

Flexibility and adaptability are the keys to the design of the Centre. The flexible proscenium of the Grand Theatre (section 1) allows for touring productions to perform without drastic design changes. The Concert Hall (below and section 2) boasts state-of-the-art sound, with acoustical curtains and a moveable acoustic canopy. The retractable seating of the Studio Theatre (section 3) allows for four seating patterns.

*Flexibilité et adaptabilité sont les clés à succès pour la conception du Centre. Le proscenium adaptable du Grand Théâtre (Section 1) permet l'accueil de productions de tournées sans grand changement de décors. La salle de concert (ci-dessous et Section 2) utilise l'équipement sonore de pointe, les rideaux acoustiques et un plafond acoustique qui se déplace. Les sièges rétractables dans le studio-théâtre (Section 3) permettent quatre configurations de salle.*

Beweglichkeit und Anpassung sind die Grundlagen für das Design des Centre. Die veränderbare Vorbühne des grossen Theaters (Abschnitt 1) erlaubt Tourneeproduktionen ohne schwierige szenische Umbauten. Der Konzertsaal (unten und Abschnitt 2) hat modernsten sound, durch akustische Vorhänge und eine bewegliche akustische Decke. Im Studiotheater gibt es vier Bestuhlungsvarianten (Abschnitt 3).

cites two features that cater to the hall's state-of-the-art sound. "There are absorbent acoustic curtains that can be lowered to vary the reverberation time for different types of music. Also, for the orchestra itself, there is an overhead adjustable acoustic canopy of wood and acrylic. This can be raised, lowered, or tilted to direct the sound within the orchestra pit. This way, the brass can hear the strings, the winds can hear the percussion, etc. It's there to make the orchestra comfortable, and the conductor has the freedom to adjust the canopy at his discretion. If we need to reinforce the sound for smaller chamber pieces or single artist presentation, a speaker system can descend from the roof. Sound limitations are very few."

There is also overhead dedicated orchestra lighting from the acoustic canopy, as well as a fixed simple rig to provide presentation lighting for variety, jazz, and popular music events. The hall boasts a 8,000-pipe, 93-stop Rieger organ from Austria, reportedly the largest such instrument in the Far East.

The Grand Theatre has been designed for drama, Western and Chinese opera, musicals, and films. It officially opened 6 November with Beethoven's *Fidelio* by the Cologne Opera with the Gürzenich Orchestra. Taylor boasts of the flexibility of the Grand Theatre. "The proscenium ranges in size from 10 to 15 meters wide, with a height of 5.5 to 9 meters. This flexibility allows touring productions to perform without drastic design changes." Andrew Peat, production manager for the Olivier Theatre in London, who brought the National Theatre's tour of *Hamlet* to Hong Kong from 22 - 25 December, agrees. "Working at the Centre has been quite a joy," he says. "Technically the space is very good — they mainly use Rank Strand lighting with a Galaxy desk, which is what we use at the

Olivier. That enabled us to program the show in the UK. Generally, it was an easy transfer — the set was rebuilt with only minor alterations. Besides personnel, we only brought along furniture, props, and costumes." Taylor mentions that the smaller proportions of the stage were created specifically for Chinese opera,

which is generally wide but not high.

The main stage is bordered by a 248 square meter rear stage and a 284 square meter side stage. The rear stage revolving wagon is 16 meters wide by 12 meters deep, with a 11 meter diameter. The electronically operated orchestra pit seats 110. Its 1,750 seats are divided into an auditorium and two balconies. Lighting is controlled by a 450 way Galaxy Control at the first circle. There are 217 profiles, 86 fresnels, 10 beamlights, 26 cyclorama units, and 48 colour change units. "There is an excellent cable system for lights and sound," says Taylor. "We don't have to run miles and miles of cable in the space — the cable infrastructure is already there."

The third auditorium is the flexible Studio Theatre, offering variable stage formats for small-scale productions, experimental theatre, and dance. It opened 6 November with a performance of Thornton Wilder's *The Matchmaker* by the Hong Kong Repertory Theatre. The retractable seating platforms in the space allow for a 39 square meter arena stage, allowing space for 542 seats; a 117 square meter thrust stage, leaving room for 338 seats; a 142 square meter end stage, with 294 seats; and a 203 square meter transverse stage, with 380 seats. Lighting is controlled by a 120 way Galaxy control, with 84 profiles, 20 fresnels, 20 beamlights, 16 cyclorama units, and 22 colour change units.

"The Studio Theatre is a very flexible space," says Taylor. "There is a technical gallery with lighting from all four sides; six bridges that go across from the sides of the technical gallery; and suspension grids above that from which we can attach scenery. Sound-wise, it's got surround-sound — sound on all four sides, overhead speakers, even underseat speaker facilities."

There has been a certain amount of criticism of the Centre for, amongst other things, the lack of windows in the offices and dressing rooms. Taylor attributes this to the designer's concept. "Lei wanted a monolithic structure — and that's what he built." But the complaints are quickly vanquished by the ovations. As Andrew Peat of the National says, "The space has a good feel to it — ample dressing rooms, generous backstage areas, a comfortable wooden floor, easy access. It's a really nice place to work."

