

Chapter Title: A Center for a Centrifugal City

Book Title: Sound, Space, and the City

Book Subtitle: Civic Performance in Downtown Los Angeles

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Published by: University of Pennsylvania Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt3fh980.6>

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1

A Center for a Centrifugal City

Merely vacant land now, Bunker Hill can begin to tie the disparate strands of government center, cultural center, popular markets, ethnic communities and burgeoning business core together—so that it becomes the center for all these other centers. . . . Only by means of a project of such scale and future mindedness can Los Angeles express what is unique about itself and at the same time begin to fulfill its future role as a center of centers of the western world.

—Bunker Hill Associates, 1980

Every city needs a place that the whole community can call its own: a space where people gather for celebrations, where people gather to relax and perhaps where people gather for free concerts and theatrical performances.

—Grand Performances, 1997

Looking out at Los Angeles at night from the Griffith Park Observatory, densely sparkling lights span the expanse of land as far as one can see to the east, south, and west. North, the mountains are sparsely lit, the lights of the San Gabriel Valley just visible on the other side. Visitors point out landmarks, places they know, inhabit, experience—where they live, the ocean, Hollywood. Tonight the air is heavy and hot. One has the feeling of being inside a dry oven. Downtown is lost in the expanse of lights, unless you look for it. No one near me mentions it, either as home or a place to

go. The lights of downtown's skyscrapers—Library Tower, California Plaza, the Aon Building—rise vertically from the flat surface, evident as a central business district but appearing as one small part of this wide expanse.

This bird's-eye view does not convey the flurry of past and present activity downtown, the rhythms of urban life that have coalesced in the center city. The intensity of attachment to a project of making downtown a center for the city. The sedimentation of a century's history of growth and decline and regrowth visible as signs advertising loft developments grace façades that have remained the same since the 1950s. Mid-century demolition of Victorian mansions already turned boardinghouses. Traces of global flows of capital, media, goods, and people materialized in stacks of hundreds of plastic sandals and offices of multinational corporations, in the sound of Spanish as the lingua franca of street commerce and the largest homeless population in the country. A skyline without skyscrapers greeting a future developer and real estate mogul as he flew into Los Angeles in the late 1960s. Bison parading down Olive Street as camera crews follow, capturing the sight for a beer commercial. The seriousness and intensity with which developers, neighborhood councils, residents, and property owners imbue their discussions of the future of downtown. Ongoing struggles over space by homeless, artists, politicians, and business owners, as the route of the monthly art walk increasingly overlaps with the boundaries of Skid Row. An audience of Angelenos dancing to the strains of *raí* or *rock en español* or Afro-pop at California Plaza's Watercourt, as the color of the sky deepens to the blue-black of evening and the lights illuminating the water behind the performers change from yellow to purple to red.

At once symbol, site, and structure, the center is mythical, occluding the past and present processes of its formation (Barthes 1972; Bourdieu 1984). The center is constituted as such in its definition and appearance as neutral, thereby obscuring its own making and the exclusions wrought therein. Today, a board member and local developer maintains, Grand Performances "is a complete success in the development saga of Cal Plaza. Standing at the end is this small piece that's fabulous free music. It's like a blade of grass after Mount St. Helens." This blade of grass provides a metaphor for the ways in which the current success of Grand Performances depends on naturalizing the result of a long process that has included urban renewal, bankruptcies, and failed aspirations; with the blade of grass the focus, the violent eruption still smoldering beneath the surface is concealed.

Yet the center has forms through which center-making processes can

be investigated. Grand Performances' achievement of being "recognized as outstanding in its efforts to promote the performing arts to the public and establish ties to the diverse communities within the urban area" (CRA/LA 2000:2) emerged from a longer history of crafting downtown Los Angeles's Bunker Hill as a center for the city. Though Los Angeles is stereotyped as lacking a geographic center, this does not prevent centralizing efforts that privilege an alternate discourse of urban form. Making downtown an urban center helps construct the city in a model made famous by the Chicago School, in which the city radiates out from a centralized core (Park and Burgess 1925). This center structures a normative city and its public through intersecting material, social, and imagined processes.

The Bunker Hill Urban Renewal Project was part of a larger endeavor to re-create downtown Los Angeles as a center that would be used as such. The terms of *renewal*, *revitalization*, and *redevelopment* that define the project imply a past to which the population displacement, land clearance, and high-rise construction was returning. Yet the project was always one of improvement and progress, of providing the city with the center it supposedly needs, and of putting populations in presumably proper places. Once there, residents are available to be called upon as public concert audience members and to be reshaped as civic subjects.

Legitimized and authorized presence in the center structures membership in the urban public, which comprises those who have ownership of the city, represent the city, and maintain the right to the city (Lefebvre 1996). The public space of California Plaza was conceived of as a place where the public of the city would gather; negotiations over the built environment and programming content helped define the public of the space and of the city. The plan that was ultimately implemented as Grand Performances focused on presenting performers who would draw a multicultural audience, helping define the public of Los Angeles as diverse. Today the privatized public space of California Plaza provides a context for shaping bodies in and as the urban public through relative inclusions and exclusions and the disciplining of disposition and comportment.

Conceiving of downtown as "neutral" makes it possible for a corporate plaza to serve as civic space, allowing the concerts to attract audiences who can be recognized as reflecting and representing the people of the city as a whole. Downtown, the presenters assert, is the only place where a diverse group of people can gather without any single group marking the area with a specific ethnicity. Because it is "neutral," it provides a place where "all

populations feel welcome and feel a sense of ownership in their city and their space.” Moreover, they say, “This neutral space can be created, established, and maintained through the incorporation of the performing arts.” Urban renewal and concert programming are thus two sides of a process of cleansing urban space to create neutrality of place and public, the former an act of physical land clearance, the latter a process of public formation that excludes through planned inclusions. Both sound the city, presuming and producing a diverse Los Angeles that is constituted by an initial centrifugal spread of spaces and subjects brought back together downtown for free summer concerts.

Constructing Neutrality

Overlooking the old downtown where vacant banks, empty department stores, and unused movie theaters lined the streets of what is now designated the Historic Core, Bunker Hill provided the possibility for a new downtown whose use and populations might be structured through the built environment and public events.¹ The Bunker Hill Urban Renewal Project cleared the area of undesirable people, providing a seemingly blank slate for a new center for the city. Urban renewal civilizes the city through a people-moving project, creating an uneven geography that values land over residents and designates the worth of people according to their location in the city. In downtown Los Angeles, the “wrong” people were moved from the city center in the renewal process and the “right” people brought in as part of revitalization and redevelopment. By dispersing low-income, minority residents to other parts of the city, it contributed to the formation of a diverse yet segregated city.

Bunker Hill had been a site of potential and realized reform and planning projects since the 1930s that focused alternately on the eradication of slums and property acquisition for public use. The first swing of the wrecking ball in 1962 marked the culmination of these efforts and the realization of the Bunker Hill Urban Renewal Project, drafted in 1958 by the Community Redevelopment Agency/Los Angeles (CRA/LA). The CRA/LA’s mandate has been, and remains, to recognize and eliminate “blight.” Though the term was used in discussions of urban policy as early as 1930 (Gordon 2004:310), the United States Housing Act of 1949 facilitated its transformation from idea to practice by providing funds for interventions into the

urban environment on the basis of blight (Fogelson 2001:376). The Bunker Hill project was the first undertaken by the CRA/LA under its mandate.

