

THE HONG KONG CULTURAL CENTRE OPENS
AS A WORLD-CLASS PERFORMANCE SPACE

The Jewel of Kowloon

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rand opera, high drama, world-class symphonies, and experimental theatre have come to the Far East in a big way. On 5 November 1989, the Hong Kong Cultural Centre opened with the sounds of Jessye Norman and the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra. Towering over Kowloon's bustling waterfront, the Hong Kong Cultural Centre houses three different and diverse halls — a 2,200-seat Concert Hall, a 1,750-seat Grand Theatre, and a 300 to 500-seat Studio Theatre.

In the planning since 1975, this HK \$600 million (UK £45 million, US \$77 million) project is the design of Macanautive Jose Lei, director of the architectural services department, a branch of the Hong Kong government. According to supervising architect, P. L. Kwan, there was a group of over 50 consultants and designers responsible for the project. "We worked with acoustical consultants, theatrical consultants, structural consultants, various architects, on and on. Because the Centre was so long in the planning and building, the roster of the professionals involved was extensive." Technical director, Mark Taylor, who has been on board since September 1988 when he came from his post at the Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts, cites UK-based John Wyckham Associates as light and stage consultants, Professor Harold Marshall from the University of Auckland as acoustics consultant, with Wagner-Biro of Austria supplying stage equipment, Strand supplying

the lighting, and Philips, the sound.

The development of the Kowloon waterside district is a four phase project. Phase One was the Space Museum, which opened in 1980 and contains a 316-seat Space Theatre. The Cultural Centre represents Phase Two of the plan. Phase Three is the new Hong Kong Museum of Modern Art, which will be completed in 1991. The last phase is an open-aired garden.

But it is the Cultural Centre that officials hope will make Hong Kong the cultural capital of the arts in the Far East. The oval-sized Concert Hall, home to the Philharmonic, houses a 20 meter wide by 12.6 meter deep oak stage. According to technical director Taylor, the hall was designed "solely as a concert hall — no compromises were made when it came to acoustics." He

