



PRECEDENT STUDIES 02

The formulation of a productive methodology for design is important. Through proper investigation past examples illustrate a culmination of processes seeking to identify the most economical and effective form in response to a design problem. But it is in this statement that the key to informed design lays, therefore proper investigation is a must. A precedent is only effective as a suitable basis for directed understanding once the investigator is able to pose to it the proper questions. Sheer documentation and illustration of similar projects in scope provide no greater understanding to the investigator. Without proper direction it is easy to describe what someone else has done to solve a problem, but the important questions of 'how' and 'why' remain importantly undiscovered. Furthermore it is not only in projects of similar scope that one may find the appropriate influence and understanding, but through the identification of comparable and suitable processes that relevant projects may be incorporated into the knowledge base of the researcher.



2.1. BBC Music Box

Foreign Office Architects

White City, London

"The design by Foreign Office Architects majors on openness with emphasis on public space. This will ensure that the Music Box not only becomes a centre of excellence for music making at the BBC but will also be an integral part of our commitment to involve the local community."

John Smith

BBC Director of Finance, Property and Business Affairs.

The Music Box, the new Music Centre scheduled to open in 2006, is soon to become home to the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the BBC Symphony Chorus, the BBC Concert Orchestra and the BBC Singers, bringing them together in one place for the first time.

The Music Box is part of the new Media Village, integrated within the BBC's redevelopment of White City, and is a key part in the BBC's policy to open its doors to the local community in West London. The White City development will also foster local regeneration in the area. The wider plan is to move all the BBC's performing groups into new or renovated buildings in the next four years.

The wider area is shared with the residents of the adjacent White City Estate and the BBC's Television Centre. The daily population of this large BBC campus is about 12,000 people. The Music Centre will sit at the centre of this campus, at the heart of the BBC in West London.

At present available images and descriptions of this building still represent the conceptual design stage of the development. The general concept of the building is strong and many conclusions may still be derived.

While details of the construction methods are sketchy at this stage, the form of the building speaks for itself. The general concept of the building is one whereby its floors and walls are one continuous element that emerge and flow out of the ground. Spaces therefore define each other by a mix-match of interior and exterior walls, intrinsically linking all the spaces both visually and structurally.

The building is tasked with responding to a large and highly utilized public open space within the city centre of London. Due to the high standard of public transport, vehicular emphasis and access is considered secondary, with emphasis on pedestrian access and congregation. The building is



Figure 2.01



Figure 2.02



Figure 2.03



Figure 2.04



Figure 2.05

therefore primarily tasked with responding to the generous public open space adjacent to, and interacting with its site. The Music box was thus designed to float above the public space in order not to institute or constrict public movement from outside to under the building. Access into the building is achievable on two levels, the transition between which doubles as public seating.

The building is divided into two major performing spaces, one of a larger capacity than the other. These spaces are joined by a common foyer area, maximizing public interface and social interaction. Circulation space is also thereby reduced.

The performance halls are uniquely designed with one entire wall made up of glazing. This wall faces the public space and provides a visual link between what is usually a closed off performance space and the outside. The glass wall provides natural day lighting into the interior from behind the audience so that the stage is front lit. The interior is however displaced vertically from the public space to the point that the interior is not visible from the outdoor public space.

Design Influences:

The BBC Music Box is inspirational one a few levels. Firstly it does not shy away from revealing its internal spaces from public view, utilizing its transparent facades to tease the passing public into experiencing its events. Secondly the manner to which it responds the outdoor public space and effectively involves it within its overall layout. It is difficult to discern where the public space ends and the music centre begins, in this way the public space is allowed to flow and continue to engage with the surrounding buildings that share the overall site and also form part of the Media Village.

What may be taken away from this design is therefore a new way of linking the interior of a public space and its relationship to the outdoor public spaces. While this form of response is not appropriate for the site at Salvokop, it is clear to see that the vitality of a development may be greatly increased by creating transparency in the building form and allowing passers by to immediately engage with and become intrigued with the goings-on within the building itself. Shared foyer spaces greatly enhance the quality of public spaces on the interior, and in a building where the nature of performances are greatly enhanced by post performance discussion; these spaces fulfill that purpose optimally. It stands to reason however that the static layout and orientation of stage and audience positions do reduce the flexibility of interior spaces and limit variety of performance.

2.2. Holland Performing Arts Centre / Orpheum Theatre

HDR Architects in collaboration with Polshek Partnership Architects (New York)
Omaha, U.S.A.