The vagueness of the definition of blight supports its effectiveness as normative description and prescription. “Blight,” the CRA/LA maintains, is “deterioration of an area caused by physical, economic and social forces” (CRA/LA 2005). An “urban disease,” blight reflects a confluence of social and spatial phenomena ranging from juvenile delinquency and overcrowding to winding streets and unmaintained homes (M. Scott 1949:108). Deployed as part of Progressive Era reform efforts to ameliorate slum conditions, blight was taken up in the service of the interests of downtown stakeholders whose businesses were suffering as part of a national pattern of suburbanization. A multifaceted definition of blight emerged to meet the interests of downtown business owners, municipal governments, and public housing advocates (Fogelson 2001:317–80). By the time it was implemented as part of urban policy, blight referred not only to poor living conditions but also to “inappropriate” use and financial liability for the city. It is perceptible in dilapidated buildings and conditions that reduce revenue or hamper economic development.

Occupied by Victorian mansions, Bunker Hill in the beginning of the twentieth century was home to Los Angeles’s elite. As the city grew the wealthy moved westward. By 1950, according to the Community Redevelopment Agency/Los Angeles, “Bunker Hill was an aging, hilly pocket of downtown, filled with deteriorating rooming houses, residential hotels, and corner stores” where “only 18.4 percent of the dwelling units were considered ‘acceptable’ or livable” (1990:5; see also Adler 1964; Davis 1992; Fogelson 2001; Hylan 1976; Loukaitou-Sideris and Sansbury 1996; Pugsley 1977; and Wild 2005). Overall, Bunker Hill neatly exemplified a contemporaneous description of a blighted area: “At an accelerated pace the whole area goes from bad to worse, until it becomes known to city officials and social workers as a problem area, in which local government spends more to curb crime, fight fires, treat disease, and provide financial assistance to the needy than it collects in taxes” (M. Scott 1949:110).

Notions of social reform were wrapped in a vision of modern urban rationality: clean houses would make clean people, in both body and morals. The concept of blight assumes a material determinism that insists the habits and lives of residents will improve if negative features of the built environment are eradicated. Eliminating crowded housing and unplanned neighborhoods supports a normative model of urban sociality that prom-

ises improvement of bodies, houses, neighborhoods, and city. Rationalized modern planning on the level of the street, the neighborhood, and the city is intended to contribute to mental health, better lifestyles, and democracy. Blight figures prominently in *Metropolitan Los Angeles: One Community* (M. Scott 1949), which draws a plan for the city out of existing features and articulates problems as the converse of norms. Suburban ideals of single-family homes with large lots are provided as a solution for overcrowding, defined by bedrooms shared by more than two people, and the correlation of blighted areas with areas of high population density. Maps graced with black dots showing that both blight and population density are highest in and around downtown support the development of an urban form in which downtown is intended for business and sprawling surrounding areas for residential use (M. Scott 1949:48, 109).

A rhetoric of care, ideals of modern living, and the relocation of the poor from potentially profitable urban spaces to segregated neighborhoods went together. According to the CRA/LA, redevelopment promised much: the residents of Bunker Hill would no longer have to live in the blighted conditions that caused disease, crime, and juvenile delinquency. They would be relocated to a “safer and more healthful residential environment” (1958:25). And they would be provided with new, modern homes that would ostensibly be as affordable as those they currently occupied. Desire for a clean and profitable city facilitated the spatialization of a racialized Los Angeles. By dispersing its affordable housing projects, the CRA/LA continues to shape a city segregated by race and class that is key for making downtown “neutral.” A Community Redevelopment area is funded by tax increments, and the CRA/LA accrues any difference between taxes due on the properties before and after redevelopment to fund its projects in that and other redevelopment areas in the city. California’s Community Redevelopment Law requires that at least 50 percent of the revenues must be used for affordable housing, presumably, although not explicitly stated, for those displaced by the redevelopment project.

Bunker Hill funds for affordable housing have primarily been used to fund single-room occupancy (SRO) housing on Skid Row and housing projects away from downtown, especially in the low-income neighborhoods of Boyle Heights, South Los Angeles, Westlake, and Pico Union, thereby helping create a dispersed and ghettoized ethnic geography of the city. New development of market-rate housing on the remaining undeveloped parcels of Bunker Hill—for which a development team was selected in 2004—

continues this trend of dispersal, providing funds for “the production of affordable housing in the Ninth Council District south of the Santa Monica Freeway” (CRA/LA 2000:18); in other words, in an already poor area a few miles away from Bunker Hill and on the other side of the border created by the freeway that separates South Central from downtown.

Angelus Plaza, low-income senior citizen housing, was the only affordable housing built on Bunker Hill as part of the redevelopment project. According to the CRA/LA, Angelus Plaza “furthers the removal of blight by implementing the goals and objectives of the Bunker Hill Urban Renewal Plan that call for replacing substandard housing with decent, safe and sanitary housing for all income and age groups” (2000:10). Senior housing is a popular way of fulfilling low-income housing requirements. With diversity extended to include age, senior citizens safely meet the demand for diverse residents without bringing the imagined possibility of undesirable or criminal activity.

A project organized around blight results in the rationalization and reorganization of urban geography through the destruction of the built environment at the expense of people whose lives are improved in name. Supporting the interests of a general public over those of existing residents, community redevelopment agencies are granted legal rights to acquire property by means other than or in addition to a market purchase. While effort is ostensibly made to pay fair market value, the CRA/LA can use eminent domain to acquire property by condemning it (1958:12). On Bunker Hill the CRA/LA promised that houses deemed “worth salvaging” would be relocated, though without their inhabitants.²

The Bunker Hill Urban Renewal Project helped replace particular people with an abstract general public, positing the needs of the latter over those of the former. Concern for city revenue frames the difference between existing residents and an urban public. Razing the buildings in the area and redeveloping would convert “a tax liability to a tax asset for the people of the City” through the “creation of a plan of land use of great benefit to the people of the entire Los Angeles metropolitan area” (CRA/LA 1958:25–26). A notion of a general public of “the people of the entire Los Angeles metropolitan area” serves in part to mask the motivations of the city as a growth machine, of a capitalist city that values planning over people (Jonas and Wilson 1999; Logan and Molotch 1987; M. Smith 1988; R. Weber 2002). A future, abstract public is one with neither content nor political representation. Demolishing the buildings on Bunker Hill in the name of this public

is clearly in the interests of those condemning the land rather than those living there; the former make a normative urban public in their image by speaking for a general public that cannot speak for itself because it does not exist as such, over the claims of those who can speak but whose voices and interests are not recognized or authorized.

Founded in 1948 by the City Council of the City of Los Angeles under the authorization of the California Redevelopment Act, the CRA/LA works in the name of the public. Even if a project is profit driven, it is framed as a public good insofar as the profit is for “the people.”³ And as work is shifted to the private, it is required to include public elements. In this way the CRA/LA integrates interests of capital into the public and figures the public in the service of the private. More than a carving out of the public, this work shows how public and private are never actually opposed but are always inextricably linked. Based in a notion of public and private as an opposition between state and market, public good and profit, the public is created as it is named, invoked as it is evoked. As “ideal types” of public and private are seemingly unmade in practice, their defining features are reinvoked, helping shape them anew.

