

escape

THINGS TO DO AROUND THE UPSTATE

APRIL 12-18, 2002



DINING: European elegance at Gerhard's



THEATER: Flat season begins



The sound of music

Zimmerli Amphitheater to host concerts in Barnet P

ZIMMERLI AMPHITHEATER COMPLETED

Music in the air

BARNET PARK:

Concert series begins Sunday

By JOSE FRANCO
Staff Writer

Passersby may not see what the big deal is. But Sunday, maybe those who attend a special outdoor concert at Barnet Park will near the difference.

The Greater Spartanburg Philharmonic and the Converse Brass Quintet will be the first musicians to perform Sunday in the completed amphitheater in Barnet Park off St. John Street in Spartanburg.

What was missing? The \$1 million acoustical fiberglass-type canopy and backdrop. They are the finishing touches to the Zimmerli Amphitheater and are supposed to improve the sound. And the park's stage, with all of these new expensive extras, is expected to become the showpiece of the 7-acre city park that opened almost two years ago.

The concert, known as "Sunday in the Park With Music," will also serve as a dedication ceremony, honoring the largest contributor to the amphitheater — retired textile executive Kurt Zimmerli.

"My dream is that Barnet Park will some day be filled with families on blankets listening to all kinds of music," Zimmerli said this week.

Bill Barnet, who is now in his fourth month as the city's mayor, and his family donated land for the park five years ago. The only stipulation was that the city begin building a park as quickly as possible. The park has evolved with sidewalks, landscaping, benches and sculptures.

Zimmerli, whose foundation also funded the park's large interactive water fountain near the entrance to the grounds, and Barnet then worked with the city to make the amphitheater a reality.

Because the city didn't have the money to build all the extras in the park all at once, Zimmerli's foundation

WANT TO GO?

What: "Sunday in the Park With Music," featuring The Petrie School of Music at Converse College and The Greater Spartanburg Philharmonic with conductor William R. Scott. Zimmerli Amphitheater at Barnet Park will be dedicated.

When: 4 p.m. Sunday

Where: Barnet Park

Admission: Free

Extra: Bring your blanket and picnic baskets for a free afternoon community concert celebration. Enjoy refreshments and tours following the concert. No pets allowed. Rain date is April 21.

took on the amphitheater and its acoustics as a project.

"The Zimmerlis (Kurt and his wife, Nelly) saw the interactive water fountain as a way to be proactive with the park, and they wanted to help out any way they could with the amphitheater," Barnet said.

The amphitheater and a simple stage came first. It is fashioned to resemble a conventional outdoor Greek theater. The audience sits in a grass and stone seating area, which is at an angle down to the stage area. More than 1,600 people can sit in the bowl area and there is room for 6,600 people, if you include the bowl and the grassy area of the park.

Several musical events have been held in the amphitheater. But the groups have always had to bring their own sound equipment and had to worry about rain.

For the past year, Barnet and Zimmerli have been working with architects to research and develop the acoustical covering or shell for the stage.

They chose to use the same architects who designed the bandshell or canopy in New York's Central Park.

The Carlos Moseley Pavilion, named for Spartanburg native and former president of the New York Philharmonic, is just one of the many acoustical shells or pavilions designed by internationally known FTL Happold in New York. They've designed others in London, Boston and a

huge one during the Summer Olympics in Atlanta's Centennial Park, to name a few.

The work to build a unique acoustical canopy in Barnet Park has been under way for several months.

From a distance, the structure may look like a tiny white tent.

But up close, the "tent" becomes a large, fiberglass-like shell designed to blend and project sound.

"It (the canopy) has two purposes," Zimmerli said. "The first purpose is so performers won't get wet. The second purpose is acoustics. The acoustical wall behind the stage will lead the sound into the park."

The special material for the canopy was made in Australia. Birdair of Canada constructed the masts — the red poles that hold up the structure.

The canopy or shell, made of a stretchable fabric structure that makes sounds reflect back into the audience, is 40 by 65. The front section is positioned higher and spikes so that the sound reflects downward so musicians can hear themselves. The structure also hides the lighting. An acoustical wall set in waves behind the stage also reflects and absorbs sounds.

Though the entire stage is large enough to hold a 100-piece orchestra, smaller community groups or individuals on shoestring budgets can perform without the use of

UPCOMING EVENTS

April 20 — Beach Music Day — 2 p.m. until 9 p.m. Admission is \$10. East Coast Band, The Breeze, Billy Scott and the Prophets and Bennie Anderson and the Drifters.

May 9 — 7 p.m., Carver Junior High School Band Orchestra

May 14 — Spartanburg High School symphony orchestra

June 7 — N.C. Jazz Repertory Orchestra

July 1 — Red, White & Boom

July 9 — Brevard Music Festival Orchestra

July 20 — 7 Moore and dezeray's Hammer



GERRY PATE/STAFF

Retired textile executive Kurt Zimmerli, right, pictured with his wife, Nelly, was the largest contributor to Barnet Park's amphitheater. "My dream is that Barnet Park will some day be filled with families on blankets listening to all kinds of music," Zimmerli said this week.

costly sound systems.

Sarah Gunn with The Music Foundation of Spartanburg said the amphitheater and the special canopy will have a lasting impact on the city. "It is a state-of-the-art facility that is so unique and precious," she said. "Our performers are thrilled."

The Music Foundation is already making plans for a summer music series, which will start in May 2003. The Philharmonic will perform Sunday and during the annual Red, White & Boom Fourth of July concert, which was a big hit in Barnet Park last year.

Beyond the canopy and stage are restrooms, which can also be used as dressing rooms. There is also a dock area and large storage area for speakers and equipment. An electrical and communi-

cations room controls all the lights and sound. (There are 14 speakers that can be assembled for a performance.)

The construction isn't just about sound. Now, the amphitheater has 116 permanent light fixtures above its stage. And lights along the floor of the stage will highlight the acoustical wall during evening performances.

The idea is to offer quality outdoor performances to the park, which in the future may be connected to a \$35-million-plus cultural center that will house all the community arts.

On Sunday Zimmerli, a collector of art and lover of music, will not only give his name to this amphitheater, but he will also realize his dream.

"From jazz, classical, blue-

grass and beach, we love music in Spartanburg and to have outdoor concerts is exciting. Families will get in the habit of listening to music outdoors," said Zimmerli, who in his retirement has remained busy working on community projects such as Barnet Park.

"The children can run around in the warm weather when they get tired of listening," said Zimmerli, a native of Switzerland who moved to Spartanburg more than 30 years ago. "They (the children) can go play in the fountain. I just love the park and the way it's laid out. It's a real jewel to have in the middle of town."

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