The Holland Performing Arts Centre has been designed with three priorities:

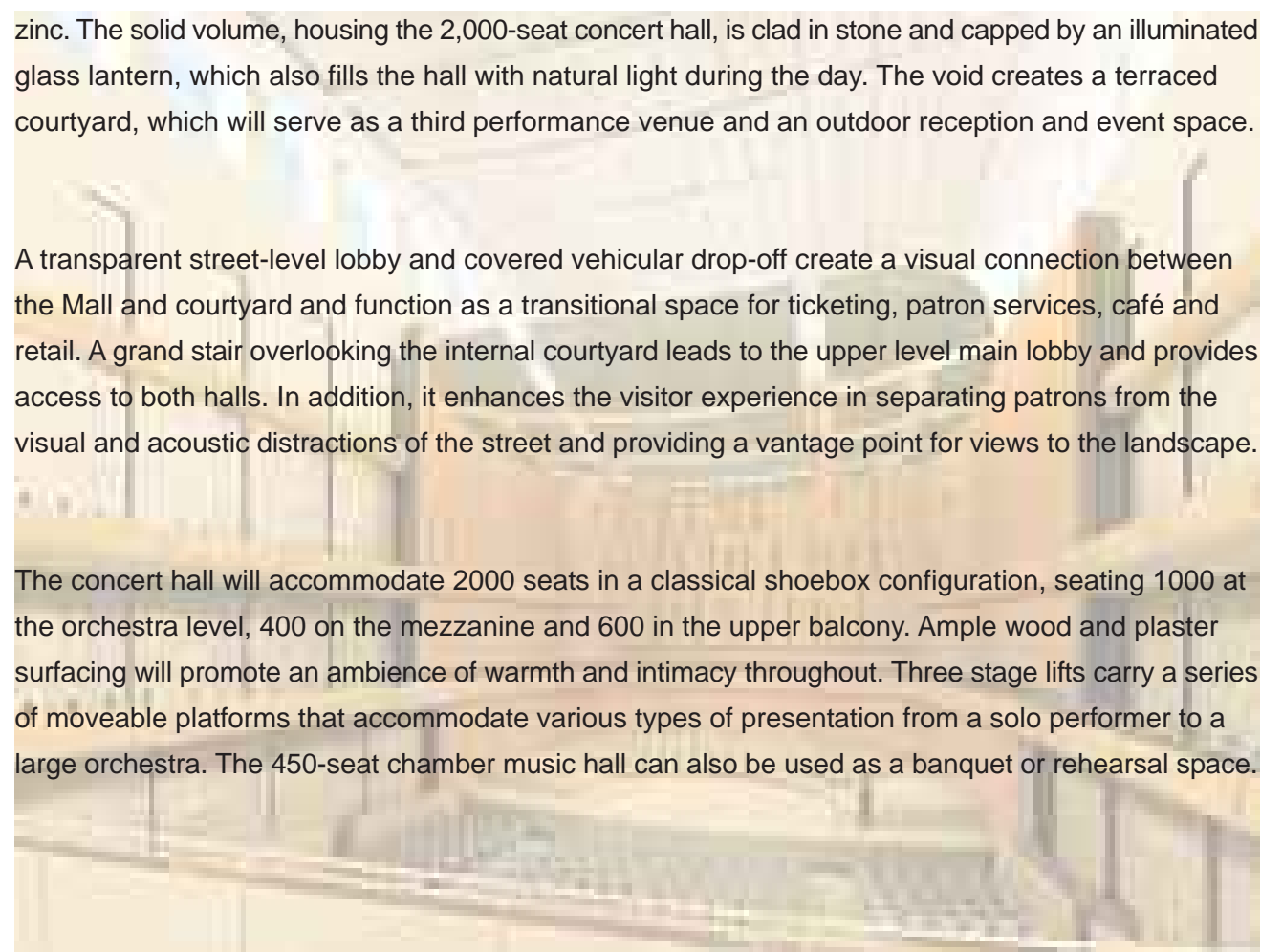
- A concert hall with excellent acoustics
- A centre that will draw people in to experience the arts
- A "building of distinction" that will last for generations

Performance and teaching spaces include a 2000-seat concert hall, a flexible 450-seat chamber music hall and a semi-enclosed outdoor performance and event garden. The multi-level lobby will accommodate a variety of uses including exhibitions, retail and a café and access to donors' lounge and green room. Back of house functions include dressing and rehearsal rooms, administrative offices, loading docks and the mechanical, electrical and storage facilities required to support all types and scales of performance.

