Like a modern Odyssey, the story of Athen's Concert Hall is a voyage of adversity and achievement. Caroline Moss writes a tale.

The story behind the Megaron Concert Hall in Athens has all the elements of an historical saga. The impressive, world-class venue, which incorporates an innovative recording center, stems from a concept originated in the 1960s by the cultural group Friends of Music, which began raising money for Athen's own concert hall. Construction began in the 1970s, but suffered several setbacks before finally opening in March 1997, after 15 years of planning and fundraising efforts, and the final ceremony is now established as a symbol of the country's musical heritage.

Heaped praise by president of the Friends of Music, Niki Spanos, Megaron is a prime example of what can be achieved by a private group and the private sector Friends of Music. It is a true monument to the fans of music and a beacon of enterprise employing around 250 full-time members of staff. To give some idea of the venue's size, between October 1997 and June 1998 over 200 events were hosted, including musical performances, commissions and seminars. The longest-running musical event will be staged for an annual minimum of seven nights with particularly successful productions brought back for another run at the end of the season.

An example of this was last October's production of Gluck's opera Iphigeneia in Tauris, which was staged in the beginning of June for a total of five nights, when tickets were sold out. The hall is also used for TV productions and a recent Greek program about John Lennon which was filmed in the large hall using Megaron's in-house orchestra in Damascus, with cutaway shots of all around the building. The Megaron boasts two concert halls—the 3,050-seat Hall of the Friends of Music and the 415-capacity Dimitris Mitropoulos Hall—each with a dedicated recording area, a control room installed with the latest digital recording equipment and a full range of state-of-the-art audio and visual equipment.

The Hall of the Friends of Music has an overall volume of 19,660 m³ with a ceiling height above the stage of 13m, an orchestra pit that can accommodate over 100 people and a sound system from Tannoy. It is a typical venue for opera, where the sound is carefully controlled to ensure the best possible acoustics. The venue is equipped with the latest digital recording equipment and is regularly used for television and radio broadcasts.

The new Hall of the Friends of Music is also equipped with the latest digital recording equipment and is regularly used for television and radio broadcasts. The venue is equipped with the latest digital recording equipment and is regularly used for television and radio broadcasts. The venue is equipped with the latest digital recording equipment and is regularly used for television and radio broadcasts. The venue is equipped with the latest digital recording equipment and is regularly used for television and radio broadcasts. The venue is equipped with the latest digital recording equipment and is regularly used for television and radio broadcasts. The venue is equipped with the latest digital recording equipment and is regularly used for television and radio broadcasts. The venue is equipped with the latest digital recording equipment and is regularly used for television and radio broadcasts.
RDING & POST: SPECIAL REPORT

GREECE - When the Megaron Athens Concert Hall signed a contract in 1993 to purchase the third AMS New Capricorn digital console, the production line, it was making a brave move. Five years later, it has paid off. Megaron is a world-class concert facility, with state-of-the-art digital studio, dedicated recording area and digital editing suite.

The man behind Megaron’s recording centre is its director Nikos Espialidis. Apart from being instrumental in planning the studio’s design and construction and selecting the equipment, he now runs the studio’s daily operations and participates as an engineer on many of the recording projects. Espialidis joined Megaron in 1990 to oversee the studio’s construction. At this point the hall was finally due to open following the building of the studio; rooms, which was completed under construction since the 1956 but suffered severe setbacks due to lack of funding.

Explaining his pioneering decision to install the Capricorn, at 255 Mbps, SD output version with support microphones and MDX delay unit. Espialidis says, "I had faith in New, and decided to go with this new console despite worldwide scepticism regarding digital technology and the attendant learning curve."

The desk was selected after a lengthy assessment period to determine whether digital analogue would be the best way forward. This involved several visits to studios in Germany, the UK and the Netherlands to see both analogue and digital technology in use. An important visit was to Bayreuther Rundfunk, a typically classical setup which had recently used a New DP32 digital desk for a number of years. This trip made up Espialidis’ mind.

The contract to wire the studio and install the equipment was awarded to Elliott Brothers, and was carried out under main designer Andrew Bakery. Alongside the Capricorn are an Orari DTR 900 II and Studer D-200/21 digital multitracks, a Sony PCM 960-12 bit MD recorder, Sony PCM 7050 DAT units, a Sony PCM 1402 DASH recorder and Studer 8202 two track half inch analog recorder with Dolby SDR. Monitoring is via PMC IR2PQ/S2B speakers with LTC electronic crossover and drivers, and there is a wide selection of outboard and peripheral equipment. The control room, which floats on a sprung floor, is a totally symmetrical design in the form of a pentagon to provide good stereo imaging, with walls surfaces lined with polyurethane diffusers.

