

In Fall 1984, President Hackney and Provost Ehrlich published for the University community a proposed to renovate Penn's 50-year-old Irvine Auditorium as a combined music facility and student activities center (Almanac September 11, 1984). They asked members of the University to comment on the proposal, stressing that no decision has been made and that indeed no funds were available for the renovation; a search for consensus on uses of Irvine rightly preceded either planning of fund-raising for the project.

The Office of Student Life was designated to coordinate a full exploration of views, through campus-wide consultation. The Office held two open meetings, assigned a series of work-group reports on specific aspects of the proposal, collected data on current uses of Irvine and on the potential of other existing buildings that might accommodate activities dislocated in the form of renovation outlined in the September 11 proposal. In addition, we encouraged letters and comments directly to our office, and collected all such comments that arrived in campus media including the *alumni Gazette*.

Our findings to date are in a 37-page report, forwarded this week to Provost Ehrlich for his review. In the pages that follow, I have summarized the data gathered and the questions raised; and I present the "Conclusions" section of the report in its entirety.

To the faculty, staff, students, alumni and friends of the University who responded, as well as to the staff and volunteers who assisted in these explorations, my sincere thanks.

—Charlotte H. Jacobsen, Director of Student Life

## Campus Response To the Irvine Proposal

### Current Status of Irvine Auditorium

Irvine Auditorium and Houston Hall form a focal point for activities on the Pennsylvania campus that bring together students, faculty, administrators, staff and guests for educational, cultural, social and recreational events. The physical proximity of Houston Hall and Irvine and their relatively central location on campus have encouraged variety in the uses of the facilities and cooperation among students and organizations. Space in both Irvine and Houston Hall is allocated to student groups for activities, storage and offices. Demand for space in the buildings is high due to the strength of cocurricular life at Penn. More than 220 recognized student organizations sponsor a rich array of events each year in response to the needs and interests of a culturally diverse campus community.

#### 1. Importance to Student Life

Irvine is important to student life because of its central location and variety of uses, and because it is available to students on a regular, affordable basis. Usage fees paid by students and University groups are minimized by the University's underwriting of operating costs for Houston Hall and Irvine as a part of its commitment to University life. During 1983-84, such costs for routine Physical Plant maintenance, housekeeping, security, utilities and supplies for Irvine exceeded \$226,000. But only personnel costs—specifically those for event-related housekeeping, security and electrical power hook-up which are not included in routine Physical Plant services—are charged to student groups sponsoring events in the building. This keeps total fees to \$60-\$200 for student-sponsored activities such as movies and lectures.

Students themselves perform much of the production work, such as taking tickets, projecting films, setting up and controlling lighting and other stage effects, etc., as part of the cocurricular experience. These services, which are typically part of the user's charge for other University facilities, are charged to non-University users of Irvine. The 19 non-University sponsored events of academic year 1983-84 generated \$18,800 in revenue for the Houston Hall-Irvine operating budget which was used by the Office of Student Life for repairs and equipment not covered by routine Physical Plant services.

Thus while Irvine is as expensive as any other building its age for the University to maintain and operate, the cost of its use by student groups has been kept low in recognition of the importance of cocurricular activities to the educational experience.

#### 2. Usage

Irvine Auditorium is currently used during the fall and spring semesters in a wide variety of ways. Tables 1 and 2 in our report summarize usage according to type of event/activity and sponsor for Fall 1984 and the academic year 1983-84 respectively. The three-semester total of 26

"University Events" includes such occasions and activities as Freshman Convocation, Baccalaureate, professional school graduations, special religious services, President's Forum events, etc. The 132 "Student Sponsored Events" include performances by student groups, and lectures, concerts, movies and other programs sponsored by student activities organizations. (See also Appendix A.\*)

The 277 "Rehearsals" indicated on Tables 1 and 2 are those which are scheduled on the auditorium stage and in Irvine's main lobby. Rehearsals typically begin at 6:00 or 7:00 p.m. and continue until midnight, except when Irvine is scheduled for movies or some other public event. Both lobby and stage are being used in this manner most evenings of the academic year. The estimated 500 "Unscheduled Rehearsals" are those which take place in some other part of the building as space is available, particularly in Room 35 of the set construction shop.

Irvine has the only campus space currently available for set construction and related storage by student performing arts groups. Usage of set construction shops is difficult to quantify; the hours spent in this type of work may vary greatly from production to production. The three-semester total of 370 uses indicated on the tables is thus an estimate based on the fact that set construction is underway in the Irvine basement from early October to early December and from mid-January to late April.

