

LES ARTS GSTAAD

No. 8

August 2014

Dear Residents of Saanen,
Dear Guests

The core team behind the Les Arts Gstaad project has now been at work for nine years. Although the basic parameters of this project have become much clearer during this period, the objective remains the same: to build a cultural centre in the Saanenland. It will be an important additional feature. Above all, however, we wish to contribute to a better utilisation of existing infrastructure such as hotels, restaurants, shops, local businesses and holiday homes. A diverse range of high-quality concerts, exhibitions, ballet performances, literary and other cultural events throughout the year will bring additional visitors to Gstaad. Both summer and winter seasons will last longer.

Quality before Quantity

An extremely attractive concert hall with excellent acoustics and the corresponding amenities, exhibition space and a simple but impressive foyer will offer visitors a diverse range of



events. There is no need to worry: Les Arts Gstaad will not be an opulent building. The concert hall, however, will be designed in such a way that the quality of the acoustics, the technology and the degree of comfort leave nothing else for an audience or the performers to desire. We are planning to present outstanding performances of classical music, jazz, chansons and ballet in Gstaad – and this requires the appropriate infrastructure. Please read the interesting interview with Andreas Mölich-Zehhauser, artistic and managing director of the Festspielhaus Baden-Baden. He makes it clear: quality before quantity!

It takes time to build a sound financial base

We are firmly committed to financing the construction costs of the cultural infrastructure through private donations. The turmoil on the financial markets has had a very direct impact on our fundraising

efforts. Specialists have indicated that it can take years between the birth of the idea and the ground-breaking ceremony to obtain funding for a project such as Les Arts Gstaad. The various planning phases, the planning permission application process and, last but not least, fundraising efforts all take time. Here again, the Foundation Board is convinced that it must weigh up every step carefully and establish a sound financial base before eventually giving the go-ahead for construction work.

Fundraising

As planning and planning permission application processes have progressed, our fundraising efforts have borne fruit. Approx. 40% of the infrastructure costs totalling CHF 100 million have been contractually secured. Discussions with other potential donors are on-going. The conviction that the Saanenland needs to take a courageous and well-founded step forward is growing. In addition to the existing amenities, the Saanenland and Gstaad need a new venue in which to stage events all year round regardless of weather conditions. The proposed multi-purpose cultural centre will fulfil this requirement perfectly.

Site Development Regulations: Objection Process

Now that the objections raised have been clarified by the planning department, the site development regulations are ready to be submitted to the municipal assembly for approval or rejection. This political process cannot commence, however, until the Les Arts Gstaad Foundation has provided proof that financing has been obtained for the infrastructure costs and the operating fund. The Foundation Board is committed to doing so by spring 2015.

Choice of Acoustician

Over the last nine months the Board of the Foundation has carried out an extensive evaluation procedure. Working closely with specialists, the Board has now chosen the acoustician for the project. Read more in the following article about Marshall Day Acoustics.

Instructions to proceed with the finalisation of the preliminary project

Once clarification of the objections raised against the site development regulations had been completed the Foundation Board instructed the team, consisting of the architect, the acoustician and the scenographer, to move work forward to finalise the existing preliminary project. Suggestions made by opponents will be taken into account and areas of potential cost savings identified, but the quality of the concert hall will not be compromised. The final preliminary project will be available by the end of autumn 2014. Read about the outstanding work on this project and the team's approach in the following articles.

I am firmly convinced that by joining forces we shall succeed in making Gstaad and the Saanenland into an alpine destination for culture lovers – unique architecture, a concert hall with excellent acoustics, art exhibitions for the most discerning art lovers and other quality events.

Help us seize this opportunity for the Saanenland. Lend your support to the highly motivated team working with the architect, Rudy Ricciotti, and the Foundation Board by making a contribution. We need your help to bring the Les Arts Gstaad project to fruition.

