

## The Millenium Forum Theatre, Derry



Our brief was to design a new performing arts centre suitable for theatre, opera, musicals, chamber music and full-scale symphonic music, in an auditorium capable of accommodating any audience size from 300 to 1,000 seats. The site was on and around part of the City Walls in Derry in Northern Ireland.

Working closely with the Theatre Consultant Michael Holden, we developed a scheme for a three-tier theatre with moveable ceiling reflectors which could drop down to

conceal the balcony and circle, creating a 300-seat or 700-seat theatre with the reflectors forming an acoustic and visual ceiling.

When fully raised the reflectors still provided an important acoustic function while revealing the whole of the 1,000-seat auditorium. Operationally, the flexibility uses hydraulic lifts to create an orchestra pit and forestage, and the stalls seats are on a raked floor which can be lifted to the level of the stage, creating a large flat-floor space for banquets and trade events.



True acoustic flexibility on this scale can not really be provided by purely acoustic means and the auditorium therefore includes a SIAP electro-acoustic system, using more than 120 loudspeakers, an array of microphones and some very smart signal processing to adjust reverberation times and add individual reflections to create a concert hall acoustic in a theatre shell. We worked closely with SIAP to integrate the system into the building and to allow it to be used also for speech reinforcement and cinema surround-sound.



The opening night performance by the Ulster Youth Orchestra and Barry Douglas) was highly successful in spite of the collapse of the piano shortly after the final rehearsal, leading to some very hurried carpentry work and some smart work from the piano tuner.

Client : Derry Theatre Trust  
Architects : HMD, Derry  
Theatre Consultant : Michael Holden Associates  
Contract value : £13 m including retail development  
Completion : 2001