In the words of the architects: building out to the street edges creates traditional sidewalks, which foster a more intimate pedestrian experience, in the manner of a typical urban block. The main body of the building is elevated above the ground plane, which reinforces the landscape by allowing it to flow continuously beneath it. A solid and a void punctuate this elevated volume, which is sheathed in zinc. The solid volume, housing the 2,000-seat concert hall, is clad in stone and capped by an illuminated glass lantern, which also fills the hall with natural light during the day. The void creates a terraced courtyard, which will serve as a third performance venue and an outdoor reception and event space.

A transparent street-level lobby and covered vehicular drop-off create a visual connection between the Mall and courtyard and function as a transitional space for ticketing, patron services, café and retail. A grand stair overlooking the internal courtyard leads to the upper level main lobby and provides access to both halls. In addition, it enhances the visitor experience in separating patrons from the visual and acoustic distractions of the street and providing a vantage point for views to the landscape.

The concert hall will accommodate 2000 seats in a classical shoebox configuration, seating 1000 at the orchestra level, 400 on the mezzanine and 600 in the upper balcony. Ample wood and plaster surfacing will promote an ambience of warmth and intimacy throughout. Three stage lifts carry a series of moveable platforms that accommodate various types of presentation from a solo performer to a large orchestra. The 450-seat chamber music hall can also be used as a banquet or rehearsal space.



Design Influences:

This building is yet another example of an interesting new way to respond to outdoor spaces. Since this building is still under construction it is not clear as to how successful it has been in its aims. This building typically sought to increase pedestrian accessibility by creating a strong perimeter, pushing its boundaries right up to the street. In this manner protection within its walls from passing motor cars may easily be sought and refuge provided in the central courtyard space that feeds into all wings of the development.

The concert hall space is of great interest with respect to the manner with which it tackles sound reflectivity and acoustical performance. The shell of the building remains obvious and is designed to primarily provide acoustical densities so that outside noise is obstructed from causing interference. Internal acoustics are aimed at solely musical and orchestral performances; therefore longer reverberation time is sought. This is thus provided by means of extensive volumetric measurements of the hall, as well as a series of aesthetically pleasing reflective panels suspended above the stage area. Thus volume is retained and even light permitted to enter by means of clerestory windows.



Figure 2.06 External relationship to pedestrian landscape



Figure 2.07



Figure 2.08 Suspended ceiling for acoustic purposes



Figure 2.09



Figure 2.10

2.3. South African State Theatre

Architects:

Pretoria, South Africa

The State Theatre is the existing complex of theatres and performance spaces that exists in closest proximity to the site of this dissertation project. The Building is arranged over four levels, with parking and services situated on basement levels. Contained within the complex:

- The Opera House is the largest of six theatres, seating 1,300 patrons on three levels including a balcony. It has an orchestra pit that can accommodate up to 60 musicians.
- Drama Theatre with continental style seating for 640 on one level.
- Two cabaret/revue venues, seat 120 independently in at separate tables in a nightclub setting.
- Arena, the complex's third largest theatre, can double as the main opera rehearsal hall. Fully equipped computerised lighting and sound control rooms form part of this highly sophisticated theatre.
- The complex also offers rehearsal studios and offices for rental.

The building, although it contains a variety of world-class venues, lacks a form of tangible relationship with the surrounding context. The building has, in true 'monumentalist' form, sought to provide a large scale building that belittles the pedestrian, incurring emotions of grandeur and importance. It does this very well it should be said. The nature and extent of the building is not well represented from the outside, and coupled with its lack of public interface results in a building that is only entered by those with specific purpose to view a performance somewhere inside of its frame. Criticism therefore is applied to its inclination to perform perfectly as a functional building, but poorly as a public and living building. It is the opinion of this dissertation that this inaccessibility of the 'old-style' and 'traditional' form theatres has contributed to dwindling attendance over the years and the inaccurate perception that there is little market for supplementary performance facilities within the city of Pretoria, and even Gauteng for that matter.



Figure 2.13 Monumental Nature of complex. Relationship with passers by non-existent

