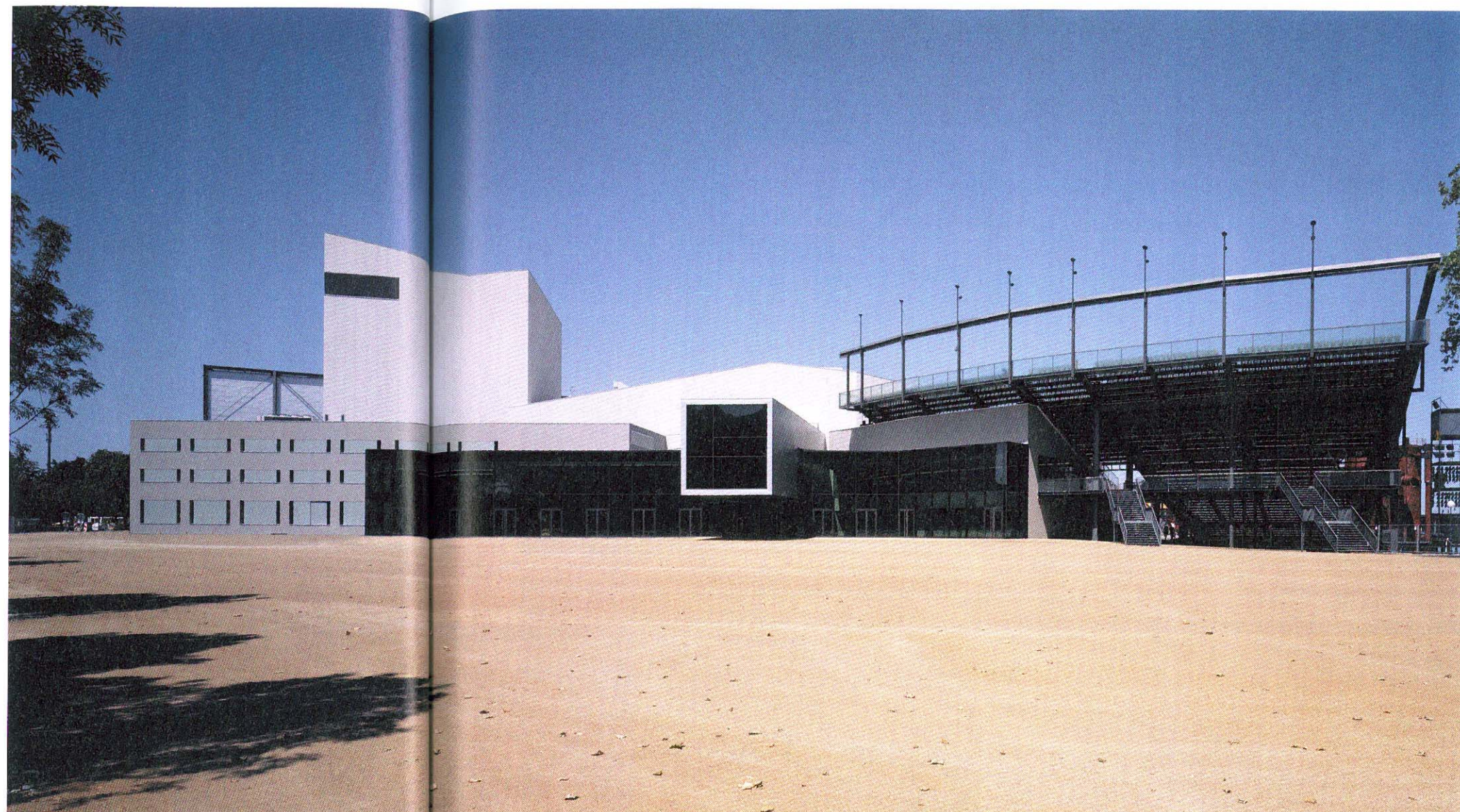


March 2007

Home is where the heart is: fifteen tailor-made houses

Against the odds: Pierre d'Avoine and
Clare Melhuish on the one-off house
Dietrich Untertrifaller in Vorarlberg
La Défense tower competition entries
Kathryn Gustafson on green Singapore
David Wild on the prolific Eliot Noyes
Structure & cladding: Wilkinson Eyre
Heating & ventilation • Workload survey





BREGENZ

Oliver Lowenstein on
Dietrich Untertrifaller's
waterside festival hall.
Photos: Bruno Klomfar.

