

GEORGE S. AND DOLORES DORÉ ECCLES THEATER SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH

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PROJECT PROFILE



A SPECTACLE OF SIGHTS AND SOUNDS

Categories: Acoustical banners and draperies, counterweight rigging, risers, pit filler, and portable audience seating.

“One technical director can hit a preset button for each event, or make adjustments as needed, to dial in the acoustics. It’s a very easy process for the people on the ground to manage.”

- Jeff Gwilliam,
Associate Division Director of
Operations at Eccles Theater

CHALLENGE

Create a beautiful performing arts center on a small footprint that can accommodate a variety of performances.

GEORGE S. AND DOLORES DORÉ ECCLES THEATER

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH

SOLUTION

A variety of motorized draperies and acoustical banners from J.R. Clancy create a robust sound for the audience and musicians, no matter the performance. Wenger's StageTek® risers, pit filler, and portable audience seating provide sturdy, stylish and flexible solutions to accommodate the changing needs of the space.

BENEFITS

- Superior sound quality to accommodate a diverse range of performances
- Motorized draperies and banners to vary reverberation time and absorb sound as needed
- Simple and easy to use manual counterweight rigging
- Custom finished portable seating that looks permanent

HIGHLIGHTS

The George S. and Dolores Doré Eccles Theater is Salt Lake City's newest performing arts center, in the heart of downtown.

Designed by world-renowned Pelli Clarke Pelli Architects, the theater, featuring a grand six-story lobby with dramatic retractable glass walls, is a beacon of light and energy on Main Street.

The Eccles Theater is a hub of activity year-round with indoor and outdoor entertainment spaces. The 2,500-seat Delta Performance Hall brings national touring Broadway, concerts, comedy, and other popular entertainment events; while the multi-use Regent Street Black Box at the Eccles Theater hosts innovative, local performances and community events in a smaller, more intimate setting. The six-story Grand Lobby holds public art, and events on the outdoor plaza will energize Regent Street.

There were several challenges in designing a multi-use hall that could accommodate the various needs of all of its performers. The variety of performances was one obstacle as Broadway shows, concerts, ballet, opera, and other special events all come to Eccles. Another was the noisy, light rail transit system stationed in front of the facility, which made sound isolation mandatory. And finally, the footprint of the site was extremely tight. The team would have to be creative and collaborative in finding a solution.

Rich and Resonant Sound

With their work cut out for them, the team began to explore solutions. The design team included Pelli Clarke Pelli, HKS Architects, Fisher Dachs Associates, and Jaffe Holden.

The task was to create a space with acoustic and visual intimacy, one where the audience could be located close to the stage, to experience beautiful sound that wouldn't be too loud or harsh.

"We wanted the hall to feel very live acoustically," explains Mark Holden, Chairman and Lead Acoustic Designer at Jaffe Holden. "We wanted it to sound tight and small, but at the same time allow sound from amplified speakers to breathe and expand naturally."

Holden says he wanted to create an acoustic volume above the audience seating so that natural acoustics had the perfect resonance and richness for natural sound. They also employed the use of acoustic draperies and banners to appropriately dampen the room's reverberant energy for amplified shows.

Above the Crowd

There's a lot of space above the audience in the Delta Hall and a lot going on. First, Pelli Clarke Pelli created an evening sky in the attic space, visible from the audience seats below. The starfield design is a matrix of hundreds of low voltage lights that can dim and twinkle.

The real ceiling, however, is dozens of feet above that, which is where the acoustical draperies and banners come in.

Nine motorized 25 oz-per-square-yard (848 g-per-square-meter), 100% fully motor-controlled J.R. Clancy draperies cross the hall from left to right, and two large drapes can be deployed on upper side walls to vary reverberation time. The total coverage area is 6,700 square feet (622.5 square meters).

Holden's team placed five acoustical banners along the proscenium wall that are 29' (9 m) tall and can be controlled with the press of a button.

"The mix of drapes and banners is deliberate," explains Holden. "Tracking drapes across the hall are effective at controlling sound energy in the mid and high frequencies, while double-layer wool serge banners are especially efficient at absorbing bass frequencies."

The system works well for a variety of uses.

"If they're hosting a musical, for example, and they want the ability to draw some of the curtains together and deaden the sound all the way through the audience, so it doesn't bounce back and forth and muddle the sound, this system allows for that," explains Scott Madaski of Fisher Dachs.

Down in the Pit

The Eccles programming requires the use of the orchestra pit for musicians. This was a critical focus of the acoustic design as musicians need to hear their own personal performance as it relates to the entire ensemble. The pit has a number of innovative acoustical features, including large wood acoustic reflectors and acoustical drapes. The draperies, provided by Wenger, were installed on the upstage wall and can be positioned behind specific instruments to control volume. Acoustical panels on the underside of the stage control overhead reflections. The upstage wall behind the drapes is angled and oriented to promote diffusion and dispersion of sound.

The draperies are controlled by 87 sets of J.R. Clancy manual counterweight rigging. The system's simplicity and ease of use were important features.

"One technical director can hit a preset button for each event, or make adjustments as needed, to dial in the acoustics," explains Jeff Gwilliam, Associate Division Director of Operations at Eccles. "It's a very easy process for the people on the ground to manage."

Sturdy Seating

The final products installed were StageTek® risers and pit filler as well as portable audience seating.

"This was a cost effective alternative to spending more money on another expensive lift," explains Madaski. "These platforms are on lifts and can be adjusted for any height. They're easy to move and can easily be taken out."

On the seating side, it was important to have sturdy chairs that look and feel like they're a permanent part of the seating.

"These chairs came with fabric that matched the fabric in the hall. Wenger tailored them specifically to this space and they match perfectly," says Gwilliam.

"We also asked that the steel components be the same as the room via powder coating and that was accommodated," adds Phil Jordan, Cultural Planning and Project Director at Eccles.

Jordan adds that the seats were delivered as requested along with custom-built carts that allow them to easily transfer the seats from the hall to the storage area.

First class performance space

The end result with all of the collaboration between the architect, acoustical consultants, theater consultants, and other players involved in the project, is a world class performing arts space that will surprise and delight newcomers and continue to serve the cultural needs of the Salt Lake County community for years to come.

PRODUCT LIST

Motorized steel frame fire curtain, 87 manual counterweight rigging sets , acoustical draperies, StageTek risers and pit filler, portable audience seating (Premier), and Rack 'N Roll® garment carts.



About Wenger | J.R. Clancy

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

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USA/5-19/200/W/LT0121B



WENGER CORPORATION Phone 800.4WENGER (493-6437) Worldwide 1.507.455.4100 | Fax 507.455.4258 Worldwide 1.507.774.8576
Parts & Service 800.887.7145 | Canada Office 800.268.0148 | Web wengercorp.com | 555 Park Drive, PO Box 448 | Owatonna | MN 55060-0448

JR CLANCY Phone 800.836.1885 Worldwide 315.451.3440 | Fax 877.836.1885 Worldwide 315.451.1766 | Web jrclancy.com
7041 Interstate Island Road | Syracuse | NY 13209-9713