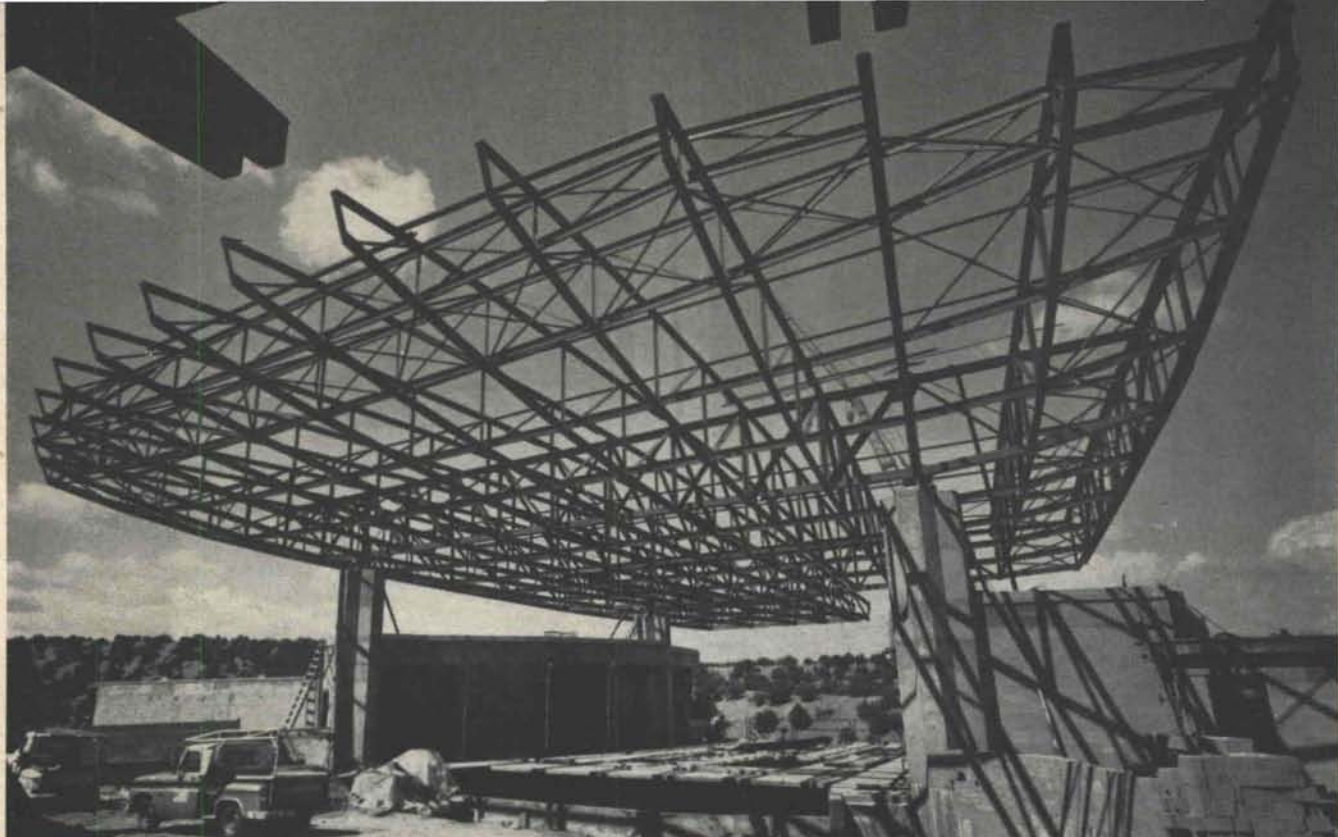


from the ashes of disaster arose a new theater the SANTA FE OPERA

On July 27, 1967 the Santa Fe Open Theater was destroyed by fire. The blaze began at approximately 3:30 A.M. Of undetermined cause, the fire started under the stage and quickly spread throughout the structure. All that remained of the once proud opera were the two concrete balcony stairways, the small box office structure, and an indomitable will to begin again.

The original theater and its balcony expansion was reported in the September-October issue of *New Mexico Architecture*. The model for this new opera house, along with a description of the expanded facilities, was published in the November-December 1967 *NMA*.