In early autumn, with a soft September sun glistening across the eastern end of Lake Constance, the view from Bregenz's shoreline is close to idyllic. A town of just 30,000 people, Bregenz is the administrative and political centre of Vorarlberg, Austria's westernmost state or 'land'. In the 1990s, what became known as the

Vorarlberg Baukunst ('art of building') gained an international reputation as a wholly self-generated and dynamic regional scene, which has attracted droves of architectural tourists to this mountain and valley honeypot. Bregenz is at the bottom of the Bregenzerwald, and evidence of the regional architectural culture runs right along the valley, through a sprawling string of towns up into the pre-alpine Arlberg foothills. In Bregenz itself there is a raft of interesting and innovative new housing, commercial and cultural buildings, many designed by well-known local practices such as Baumschlager & Eberle. Others include Jean Nouvel's Interunfall (1999) – offices and housing in the suburbs – and Peter Zumthor's otherworldly glass-plated Kunsthau in the town's centre (1997).

These architectural focal points have now been joined by the recently renovated Festival Hall

and Congress Centre, whose waterside location offers views across the eastern end of the lake. The building is at the heart of the Bregenzer Festspiele, a performing arts festival held every July and August. Founded in 1946, the festival presents a wide variety of musical and theatrical events in several venues including the Seebühne (lake stage), whose 7,000 seats overlook large-scale opera or musical performances on a floating stage. The lake stage adjoins the Festival Hall, which presents rarely performed operas and classical music.

The 2006 season marked the end of the second and last phase of works to the building by another of the most influential practices in the region, the partnership of Helmut Dietrich and Much Untertrifaller. Having been in practice since the late 1980s, Dietrich Untertrifaller won the competition to overhaul

the Festival and Convention Centre in 1992.

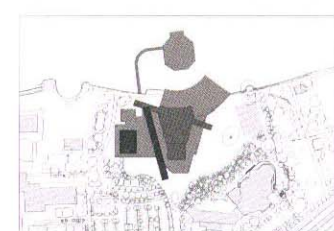
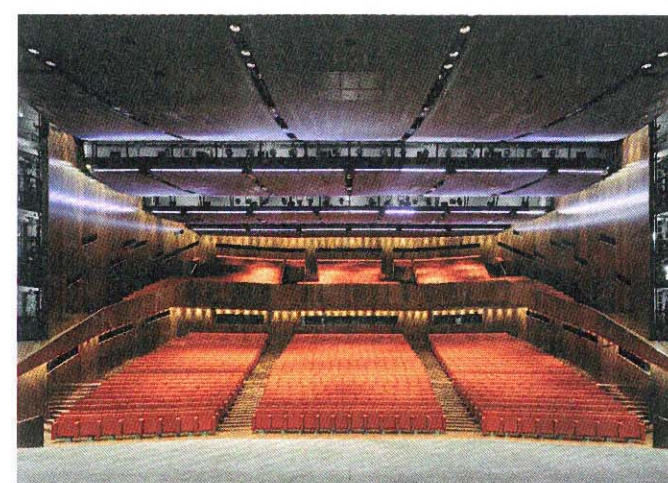
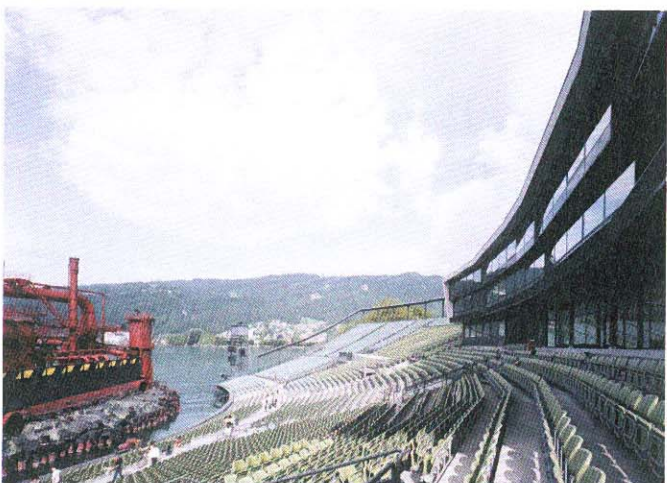
The alterations were demanded by the success of the festival; in 1979 it moved into its first permanent hall, designed by the local practice Büro Braun and described by Untertrifaller as 'really ugly'. By the end of the 1980s, the festival attracted over 400,000 visitors annually. In 1998, the first phase of refurbishment was completed. By siting new administrative and production space in a 110-metre-long steel box bridge, suspended between the Festival Hall and the Congress Centre, the architects enabled productions to continue while works were carried out. Around the bridge, two further buildings were added: a two-storey timber-framed office extension, opening both to the lake and the park, and a workshop theatre – one of the largest such spaces in the region. A side stage was

