

Butler Eagle

# FOCUS

Sunday, May 6, 2001



This is a close-up photo of a stained-glass chandelier in the lobby of the Scottish Rite Cathedral.

## HOUSE BUILT FOR A KING-SIZE PERFORMANCE



JACK NEELY/BUTLER EAGLE

Charlene Osborne, manager of the Pittsburgh Symphony's New Castle series, stands on the stage of the 2,834-seat auditorium in the Scottish Rite Cathedral. This was once

the largest stage between New York and Chicago. The facility is a little larger than Heinz Hall in Pittsburgh.

# Symphony finds second home

## Pittsburgh orchestra will perform series

By **DARLENE WHITE NATALE**  
Eagle Focus Editor

In 1998, Bill Donley was looking for a program for a family party.

He contacted the Pittsburgh Symphony to get pricing on a performance in New Castle.

"They (symphony) sat down and talked to me and their price was in the \$40,000 bracket," said Donley, who was then the commander-in-chief of the New Castle Consistory, an organization of the 32nd Degree Scottish Rite Masons, at the Scottish Rite Cathedral. The price was beyond Donley's party budget, but the discussions were fruitful.

"They were floored by the facility," said Donley. He said they couldn't believe the

SCOTTISH RITE CATHEDRAL	
<b>ADDRESS:</b> 110 E. Lincoln Ave., New Castle	<b>CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS:</b> 2.6 million bricks, 436 doors, 210 windows
<b>YEAR BUILT:</b> 1925	<b>STAGE DIMENSIONS:</b> 82 feet wide, 46 feet deep and 65 feet high.
<b>EXTERIOR DIMENSIONS:</b> 244 feet wide by 181 feet deep. 180 feet high at back of building. Six stone columns rise 32 feet at front of the building and weigh 32,000 pounds each.	<b>AUDITORIUM SEATING:</b> 2,834 total. 1st floor - 918, 1st balcony - 1,026, 2nd balcony 890.

stage at the Scottish Rite Cathedral was as large or a little larger than Heinz Hall.

In fact, Heinz Hall seats 2,600, while the Scottish Rite Cathedral seats 2,834.

Charlene Osborne, manager of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra's New Castle series, said the symphony had been studying the idea of having a second location if it could find a suitable house.

"There is not a bad seat in that house

and the acoustics are wonderful. Whether you're on the first floor center section or the 2nd balcony, the sound is the same. The enjoyment will be the same," Osborne said.

Donley said the pieces fell into place. He said the groups discussed many different scenarios and finally came upon a profit-sharing arrangement. He said the symphony was content to sell 2,100 seats the first season.

"They have already exceeded that and the first show is two months away. It looks like it will become a huge success."

Osborne explained that the symphony is renting the facility, but that profits are shared with the consistory. She said a dollar is added to each ticket for the restoration of the cathedral.

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**THE LARGE NEO-CLASSIC** Scottish Rite Cathedral was built in 1925 by a Milwaukee firm from plans drawn by architect R.G. Schmidt, also of Milwaukee, at a cost of \$1.7 million.

The building was first used in November of 1926, but not before some unique problems had to be solved. The building is set on a steep hillside, and the contractors ran into quicksand on the hillside and had to install pilings to ensure stability.

The original usage of the cathedral was

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# Orchestra to launch New Castle series

By **DARLENE WHITE NATALE**  
Eagle Focus Editor

The Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra will soon begin its first concert series at the Scottish Rite Cathedral in New Castle.

The cathedral joins an impressive list of music halls that have hosted the PSO, including Carnegie Hall in New York, Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. and the Boston Symphony Hall.

In fact, this is not the symphony's first visit to New Castle.

In November 1899, the symphony performed at Park Disciple Church in New Castle. Conductor Victor Herbert and the Pittsburgh Symphony were well received by an audience of about 250. This year's performance should bring a crowd ten times the size that first enjoyed the symphony in New Castle.

On June 22, Marvin Hamlisch will conduct the Pittsburgh Pops performing music that made the conductor famous, including "A Chorus Line" overture and a tribute to Richard Rogers: "The Way We Were"

The second of the three-concert series will feature violinist Pinchas Zukerman soloing with the symphony. This perform-



**Pinchas Zukerman**  
*Violinist*



**Hamlisch**  
*Renowned conductor*



**Michael Feinstein**  
*Vocalist, composer  
and arranger*

ance will include Bach's "Brandenburg Concerto No. 3," Brahms' "Serenade No. 1" and Stravinsky's "Pulcinella Suite." Zukerman will appear on Nov. 10.

The third concert of the inaugural season in New Castle will present contemporary vocalist, composer and arranger Michael Feinstein on April 17, 2002.

Feinstein has made three appearances at the White House and recently released his 20th recording, a double album titled "Romance on Film, Romance on Broadway." Feinstein's show will feature music from Gershwin, Porter, Berlin and Rodgers.

