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This two-balconied theatre seats 1125, with an orchestra pit large enough for 100 musicians, divided into six sections that can be raised or lowered to achieve desired sound effect (Section, 5).

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Ce théâtre à double-balcon a une contenance de 1125 places, avec une fosse d'orchestre suffisamment grande pour contenir 100 musiciens, et se divise en 6 parties qui peuvent être surélevées ou abaissées selon l'effet sonore désiré (section, 5).

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Dieses Theater mit zwei Balkonen bietet 1129 Menschen Platz und hat einen Orchestergraben, der gross genug für 100 Musiker ist und in sechs Teilbereiche untergliedert werden kann, die erhöht oder niedriger gestellt werden können, um den gewünschten Ton zu erzielen (ein Teilbereich, 5).

Working in conjunction with his widow, Elissa Aalto, who is a trained architect, was prominent German theatre architect Harald Deilmann. He and Mrs. Aalto, though attempting to remain as faithful as possible to the original design, revised the interior plans to take into consideration these many advances. An engineering firm headed by Henrik Wiczowski and Adolf Zotzmann, one of the foremost theatre engineering companies in West Germany, oversaw the building and installations.

Where Aalto had originally, for instance, planned for the stage turntable to be on the main stage, technology now makes it possible for the turntable to be stored behind on the rear stage and moved forward when called for.

The stage area is set up as a standard four square pattern, with a backstage and two sides stages. The Essen design allows soundproofing of the side stages, permitting rehearsals simultaneous to construction and performance.

Between the mainstage and rear stage is an enormous vertical drawer that disappears into the stage floor where up to 50 backdrops can be stored for easy access. An elevator the length and height of a rolled backdrop runs directly from the paint shop above onto stage right.

Since the Aalto blueprint did not allow for a fly tower-it would interfere with the sloping roofs-the top of the house has three ascending tiered levels on which the machinery is arranged. There are 32 motorized flies and another 15 hand-operated ones in between.

As the Aalto's first resident lighting designer, Ulrich Motz was in the enviable position of being able to select a great deal of the equipment and oversee the installation. The steel construction and stage machinery systems were engineered by Essen-based Krupp. Siemens installed all the electricals including two B-40 light boards. Besides providing crucial backup, "Having the two boards," says Motz, "permits different programs to be operated. While one board operator is working on the evening's show, the other can be doing corrections for another production."

Proudly showing off his domain recently, Motz pointed out three lighting galleries circling above the mainstage. "The back shelf of the first gallery," he notes, "is also a mobile bridge that can be moved downstage toward the proscenium opening." Above the proscenium arch is a lighting bridge with a two-tiered catwalk that can be moved up or down. "It gives us great flexibility in terms of overhead lighting positions," he adds.

According to Motz, a graduate of the North Carolina School of the Arts, "The overall design

makes the work of the crews less complicated and in some instances reduces the number of men necessary to perform a job.

"For instance," he continues, "all lighting positions are wired so that two people can easily reach them. And all positions have elevator access."

The overall sculptural effect of the Aalto is remarkable. Set well back from traffic, the theatre nestles in a landscaped public garden amidst a low stone wall and formations that suggest a prehistoric temple and grave markers, a commission executed by Essen sculptor Ulrich Ruckriem. The natural stone and mature trees give the imposing sturdy white mass contrast and perspective. From certain views the surrounding buildings—a mix of pre- and post-war office complexes—remain out of view, letting the Aalto dominate the skyline.

The wavy facade, along which there are no right angles, and which is said to have been influenced by the natural textures of trees and rocks, is composed of alternating strips of wide and narrow granite blocks. Longish windows face out from the main foyer, while seemingly random patterns of smaller windows provide natural light for office and production facilities. A brown tubular awning over the entry provides weather protection.

Passing functional box office windows you enter a vast, low-ceilinged coat check room dominated by a long curving white marble topped counter. The competition guidelines stipulated that theatre-goers be given the opportunity to remove outer garments before entering the foyer proper.

Up some steps is a triple height gathering chamber with long glass windows opening out to the public. A cool stark white, this chamber introduces contrasts with wood, fabric, and paint and metal details. The supported columns are clad partway up in glazed off-white ceramic tiles. The overall dramatic effect Aalto intended was a way of putting the audience in the right frame of mind for the anticipated performance.

Down a few steps is an open cafe serving both food and drinks, permitting theatregoers garden views from a ring of bistro-type tables or in warm weather to step out onto an adjoining terrace.

Foyer accents are copper and brass handrails wrapped in black leather. 50s-style light fixtures, free standing lamps, tables and black leather seating are all designed by Aalto. For maximum soundproofing each set of double-doors leading into the main theatre is covered with fabric woven from Chinese horsehair. Two levels of wavy balcony balustrades, overlooking the foyer's main congregating area, are accessed by free-hanging stairwells.