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The Acoustics of Performance Halls Spaces for Music from Carnegie Hall to the Hollywood Bowl

J. Christopher Jaffe

"I am heartened in knowing that there are a few—a very few—like you who know enough about acoustics to care about the sound from a musician's point of view, and to look for that intangible magic and warmth that really makes for a great hall and an additional instrument for us to work with in performance."

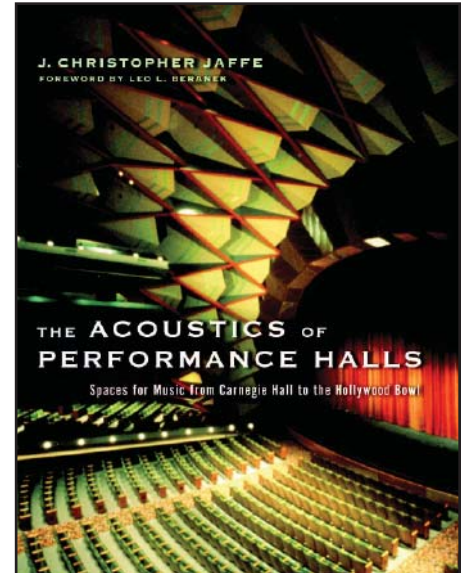
— Isaac Stern, violinist, December 15, 1984

"Possessing a wonderful acoustical equilibrium, Bass Performance Hall is one of those in which music heard by the audience is the same as that heard by the performer. The clarity of sound heard throughout the entire range, in addition to the warm and welcoming environment, makes Bass Hall one of the finest halls."

— Yo Yo Ma, cellist, October 10, 2000

"Thank you for the extraordinary work you did on transforming the sound of the Kennedy Center Concert Hall. It is truly a room in which all Americans can enjoy music under ideal conditions. Your professionalism, hard work, and good sense have blessed us with one of the finest halls in America."

— Lawrence Wilker, president emeritus of the John F. Kennedy Center



J. Christopher Jaffe, the acclaimed acoustician, describes the common misconceptions about what makes a successful classical concert space, explains that sound reflections rather than geometry are the key to developing an outstanding hall, and shows how a series of simple principles related to how humans perceive musical quality can provide the ideal environment for classical music performances. Jaffe presents a proven methodology for designing successful venues for symphonic performance in a variety of building types, including concert halls, music pavilions, multi-use theaters, and amphitheaters. An invaluable resource as a large-scale troubleshooting manual, this book should be required reading not only for acousticians but also for concert administrators, concert division directors, and operations managers, as well as theater consultants, architectural firms, and construction companies.

J. Christopher Jaffe has been a consultant in acoustics for half a century. With a background in engineering, theater, and music, he has designed concert halls and symphonic music pavilions for dozens of America's top orchestral ensembles, including the New York Philharmonic, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Chicago Symphony, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and the National Symphony. Noted for his innovative design concepts, starting with the Stagecraft Orchestral Shell (developed with Boris Goldovsky, director of the Tanglewood Opera Theatre) in 1959, Jaffe also developed the tunable/coupled orchestra shell, the concert hall shaper, and the "Cab Forward" design approaches to multiuse concert facilities described in this book. He has worked with many of America's most talented theater architects, including Philip Johnson, I. M. Pei, Frank O. Gehry, Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer Associates, Rafael Viñoly, and David Schwarz. When not consulting for Acentech Inc, he divides his time between his home in Connecticut and a camp on Loon Lake in the Adirondack Mountains.

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