The Stage roof which covers more than one quarter of an acre, provides stand-up space to manipulate all of the Stage lighting, spots, floods and accent lights and contains more than 13½ miles of electric wire to facilitate the controls.

The balcony steps left standing after the fire, now lead somewhere: to the new theater balcony.



THE SANTA FE OPERA ASSOCIATION

John O. Crosby, General Director

ARCHITECTS

McHugh and Kidder, Architects
Santa Fe, New Mexico
John T. Midyette III, Project Captain

STRUCTURAL DESIGN

Earl P. Wood & Associates
Santa Fe, New Mexico

STAGE LIGHTING

Robert Benson of
Kleigl Brothers
Long Island City, New York

MECHANICAL ENGINEERS

Barkmann and Rogers, Consulting Engrs.
Santa Fe, New Mexico

GENERAL CONTRACTOR

Modern Construction Company
Santa Fe, New Mexico
Grant Hall, Project Superintendent

ACOUSTICAL CONSULTANT

Jack Purcell of
Bolt, Beranek & Newman
Van Nuys, California

ELECTRICAL ENGINEER

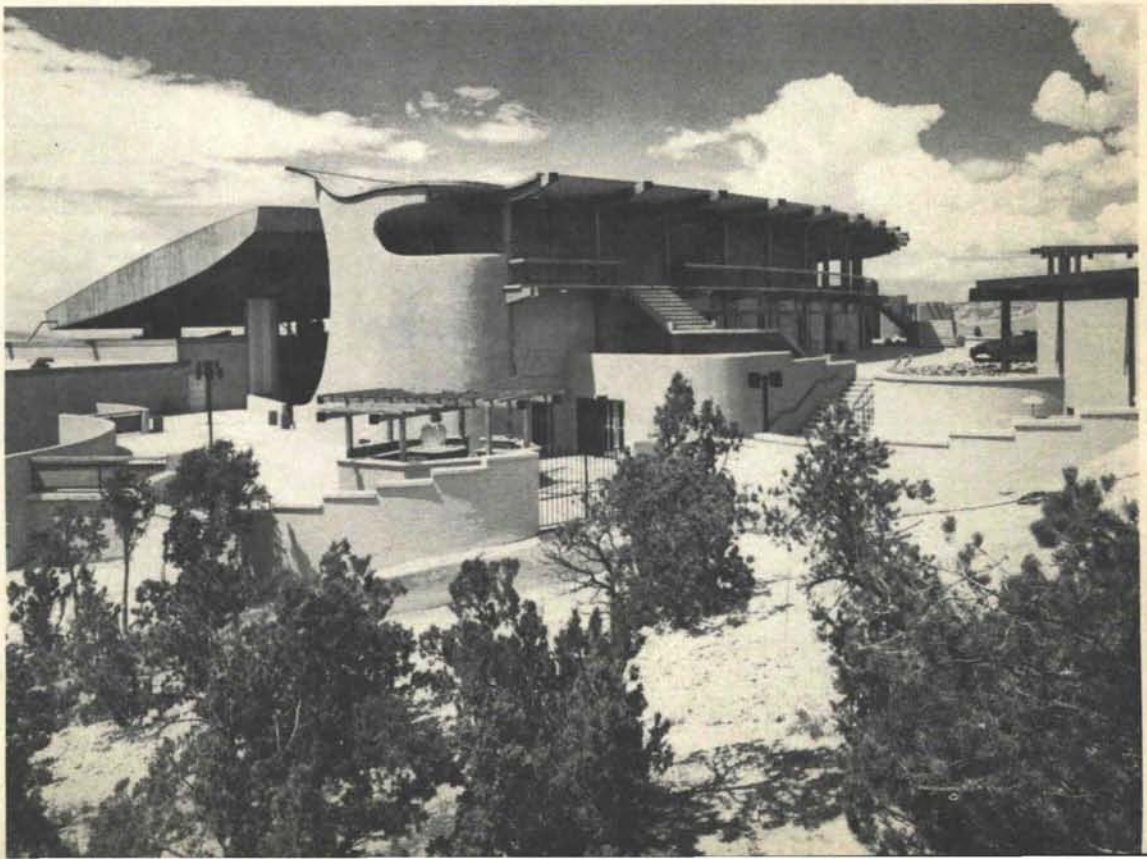
Carl Albach, Consulting Engineer
Santa Fe, New Mexico

