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**OPERNHAUS
ZÜRICH**

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«Future Opera» - A Structural Development Project and a Dialogue with City and Canton

The Opernhaus Zürich is Switzerland's largest cultural institution. Some 800 employees from 38 countries practice 146 professions here. The Opernhaus Zürich AG owns multiple properties. The centerpiece is the historic Opernhaus on the Sechseläutenplatz. In the adjoining extension building are rehearsal stages, ballet studios, workshops, dressing rooms, and offices. The extension building is, in effect, the transmission and engine of the Opernhaus. The historic Opernhaus Zürich and the adjoining extension building need to be renovated.

The historic Opernhaus is in good shape, thanks to consistent, high-quality maintenance. However, the seating and technical equipment are starting to age, and barrier-free entry to all event venues needs to be created. The extension building, constructed in 1984, and the backstage area have serious flaws. According to a study conducted by Kunkel Consulting, which specializes in theater planning, the Opernhaus Zürich requires 60% more space. This lack of space is felt everywhere, both in front of and behind the «red curtain».

The extension was built in 1984 in solid reinforced concrete. Most of the interior walls were designed as load-bearing concrete and cannot be adapted to changing processes and requirements. Existing permits secure the operation of the extension in many places. The implementation of numerous labor regulations and safety issues requires space that is not available. Renovating the extension building «one to one» without making any changes would merely worsen the situation and the building's operational capability might no longer be a given.

Whether the structural reorganization and the solution to the space problem can be achieved by adding to the existing extension building is currently being investigated in a study commissioned by the Hochbauamt Kanton Zürich (Zurich Cantonal Building Department). The results will be available in the fall of 2023.

The structural development project is planned as a public-private partnership, a cooperation between the public sector, sponsors, and private donors. The Opernhaus Zürich AG as property owner acts as building owner and client. The Hochbauamt Zürich (Zurich Cantonal Building Department) acts as the client's representative. The Direktion der Justiz und des Inneren Kanton Zürich, Fachstelle Kultur (Directorate of Justice and Home Affairs of the Canton of Zurich, represented by the cultural department) is involved in the project development. Any assertions about the timeline for the «Future Opera» project at this time would be imprecise. A possible building phase would take place at the earliest in the first half of the 2030s, 50 years after the house's last renovation.

The «Future Opera» project, and an addition or new construction of the extension building, intends to ensure that the Opernhaus remains functional in the future, and also to create added value.

+++ The Opernhaus and the extension building should provide barrier-free entry for visitors and employees with limited mobility. The auditorium and all historically protected foyers will remain unchanged in the process.

+++ One particular focus is to expand educational programs for all age groups and meet the expectations of the house, of politics, and of society. The current program falls far short of demand, but there is a lack of space for more events.

+++ Occupational health and safety standards have been greatly expanded since the 1980s. But many workstations in the Opernhaus cannot meet these requirements. The space available to employees is cramped. Many rooms have unacceptable working conditions. They should be designed to encourage good health and be modern.

+++ The delivery and storage of set pieces is one of the biggest shortcomings of the extension building. Trucks with large trailers maneuver along the Falkenstrasse on the sidewalk and on the street, endangering traffic and pedestrians. In some cases, valuable set pieces are exposed to the weather and vandalism overnight in the open air. The solution is in-house delivery with additional storage space. This requires a fundamental reorganization of the extension building.

+++ The extension building should be an accessible meeting point, open to everyone. It is part of the urban space around the lake and Sechseläutenplatz, providing added value for Zurich as it creates opportunities for encounters and interactions well beyond visits to a performance.

+++ The building at the city's most central location should attract international attention with its site-specific and visionary architecture, and be a role model in terms of energy efficiency, sustainability, and resource-saving construction methods.

+++ Zurich as a cultural hub should profit from an additional laboratory stage, in which new formats of music and dance theater will be developed and a cooperative collaboration with other cultural institutions will be established. The aim of the coming dialogue process is to find out what an Opernhaus of the future is for Zurich.

«The Opernhaus isn't an Opera-Museum. Rather, it is a cultural institution, anchored in the here and now that reacts to the present. It playfully combines tradition and modernity, and symbolizes a creative spirit of adventure. With a new extension building, the Opernhaus shall be opened up even further in terms of content and space. In addition to an expanded educational program for all age groups and programs for cultural participation, a second venue will offer new and diverse opportunities for cooperative collaboration with other cultural institutions, and for working on new formats of music and dance theater. A further symbol of the importance of culture in Zurich will be placed on the Sechseläutenplatz».

Jacqueline Fehr, Councilwoman und Chairwoman of the Special Committee of the Board of Directors «Future Opera»

The Stopgap Temporary Structure

Due to the lack of space, many workstations do not comply with current legal guidelines for occupational safety and workplace design standards. A solution to this problem can only be found within the framework of comprehensive construction measures. In order to improve employee conditions in a timely manner, a temporary transitional building, with 330m² of usable space, will be constructed in the summer of 2024, which should lead to some initial relief. The proposal by the architectural firm EM2N envisages a single-story roof structure on the roof of the extension building at the corner of Utoquai and Falkenstrasse. The timber structure that has been developed emphasizes flexibility, functionality, reusability elsewhere, and architecture appropriate to the surrounding context.

Future Opera Dialogue

Planning for the future of the Opernhaus means more than thinking about buildings and operations. Before comprehensive decisions are made, a large-scale dialog process will clarify what contributions the Opernhaus of the future, with its new extension, can make for performance guests, for the general public, for tourism, and for the cultural scene. In addition, we'll investigate what this structural development means for the civic space «Sechseläutenplatz» and the location on the lake.

As a part of the «Zukunft Oper Dialogue» project, we have planned workshops and dialogue formats with employees, subscribers, shareholders, Freund:innen der Oper and Freund:innen der Ballett Zürich, as well as with visitors, Club Jung members, and Opernhaus neighbors, among others. Furthermore, focus groups will take place with experts from architecture, sociology, future studies, with representatives from policy, and from city and canton administration, as well as with individuals from the tourism sector and Zurich cultural scene. On 17 June, the public is invited to a civic dialogue on the Sechseläutenplatz.

The first results will be presented during the traditional season opening on Saturday, 16 September 2023. They will form an important foundation for further planning of the Opernhaus' structural development project. This initial dialogue should be the beginning of a continuous exchange about the cultural and social opening-up of the opera in the interest of culture and the people of the city and the canton.

«We see ourselves as one of the canton's central cultural institutions here in the heart of the city of Zurich, and we are one of the world's most renowned opera houses. Anchored in the cantonal Opernhausgesetz, or Opera House Act, is the standard for "artistic accomplishment of outstanding quality and international appeal," as well as "communication of its offerings to broad sections of the public." One of the goals for the structural development project is to remedy the property's fundamental flaws, so that the Opernhaus can continue to fulfill its mission. In order to maintain and expand this standard, the historically protected Opernhaus and the adjoining extension building, with the Bernhard Theater and the Restaurant Bernadette must be renovated – energetically, and operationally».

Markus Notter, Chairman of the Board of Directors Opernhaus AG

You can find further information and facts about these plans, the dialogue process, the temporary structure including images at: **opernhaus.ch/zukunftoper**