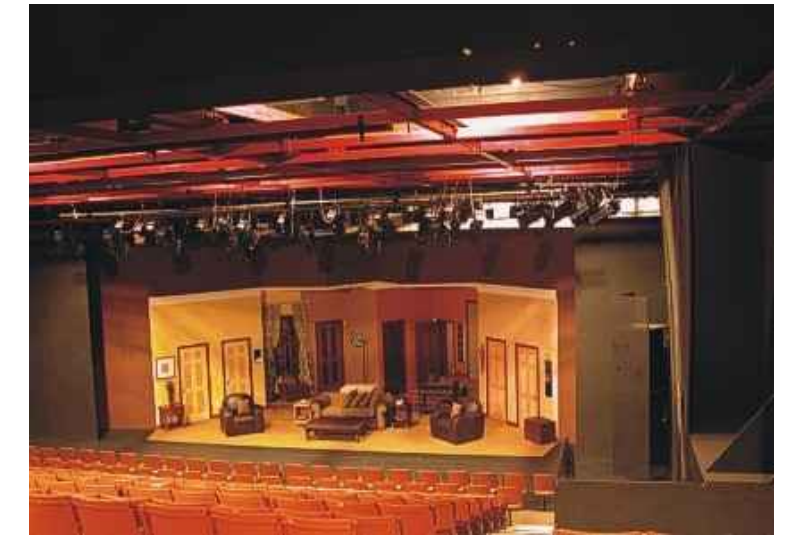


Figure 2.11 Proscenium Theatre, one of the many performance spaces contained



Figure 2.12 Traditional Concert Hall Layout, high in luxury and entertainment value



Figure 2.14 Although on an important corner, there is no public desire to explore its facilities

2.4. Musiktheater Gelsenkirchen

Max von Hausen, Ortwin Rave, Werner Ruhnau
Gelsenkirchen, Germany

The Municipal Theatre in Gelsenkirchen opened in 1959 and is a good example of the post-war building boom in Europe. The opening of the theatre to the town – typical coal and steel place where the theatre is keen to demonstrate its prestige – is somewhat exhibitionist in nature and extends the entire width of its façade. For the first time in an auditorium of its scale, the stage (proscenium opening) was designed to be flexible and is of entirely the wagon type (11m diameter) with three large subsidiary stages. This is used to prepare multiple stages for a single production, so while one is grasping the attention of the audience, the next is being set-up for eventual rotation into public view.

The studio, originally planned for experimental productions, appears in stark contrast to the large house. Its attractive layout has termed it the intimate theatre and has ultimately estranged itself from its original role as experimental studio. This smaller theatre may be described as a multi-form space, whereby its flexible internal layout allows it to adopt one of two different stage layouts and performance experiences. The stage is able to move horizontally along a single plane, resulting in either a proscenium style stage or a surrounded stage with seating on all sides. By allowing the stage to be pushed up against the side, this puts the audience in a position to experience the production from a single vantage point – a typical confrontational layout between performer and audience. By shifting the stage to the middle, multiple vantage points are created resulting in the performance being surrounded, hopefully by a captivated audience.



Figure 2.20 Primary Glass Facade

Design Influences:

The manner with which it so boldly reveals its interior to the approaching public generates quite a statement upon approaching the Musik Theatre. The transparent façade thereby has the ability to relieve the public's focus away from the scale of the building – as it needs to be – and re-directs it to the interior, towards the events and extents of the building itself. The Musik theatre therefore becomes a building within which to explore, whereby the visitor's destination may be sought and identified before entering the building rather than a solid and enormous mystery that almost provokes becoming lost and disorientated within. While the scale of such a façade, or building for that matter, is not appropriate for this dissertation project the manner with which the building embraces and comes to terms with its scale is quite appropriate, by putting all on display and utilizing the public as its main contributor of aesthetics and representation of life-blood.

In terms of stage design, it is the intimate theatre that provides most influence. Flexible Performance spaces are typically one of two things: multi-purpose or multi-form. This theatre is best described as the latter. A single purpose expressed in a number of ways, this is a design direction that complements best the desired performance spaces of this dissertation project. While still somewhat limited in flexibility, the simple and uncomplicated manner with which the space may be so drastically changed within static confines serves to influence personal design decisions greatly. By making the stage an animated object, the audience is therefore hardly ever allowed to experience the same space in the same way, thus allowing possibility to be engaged by the performers as never before.

Figure 2.15



Figure 2.16



Figure 2.18



Figure 2.17



Figure 2.19

2.5. Nagaoka Lyric Hall

Toyo Ito and Associates
Nagaoka, Japan

Consisting of facilities provided primarily for musical and theatrical performances, including a concert hall with 700 seats, a theatre with 450 seats and 10 studios of three different sizes, this complex is situated in an educational zone encircled by extensive flatlands. The building height was kept low and the entire complex was covered with a large, gently-sloped, three-dimensionally curved roof, maintaining visual continuity with the surrounding landscapes. In contrast to this, an oval shaped hall and rectangular shaped hall jut out above the structure to stand in sharp defiance to the landscape form. The area to the south was filled to create a grass slope leading up to the foyer. The foyer, the studios, an information lounge etc. are covered with a flat-slab roof structure. Inside a grove-like space was created through the use of randomly arranged columns and permeating light through the roof structure.