Yours sincerely,

J. Markus Kappeler-Steffen
President, Les Arts Gstaad Foundation

“Quality before Quantity”

The Festspielhaus Baden-Baden as a point of reference for
LES ARTS GSTAAD



In the course of the following conversation Andreas Mölich-Zebhauser draws an imaginary arc from Baden-Baden and its Festspielhaus to the Saanenland and its project ,Les Arts Gstaad' and speaks not only of the opportunities and risks but also of the contribution cultural events – done well – can make to the success of the tourist industry and other business enterprises.

Mr. Mölich-Zebhauser, a study done by the University of St. Gallen in 2008 calculated that your opera house produced extra purchasing power for the town and region of Baden-Baden of approx. 45 million euros. That is a very high figure and the public's perception of the Festspielhaus and cultural events as the primary drivers of tourism and economic growth is presumably just as high. Do you personally feel that your concerns and requests are well received?

A lot of water has flowed under the bridge since 1998. At that time we encountered a lot of hostility. Today, everyone, from the mayor to the baker, considers the Festspielhaus a stroke of luck. In less than 10 years the construction costs, financed by city and state, will be paid off. Afterwards the city will only have to pay around 400,000 euros per year for the maintenance of the opera house which seats 2500. For the past 12 years we have already been funding all operating costs - from artists' fees and staff costs to electricity and cleaning – ourselves, entirely without public funds. Against this background the extra purchasing power is, of course, of inestimable value for the city and the construction costs are no longer looked upon as a burden but rather as a very profitable investment in the future of the city. Therefore, representatives of the town council, local businesses and the tourist

Andreas Mölich-Zebhauser, who first obtained a graduate degree to teach German and history before going on to study business administration, law and musicology, spent twelve years working for music publishing house Ricordi, lastly as artistic director.

After seven years in charge of a progressive experiment, the Ensemble Modern, in Frankfurt am Main, he moved in 1998 to the „commercial bunker“, the name by which the almost bankrupt Festspielhaus Baden-Baden was popularly known at that time.

In a relatively short period of time Mölich-Zebhauser succeeded in creating conditions which ensured the continued operation of the opera house. Initially, his priority was to win back Festspielhaus audiences and eliminate the fundamental errors of his predecessors. Today the Festspielhaus is one of the top international venues for both artists and audiences.



Festspielhaus Baden-Baden

industry are usually pleased to see me and I find that they are willing to listen when I put forward a request for something which would make things run even more smoothly. After all, this attractive town thrives mainly because of its visitors.

Is there anything similar in the town or the region?

It is very interesting to note that after the opera house was founded and became a success several other cultural institutions have been established in Baden-Baden, all on a purely private basis. First and foremost of these is the Museum Frieder Burda, with its breathtaking architecture designed by Richard Meier, which houses his personal collection and holds temporary exhibitions of 20th and 21st century art. Together with the new Kulturhaus LA8 and the Kunsthalle, one of the town's oldest cultural institutions, it has transformed the Lichtentaler Allee into a short but exquisite 'museum mile'. There is nothing like the Festspielhaus Baden-Baden in Germany, it is the second-largest opera house and concert hall in Europe – and operating without subsidies. One of the keys to understanding how this is possible is to be found in the fact that we always strive to offer world class performances by the world's greatest artists.

In your opinion, how have cultural events developed in recent years as a driving force for the economic development of a region? As compared to big sporting events, for example?

Two remarkable things stand out: firstly, the fact that an institution dedicated to the fine arts can attract so many visitors to a small town and that a new hotel opens here almost every year, primarily in the luxury sector. Secondly, and I consider this even more surprising, within a period of ten years the Festspielhaus and the museums have totally transformed the sleepy image of Baden-Baden ('a town of old people', waning interest in former attractions such as horse racing, casino and spa baths). Today, Baden-Baden is perceived internationally as a quiet and contemplative oasis with a vibrant cultural life.

What are you doing differently from your competitors?