The Technical Director, who advises and assists student groups with production techniques and problems, has office space on the first floor of Irvine, as do 14 student organizations: Quaker Notes, Pennsylvania Six-5000, Bloomers, Intuitons, Quadramics, COPUS, Penn Political Union, Debate Council, the Undergraduate Assembly, the Curtis Organ Restoration Society, the *Red and Blue*, *Penn Press*, *Punch Bowl* magazine and *Columns* magazine.

Tables 3 and 4 in our report summarize estimated total monthly attendance at public events in Irvine for Fall 1984 and the academic year 1983-84 respectively. These data illustrate the correlation between usage and the academic calendar, with scheduling at the beginning of each semester relatively low as student groups plan and prepare their events and productions. October is a high usage month as PUC movies are frequently scheduled and well attended, and the first and second PUC concerts of the year are held. The peak in December, exam time on campus, is largely attributed to non-University sponsored events, and the peak in May to University ceremonies such as Baccalaureate and professional school graduations (See also Appendix A\*). Records of the Office of Student Life indicate that usage patterns of Irvine have changed little over the past five years.

Of the 158 University or student-group sponsored events held in Irvine Auditorium over the past 3 semesters (Appendix A\*), 31 had audiences of 1000 or more people and 17 drew between 500 and 1000 people at single seatings. One hundred and four of the 158 events were movies sponsored by Penn Union Council (PUC) three or four nights each week of each term. The revenue generated by movies constitutes a major portion of the PUC budget and is used to underwrite many other activities sponsored by PUC throughout the year. Students are attracted to on-campus movies by the reasonable price and because they offer an opportunity to meet fellow students in a student-union atmosphere rather than in an off-campus commercial environment.

### 3. Curtis Organ

The Curtis Organ is traditionally played for some University occasions, including Freshman Convocation, Baccalaureate and the graduation ceremonies of several graduate and professional schools. Curtis Organ recitals are presented several times a year, and for the past twelve years the organ has accompanied an annual Halloween showing of the classic film, "Phantom of the Opera." It is the University's only pipe organ and is available to students and faculty for practice.

The 11,000-pipe organ has been maintained in recent years through the efforts of the Curtis family and the Curtis Organ Restoration Society. During 1980-81, the Society and the University Development Office mounted a successful campaign to fund a \$13,500 console repair, and

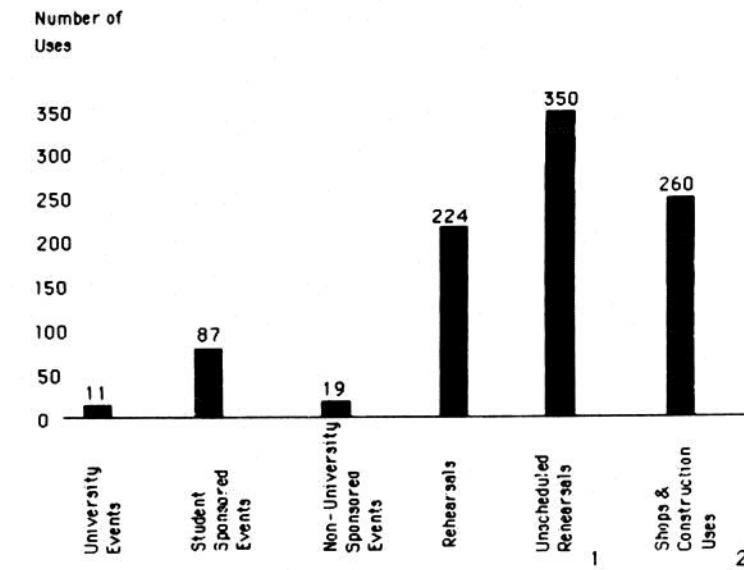
since 1981 the Society has raised an additional \$10,293 in program funds. Members of the Society have also contributed many hours to the care of the organ in an effort to overcome years of neglect. This work is ongoing as significant restoration and repair continue to be needed.

