

Hamer Hall Arts Centre

Melbourne, Australia

The new Hamer Hall: one of the world's best venues for acoustics

After two years of redevelopment by the architectural firm Ashton Raggatt McDougall (ARM) and auditorium specialists Schuler Shook, Hamer Hall is now fully operational. The upgrading of the venue included improvements to the stage technology and seating, and the creation of new spaces (for employees and performers), a new entrance, and improved access to the riverfront.

One of the challenges was to provide the auditorium with acoustics that would make it one of the best in the world.



Technical details:

Name: Hamer Hall Arts Centre

Location: Melbourne, Australia

Year of development: 2011

Architecture: Ashton Raggatt McDougall (ARM)

Theatre consultants: Schuler Shook

Construction company: Boulderstone

Client: Arts Centre Melbourne

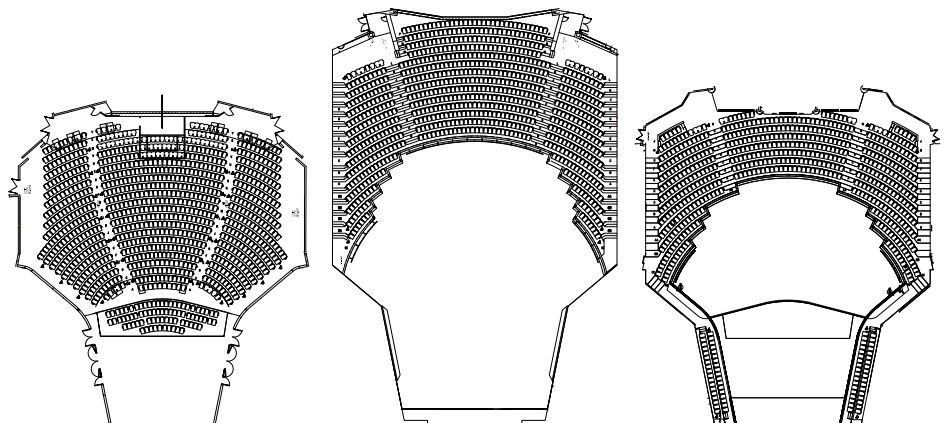
Floors: 8

Capacity: 2,500 seats

Product: Hamer Seat, custom product

As Judith Isherwood -its Chief Executive- explains, “the auditorium has a theatricality of design that many other halls don’t have. While it works beautifully as a performance space, thanks to the great technology we’ve put into the hall, the excitement can be felt even before the performance starts.

The combination of the new seating, the original hand-painted walls and ceiling motifs, the 150 suspended LED lights, and the new sense of warmth makes it a very enjoyable space. Add to these elements the slick movement of the new technical zone and you get a real sense of excitement when you enter the space and before the first note is played.”





Challenges and solutions

The scale of the project and the exacting technical requirements made it a real challenge. The installation was particularly complicated because of the variations in the seat height and the fact that they had to be mounted on the riser face in the amphitheatres. Figueras provided 2.500 seats for the auditorium. To ensure optimal ergonomics and visibility, each unit has a specific seat width, backrest height and angle, and pedestal angle. While most of the seats are fixed, some, including those in the orchestra pit, are movable. Others have side panels that feature the electronically controlled Swing system, which allows the arm to open to the side, making it easier to seat people with reduced mobility.

The seats in the stalls are equipped with an air-conditioning diffuser in the base of the pedestal. After carrying out a number of noise-level tests, Figueras engineers were able to ensure that the sound level of the diffusers does not exceed 6 dB(A) to avoid any disturbance to the acoustics of the venue.

Product supplied

The seat selected for the project is inspired by the 128 Carmen model, which meets stringent acoustic requirements, and is finished in natural oak and orange upholstery. Each seat had to be adapted to its specific location, so Figueras ended up creating over 50 variants

of the basic model for the hall (stalls and two amphitheatres). The seats feature an oak timber construction with vibrant orange brushed velvet upholstery.

The use of timber meets the acoustic performance, but also matches the timber textures of the original palette which feature in the concert hall. The orange velvet provides a strong colour which complements the original mood, but the brightness and plushness add a sense of glamour and “special occasion” in contrast to the monumental interior.