I try not to promise more than I can deliver and I've been doing that constantly since 1998. This gives visitors confidence and allows for positive surprises. Secondly, I allow myself the luxury to reject mediocrity at the Festspielhaus. And I firmly believe that no one can produce more than 100 outstanding operas and classical music concerts per year. I consider the quantity that has been produced in Salzburg in recent years utterly wrong. I would rather produce one opera less per year in order to make our youngest endeavour, the Easter Festival with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, a huge success. Therefore my maxim is: focus on quality rather than quantity.



Anna Netrebko with Andreas Mölich-Zebhauser

What are the main prerequisites?

A determine to shape the future, to fire the enthusiasm of top artists for your mountain paradise and think big rather than small. And your hoteliers must participate actively, that took far

too long in our case - here they are already involved because they can all see the benefits.

Your concerts are held hand in hand with art exhibitions. Do the parallels between these two different cultural styles inspire you? We work closely with our museum partners but remain independent.

Which elements of your successful concept do you think would be appropriate for our project in Gstaad?

The most important thing is to build a relationship between the audience and performers. That means giving concert goers what they most want: an opportunity to meet the stars, if not for a conversation, then at least for an autograph or a photo. And then perhaps concentrate on private initiatives.

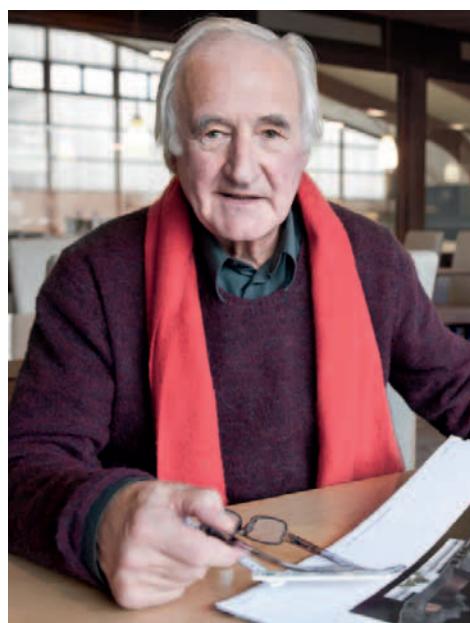
In your view, which errors must Gstaad avoid in the project planning phase and later in running the cultural centre?

Never promise more than you can deliver (see above) and establish a steady development plan, i.e. do not count on a significant increase in the number of concert goers.

Does the architectural design of our project appeal to you?

I have only seen the preliminary drawings, not the current plans. It is certainly a good idea to build something striking - I don't mean in size but something which sends out a signal for the future.

LES ARTS GSTAAD – Further development in the hands of the established team



Kurt Aellen

The Foundation Board of the Les Arts Gstaad has always taken fears and all the constructive criticism regarding the size and costs of the project very much to heart and has acted accordingly. So size and cost optimization are going to remain constant issues in the development programme in the course of the coming months – and indeed they will be just as important as architectural, acoustic and functional aspects.

The Foundation Board wants to make sure that it is able to present a comprehensive, self-explanatory project. To achieve that, the key points are elucidated once again below.

The Concert Hall – Quality above all else

In the present-day situation, in which the internationally famous and locally very securely anchored Menuhin Festival – and with it the music tradition in the Saanenland – occupies an important position, it only makes sense to create a unique hall of the utmost quality. In international competition, Gstaad is vying with

the best music offered by the big cultural institutions; a new hall must therefore do this starting situation justice. Ways have thus got to be found to fund a hall with special attributes, the most modern technical systems available and the best acoustics – but with no wastage on pomp.

In contrast to the Concert Hall itself, all the facilities around it are being austere planned, using only the simplest of resources. There is to be a quite deliberate contrast between this plainness and the striking (internal and external) appearance of the Concert Hall. There are going to be no frills in the foyers, interlude bars, stairways and the like.