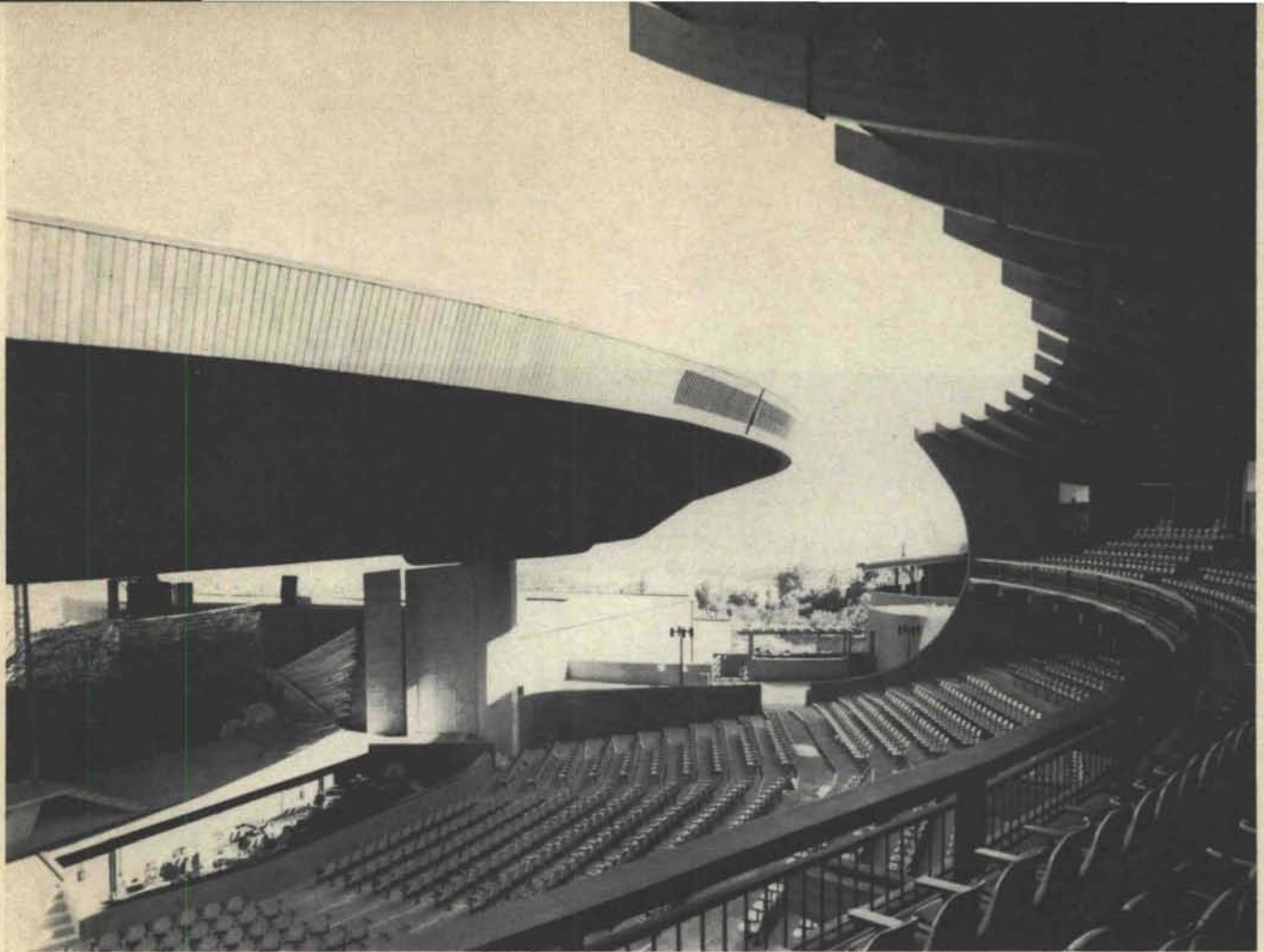


“True to his own predictions, and contrary to those of the enlightened pessimists, Crosby opened his new theater, on schedule, July 2, 1968. It is a magnificent new house that combines the charm of its predecessor with the advantages of enlarged facilities and improved technical resources.

