

Encore!

After a gap of 10 years, Multistage International has returned to the Thessaloniki Concert Hall in Greece to complete the second phase of development – stage technology for an additional 1,500-seat hall

Right: Butterworth Concert Hall

Below: The new venue at Thessaloniki Concert Hall

Multistage International can be forgiven for thinking it has been here before when it comes to the Thessaloniki Concert Hall in Greece. After a gap of 10 years since completing the first phase of this building project, the company is now finishing work on a second phase – an additional 1,500-seat venue built in the car park of the original. Indeed the initial Concert Hall marked the beginnings of the group of people that now make up Multistage International. During the later stages of the first design stage of the Concert Hall, in August 1999, John Tune and his team were made redundant and only stuck together, initially as JVT Associates, to finish the design and installation of the stage machinery for the Greek builder GEK.

The original Concert Hall is a multipurpose hall with a 40-tonne moving concert shell that when retracted allows the motorised flying winches to be used. The stage and forestage comprise a series of motorised platforms that allow the area to be configured in a variety

of settings depending on the requirements of the production. The initial stage equipment installation took two years to complete, which followed a year spent installing the stage equipment at the Royal Theatre, Thessaloniki, with acoustic consultant Theodore Timagenis.

Upon the completion of the Thessaloniki Concert Hall in 2001, JVT Associates, with help from Tonis Toumazis, managing director of Atlas Pantou Constructions, became Multistage International and since then the company has amassed an impressive track record of stage engineering, lighting and audio projects.

In 2008 Multistage International started on the design for the second phase of the Thessaloniki Concert Hall project, working again with acoustic consultant Timagenis, as well as Flemings & Barron. Due for completion in 2009, Multistage International has designed and installed motorised tracking acoustic panels, overstage lighting and scenery bars, forestage lighting bars with motorised ceiling panels that allow the auditorium ceiling to be closed when not in use, and a scenery lift linking the car park with the stage. Work is almost complete and the installation engineers were recently asked to do a full maintenance service on the original Concert Hall, as they were already next door, so to speak. Thankfully the company says very little was wrong even after eight years of use.

Multistage International doesn't only work in Thessaloniki though – 2008 also saw it start the design for the renovation of the Butterworth Concert Hall at Warwick Arts Centre in the UK. Working for the contractor Moss Construction and design consultants Acoustic Dimensions, four motorised stage lifts were installed to offer the flexibility needed to create the myriad of configurations needed for the venue. The lifts cover an area of 152m², each travelling over 1.5m, and use Serapid's Linklift chain, so removing the need for additional civil works. Taking only

four weeks from when the first components arrived on site, Multistage International installed, commissioned and handed over the working system to the venue in April 2009.

"We found working with Multistage very easy. We were able to draw on its extensive knowledge and experience in the development of some tricky details such as the lift guides," says Nicholas Edwards of Acoustic Dimensions. "Multistage's CAD drawings were clear and its site installation and testing very clean and effective."

Multistage International is currently finishing off projects in the UK, including a comprehensive performance lighting and audio visual installation within the banquet and conference rooms at the Royal Garden Hotel Kensington, as well as working on designs for a project in Belfast, and contracts in Cyprus. ■

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