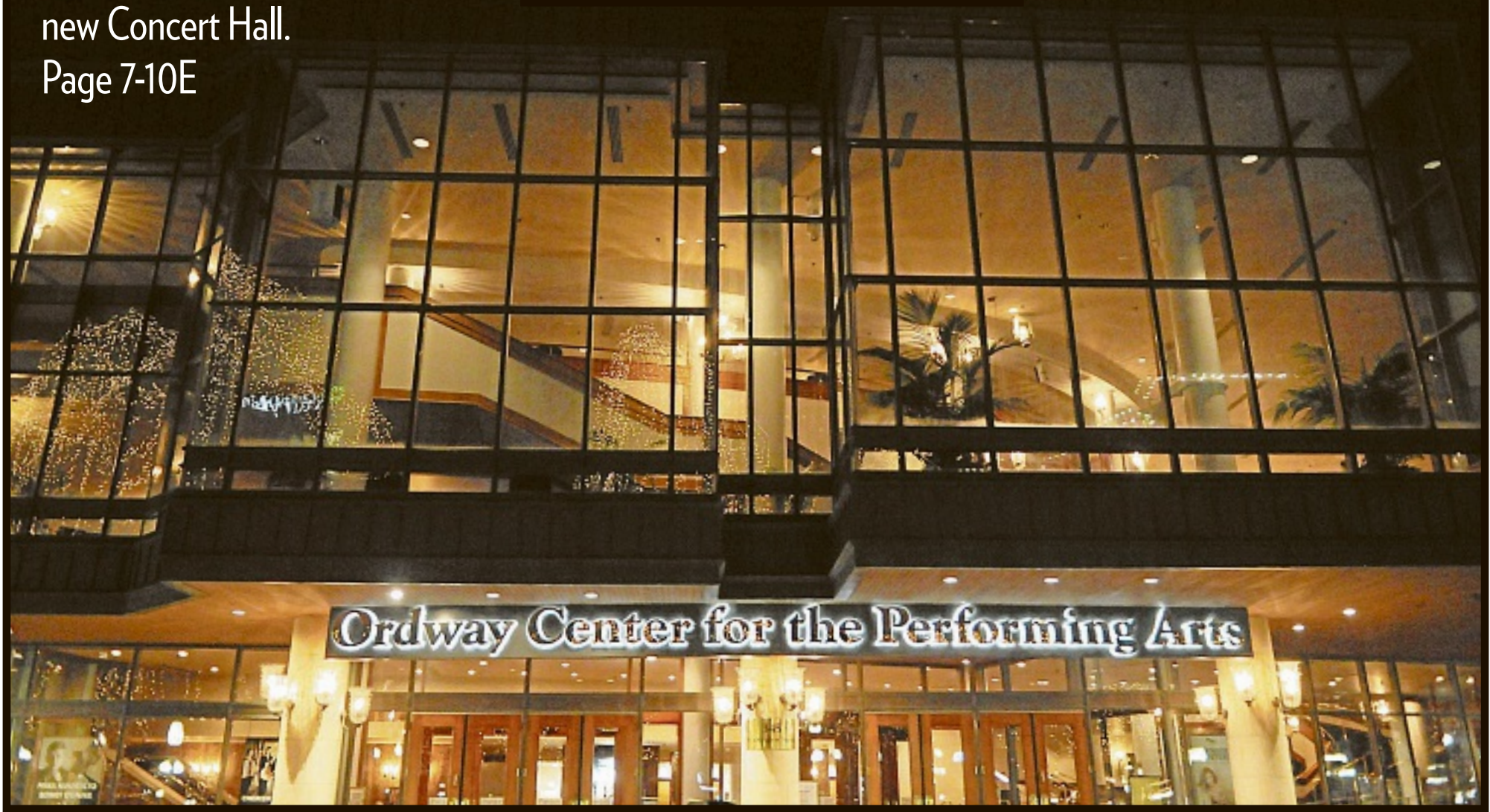


Shining jewel

Your complete guide to the Ordway's new Concert Hall. Page 7-10E



PIONEER PRESS PHOTOS: SHERRI LAROSE-CHIGLO AND BEN GARVIN

Relationships > Family Outings

Despite winter, fat-tire bikes keep us rolling along

By Maja Beckstrom
mbeckstrom@pioneerpress.com

Those newfangled bikes with the crazy fat tires can even roll over water. Well, frozen water. My 15-year-old son and I recently pedaled a pair of rented fat bikes down the middle of Minnehaha Creek.

Our big black wheels evoked both a toddler cartoon bike and a motocross motorcycle, and somehow that combination of goofiness and toughness summed up the mood of our hare-brained adventure. I couldn't keep from grinning and we bounced along the sunken, snowy corridor through South Minneapolis.