The theater is a triumph in just about every way, and — more important — it seems to be housing some extraordinary artistic commodities. Crosby has survived disaster without compromising integrity.”

*Martin Bernheimer, Music Critic,
Los Angeles Times, August 13, 1968*





"The Santa Fe Opera Company isn't real. What I witnessed or thought I witnessed a week and a half ago when I seem to recall visiting a grand hill-top in New Mexico was so patently improbable that I now believe I had gone on a hallucinatory trip.

"I persist in thinking that I arrived at a full-blown opera evening virtually in the middle of desert-like grazing lands, and entered a structure of sweeping modern design. While most of the audience sat under a broad redwood roof extending over the balcony and beyond or under a stage canopy reaching towards it, I sat in a space between, bared to the elements, with sky and stars overhead. Yet from the handsome deep stage, open at its rear to a distant dark horizon of mountains and the lights of Los Alamos, I heard everything perfectly. The clear tone and diction of the soloists, and the chorus' extra-sonorous singing, were unaffected by the cool breeze that washed the air between.

"The large orchestra, sunk to a depth that rendered even the conductor invisible in a pit larger than that at the San Francisco Opera House, played with full spirit yet never overpowered the voices — the Bayreuth ideal.

"The opera was a new one, Hans Werner Henze's 'The Bassarids.' The principals were first rate, the production strikingly designed.

"It was not to be believed. Twelve months before, the entire Santa Fe Opera house with all its contents had burned to the ground—total wipeout. Yet here it was again, with a finished production in one of America's handsomest operatic settings."

*Robert Commanday, Music Critic,
San Francisco Sunday Examiner
and Chronicle*

"In the eternal, brooding mountains of New Mexico, things take a long time to grow and even longer to change. Yet amid the Sangre de Cristo range outside Santa Fe this year, a dramatic new feature has jutted up in a matter of months. It is the Santa Fe Opera Company's new theater, a bold cross between an open-air arena and a Pueblo fortress. It has no side walls, and its see-through stage provides the action with a striking natural backdrop of dancing hills. Above the orchestra seats, a redwood-beamed adobe canopy sweeps upward, then breaks off abruptly to reveal a broad area of New Mexico sky.

"The structure is really something, especially since a year ago it was really nothing. Fire destroyed the old 1957 building in midseason last year (TIME, Aug. 4, 1967). Against awesome odds, General Director John Crosby rode herd on a double-shift construction schedule through the winter and spring to get the house ready for last month's season opener."
TIME — August 23, 1968

"Whatever Santa Fe has accomplished in the past 11 years can be credited to Crosby, a man of singular vision and devotion who oversees every detail on-stage, off-stage and backstage. Building the new theater in a mere 300 days and going ahead on schedule with an ambitious season, Crosby has managed to turn disaster into relative triumph."

*Martin Bernheimer, Music Critic
Los Angeles Times
Sunday, August 25, 1968*



John Reardon as Pentheus and Loren Driscoll as Dionysus in the 1968 production of the Bassarids.

All Photographs — Allan Stoker



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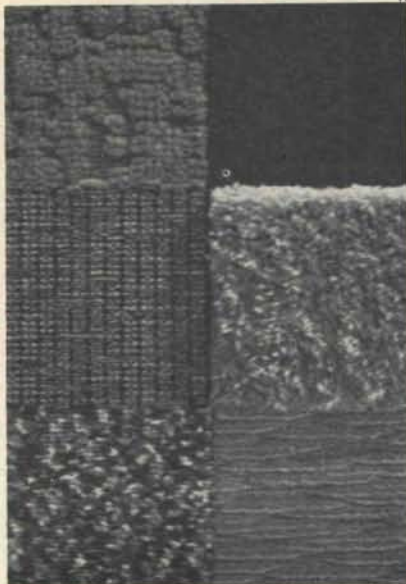
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