

report

How the Los Angeles Philharmonic celebrates its 100th birthday

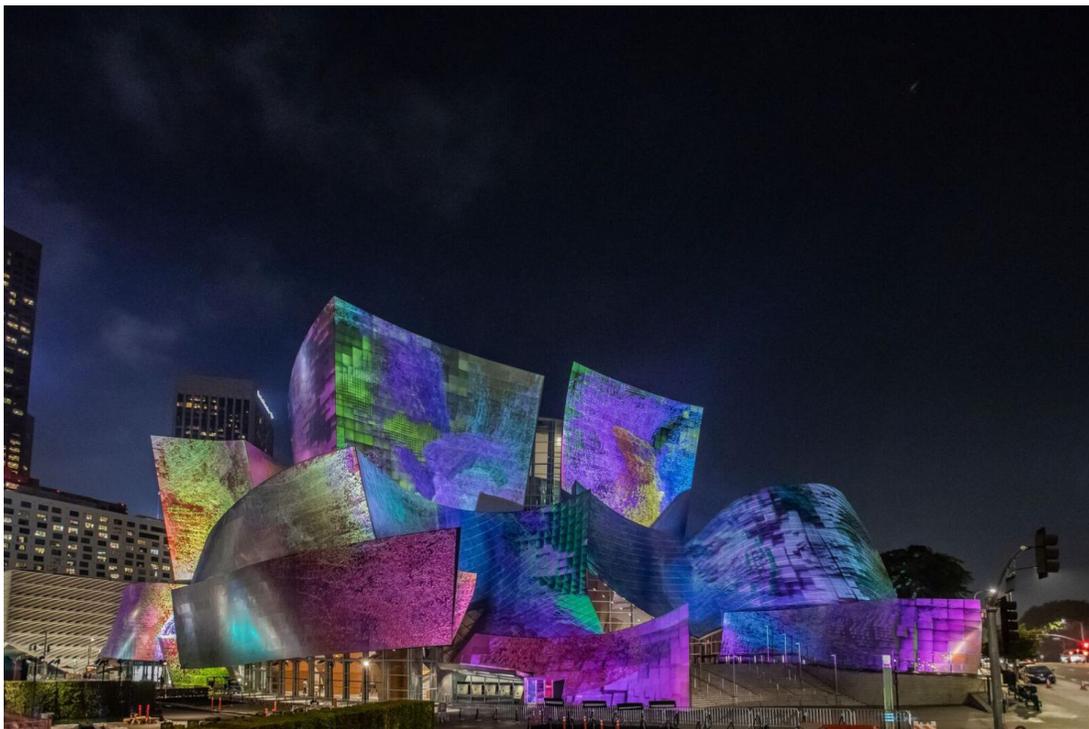


Photo: © Dustin Downing

Projections at the Walt Disney Concert Hall



Text

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It took four days to celebrate the centenary of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, for which media artist Refik Anadol immersed the Walt Disney Concert Hall in a world of light. Florian Werner was for monopoly in the city where dreams are produced

Dreams. The term is so common on that balmy California late summer evening that the decent gala visitor is at some point no longer sure what he means. Or is it because of the lilac signature drink, which was created especially for the evening and is generously served accordingly? "WDCH Dreams" is the name of the light installation by Refik Anadol, "The Walt Disney Concert Hall is Dreaming," and the young media artist from Istanbul will report afterwards that *a dream is coming true* for him, *a dream come true*, what else, he shines like a honey cake horse.

Understandable. Recently, the legendary charismatic conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Gustavo Dudamel, has ushered in the centenary celebrations of the orchestra; Gracious Doors drummer John Densmore personally swung the drumsticks on an orchestral version of "LA Woman," while Chris "Coldplay" Martin channeled the dead Jim Morrison.