### 4. Physical Condition

The current overall condition of Irvine Auditorium is poor. Mechanical and electrical systems installed in the late 1920's are inadequate, and deferred maintenance in recent years has resulted in a shabby appearance in the auditorium and other areas. An Office of Student Life analysis of known major deficiencies indicates that the stage curtains must be replaced at once, that the lighting panel is inadequate, that plumbing and fixtures in rest rooms are antiquated, and that dressing rooms are embarrassingly delapidated. Many auditorium seats remain broken because replacement parts are no longer manufactured. Irvine is referred to as a 2000-seat auditorium throughout this report, however, if all the seats could be repaired, it would seat 2300. Moreover, the poor acoustics of the auditorium itself are due to the building's design rather than its age. Besides not being air conditioned, it is costly and inefficient to heat.

On the positive side, Irvine is structurally sound, has a recently repaired roof, is centrally located, and is the largest auditorium on campus. Future uses of Irvine as a student activities facility have been under discussion by the Houston Hall Board and the Office of Student Life for several years. Both groups have identified long and short term renovations and repair needs for the entire building. Such projects have been minimal in recent years due to limited funds from current operating budgets. However, Irvine Auditorium has the potential of serving the University for many more years to come if its operating systems are replaced and its interior refurbished.

Utilization of Irvine Facilities  
1983-84



Total uses of Irvine for 1983-84: 951

Note: Irvine is closed during the summer.

1. Use of shop and storage space as available as estimated by Performing Arts Technical Director.

2. Estimated use determined by Performing Arts Technical Director.

\*Not published. Full text of Report available from Student Life Office, Houston Hall, or call Ext. 6533.

## Specific Responses to the Proposal

### Potential Advantages

While students in the open discussions raised concerns and questions about the impact of the renovation proposal on existing student-activities uses of Irvine, they also recognized the positive potential of the plan for student life and the University community. Five potential advantages were identified:

1) A first-class concert hall would increase the number of musical performances by University and visiting artists, thereby enriching cultural opportunities for the entire University community and the city of Philadelphia.

2) The concert hall, with its superior acoustics, seating and technical facilities, would be a great improvement over the existing auditorium as a facility for some performances currently presented by student groups. It would be well-located on campus with access to public transportation and parking.

3) Rehearsal space, sorely needed to alleviate current pressure on existing spaces, would be more readily available to individual musicians and groups.

4) The creation of the upper building would provide increased space for additional activities in Irvine by student groups and other members of the campus community.

5) The entire building would be renovated and air-conditioned, which would encourage fuller use of the facility in comfort on a year-round basis.

### Potential Changes and Disadvantages

Participants in the consultation process were asked to be as specific as possible regarding foreseeable changes in the uses of Irvine and potential disadvantages of the renovation as proposed. Following is a summary of the major issues, concerns and possible alternatives which were expressed in the meetings and in writing. Discussion focused on the allocation of interior spaces, uses of the building and concert hall by student groups in

particular, the necessity of relocating displaced events and activities in suitable facilities, and on the future of the Curtis Organ.

1. **Loss of a 2000-Seat Auditorium.** The gap between Zellerbach (950) and the Ice Rink (5000) is perceived as problem for student activities (e.g., PUC movies, touring popular artists); all-University events (Freshman Convocation, Ivy Day, Baccalaureate; Medical and Dental School graduations; major lectures); and community users who rent the auditorium in non-peak periods. (See *Alternate Sites* summary, next section.)

2. **Accessibility Concerns.** Six performance groups in Music and seven non-theatre music groups in the Performing Arts Council (PAC) find the 1000-seat proposed hall desirable; but PAC's nine drama and music-theatre groups need performance space also—and with a fly tower (not in the proposed hall). Also cited are possible schedule conflicts: Music's projected increase in programming would affect PUC and PAC group uses on Friday and Saturday nights and midweek rehearsals of PAC groups. A Music spokesperson indicates that certain performances such as rock concerts would not be approved for the hall. A general concern: the possible resemblance of the concert hall, in cost and priorities, to Zellerbach Theatre.

3. **Future of PUC Movies.** Present frequency of PUC movies (three or four nights, two showings nightly, during academic year) could not be maintained in the concert hall as envisioned, and loss of a dependable "home" site for audience-building is seen as a serious drawback for PUC Movies—and indirectly for others since PUC proceeds underwrite some other student activities.

4. **Displaced Services/Facilities.** Making the basement into the lower level of the concert hall, as proposed, would displace the set and costume shops; technical director's office; and storage space now used by several groups for music, props, costumes, scenery, lights, supplies and equipment. Relocation would need to be nearby, and in space taking account of some set construction's now done onstage for height.

