



SECURITY IN CONCERT HALLS

BY STEVEN R. KELLER, CPP

Concert halls are somewhat unique in regard to their security needs. There are often several aspects to be considered. First is the security of people. Unless special problems exist, such as the facility is located in an unsafe neighborhood, or the concert hall has its own parking deck requiring special security or "litigation avoidance" lighting, there is little need for special security provisions. Of course, there must be privacy and protection for famous musicians or performers, but beyond that, the risk to people is more in the realm of the life safety practitioner.

Concert halls often have box offices requiring sound ticket and cash security provisions, anti hold-up and burglar provisions, and access controls. Bullet resistant glass on the box office booth, safes, hold-up buttons, good locks, after-hour burglar alarms, secure ticket stock storage, and card access are standard considerations in such instances.

Concert halls require fairly wide access beyond the privacy of the performers' quarters, administrative offices, and box office. Stagehands, electricians, technicians, and others must move freely backstage. So any high value or important assets must be protected via "compartmentalization." Few major



concert halls lack the presence of valuable or important musical instruments. Major concert halls often boast several Stradivarius violins or other rare or antique instruments. These require secure and possibly alarmed storage since access to the spaces they are used in can rarely be restricted. During performances, musicians dress in tuxedos, leaving personal items, i.e., wallets, keys, etc., which must be protected, in their dressing room lockers. Most concert halls housing major orchestras will require a loading dock for loading and unloading of equipment relating to concert tours. If space permits, the shipping and receiving functions should be physically separated with secure storage and staging space provided on the dock. This prevents the local delivery man from "picking up" a crate of electronic equipment or musical instruments after dropping off an incoming parcel.

Some concert halls include recording studios with expensive high tech equipment. Even if there is no recording studio, live broadcasts often take place from the hall and sound

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equipment is present. This must be protected or it surely will "walk out the door." Many concert halls, in which major orchestras reside, include among their most valuable assets a collection of sheet music in a music library that must have controlled access and security designed to meet the unique situation of that facility. Consideration must be given to the sounding of alarms. Orchestras usually require that alarms not sound audibly to interfere with performances, recording sessions or rehearsals. Therefore, if codes permit, there must be some staffed location where alarms can sound during such quiet periods and still be dealt with properly without disturbing the building occupants unnecessarily.

A final consideration is the attitude toward security by building occupants. The five most difficult groups I have ever worked with are doctors in hospitals, curators in museums, professors in universities, actors in theaters, and concert musicians in large concert halls. While most employees of concert halls differ little from the population in general, concert musicians are often more difficult to deal with. They often tend to be prima donnas, and security must be designed to be effective, yet convenient, or your systems and controls will be abandoned by management, which is often unable to enforce cooperation by these groups. Concert musicians

will cooperate with security controls as long as they are transparent to them and do not interfere with them in any way. You can't give the maestro or a doctor a card key and expect him or her to insert it in a card reader to open a door. They'd all be locked out most of the time.