

Ford Amphitheatre Reopens with Civic Dedication Ceremony

broadwayworld.com/los-angeles/article/Ford-Amphitheatre-Reopens-with-Civic-Dedication-Ceremony-20170714

by BWW News
Desk

7/14/2017

The John Anson Ford Amphitheatre reopened today with a civic dedication ceremony, marking the completion of a multi-year construction project that has restored, upgraded and enhanced this iconic and historic venue on Cahuenga Boulevard East in the Hollywood Hills. Dancers and musicians from the troupe Viver Brasil, among the artists to be featured in the 2017 Ford summer season, led a celebratory procession to the venue's completely new stage, where LA County 3rd District Supervisor Sheila Kuehl cut a red ribbon to inaugurate an era of broadened programming, national artistic partnerships, and improved technical facilities and audience amenities. The latter includes the new Ford Terrace Café on the new Zev Yaroslavsky Terrace, "The Zev," which was dedicated today in honor of retired LA County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, who championed the Ford's revitalization during his 20 years as 3rd District Supervisor.



The 1,200-seat John Anson Ford Amphitheatre will open to the public on Saturday, July 15, with an inaugural season performance featuring world-renowned tap dancer and choreographer [Savion Glover](#). Opening weekend will continue on July 16 with [Culture Clash's](#) OG Summer Desmadre, commissioned by the Ford Theatres and featuring the LA-based Latino/Chicano trio in performance with a host of guest artists. The season will run through October 16.

"Today, we celebrate the Ford Theatres," said LA County Supervisor Sheila Kuehl. "The Ford has undergone its most significant transformation in more than 75 years. This summer, audiences will be dazzled by artists of the highest caliber from world class performers rarely seen in LA to outstanding local artists, all of whom reflect the rich multicultural life of this County. This is the summer to visit the Ford - to listen, to enjoy a meal on the new Terrace, and to take advantage of this marvelous Amphitheatre under the stars."

"We open our 2017 season with an increased commitment to having our stage represent the global community that is Los Angeles," said [Olga Garay-English](#), Interim Executive Director of the Ford Theatres. "The 2017 season deepens the Ford's long-held commitment to presenting local and regional artists who reflect LA's cultural diversity - some of them returning to the Ford and some taking the stage for the first time-while also expanding our program to include nationally and internationally recognized artists and partner institutions."

FORD ARCHITECTURE AND RENOVATION

Owned by the County of Los Angeles and operated in partnership with the Ford Theatre Foundation and the Department of Parks and Recreation, the Ford Theatres has a rich history dating back to the 1920s.

Nestled in the canyon of a 32-acre County regional park in the Cahuenga Pass, the current venue was built in 1931 after a brush fire destroyed the original 1920 wooden theatre. In 2010, 3rd District LA County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky and Los Angeles County Arts Commission Executive Director Laura Zucker hired Levin & Associates Architects to develop a comprehensive master plan with the goal of preserving the aging Theatre and prolonging its

life as a cultural resource and architectural landmark. Initial work on the project began in 2012, and in September 2014, the Ford Theatres broke ground on the current \$72.2 million project, the first major renovation and construction initiative since 1931. The project, designed by Levin & Associates Architects with Mia Lehrer + Associates landscape architects, required a 21-month closure of the amphitheatre. Programming in 2015 took place at venues off-site. In 2016, Ford Theatres reopened for a partial summer season while construction continued to be completed.

Architect Brenda Levin said, "For those of us who have known and loved the Ford Theatres for many years, this has been substantially more than a renovation project. Our firm, and Mia Lehrer's, found inspiration for our design work in the fabled history, extraordinary natural setting, and brilliantly popular and inclusive mission of this great Los Angeles landmark. We hope we have given the people of Los Angeles County a Ford Theatres that stays true to their best memories while offering a future of richer, livelier, and more enjoyable and inclusive experiences.

The new, 2,300-square-foot Zev Yaroslavsky Terrace ("The Zev"), unveiled today and named in honor of Mr. Yaroslavsky, introduces an outdoor dining experience and full-service concessionaire at the Ford for the first time, as well as providing added informal performance space. "The Zev" honors Yaroslavsky for his tireless commitment to supporting the Ford as an important Los Angeles artistic and architectural resource. The construction of a new attached building adjacent and north of the amphitheatre adds 11,055 square feet, which accounts for "The Zev," concession/kitchen space, new administrative offices and loading and storage, further maximizing the Ford's existing campus.

A sound wall at the rear of the amphitheatre minimizes noise from the nearby 101 Freeway and enhances the modern beauty of the Ford, borrowing its palette from the natural backdrop in a soothing canyon green and [Sky Blue](#) palette interspersed with wood battens to form an organic extension of the canyon. The sound wall includes a new projection booth and control room, as well as a new lighting platform to replace past lighting positions. In addition, there are new Digico SD 10 sound consoles for both the front of house PA as well as the house monitor system.

