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The Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion HISTORY

Real Life Dreams—The Real Live Nation

As people drive by The Pavilion each day, they may recall a good time with friends or an encore performance for the ages. However, few people see the haven that The Pavilion provides to the classical artistry that was so beloved by Cynthia Woods Mitchell herself.

Cynthia Woods Mitchell, wife of The Woodlands developer George Mitchell, was by all definitions a lover of the arts, more specifically the performing arts. She had a true passion for bringing people closer to art and tearing down the walls of unfamiliarity many people often experience with classical music. She wanted that mission to be her legacy and she knew that The Woodlands would be the fertile soil on which it could thrive.

Like all good gardeners know, you cannot will your way to a bumper crop. Cynthia knew that for The Pavilion to become a reality she would need some expert help. What she didn't know is that her dream would grow ten-fold and would far surpass her early vision of making the arts accessible to all.

There's No Business Like Show Business

Ask anyone on the street what they know about The Pavilion and they may tell you a number of things. Most answers, however, will probably include an anecdote of a great contemporary show they saw at one time or another. Their answer may even include comments about the current line-up and the often free classical events that are "a great time for the kids" or a "good idea for a date night." Many people never consider just how intertwined those free classical shows and the rock-and-roll contemporary shows are.

When the Mitchells set out to build The Pavilion in the late 80's, they had a vision of a small outdoor venue that would only play classical shows and would bring the people of The Woodlands closer to the performing arts. As plans continued, George Mitchell knew that he would have to solicit the help of venue development professionals to

ensure The Pavilion's success. One such professional was Allen Becker, co-founder and then president of Houston-based PACE Concerts.

Becker saw the passion that the Mitchells had for The Pavilion, but he knew that they needed to expand their idea for it to work. Becker suggested that The Pavilion's repertoire include contemporary shows to raise funds to support their performing arts events.

"It's an expensive habit," kids Becker. "They were thinking symphony, opera, ballet and I'm thinking rock and roll, country western, and all of that."

Becker knew that to make The Pavilion successful the Mitchells would have to expand their plans from "500 seats on the side of a hill" to a full blown amphitheater that would provide revenue generating contemporary shows that could support the performing arts shows. Cynthia was the first to be convinced and by then "George had a really big bill on his hands," Becker jokes. Plans went from 500 seats to 6,000 and a deal was struck with PACE Concerts (now Live Nation) to bring contemporary shows to The Pavilion and have "rock start paying for Bach."

How Rock Pays for Bach

Now an often used mantra of The Pavilion staff, "rock pays for Bach" is the essential model for how The Pavilion operates today. As a 501 (c)3 nonprofit organization, The Pavilion utilizes a partnership with Live Nation to make possible the performing arts events that are the essential mission of the venue.

Live Nation co-president, North American Concerts, Bob Roux admits "there is a big responsibility on our shoulders knowing that our partnership is what helps The Pavilion fulfill its 501 (c)3 status."

Live Nation has been with The Pavilion since the beginning. Since the day the doors opened they have always served to help The Pavilion support its model of rock paying for Bach, and it has certainly come with its perks, according to Roux.

"The Pavilion's charitable mission towards the performing arts, truthfully, makes my job easier," Roux says. "Artists love playing The Pavilion because they recognize how The Pavilion gives back. They really feel good about being able to play a show that will help make the classical arts accessible."

And that's not all. Live Nation senior vice president of booking, Randy McElrath, adds that the facility itself is also coveted by artists.

"Artists want to play The Pavilion... they like the fact that it was built for music," McElrath said. "Not to mention they are always impressed with the progress that the facility is making. I think they really notice the improvements."

With a portion of the proceeds from each contemporary show going directly to The Pavilion, the partnership with Live Nation is a "true partnership in every sense of the word," says Jerry MacDonald, president and CEO of The Pavilion. "We are risking as much as Live Nation every time we have a contemporary performance. We win

together and we lose together. With so many wins under our belt, we owe it all to our partnership with Live Nation."

In addition to their partnership, Live Nation contributes over \$100,000 annually to The Pavilion to help support the mission to bring the performing arts to The Woodlands community. That funding is invaluable to The Pavilion's efforts and the gratitude for such a partnership is expressed by The Pavilion at every opportunity.

"The Pavilion truly is a first class operation," comments Roux. "It is by far one of the best run amphitheatres in the country and it is a privilege to be able to work with them. I think it's because their mission really comes from the heart."

From Hundreds to Thousands

The dream became a reality when The Pavilion opened with a star-studded gala weekend in April 1990. The Houston Symphony performed April 27, Frank Sinatra April 28 and Alabama with Clint Black on April 29.

While the Mitchells always set sights high and planned big, people close to them know that they never expected to see The Pavilion become the immense success it is today. From the planned 500 seats on the side of a hill to the 16,500 seats available today, Mrs. Mitchell's vision of a haven for the performing arts has by all measures exceeded expectations. Those strides could not have been made possible without the vital partnerships made along the way.

"[Cynthia] saw how rock and roll could provide the revenues needed," recalls Becker. "I think if she saw The Pavilion today she would be proud. I think she would say 'I never dreamed it could be this big' and 'we did a good thing'."

Live Nation has been instrumental in making The Pavilion a dream come true for both the Mitchells and The Woodlands community. Their dedication to the venue, as well as the performing arts mission, has proved their own motivation to truly see "rock pay for Bach."

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The Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion is part of The Center for the Performing Arts at The Woodlands, a nonprofit 501 (c)(3) organization that provides diverse, high-quality performing arts events for the entertainment and enrichment of a broad regional audience. Through numerous educational and community outreach programs, The Center is a catalyst for attracting new audiences to the performing arts and building strong ties between the arts and educational institutions.

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