

the ASTC letter

The Newsletter of the AMERICAN SOCIETY OF THEATRE CONSULTANTS

Why Hire an ASTC Theatre Consultant?

The American Society of Theatre Consultants celebrates its twentieth birthday in January, 2003. Two decades ago, thirteen founding members gathered in Jules Fisher's conference room in New York City and laid the groundwork for the organization. Today, the American Society of Theatre Consultants has forty-one members representing the majority of theatre consulting firms practicing throughout the United States.

Through twice-yearly meetings, on-going committee work, and the exchange of technical information and experience, ASTC members have over the last twenty years significantly advanced the role and effectiveness of the Theatre Consultant as a member of the building design team and as an advocate for the design of successful performance facilities. Why hire an ASTC theatre consultant? Why would you not?

The design of performance facilities is often stated to be in the same category of complexity as that of hospitals and laboratory facilities, being the most complex physical structures to achieve. ASTC members are committed to an ongoing process of broadening their understanding of this building type through in-depth examinations of the many aspects of performance facility design. Each year, the organization sponsors a Forum at which members explore a new subject and issues are examined in detail. Past Forum topics include:

- Programming and Planning

for the 21st Century

- The Artistic Side of Theatre Planning
- Acousticians
- Facilities for Dance
- Large Venues
- Casino Theatres
- Outdoor Theatres
- Concert Halls
- Opera Houses
- Churches as Theatres
- The Renovation of Broadway
- Front of House Design Issues
- Building and Fire Codes related to Performance Facilities

share valuable information on experiences and code interpretations.

The ASTC has ties with allied organizations including the United States Institute for Theatre Technology (USITT), the International Association of Auditorium Managers (IAAM), the Entertainment Services and Technology Association (ESTA), and the International Institute for Theatre Technology (OISTAT). For further outreach, in 1999 the ASTC established an Internship Program that invites qualified theatre and architectural students to participate in annual Forum activities.

Why hire an ASTC theatre consultant? ASTC members contribute articles and information to this annual ASTC newsletter with a circulation of over 1,000 that includes architects, theatre owners, performing

arts organizations and theatre practitioners. ASTC members are well connected throughout the performing arts community.

The ASTC membership created and has presented on numerous occasions the popular Great Theatre Design Charrette, which assembles theatre consultants, architects, directors, managers, technicians, and students into competing "instant" building design teams that playfully yet intently plan, design and sometimes produce solutions to intriguing theatre design challenges over the course of a three-hour period. The "Charrette" has successfully introduced many individuals to the world

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- Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Consultants Round-Table Discussions

The ASTC has a continuing interest and involvement in the evolution of building codes and has been a major catalyst in the development of all of the major building and life safety codes pertaining to performance facility design. Funded by financial donations from performance equipment manufacturers and through membership dues, the organization has participated for over fifteen years at a committee level in ongoing code development. ASTC members have direct access to up-to-date building code information and

A Quick Peek Into the Dressing Rooms!

Backstage, everything happens in real time. Members of the audience, absorbed in the show, usually don't realize that. In the twinkling of an eye, the action shifts from an exterior daylight scene to an interior nighttime setting that is months later. In that same twinkling of an eye, many performers make complete costume changes.

This is only one of the challenges inherent in handling costume and makeup for a live stage production. The places where performers, costumes, and makeup come together are the dressing rooms.

Costumes consist not only of outer garments, but also footwear, millinery, wigs, jewelry and often underwear, armor, headgear and weapons. Even a relatively simple stage show may include several hundred pieces of costume; large elaborate musicals and operas may include thousands of pieces.

Not only are the costumes worn every day, they must also be maintained. Stage performance is an inherently hot business. The heat of the lights and the exertion of stage movement, dance, and acrobatics will make any performer sweat profusely. So undergarments, hose, shirts, blouses and other washables are usually laundered daily. Those garments that cannot be laundered are dry-cleaned frequently. Others require repair or refurbishing under the hard wear of stage use.

All of the above dictates certain requirements that must be present in the design of a theatre to make it an efficient producing facility. Dressing rooms must be close to the stage, for easy access by performers, and accessible to the costume maintenance area for ease of service. It also means that they must be well equipped with makeup counters, mirrors, good lighting, and plenty of hanging room for costumes. They also must have sinks, toilets, and showers.

