

Director's Notes

Q&A for/from Our Architects

Our intention is to build the community a world-class performing arts center for the arts to thrive. In addition to providing incredible opportunities for local youth and performances by the world's top performers, The Stages have been designed by Williams+Paddon Architects + Planners as a striking and iconic architectural sculpture with facilities that will aspire to the highest level of LEED and WELL Building certifications. We asked the architects to reflect on the design considerations that went into this project.

What was the design inspiration for The Stages at Northstar? Are there any other performing arts centers it takes inspiration from?

The exterior building envelope takes its form directly from the functional theatrical elements, most prominently the fly loft¹, which is twice as tall as the proscenium arch². Like a windswept snow cornice, the flowing roof line drapes itself over the fly loft, main house seating & balcony, descending to cover the lobby and exterior entry plaza. The theatre turns its back to the north winds and the lobby opens open to the south sun which is shielded in the summer and is allowed to penetrate for warmth and sparkle in the winter. While all great theaters share common programmatic elements, we truly wanted the expression of form to be a direct manifestation of program and site context. The natural environment is obviously a critical factor in Tahoe, and something local residents are extremely passionate about, as are we. There is no other theatre complex like this.

What design considerations were included to make the project as environmentally sensitive as possible?

The building is designed to endure for many generations with a goal to be a Zero Net Carbon building. It will employ geothermal space conditioning³ and use grid-based renewable power with zero combustion. But more importantly, the building will optimize passive energy design strategies first to minimize power demand from external sources. The building design responds to solar orientation and natural context including contour, vegetation, climate, prevailing weather patterns and access. The theatre's co-location with the Northstar day parking lot reduces the requirement for new impervious paving. A carbon sequestering mass timber⁴ structural system will also provide seismic resiliency and inherent fire resistance.

When The Stages at Northstar are built, what will it feel, sound, and look like?

It's interesting to consider that because of its location, patrons will only experience partial vignettes of the building at any one time. Certainly, the lobby approach from the south will be the most common visual experience. And the iconic amphitheater stage will frame outdoor performances while itself being framed by the forested topography of its immediate background. The amphitheater seating area will have incredible Sierra Crest vistas including one of the best views of Tinker Knob. Because the amphitheater sound system will provide micro-control, even outdoor performance days will not change the current ambient sounds levels beyond the property boundaries.

¹ Vast space above the stage that is home to all of the scenery, and lights that support and surround the actors on stage.

² An arch framing the opening between the stage and the auditorium in a theater.

³ <https://www.epa.gov/rhc/geothermal-heating-and-cooling-technologies>

⁴ Mass timber construction is a carbon removal technique that involves using specialized wood products to construct buildings, including high-rise buildings.



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Where the arts reflect the majesty of nature.