

Constructing a union of past and present

OSBORNE

CHICHESTER FESTIVAL THEATRE

“The theatre reopened just 21 months after its demolition began. I am immensely proud of the hard work by our team, we are extremely thankful.” **Alan Finch, Executive Director - Chichester Festival Theatre**

PROJECT	Chichester Festival Theatre
CUSTOMER	Chichester Festival Theatre
LOCATION	Chichester
CONTRACT	Single stage traditional
COMPLETION	2014
VALUE	£11.4m

Issue

As Chichester Festival Theatre marked its 50th birthday, its ageing infrastructure required updating to meet new building regulation demands and increased attendance figures. The project needed to focus on a regeneration rather than a complete redesign, as requested by the theatre board.

The fundamental challenge was to accommodate bringing the theatre up to modern standards whilst maintaining the ambience and charm of the original 'pavilion in the park'. This involved building around the existing structure and iconic facades to maintain the feel and atmosphere so lovingly created by Sir Lawrence Olivier when it was originally built. Specific requirements for the project included:

- Addressing structural weaknesses arising in original design and materials used whilst accommodating expectations of modern audiences, as well as capacity growth
- Incorporating modern advances in technology and acoustics to enhance the performance for audiences
- Keeping to tight financial and timetable constraints

- Ensuring that the theatre's summer programme was not interrupted during the works by temporarily relocating the theatre, to minimise disruption to the community

Solution

A combination of technical and modern aesthetic design solutions was delivered, achieving a blend between existing structure and state of the art construction techniques to create an enhanced performance space.

- An independent structure was created to carry heavier stage lighting and engineering equipment to take the bearing off the original lightweight roof structure
- Optimising space: bringing the previously unused side galleries back into use and creating a back of house extension to incorporate new dressing rooms
- A new thrust stage - the first of its kind in the UK - and reprofiling of seating was incorporated into the main auditorium to increase audience acoustics and enhance the connection between performer and audience

- Aesthetic improvements to the façade of the building included the addition of glazing strips to increase the light in the building, providing stunning views of the adjoining park from the main staircases

During the works, a 1,400-seat temporary 'Theatre in the Park' was built a football pitch away from the site to ensure that ongoing events were not interrupted by the regeneration and to ensure minimal disruption to all who use and work at the theatre.

Outcome

The building's regeneration reflects its original design and ambience and respects the original feel that was carefully crafted so many years ago. With its stripped back features and enhanced inside spaces, the finished product caters to the theatre's modern requirements whilst maintaining its original and iconic appeal, creating a union of past and present.

