

UC San Diego's New Acoustically Superior Music Center Takes Shape, from the Inside Out

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Internationally renowned composer and conductor, Rand Steiger.

After years of planning, research and design, the state-of-the-art Music Center at the University of California, San Diego is finally taking shape, thanks to the vision of Rand Steiger, chair of the university's Department of Music.

While most buildings begin from the ground up, UC San Diego's construction of its new Conrad Prebys Music Center began from the inside out, with an emphasis on sound. Steiger, who is an internationally renowned composer and conductor with a long standing interest in contemporary music, was integral in developing the new facility and encouraging financial support.

"UCSD's Music Department is already known internationally for our composition, computer music and percussion programs, among others. The Conrad Prebys Music Center will bring additional attention, while inspiring us to new and greater levels of distinction," said Steiger. "When funding is complete, this facility will be the preeminent place to create and perform music in San Diego, and will include one of the best small concert halls in the world."

To Steiger and his fellow colleagues, The Conrad Prebys Music Center, named after local philanthropist Conrad Prebys, will be more than a building-it will be a new frontier in music.

With this in mind, the best architectural and acoustical designers were sought to join the core design team--architect Mark Reddington of LMN Architects in Seattle and renowned acoustician Cyril Harris, whose career spans 60 years. LMN Architects is based in Seattle and since 1979 has designed more than 40 arts buildings including 16 concert halls and theaters, such as Seattle's acclaimed Benaroya Hall. Harris is a legend of both concert hall design and theories of acoustics and sound.

Founded by composers over 40 years ago, the UC San Diego Department of Music today spans a spectrum of music from classical to contemporary, including jazz, Hindustani, computer and experimental music. The faculty of the Music Department has included many distinguished composers, performers and scholars who have been recognized with Pulitzer Prizes, MacArthur "Genius" awards, Guggenheim Fellowships and Grawemeyer and Grammy awards.

Seattle LMN architect and renowned acoustician, Cyril Harris.

UCSD composers have collaborated with the Paris, Salzburg, Chicago and New York City Operas, and with many orchestras including the Los Angeles and Tokyo Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, and the San Francisco and Chicago Symphony. Faculty performers and scholars have published hundreds of books and compact disks, and some of the most widely-used computer music software has been developed by faculty

researchers. Former students have gone on to similar careers, and alumni are currently in positions at several renowned universities.

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With the foundation and outer structure of the Music Center nearly complete, now the design team and construction crew are tasked with placement of the ceiling and walls of the concert hall. The acoustical ceiling will be suspended from the building's roof with steel cables, and shock absorbers will isolate the internal structure from all external sound. The unique design of the shell, made up of asymmetrical triangular panels, provides for excellent sound diffusion and creates a complex visual pattern-one that is both innovative and striking.

"The State of California makes it possible for us to build adequate buildings," Steiger said. "Private support enables us to build great buildings." In addition to a significant gift from Conrad Prebys, private support for the Music Center has also come from John and Rebecca Moores, Anne and Joel Reed, San Diego National Bank, Murray and Elaine Galinson, and other generous donors.

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Until the completion of the Music Center, Steiger won't slow down. He is diligently working to garner additional private support to fund musical instruments and equipment, and to endow scholarships and operating funds.

Although the facility is scheduled to open spring 2009, funding is still needed to ensure the continual success of the program. To see ongoing progress of the Conrad Prebys Music Center, visit <http://music.ucsd.edu/building>; for information on how to support the Music Center, call 858-534-9043.

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