Size of the Hall – Sense of proportion and harmony

The original, priority reason for the project is to create a Concert Hall worthy of and catering for the worldwide reputation and cultural level of the Menuhin Festival Gstaad for staging symphony concerts, like those already performed for decades in the festival marquee, at times under adverse conditions. The aim is thus for the spirit of the festival, which is also determined by the impressive ambiances in the solemn churches with their high acoustic quality, to bring new life to large-scale events featuring the world's best symphony orchestras too, without doing away with the church concerts. At the same time, that predetermines the size of the Concert Hall, with at least 1100 seats and up to a maximum of 1200, which is still being criticised from many quarters as too big. Without appearing to be gigantic, however, the Concert Hall must offer a size that is very appreciably bigger than Saanen church, with its 700 seats, and the marquee that has been used up until now (accommodating 1800 at present) and must enrich the festival by adding a novel dimension to what it has to offer.

Carefully calculated size of the project as a whole

It is evident that the high capital outlay would not be justifiable for the 6-8 concerts that the Menuhin Festival Gstaad has held in the marquee up until now, along with a further dozen concerts at most planned throughout the year, plus dance events, without the initiators including other fields of activity, such as art and other exhibitions, corporate events, small congresses, local occurrences, trade

fairs and so on in the conceptual planning. The first thing needed to make that possible is to be able to make flexible use of the spaces required anyway for the concert operation, and the second thing is a broader range of spaces on offer to be designed in such a way that it would be possible to combine all sorts of programmes and activities symbiotically with one another. In this way, the aim is for a living cultural centre to come into being, also having very close ties with village life. That explains why the location in the middle of the village of Gstaad, right next to the railway station, is the ideal situation. What other place is there, what other town still offers adequate land and space for an infrastructure of this nature to be built up from scratch? Another consideration is that the architect, Rudy Ricciotti, has come up with a poignant answer to the desire for the integration of all sorts of activity not only in the external appearance of an extraordinary project, presenting itself as a natural phenomenon snuggling up to the Riedhubel, but also in the organisation of the interior space.

The additional space taken up by the extra rooms available for art exhibitions, product presentations and all sorts of encounter accounts for less than 10% of the total volume. It ought not to be forgotten that the 150-200 parking spaces demanded by the communal authorities plus the bus station are further factors that determine the size of the whole.

Cost optimization is not just lip service.

Thanks to the architect's central idea of not erecting a monumental edifice but of ar-

ranging only part of the Concert Hall to be visible, resembling a natural phenomenon growing out of the ground, and of concealing all the other rooms underground, the project harmonizes with the landscape and with the station square dominated by Hotel Bernerhof and is bringing a new focus to a site that has so far been nondescript with the introduction of the new special shape of the curved tree trunks. Making a reality out of this convincing concept inevitably involves heavy expenditure for the underground structures, with the corresponding measures to secure the hillside and railway tracks.

The suggestion repeatedly made, that today enormous savings could be achieved through international calls for tenders among general contractors, does not deal adequately with the tough challenge. The Foundation Board of Les Arts Gstaad and the specialists involved really appreciate the high quality of local craftspeople and intend to do all they can to integrate them in the achievement of the extraordinary feat. It has to be accepted that additional costs may arise as a result.

Architecture and acoustics are inexorably linked.

The history of music shows that the development of architecture and music have always been closely intertwined with one another. Gregorian music came into being in resounding Romanesque and Gothic churches. The Renaissance and Baroque style produced better comprehension of words, a corresponding clarity and transparency, which led to the



Vereinssaal Wien

development of polyphonic music. It was not until the eighteenth century that concert halls were built; they were erected according to the rules of the building trade at the time and following the particular stylistic code without any understanding of acoustics. One effect of these newly designed halls was that the orchestras became bigger and bigger.

The principal material used, plaster, reinforced with straw matting for walls, ceilings and stucco work, mixed with marble elements and the rich pilaster strips, niches and sills, produced a balanced tonal quality without that ever being the intention, but it is still exemplary today, for instance in the Musikverein hall in Vienna. The leading composers of the time wrote works especially for these halls – Haydn for instance for the hall in Esterhazy Palace, Mendelssohn for the Gewandhaus and Brahms for the Musikverein.

