

## The Arts Ballroom Story

The newest Center City events venue, Arts Ballroom, has opened on the ground floor of the Arts Condominium Building at 1324 Locust St, one block from the Avenue of Arts (Broad St.). Despite being a new, luxury renovated facility, the space has a long history of being used for entertainment.

The building was erected in 1919 and became the Hotel Sylvania in 1923. The hotel restaurant and the ballroom were located in the space currently occupied by the Arts Ballroom. Remarkably, the original Hotel Sylvania Opening Dinner menu was discovered inside a wall in 2009 during renovation work. Until 2008 the space was used as an office, but in May of 2008 the premise was bought by Indian Creek Investments LLC. The company owners, Gala Kimberly Romm and Leo Vayn, were attracted by charm of the old building, high ceilinged rooms filled with light, stunning arch windows, and by its centrally convenient location near City Hall, Kimmel Center and theaters.

Friend and a real estate consultant, Jormas Anas'san, suggested converting the premise to its roots, i.e. to rebuild it as an event space. Being entrepreneurs at heart, both owners like the idea. After consultation with another friend, architect Joseph Spector, the decision was made to create unique elegant space for a wide variety of events. Joseph's Spector Design Company created one of a kind beautiful design of the space. Innovative interpretation of the classical proportions and architectural elements such as columns, cornices, balustrades, mirrors, paneling, granite stairs and metal art work provide a sense of excitement and movement. The unique lighting system design of the space incorporated into classical coffered ceilings and innovative stretched ceilings by "Extenzo" creates sophisticated and exciting composition of crystal chandeliers, wall sconces, recessed lighting fixtures, and lighting cornices. Also, the project utilizes some advanced technologies such as integrated surround sound system and wireless internet.

The next challenge was to select a reliable, creative general contractor. Old building renovation is always associated with surprises. The company hired **Shaoul Ohana of New York-based NESPO Developers as a general contractor**. The design called for the total demolition of the space and replacement of all mechanical and electrical equipment, leaving only bare walls. A new mezzanine, bathrooms and catering kitchen were constructed, as well as a new air conditioning system and completely upgraded electric power supply. New flooring, ceiling, lighting and decorative elements create a welcoming, harmonious environment. A contemporary art collection, courtesy of Dalet Gallery, brings artistic spirit to the space.

From the beginning, Gala and Leo understood the importance of another key factor: the serving of great food to guests. Stemming from her previous experience as a restaurant owner, Gala Kimberly Romm was familiar with complexity of that business. Gala contacted Simon Powles, catering arm head for renowned restaurateur Stephen Starr. During the first meeting with Simon Powles and Morgan

Bedore, VP of Starr Events, Gala and Leo realized they had discovered a perfect match, and Stephen Starr Events became the Arts Ballroom's exclusive caterer. In this respect, Arts Ballroom joins the lineup of well-known institution such as, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Convention Center, and Ground for Sculpture, all of whom benefit from the use of Starr Events services. The Arts Ballroom's two halls accommodate up to 400 guests and are suited well for weddings, parties, social and corporate events, fundraisings, fashion shows and concerts. VIP suites on the mezzanine provide a relaxed atmosphere for bride and groom, and the suites may be used for a variety of private meetings and gatherings.



**BEFORE**



AFTER