California Plaza is now private property on public land, with a ninety-nine-year lease from the CRA/LA. Defining elements of publicness support this privatized public: urban renewal was undertaken in the name of increased tax revenue for the public while nonprofits are considered more open than government agencies. Restrictions generated by privatization facilitate public formation through relative inclusions and exclusions, from urban renewal to privatized security and surveillance. Already posited in name, the particularity of the “general public” was negotiated and clarified through a series of planning and development documents addressing the nature and content of California Plaza’s privatized public space and event programming.

A Place to Gather

Development proposals read as reality writ as fantasy. Their future tense asserts an imminent reality of present possibilities. The plans for what would become California Plaza deploy representations of the built environment in the service of an imagined lived space of social activity. They posit neutrality by presenting abstract space as a background against which a general category of “people” can play. In one, planters grace dividing walls,

and a businessman and businesswoman meet for lunch, leaning over an umbrellaed table to talk. Public space and events focus the fantasy of a vibrant space bustling with crowds of people enjoying themselves. These spaces convey an urban ideology of cities as spaces in which people gather and encounter each other.

A public space for the people of the city with events that would draw them there served a larger purpose of city- and civic subject-making. As imagined by the CRA/LA and developers, the public space was for the people of the city, who, in gathering therein, would make downtown a city center and Los Angeles recognizable as a world-class city. Publicness of place and people was asserted within the public-private partnership in order to achieve these goals. In 1979 the CRA/LA issued a request for proposals (RFP) for the five-block area on the southeast corner of Bunker Hill that would become California Plaza (CRA/LA 1979). Stressing the “public” part of the Plaza, the CRA/LA defined the size and scope of the area and demanded its publicness be apparent in the built form: “Central to [the 5.5 acres of open space in California Plaza] is to be the Central Performance Plaza serving as the major open space” for the development (CRA/LA 1981:3). The Central Performance Plaza should “provide a public forum, offering a natural stage for civic festivals, concerts, dance, theatre and televised shows. It should also provide a setting for informal types of activities, such as concerts and outdoor exhibitions” (1981:9). If these directives were followed, aspirations might be realized of making California Plaza a center for the city, the region, and the world.

Negotiations between the CRA/LA and the developer over the nature of the development reflect a dual process of facilitating the integration of the private into the public while maintaining the public in the context of privatization. Though public space was mandated in the request for proposals (RFP), the emergence of its form and desired users reflects the continual making of meanings of public and private and of the nature and content of Los Angeles’s urban public. A series of proposals defining and refining event programming helped shape an urban public through the performing arts, by the end of which a clear emphasis on attracting a multicultural audience to Bunker Hill emerged.

A year after the RFP was issued, eighteen years after Bunker Hill demolition began, and the year Los Angeles surpassed Chicago to become the second largest city in the United States, Bunker Hill Associates won the competition to develop what is now called California Plaza.⁴ The RFP had

stated that the area was to “become the focal point of the Central Business District and metropolitan Los Angeles” (CRA/LA 1979:1). Both the winning and losing plans were perceived as meeting the aim of creating a new “center” for Los Angeles, and rhetoric to support that end was used to frame and evaluate both.

Bunker Hill Associates proposed a mixed-use development that satisfied the requirements of the RFP: residential towers, a hotel, office towers, retail establishments and restaurants, Los Angeles’s new Museum of Contemporary Art, and a central public space. Arthur Erickson, architect for the winning proposal, proclaimed that California Plaza’s potential as a center of the city could make Los Angeles “a center of centers of the Western world” (Bunker Hill Associates 1980:1). An architecture critic concurred that the winning proposal’s modernist approach of “creating large open spaces by placing towers in a park, with a linear slab building reinforcing one edge” (Goldstein 1980:46), would draw the public there and thus situate California Plaza as a center. A place for the public to gather lent a social quality to the city that she otherwise found lacking: “Los Angeles is a city where there is, literally, no real *place*. There is no real gathering place in Los Angeles—no place to celebrate New Year’s Eve or the Fourth of July. The most encouraging aspect of Bunker Hill Associates’ scheme is that it tries to create a *place*” (Goldstein 1980:46). The winning proposal, with its uniform design, aspired to tie together disparate aspects of Los Angeles with a rational amelioration of the area’s former “blight.” Its modernist approach was sustained by its “uniqueness” and “future mindedness.” The plaza would allow a crowd to form that would be visible as such: measurable, controllable, and identifiable as the public of the city.

Maguire-Thomas’s “varied” plan, supported in a CRA/LA Minority Report, emphasized the experience of the individual participating in private, out-of-sight activities. Postmodern architecture implemented in a corporate plaza, the plan incorporated the work of multiple architects and placed modern sculptures prominently throughout the area. A “people oriented, exciting, dramatic, playful and varied urban design,” it provided “the greatest opportunity to create *the* Center of the City of Los Angeles” (Bunker Hill Task Force 1980:3). The plans’ differences were articulated in language that described on the one hand a gathering place for major holiday festivities and on the other a “people oriented” space, a place for a mass public and a place for social interactions between individuals. The former was valorized for its seemingly clear yet grandiose potential to both

represent and create a center for the city, made tangible in the built environment and the presence of the public.

Arts supported aspirations for California Plaza's centrality. As "'material' shapers of cities" (Whitt 1987:16), arts structure urban development and neighborhood characteristics, capital flows and the movement of people. The use of the arts in Los Angeles's downtown development reflects a strategy found in other cities across the United States and, increasingly, around the world. Though the arts have a much longer history as part of urban public life (D'Accone 1997; Johnson 1995; Strohm 1985), in the late twentieth century they became an integral part of the urban growth machine, used to draw people and attention on urban, regional, national, and international scales (Bianchini 1990; Harvey 2001; Kotler 2002; Ward 1998; Whitt 1987; Zukin 1982).

The RFP, calling for "creative integration of residential, commercial and office type uses with artistic, cultural and recreational uses" (CRA/LA 1979:29), explicitly required the inclusion of the Museum of Contemporary Art (referred to then as the Museum of Modern Art). Though the RFP did not specify that there should be a public performance space, sources inside the CRA/LA made it known privately to the developers that the inclusion of such a space would make a stronger proposal. To this end, winning designs for California Plaza initially included three major arts components: the Museum of Contemporary Art, a resident modern dance company, and a public performance series. Each of these projects was implemented through a public-private partnership, situating the arts in a shifting dynamic of public and private that shaped the value and meaning of the organizations and their respective publics. Though not all survived, their perduring presence in the built environment of California Plaza conveys histories of multiple modes of center-making through the arts.