Afterwards, the illustrious festive community took place on the upper deck of a parking garage converted into an open-air lounge opposite the concert hall to admire Anadol's contribution to the Centennial. For fifteen minutes, flickering video footage lit up the steel corpus of the building, accompanied by a soundtrack amalgamated with countless historic sounds. The massive, day-to-day-glowing surfaces of the Gehry building became fluid and brittle under the projections, as if the San Andreas ditch had opened to rinse the concert hall from its throne on Bunker Hill toward the Pacific.

At times, streams of images from the orchestra's history slipped over the outer skin, at other times the building seemed to reveal its skeleton, then neuronal impulses flashed, chains of associations like love beads, from which members of the orchestra peeled off in the blink of an eye or legendary conductors of the past: Zubin Mehta, André Previn, Esa Pekka salons. And again and again Dudamel, whom everyone here just calls "Gustavo" and love so intimately that he would be capable of any career; If he ever ran for the office of President, here would be the billboard to advertise.

But the question remains: how do you make a building a dream? Especially when it is only 15 years old, the glorious story of which it is intended to dream, but which covers a whopping hundred years, is therefore much older than the hypnagogic architecture. The Californian Answer: You partner with Google's "Artists and Machine Intelligence" program to digitize the entire orchestra archive, 40,000 hours of audio, plus nearly 600,000 image and 1,800 video files - a technological sublime from no building or humans, which is why Refik Anadol had it linked by an artificial neural helper to dream sequences.

So, strictly speaking, it's not the building that dreams, it's a computer; consistent, since even the human memory is increasingly outsourced to external storage media. Will artificial intelligence someday take over the "dream work" (Sigmund Freud) for us? Do concert halls dream of musical sheep? Possible concerns about working with an almighty Internet corporation seem as remote here as the fresh European autumn weather. "Data made beautiful" is Refik Anadol's slogan; the relationship between him and the digital assistant is similar to the one between a renaissance painter and his workshop.

Of course, he also works with human intelligences. Not least with Frank Gehry, who designed the Walt Disney Concert Hall from the outset as a three-dimensional canvas assemblage; Anadol's installation thus fulfills a vision already built into the DNA of the building. At the architect's will, if concerts take place in the body of the building, they would be projected onto his skin at the same time: an entanglement of inside and outside, as found everywhere in Southern California architecture, such as the Eames House in Santa Monica or the airy villas of Rudolf Schindler. At Gehry / Anadol, the role played by the generous sliding doors and windows takes over the tiny slices of video projectors.

And then, two days after the centenary kick-off, the Walt Disney Concert Hall actually opens up to its surroundings: an open-air performance by the Philharmonic opens the door, then a stream of thousands of angelenos pours into a bike, skateboard and Scooters into the city, the streets are closed to traffic, 1 500 musicians replace the engine noise. Led by the boisterous high school marching band from a notorious gangsta rap metropolis in the south, it's not - not *straight inna compton* but northwest. Down from Bunker Hill into the endless "planes of the Es," as the English architectural theorist Reyner Banham called them: into the lowlands of the Los Angeles Basin, where the instincts, the music, the repressed romp. Three strings of the Philharmonic gondolas on a rickshaw through the streets of Westhill and play the theme of "Love Story". In MacArthur Park, a Mexican wandering preacher sweats in the heat and roars like a possessed "Gloria! Gloria! Gloria!" The pastor of a Korean free church stands on Wilshire Boulevard and tututes in her saxophone. A few miles away, but light years away, Wynton Marsalis swings meanwhile.

In the evening in the Hollywood Bowl, the Los Angeles Philharmonic will perform again, pimped up by guest stars such as Herbie Hancock, Terrace Martin and Katy Perry. And as the evening finale, 86-year-old John Williams suddenly steps out of the crowd and directs the title theme of "Star Wars" under Hollywood's starry sky, so powerful that it's still down in the valley where the dreams are fabricated and then, when Hancock and Perry suddenly start on stage to duel with plastic lightsabers, all

the talk of dreaming buildings, people, and machines that had seemed a bit strained two days before, suddenly seems complete realistic.



Florian Werner