

POLITECNICO DI TORINO
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Master of Science in Architecture
Honors theses

NEW YORK CITY THEATRE, project of a theater complex in New York City

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The project concerns the design of a theater complex, dedicated to musicals in New York.

The project theme is taken from the competition organized by the Association Archmedium.

It required the construction of 4 show rooms and back stages, to provide adequate space for smaller theater companies that fail to establish itself in the difficult world of show business of Broadway.

At present the plot has a deposit of railway trains and it is located at north of the Chelsea neighborhood in Manhattan, an area with a strong artistic vocation.

The area is actually involved in a larger urban requalification project known as Hudson Yards, but the competition requirements only, had been taken into account for the thesis project

The design concept starts analyzing the relationship between function of the building, the users and the context.

From the analysis made on the musical genre, it was found that the formulation of a performance will include, in the first phase of trials, that the various elements of the show (singers, dancers, extras) should study separately the roles through the piano accompaniment; this musical instrument makes possible to reproduce all the sounds of the orchestra through the use of only 2 hands, and it is also very useful for making faster corrections to the score (which will then be communicated to the orchestra afterwards).

Attention is therefore focused on the piano because it is the link between the various elements of the show.

The analysis of the lever mechanism of the single white key on the piano, has revealed many similarities between an indispensable tool for setting up the show and the building that host the same event: the sequential lever motion is in fact similar to the functional sequence path of a theater. The latter in fact is a type of building that provides a unique, univocal and not arbitrary functional path (foyer – box office - wardrobe-stalls).

In addition, the case of the piano hides this system of levers, at the view of the user, leaving the listener to guess how the sound is produced. This raises another analogy with the building because the theater stage and the curtain are the boundary between reality and fiction, between reality and illusion.

The pit interrupts the passage for the audience. Here it stops. And from here on it will be enabled to hear the show only, to get carried passively by the emotion that it gives, without being able to understand how it is carried out.

The illusion is the key of the theater. Everything should look for what it seems, not for what it really is. All the theater building is made according to this fundamental elements and it is set around the stage, trying to maintain the highest illusion and imagination of the viewer.



CONCEPT

The project focuses in particular on the input provided by the music played by the hands of the pianist: it is the human element that triggers the levers, then generating the sound. This is a further analogy between theater and piano while at Broadway , the permanence of a show on the billboard depends only by the affluence of the audience. So the user, that is the human component, is crucial for the life of the building.

From these concepts, the project begins by developing the 4 rooms required by the project, under two large hands photographed in the act of playing a piano.

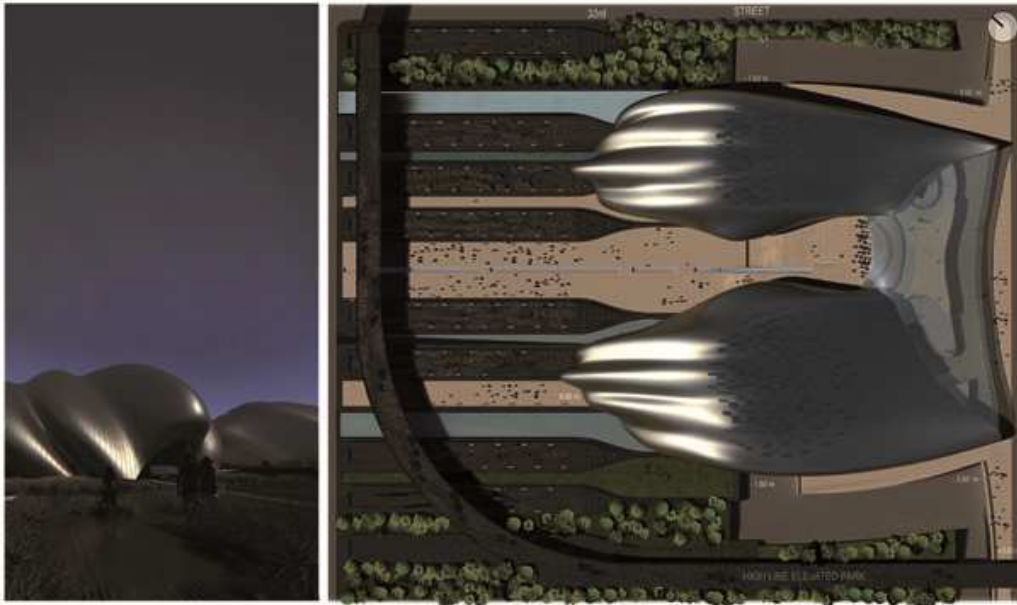
The park is the piano, and exploiting the gap between blacks and white keys, external boxes are created for the many street performers in New York: an added attraction for a place that needs to assert its presence. To maintain the contrast of the colors between black and white keys, a set of different flooring is employed. A special plant called 'black grass' because of its characteristic dark color is set to decorate the flat/sharp notes.

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