

JAY AND SUSIE GOGUE PERFORMING ARTS CENTER AUBURN UNIVERSITY, AUBURN, AL

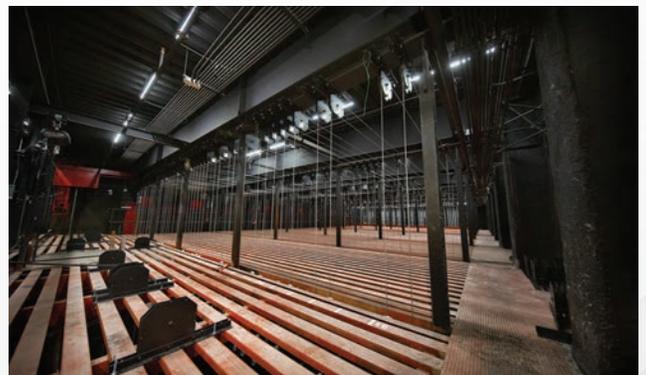


PROJECT PROFILE



“The community loves it. There’s never been anything like it here before. We have full houses for everything and it’s great to see the local community support what we’re doing.”

- Chris Burke, Production Manager for Audio at the Gogue Performing Arts Center



CHALLENGE

With nowhere for the community to go for local performing arts, Auburn University wanted a world-class performing arts center with the newest stage technology to ensure great performances and enhanced opportunities for community members and students.

WENGER SOLUTION

Wenger Corporation developed a custom solution, combining a Wenger Diva® Acoustical Shell with Lieto™ White and RGBW LED Fixtures, along with Wenger Transform® Banners, J.R. Clancy automated hoists and motion control systems to accommodate a variety of performances, and effectively and efficiently store the shell when not in use.

THE GOGUE PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

AUBURN, ALABAMA

BENEFITS

- Dramatically augmented sound quality for both musicians and audience
- Improved lighting and multi-colored lighting options for performances
- Intuitive handheld motion control systems for enhanced safety and ease-of-use
- Above-stage storage in the smallest amount of space possible
- Flexibility to support many kinds of performances
- Reduced set up and strike times



HIGHLIGHTS

Acoustics were always the priority for the new Jay and Susie Gogue Performing Arts Center at Auburn University in Auburn, Alabama. The focal point of the 85,000-square-foot (7,897-square-meter) Gogue Center is the 1,202-seat Woltosz Theatre. Naturally, it would require superior acoustics to ensure every type of performance would be accommodated and leave the audience wanting more.

Auburn University staff knew that creating the right space would have the power to entertain, inspire and engage audiences of all ages, from students to community members. They partnered with Wilson Butler Architects, Akustiks Acoustical Consultants, Theatre Projects Consultants and Wenger Corporation to complete the task at hand.

"This region has always had to drive to Birmingham, Atlanta or Columbus to have exposure to touring performing arts," said Taylor Dyleski, Director of Production at the Gogue Center. "Now, we get to bring that experience to Auburn University to make this an even better place to live and go to school."

Setting the Stage for the Acoustics

With acoustics at the forefront of the project, the team looked to Acoustical Consultant Russ Todd of Akustiks who worked with Wenger Corporation's Performing Arts Custom Product Manager, Mark Ingalls to create the solution.

"Mark and the Wenger team were willing to customize the shell to address key acoustical requirements that our office considers important," Todd said.

The foundation is a custom Wenger Diva® Acoustical Shell that would have the flexibility to serve all purposes.

"We spent a substantial part of the investment on acoustics," explained Chris Burke, Production Manager for Audio at the Gogue Performing Arts Center. "We wanted this to be perfect and rival any performing arts center in any major city."

Ten Wenger Transform® Motorized Acoustical Banners line both house right and house left of the audience chamber. They have the ability to be individually controlled, so the user can lower or raise them to adjust the acoustics in the room. The banners are controlled by a J.R. Clancy SceneControl™ 12 Motion Control System.

"We're connecting the sound on stage to the audience, and allowing the musicians to really hear themselves, hear each other and react to the room," Todd said.

A shell of this size would normally take hours to set up and strike, but Wenger's engineers made it so three people can place the entire shell into performance position within 45 minutes and strike in just 20 minutes.

"It's really impressive how easy it is for the shell to come in and out," he said. "That's been a good surprise."

"It's very customizable and adaptable," Burke said. "The banners are great for our multi-purpose venue. If we have a classical artist, the banners can be up, so we get the best live sound as possible. We can put them down for amplified shows where we need to absorb the acoustic energy in the space."

In addition, the team added custom ceiling coffers to provide a higher degree of cross-stage hearing and communication.

Dimmable Lights and Beautiful Colors

As the acoustical shell mock-up was being designed, the Auburn staff decided to add Lieto™ LED fixtures into the shell ceiling.

