

New World Symphony on track for 2011 building opening

By Scott E. Pacheco

The New World Symphony's new home continues to sprout up on Miami Beach and is about a year from completion, its president says.

"We will complete the building and we intend to receive a temporary certificate of occupancy at the end of next summer," said Howard Herring, symphony president and chief executive officer.

Throughout fall 2010 the symphony is to test the facility, which Mr. Herring called a "very complex building technologically." After that, it's expected to open during the final two weeks of January 2011.

"All of those performances will be demonstrating the new capabilities of the new space," he said. "[It has] extraordinary acoustics so that will be demonstrated," as well as the flexibility of the performance spaces.

The 109,000-square-foot, \$154 million project, designed by noted architect Frank Gehry, is set to receive \$27 million more from Miami-Dade County hotel bed taxes. However, with the economic downturn, plunging room rates and millions committed to a new Florida Marlins stadium, there is concern whether enough will be left for the symphony



Photo by Maxine Usdan

The New World Symphony facility is to be a '21st century musical meetinghouse,' Howard Herring says. project.

"We expect that last portion of the funding of the construction to come from Dade County — they already directed \$3 million of the \$30 million we've requested," Mr. Herring said.

Neisen O. Kasdin, symphony board chairman, said "there's some concern with the economic downturn," but he pointed out that the county commission adopted a resolution to pay the

money. He said the symphony is "on budget" and moving forward with plans to receive the money.

County officials couldn't be reached.

According to the New World Symphony's Web site, the current "building has severe acoustical deficiencies and technological limitations. These challenges, coupled with a sheer lack of space, keep NWS from pursuing the

next steps in orchestral innovation — whether in new performance formats, expanded educational programs, distance learning, or community outreach."

The new building is about 2.5 times larger, with major upgrades in technological capabilities.

Mr. Herring said the east curtain wall, made of glass, was recently completed.

"It is designed to create a

new transparency — something that musical institutions have rarely known," he said. "Rather than be a fortress that surrounds the music, we are creating pathways and enticements for our audience."

And once the facility can be air-conditioned, "we will begin the creation of the acoustic baffles in the primary performance space," Mr. Herring said of the sound-regulating pieces.

Work should begin on the sound baffles in early November, he said. They are to be composed of six layers of wood and drywall and then covered with special paint that will receive projection and make it vivid.

It will be a "21st century musical meeting house — a laboratory for the exploration of the way music is taught, performed and experienced, and it will enable this orchestral academy to blossom in ways that we can't even imagine," Mr. Herring said.

Mr. Kasdin pointed to the multidimensional symphony hall, an exterior projection screen and the internal atrium as a few of facility's "real gems."

He said the facility itself will be the best marketing tool once it gets up and running.

"There is no other building like it in the world."