

CHICAGO'S NEXT **BIG** PROJECT



World-renowned architect Frank Gehry brings his signature style to Chicago

written by Lori Rotenberk

With its stainless steel curl and lyrical flow, the yet-to-be-built music pavilion in Chicago's new \$230 million Millennium Park has been described as a gift package with ribbons, flower petals, and even a tin can exploding. But to Frank Gehry, the eminent architect who created it, the design is a culmination of the many things that inspire him.

"I am a vacuum cleaner, visually taking up everything around me," explains Gehry, describing his approach on the music pavilion as well as his most recent projects including the Experience Music

Project, the new rock 'n' roll museum in Seattle, and the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain. "I look at paintings and sculpture. I look at people at cocktail parties and the spaces between them. I read and I have a curiosity about things. I love listening to music, so that had to have a hand in it. I hope it will be a place where the Chicago Symphony Orchestra will want to play."

Encompassing 24.6 acres, Millennium Park is located on the northwest corner of Grant Park, bounded by Michigan Avenue, Columbus Drive, Randolph Street, and Monroe Street. Expected to be unveiled in summer of 2001, the park, which will be the new permanent home for the Grant Park Music Festival, is a celebration of architecture and the arts for Chicagoans.

In addition to housing the music pavilion, the park includes a music and dance theatre designed by architect Thomas Beeby and a stainless steel sculpture created by Anish Kapoor. The sculpture, measuring 60 feet long and 30 feet high, will be centrally

■ Frontal view of Millennium Park Music Pavilion as the audience will see it.

located in the new park between Washington and Madison streets. When visitors look at the sculpture, they will see reflections of everything that represents Chicago—its skyline, the lake, and Michigan Avenue.

Gehry's design for the music pavilion is described by Ed Uhlir, project director for the park, as a work in which "the beauty is heart-stopping." The pavilion, a sculpture in itself with its corrugated curve design, translates into an outdoor venue where classical and contemporary music is played; there will be 4,000 fixed seats in the main seating area and room to accommodate an additional 6,000 to 7,000 people on the surrounding lawn. "The stainless curves of the pavilion provide a surface on which light can be projected. How many different ways they are lit can change the appearance of the structure," Uhlir explains. "Its structural expression is part of its art. As you walk around it, the pavilion will be a different

kind of visual experience."

The stage interior, clad in Douglas fir, will feature a series of portable risers to accommodate an orchestra of up to 120 musicians; there will also be a three-row choral terrace for 150 performers. In addition, a state-of-the-art sound system will be suspended from a trellis that spans the entire 600-foot length and 300-foot width of the lawn, giving the audience, no matter where they sit, a full sense of the onstage sound. The trellis, shaped like a flattened dome, will be constructed of curved stainless steel pipes spaced 65 feet apart and supported by cylindrical stainless steel piers.

A much-anticipated pedestrian bridge will stretch across Columbus Drive and be designed in harmony with the pavilion. The bridge, sinuous in shape, curves at its center and is also constructed of stainless steel.

Funding for Gehry's work is being provided by the Pritzker family, founders of The Hyatt Foundation, which gave the city \$15 million in April. In 1979, The Hyatt Foundation established the prestigious Pritzker Architecture Prize, which annually honors a living architect who has made consistent and significant contributions to humanity and the built environment through the art of architecture. Frank Gehry received the Pritzker Prize in 1989. ■

■ Frank Gehry and the Millennium Park Music Pavilion Design



■ -Side view of trellis sound system embracing the Great Lawn.