The improved lighting system at the Ford now features a total of 522 new theatrical fixtures. (Some existing light fixtures have been retained.) There is also a new dimming control system for both the theatrical lighting fixtures and the architectural lighting fixtures within the stage and amphitheatre area. The new fixtures are LED, lowering lamp, gel and maintenance costs and reducing the facility's carbon footprint.

Installation of new theatrical and AV infrastructure, including a projection screen, lighting/sound proscenium truss and lighting towers, are oriented to the new stage reconfiguration.

[Olga Garay-English](#) remarked, "We are proud to note that the Ford's new sound system makes the renovated John Anson Ford Amphitheatre one of the best sounding 1,200-seat amphitheatres in the country - which is appropriate to accommodate its most impressive season entertainment lineup to-date. We are excited to welcome the public here to enjoy this revitalized space as a community."

Ford Theatres Project also included reconstructing and restoring the venue's concrete structure, which was modeled after the gates of Jerusalem. The task required modernizing a rudimentary drainage system that forced water through and beneath the amphitheatre, causing erosion to the foundations. A new drainage and storm water management system now directs rainwater away from the structure.

The fragile hillside into which the Ford is built was stabilized by taking erosion control measures led by landscape architects Mia Lehrer + Associates. Slope stabilization was enhanced by the placement of plantings selected to harmonize with and support the native landscape and natural canyon ecosystems, adding a practical purpose to the aesthetic enhancements. Stone staircases traversing the back of the stage offer hillside stabilization, enhance the stage's natural backdrop, and provide additional vertical performance space from the stage.

The new stage itself is a centered, level, two-tiered proscenium constructed of Brazilian hardwood over concrete with a built-in piano lift, replacing the former raked concrete stage and offering improved surfaces for dancers and access for artists with disabilities. Maximizing usable space within the Ford's existing footprint was central in the planning. With the addition of 1,800 square feet of space below grade through the excavation of the bedrock under the theatre, the Ford has expanded and added green rooms, dressing rooms, artist storage, and backstage spaces to upgrade the artist experience and accommodate artistic companies that may have many performers or require multiple costume changes.

PROGRAMMING AT THE FORD

Chief among the Ford's new initiatives, the inaugural "IGNITE @ THE FORD!" series brings to the Ford stage national and regional cultural collaborations with The [Lincoln Center Festival](#) and New York's Apollo Theater, The Music Center, LA Opera, the Skirball Cultural Center and the Fountain Theater. "IGNITE @ the FORD!" features thought-provoking world-renowned artists whose work is compelling and contemporary, including Grammy Award-winning Senegalese vocalist Youssou NDOUR performing songs from his most recent album Africa Rekk!; avant-garde Cuban music ensemble Síntesis; LA-based Latino/Chicano performance trio [Culture Clash](#) joined by legendary Latin R&B band Tierra and Chicana punk rocker Alice Bag, among other special guests; and the celebrated Flamenco dancer Jesús Carmona, with the West Coast premiere of his latest piece Impetus. This 10-part series was made possible by Supervisor Sheila Kuehl and was curated by Ford Theatres Interim Executive Director [Olga Garay-English](#), an arts leader with more than 30 years in the field.

The Ford has teamed up with a number of cultural collaborators for the series. The Music Center's The Music Center On Location will present three consecutive nights in August, featuring the West Coast premiere of Awáa by contemporary dance company [Aszure Barton & Artists](#); a double bill featuring groundbreaking artists in contemporary dance and music including contemporary dance by the innovative Jacob Jonas The Company and the experimental music of Juno award-winning composer and sound artist Tim Hecker and Kara-Lis Coverdale, a fiercely independent voice in new music; and a special performance by singer, songwriter and composer [Rufus Wainwright](#). Presented in association with collaborator LA Opera will be the West Coast premiere of The Hubble Cantata, a space-inspired live experience that incorporates original music and libretto sung by internationally-renowned opera stars [Nathan Gunn](#) and Jessica Rivera, and members of LA Opera Orchestra and LA Opera Chorus. Additional events in the "IGNITE" series include a celebration of [Ella Fitzgerald's](#) 100th birthday presented with New York's The Apollo Theater featuring Grammy Award-winner [Patti Austin](#) in tribute to the First Lady of Song and Yitzhak Rabin: Chronicle of an Assassination, presented with the Skirball Cultural Center, in association with The [Lincoln Center Festival](#).

