

Honey, I Shrunk the Hall – Are chamber music halls just small symphony halls?

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ABSTRACT

Many venues for the performing arts contain a large symphonic hall as well as a smaller chamber music hall (also “recital hall”). The competition specifications for a new project often contain rather strict measures for the large hall for many dimensions. Conversely, the guidelines and experiences for chamber music halls appear to be looser. The additional freedom can lead to rather unconventional architectural suggestions. This raises the question: What is a chamber music hall and which acoustics are suitable? In this article typical design criteria are discussed. We find acoustically relevant differences regarding room shape, audience and musician arrangement, room volume, reflection coverage and reverberation, level and musical dynamic. Differences are demonstrated using results from simulations as well as measurements, case studies of some realized rooms. Interviews with consultants give hints regarding the current practice in planning.

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