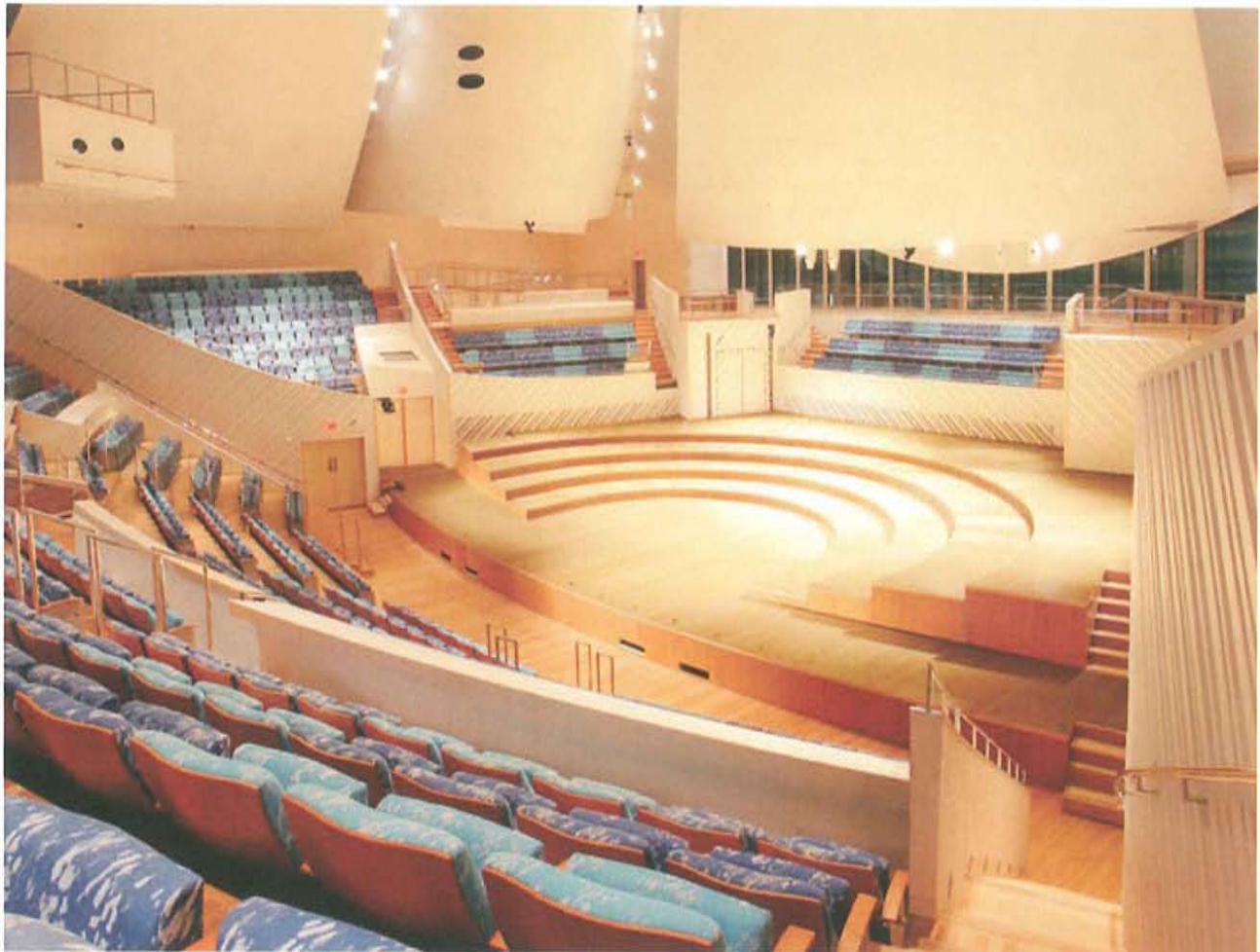


The New World Symphony's Debut

BY TOM AUSTIN



Frank Gehry and New World Symphony artistic director Michael Tilson Thomas, the two marquee names behind the [New World Center](#), are used to hoopla. But this should be a long winter of public-relations duty for the two old friends. In the life of any city, design is destiny, and attention, necessarily, must be paid to Miami's newest landmark.

The \$154 million facility just off Lincoln Road—which opens this month—is Gehry's first project in Florida and major international news; it also entails a Gehry designed parking garage with an advanced LED lighting system woven into a steel-mesh skin. The front façade of the new NWS home is actually a 7,000-square-foot projection

wall for concert broadcasts, movies and video art, which towers over an adjacent two-and-a-half-acre park designed by the renowned Dutch firm West 8, of New York's Governor's Island Park and Public Space Project.