"We saw the Lieto at LDI in 2018 and we were sold," Dyleski said.

The fixtures provide more lumen output than other fixtures currently used in acoustical shells, meaning fewer fixtures are required in the shell ceiling. They're also silent, which is critical for performers on stage, much cooler than conventional lighting and dim down to zero percent. Plus, they're easy to adjust, with three-axis beam positioning to provide tool-free pan, tilt and rotation, as well as the ability for front-face focusing.

Once the decision to incorporate the Lieto was made, Wenger offered another unique solution. Instead of installing more white light than the Gogue Center needed and dialing back the intensity, Wenger invited Auburn University to test the new Lieto RGBW solution before it came to market in January 2020. RGBW adds the option for multi-colored lighting on stage.

"Usually with acoustical shells, you struggle with lighting the orchestra so they can see and be seen," said Paul Anton, Production Manager for Lighting at the Gogue Center. "With this system, everything is incredibly well lit, the color is unbelievable, and we have a variety of options."

"Now we have something up our sleeve for when we're doing a Pops event or when we are presenting something unconventional in front of the shell," Dyleski said. "We can do white light, and we can do a pop of color on top of that white light, and it won't affect the musicians while performing."

Collaborative Shell Design

Though acoustics were a priority for the shell, it had to be beautiful and blend into the existing room.

"It was a little bit of a three-way effort," said Josh Stiling, Senior Associate Architect at Wilson Butler Architects. "We hit the ground running with the theatre consultant and acoustician. We had a great history with Theatre Projects and Akustiks and collaborating early was critical. The process involved several iterations and design reviews."

Kelly Chiaradonna, Josh's colleague and Interior Designer at Wilson Butler Architects drew inspiration for the look of the shell from local materials. She chose southern heart pine in both lighter and darker stains for the veneer of the shell.

The forestage reflector ceiling was designed to match the over stage orchestra shell ceiling's design, so it appears to be a single, seamless ceiling. The forestage reflector is suspended from a motorized hoist, which allows the users to adjust the angle of the forestage ceiling reflector.

Stiling says the shell towers work well since theatre staff can move them around more easily, breaking them down in under an hour.

"It was very fluid working with this team because everyone knows where their strengths are, and we knew what to expect from each other," Stiling said. "This was a very collaborative design."

The Right Rigging

As the theatre equipment designer on the project, Michael Nishball, Principal at Theatre Projects Consultants, took the lead

and recommended J.R. Clancy automated rigging and controls. They installed the following:

On stage:

- Three PowerAssist® Hoists, which have a 2,000 lb (907 kg) capacity per hoist
- A custom high-speed counterweight assist hoist on the house curtain and custom controls to maneuver it. The hoist can move up to 360 feet per minute (1.83 m/s), to quickly open or close the curtain.
- A 60-foot wide by 38-foot tall (18.28 m by 11.58 m) steel-framed fire curtain, weighing nearly 10,000 lb (4,536 kg). To move it, the team installed a custom traction drive hoist with a lattice track and arbor.

Front of house:

- A custom portal header drum hoist and a double purchase system to support the frame, which weighed almost 10,000 lb (4,536 kg).
- A custom drum hoist for the forestage reflector, allowing the user to change the angle of the reflector panel to achieve the desired acoustic results.
- A custom drum hoist for the forestage speaker arrays to control the synchronous raising and lowering of the left and right arrays.

"We worked with the design team including the architect, theatre consultant, acoustician and Auburn staff to ensure we delivered what they needed while providing multiple options," said Ryan Cole, Project Manager at Wenger Corporation.