Costumes often have characteristics that are very unlike the garments that people wear everyday. Plays set in earlier times make use of period costumes.

These are often longer than modern dress. Costumes are often made from heavy fabrics and may be cut fuller for a more sumptuous or elegant look. Other types of costume may be fantastic or fabulous in character or emulate animals and inanimate objects. When coupled with wigs, headgear, hoops, etc., storing these for use in dressing rooms can require a lot of heavy-duty hanging and shelf space per performer, particularly when each of them may make several costume changes during each performance.

Each performer needs a make-up space, too. Makeup counters should be made of extremely durable materials and finishes, must provide room for lots of makeup materials, and are usually relatively shallow, to allow performers to get close to the mirrors in front of them. Large mirrors, good lighting, and convenience power are all essential for each makeup station. Mirrors must be well illuminated with incandescent or halogen lighting that mimics the color temperature, color rendition, and direction of stage lighting. A lot of "bad" stage makeup results from bad dressing room lighting. Electrical outlets are provided for heating steam curlers and curling irons.

Hand sinks are usually provided in the dressing room itself, since hand and face washing is a part of the makeup process. Toilets and showers are customarily partitioned off for privacy. Showers are an essential for performers who generally want to clean up after the hard work of performance before donning their street clothes. They are also essential for removing body makeup.

In addition to all of the above requirements, space is needed for actors to put on and take off costumes, and lockers are required for the secure storage of performers' valuables.

Well-designed, spacious dressing rooms are essential to any efficient, functional backstage entertainment "factory."

Lawrence Graham, ASTC

ASTC Forum 2002 - "The Church as Theatre"

ASTC members gathered in Salt Lake City this September to see the theatrical and religious sights and consider the parallels suggested by the Forum's title. Auerbach Pollack Friedlander's (with architects Zimmer Gunsel Frasca and acousticians Jaffe Holden) awesome LDS Conference Center was alone worth the trip.

The ASTC toured the entire Conference Center, which includes the 900-seat "small" theatre, extensive, redundant, and impressive technical support facilities, and, of course, the Assembly Hall. At more than 21,000 seats, the Assembly Hall is - as far as we know - both the largest church in the world and the largest theatre in the world. It includes a demountable rostrum measuring 120 feet



ASTC Members at Forum 2002

across and sweeping up several stories to display the Tabernacle choir and a large organ. It requires a 10-person crew, four weeks to set up or take down the rostrum setting.

In addition to the LDS facility, the ASTC also toured the Rose Wagner Center, the Capitol Theatre, and Abravanel Hall, all in downtown Salt Lake City. We also invited three knowledgeable guests to address the topic at a round-table discussion. These included Rev. Bobby Lewis, former Associate Pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis; Robert Mahoney, acoustics consultant with a substantial number of completed church projects; and Kerry Nielsen, the principal LDS architect for the Conference Center. The discussion was lively and rewarding.

A BUSY YEAR FOR ASTC CODE WORK

The past year has been the busiest ASTC code effort since the founding of the Society. The Access Board has been revising the ADA Accessibility Guidelines and ASTC has been represented by testimony at hearings and by submitting written comments. A major concern has been the dispersion of wheelchairs within seated assembly spaces. The proposed revisions are significant improvements to the previous language for both people with disabilities and for designers.

For the first time ASTC has participated in the development of the *2003 ICC/ANSI Standard on Accessible and Useable Buildings and Facilities*. Because we represent the largest single group of design professionals focusing on assembly spaces, the ASTC is a full member of the committee. This will be the referenced standard for the 2003 International Building Code and will probably be-

come the most widely used standard for accessibility in the US before long.

In the late 1980's and early 1990's, the ASTC was instrumental in working with the Board for Coordination of Model Codes (BCMC) in the development of modern requirements for Stages and Platforms. (The BCMC report is available on the ASTC web site.) This past year, there was a lot of activity in the area of fire protection for stages and platforms in the development of NFPA 101, *The Life Safety Code*; the first edition of NFPA 500, *Building and Construction Safety Code*; and the continuing development of the International Building Code. In all three, code language relative to when proscenium opening protection is required is being challenged by a fire curtain manufacturer. Changes they have proposed would require fire safety curtains on even the smallest stages and would

return ambiguous and non-performance based language to the codes. ASTC has been successful in opposing these efforts to date, regularly sending representatives to meetings to testify against the changes.

