

The opening of the Mandell Weiss Center for the Performing Arts with the production of "The Threepenny Opera"

October 22, 1982

The Mandell Weiss Center for the Performing Arts on the campus of the University of California, San Diego, will open on Wednesday, November 10, with a program for specially invited guests.

This program will begin at 6 p.m. with a reception in the foyer and promenade of the new Weiss Center. Chancellor Richard C. Atkinson will deliver the opening remarks. The UCSD Department of Drama's production of "The Threepenny Opera," by Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill, will follow at 8 p.m.

Special guests at this celebration include Mandell Weiss, in whose honor the theater is named; Ewart W. Goodwin Jr., President of the Theatre and Arts Foundation; members of the Foundation's board of directors; Arthur Wagner, acting chair of the UCSD Department of Drama and director of "The Threepenny Opera"; members of the Chancellor's Associates; patron and donor members of the Friends of the UCSD Theatre; major donors to the Committee for the Fund for the New Theatre, and key UCSD administrators and city officials.

The public opening of the UCSD Department of Drama's 1982-83 season will occur at 8 p.m. Thursday, November 11, with "The Threepenny Opera" in Weiss Center.

Arthur Wagner and John L. Stewart, Provost of Muir College, will speak at this November 11 opening.

"The Threepenny Opera" will continue to play at 8 p.m. on November 12, 13, 17, 18, 19 and 20. It will show once at 7 p.m. on Sunday, November 14.

The Mandell Weiss Center for the Performing Arts will be used by the UCSD Department of Drama during the academic year, and by the Theatre and Arts Foundation's revitalized La Jolla Playhouse during the summer.

Weiss Center is located on the corner of La Jolla Village Drive and Torrey Pines Road in La Jolla, at the southwestern entrance to the UCSD campus.

For further information regarding the UCSD Department of Drama's 1982-83 season, phone 452-3793. For information about tickets to "The Threepenny Opera," phone 452-4574.

For more information contact: Jan Seagrave, 452-3120 or Lori Carlson, 452-3793

(October 22, 1982)

THE STAGE AND SUPPORT EQUIPMENT OF THE WEISS CENTER

The stage and support equipment of the Mandell Weiss Center for the Performing Arts has been designed and chosen to provide flexibility for the artists. The stage will be reshaped continually by scenic environments and lighting designs. Many traditional stage necessities and theatrical conventions exist throughout the building. In addition, new design and equipment concepts have been introduced.

Front-of-house stage lighting has traditionally been a problem of finding that ideal spotlight location in a ceiling normally filled with air conditioning units, house lights, masses of catwalks and pipes, and usually very small slots through which to aim the spotlights. The tension grid located above the audience is a new approach to solving these old problems. The grid is a 35' x 70' mesh "floor" of woven 1/8" diameter steel aircraft cable. The space above the mesh is totally clear and available for spotlight hanging. This is a unique technical advance in the American theater. Several small tension grids are now in theaters on the east coast, but the Weiss Center's is the first on the west coast and the largest in the world.

For years, theater lighting has been plagued with a cumbersome patching of spotlights from the circuits to the limited number of large capacity dimmers usually found in a theater. (Picture the old fashioned telephone switchboard, and you know the problem.) Taking advantage of several recent breakthroughs in the electronic and stage lighting industries, Weiss Center provides one dimmer for each of the 366 stage lighting circuits. Each dimmer is connected to a sophisticated memory control for lighting the individual scenes by the designer. This is a sophisticated teaching tool, and the equivalent of the professional equipment found in major repertory theaters around the country.

The studio workshops, currently under construction, will further enhance the complex technological base of the Weiss Center. These highly specialized studios will provide areas for creating many of the magical images you see on stage.

Immediately behind the stage will be the scenic studio with areas for prop making, wood working and scenic painting. The motor powered paint frame, 29' high x 56' long, to be installed along the south wall will allow scenic artists working on large drops and scenery to remain on floor level, eliminating the need for ladders and scaffolding. Costume storage with independent air drying systems for preserving costumes will be located on the second floor; fitting rooms, dye studio and costume workshop areas will occupy the third floor, connected to the main Weiss Center via a bridged walkway.

Topping off this studio area will be a north facing skylight running the length of the building, permitting natural lighting for the artists.

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THE WEISS CENTER: A JOINT PROJECT

One of the missions of the University of California, San Diego has been to develop and enhance the cultural resources of San Diego, to encourage a community of theater artists and scholars. It was appropriate to join with the Theatre and Arts Foundation to fulfill this purpose.

The foundation and the university signed an agreement in 1974 in which the foundation pledged to provide funds to build a new theater on the UCSD campus. In turn, the university pledged three acres of land for the theater, maintenance services and parking facilities. The theater will be used by the University of California for its Department of Drama during the academic year, and during the summer by the foundation's revitalized La Jolla Playhouse, a professional non-profit regional theater company that opens in June 1983.