5. **Use of Upper Building.** Cited in the report are needs of present student activities, plus unmet needs of others. Students view as primary these claims on the upper building space, and resist the suggestion that the Music Department should move its offices and classrooms into Irvine. An improved Houston Hall-Irvine student union complex has been discussed and promoted for several years, most recently in the units' five-year plans. Space for rehearsals concentrated in evenings and on weekends—is cited as a present problem, as well as a future one under the proposal.

6. **Future of the Curtis Organ.** Members and supporters of the Curtis Organ Restoration Society, including alumni, object to removal of the historic instrument received as a gift. No appropriate alternative site has been identified. Rebuilding the Organ smaller has been opposed on musical and historical grounds. One estimate (disputed by others) puts the cost of moving at several hundred thousand dollars; an appendix discusses this in full.

### Consideration of Alternate Sites

Consideration was given to non-academic campus facilities other than Irvine Auditorium which might be suitable for some of the events and activities potentially dislocated by the renovation. Factors such as cost, technical capabilities, location or long-range plans for the facilities are condensed below. Preliminary review of these sites indicates that detailed analyses and feasibility studies are needed before relocation decisions can be made.

#### Meyerson Hall (Lecture Room B-1) 436 seats.

**Availability:** Only Saturdays and Sundays. Used daytimes and weekday evenings primarily as a classroom facility, Friday night for the GSAC film series.

**Advantages:** Centrally located. Parking available nearby. Well-suited for films (16mm.) and lectures.

**Drawbacks:** Cannot accommodate performances requiring a stage. Projection equipment and projectionist must be hired through the SAS Audiovisual Center at around \$150 per event. An additional \$100 in housekeeping charges must also be incurred as the normal housekeeping schedule only covers classes. Also, PUC Movies often requires 35mm. equipment.

#### Harrison Auditorium, University Museum 800 seats.

**Availability:** 30%-40% of weekday evenings and approximately half the Friday or Saturday nights of a given semester.

**Advantages:** Reasonably accessible to students. Parking available nearby. Lends itself to lectures, films (16mm. only) and performances which require a small stage without backstage and wings.

**Drawbacks:** Current charges are \$335 for Friday and Saturday eve-

Total Attendance: 109,207

Source: Office of Student Life

nings, with an additional \$100 per hour charge after 10:30 p.m. Projectionists then cost an additional \$50 per event. A double-screening would therefore run between \$550 and \$700 per event, prohibitive for most student groups in the absence of University subvention.

**Zellerbach Theatre, Annenberg Center** 970 seats.

**Availability:** Limited. Heavily used for professional productions.

**Advantages:** Central location. Ample parking. Technical facilities are far and away the best on campus, and box office and staffing make Zellerbach highly suitable for films (16mm. and 35mm.), performances, concerts (though not rock concerts), and lectures.

**Drawbacks:** Aside from the lack of free time, charges for personnel and maintenance are beyond the reach of most student groups. Center staff attempts to provide at least one performance time (per year) to every student group which can draw an audience large enough to cover costs, but others, by necessity, are given low priority.

**Class of '23 Ice Rink** 2800 fixed seats, 2200 more that can be added when there is no ice or when ice is covered.

**Availability:** Unavailable Friday and Saturday evenings from October to mid-March when it is open for public skating, but an occasional special event might be given priority.

**Advantages:** None listed.

**Drawbacks:** Nightly flat fee of \$3000 (negotiable for University groups). Rink does not own a floor covering, thus one would have to be rented or purchased. There is also no stage. Based on experience with preparing large facilities for concerts, etc., total costs per event could approach \$15,000. The location is also not central and there is limited parking; some concerns on safety.

**The Palestra** 9000 seats, or 6500 with stage.

**Availability:** Limited, especially during basketball season.

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

In summary, the addition of a first-rate concert hall and upper building to Irvine is seen by many as of great potential benefit to the Penn community. Student leaders are reluctant, however, to see the seating of Irvine Auditorium reduced to 1000, given the lack of alternative facilities on campus that are comparable in nature and which can be designated as a priority area for student activities. Several reviewers reiterated that their evaluation of the proposal was limited by insufficient information on the feasibility of locating the concert hall elsewhere on campus. Fear was expressed in the open meetings that the range and quality of student activities would suffer if the auditorium were to be reduced in size, and priority for use of a concert hall in Irvine given to Music Department sponsored musical performance.