The grassy slope on the south was further exploited in the creation of fixed raked seating of concrete construction. This seating thus serves a dual role. Due to its accessible location from the parking area, a relaxing seating space is created for the loitering public, allowing a suitable vantage point from which to enjoy the rolling landscapes. It is also possible to utilize this space as a suitable outdoor performance space. The stage area follows the continuity of the curved line that defines the seating space and gently pushes its way into the curvilinear form of the complex. The stage thus remains covered by the continuous sloping roof.

The main concert hall, oval in shape is static in internal configuration. The stage is surrounded by seating on all sides by means of elevated seating platforms that continue around the space at the level of entrance.

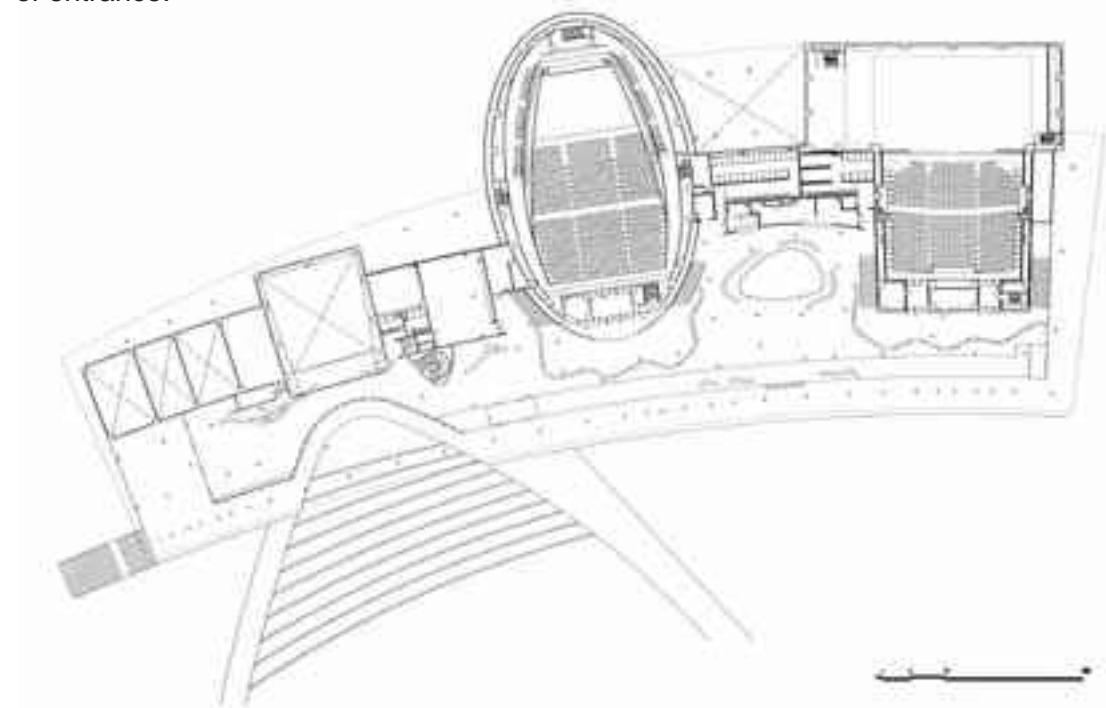


Figure 2.22 Above. Ground Floor Plan
Figure 2.21 Top. Site Plan of Lyric Hall

Design influences:

While the nature of this building is not unique for its time, there are many design decisions taken that serve to illustrate the appropriate relationship of the building to its surroundings. The subtlety and simplicity of its form projects elegance, unpretentiously revealing the linearity and simplicity of its public spaces against the protruding forms of its performance spaces. It is this conscious linearity that suitably represents the building's affiliation with music, a physical representation of a logical and continuous movement from start to finish, attributing memory to the listener/user during its progression.

The manner with which the complex involves the outdoor performance space is of particular interest. The outdoor space has gained sufficient meaning, not only as an integrated public space, but also as a potential expansion of performance space. While still somewhat reactionary in layout, this renewed importance and incorporation of space is very adept to a culture that has such a history of outdoor gathering and recreation, as could be described is the case in South Africa. It serves to reason that the integration of outdoor performance/recreational spaces in the layout and construction of performance buildings – which are typically assumed to be secluded from the elements – is an appropriate response to contemporary briefs of this nature and may serve to lend such facilities an increased vigour and vitality in the years to come.



Figure 2.23



Figure 2.24



Figure 2.25