inserted between the workshop stage and the main stage.

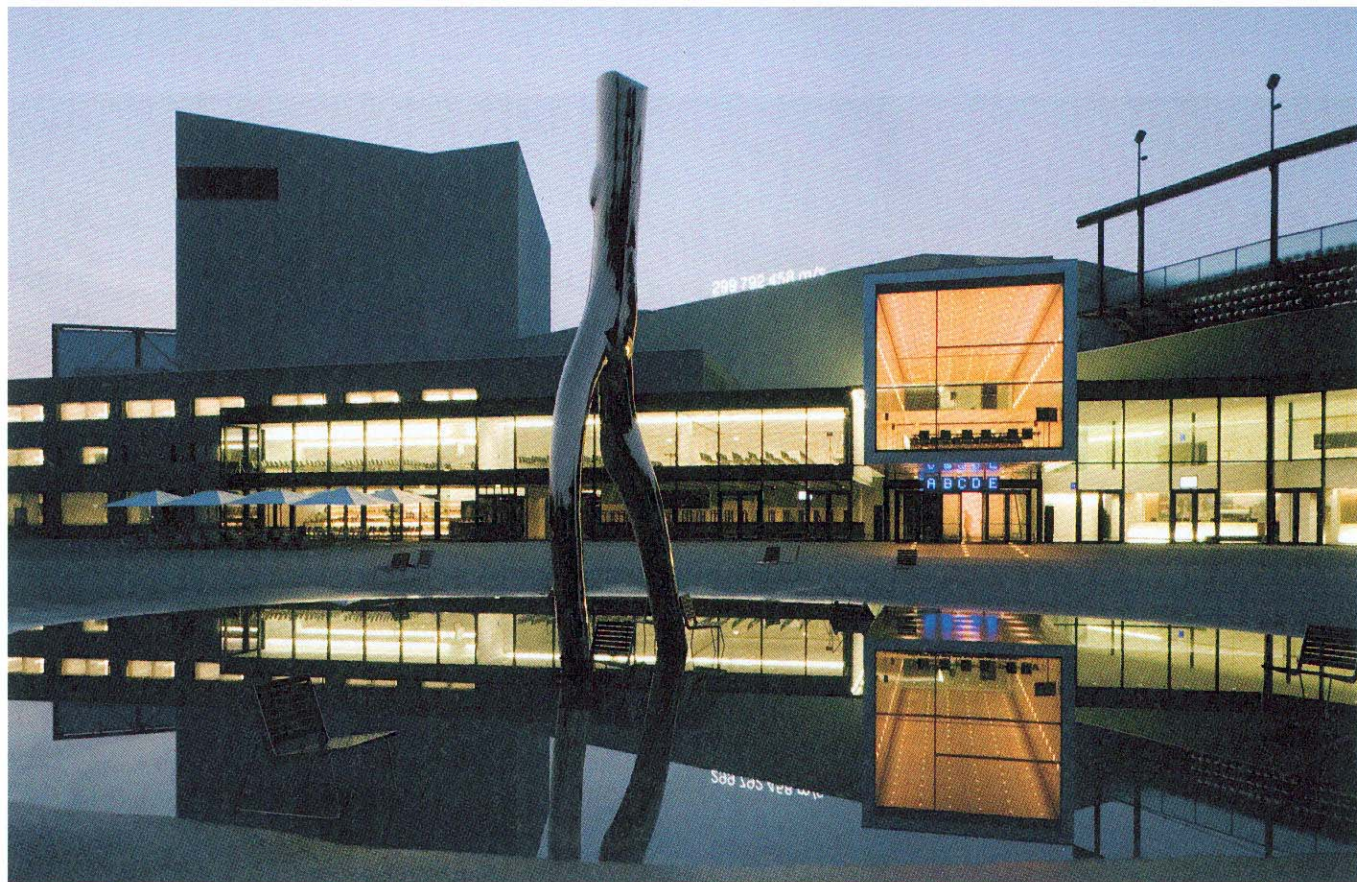
The completion of the second phase has redefined the building once again. It is organised around the double demands of the site, opening both to a large piazza on the park and town side, and to the open air arena on the lakeside, overlooking the spectacular floating

