

World-Class Performing Arts Center Designed by LMN Architects Opens its Doors Today in San Antonio

(San Antonio, Texas) – September 4, 2014 – Tobin Center for the Performing Arts opened its doors to the public today, kicking off a month-long festival of special events, beginning with a performance by the Tobin’s resident companies (symphony, ballet, opera) and culminating in a rare and intimate concert by Paul McCartney. The world-class facility has revitalized downtown San Antonio, the nation’s seventh-largest city, and brought new energy to the River Walk. As the number two tourist attraction in Texas, the River Walk acts as the centerpiece of San Antonio’s civic identity and the main social corridor for nightlife, festival activity and pedestrian life downtown.

Designed by LMN Architects in partnership with Marmon Mok, Tobin Center for the Performing Arts embraces the multi-faceted cultural identity of the city with a distinctive tapestry of form, materiality, light, and landscape. The new facility offers a rich diversity of architectural experience, capable of continuous transformation in response to programmatic and environmental influences.

While retaining the Municipal Auditorium’s treasured historic façade, the Tobin Center weaves a new 183,000-square foot facility into its framework of public space—including a 1,768-seat Main Performance Hall and 231-seat flat floor studio theater. This substantial facility reconfiguration called for a grand, unifying design gesture to integrate new and old architectural components. The solution – a porous, shimmering metallic veil – creates a sculptural, environmentally responsive expression that celebrates the cultural life of contemporary San Antonio. The veil begins low at the River Walk, and rises through irregular sheer planes to form an unmistakable new architectural presence in the San Antonio skyline.

“We drew inspiration for the architectural form and detailing from the Spanish Colonial style of the original 1926 Municipal Auditorium, as well as San Antonio’s rich vernacular of color, pattern, and public celebrations,” said Mark Reddington, lead designer and partner at LMN Architects.

Goals for the renovation and expansion were threefold: to create a large, flexible, multi-use performance space with acoustics comparable to the world’s finest concert halls; to restore the iconic historic building for future generations; and to create a vibrant connection between the city’s main cultural venue and the River Walk. The completed project combines the historic preservation of one of San Antonio’s most beloved architectural icons with the most flexible multi-purpose performance hall in the United States.

“We couldn’t be happier with the LMN/Marmon Mok partnership,” said J. Bruce Bugg Jr., Chairman of the Bexar County Performing Arts Center Foundation, which was established to own and operate the new performing arts center. “They gave us a striking, new landmark for San Antonio’s downtown, took full advantage of the River Walk site and provided us with an extraordinary and acoustically excellent performance space.”

The H-E-B Performance Hall is equipped with a fully automated movable floor system that can be changed from raked theater seating to a flat floor, or any number of other seating configurations, in just 15 minutes. The floor is unique in the United States and enables Tobin to host multiple, different types of events on the same day.

Open green space connects the below-grade River Walk to the street level, capturing space for a third venue—a riverside auditorium with rows of plaza seating and a giant video screen incorporated into the veil. Here, venue programmers can simulcast live performances, as well as host outdoor cinema, music, and other curated events. The high, glassy entrance lobby of the Studio Theater opens directly onto the space – allowing audiences to arrive for the first time by the scenic riverside walkways or even by river taxi or barge.

As night falls and the River Walk transforms into a festive, carnival-like atmosphere, the veil reveals a second life with internal, programmable LEDs, allowing facility programmers to create custom light displays expressive of the evening’s performance.

To learn more, visit www.tobincenter.org.



About LMN Architects

LMN Architects specializes in designing public facilities such as convention centres, cultural arts venues, higher education facilities, commercial and mixed-use developments and urban environments that celebrate and enrich communities. Founded in 1979, LMN has earned an international reputation for high quality design, successfully managing complex projects and delivering progressive, sustainable solutions.

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