It was not until the end of the nineteenth century that pioneers began to establish the scientific bases for the phenomenon of sound, and it was only at the beginning of the twentieth century that the first attempts were made to design concert halls in accordance with the new perceptions of acoustics. Knowledge has developed greatly since then, so that today solid, scientifically proven and in part measurable principles are available for designing halls.

Following an international competition among four leading acoustic companies, Les Arts Gstaad commissioned Marshall Day Acoustics (Melbourne, Hong Kong, London and Cannes) to take charge of acoustics in the Concert Hall.

Sir Harold Marshall founded the company in 1981. Today, he is one of the doyens of modern acoustics, has received numerous international prizes and is still active. He has already expressed his willingness to accompany the Les Arts Gstaad project as a supervisor, because he rates the project as exciting, unique and challenging. His two leading associates, Peter Farnside



Les Arts Gstaad Project

und Thomas Scélo are the project managers. They are supported by a team of seventy specialists.

Spatial atmosphere, comfortable feeling and individualism – an interdisciplinary undertaking

As the physical research into sound propagation advanced, the clearer it became just how complicated this phenomenon is. Specialists confirm that a major element in the perception of audio quality is to be found in the empirical-psychological realm. The atmosphere in the room, bodily comfort, individualism and the congruence between external appearance and ambience are sensations which, along with a balanced propagation of sound, make hearing into a pleasure. It needs them all in unison. Despite this fact, a tendency has become widespread in the construction of several concert houses in recent years of having acousticians develop guidelines for

the design of halls independently of the architect, for example in the form of massive reflectors or ceiling sails, without these fitting in with the idea of the hall, its mood and radiation. Their effect is often that of foreign bodies and imposed standards, failing to allow for the complexity of how sound is perceived in a specific location. In this lurks the danger of producing “perfectly canned” concert hall acoustics devoid of personality.

Architect Rudy Ricciotti has created the notion of a special spatial atmosphere, building on Yehudi Menuhin’s idea of a “rocky cavern”, enlisting fundamental tenets of acoustics with regard to volume and shape. This space harmonizes with the external appearance as an autonomous structure without in any way imitating the prestigious buildings of which so many have gone up in recent decades. With this fundamental concept as his starting point, the architect tops up his project team with the acousticians and scenographers hand-picked by us, who, jointly with him, are further developing the project and searching for solutions to deal adequately with the complexity of the task-in-hand. This is making architecture and acoustics into the common theme, with the aim of bringing the specific character of the hall and its sound into a balanced unity. Workshops are now being held regularly, at which the interdisciplinary team, under the project leadership of Les Arts Gstaad is developing the definitive building project, with the clear remit of doing justice to art and culture as well as economics.

Kurt Aellen,
Chairman of the Les Arts Gstaad Building Committee

Eckhard Kahle comments the choice of Marshall Day Acoustics for Les Arts Gstaad

“We are very excited to welcome Marshall Day Acoustics (MDA) to the design team for Les Arts Gstaad. MDA are clearly some of the most creative and most exciting people in the room acoustics world, with a number of excellent and innova-

tive projects to their record. This is another step towards a high-quality acoustic building for Gstaad, the Region and all of Switzerland.”



Guangzhou Opera House by Zaha Hadid Architects

Marshall Day Acoustics was founded in New Zealand by Sir Harold Marshall, an eminent researcher and practitioner in the field of room acoustics. His studies in the 1970s lead to the discovery of the importance of lateral acoustic reflections in the perception of room acoustics quality, now established as one of the most important factors for success. In parallel to his academic research, he worked on the design of Christchurch Town Hall, New Zealand, enhancing the original elliptical plan by inserting very large acoustic reflectors that have become the signature of this hall. Currently closed after severe earthquake damage, the hall is considered one of the best halls of the Southern Hemisphere. Another key project of the early years of MDA is Segerstrom Hall in Orange County (Greater Los Angeles), a highly asymmetrical theatre, conceptually developed from the superposition of two slightly rotated shoebox halls. The growth of Marshall Day Acoustics into an international consulting practice with five offices has multiplied the amount of projects, yet creativity in making innovative architec-

tural designs work has apparently remained a constant. More recent projects include several halls in China, most notably the new Opera in Guangzhou (Canton) with architect Zaha Hadid – developing acoustically efficient surfaces in typically Hadid flowing architecture – and the Philharmonie de Paris with architect Jean Nouvel – with balconies floating within a bigger acoustic volume – currently under construction.