Finally, this year ASTC has expanded its code activities to include participating in the Entertainment Technology and Services Association's (ESTA) Technical Standards Program. We have full membership on the Committee and as well as the Rigging Working Group. In addition our members are chairing the Fire Safety Curtain Standard Working Group which includes a representation of many interests developing a truly performance based standard for fire curtains. When this standard is finally complete and certified as an ANSI standard, it will likely be the first widely recognized and used consensus standard for fire curtains.

ASTC MEMBER NEWS

TE&A London

Several ASTC members attended "Theatre Engineering and Architecture 2002" in London in June. This international conference on modern stage technology and performing arts buildings, attracted over 200 attendees from Europe, Asia, and the Americas. The conference offered an intriguing array of topics on technology and architecture, including "Do Found Spaces Offer Creative Freedom?", "Beating Technology Noise", "Physical Strain on Stage", "Why Do Theatres Cost So Much?", and "Theatre Design and the Superstar Architect".

Joshua Dachs, ASTC, spoke on "The Role of the Theatre Consultant". Bill Conner, ASTC, participated in a presentation on "Audience Safety", speaking about the need (or lack thereof) for fire curtains in modern theatres. Other ASTC members attending this event were Eugene Leitermann, Steven Friedlander, and Robert Shook.

Liaisons

ASTC participates actively with several related organizations, including the International Association of Assembly Managers (IAAM) and the Entertainment Services and Technology Association (ESTA).

ASTC will hold their 2003 Annual Meeting in Houston in February in conjunction with the IAAM Performing Arts Facility Administrators Seminar. ASTC will be presenting a revival of the popular "Great Theatre Design Charette". In addition Joshua Dachs, ASTC, will be participating in an IAAM seminar on "Theatre Design: Art or Science?"

Several ASTC members participate actively in ESTA through their involvement in the Technical Standards Committee (TSC). Bill Conner and Robin Crews are official ASTC representatives to the TSC, in addition to Ted Paget's involvement on the committee. There is a substantial list of ESTA TSC working groups that are in various stages of preparing standards for submittal to ANSI. Among them are:

- E1.2 revision to ANSI E1.2-2000 - Portable Aluminum Towers and Trusses.
- BSR E1.4 - Manual Rigging Systems.
- BSR E1.6 - Powered Rigging Systems.
- BSR E1.8 - Speaker Enclosures Designed for Overhead Suspension.
- BSR E.11 - DMX-512-A.
- BSR E.17 - ACN.
- BSR E1.19 - Ground Fault Protection.

- BSR E1.20 - Remote Device Management.
- BSR E1.21 - Fire Curtains.

Another area of interest that has not turned into a project yet is the matter of fire detection systems and theatrical fog. It keeps coming up in the Fog and Smoke Working Group as a problem. Theatrical fog and haze will set off smoke detectors. Theatre consultants don't design fire alarm systems, but generally they are involved in the early design of a building and are in a position to alert the fire alarm system designer to the problem and to possible solutions.

There are a number of other standards projects in the works, including standards for stage floor with standards for testing. There is a photometric group looking to develop testing standards for entertainment lighting fixtures.

"Having a formal link with ASTC will help us all", says Karl Ruling, ESTA's Technical Standards Manager.

Other ASTC News

Auerbach+Associates is now Auerbach Pollock Friedlander.

Information regarding the ASTC Internship Program is available through the ASTC office.

Theatre projects in progress

The following theatre and assembly projects are in various stages of design and construction in ASTC members' offices:

ARTEC CONSTULTANTS, INC.

Roy Thomson Hall, Toronto, Ontario
Fox Cities Performing Arts Center, Appleton, WI
Four Rivers Performing Arts Center, Paducah, KY

AUERBACH POLLOCK FRIEDLANDER

NYNY/Cirque du Soleil, Las Vegas, NV
Atlanta Symphony, Atlanta, GA
Mesa Arts Center, Mesa, AZ

CDAI

Columbia County Library Theatre, Augusta, GA
Nova Southeastern University Theatre, Ft. Lauderdale, FL
Riverside Military Academy Auditorium, Gainesville, GA

ROBERT DAVIS, INC.