With their extra-wide rims and 4- or 5-inch tires, fat bikes have become popular in the past several years among cyclists who want an easier ride over snow. I don't normally ride in winter, and I'm not a recreational mountain biker, but I was looking for an adventure to lure out my teen.

The older he gets, the harder it is to peel him away from friends to hang out with mom. So, I decided to try fat bikes out.

Several shops in the Twin Cities rent fat bikes, including Angry Cat-



PIONEER PRESS: JEAN PIERI

Fat bikes make pedaling over snow easy. These cyclists race over the snowy trails at Carver Park in Woodbury thanks to extra-wide tires with low pressure. A decade ago, the first fat bikes were custom rides for serious winter cyclists, but today they are seen at a lot of local parks.

fish, a coffee bar and bike shop in Minneapolis. The storefront has an industrial chic feel, with stripped-down bike frames hanging like abstract art in the front windows. We walked through the front where serv-

ers poured Intelligentsia Coffee and patrons sat at tables or around coffee tables strewn with biking magazines. The fat bikes were in back.

FAMILY OUTINGS, 4E >

Relationships > Daily Juggle

A planned birthday splurge at the mall ruined by terrorists

I promised my daughter that on her 11th birthday I'd take her clothes shopping at the Mall of America.

Since I usually purchase clothes for my kids at our neighborhood Goodwill on Thursdays — when children's clothing and toys with blue, green and yellow tags are marked 50 percent off — my daughter knew this was a real splurge for us.

Just two days before our mother-daughter outing, though, last Saturday at 7:14 p.m., this headline topped my social media feed:

"Mall of America named as target in al-Shabaab video."

I gasped.

This is the same group that claimed responsibility for the 2013 siege on the posh Westgate Mall in Nairobi, Kenya. At least 67 shoppers were killed in that attack. I remembered that I had read a Westgate survivor's account in "Guideposts" magazine back in September: Amanda Belcher of Nairobi, Kenya, wrote about going to the mall that day with her husband; their plan was to catch a movie and get sushi for lunch. The shooting started after they had parked their car and were walking toward an entrance.

"Across the parking lot I could see the terrorists coming, methodically shooting anyone in their path, adults and chil-



dren ..." Belcher wrote. *"Listen, people, one of the terrorists said, 'We are here to kill you.' He spoke in English, calmly, as if he were commenting on the weather."*

"What if such an attack were to occur at the Mall of America in Minnesota?" wondered the video's narrator, a coward in a mask.

No.

No.

No.

My concerns increased the next morning.

"I would say that if anyone is planning to go to the Mall of America today, they've got to be particularly careful," U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson said Sunday on CNN's "State of the Union."

By Monday morning, my courage had started to return. Perhaps this was due to the date: I had given birth to my first daughter on a Monday morning exactly 11 years earlier; I know I am capable of strength in the face of fear. I was also starting to get angry — I had listened to a

MOLLY, 10E >



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The Ordway Center for the Performing Arts as seen from Rice Park in downtown St. Paul.

PIONEER PRESS: SHERRI LAROSE-CHIGLO

The Ordway’s Concert Hall is fine-tuned and set to sparkle.

Shining jewel

By Chris Hewitt
chewitt@pioneerpress.com

The Ordway Center for the Performing Arts has been around for 30 years, and the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra has been in existence for 57 — but both feel brand-new today with the opening of the SPCO’s new home, the Concert Hall.

Rehearsals and invitation-only concerts have been going on for the past month but the public will get its first look at the \$42 million Concert Hall today as the venue kicks off three weeks of celebratory events dubbed “Rock the Ordway.”

They’re the culmination of efforts you could trace to 2010, when the Arts Partnership — the Ordway, SPCO, the Schubert Club and Minnesota Opera — announced plans to tear down the McKnight Theater and construct the Concert Hall in its footprint. Or you could go back as far as 1985, when the Ordway opened with the McKnight Theatre as a compromise space that never quite addressed the fact that so many organizations wanted to program events at the Ordway.

In part because the amount of available space was defined by its location at the corner of St. Paul’s Washington and Fifth streets, most of the new construction is devoted to the hall itself. That means Concert Hall users will still rely on the original Ordway for many things: bathrooms (although there are some new ones in the lowest level of the new hall), the ticket window, bars and the like. Your best bet, when using the new space, might be to think of it as part of a larger whole, with some amenities of its own and some that are shared.

“We hope patrons will explore how they want to live with and use the space,” says Patricia Mitchell, the Ordway’s president and CEO. The following user’s guide should help you find out what’s new — and not-so-new — at the venue that has been called, with slight geographic imprecision, the “Jewel of the Mississippi.”