A consortium of Angeleno power brokers that included Mayor Tom Bradley, council member Joel Wachs, and Marcia Simon Weisman spearheaded a mobilization to build the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), deemed important for making Los Angeles visible nationally and internationally as an arts city (Berelowitz 1991). The museum was intended to be compatible with existing and future elite arts institutions on Bunker Hill, including the Music Center and Disney Hall. The board selected Japanese architect Arata Isozaki to design the museum's permanent home in the northern part of California Plaza. Conflict emerged around questions of whether and how much Los Angeles artists would benefit from the

museum. A board of local artists, chaired by Robert Irwin, contributed to early phases of the planning process, including vetting the design submissions for California Plaza. The artists' preference for the Maguire-Thomas plan did not sway the CRA/LA in its decision. The committee was also not part of decisions about the architecture of the museum building. However, they were instrumental in identifying a space for the "Contemporary Temporary" in Little Tokyo. Initially used for MOCA shows before the main building was completed, the space remains an adjunct to the Grand Avenue museum under the name Geffen Contemporary.

Bella Lewitzky's company, the premier West Coast modern dance company at the time, was selected as the resident company. For this group, private fund-raising was a measure of civility, providing access to a place in the center. The company was given seed money from the CRA/LA in the form of a \$5.5 million loan for facilities but was required to raise matching funds to demonstrate it was financially stable. When it failed to raise the funds, the CRA/LA support was revoked and the dance company never moved into California Plaza. However, the second office tower where the dance gallery would have been housed was already built by the time it became clear that it was unable to raise the necessary funds. Artist dressing rooms intended for the dancers are used as offices for Grand Performances' technical staff and summer interns. "Artists' Entrance" signs still hang in the service hallways that are now used for mail delivery, garbage disposal, and as a shortcut from the production space to the Plaza.

A space for public performances marked a culmination of the Bunker Hill Urban Renewal Project's call for a place for "cultural gatherings of many kinds" and "a plan of land use of great benefit to the people of the entire Los Angeles metropolitan area" (CRA/LA 1959:23). Part of a wider Central Business District redevelopment strategy, the California Plaza development was one among several places where the CRA/LA could use public performances to bring people into downtown public spaces (Garden Theatre Festival, Box 62). As mandated by the CRA/LA, public programming in the Central Performance Plaza would be provided by the developer, with programming and budgeting supervised and approved by the CRA/LA. Representing and constituting "the people of . . . Los Angeles," the development of the content of these performances and the design of the public space went hand in hand and were the central means by which an urban public was crafted for and by California Plaza.

The first plans, presented by the winning development team, described a space for nearly every kind of event, including festivals, concerts, filming television programs, and visual art exhibitions. The imagined public of the Plaza was vague and broad, categorized by diversity of work, transportation, and taste. The developers imagined the public space as a vibrant, festive place, bustling day and night with social activity and performances.

The plaza of Angel's Park is a public forum, offering a natural stage for civic festivals, concerts, dance or televised shows. It offers a perfect opportunity to develop the wealth of budding talent in Los Angeles. During the day it is an ideal setting for informal concerts and outdoor exhibitions supported by cafes and shops. At night it changes character. Innovative restaurants and cabarets provide excellent alternatives for drinks or dinner to those attending performances under the canopy on Angel's Park plaza or to patrons from the nearby Music Center. (Bunker Hill Associates 1980:32)

The CRA/LA returned the first proposal to the developers for refinements and a second plan was drafted. "Plaza for the Performing Arts" added "the populace" to the mix of consumer segments, which consisted of Los Angeles' minority groups: Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, African Americans, children, and women (Bunker Hill Associates 1982:7–8).

Subsequent to this initial articulation of social diversity and with his control over the design process slipping, architect Arthur Erickson drafted a reactionary plan that sharply redefined the public of California Plaza as an elite arts audience. In 1985 he presented a plan to the CRA/LA that stated, "One of the main objectives of this space is to provide entertainment of various types and times to the public of California Plaza." This public was defined through programming. Informal performers such as jugglers and street musicians, noontime concerts featuring string quartets and boxers preparing for competition, and evening performances of the Los Angeles Philharmonic and rock groups would attract "well-educated, affluent groups which will have an appreciation of cultural events and will have a fair amount of disposable income which can be used to support these cultural interests" (Arthur Erickson Architects 1985:15–16, 14).

Two years later, as building commenced, a plan titled "The Arts in an Urban Garden" returned to an emphasis on social diversity, describing a varied space with different kinds of performances where residents of and

visitors to Los Angeles would help make it known as not just office towers but “an urban attraction to visit and enjoy during the day, on nights and on weekends” (Bunker Hill Associates 1987:5). A plan for Angel’s Flight Productions, submitted by Aaron Paley in 1989, outlined explicitly multicultural programming, relating it to a city now described as diverse. This plan provided the basis for what would become Grand Performances.

Models for a public concert series in California Plaza were provided by citywide festivals and other downtown concerts. The former made multicultural programming a viable and in some ways a necessary choice, while the latter used the arts to attract Angelenos to spaces either unoccupied or occupied by undesirable populations. These programs, and their surrounding agendas, sponsorship, and controversies, laid the foundation for Grand Performances. The Garden Theatre Festival was initiated in 1970 as a small theater festival in a backyard near the University of Southern California; within the decade it had become a multidisciplinary, multicultural event in the city’s Barnsdall Park with programming intended to reflect a diverse Los Angeles. In 1979 its director was hired to present concerts in downtown Los Angeles with the explicit mandate of “activating” and “cleansing” urban space.

Earlier that year public performances in Pershing Square, presented in conjunction with the Garden Theatre Festival, had attracted an estimated six thousand people to downtown Los Angeles. As Whitt warns, “the arts attract people to downtown, but not just any kind of people” (1987:28). The director of the Garden Theatre Festival explained, “Pershing Square was undesirable. It attracted a lot of homeless because it’s close to Skid Row undesirables. They’d closed the restrooms because that was where the homeless urinated. And they brought me in because they wanted to change that.” Adjacent businesses that did not already support the arts contributed to the performances after they were shown how the arts could, the presenter said, “clean up the front lawn.”

A proposal for the Festival in the Square explained that Pershing Square “has a strong reputation as the ‘park that people run through’ as the ‘residents,’ as it were, are not a popular element with the working community” (Garden Theatre Festival). As the authors of the proposal maintained, “We felt this was an opportunity to put the arts to work and test the theory of revitalization.” According to subsequent discussions, the project seemed to work.

On the whole . . . we had very little trouble, and had fabulous cooperation from the police . . . but that “element” of people did play a significant role in the response to the night programs. The first eight weeks were so successful that the “residents” almost faded into the background, but as people began to get comfortable with the programs and the numbers started to dwindle, the “residents” began to be very apparent and started an uncomfortable cycle of reinforcing the negative aspect of the park as safety in numbers began to decrease.

In “activating” public space by attracting people there, downtown performances mobilized one group to “cleanse” urban space of another in order to ultimately support business interests.

During the 1984 Olympics, forty-five days of consecutive concerts were held in Pershing Square to, as one presenter said, “make it look like there was something going on.” Elsewhere, downtown free concerts supported by corporations were used to draw audiences to otherwise underutilized privatized public spaces. Weekly noontime concerts on the Bonaventure pool deck sponsored by Arco⁵ drew five to six thousand people to performances by popular artists such as Dianne Reeves, the Yellow Jackets, Queen Ida, and Bo Diddley. Arco stopped sponsoring these concerts around the same time free concerts began in California Plaza.