stage. Some of the changes are immediately apparent when approaching the building from the park. The outdoor arena has been extended to the east, and now has a capacity of 7000. In extending the curve of the original plan, the architects have emphasised the form, and one can sense a conceptual semi-circle, abruptly terminated by

the end of the seating block. Perhaps the most significant addition is a single-shaded glass facade to the foyer, which stretches across the central section of the ground floor, set against the larger concrete mass of the original theatre. The glass box provides much-needed extra ticketing facilities, an extended foyer and a restaurant. Its sleek,



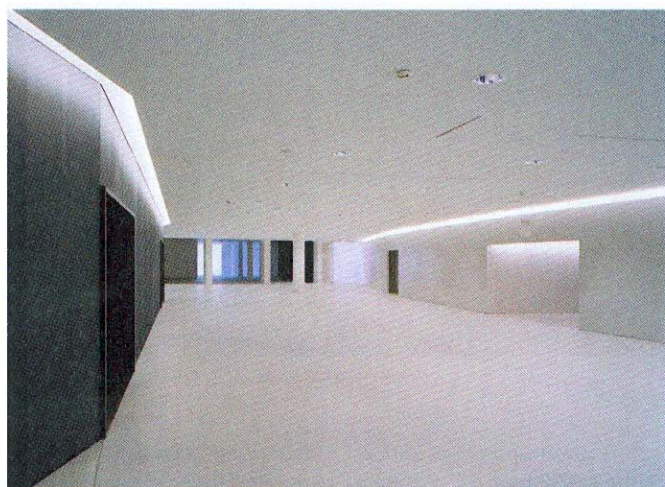
Top left The bridge element added in the first phase of refurbishment to provide production and administration spaces.
Top right The new foyer and extended seating seen from the park side.
Far left Outdoor arena overlooking the floating stage.
Left The reconfigured main hall includes 600 extra seats on a new gallery tier.



rather restrained coolness is countered by a steel box which juts out from the centre of the second floor. The box provides an external canopy to the entrance and a ceiling to the main staircase, while its square eye is both a viewing chamber onto the park piazza for those inside and a focal point to the facade. Looming over the glass foyer, the concrete shell of the hall is the dominant volume in height and scale. It brings to mind a great ship's bridge, and the blacked-out window slit on high exudes a slightly periscope

feel. Adjoining the glass facade and foregrounding the towering hall is a third rectilinear form, which houses the dressing rooms and other back-of-house areas. This final part of the building ensemble is partly new and partly rebuilt, its concrete and plaster surface finished to contrast distinctively with the other two main volumes.