WHAT’S THERE

The Concert Hall’s chief use is as the home of the SPCO, but the orchestra will continue to perform in a variety of other venues. The SPCO has use of the Concert Hall for 24 Saturdays each year and for most of the surrounding weeks, but that leaves room for other events, including the Schubert Club, several “Rock the Ordway” shows and April’s “Broadway Songbook: Rock & Roll on Broadway.” The Concert Hall is equipped with a sound system, re-purposed from the McKnight, for events that use amplification. The SPCO generally will use it only for speakers.

PARKING

Perhaps the best advice on where to park when you’re attending events at either the Ordway Music Theater or Concert Hall is: Don’t.

The Ordway is a four-block walk from the “Central” stop on the Green Line. Especially if you’re coming with a small party, that’s going to be easier, cheaper and more energy-efficient than driving.

If you do drive, you could circle around for a while, looking for a meter, or you can opt for one of the nearby parking ramps such as Lawson Commons or RiverCentre or surface lots, where prices may vary depending on events. (If the Wild are deep in the playoffs at the Xcel Energy Center next door, plan to take out a mortgage to pay for your parking space.) Pro tip: The Ordway’s staff tends to park in the Landmark Towers Ramp, across Rice Park from the Ordway, partly because Ordway offices are in Landmark Towers.

TICKETS

This works much the same as it always did. SPCO tickets can be purchased from the orchestra, either at www.thespco.org by calling 651-291-1144 or at their offices in the Hamm Building, 408 St. Peter St. Ninety minutes before concerts, tickets are also available at the Ordway box office, which will have ticket windows dedicated to the Concert Hall. As you face the box office, the windows on the right will be for the Concert Hall, which also will be to your right.

GETTING INTO THE HALL

Patrons still can enter the way they’ve always entered, greeted by the doormen at the sets of double doors that lead directly to the ticket

windows. You can proceed from there to the right, up the ramps that lead to the new Concert Hall. But, if you already have your tickets, you may want to consider other options.

There’s a new entrance at the Concert Hall and there will be a doorman there, too. Entering there will deposit you in the lobby, next to the elevator and coat check. One other thing to consider is that the entrance to the Concert Hall main floor lobby from the Ordway is not very large, which may cause bottlenecks. Patrons who have first-tier or second-tier Concert Hall tickets may find it easiest to use the original Ordway entrance and proceed up the winding staircase to enter the Concert Hall on its upper levels.

WHERE TO SIT

There are a lot of great things about the Concert Hall but maybe the best great thing is that, no matter where you sit, you will not be more than 90 feet from the performers.

For comparison’s sake, if you were sitting in the SPCO’s old home in the Music Theater next door, 90 feet away from the stage would put you in the third row of the mezzanine. In other words, you can sit in the far back of the Concert Hall and you’ll still be quite close to the music. But where are the best best seats?

“I know this sounds like weaseling out, but it depends,” Mitchell says. “The sound is wonderful, although it’s true that the sound is more blended if you’re in the second tier than on the main floor. It you’re sitting on what we call house left, where the seats come all the way around (see maps on Page 9E), you’ll be able to read the music a pianist is playing. If he hits a wrong note, you will know, because those seats are like being in the orchestra. It’ll really be a different experience, depending on where you are.”

THE ORDWAY CENTER, 8E >



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“Some people like an intense, direct experience because, in the front row, you can see things you can’t see from anywhere else.”

— Paul Scarbrough

CONTINUED FROM 7E

> The Ordway Center

Andy Luft, the sound and lighting expert who is the Concert Hall’s project manager, agrees.

“If you’re sitting in the first few rows, next to the string section, you’re going to hear a lot of strings. If you’re by the tympani, you’ll hear more percussion,” says Luft, who echoes the Ordway theme that there are no bad seats in the Concert Hall (more on that later). If forced to pick, he says his favorite seat would be dead center in the first row of the first tier.

Luft might have to arm-wrestle acoustician Paul Scarbrough for that seat. He, too, gravitates to the front rows at either the center of the first tier or the center of the second tier.

“But that’s due to my subjective preference,” Scarbrough says. “The acoustical character will vary as you go around, which is natural in any concert hall. Some people like an intense, direct experience because, in the front row, you can see things you can’t see from anywhere else. But I prefer to sit farther back, where the sound has clarity and a little more resonance.”

