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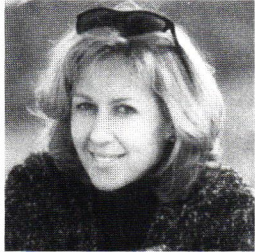
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The French Connection

By Tracy Certo



As I read about Perkins Eastman and UDA and others who are lending their design expertise in the Gulf Coast area it is not only impressive but also heartening.

One of the many things that impressed me

during a recent but all too brief visit to Buenos Aires was the architecture. From my sixth-story hotel room on a busy city street I stepped out on the half-moon shaped balcony (how Evita!) and felt at one with the splendid street scene all around me. Buenos Aires is like two cities: street-level with its urban congestion that reminded me of New York (and for the record I love both cities) and the above-street level where the architecture takes center stage. The buildings, many frosting-white and bearing strong French influence, were rundown in cases but still stunning in this city that was once nicknamed the Paris of South America.

I was so enamored by it all that I nearly passed on the tour of Teatro Colon, the block-long, legendary theater that Albert Filoni, AIA had the opportunity to work on (p. 14). A friend I met in the city on my last day insisted we do it. Never one for organized tours I questioned the decision. Didn't we want to spend more time in artsy Boca? And would that leave enough time to stroll through the Recoleta, the amazing cemetery? Must we? I persisted. My friend, Connie, a solid Type A attorney from New York City, said yes, we absolutely must and I caved. What a great move. I'll be forever grateful to her.

The hour-long tour was one of the highlights of my trip. We got an upclose glimpse of the backstage world, from the zapateria with its thousands of shoes (wacky and colorful and showy shoes, some with heels that tower over two feet high) to music and dance rehearsals for, in this case, *Peter and the Wolf*. The building itself is a wonder and I wanted to learn more about it than I possibly could in an hour. While the theater was magnificent and the president's box quite divine, the show stopper was the stuff going on downstairs and backstage: skilled and speedy

seamstresses making fabulous costumes out of every fabric imaginable, artists painting an enormous backdrop for the stage while it was on the floor on one of the lower levels, props of every size, material and kind. It was a land of magic and fantasy. Can you imagine, I asked Connie, working in a place like this?

Months later, Al Filoni had the chance and what an opportunity it was. Although it lacked a perfect ending—in reality, the story lacks an ending altogether at this point—Al made the most of it and directed an opera during his stay in Buenos Aires. Read all about it here.

On the subject of architecture with French roots, anyone who has spent time in New Orleans knows the treasure trove of buildings found there. So it's hard to imagine losing so many. Quintin Kittle, AIA, a native of Mississippi, recently spent a week assessing damage in his home state and he reports back here (p.10). We also report on efforts by local architects making a difference in the hurricane-ravaged areas. This story was suggested to us by an architect so if we missed you, drop us a line and we'll include you in a follow-up the next issue.

Although I've never been to the Mississippi Gulf, I've been to New Orleans a number of times over the years, each trip memorable. Like many of you, I have a great affection for the city and I have friends who live there. So as I read about Perkins Eastman and UDA and others who are lending their design expertise in this area it is not only impressive but also heartening. To everyone who agreed to share their story, I thank you.

You can contact the editor at tcerto@adelphia.net.

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On the cover: The remaining pieces of two homes in Ocean Springs, Mississippi. Photo by Quintin Kittle, AIA