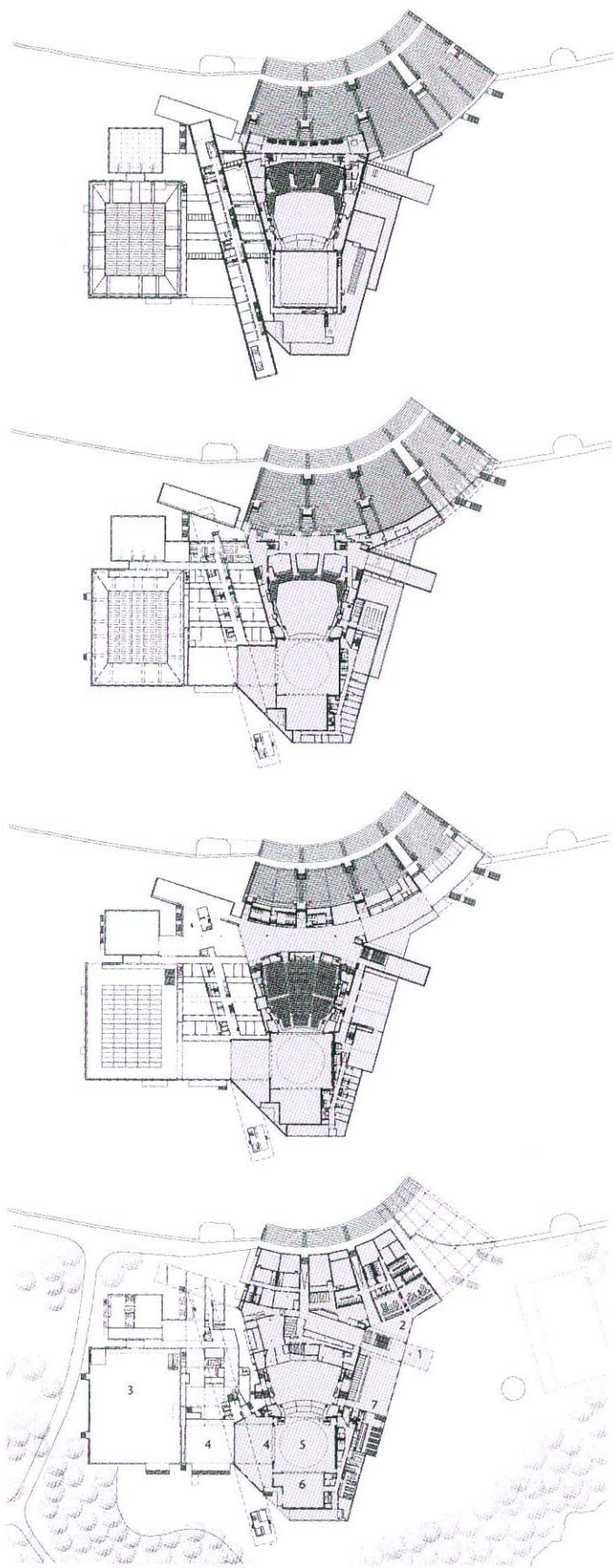
Inside, Dietrich Untertrifaller mixes a cool white finish with wood panelling. The first and second floors integrate audience bars with workshop spaces, organised to capitalise on the



lakeside views. Although the hall itself was part of the original building, the second phase of the refurbishment added a 600-seat gallery tier which, along with the existing seating, repositions the audience in relation to the stage.