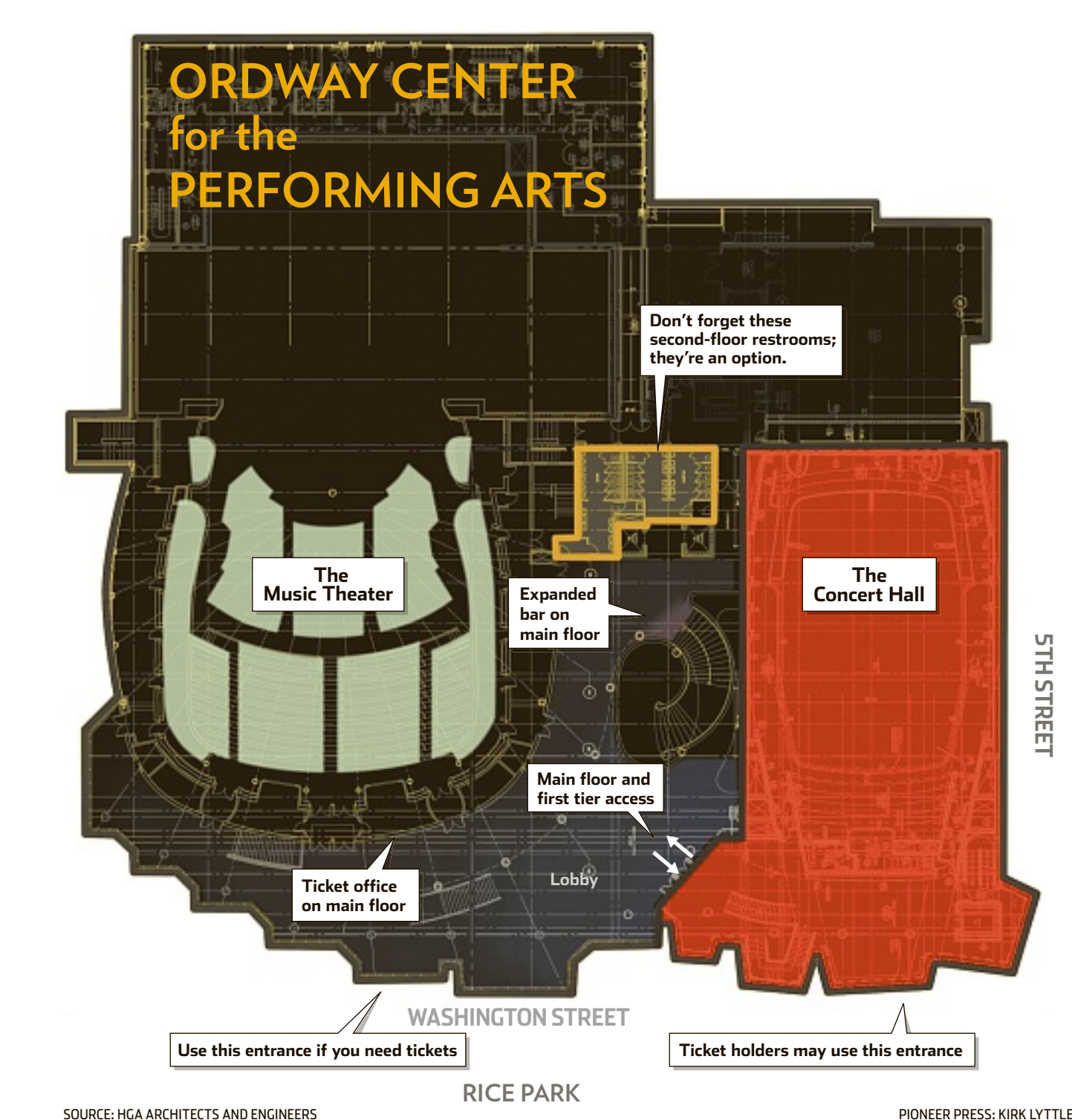
Kyu-young Kim is with him. The SPCO’s principal second violin already has been at a lot of rehearsals and events in the Concert Hall, both playing on stage and listening from the audience, and he knows where he’d want to sit if he were paying.

“I’d want to be up high. The best sound will be at the top, and that kind of bird’s-eye view of the hall is really cool,” Kim says. “But I wouldn’t worry if I had to sneak in and get a ticket at the last minute. They’re all good seats.”

But there definitely are some less-good seats: specifically, the ones off to the sides on the second tier. At the front of these sections, there are two fantastic seats that face the stage but, unless you move way forward in your chair, you cannot see the entire stage from most of the other seats on the sides of the second tier. (At present, SPCO is not selling these seats as partial-view but they are letting patrons know there are sightline issues and working on a way to make sure those issues are reflected in online ticketing charts.)

Some of the seats in the choir loft, the area behind the musicians that will be sold at most concerts, also have slightly obscured views of the stage. But the intimacy with the musicians there is so real that you’ll practically feel like BFFs with the violinists. And the spectacular view of the Concert Hall, with the ceiling’s waves of wood rolling all the way to the back of the hall, has me determined to sit right in the middle of the front row of the choir loft: row A center, seat 16.