The La Jolla Playhouse was founded in 1947 by Gregory Peck, Mel Ferrer and Dorothy McGuire. Peck, armed with a \$15,000 loan from David O. Selznick, convinced the La Jolla Kiwanis Club it should help him found the La Jolla Playhouse. It did, and rapidly the Playhouse became a professional summer stock theater in the La Jolla High School auditorium. As the Playhouse blossomed, so did the community's support. The La Jolla Playhouse Women's Committee was formed, spearheaded by Marian Longstreth and Marian Trevor. In 1954, Mrs. Longstreth founded the Theatre and Arts Foundation which would produce the annual Playhouse season as well as mount an aggressive capital campaign for a new theater facility.

When the University of California began developing its La Jolla campus, Marian Longstreth quickly joined forces with Roger Revelle, then head of Scripps Institution of Oceanography. Revelle was instrumental in persuading the University of California Regents to set aside land for the Theatre and Arts Foundation to build a theater that would serve as home for the La Jolla Playhouse and for the UCSD Department of Drama. A new facility now seemed close at hand, yet remained out of reach for nearly 25 years because of funding difficulties.

The Committee for the Fund for the New Theatre was formed in April 1981 to raise the remaining funds needed for theater furnishings and equipment not included in the original construction plan. Its members are representatives from the community, UCSD, and the Theatre and Arts Foundation, under the direction of Ray Ramseyer, special assistant to the chancellor for development.

A major breakthrough in the fund-raising campaign occurred when Mandell Weiss, a prominent San Diego resident, gave approximately \$1.2 million in October 1981. Because of the significance of this gift, the University of California Board of Regents approved naming the facility after Weiss. His donation is being used to complete the theater and to purchase technical production equipment.

A grant of \$150,000 from the James S. Copley Foundation was pledged toward the completion of the theater. The upstairs promenade will commemorate the Copley gift. James Copley, chairman of the board of the Copley Press, Inc., was active for many years with the Theatre and Arts Foundation, producers of the La Jolla Playhouse, and served as a member of the foundation's board.

The committee has recently raised several other large donations. The J. David Company of San Diego gave \$250,000 for landscaping and the upper outside deck of the theater. Mr. and Mrs. Charles Taubman of Rancho Santa Fe committed \$50,000 to further the project. Mrs. Dorothy Johnson made a gift of \$45,000 for the main curtain and the stage curtains. An additional \$100,000 has come from various donors.

Earlier gifts to the Theatre and Arts Foundation are now being recognized. The lower lobby of the theater is being named after Ewart W. Goodwin. The driveway under the portico will be named in honor of Marian Longstreth, founder-president of the Theatre and Arts Foundation.

The efforts of the fund-raising committee continue for completion of the Mandell Weiss Center for the Performing Arts.

(October 22, 1932)

THE DEPARTMENT OF DRAMA UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Theater at the University of California, San Diego began in 1968 when Eric Christmas was appointed to the faculty after an extensive career with the Guthrie Theatre, the Stratford Festival in Canada and the British theater. From the outset, Christmas set the tone: commitment to professional standards, a search for fresh modes of theatrical expression and a return to the text in the work of the actor, director and designer.

Arthur Wagner joined the faculty in 1972 as the first chairman of the new Department of Drama and set the course of the formal academic department in the first five years of development. Before coming to UCSD, Wagner had been head of the Theatre Arts Department at Rollins College and had established graduate professional acting programs at Tulane, Ohio and Temple Universities. During his initial five years as chairman at UCSD, the faculty grew to eleven. Undergraduate and graduate programs were established and several theater and studio spaces were developed, including early plans for the Mandell Weiss Center.

Michael Addison joined the faculty of UCSD in 1973. He served first as graduate advisor, and in 1977 assumed the chairmanship of the department. Addison had previously served as department chairman at UC Santa Barbara and as dean of theater at California Institute of the Arts. He led the UCSD Department of Drama

through a period of continuing growth and new programs, including national recognition of the graduate program by admission to the prestigious League of Professional Theatre Training Programs.

The Department of Drama at UCSD was formed in a research, scientific and educational environment. Each faculty member has been chosen to perpetuate a faculty with professional accomplishments, teaching skill, and continuing creative or scholarly potential. One of the most distinguished faculty appointments has been that of Alan Schneider, the eminent American director who now holds the Quinn Martin Chair of Drama at UCSD.

The Mandell Weiss Center for the Performing Arts is the producing arm of the Department of Drama. It is here that the ideas explored in the classroom and the tools mastered in the studio or laboratory are put to the services of practical theatrical art. Here the faculty artist-teachers, the students and the professional technical staff join to create the theatrical event.

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