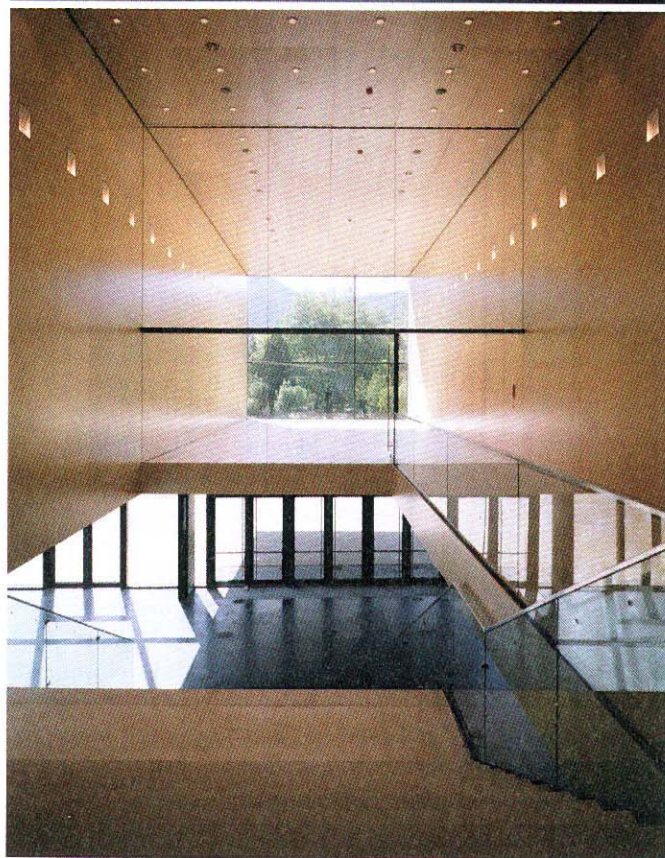
In the circulation spaces timber beams have been left exposed, showing the detailing for which Vorarlberg architecture is known. Given the building's outward appearance, it comes of something as a surprise to discover that along with steel and concrete, timber is used structurally – in the two-storey dressing room building, for example, whose walls are cooled with water from the lake. Sustainable elements – from such ingenious

Above/left Dietrich Untertrifaller's second phase interventions place a strong emphasis on the experience of arrival with a new foyer extension and ticketing facilities and re-organised and refurbished circulation.



technical solutions to a simple emphasis on natural lighting – have been integrated seamlessly into the building. Indeed, the practice is becoming well known for its work in this area, having recently completed some far more radically sustainable projects including the largest Passivhaus-standard school in Europe, near Götzis, and an equally large-scale

Passivhaus set of apartment buildings in Vienna. Such innovations, and the growing scale of the practice's work (completion at Bregenz coincides with the conclusion of another major cultural project, a new building at Vienna's Stadthalle) should continue to focus attention on the architects of Vorarlberg for some time to come.



Oliver Lowenstein is the founder and editor of Fourth Door Review.

Plans Ground, first, second and third floors: 1 main entrance, 2 tickets, 3 workshop stage, 4 side stage, 5 main stage, 6 back stage, 7 restaurant.

Top/above The metal-clad box above the main entrance echoes the bridge added in the first phase and acts as a canopy, enclosure for the main stair and viewing platform.

Project team:

Architect: Dietrich/Untertrifaller Architekten; qs: JM Projektentwicklung; structural engineer: Mader Flatz/Zivitechniker; geology: 3P Geotechnik; foundation engineer: Josef Bischofberger; stage technology: Bühnenplanung Walter Kottke Ingenieure; acoustics: Müller BBM; organ builder: Rieger Orgelbau; main contractor: Rhomberg Bau.

Selected suppliers and subcontractors:

Steel structure: Geiger Technik; insulation: Rockwool; metal facade: Metallbau Neyer; interior glazing: Glas Marte; hall lighting: Zumtobel; sound insulation: Knauf; roof membrane: Sarnafil.