Sound, of course, may not be your only



SOURCE: HGA ARCHITECTS AND ENGINEERS

PIONEER PRESS: KIRK LYTTLE

consideration when choosing where to sit. Wheelchair-accessible and companion seats are situated at various places throughout the Concert Hall. Ticket agents, and the website, can help with choosing those seats.

Ultimately, Mitchell thinks the key to finding your favorite seat at the Concert Hall is not to find your favorite one.

“It isn’t a matter of finding the seat you like best,” Mitchell says. “It’s all about switching it up.”

SOUND

If you find yourself thinking, “I wonder why they did that,” as you look around the Concert Hall, the answer will often be “because of the sound.”

The concrete floors? Better for acoustics. The each-one-different wall panels? They help to assure there’s no symmetry in the room, which makes for better sound. The subtle shifts that have taken place over the past month as to where the musicians sit on stage and to the acoustic panels at the back of the stage? It’s all about making the SPCO

musicians sound as good as they’ve ever sounded.

“We’ve had about four weeks of rehearsal in the space, everything from a chamber music rehearsal to Beethoven’s Ninth, so we’ve had a chance to hear everything from the most intimate to the most expansive music,” Kim says. “What’s been interesting is that the hall has been very sensitive to any adjustment that’s been made. We’ve been trying different subtle things, and they make a difference. The orchestra members can hear this incredible detail and react to it.”

For the last month or so, acoustician Scarbrough and his team have been on hand as sound in the Concert Hall has been adjusted, almost in the same way an expert tunes a piano.

First, they had to get the room as quiet as possible, blocking out ambient noise from things such as the heating and cooling system. Then adjustments had to be made to various qualities in the room. One early problem, according to Luft, was that there was too much bass in the room but that sort of thing is fixable.

“There are two kinds of adjustability in the room. One is what we refer to as one-time adjustments: the acoustic canopies over the stage, the wall behind the dowels (at the back of the stage). We’ve been working with the orchestra to hone that, and once we’re done it will pretty much be fixed for all time,” Scarbrough says. “But things like acoustic banners and draperies will be used, depending on what’s happening in the room. When they’re doing other types of events, particularly events with amplified music or speech, those drapes, for instance, can be deployed to dampen the resonance in the room.”

But the vast majority of the Concert Hall’s usage will be by the SPCO. And what Bruce Coppock, the orchestra’s president and CEO, has been hearing over the last month or so of rehearsals has him convinced that the Concert Hall could make audiophiles of us all.

“What I’ve always found about audiences is they don’t give themselves enough credit for how much they understand, how much they hear,” Coppock says. “The challenge, I think is

THE ORDWAY CENTER, 9E >

Nearby restaurants to round out an evening at the Ordway

By Jess Fleming
jfleming@pioneerpress.com

If it has been awhile since you were out and about in downtown St. Paul, here’s a look at places to warm up and grab a bite to eat before you visit the Ordway. There are plenty of restaurants within a few-block radius of the theater.

WEST SEVENTH

If you haven’t yet seen the expanded Cossetta complex on West Seventh Street, it’s worth a stop. There’s something for everyone there — a kid-friendly, carb-laden Italian-American menu in the eatery and a higher-end, more authentic restaurant, called Louis, on the third floor.

If you have time for a full, sit-down meal, there are higher-end pasta dishes, steaks and an out-of-this-world cioppino.



PIONEER PRESS

Pizza by the slice is available at Cossetta Italian Market and Pizzeria.

But if you’re in a hurry, the restaurant has a great happy hour from 3 to 6 p.m. Drinks range from \$5 to \$6, and huge portions of food are priced at \$6 to \$9. Our favorite happy-hour special is the sausage Calabrese, a pretty good deal at \$9.

Cossetta Italian Market and Pizzeria: 211 W. Seventh St., St. Paul; 651-222-3476; cossettas.com.

The warm, fireplace-and-stonework dining room at the Downtowner Woodfire Grill is a great place to start an evening. We’re fans of the Persian kebobs and the decent wood-fired pizzas. There’s a decent wine list, too.

Downtowner Woodfire Grill: 253 W. Seventh St., St. Paul; 651-228-9500; downtownerwoodfire.com

CENTRAL DOWNTOWN

For the ultimate St. Paul experience, have a seat at the St. Paul Grill at Fifth and Market streets. It overlooks Rice Park and is the place where politicians and many of the Capital City’s movers and shakers hang out. Warm up with one of the Grill’s generously sized and high-priced classic cocktails — we’re especially fond of the Manhattan and the Aviation. The food menu is expensive, too, but you can’t go wrong with any of the burgers, steaks or chops.