The first free lunch-hour concerts were held in California Plaza’s Spiral Court in 1986 and were produced by Community Arts Resources, Inc. (CARS). In 1989 its director, Aaron Paley, was hired to draft what became the ultimate plan for programming at California Plaza. A veteran of the 1984 Olympic Arts Festival, Paley had most recently worked on the first Los Angeles Festival held in 1987, a triennial event he continued working with until 1993 as organizer of the Fringe Festival. The Los Angeles Festivals took up the mantle of the Garden Theatre Festival in their orientation toward the city as a whole. While the 1984 Olympic Arts Festival emphasized bringing important international programming to Los Angeles and putting the city on a global cultural map, the Los Angeles Festivals (1987, 1990, 1993) turned increasingly to the city itself as the source of performers. Organizing the 1993 Festival around the diversity of the city, its director urged “people to really live in their city. Encounter it instead of avoiding it” (Peter Sellars, qtd. in Kreiswirth 1993:K16). CARS’s project is founded on the multicultural, citywide outlook of the latter Los Angeles Festivals

(Cheng 2002:71–76; Davis 1992:80–81; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1995; Lowe 1996). Today it produces, among other things, an annual festival in Santa Monica; Yiddishkeit, an annual Yiddish festival; and public events at the Getty Museum.

Of all the proposals put forward, Paley's was the one most directly implemented for the concert series in California Plaza, shifting the emphasis of the planned performances firmly toward multicultural arts. A five-year plan for Angel's Flight Productions emphasized "affordability, accessibility, usefulness and vitality" in order to serve the needs of local arts organizations, especially multicultural arts groups (Paley and Slavin 1989:2, 3–4). Drawn from a city defined as diverse, the public of the Plaza was imagined to represent the diversity of Los Angeles. Programming was oriented toward the people of a diverse and segregated Los Angeles, "from tourists to office workers, from Watts to East Los Angeles, from Latin Broadway to Chinese North Broadway, from the Valley to West Los Angeles" (Paley and Slavin 1989:7–8). By attracting residents of segregated and dispersed neighborhoods to a shared public space to participate in a common experience of public performances, programming for this public supported the project of making California Plaza in downtown L.A. the "center" of the city.

Following the submission of this final plan, Michael Alexander was hired as programming director of public events in California Plaza. Alexander had joined the Cultural Affairs Department (CAD) of the City of Los Angeles as director in 1988. As director of CAD, Alexander presented free concerts in the Civic Center Mall around the Triforium, by then in disrepair. Dedicated in 1975, the Triforium is a kinetic sculpture with electronic sound and light features. Afraid that audience members might fall into the pit left by a reflecting pool that had been drained after it had leaked into the parking lot below, Alexander also wanted to find a performance space that could accommodate more people. "My concern," he said, was "that the city of Los Angeles, as the number two city in the country, needed to have a more substantial summer program than one that would only accommodate two hundred people. It struck me as just an inappropriate use of public funds to be producing something that was playing to such a rarified group of people in this city of three million people." In 1989 the city produced evening concerts in the Spiral Court while CARS produced lunch-hour concerts. Later that year Alexander applied for the job of programming director of the fledgling performance series.⁶

Having grown up in Los Angeles, Alexander was a veteran of community theater, had performed as a clown, and had managed the Aman Folk Ensemble. He credits his investment in multicultural and international programming and civic performance to this experience. Heavily influenced by the ideals and approach of the Garden Theatre Festival and Los Angeles Festivals yet aware of the pitfalls of risk in the context of its corporate setting, under Alexander Grand Performances continues to walk an artistic line between a populism that reaches out to a city marked by diversity and a corporatism that accedes to the demands of its venue and major supporters. Its project entails bringing the “right” people to California Plaza, who will help constitute a multicultural audience but not make class apparent, who will “reflect the diversity of L.A.” but not express divisive political views.

Organizing its presenting around an imagined general public of the city, interests of the corporate plaza, and grant guidelines of government arts agencies, Grand Performances enacts a state project of multiculturalism. As such it sustains a foundational contradiction of multiculturalism as both political and depoliticized, as a site for the production of forms of belonging wrought from exclusions. Multiculturalism reflects conditions of neo-liberal capital that have contributed to the transformation of the sociogeography of cities and turned identity into a consumer product at the same time as it presents the promise of new forms of rights, access, and belonging (Dávila 2001; Kymlicka 1995; Lubiano 1996; Povinelli 2003; Taylor 1994). Complicit in the production of ethnicized subjects by capital and the state and the performance of delineated identities by those subjects, multiculturalism also creates the conditions of possibility for those identity categories to provide the terms for politicized resistance. Ethnicity as a marketing category and a means of making minority group claims on the state is imbricated with belonging, which might be organized around capitalist consumption as well as identity politics that are outside the logic of capitalism.

Grand Performances navigates between multicultural arts projects as political, ethical engagements on the one hand and the folding of multiculturalism into the interests and constraints of capital on the other (Lowe 1996; Yang 2008). The nature of nonprofits sustains this stance. Nonprofits exemplify the privatization of public services in the United States, as reflected in their growing numbers and increasing role in administering social welfare. Yet nonprofits stand between public and private, existing as both at once, mediating and blurring the line between “public” and “private”

rather than simply reflecting the privatization of the public. Intended to provide public goods and services, nonprofits must compete in the marketplace for legitimation and funding. At the same time, referred to as the “third sector,” nonprofits are tax categories that emerged out of early American voluntary organizations (Hall 1992; Hammack 1998). They are closely linked to government through their tax-exempt status, by offering tax relief for donors, and as the only kind of organization eligible for government arts grants.

Grand Performances’ nonprofit status shapes its publicness in terms of what makes it “public” and what it offers as a “public good.” For Grand Performances’ director, the transparency of nonprofits’ finances makes it more public than government agencies. Defining free concerts as a public good insofar as they are not profit driven, Plaza Commons, Inc. (PCI; the original presenting organization), in its first attempt to gain nonprofit status, was denied because it was deemed to be a for-profit business, earning revenue primarily from the parking garage.⁷ In 1996 Friends of California Plaza Presents was formed as a “nonprofit public benefit corporation” and granted nonprofit status by the state of California.⁸ In its successful application, Grand Performances (then Friends of California Plaza Presents) stated that its public good was providing performing arts as education. As its application for nonprofit status argued, “The specific purpose for which this corporation is organized is to educate the public in the performing arts through the presentation of public performances at California Plaza in downtown Los Angeles.”

Art as deployed by civic performance figures multiple meanings of public and private. The public-private divide is largely framed as a presumed opposition between art and capital. This opposition figures Grand Performances’ public concerts as existing at the crux of a market-driven city and a logic of art as outside of and antithetical to capital. In putting art in the service of a public-private dichotomy, public concerts shape the meaning of art through intersections of programming, funding, and marketing. Art is not inherently public. Rather, art provides a package for a range of public goods that include the idea of art as a public good and extra-artistic ends such as community, multiculturalism, and cross-cultural understanding. At the same time, art is often privately funded and part of multiple private practices and institutions.

Americans have long debated whether the arts are a public good worthy of state support (Banfield 1984; Benedict 1991; Starr 1987). These debates

have asked what kind of good the arts are, what the role of the government is in funding arts, and what kinds of arts the government should fund. Even as municipal support became a defining feature of public concerts, early examples show there has always been a range of funding. And when municipal governments funded free concerts, this support did not come automatically or unquestioningly.