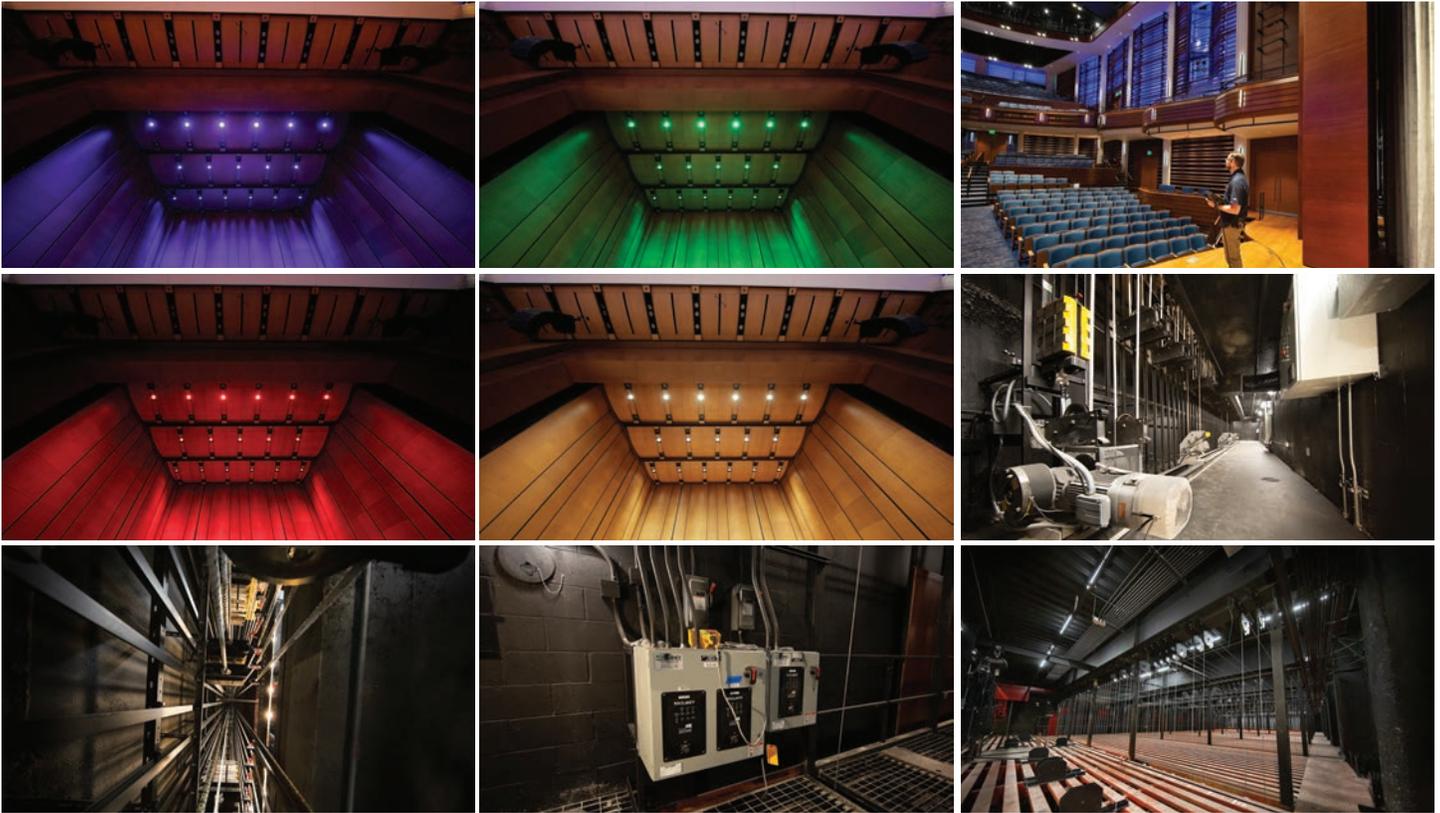
"Wenger | J.R. Clancy has been a leader in equipment development and ISO quality control, as well as safety, training, inspection and maintenance," Nishball said. "We have worked with them on many projects and enjoy collaborating with them."

A Vibrant Destination for Artists from Around the World

The Gogue Performing Arts Center opened its doors in August 2019 with a four-day festival featuring 27 performances at both the Gogue Center and the school's outdoor amphitheatre.

"It is a beautiful building that provides the area with options to bring in all different types of talent and performances," Cole said. "The extensive customization allows staff many different ways to maneuver their systems to get the very best acoustics possible, no matter who is on stage."

"The community loves it," Burke said "There's never been anything like it here before. We have full houses for everything and it's great to see the local community support what we're doing."



PRODUCT LIST

Transform® Motorized Acoustical Banners, Custom Hoists, PowerAssist® Hoists, Counterweight Rigging System, Automated Fire Curtain System, SceneControl™ Motion Control Systems, Custom House Curtain Control System, Custom Tormentor Doors and Portal Header, Staging Products (StageTek® platforms & Nivoflex Scissor Platforms) and Portable Audience Seating

ABOUT WENGER CORPORATION

Wenger Corporation provides the widest array of innovative, high-quality products and services for the performing arts industry. Their advanced Wenger and J.R. Clancy products provide the highest levels of safety, reliability and aesthetics, helping transform performance venues and engineer unforgettable experiences.



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Owatonna Office: Phone 800.4WENGER (493-6437) Worldwide +1.507.455.4100 | Parts & Service 800.887.7145 | wengercorp.com
555 Park Drive, PO Box 448 | Owatonna | MN 55060-0448

Syracuse Office: Phone 800.836.1885 Worldwide +1.315.451.3440 | jrclancy.com | 7041 Interstate Island Road | Syracuse | NY 13209-9713

ATHLETICS Phone 800.493.6437 | email gearboss@wengercorp.com | gearboss.com | 555 Park Drive, PO Box 448 | Owatonna | MN 55060-0448