The Scottish Rite Cathedral will offer Butler County residents a more convenient

## IF YOU'RE GOING

**WHAT:** Pittsburgh Symphony New Castle Series

**WHEN:** June 22, 2001, Nov. 10, 2001 and April 17, 2002. All performances begin at 8 p.m.

**WHERE:** Scottish Rite Cathedral, 110 E. Lincoln Ave., New Castle

**COST:** \$19, \$26, and \$33

**FOR INFORMATION:** 800-743-8560

way to attend the symphony without the big city traffic or parking hassles or fees.

There are two parking lots adjacent to the cathedral with space for 300 cars. The city of New Castle has designated free off-site parking, assigned eight police officers for security, and will have free continuous shuttles before, during and after the concerts.

A nearby 400-car municipal garage and two municipal lots with an additional 300 spaces will provide quick access to the cathedral.

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JACK NEELY/BUTLER EAGLE

Charlene Osborne, manager of the Pittsburgh Symphony's New Castle series of performances, stands outside the Scottish Rite Cathedral, where three performances will be held.

## Symphony

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as a meeting place for Masonic groups. During the Depression, the Masons were unable to pay taxes, and the building was lost to the county.

In 1940, the Cathedral Foundation was formed by Masons, who pooled funds and acquired the building. The foundation still handles the rental of the facility.

"It was originally the largest facility between New York and Chicago," said Dawn Ayers, Cathedral Foundation coordinator. She said Pittsburgh Symphony conductor Marvin Hamlisch was impressed with the facility.

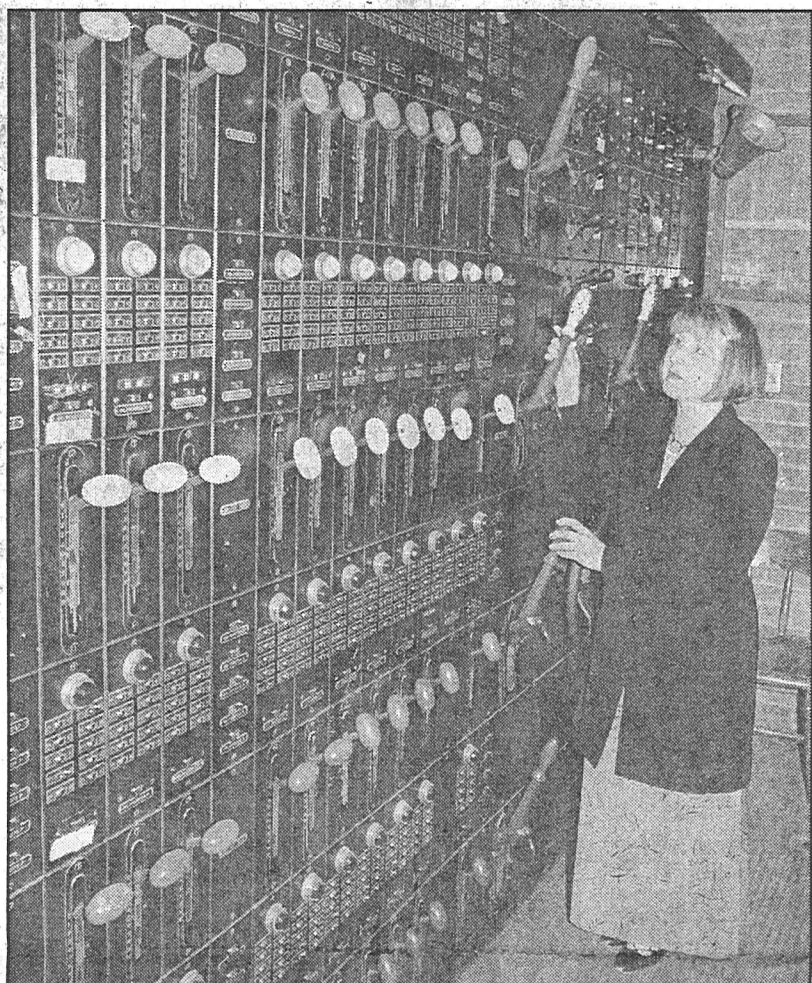
Ayers said it has been using the auditorium/concert hall for recitals, regional ballet and choruses.

The facility's primary rental income comes from wedding receptions. Ayers said the facility has dishes and silverware for 1,800 and a huge dining hall. She said the magnificent lobby is often used for receptions, as is the main dining room and west and east dining rooms.

A grand ballroom features glistening maple floors for dancing.

Weekly bingo games in the dining area are another primary use of the cathedral.

"We have quite a little gem here," Ayers remarked.



JACK NEELY/BUTLER EAGLE

Cathedral Foundation Coordinator Dawn Ayers works the lighting control panel offstage at the Scottish Rite Cathedral. The panel controls all stage lights, including 165 border lights, 88 footlights and all of the auditorium lights.