

CINCINNATI MUSIC HALL CINCINNATI, OHIO

PROJECT PROFILE

Wenger® | J.R. CLANCY
CREATIVITY OF ENGINEERING



WENGER SYMPHONY CHAIR, BRAVO™ MUSIC STAND, WENGER CUSTOM ORCHESTRAL AND CHORAL RISERS, SEATING WAGON AND CUSTOM J.R. CLANCY RIGGING

*"The music has never sounded so rich,
so detailed, so warm."*

- Cincinnati Performing Arts Reviewer



CHALLENGE

Renovate a massive auditorium in a historically designated building, while facing design and deadline challenges. Modify and enhance existing products, refurbish rigging components and develop custom products tailored for the space.

WENGER SOLUTION

Customization of numerous Wenger and J.R. Clancy products to meet the needs for the historical venue. Seating wagons, choral risers, orchestral risers, and custom hoists to quickly install one-of-a-kind-built glass acoustical panels. Add height to an existing acoustical shell to improve acoustics. Refurbish rigging components to ensure safety and improve performance and longevity.

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BENEFITS

- Improved acoustics
- Maximized space
- Enhanced versatility
- Safer rigging

HIGHLIGHTS

Custom Hoists, Risers Help Revive Historic Cincinnati Music Hall

Built in 1878, the Cincinnati Music Hall is a classic entertainment venue filled with High Victorian Gothic grandeur. So much so, it was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1975.

However, time had taken a toll on the city's stately redbrick Music Hall. It was no longer meeting the needs of performers, nor the expectations of audiences and visitors. The multi-use Music Hall is home to Cincinnati's Symphony Orchestra, Pops Orchestra, Opera, Ballet and the May Festival Chorus. Plus, it has hosted star entertainers from crooner Frank Sinatra to musical genius Prince.

If Music Hall was to resuscitate its reputation as one of the world's greatest performance locales, it needed a facility-wide renovation. It hadn't done so in over 40 years. The nearly 3,500-seat Springer Auditorium (the Hall's main auditorium) would be the primary focus, with upgrades throughout the building.

Using public and private funds, the City of Cincinnati launched a \$143 million renovation in 2016, with a caveat: the renovation must be completed in just 16 months. The City secured a temporary relocation for the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and closed Music Hall for construction in early June 2016. Through incredible teamwork and custom solutions, the project was completed on time and on budget. Music Hall reopened to a sold-out symphony concert in October 2017.

The Team

Foremost, Springer Auditorium needed to refurbish rigging equipment, correct uneven acoustics, increase stage versatility and improve seating comfort.

The city hired Akustiks acoustical consultants and Schuler Shook theatre planners. Christopher Blair is a partner at Akustiks and its chief scientist (as well as an orchestra conductor). He described the goals and challenges of addressing the deficiencies within Springer Auditorium:

"We wanted to help create a closer relationship between the

audience and performers but maintain the signature sound of the historically protected building. That created limitations on what we could and could not do."

Indeed, the existing configuration was difficult. There were no cookie-cutter solutions and everything had to look like it belonged in the space. Vendors would need to customize their products, and fast. Everyone agreed that engaging Wenger Corporation early on was the right move, said Michael Burgoyne, a partner at Schuler Shook.

"We had tight design and construction times and a complex project. Their experience with large, custom rigging solutions made them a perfect fit, and we knew Wenger Corporation could handle custom items and modifications."

Fixing the Acoustics

Music Hall had previously made multiple attempts at acoustical interventions in Springer Auditorium. None had fully worked. The auditorium had over one million cubic feet of air to fill with sound, reducing the sonic impact of all its tenants.

The architectural partnership of Martinez and Johnson (design architect) and Perfido, Weiskopf, Wagstaff and Goettel (executive architect) got to work. They reconfigured the Hall, moving the stage edge 13 feet out into the audience and musicians in front of the proscenium, with the use of J.R. Clancy-supplied motorized stage lifts. Wenger created custom choral risers to elevate performers, which, in turn, would help project sound.

There was still an issue of sound going into the stage house, rather than the audience. An existing shell tower height was modified from 24 feet to 40 feet by creating a J.R. Clancy wall extension mechanism. The Wenger Corporation team also worked with subcontractor C.K. Wegner who fabricated custom acoustical glass ceiling elements (designed by Blair) to act as a canopy over the orchestra platform. C.K. Wegner provided custom carts to store the panels, which can be suspended from J.R. Clancy custom line shaft hoists.

Upgrades Behind-the-Scenes

Springer Auditorium requires the ability to quickly vary stage size, change out scenery, and more. During the renovation, the architects reconfigured backstage amenities. Wenger Corporation supplemented that by providing nearly a dozen J.R. Clancy customized drum hoists, five motorized line shaft hoists, automation controls, and three custom seating wagons.

"The additional J.R. Clancy hoists mean staff can quickly fly the acoustical ceiling panels into preset positions and then bring them down into custom carts for storage, and then fly the carts out of the way when not in use. It makes the house and stage more flexible," Blair explained.

Springer Auditorium's existing rigging also needed attention. Wenger Corporation refurbished an 83 counterweight lineset system, provided a new J.R. Clancy motorized traction drive hoist for a fire curtain system and two SceneControl™ pendants, sourced additional equipment, and collaborated on rigging installation with local installer Beck Studios.

According to Blair, the Wenger Corporation team certainly delivered. "They were incredibly responsive, on time and on budget. In fact, they were ahead of time. We needed the custom risers two months prior to the grand opening for acoustical testing, and there they were."

The Result: Cincinnati Pride

Music Hall's website promised a dramatic end result: "The auditorium's warm sonic identity will be maintained, yet enhanced, by creating an even, present sound throughout that conveys the full timbral and dynamic palette of the performers, and which, in turn, creates an intimate experience between the stage and the audience."

According to one local reviewer, Music Hall delivered. "The music has never sounded so rich, so detailed, so warm."

From his previous work with Wenger Corporation, Blair knew they could deliver. "Their team is very professional and responsive, which is critical in a quick-turnaround project like Music Hall. Our client is thrilled with the result."





PRODUCT LIST

J.R. Clancy Titan® Motorized Hoists, J.R. Clancy Custom Drum Hoists, J.R. Clancy Line Shaft Hoists, Wenger Custom Seating Wagons, J.R. Clancy SceneControl™ Motion Control Systems, J.R. Clancy Custom Extension Mechanism for Acoustical Shell, J.R. Clancy Counterweight Rigging Components, Wenger Custom Choral Riser, Wenger Custom Orchestral Risers, Wenger Symphony Chairs, and Wenger Bravo™ Music Stands

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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