In its use of art, Grand Performances operates within a set of private-oriented effects of neoliberalism at the same time as it proffers public goods that are opposed to profit: free art for everyone, payment for artists, and community building. The logic of the arts creates a space for the imagined reflection of urban diversity. Its social consequences consist in drawing “minority” audiences originally from the country of origin of the performers, who feel included in the civic body by seeing performing arts from their country, who help signify the diversity of the urban public by their presence at the performance, and who are members of the moral community of the public concert audience. The market logic, on the other hand, affects presenters’ choices about which countries’ artists should be presented and which artists will be programmed, as well as marketing and development activities that are in turn related to other local cultural programs.

As a nonprofit, Grand Performances became eligible for government funding at national, state, county, and city levels as well as for foundation grants; it was also able to offer a charitable tax write-off for corporate and other private donations. Today roughly half of Grand Performances’ funding comes from corporate sponsorship, government and philanthropic grants, and audience donations. At every evening performance during intermission, staff, board members, and other volunteers walk through the audience carrying five-gallon red buckets, decorated with colored lights to make them more visible in the dark. A volunteer commented on how it was similar to “tithing” at church. Like tithing, red buckets help create the audience as a moral community, active participants in making the free concerts possible. In pre-concert and intermission comments the director expresses a dependence on audience members’ contributions in order to “help us get through our season,” urging them to follow the invented example of last year’s audience who “averaged three dollars per person.” In actuality, audience donations average around fifty cents per person and usually add up to around \$25,000 over the season. One summer a man asked audience members for money for himself when volunteers brought

red buckets around at intermission. Grand Performances' staff asked him to stop, and by the end of the season he would tell them, "I'm not asking for money now."

Nonprofit status supports Grand Performances' multicultural project by bringing together the aspirations expressed in the final programming plan and available arts funding. Through nonprofits, the symbolic capital of multiculturalism can be transformed into economic capital. With world music and international programming already a foundation of the performances under Michael Alexander, the board first discussed diversity in the context of available funding and desirable board members. After becoming a nonprofit, Grand Performances shifted its emphasis from noontime to evening performances and presented a more explicit multicultural project. The board stated, "We want to have a substantial arts program which is multicultural and varied (music, dance, etc.)." An arts consultant advised the organization that arts funding sources are "looking at the impact an arts program has on the community. Funding is generally more available for programs with significant community impact rather than for 'Cultural Palaces' (such as the Music Center)" (Board Minutes, December 5, 1996, Grand Performances' files).⁹

Grand Performances structured and solidified its multicultural work by forming partnerships with other local arts organizations oriented toward specific racial or ethnic groups such as the Watts Towers (African American), Self Help Graphics (Latino/a), and Plaza de la Raza (Latino/a). The first proposed mission statement, drafted at the beginning of 1997, used language that began to reflect what the staff now considers the organization's multicultural project: "The mission of California Plaza Presents is to bring together, in a unique urban venue, the diverse people of Los Angeles through performing arts that reflect those communities." In this way they produced a meaning of multiculturalism that looked to the city for its content. Desired board members—who would help create a multicultural audience at Grand Performances' concerts—were "top layers of all ethnic communities; liberal; people interested in a diverse community; the educational community" (Board Minutes, January 14, 1997). By 2003, with the early goals seemingly met and institutional stability a greater concern, emphasis had shifted to finding board members with money or connections to money who could provide financial support for the free concerts.

A name change shortly after the nonprofit was formed discursively connected the free concert series to wider trends of downtown development.

The name change was intended to both broaden the geographic scope of the concert series and help the organization obtain funds from sources beyond California Plaza: “The title and approach of Friends’ publicity could be broadened from just California Plaza to ‘Grand Avenue’ in order to attract greater support from neighbors of California Plaza” (Board Minutes, October 21, 1997). The new name, Grand Performances, met the ideal of being “memorable, exciting,” and able to “spark one’s imagination” (Board Minutes, November 6, 1997). The name also had “a geographical component,” associating the concerts with Grand Avenue, which, as the home of the Music Center and the Museum of Contemporary Art, was already a destination for cultural consumption. The name was officially changed in 1998, with a byline added to the stationery that, evoking the role of the arts in attracting the “right” people to an area, stated, “because people are returning downtown.”

Public Bodies

Although the final Plaza hardly resembles what one imagines from the ebullient descriptions of the plans, elements of their designs can be found in the space that was built. Today, the central performance area doubles as a water feature, where shooting jets cascade into a waterfall that flows down a graduated terrace into a reflecting pool. When turned off, the surface between the rear shooters and front pool becomes a stage. The audience sits across the water from the performers. On the lower level plastic chairs are tied together in rows, facing the performers in three sections around the perimeter of the water. The middle section, in front of the sound booth, is reserved for donors, board members, press, and friends of the artists. Upstairs, audience members sit on granite benches built into the Plaza. People stand to watch over the heads of those seated, and behind them others dance. For smaller events, a side area called the Marina Pavilion is used as the stage, and the audience sits on benches created by the granite amphitheater. Though spontaneous events were once imagined as a possibility, today performances at California Plaza are always planned, with only one taking place at any given time.

The planning process wavered between desire for openness and fear of the public, ultimately leaning toward the latter with ensuing results in the built environment, security, and event planning. California Plaza, in particular during public concerts, maintains enough elements of civic ideals to

