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# Concert Halls and Opera Houses: Music, Acoustics, and Architecture

*By Leo Beranek*



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**Concert Halls and Opera Houses: Music, Acoustics, and Architecture** By Leo Beranek

This illustrated guide to 100 of the world's most important concert halls and opera houses examines their architecture and engineering and discusses their acoustical quality as judged by conductors and music critics. The descriptions and photographs will serve as a valuable guide for today's peripatetic performers and music lovers. With technical discussions relegated to appendices, the book can be read with pleasure by anyone interested in musical performance. The photographs (specially commissioned for this book) and architectural drawings (all to the same scale) together with modern acoustical data on each of the halls provide a rich and unmatched resource on the design of halls for presenting musical performances. Together with the technical appendices, the data and drawings will serve as an invaluable reference for architects and engineers involved in the design of spaces for the performance of music.



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### **Editorial Review**

#### Review

From the reviews of the second edition:

Advance praise for Leo Beranek's "Concert Halls and Opera Houses: Music, Acoustics, and Architecture" --

**PHILIP GOSSETT, PROFESSOR OF MUSIC, UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO:**

Given the many controversies surrounding the acoustical properties of concert halls and opera houses, it is a relief to be guided by someone who is both a scientist and a devoted listener. Here, the mysteries of acoustics seem less intimidating: we come to understand why music sounds the way it does in various performance spaces, and what we can do about it. It's a terrific book!

**I. M. PEI, ARCHITECT, NEW YORK:**

[This book] provides an invaluable reference for the understanding and design of music facilities.

**JOHN WILLIAMS, COMPOSER AND CONDUCTOR, LOS ANGELES:**

Dr. Beranek has created a comprehensive and fascinating study of 100 of the world's halls for music. Visiting each of these venues would be a great delight and a marvelous adventure, but such being impractical, this great book is the next best thing. All lovers of music, acoustics, architecture, and travel will enjoy this unique work.

**WILLIAM L. RAWN III, FAIA, ARCHITECT, BOSTON:**

The rigor, clarity and comprehensiveness of Concert Halls and Opera Houses, balanced brilliantly by Leo Beranek's personal and subjective sense of acoustics and music, provides a powerful resource for architects and music lovers alike. Beranek's passion for music helps to make this the most significant music acoustics book of our times.

**HELMUT A. MUELLER, MUELLER-BBM GMBH, ACOUSTICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANTS, PLANEGG, GERMANY:**

Art and science are combined in Leo Beranek's new book. Presented are carefully collected plans, data and pictures of halls for music, and assessments of their acoustical quality by artists, critics and audiences, as well as measured scientific criteria. It is an easily readable, "must" handbook for anyone traveling to perform or attend concert or opera music.

"The present volume is an astonishing feat by an old gentleman who is still active. ... The book explains the intricacies of modern auditorium acoustics, a much more complex science than it had been in the immediate post-WWII era ... . There is a detailed bibliography and an excellent index. ... This is an easily readable book. Beranek explains the complexities of the acoustical criteria lucidly, and describes the halls concisely, but clearly with the aid of illustrations and data." (Architectural Science Review, Vol. 43 (3), September, 2004)

RUSSELL JOHNSON, ACOUSTICS AND THEATER CONSULTANT, ARTEC CONSULTANTS, INC., NEW YORK:

Concert Halls and Opera Houses sets forth the harvest of six decades of intensive study of acoustics for music performance. It is a comprehensive (and indispensable) aid to architects, musicians and design teams who tackle the incredibly daunting task of creating new performance spaces.

HIDEKI TACHIBANA, PROFESSOR OF ACOUSTICS, UNIVERSITY OF TOKYO, JAPAN:

This book assembles architectural and acoustical data on 100 spaces for music and rank-orders over two-thirds according to their acoustical quality as judged by musicians and music critics. It gives comprehensive knowledge of room acoustics and offers a basic foundation for acoustical research long into the future.

R. LAWRENCE KIRKEGAARD, ACOUSTICAL CONSULTANT, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS:

Beranek has created a new Rosetta Stone for the languages of music, acoustics, and architecture. Lovers of music everywhere will welcome this extraordinary work for its scope, depth, and ease of reading, and for heightening our understanding and enjoyment of the musical experiences that so enrich our lives.

ROB HARRIS, DIRECTOR, ARUP ACOUSTICS, WINCHESTER, HAMPSHIRE, ENGLAND:

Beranek's latest reference work is an essential volume in every auditorium designer's library. It will also bring information and pleasure to all with an interest in music, acoustics and architecture. In our offices, a common response to a question in an acoustical design session is "Let's check in Beranek...."

CHRISTOPHER JAFFE, FOUNDING PRINCIPAL, JAFFE HOLDEN ACOUSTICS, NORWALK, CT:

CH & OH is the definitive work on the architectural acoustic design of classical music spaces. With presentation of 100 halls, it illustrates various levels of acoustical quality. Written for the lay reader it deserves to be in every school of music, architecture and science and with every musician and music lover.

From the reviews:

"For anyone interested in musical performance or in architecture, this book is a real treasure. After a short introduction to outline the approach and define the acoustical terms involved, the book plunges into a wonderful survey of 100 concert halls in 31 different countries ... . The book is elegantly typeset and produced, and will be both interesting reading and a wonderful resource for architects, musicians, and concert goers." (Neville Fletcher, *The Physicist*, Vol. 41 (4), July/August, 2004)

From the reviews of the second edition:

"One of the most famous books in the field of room acoustics ... got a new shape and an extension in the new edition. It again has an outstanding quality in layout and printing. The book is an illustrated guide to performance spaces. It provides a rich source of information on music and its relation to room acoustics. ... It is also a document of cultural heritage and a help for musicians ... . recommended for everybody interested in music, acoustics and architecture." (Michael Vorländer, *Acta Acustica* united with *Acustica*, Issue 3, 2004)

"This new edition (1<sup>st</sup> ed., 1996) attempts to compare more than a hundred of the world's most important concert halls, as it takes a closer look at the acoustical properties as well as the architectural shape of each.

... It is an invaluable resource for those involved in the design of spaces for the performance of music ... . this book would be most beneficial to those with a greater interest in the physics of acoustics. Summing Up: Highly recommended." (R. P. Meden, CHOICE, April, 2004)

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Anita Pfeifer:**

Reading can called mind hangout, why? Because if you are reading a book mainly book entitled Concert Halls and Opera Houses: Music, Acoustics, and Architecture your thoughts will drift away trough every dimension, wandering in every aspect that maybe mysterious for but surely will end up your mind friends. Imaging each and every word written in a book then become one type conclusion and explanation in which maybe you never get prior to. The Concert Halls and Opera Houses: Music, Acoustics, and Architecture giving you a different experience more than blown away the mind but also giving you useful information for your better life in this particular era. So now let us show you the relaxing pattern at this point is your body and mind are going to be pleased when you are finished reading through it, like winning a sport. Do you want to try this extraordinary wasting spare time activity?

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#### **Chad Davis:**

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