

**IN MIAMI BEACH,
WEST 8 BRINGS
THE NEW WORLD SYMPHONY
OUT TO THE CITY WITH A
DAZZLING NEW PUBLIC PARK.**

BY JOHN GENDALL

IMAGE CREDIT
Robin Hill for West 8

SUR- ROUND SOUND





FIFTY YEARS AGO, New York raised the curtains on Lincoln Center, the performing-arts superblock on Manhattan's Upper West Side. The campus has been long maligned as hermetic, and nowhere is this criticism truer than in the placement of Damrosch Park, tucked into the site's remote southwest corner. But there, on a concrete surface framed by the back ends of two imposing music halls, Lincoln Center holds outdoor performances by filling the plaza with rows of folding chairs. Delightful as the programs tend to be, the space itself is barren in the off-season and otherwise quite isolated, making it nearly impossible for anyone to wander casually upon the venue.

Starting this year, though, the New World Symphony, an orchestral academy in Miami Beach, is calling all wanderers. In January, the symphony cut the ribbon to its new home, a performance and music education space designed by Frank Gehry, and threw open its doors, so to speak, to attract as large and diverse an audience as possible. In front of the building, a new park, designed by the landscape architecture firm West 8, figures centrally in its populist vision. The project is interesting because it promotes a pointedly unstuffed image of classical performance. It's also intriguing because it represents the first completed public project in the United States for West 8, which is based in Rotterdam and New York and is also working on the redesign of New York's Governors Island and recently completed a public waterfront in Toronto.

FOR ALL
ITS LARGER
IMPERATIVES
INVOLVING
PERFORMANCE
AND TECHNOLOGY,
THE PARK
IS SCALED
TO PEOPLE
AND THEIR
EXPERIENCE.

"Most concert halls are designed in a way that requires the potential audience to pass through a threshold that is not open and transparent," says the symphony's president, Howard Herring. "We set out to take a different approach. We hope that people who are strolling in the park, and who are in the frame of mind that parks inspire, will come into a concert or stick around to discover our programs."

Given this ambition, the main facade became an important mediator between the public realm of the park and the performance spaces inside. Unexpectedly, Gehry kept the envelope strikingly restrained, opting instead to confine most of his trademark flamboyant curves to the building's interior spaces. He divided the primary outer facade into two parts; on the left, as you face the building, there is an →



THIS PAGE

Arabesque pathways allow the park to be criss-crossed like an urban plaza without compromising its relaxed, parklike atmosphere.

OPPOSITE PAGE

Custom pergolas frame entrances to the park and will soon support bursting growths of bougainvillea.

IMAGE CREDITS

Robin Hill for West 8