A LONG TIME COMING

During the groundbreaking ceremonies three years ago, Tilson Thomas, always the showman, added a Miami-style jolt by merrily conducting a herd of bulldozers, a pageant accented by fireworks and Alberto Ginastera's *Estancia*. But on this bright afternoon in Miami Beach, he's all quiet satisfaction: "Frank's building is going to inspire young musicians in ways we can't even imagine now, allowing them to explore entirely new relationships with music."

This architectural dream has taken a long time to play out (a quarter of a century, in fact), but the NWS complex—a true global musical meeting house—is about to transform Miami, and the future of classical music itself. After spending its first season in the Gusman Center in downtown Miami, the Symphony in 1987 relocated to Lincoln Road, into a converted movie theater, at a time when female musicians had to be escorted home at night and the street still had a certain seedy charm.



Tilson Thomas

For the last 23 years—especially after the Miami City Ballet moved on from rehearsing in a glass-fronted space that's now a Victoria's Secret store—the NWS has single-handedly raised the tone of Lincoln Road. From its new campus, the NWS will broadcast concerts live and free in the park via robotic HD cameras mounted in the concert hall. In addition, high-speed Internet2 will allow for live broadcasts of NWS concerts all over the world.

A NEW WORLD ORDER

Years ago, the NWS had techno-driven dance parties at Crobar, and Tilson Thomas has embraced the new age of South Beach. "Pulse: Late Night at the New World Symphony" will feature Mercury Soul—conductor Benjamin Schwartz and DJ/composer Mason Bates—spinning electronica (programmed in conjunction with live, contemporary classical music works) until 2 AM in the concert hall of the new building.



Frank Gehry

Retractable seating in the 756-seat hall will create a commodious dance floor. This is South Beach, after all, where music equals movement. Inside, the concert hall has nearly 360-degree curvilinear projection surfaces and five acoustic "sails"—jib-shaped plaster forms that allow for highly attuned acoustics by Gehry and Yasuhisa Toyota of Nagata Acoustics, who also worked with Disney Concert Hall.

The NWS projection wall should also be an incredible space for video art. After the January 26 concert for the opening ceremonies, NWS' exterior projection wall will launch with the premiere screening of a commissioned video mural by London-based Tal Rosner and digital artist C.E.B. Reas. A professor at UCLA, Reas designed programming for creating images, animation and interaction.

The ever-changing NWS video mural promises to stretch the limits of technology. It required custom-made software and drew from more than 6,000 photographs of the Gehry building and Miami Beach itself, architectural details that were abstracted through computerized regeneration and animation. The mural is intended to bring a sense of ritual and occasion to the park: Every hour on the hour, the mural will

suddenly change course, akin to the tolling of a clock tower.

On January 26 and 28, Rosner will debut another NWS commissioned piece of video art, accompanying the premiere of a new commissioned work by British composer Thomas Ades. (In the past, Rosner worked with Ades on *In Seven Days: Piano Concerto with Moving Image*.)

GEHRY'S STAMP

Architecturally, the NWS facility represents a marked leap from the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao or Disney Concert Hall, and is something of a return to Gehry's earlier work. His trademark geometric shapes are found in the lobby behind a seven-story glass curtain wall, as well as near the front entrance and on the roof.

Indeed, the building blurs the private and public realms—a fitting touch for the voyeur's paradise of South Beach. Audience members can scan the park, while park visitors can watch musicians rehearse in the glass-walled SunTrust Pavilion space or, in the evenings, NWS patrons at play in the rooftop garden designed by Raymond Jungles. The six-stories-high sky-lit atrium will eventually be open to the public when concerts aren't taking place, while the illuminated glass bar with a titanium canopy is intended to serve as a town social center.

Adding to the architectural drama, Gehry's tumbling geometric forms, framed by the glass-curtain wall like a stage proscenium, will be lit at night. Inside the main hall, 10 movable performance platforms allow for nearly unlimited flexibility—from solo recitals to full orchestral concerts—as well as intimate narrated concerts, accompanied by video projections and designed to be educational affairs.

Four decades ago, Tilson Thomas was a protégé of Leonard Bernstein, eventually going on to host Bernstein's famed Young People's Concerts. This season, the NWS will feature occasional Discovery Concerts aimed at younger audiences, hosted by Jamie Bernstein, Leonard's daughter.

South Beach has a way of neatly tying up the loose ends of pop history. It's another night, another opening for Gehry, who came to Miami recently to survey the building and seemed thoroughly pleased. "I didn't want this place to be precious," he explains. "It's meant to be very purposeful, a beehive of activity, where the musicians will be bumping into one another in a kind of multistory village. And it's personal, a social network where everything is visible from the outside: In this building, nothing is secret."