St. Paul Grill: 350 Market St., St. Paul; 651-224-7455; stpaulgrill.com.

If you’re looking to make a date of it, the most romantic restaurant downtown is Meritage, just down the street from the Grill on St. Peter Street.

Nosh on the best oysters in the Twin Cities and enjoy a craft cocktail or glass of wine from the exhaustive French list at the restaurant’s pretty bar.

Meritage has a good happy hour, too, but it’s available only from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. Tuesday through Friday. Oysters are 2 for \$4, and a few select cocktails are available for \$5.50.

Meritage: 410 St. Peter St., St. Paul; 651-222-



PIONEER PRESS

Slurp some oysters at Meritage in St. Paul before a concert or performance at the Ordway.

5670; meritage-stpaul.com.

Another place with a great happy hour and sit-down options is Pazzaluna on the corner of Fifth and St. Peter. Drinks during happy hour, which runs from 4 to 6 p.m. daily, range from \$3 to \$6 and appetizers from \$6 to \$9.

If you’re looking for a sit-down meal, the restaurant’s Italian menu has something for everyone.

Pazzaluna: 360 St. Peter St., St. Paul; 651-223-7000; pazzaluna.com

The pretty, quiet dining room at the Japanese restaurant across from City Hall, Sakura, is a great place to meet before a concert or show. Sushi, tempura, teriyaki and bento boxes are all decent here, sake is offered hot or cold, and there is a full bar.

Sakura: 350 St. Peter St., St. Paul; 651-224-0185; sakurastpaul.com

Restaurant and food reporter Jess Fleming can be reached at 651-228-5435. Follow her at twitter.com/jessflem.

NEW CONCERT HALL

SECOND TIER

FIRST TIER

MAIN FLOOR

SOURCE: HGA ARCHITECTS AND ENGINEERS

PIONEER PRESS: KIRK LYTLE

NEW CONCERT HALL — BY THE NUMBERS

14.7 miles
of oak rods on the
walls, ceilings and
other surfaces of
the concert hall

282
ceiling panels

220 light bulbs

1,200
250-
pound
wall
panels

17
new bathroom
stalls and
urinals
(including one
wheelchair-
accessible,
family
restroom)

90 feet — distance from the stage if you sit in the back row

24 inches — thickness of concrete wall that separates the Concert Hall from the Marzitelli Foyer

\$42 million –
cost of the concert hall (excluding the endowment and other maintenance funds raised)

35,000 feet
of fiber optics (which will prepare the
hall for future technological
developments)

22 inches —
thickness of concrete wall on
the Fifth Street side of the
Concert Hall

35,000 feet
of high-bandwidth
copper wire

“It isn’t a matter of finding the seat you like best. It’s all about switching it up.”

Patricia Mitchell

CONTINUED FROM 8E

› The Ordway Center

that, when you don't have something to compare it to, it's hard to imagine what it could be. That's going to be the voyage of discovery for our audiences. All of a sudden, they're going to hear things that they never knew were going on before."

That will be a continuing process. Everything is pretty much set for this month's concerts, but the SPCO and other tenants will continue to provide fine-tuning feedback, and Scarbrough says he and his team will return in about a year to make any adjustments that are required.

FOOD

One thing that has not changed at the Ordway: No outside food or beverages allowed, with the sole exception of water bottles.

"If we could establish water stations and completely eliminate selling bottled water — from an environmental standpoint that would make me happy," says Tammie Weinfurter, the Ordway's food and beverage services manager. In the absence of those stations, though, patrons can bring their own water bottles in.

The biggest change is that patrons can now also bring their purchased refreshments into the halls with them, something that was previously not allowed. Hot beverages must have covers.

The bar underneath the staircase in the Music Theater has more than doubled in size, with room for five bartenders. It'll be open to serve Concert Hall patrons, even if there isn't also an event in the music theater, and the Concert Hall has added a bar on the second tier, the only level where the lobby of the Concert Hall doesn't connect with the lobby of the Music Theater. Like drinks, the other refreshments offered at the Music Theater will be available to Concert Hall attendees.

"If there's anything happening at the Ordway, you can get cake and cookies, beer and wine and a Kowalski's wrap," Weinfurter vows. (Looking for a quick bite or luxurious dinner before a show? See Page 8E.)

BATHROOMS

When you're planning bathroom breaks while attending the Concert Hall, it's best to think of the entire Ordway space. If you're on the main floor of the Concert Hall, it probably will be easiest to use the new restrooms in the lower level, which features 17 new stalls or urinals. But if you're sitting anywhere else, there may be closer options in the original Ordway, which is accessible from the main and first tier lobbies and which always will be open during Concert Hall events, even if there's nothing on stage at the Music Theater. The farthest you can be from a bathroom is probably in the "choir loft" seats, the rows of seats behind the stage. If you're sitting there, you may want to visit the restroom before the concert begins because it's a long walk to the restrooms in the foyer in the Music Theater.