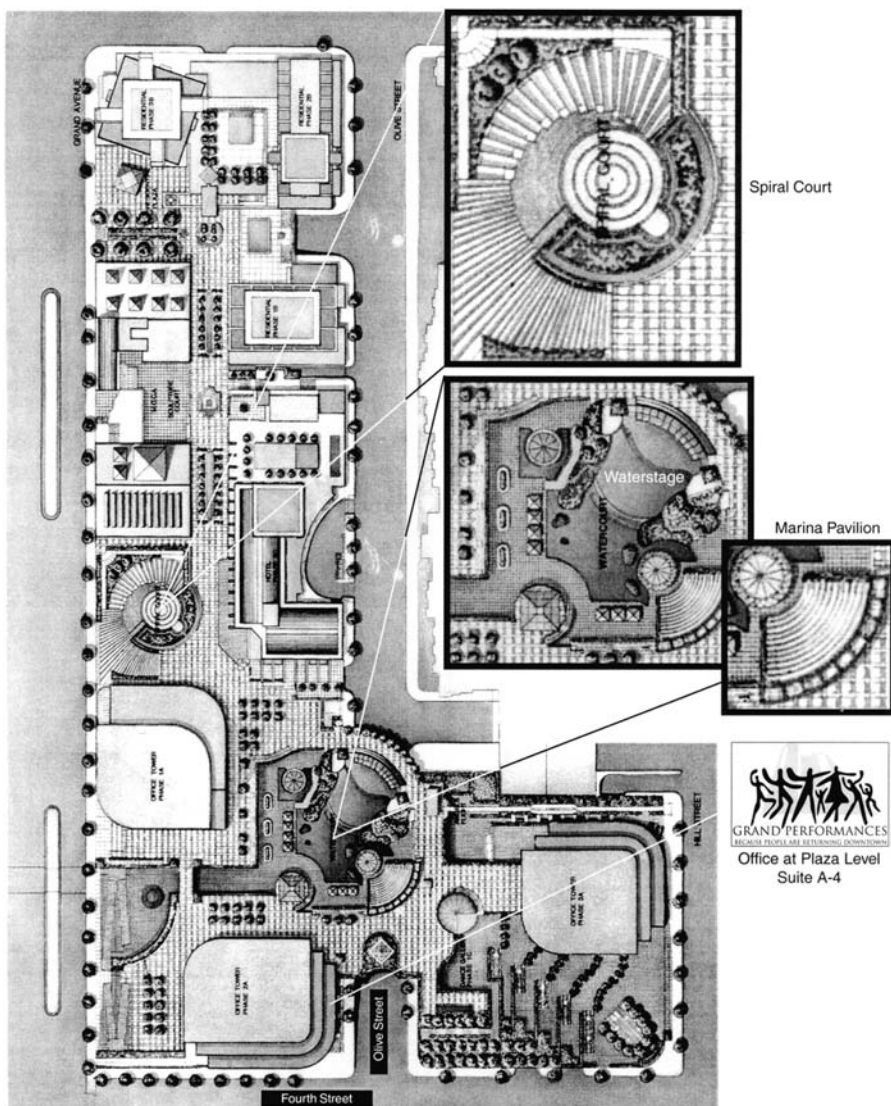


Figure 3. California Plaza's performance spaces. Grand Performances has overlaid its offices and performing spaces on a projected plan that included three office towers, the last of which was never built. Courtesy of Grand Performances.

be recognized as public space and for users to make claims on that basis. Even a critique of California Plaza as failed public space depends first on a recognition of it as public space. With a history of negotiations over the nature of the public space sedimented in its built environment, the publicness of the space and people is continually created through use. Practices of visitors, security measures, and use regulations help shape the public of California Plaza by disciplining bodies of included members of the multicultural public and actively excluding others. Disciplinary measures are both organized around and put pressure on foundational tenets of liberal democracy such as openness, tolerance, difference, and dissent. Marking while revealing the limits of the publicness of the Plaza and performances, these tenets are also invoked to make claims on its publicness.

The only sign alerting a visitor she is entering California Plaza is a small plaque on the ground marking the divide between the public property of the sidewalk and the private property of the Plaza. Evoking openness, the lack of posted verbal rules in California Plaza suggests a general “fit” between desired user and social “order” in the Plaza, with a user whose practices and accoutrements are considered proper for the place. Her presence in the space is naturalized, as her *habitus*, or “bodily hexis,” is continuous with the status quo of the “established order” (Bourdieu 1984:427).

The openness to desired users belies the ways in which undesired users are excluded, putting pressure on ideals of tolerance for difference. Class is excluded as a category of difference. Grand Performances’ staff decide not to invite homeless children to concerts because it will create a “class-noticed situation;” they talk about how the janitors sometimes come back to California Plaza at night for the performances with their children “all dressed up” and thus able to “blend in.” Those who are visibly homeless or panhandling are asked to leave for fear that they will drive part of the diverse, middle-class audience away or force them to face existing social problems. The exclusion of class is necessary for the creation of a multicultural audience in which identity is serial, measured by differences in form and content of color and “culture” rather than economic conditions that reflect social inequalities. The requirement for membership in the multicultural public is the display or performance of ethnicity or race. Grand Performances’ success resides in the recognition of ethnicity or race as constitutive of a multicultural whole by at least some of those who are present.

Security guards patrol the common area of California Plaza on foot,

looking for forbidden activity. Wearing suits and ties, they blend in with the daytime corporate users, helping maintain the consensus of privatized public space while they enforce movement through the Plaza. The guards' gaze is extended by omnidirectional security cameras hidden under half-domes of dark Plexiglas located throughout the common area. Two guards sit inside a small room on the ground floor of one of the office towers watching the monitors that show the view of each security camera. If the guards see something deemed suspicious they will pause the automatic rotation of the cameras, holding an image on a monitor that shows the view from the camera capturing the activity. One guard chuckled at the memory of moving the camera away from a couple having sex at the end of a dark corridor, unaware they were being watched. If the suspicious activity is a person walking through the Plaza, the guard uses her fingers to push the arrowed buttons that control the movement of a camera, turning it to "follow" the person and picking up his movement with the next camera.

During an afternoon that I spent in the monitor room, California Plaza's only female security guard trained me to "follow" a person on the Plaza with the cameras, as she thought that was the most significant thing I could learn. I clumsily translated the view of the camera onto the arrows beneath my fingers, first turning it the wrong way, then too far off its course before getting a very rough sense of the connection between my fingers and the visual space of the Plaza. Though I practiced on a businessman dressed in a suit, the security guards generally use the cameras to follow someone who has visible traits that mark him as homeless: unkempt, dirty hair, a blanket wrapped around his body, perhaps missing a shoe or two. After following the person's movement, the guard watching will call a guard patrolling the Plaza on foot, telling him there is a "guest." The guard will ask a person panhandling aggressively to leave the Plaza. If the person is unkempt but not disturbing anyone, the guard will stand three feet away, following until the person feels uncomfortable enough to leave the Plaza. At performances, homeless people are generally asked to leave only if they are panhandling or creating a disturbance.

The disciplining of bodies in the Plaza extends to concerts. Such disciplining is central to the production of consensus in privately owned public space. A proper performance by audience members is necessary for the concert form to work and for those present to be constituted as civic subjects and members of the public. While audience members will in general

“act” their part correctly by listening to the music, watching the performer, telling a noisy neighbor to be quiet, and applauding at the end of pieces, their movement is micromanaged to limit the claims people can make on the space and to create order at the event. Discipline is maintained through rules, security measures, and the invocation of social norms by fellow audience members. The interconnection of these areas of legitimation yields a general consensus such that “rules” are less visible, and public space is constituted as a space of consensus rather than dissent, a space of civility that enforces particular modes of bodily comportment. Although there are legal frameworks behind these regulatory measures, for the most part they are unknown and rarely raised, and the rules themselves, rather than questioned, are enforced by all present.

During concerts, a sign is posted listing Grand Performances’ event policies. These policies, rather than specifically disallowing practices, maintain consensus by asking patrons to comply, for their sake and that of others.

Grand Performances reserves the right to hold seats at its discretion.
House opens 2 hours prior to performance.

Seats may not be reserved prior to house opening.

One person may reserve a maximum of 6 seats.

One person must be present to hold their seat reservation.

Blocks of seats indicated by blankets, tape, etc., will not be honored.

Please keep aisles clear at all times.

Please use plastic, paper or aluminum containers for food and beverages.

Please move away from the seating areas if you wish to smoke.

Please use ash cans to dispose of cigarette butts.

Please move away from the seating areas to make phone calls.

Seeing-eye or other assistance animals are welcome at California Plaza.

Patrons should not bring their pets to performances.

A full list of Grand Performances policies is available at the Information Booth.

Thank you!

