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REALLY MAKE
TELEGRAM
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THE

WESSENGER

AUDIO, ORIGAMI AND ARCHITECTURE

In Budapest, birdsong and live musicians can merge thanks to Japanese designer Sou Fujimoto's latest creation—a concert hall intended to melt into nature



Nestled among the sycamores of Budapest's bucolic City Park sits an undulating roof, punctured by 100 circular holes. Some of the woodland rises through, becoming part of the architecture. Mottled sunlight seeps through the hybrid canopy, whose ceiling is lined with more than 30,000 origami-style golden leaves that twinkle above an open floorplan stretching into the parkland.

This is the work of Sou Fujimoto. Known for his cloud-like design for London's Serpentine Pavilion, and his L'Arbre Blanc (The White Tree) tower block in Montpellier, where balconies branch out in different directions, the Japanese architect has long evoked the organic in his creations.

Given the green setting, Fujimoto was a natural fit to design the *House of Music*. Its innovations follow his vision: "The building's shape has no classical straight angles," says Márton Horn, the venue's project director. "The biggest issue became how it would structurally hold: each hole in the roof has to align with trees and supporting columns."

Nature and music are interwoven throughout the part-concert-hall, part-museum, part-community-space. An open-air stage is sheltered by



↑ A staircase links three floors, including a library, cafe and a Hungarian pop-music archive

↑ The *House of Music*'s canopy has 30,000 golden metal leaves set in the suspended ceiling

the park's rich foliage. A hemispherical sound dome houses an immersive, 360-degree audio-visual experience. The rise and fall of the roof allows visitors to walk under the trees, and its oscillating structure is inspired by sound waves.

The design also creates a seamless transition between the in- and outdoors, with glass walls cocooning the venue. "It's a round-shaped building: you can enter from points all over the park," explains Horn. "And, because of the open roof, you can listen simultaneously to a concert and the birds calling above you."

Sustainability has been built into Fujimoto's design, too. "We've installed 120 geothermal probes: the building's complete heating and hot-water supply comes from 150 meters underground," says Horn. "And rain collected from the roof will water surrounding plants."

The *House of Music* spearheads the €1 billion Liget project: a vision conceived by Hungary's right-wing Viktor Orbán government to transform the Városliget area of Budapest into a Hungarian cultural landmark. Critics say the plans to develop the centuries-old park into a museum quarter will disrupt the park's ecosystem and deprive locals of green space. "There has been debate," says Horn. "But we didn't just want a new concert hall: we strove for a place that could entertain and educate, as well as be connected with the park and nature."

Besides classical music, Budapest is steeped in architectural history. But Horn believes Fujimoto's concept adds a crucial modern-day touch. "We're more famous here for older architecture, rather than for contemporary," he says.

The *House of Music* opened its doors in January. The wintry winds kicked off from the Danube. The temperature rarely surpassed sub-zero. The sycamores, fundamental to Fujimoto's design, were skeletal. It's only now, as late spring makes way for summer, that his latest creation can be truly revealed in its full splendor. "It looks spectacular with sunshine and leaves on the trees," says Horn. "What Fujimoto has done is break the borders between the built environment and the natural one."

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