COAT CHECK

Patrons who want to check their coats will have a couple of options: There's a new coat check in the Concert Hall, just inside its new entrance, but the familiar coat check, near the Ordway's box office, remains an option.

LATE SEATING

The main challenge in the Concert Hall will be figuring out how to seat latecomers who have tickets in the choir loft. That will be difficult to do without disrupting other patrons, so event services manager Toby Lien says his staff will be keeping an eye on how traffic patterns at the Concert Hall work and creating a plan. For now — and actually, forever — be on time.

FAOS

Q: What entrance am I supposed to use? **A:** Any entrance you want. The Concert Hall entrance on Washington Street, like the original, Music Theater entrance on Washington, will be staffed with doormen. It will be open any time there is an event at the hall but you also can enter through the other entrance, closer to the ticket office.

Q: What if I suddenly have a dry throat? **A:** If you have a hacking cough, there's something to be said for not inflicting your germs on your fellow theatergoers. But dry throats happen and ushers at the Ordway, both in the music theater and the concert hall, have lozenges to dispense to coughing patrons.

Q: I plan to do some making out while I'm at the Concert Hall. What's the best place? **A:** That would be what is alternately known as the kissing corners or proposal corners, on the Fifth Street edge of the lobbies outside the first and second tiers. "An enormous number of people become engaged at the Ordway," says Mitchell, who notes that the staff is already predicting most future engagements will occur at the kissing corners, which have spectacular views up the hill to the Cathedral of Saint Paul. (Noting that the corners would be great places to view Crashed Ice, the extreme winter sports event on Cathedral Hill, Mitchell is already thinking about trying to sell tickets if the event occurs again next year.)

Q: I want my own armrests. Is that too much to ask? **A:** Not in the Concert Hall, it isn't. If you opt for any of the side seats on any of the seating tiers, all of those chairs give you armrests on both sides of the chair; no sharing required. Most of the seats in the first two rows on the main floor also have their own armrests.

Q: If there are events in both the Music Theater and the Concert Hall at the same time, will the sound bleed through like when I'm trying to watch a romantic comedy at the multiplex but "Transformers" is drowning out Julia Roberts? **A:** No. There's a 24-inch concrete wall between the two theaters, in addition to 4 inches of air space and 3.5 inches of plaster panels.



PIONEER PRESS: JEAN PIERI

SPCO musicians will celebrate the opening of their new venue with a variety of events this month.



ANANYA DANCE THEATRE

Ananya Dance Theatre will perform on March 11.

CONTINUED FROM 9E

> The Ordway

CONCERT HALL GRAND OPENING ‘ROCK THE ORDWAY’ EVENTS

- March 1, 11 a.m.-4 p.m.:** Ribbon Cutting and Community Open House, Concert Hall
- March 4, 7:30 p.m.:** Mozart for the Young at Heart (Minnesota Youth Symphonies and Project Opera), Concert Hall
- March 5, 7:30 p.m.:** Opening Celebration, SPCO, Concert Hall
- March 6, 10:30 a.m., 8 p.m.:** Opening Celebration, SPCO, Concert Hall
- March 7-15, various times:** “The Manchurian Candidate,” Minnesota Opera, Music Theater
- March 7, 7:30 p.m.:** “Twenty Years of Freedom,” Vusi Mahlasela and Hugh Masakela, Concert Hall
- March 8, 2 p.m.:** The Schubert Club welcomes Pekka Kuusisto, violin, and Dermot Dunne, accordion, Concert Hall
- March 11, 7:30 p.m.:** Ananya Dance Theatre, Concert Hall
- March 12, 7:30 p.m.:** La Santa Cecilia, Concert Hall
- March 13, 10:30 a.m. and 8 p.m.:** SPCO, Mahler’s Fourth Symphony, Concert Hall
- March 14, 9 a.m.-noon:** Family Day open house
- March 14, 8 p.m.:** SPCO, Mahler’s Fourth Symphony, Concert Hall
- March 15, 2 p.m.:** “The Singing Revolution: Songs of the Baltic Awakening,” Cantus, Concert Hall
- March 17, 7:30 p.m.:** Cherish the Ladies, Concert Hall
- March 18, 7:30 p.m.:** Haley Bonar, Concert Hall
- March 19, 7:30 p.m.:** Sounds of Blackness, Concert Hall
- March 20, 7:30 p.m.:** “Love Songs,” Schubert Club welcomes vocalists of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center
- March 21, 7:30 p.m.:** Bernadette Peters, Music Theater
- March 21, 8 p.m.:** “Island Universe Story,” Helado Negro, Concert Hall
- March 22, 1 p.m.:** 92nd Annual Bruce P. Carlson Scholarship Competition Winners’ Recital, Schubert Club, Concert Hall
- March 22, 4 p.m.:** “When Inspiration Knocks,” Greater Twin Cities Youth Symphonies, Music Theater
- Ticket prices vary. Tickets can be purchased by calling 651-224-4222 or visiting ordway.org.

