

It All Began With Disney Dollars

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In a roundabout way, a Music Center family of 440 was saying, "Thank you, Snow White, Pinocchio, Mary Poppins and Beauty and the Beast" on Tuesday evening at the new Inter Continental hotel.

Had not an adoring world enriched their creator, Walt Disney, and had not Disney's widow, Lillian, and their daughters, Sharon Disney Lund and Diane Disney Miller, given \$50 million (that has now grown to more than \$90 million with interest), groundbreaking for Disney Hall on Bunker Hill might not have occurred in December.

Add to the necessary ingredients a volunteer of tenacity and humor, Fred Nicholas, chairman of the Walt Disney Concert Hall Committee, who facilitated five years of negotiations.

Tuesday, at a business-suit dinner, there was celebration about a hall that won't debut until 1997, but is promised to be the most beautiful and important cultural structure ever built in Los Angeles.

Though no Disneys were in the audience, they were adulated. Said Nicholas, "This event could not take place without the commitment and devotion of Lillian Disney and her two incredible daughters. Never have there been donors

like the Disney women. They have made no demands, they have been patient, waiting more than five years for the groundbreaking, and they have made only two modest requests—a great-sounding hall and a beautiful garden."

Jim Thomas, chairman of the Music Center Board of Governors,

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JIM THOMAS
Music Center Board of Governors

paid tribute: "Disney Hall will be a living symbol of the arts in our city . . . will send a message that where the arts are alive, the city is alive."

Tributes also came from honorary dinner chairman Franklin Ulf, whose company, U.S. Trust, underwrote the affair; from Ron Gother, senior partner of Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher and the Disney family personal lawyer who helped arrange the \$50-million gift; from Lt. Gov. Leo McCarthy, who introduced Nicholas with a comment that his leadership "had helped achieve harmony and keep the big wind instruments from dominating

the performance."

Nicholas lauded his wife, Joan, Disney Hall architect Frank Gehry and the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, which contributed land for the hall and is financing the garage.

Nicholas described his role as that of a facilitator, dealing with "constituencies deeply entrenched and territorial in a mine field of overlapping jurisdictions."

"We have survived trial by fire and the rest is easy—build a concert hall on time and on budget over the next four years."

First off, his goal is to raise \$17.5 million more to complete the hall. Nicholas says he'll raise it this year.

That's separate from the Music Center's \$14.5-million goal for 1993 co-chaired by Kent Kresa and Charles I. Schneider. Among those working on the latter team are Ed Carson and Ulf. They, Thomas and Music Center president Esther Wachtell, all confirmed that the fund drive is "behind."

Said Schneider, "It's going with difficulty." Said Carson, "It's going well considering the economy." Said Thomas, "It's hard to judge because so much of the money comes in so late in the campaign. My commitment and determination is to make the goal."

The \$2,500-per-table dinner, a sellout, is expected to raise more than \$100,000 toward the goal.



LORI SHEPLER / Los Angeles Times

Kent Kresa, left and Charles I. Schneider flank honorary dinner chairman Franklin Ulf, whose firm underwrote the evening for Disney Hall.



At the Disney dinner are Ed Carson, from left, Fred and Joan Nicholas and Jim Thomas. The affair is expected to raise more than \$100,000.