

SC Civic celebrates 75 years

Civic Auditorium
Performances, ceremony honor iconic arena

By Calvin Men

calvinmen@santacruzsentinel.com
@calvinmenatwork on Twitter

SANTA CRUZ » For the 75th anniversary of the Santa Cruz Civic Auditorium, organizers celebrated the building's history through presentations, highlighted the present with performances from locals, and showcased the future with plans of what the remodel would look like.

Saturday was a busy day for the arena, with hundreds expected to attend throughout the afternoon and evening to honor the building.

In the first hour of the event, more than a hundred people walked through the doors of the civic auditorium to watch an exhibition by the Santa Cruz Derby Girls junior program, performances by students at Dancenter of Santa Cruz and the Inner

Light Choir.

Unveiled on March 28, 1940, the civic auditorium endured the test of time and survived floods and earthquakes that toppled other city and county buildings. It has played host to scores of events that include concerts, boxing matches, dances, basketball games and lectures.

"There's just an amazing amount of stuff," said Andy Botsford, auditorium supervisor for the civic. "For 75 years, people have been coming and graduat-

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Audience members watch as dancers from Dancenter perform at the Santa Cruz Civic Auditorium on Saturday during the Civic's 75th anniversary.

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SUNDAY, MARCH 29, 2015

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ing and dancing and partying."

Though much of the day was about showcasing the history, a portion of it was dedicated to collecting memories from people who have visited the auditorium. In the lobby, people were asked to fill out slips of paper sharing their favorite moment at the venue.

Some confessed it was their first time at the venue while others shared recent memories. One woman wrote about going to a reggae concert with her son in the 1980s.

For Virginia Wright, former executive director of the Santa Cruz Symphony, spoke highly of the building's acoustics.

"People don't understand



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The Inner Light Choir sings at the Santa Cruz Civic Auditorium on Saturday during the Civic's 75th anniversary celebration.

how good of an acoustic space it is for classical music," she said. Though she added the symphony needed to be in the right place to achieve the good sound.

Wright also grew up with the venue and said she re-

members the venue as small and cozy.

"I saw acts that were really big in a relatively small place," said Wright.

"If you would go to San Jose or San Francisco, it would have been a bigger space. So this created a sense of intimacy with the artist."

Jacqueline Lockwood, a performer with the Santa Cruz Follies, called the building a blessing for the city because it serves so many purposes.

"It's always a pleasure and it has a wonderful technical and sound crew," she said, adding that the Follies were celebrating 60 years of performing at the arena.

Though she did find some faults in it: "The stairs are steep but the music has always been good."

Toward the end of the 75th anniversary events, organizers held a rededica-

tion ceremony for the auditorium with a proclamation from Santa Cruz Mayor Don Lane.

There was also an overview of the plans for the future of the venue. Presented by Ellen Primack, executive director of the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music and chairwoman of the Civic Planning Leadership Team, the plans to create a better auditorium are still in the early stages. A study is set to begin that would assess the building's ability to handle earthquakes if it were remodeled. Results from the study aren't expected until June.