Marshall Day Acoustics has already started their collaboration with the architects and the design team for Les Arts Gstaad and we are really looking forward to seeing the developments of Rudy Ricciotti's hall within the next months.

www.marshallday.com

Eckhard Kahle

Eckhard Kahle, acoustician and musician, has long-standing connections with Switzerland. From 1995 to 1998, he was acoustic project manager for the construction of KKL Lucerne, as assistant to Russell Johnson and for Artec Consultants Inc. In 2001, he founded his own acoustic consulting firm, Kahle Acoustics, located in Brussels. Swiss projects include acoustic improvements of the Stadthaus Winterthur, the renovation of the Victoria Hall in Geneva as well as the transformation of the Musikinsel Rheinau. Key international projects include the Morgan Library & Museum in New York (architect Renzo Piano), the Théâtre de l'Archipel in Perpignan (architect Jean Nouvel) as well as concert halls in Lille, Bordeaux and Stavanger. The latter, located on the West coast of Norway, has often been compared to the KKL Lucerne for its acoustic quality.



Eckhard Kahle was acoustic advisor to the Jury for the Les Arts Gstaad architectural competition that selected Rudy Ricciotti's fascinating project for execution and still is a consultant for acoustic issues to the Foundation Board.

www.kahle.be

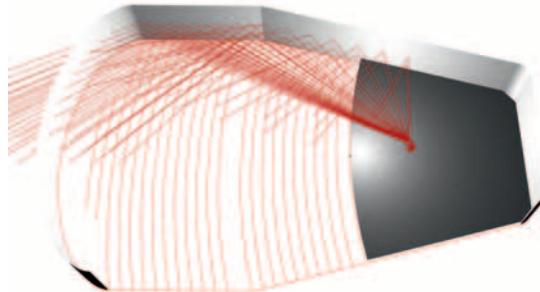
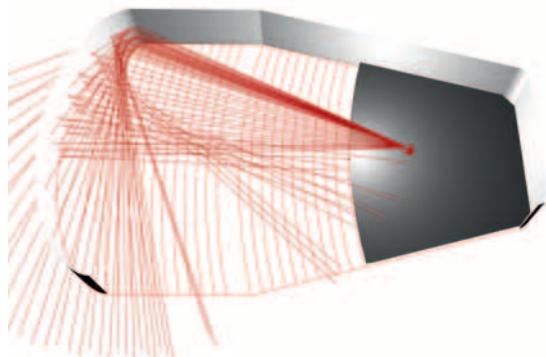
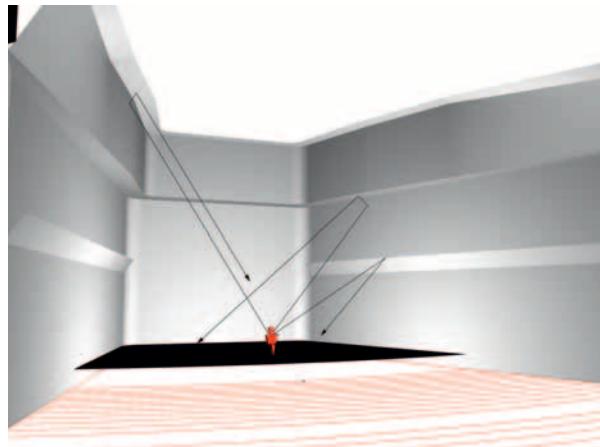
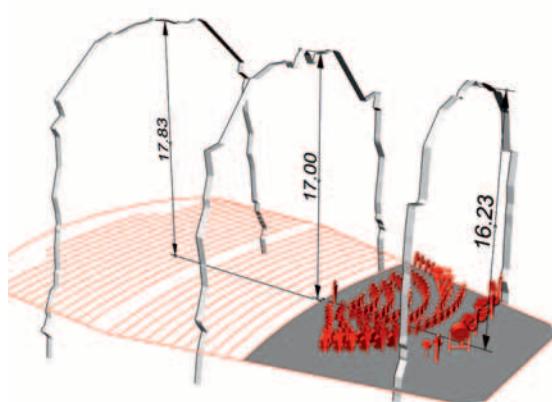
Full sound and acoustic intimacy: Gstaad Concert Hall

