

NEW BRUNSWICK PERFORMING ARTS CENTER NEW BRUNSWICK, NEW JERSEY

PROJECT PROFILE



ELIZABETH ROSS JOHNSON THEATER

“It really was important that we were able to use this stage on more nights than the other previous stages had been used. Being flexible, being able to change out scenery very quickly to accommodate a comedian on one night, a chamber orchestra on another night and then bring back a seven-week run of one of our theatre companies. The products that Wenger Corporation provided are part of the magic.”

– Christopher Paladino, President of the New Brunswick Development Corporation (DEVCO)



CHALLENGE

Create multi-use spaces to serve the needs of four unique performing arts organizations, spark creativity and innovation within the New Brunswick arts community and reinvigorate the Downtown Cultural Arts District.

WENGER SOLUTION

Wenger Corporation provided solutions for two state-of-the-art, proscenium-style theaters to optimize sound and streamline the rigging needed to accommodate everything from musical theater, opera, drama and dance to community meetings and lectures. Theater features include Wenger audience seating, Transform[®] Motorized Acoustical Banners, custom Diva[®] Acoustical Clouds, J.R. Clancy Motion Control Systems, PowerLift[®] Hoists, Tension Grids and Counterweight Line Sets.

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BENEFITS

- Versatility to support varied performance types and sizes, from lectures to opera
- Flexible and custom rigging systems for safe and reliable line sets and heavy scenery sets
- Comfortable custom seating designed to last
- One-of-a-kind facility to house world-class artists
- Multi-use donor lounge that also acts as a rehearsal space



ARTHUR LAURENTS THEATRE



HIGHLIGHTS

The New Brunswick Performing Arts Center (NBPAC) in New Jersey was a \$172 million redevelopment project 20 years in the making. Located on the site of the former George Street Playhouse and Crossroads Theater in New Brunswick, the cutting-edge, multi-use property would completely transform the Downtown Cultural Arts District.

Once complete, NBPAC would become the new home of four performing arts organizations: the American Repertory Ballet Company, Crossroads Theatre Company, George Street Playhouse and Rutgers, Mason Gross School of the Arts.

At the heart of the public-private partnership between 19 organizations was New Brunswick Development Corporation (DEVCO). Together, they would bring two state-of-the-art, proscenium-style theaters to the community, along with office space and a 207-unit residential rental apartment tower that would rise 18-stories above the theaters, creating a 23-story complex. In addition to providing the community with modern apartments, the facility planned to partner with The Actors Fund to market the new units to artists and theater support personnel.

"The arts have always been very important to New Brunswick. Certainly, it pays off in an economic way because people come to restaurants, people park cars, people stay in hotels. But it also gives the city a sense of identity, that people from the region come to New Brunswick for the arts," said Christopher Paladino, President of DEVCO. "So, quite honestly, this was an opportunity – a mission. It was our goal to figure out how we can help our arts organizations bring more people on more nights for more performances to New Brunswick."

The City of New Brunswick and DEVCO brought Elkus Manfredi Architects on-board to bring the project to life. Elkus Manfredi hired Auerbach Pollock Friedlander (APF) as theater consultants to help put the pieces of the theater together. ADJ Construction brought in Wenger Corporation to the project team because of their history and expertise with performance spaces.

"Picking the professional staff was really, really important. We had our consultants take us to see Wenger's work all throughout the region. We visited theaters in Boston, in Philadelphia and saw theaters in New York" Paladino explained. "This really had to be state of the art."

"Elkus Manfredi Architects understood structure and steel, and we could talk to them about installation around that structure. This gave the project team a very good feeling and comfort level with us from the beginning. They knew Elkus

Manfredi Architects could get the steel and concrete in place, and we could take care of the rest," said David Jones, National Sales Manager at Wenger Corporation.

Elizabeth Ross Johnson Theater

As the larger of the two spaces, the 463-seat Elizabeth Ross Johnson Theater is a Proscenium Theater designed to accommodate musical theatre, dance, opera and dramatic theatre. It features an 86-foot stage, a 75-foot fly tower and a trap system, along with an orchestra pit that can accommodate up to 70 musicians.

Due to the multi-use design, this space was in need of unique acoustical solution and chose Wenger Transform® Acoustical Banners. However, unlike traditional spaces where Transform banners get mounted on the walls in the house the ones in the Elizabeth Ross Johnson Theater were installed above the house to drop into performance and storage position above the audience to enhance the acoustics.

"This theater had a lower ceiling than we usually see, so they needed balance sound, but they also had to absorb some of it. We'd never done anything like that before, which made it an exciting opportunity," Jones said.

In addition to the fixed acoustical clouds, the Elizabeth Ross Theater also has a tension wire grid for ease of access and maintenance for the facility. Plus, it features counterweight sets, a J.R. Clancy Motion Control System, fire curtain system, audience seating and drapery.

Arthur Laurents Theater

This Proscenium Theater was primarily designed for theatrical performances and smaller dance performances. The 252-seat Arthur Laurents Theater has a 60-foot stage and contemporary grid system. This unique approach for lighting and sound creates additional flexibility for even more performance types, including lectures, musical and community events.

"It really was important when we developed this space that we were able to use our stages on more nights than our older theaters. Flexibility was key. Being able to change out scenery very quickly to accommodate a comedian on one night, a chamber orchestra on another night and then bring back a seven-week run of one of our theatre companies was pertinent," said Paladino. "The products and solutions from Wenger Corporation were part of that magic, which allowed us to turn on a dime and provide more performances for our community."

J.R. Clancy Motion Control System

To increase flexibility at NBPAC, Wenger recommended a J.R. Clancy Motion Control System. This motion control system can manage up to 36 machines, but it's still compact enough to go anywhere on stage. At NBPAC, the team can use it for multiple purposes in both of their theaters, from hanging banners and scenery to positioning projectors and screens.

The Motion Control System provides users with an easy-to-use touchscreen display for complete control. Plus, through its program and controls, the production team can use multiple line sets at once.

"The interface on the control system is very easy to navigate, and the ergonomic design makes it comfortable to grip. And, since it has such a large screen, it's possible to train multiple technicians and NBPAC staff at one time on the interface," said Andre Pen, Deck Supervisor at NBPAC. "The safety login is also key as we can set how each user can utilize the system and have emergency stops in place, just in case something was to go awry."

"Nothing's worse than installing equipment that you never get to use. But here at NBPAC we are really putting everything to use. I think it's a testament to how the spaces were designed and how the equipment was selected for safety and versatility," Paladino added.

Robert and Joan Campbell Donor Lounge and Dance Hall

In addition to the main theaters, Wenger also outfitted the Robert and Joan Campbell Donor Lounge and dance halls with track and drapery, maximizing these spaces for rehearsals, workshops, dance, drama, general classes and small gatherings.

"One night, it's a donor's lounge. The next night, I'm having my annual board dinner in that room. We're having we set it up with a piano so someone can actually come in and rehearse. And it can be used for general rehearsal space. So, like all of the spaces in this building, we really hope this rehearsal space/donor lounge/dining room is turned over 7, 8, 9, 10 times a week," Paladino said.



PRODUCT LIST

Counterweight Rigging, PowerLift Hoists, Fire Curtain system with fire curtain, J.R. Clancy Motion Control Systems, Tension wire grid, Transform Motorized Acoustical Banners, Custom Diva Acoustical Clouds, Audience Seating, Track and Drapery

ABOUT WENGER CORPORATION

Wenger Corporation provides the widest array of innovative, high-quality products and services for the performing arts industry. Their 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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