These semi-official security guidelines and event policies are the only rules made visible to the public. The “full list” of policies expands on these rules,

asking audience members not to drink red wine as it might stain the granite and requesting that people with reserved seats arrive by 7:45. Additional rules include not passing out flyers on the Plaza (people are allowed to put their material at the information booth) and not filming without permission from Grand Performances and the artist. Problems and “concerns regarding the safety of the audience and the enjoyment of the performance should be reported to the marketing cart to be passed on to GP [Grand Performances] management or handled by security as required.” The differences between the two sets of rules depend on whether “problems” are considered widespread or limited; general problems require a notice that is visible to all audience members, while limited ones can be regulated by staff members or security. The existence of the full set of written rules is used to authorize these enforcements if contested by the perpetrator.

Performance regulations are supported by the 1981 California Plaza Disposition and Development Agreement (DDA), which asserts that Plaza use guidelines are at the discretion of the developer (DDA, Exhibit C, CRA/LA 1981:5). While rarely read or referenced as such, they are cited by Grand Performances’ staff members when disciplining an unruly audience member or describing the nature of the public space. Along with controlling users’ activities, these rules made it such that only space for administered events was written into the nature of public space. In the name of the sensibilities of an abstract “Permittee,” users are not allowed to do anything that might constitute a performance, such as “Parade, rally, patrol, picket, demonstrate or engage in any conduct that might tend to interfere with or impede the use of any of the Common Area by any Permittees, create a disturbance, attract attention or harass, annoy, disparage or be detrimental to the interest of any of the establishments within the Center” or “Use any sound making device of any kind or create or produce in any manner noise or sound that is annoying, unpleasant, or distasteful to any Permittee.”

Use of the space is also controlled by less explicit devices that help audience members “perform” consensus. Maintaining order, they discipline bodies into concert audience members qua civic subjects. At evening concerts, chairs are laid out in rows and tied together to keep them from moving. Stanchions are placed around reserved seating sections and a staff member monitors access. Crew members put yellow tape on the ground to create fire exits and walkways. The effectiveness of designations regarding where one is allowed to stand, sit, or move through must be enforced by people. A security guard stands at the edge of the yellow tape, admonishing

audience members who pause to catch a glimpse of the performer to move on.

Though guards and regulations put pressure on the publicness of the space and performances, they also maintain a space of consensus in which they are generally not questioned as such by users. However, the relative publicness of the performances is raised at its limits. The fact that the concerts are free posits an ideal of equality that is undermined by reserved seating, which stratifies based on financial contribution through the reward of a superior consumer experience. The stratification created by reserved seating is spatialized in California Plaza. For every evening performance, seats in the front, middle section of the Lower Plaza are reserved. At performances to which many special guests are invited, seats are also reserved on the benches on the right side of the Upper Plaza. The seats in the Upper Plaza are considered the best for watching dance, as the four-dimensionality of the choreography can be seen most clearly from above. Before a performance, the reserved areas are cordoned off and a staff member, holding a clipboard with a list of names of those with reserved seats, a pen for crossing off the names of those who have already arrived, and a radio in case help is needed, is stationed at each entrance.

Grand Performances' returning audiences learn quickly that in order to find seats they must arrive early. People begin to arrive an hour or two before the performance is scheduled to start, and for a popular performer the seating areas might be filled within half an hour of the first audience members' arrival. Those who come late usually have to stand. However, audience members with reserved seats do not arrive early, as their seats are saved for them. This can create a situation in which all the seats are filled except the best ones. People arriving at this point are often dismayed, asking whom the seats are for and why they are reserved.

At a Friday evening performance I worked at Upper Reserved. Early in the evening a man became quite angry at the fact that the area in the Upper Plaza was reserved. "This is a public place! They can't reserve these seats. I'm sitting here," he announced loudly, eliding a meaning of public as general, nonhierarchized access and ownership by "the people" into the right to claim private ownership. While "they" do not have the right to reserve seats, he, self-defined as a member of the public, could register a claim to space with his body rather than leaving the spot for another. His girlfriend was embarrassed and tried to get him to move. "Be nice," she wheedled, begging him to consent to the arrangement. Having had no suc-



Figure 4. Tape marking walkways for a performance, and a guard looking out over downtown.

cess in convincing him to move, I asked a member of the crew to help; he spoke calmly to the man, explaining the cost of producing the performances and telling him that seats are reserved for donors. "But I donate in the red bucket," the man grumbled, before he moved to the other side of the stanchion. Others, seeing the empty seats, walked past, not even noticing me standing there, and sat down. I asked them to move, explaining that the seats are for donors who, as I had been told to say, "help make these free performances possible."

Grand Performances' staff members argue that part of their aim is to make everyone feel welcome at these downtown concerts and that they want people, in particular those marked as "minority," to have a sense of ownership of the event and of their city. Many public concert audience members exhibit a sense of ownership after having been to the place over and over and claiming particular areas as "theirs" in which to sit. By claiming seats they constitute themselves as members of the public for whom the space and the event are intended at the same time as they "privatize" those particular spots, claiming individual ownership of them for the duration of the event. This ownership could only rightly be usurped by another audience member who arrived earlier and happened to sit there; for the institution to mark the seats as privileged appears to audience members to privatize the space too blatantly and obviously, erasing, or at least calling into question, an ideal of equality implicit in this public space.

Conclusion

The multicultural urban public now recognized in the public concert audience is predicated on a history of city- and civic subject-making informed by interests of capital and modernist notions of cleanliness and proper living. Sounding city space, civic performance's modes of inclusion are wrought out of prior exclusions that structured both bodies and geographies. Urban renewal helped create a segregated city that is perceived as needing to be brought back together in ephemeral sites of pleasure such as free concerts. Those displaced were promised new, modern housing in another part of the city, in order for the general population of the people of Los Angeles to benefit from increased property tax revenue and a public space that could be used by everyone. The arts are used to draw the segregated city wrought out of urban renewal back together in the center, uniting an urban public that reflects the diversity of Los Angeles. In attending per-

formances on the land of urban renewal, residents of the neighborhoods to which Bunker Hill's populace was dispersed are brought back together under the auspices of a multiculturalism that only refers to that history as evidence of L.A.'s diversity, flattening a time span of neighborhood change in space.

Membership in the urban public is made through access to, ownership of, and presence in the center. Organized around diversity, togetherness, and consensus, downtown civic performance enables a multicultural public to emerge as a normative urban public, supporting senses of belonging and recognition of a diverse city. At the same time, the bases for Grand Performances' diverse audience to come together downtown from around the city reflect and re-create multiculturalism's tension between the particular and the general. This tension is expressed spatially and sonically. Spatially, it is manifest in the relation between segregated neighborhoods and a "neutral" downtown. Insofar as members of a multicultural urban public come from racialized neighborhoods around the city, making downtown neutral always depends on a relationship to a surrounding city understood as segregated. By moving through urban spaces in which they are alternately marked and abstract, urban subjects create a relationship between the normative and the marginalized that is sedimented in a real and imagined racialized geography. As sonic expressions of multiculturalism, Grand Performances' events draw audiences with affective, identity-based connections to particular musical forms to concerts where they are part of a collective recognized as diverse. Grand Performances' concerts aspire to constitute a unified public of the audience, allowing for the expression of differing views while encouraging consent for a notion of multiculturalism and tolerance of difference.