Trinity Repertory Company Pell-Chafee Performance Center, Providence, RI
Playwrights Horizons, New York, NY
Southwest Center for the Performing Arts, Amarillo, TX

FISHER/DACHS ASSOCIATES INC.

Miami Ballet/Opera House, Concert Hall, Miami, FL
Toronto Opera House, Toronto, Ontario
Guthrie Theatre, Minneapolis, MN

GEORGE THOMAS HOWARD ASSOCIATES

Whittier Union High School, Whittier, CA
Jurupa High School, Riverside County, CA
Vista Murrieta High School, Murrieta, CA

GEORGE C. IZENOUR ASSOCIATES

Blair School of Music, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN
Country Music Hall of Fame, Nashville, TN
Theater/Recital Hall, American University, Washington, DC

J&M ASSOCIATES

Windham High School, Windham, ME
Freeport High School, Freeport, ME
Greely Middle School, North Yarmouth/Cumberland, ME

JERIT/BOYS, INC.

University of Mississippi, Oxford, MS
Washington Pavilion for the Arts and Sciences, Sioux Falls, SD
Augustana College, Sioux Falls, SD

JONES & PHILLIPS ASSOCIATES, INC.

The New Lively Arts Center, Daytona, FL
Festival Theatre, Wright Stage University, Dayton, OH
East Grand Rapids High School Theatre, Grand Rapids, MI

LANDRY & BOGAN

Geffen Theatre, Los Angeles, CA
Cal State University Arts Center, Fullerton, CA
Snow College, Ephrem, UT

ROBERT LORELLI ASSOCIATES, INC.

Performing and Visual Arts Center, American University, Cairo, Egypt
Providence College Center for the Arts, Providence, RI
West Chester University, West Chester, PA

LUSTIG & ASSOCIATES, INC.

A.G. Edwards & Sons, Inc. Learning Center, St. Louis, MO
Hannibal LaGrange College, Hannibal, MO
Grand Center Multi-Performing Venues, St. Louis, MO

SCHULER & SHOOK, INC.

Boston Opera House, Boston, MA
Marion Oliver McCaw Hall, Seattle Center, Seattle, WA
Asheville Performing Arts Center, Asheville, NC

KYLE SMITH THEATRE CONSULTING

Georgia Military Academy, Milledgeville, GA
Charlotte Country Day School, Charlotte, NC
Taylor Center for the Arts, Santa Rosa Beach, FL

THEATER DESIGN INC.

Constans Theatre Addition, University of Florida at Gainesville, Gainesville, FL
William Paterson University, Wayne, NJ
Jewish Community Center of Monmouth, Monmouth, NJ

THEATRE PROJECTS CONSULTANTS, INC.

Benjamin & Marian Schuster Performing Arts Center, Dayton, OH
Metropolitan Kansas City Performing Arts Center, Kansas City, MO
Dallas Performing Arts Center, Dallas, TX

WRIGHTSON, JOHNSON, HADDON & WILLIAMS, INC.

West Texas A&M Fine Arts Building, Canyon, TX
Stafford Centre, Stafford, TX
Weatherford High School and Community Auditorium, Weatherford, TX

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of theatre building design and theatre consulting through this fun and memorable experience. The popular "Slide Slam", another ASTC creation, often accompanies the "Charrette" and features slide images and on-the-spot narratives (and humorous audience responses) offered by ASTC members, architects, students and other brave souls willing to take the well-meaning critique.

Another ongoing activity is the ASTC database of completed theatre design projects. This database is

available to ASTC members and provides valuable information on programs and cost data for guidance in budgeting upcoming projects.

The American Society of Theatre Consultants is proud of its accomplishments over the last twenty years and looks forward to serving a continuing and increasing role in the advancement of the design of performance facilities and allied projects. So, why hire an ASTC theatre consultant? You should already know the answer.

Robert Long, ASTC

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To learn more about the ASTC, visit our website:

www.theatreconsultants.org