



PHOTO BY PETER MURDOCK.

MAGAZINE

The Rotunda at Manhattan's Historic Steinway Hall Shines Again

With its spectacular domed reception hall, marble columns, plaster tympanums, and Paul Arndt murals, the 1925 Neoclassical landmark will soon serve as an entrance to SHoP Architects's new tower in Midtown

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Music is once again in the air—and on the ceiling—at Manhattan’s historic Steinway Hall. Designed by Warren and Wetmore, the venerable architecture firm behind such treasures as Grand Central Terminal, this 1925 neoclassical landmark served as the headquarters of the American piano company Steinway & Sons for nearly nine decades.

At its heart, a spectacular domed reception hall wowed patrons with marble columns, plaster tympanums, and Paul Arndt murals depicting lyrical scenes of putti and other revelers. By the time JDS Development Group and Property Markets Group bought the building in 2013, chronic water damage had tarnished its opulent interior. But after a meticulous restoration, the space sings once more. “With classical architecture and Italianate decorations, the rotunda is very grand,” says conservator David Riccio of John Canning & Co., who led the team to repair plaster ceilings, clean faux-marbled

entablatures, and return walls and metal-work to their original color palette. “The subtlety of some materials utilized is also striking.” The removal of three layers of varnish and grime from the dome’s fresco secco and marouflage, meanwhile, revealed the rosy cheeks of cherubs and the bright draped garments of female harpists. Soon all New Yorkers will be able to take them in. Though the building will act as the West 57th and 58th Street entrances to a new 91-story tower by SHoP Architects, with interiors by the AD100 firm Studio Sofield, the rotunda will double as retail space, tempting shoppers and architecture lovers alike.