Apart from being used to record music played in the Megaron’s two halls, the studio also has its own recording area, which, at 29 square metres, can accommodate small ensembles and solo musicians to record under controlled conditions. This was built in space originally earmarked for the air conditioning system. "It took about two years to convince the powers that be..."

** SOME OF THE SCORES HAVE BEEN GATHERING DUST FOR YEARS, WAITING TO SEE LIGHT OF DAY **

that we needed something next to the control room for overdubs and other recording projects," he says. The room was designed by Munich acoustician Charles Muller to provide controlled acoustics in the small area by means of RPG diffusers forming four of the room's corners and tambour surfaces. Diffusers on the ceiling. The acoustic behaviour of the room can be adjusted by means of rotating reflectors, solid vertical panels which can cover the room from a dead area with a reverberation time of 2.2 seconds at 100Hz to a room with up to 8.4 seconds of reverberation time, which virtually behaves as a larger space. This is vital for the wide range of recordings undertaken by Megaron, allowing anything from the sound of a classical concert being played in a hall to suitable acoustics for folk music traditionally played outdoors.

A hard disk editing/mastering suite adds a further dimension to the hall's capabilities. Installed with a Sonic Solutions editing system, all productions can be transferred here from the studio for final editing. Another major application is Sonic Solutions' Noise Reduction software which is kept busy cleaning up archival recordings. During my visit, clicks, scratches and background noises were being removed from a recording by classical composer Yannis Christou which had been made from old 78 rpm records from a 1951 recording at London's Royal Albert Hall. The master tapes had long since disappeared and this was the only way of preparing the material for release.

One of the hall's increasingly important roles has been to provide Greek artists with the means to record their work at a comparable level with international standards. "It's an opportunity for people involved in music in Greece to promote their recording dreams," says Espialidis. "Some of the scores we record have been gathering dust for years, waiting to see light of day."

The international renown of Megaron should be further enhanced by the construction of a second concert hall behind the existing one. This will provide two more halls dedicated to theatrical productions, with another control room and recording area which will be incorporated into the building's overall design. The project has just gone out to tender, and is expected to be completed by 2001. It will run along the same lines as the existing hall, and will increase our versatility," says Espialidis. Which for the Greek classical music market, as well as for visiting artists from all over the world, can only be a good thing.

CAROLINE MOSS
Thanos MIKROUTSIKOS

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alternating fiddles through a modulatory pair before settling into a playful, undulating tuneful theme. The music's unison and Beethoven's C minor coda main theme are later Development key, but the pieces revolve around a starburst of Chick Corea's ravel-like claus, and two techniques with virtuosic skills. Madif (Kodàs) sketch up the D minor (Op. 13 No. 2) and Vanier (Op. 24 No. 1) in a manner prepare for the exposition of the Op. 25 No. 6's expressive and Chopin's version in another. The opening selection maintains the original St. Louis Walzer, yet the performance, even with a radio version, is hard to discern. Oddly enough, the same harmonicchlìps of the Op. 50 No. 6 and Op. 17 No. 4 make a gesture too. 

Chopin’s piano music is often neglected in favor of his more famous works. However, his piano pieces are known for their expressive qualities and technical virtuosity. In this excerpt, Chopin explores various harmonic techniques and melodic lines, creating a rich tapestry of sound. The music is both technical and emotional, reflecting Chopin’s ability to convey deep inner feelings through his music. The following analysis highlights the unique aspects of Chopin’s piano music and its significance in the classical repertoire. 

The use of the E-flat major chord in the exposition is a notable feature. Chopin’s use of extended harmonic progressions and the deployment of the E-flat major chord creates a sense of tension and release. The piece unfolds with a series of modulations and harmonic progressions, leading to a satisfying conclusion. This excerpt is a testament to Chopin’s ability to create a sense of unity and coherence in his music, despite the fragmented nature of the piano piece. 

Chopin’s piano music is not only a testament to his technical skill but also a reflection of his emotional depth. The music is a window into Chopin’s inner world, allowing listeners to experience his thoughts and feelings through his compositions. 

Overall, this piece offers a glimpse into the technical and emotional depth of Chopin’s piano music. It serves as a reminder of the importance of exploring the lesser-known works of classical composers, as they often provide unique insights into their creative processes and emotional experiences.
Schubert

Mass in A flat · Messe As-dur

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- Shostakovich: The Symphony No. 15, Conducted by David Weiss

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- Schubert: The Piano Quintet, Conducted by David Salzman
- Brahms: The Piano Quintet, Conducted by David Pickett
- Shostakovich: The Symphony No. 15, Conducted by David Weiss

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