

BEST USE OF TIMBER 2015 SHORTLIST

AS PART OF THE ANNUAL RIAS AWARDS SCHEME, FORESTRY COMMISSION SCOTLAND AND WOOD FOR GOOD HAVE COMBINED TO SPONSOR A NEW AWARD AIMED AT ENCOURAGING INNOVATIVE AND CREATIVE USE OF TIMBER IN NEW BUILDINGS IN SCOTLAND



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RIAS



Forestry Commission Scotland
Coimisean na Coilltearachd Alba

Architecture & Design Scotland
Ailtearachd is Dealbhadh na h-Alba

THEATRE ROYAL

Location: Glasgow
Date Completed: December 2014
Building Type: Theatre
Architect: Page \ Park Architects
Client: Scottish Opera
Main Contractor: Sir Robert McAlpine

Timber Supplier: Sheet materials supplied by Lathams, solid birch supplied by Bryceland Total Timber Solutions, Specialist joinery manufactured by Scottish Opera's joinery workshop and Alex Forsyth Ltd joinery assisted them with installation

THE PROJECT

The new foyer extension for Scottish Opera at Glasgow's Theatre Royal was focused on creating a transformational experience for audiences, encouraging wider community engagement and building a sustainable business for the future.

The project focused on the audience's journey from 'street to seat' - on improved approach, entrance, intuitive wayfinding and the provision of enhanced audience facilities. Lifts provide full access to all upper theatre balconies. Compliance with accessibility legislation was an important driver behind the project, but also the client's desire to 'open up' the theatre and opera as an art form by the provision of open and welcoming foyers.

The demolition of the former Café Royal building provided the opportunity to create a dramatic extension addressing the street corner. Common with many Victorian venues, a number of staircases lead to the upper balconies and the aim was to 'democratise' the theatre experience with the creation of a single central staircase that rises up through all levels, changing in form as it rises to add drama.

A new box office and café at stalls level complements new bar facilities at upper levels. To the east is the 'core', housing two 17 person lifts, new toilets and an escape stair. Above stalls level the core is repetitive in plan to assist with wayfinding.

The new spaces provide welcoming and accessible facilities and an appropriate prelude to the richness and delights of the Victorian theatre beyond.

USE OF TIMBER

A large part of the interior palette of the new extension is made up of birch ply. Timber was chosen to add warmth to the exposed concrete structural frame. There are three principal areas where timber offered the opportunity to craft complex geometries and has been used to great effect: the elliptical ceilings; 'vent box' column enclosures; and the cladding to the central staircase.

Suspended birch ply ceilings follow the elliptical geometry and perform many roles. Acoustic panels have been carefully integrated in to these along with recessed lighting, with all cabling and services discretely hidden above.

Around the perimeter of the foyer spaces 'vent box' columns are positioned between the structural concrete columns. These are constructed from a combination of birch ply and solid birch and contain the natural ventilation intakes, the heating system and perform the function of drinks shelves and exhibition displays.

Finally, the sculptural self-supporting central stair with its twisting geometry has been clad in an external skin of birch ply. Each of the many stair panels has been individually cut and shaped to follow the structural steel framework beneath.

In terms of the installation of the timberwork, the team of Scottish Opera's joiners manufactured the many hundreds of joinery elements to extremely tight tolerances. On one level it appears as a simple decorative finish, but when the crafted details are looked at more closely and the multiple functions each element is performing are considered, the incredible complexity and elegance of the timber solution can be appreciated.



Photography: Images: Andrew Lee and Page\Park

