Clark of Artec, who worked as director of audio-visual systems for the Santa Fe Opera.

The chamber music concert was in a much smaller venue, the Saint Francis Auditorium, which is the presentation space in the New Mexico Museum of Fine Arts. Saint Francis Auditorium has a seating capacity of 600 people, and the architecture is based on a mission-style church, typical of historic churches in the Southwest. The performance was



Fig. 2 Production Director Paul Horpedahl leading the discussion from the stage of the Santa Fe Opera



Fig. 3 Panel Discussion

Mahler's song cycle, *Das Lied von der Erde*, arranged for twenty-piece chamber orchestra. The next morning, a panel of faculty members compared their listening impressions from the previous evening's concert (See Fig. 3). There were some significant differences in the sound depending on the listener's location within the auditorium, with listeners in the balcony reporting the best sound.

Our third listening experience was in the Lensic Theater, a former vaudeville theater and movie palace in downtown Santa Fe. The Lensic has been converted to multi-use auditorium with a full fly stage and an audience capacity of 820. The stage has a complete concert shell, used for concerts by the New Mexico Symphony Orchestra and smaller ensembles. For symphonic and chamber music performances the Lensic has a reverberation enhancement system built by Acoustic Control Systems (ACS). Arthur van Maurik of ACS arranged for a 5-piece brass ensemble to perform while CHRG participants listened to the music with and without the reverberation enhancement system.

Since this was a private demonstration, we were free to move around and listen from different parts of the audience area and stage. Most people agreed there were no cues that the sound was being enhanced by loudspeakers. We also had the opportunity to ask the musicians about their experience and impressions of the system. One of the players also performs in the New Mexico Symphony Orchestra, and he said the orchestra would not be able to use the Lensic Theater were it not for the reverberation enhancement system.

This was an international conference with attendees from Argentina, Chile, England, Hong Kong, Spain, and Sweden. The 20 student participants came from eight different universities.

Many students received scholarships, five of which were provided by the Acoustical Society of America and Institute for Acoustics for the Performing Arts in honor of Russell Johnson and one by RPG Diffusor Systems. We also had a special guest—Charles Schmid, Executive Director of the Acoustical Society of America.

Faculty presenters included Neil Shade, Rick Talaske, Scott Pfeiffer, Damian Doria, David Kahn, Russ Altermatt, Bob Essert, Ann Minors (Theater Consultant), Paul Scarborough, and Steven Ovitzsky, general manager of the Santa Fe Music Festival. Carl Rosenberg presented a paper written by Chris Jaffe, who could not attend. We also had a special lecture by architectural historian, Victoria Newhouse, analyzing how the success of concert halls and other arts facilities is related to the degree of involvement of the end users with the design team.

One afternoon was devoted to a design challenge which involved placing a concert hall and opera house inside a huge abandoned structure once used to park dirigibles (See Fig. 4).



Fig. 4 Design Competition Team



Fig. 5 2010 Summer Institute Organizers (L to R) Carl Rosenberg, Michelle Vigeant, Tim Foulkes and Bill Dohn  
(Editor's note: There is a fifth organizer in the photo. Can you find him?)

Six design teams, each consisting of students and professionals, came up with some novel design concepts which were judged. This provided the opportunity for the students to

work side by side with consultants and professors. The Institute's organizing committee included Bill Dohn, Tim Foulkes, Carl Rosenberg, and Michelle Vigeant (See Fig. 5).