In addition to "IGNITE @ the FORD!," the Ford also launches "On Stage @ the Ford" this season, presenting works-in-progress, experimental and theater-based works and small commissions, that will allow audience members to be on the Ford's stage with the performers. In addition, the new Zev Yaroslavsky Terrace, "The Zev," will host performance and media-based works (including spoken word, jazz and more) for audiences of up to 155 people. These initiatives, specially situated in more intimate spaces, are geared for the presentation of even more diverse and experimental programming and will kick off in October 2017.

The Ford Theatre's flagship Artists Partnership Series will bring the annual Broadway Under the Stars, Flypoet Summer Classic, Angel City Jazz Festival and Star Entertainment's Fiesta Mexicana back to the iconic stage, along with new partners Samba Society and KJAZZ 88.1 FM. Series events promise to connect audiences with local and world cultures with performances presented by Grandeza Mexicana Folk Ballet Company, Kayamanan Ng Lahi Philippine Folk Arts, Bellydance Evolution and Viver Brasil, which will celebrate its 20th anniversary on the Ford stage. Notable evenings from the series also include The Music Circle's Wind Whispers from India, [Chris Isaacson Presents Thelma Houston: My Motown, Memories & More](#) and Colibrí Entertainment's ¡Viva La Tradición! 30 Años de "Canciones de Mi Padre" celebrating 30 years since the release of [Linda Ronstadt's](#) hit album of the same name.

The Ford Theatres will also continue to present the weekly, free interactive program, JAM Sessions and Big World

Fun, family friendly offerings that take place over four Saturday mornings.

NEW DINING OPTIONS AT THE FORD

The 2017 season introduces expanded dining options to the Ford. A café on The Zev will allow the Ford to prepare hot food on-site for the first time in the new state-of-the-art kitchen with a gourmet menu by Crumble Catering featuring signature cocktails and a diverse, sustainable menu. Signature items will include the "Original Ford Burger," street tacos, poutine, a variety of sandwich and salad options, crème brûlée, and more. There will also be a grab-and-go marketplace which occupies the space formerly used as the Inside the Ford theatre, adjacent to Edison Plaza and behind the Amphitheatre's 11'4" original historic front doors, opened for the first time in 78 years for the 2016 season.

ABOUT THE FORD

At 1,200 seats, the Ford Theatres creates an intimate concert experience that is a favorite among Angelenos. Each summer, the Ford hosts a diverse roster of events representing music and dance styles reflective of the communities that comprise Los Angeles County. Ford summer season events are presented in partnership with Los Angeles County arts organizations and producers. Unlike a traditional presenting model, these organizations apply to be part of the season and receive significant marketing, front of house and production support while keeping the majority of box office proceeds. The "IGNITE @ the FORD!" series is made possible through the generous support of Los Angeles County Supervisor Sheila Kuehl; proceeds benefit the Ford Theatre Foundation. Located in a County regional park in the Hollywood Hills, the Ford is owned by the County of Los Angeles and operated in partnership with the Department of Parks and Recreation and the Ford Theatre Foundation.

The 2017 Summer Season at the Ford Theatres is presented with the support of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. Additional support is provided by the Office of Supervisor Sheila Kuehl along with AXA Advisors; Comcast NBC Universal; the Department of Cultural Affairs, City of Los Angeles; Discover Hollywood; First 5 LA; Fusicology; The James Irvine Foundation; KCRW; KPFFK; LA Arts Online; L.A. Parent; the Metabolic Studio, a direct charitable activity of Annenberg led by Artist and Foundation Director, Lauren Bon; Metro; Motey; The National Endowment for the Arts; Pernod Ricard; The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation; Southern California Edison; Time Out Los Angeles; Union Bank; Univision; Wells Fargo; and Yelp.com.

WHEN: July 15 - October 16, 2017

WHERE: 2580 Cahuenga Blvd. East, Hollywood, CA 90068

Just off the 101 Hollywood Freeway between Hollywood and [Universal Studios](#) in the Cahuenga Pass

PARKING: Onsite, stacked. \$10 per vehicle for evening shows; \$1 per vehicle for morning family shows. Carpool and save: three or more people per vehicle pay only \$5 for parking for evening shows. A FREE shuttle to the Ford services the Universal City/Studio City Metro Station lot at Lankershim Blvd. and Campo de Cahuenga (excluding Big World Fun and JAM Sessions). The Ford shuttle stops in the "kiss and ride" area and cycles every 20 minutes. For non-stacked off-site parking, a FREE shuttle services the parking structure located at 3330 Cahuenga Blvd. West, Los Angeles, CA 90068 (new); parking costs \$12.

TICKETS: Online: FordTheatres.org / Phone: (323) 461-3673

Box Office Hours: Now - October 28: Tuesdays - Saturdays, noon - 5:00 p.m. for phone and window sales. On show days, including Sundays, the box office opens two hours before the start of the show. Visit the website for more info.