by Thomas Scélo and Peter Fearnside

The design of the concert hall is striking. It is designed to provide the reverberance, and therefore the full sound of symphony orchestras, typically found in natural caved. This will envelope with the audience and give to everyone a sense of acoustic intimacy only found in the best designs of concert halls.

The hall must provide a full reverberant sound required for large symphony orchestras. It also needs high sound clarity to highlight the quality and sensitivity of the musical phrase. The natural loudness of the hall is important to ensure musicians can exploit the full dynamic range of music. Finally, early sound re-

flections arriving from lateral direction to the audience, will provide an acoustic intimacy between audience and stage. The crystal finish proposed for the Gstaad concert hall is where architecture and acoustic converge. In specific areas, the crystals will ensure the absence of acoustic anomalies such as echoes and flutters. In other areas, the crystals provide the opportunity to optimise the sound clarity and envelopment. By orientating each and every facet of the crystallised walls, we can stir the sound reflections directly toward the audience and increase the sound clarity, the details in the musical phrase, the envelopment and intimacy of the room. Although unique in its architectural expression, the acoustic design of the Gstaad concert hall finds precedents in previous acoustic designs. The most explicit example is the Deakin Edge theatre in Melbourne Australia where each glass facet has been the subject of an acoustic study.



Studies and simulations of audio and tonal characteristics in the Concert Hall



Deakin Edge Theatre in Melbourne Australia

Many of the facets have been orientated to provide «early reflections», that is reflecting sound from the stage directly into the audience. The rest has been orientated to reflect sound away into the larger volume of the hall and develop the reverberation. It is an exercise in balancing the ratio between these two families of facets.

The Gstaad concert hall is a challenge, but one that has precedents and finds solution in both empirical studies of existing halls (and the lessons learned) and in the acoustic science served by the most modern modelling techniques available.

There is no doubt that the 1,200 seat of the concert hall will have excellent acoustics that merges with the striking architectural journey offered to the concert goers.



*v.l. Thomas Scélo, Akustiker Marshall Day Acoustics,
Peter Fearnside, CEO Marshall Day*

Site Development Regulations Les Arts / Ried

Objections against and concerns about the cultural centre project and the new access road behind the Gstaad train station have been raised mainly by those living in the vicinity.

The site development regulations, the planning applications for the road tunnel, for the MOB technical building and for changes to the platforms and railway tracks together with all the corresponding plans and documents and the planning department's report on the results of the participatory planning process were made available for inspection by the public at the municipal offices in

Saanen from January 29 to February 28, 2014. Thereafter, 17 objections against the project were filed, mostly from owners of neighbouring properties.

Meetings were held with the opponents in June in order to discuss their misgivings about the project. This meaningful dialogue gave the planners an opportunity to answer specific questions and address concerns. Four objections were then withdrawn. Based on the remaining objections the project will be reconsidered and, if possible, slightly modified.

The municipal council will address these objections at a municipal assembly, the date of which remains to be fixed, and then put corresponding proposals to the vote. The file will then be submitted to the Office for Municipal Affairs and Land Use for approval.

Gemeindeverwaltung Saanen

LES ARTS GSTAAD

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