The impact on student life of activities being displaced to various locations around the campus, rather than clustered in the Houston Hall-Irvine complex, was also noted with concern. Some students sought assurance that Irvine would not become an academic building under the supervision of the Music Department, resulting in the loss of a student activities center as well as a large auditorium. It was thought that this would have a negative impact on student life by virtue of directing student activity away from its current focal point, the Houston Hall-Irvine student union complex.

To the extent that they would be accessible by and allocated to student organizations and activities, the new upper floors of Irvine were viewed as a needed improvement in the quality and quantity of space. Student representatives saw the potential of having areas designed for student activities, offices, storage, and administrative support. In the event the proposal is approved, they hope for an opportunity to discuss their needs with the architects so that the upper floors will reflect student life priorities as well as those of the Music Department related to the concert hall.

Selection of an appropriate site for the relocation of the set construction shop and related services is a major concern. Given the current sad condition and limitations of the shop under the stage, a larger and more accessible space should be sought, one that includes storage and office space for the Technical Director and the theatrical performing arts groups. (While it seems desirable to move drama groups housed in Irvine to the Annenberg Center office space currently occupied by music groups, and vice versa, this would not provide for consolidation with set

**Advantages:** Reasonably accessible. The Palestra, in addition to being the best place in the world to watch basketball, is also the largest arena on campus, and with improvements it might be made suitable for large lectures, concerts and University ceremonies.

**Drawbacks:** Alterations per-event—to erect a stage and cover the gym floor, install sound, lighting and a portable generator, remove goals and press tables, provide housekeeping, security and ushers, and rent chairs—could cost approximately \$17,000 (based on recent experience with Spring Fling concerts). Concern has been raised on alterations' long-term effects on the building and the court. In addition, The Palestra has many of the same problems as Irvine: lack of appropriate backstage, hospitality and dressing room areas, and acoustics that are not worthy of musical performances.

**Future Sites**

**Small Multipurpose Room in the Quad.** Plans for renovation of the Quad include the construction of a multipurpose room (expected completion early 1986) seating 150-200 persons which could be used for some movies, lectures or performances. While priority would be given to activities for residents of the Quad, the space does represent an increase in facilities available for student activities and programs.

**A New Athletic Complex.** The University is also considering construction of a new field house/athletic complex. As just one of its proposed features, the facility would contain a 25,000-square-foot multipurpose interior space, seating approximately 12,000, which could, with suggested modifications, be set up for concerts, lectures and special events at much less cost than is currently the case for the Ice Rink and The Palestra. Architects have developed a feasibility study, but no decision has yet been made regarding the facility and no funds have been identified. Such a building is thus unlikely to be available for at least five years.

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

and costume shops and storage facilities unless space for the latter could be found nearby.) No suitable alternative site for the set shop was identified during the review.

The potential loss to the campus of the Curtis Organ was keenly felt by a number of respondents. Their major objective was to urge that the University take active steps to donate the organ to a suitable group and that it be moved with care so that it could be preserved intact as a functioning instrument.

The architectural concerns of several reviewers revolved around the quality of the renovation design, preservation of as much of the auditorium's walls and ceilings as possible, and potential conflicts with the historical registration of the building.

Based upon the comments of reviewers and respondents, it is recommended that resolutions of the following issues are integral to a final decision on the Irvine renovation proposal:

1. Designation of existing campus facilities to house displaced activities, facilities and services, and/or plans to construct suitable new spaces. Provision for University subvention to keep these facilities affordable to student groups.
2. Detailed planning by students and activities specialists with architects to consider best use of the upper building for student organizational space and services.
3. Projections by the Music Department of its anticipated levels and kinds of uses of the concert hall, particularly for student group and non-University group performances, as well as scheduling priorities, e.g., days of the week and relationship to the academic calendar. Such information would facilitate assessment of accessibility of the concert hall to non-Music Department student groups and development of a shared-use policy.
4. Defining alternatives for preserving the Curtis Organ.

This report is being presented to the Provost and the President in the hope that it accurately summarizes the questions and concerns of the campus community about the proposed Irvine renovation which were identified during the consultation process. The goal of the consultation process will have been achieved if this report highlights questions and concerns which will assist the administration and Trustees in their deliberations, and will enable them to reach a decision that balances perceived needs and fiscal realities and is consistent with the high quality of cocurricular life at the University of Pennsylvania.