

FP-063

THE MUSIC HALL AT FAIR PARK

This building is one of the 30 historic structures at Fair Park that remains from the 1936 Texas Centennial Exposition. However, unlike most of the other structures on that list, this building already had a well-established history by the time that exposition rolled around.

Built in 1925 as Fair Park Auditorium, the building is now known to theater lovers everywhere as The Music Hall at Fair Park. The historic building embodies the Spanish Baroque style of design, with Moorish architectural influences. It features six, soaring stair towers capped with cast drum and dome, and five great arcade porches offering panoramic views of Fair Park. Throughout the years, the Music Hall at Fair Park has been a welcoming stage to such renowned entertainers as Debbie Reynolds, Jack Benny, Jose Ferrer, Judy Garland, Carol Burnett, Al Jarreau and the animated favorite, Shrek, among hundreds of others.

The building's first presentation in 1925 was supposed to be a successful Broadway musical at the time, called "Sky High". However, difficulties with the musician's union resulted in the last-minute cancellation of that show. Officials took a risk and quickly replaced it with the musical premiere of Sigmund Romberg's "The Student Prince". The risk paid off, as the show was a huge hit both with critics and the public. However, the true star was the hall itself, which was dedicated to, "the good, the true and the beautiful" (a line borrowed from the opera house in Frankfurt, Germany).

During the run of the 1936 Texas Centennial Exposition, the Music Hall became the General Motors exhibit hall. A year later, during the 1937 Pan-American Exposition, it was turned into a Casino - complete with Latin-American band.

In 1951, the hall hosted a review of George Gershwin's opera "Porgy and Bess", with Leontyne Price and William Warfield. Observers questioned staging a show that featured an all-Black cast at a mainstream theatre in the South. But the production was a smash and it went on to tour the world. In the 1980s, the hall hosted the Southwestern premiere of the musical, "Phantom of the Opera".

Throughout the decades, the hall has undergone numerous enhancements, including the addition of air conditioning, an elegant restaurant and gift shop. The result -- a nationally recognized venue for Broadway musical touring companies, grand opera, ballet and other dance productions, concerts, national pageants and public and corporate functions.

Today, the Music Hall is home to the Dallas Summer Musicals and a theatrical production during each State Fair of Texas, as well as numerous other smaller concerts and shows.

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