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Historic UC Theatre to reopen as Berkeley Music Group's new venue, will offer youth programs

By Annalee Allen aallen@oaklandnet.com

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Lending support for the reopening with a \$1.3 million challenge grant is Tad Taube, chairman of Bay Area-based Taube Philanthropies. This matching grant will go a long way to completing the renovation and restoration of this \$5.6 million project. "Starting now, every new dollar donated to our capital campaign will be matched -- and thereby doubled, said David M. Mayeri, the president and founder of the Berkeley Music Group. "Our mission is to use this venue to present a vibrant and diverse range of live performances to advance the understanding and appreciation of music, culture and education in the East Bay," Mayeri said.

Mayeri pointed out that when completed, the theater will be the only music venue of its size in the East Bay; it will have a 1,400 person capacity, and a state of the art Meyer Sound audio system.

"We are planning on hosting a diverse range of local, national and international artists and bands representing various musical genres, including rock, jazz, R&B, alternative and world music. Our community programming will include symphony concerts, opera recitals and gospel performances," said Mayeri, whose background includes working 30 years with Bill Graham Presents. "Comedy shows, film and speaker series will also be part of the mix," he added.

Plans also call for a full-service restaurant and bar.



Mayeri recalled his early experiences working for Bill Graham Presents, while still a high school student at nearby Berkeley High School. "I would like to give today's youth the same sort of opportunity to get involved with this business," he said. His nonprofit educational programs will be combining workshops and internships in the technical, creative and business aspects of promoting and running concerts and

cultural events. Local youth ages 17 to 25 will be invited to attend these workshops.

Video NewsFeed



The long-closed theater has been vacant for 15 years. The history files reveal that architect Placheck was a prolific and versatile architect of much of downtown Berkeley from the early1900s through the 1940s. Born in Chicago to Czech immigrant parents, he apprenticed in a Chicago architect's office and studied structural engineering (a common place practice in those days). In 1906 he was sent west by the mayor of Chicago to study the effect of earthquake and fire on building materials. In 1912 he opened his own practice in Berkeley and spent the rest of his career there.

His work changed with the times, say the files, from craftsman and classical in the 1910s through Period Revival in the 1920s and Moderne in the 1930s and 1940s. Perhaps his bestknown work is the Berkeley Main Library on Kittredge Street.

Joining us on the walk through was Shana Penn, executive director of Taube Philanthropies, who explained that it was established in 1981 and also has offices in Warsaw, Poland, where founder Ted Taube was originally from. "We focus on philanthropic investments in both the Bay Area and Poland," said Penn, "and our grants benefit heritage preservation, arts, culture, and education and institution building."

"Music and the arts are gifts that should be accessible to everyone, and this new vision for the historic UC Theatre will both enrich our community as well as broaden youth engagement in the arts."

To find out more go to www.theuctheatre.org (http://www.theuctheatre.org) and www.taubephilanthropies.org (http://www.taubephilanthropies.org).

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