CONTINUED FROM 1E

> Molly Guthrey

radio news report in which a Minnesota mom said she would no longer bring her kids to Nickelodeon Universe once a week in the winter, an activity that helped her family ward off cabin fever.

“That’s it,” I told my kids as I drove them to school. “We will go the mall tonight. We will not let fear rule us!”

My kids cheered.

At the office, I fortified my courage with something else I remembered reading, a Leonard Pitts Jr. column published shortly after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11. The headline is still relevant: “STRIKE BACK AT TERRORISTS BY LIVING AS WE ALWAYS

HAVE.”

“In America, it seems, fear has become a way of life,” Pitts wrote. *“That’s why I wanted to share an e-mail I recently received from a reader, Brenda Knapp. She wrote about having lunch with some business people, one of whom was a woman who vowed that, in the wake of Sept. 11, she’d never go into a skyscraper again. Everyone else at the table concurred. But when they asked Knapp whether she’d go into a high-rise, again, she said, ‘Of course.’*

“Her tablemates were stunned. ‘You would?’ they said. ‘Why?’

“‘Out of sheer spite,’ she replied.

“In her note, Knapp explained that she got her attitude from her father. ‘He was in England as a flight surgeon for the U.S. Army Air Corps during WWII,’ she

wrote. “The evenings ... were punctuated by Germans redecorating London with bombs. But the English — in their very English way — went on.”

“Her father, she said, ‘recalls going to the ballet in London: They would open the performance by asking any patrons who ‘felt they must leave during an air raid to do so quietly, so as not to disturb the other patrons.’ So nobody left during air raids. The bombs would drop (ke-blam!) and the dancers would pirouette (ke-blam!) and the orchestra would play (ke-blam!) and the audience would applaud.

“‘Everyone heard the bombs. Everyone felt the fear. But they, in their own quiet way, fought back by remaining stubbornly in their seats.

“‘As for me, I will continue to climb into tall buildings. I will continue to fly. I may be hijacked by terrorists, but I

will not be hijacked by fear.”

This time, though, fear won. It won at 4:58 p.m., the hour of my daughter’s birth, when her dad called our house phone to wish our girl a happy birthday.

A few minutes later, during a Target run after work, my phone pinged.

“Are you going to take the kids to MOA tonight?” her dad texted. “I would really recommend against that given the threat.”

“Really?” I texted back. “Definitely.”

“Well I just don’t think we should let the terrorists decide where we shop.”

“I’m not trying to be flip but I don’t think they really care what you think,” he replied. “I won’t go there any more. is too much of a target.”

I sighed, looking down at all the taco fixings I had loaded into my cart. Suddenly, I wasn’t hungry.



PIONEER PRESS: MOLLY GUTHREY

I fought fear by going to the Mall of America on Tuesday to buy bath salts, accessories and a pecan Cinnamon.

25

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At home, our new babysitter, Mrs. Doubtfire, was frosting the birthday cake as my high-spirited tween bounced around her.

The bouncing stopped after I told my tween that, out of respect for her dad’s concerns about the fresh threat, we would stay away from the mall — for now, anyway. Instead, I’d take her shopping at her favorite consignment shop, My Sister’s Closet.

“Are people really going to bomb the Mall of America?” my daughter asked.

“I hope not,” I said.

And then I chased away the darkness by lighting the candles on her cake.

The next morning, after I had dropped the kids off at school, I headed to the mall on my own to take a look around. Posted signs instructed me: “If you SEE something SAY something.” I didn’t see much of anything on this

quiet weekday morning — people were at work and at school, after all — but there was a line of people with babies and toddlers in tow, waiting to get into a “Curious George” event in the rotunda for Toddler Tuesdays. I skipped the monkey show and headed to a store for girls, where I bought my daughter a floral headband. The cashier and I got to talking about the threat hanging over us.

“I plan to come to the mall even more now,” I told the cashier.

“Really?” she asked.

I nodded.

“That’s awesome,” she said.

We all should, I think. After all, isn’t this America, the land of the free and the home of the brave?

Molly Guthrey can be reached at mguthrey@pioneerpress.com or 651-228-5505.