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Baryshnikov Arts Center to Open Jerome Robbins Renovated Theater as One of the Most Technically Advanced Theaters of Its Size

Posted By Susan Piperato, 11/19/09

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NEW YORK, NY—The Baryshnikov Arts Center (BAC), will open the state-of-the-art Jerome Robbins Theater in early 2010, a newly renovated venue within the building that houses the Center's existing facility at 450 W. 37th Street in New York City. BAC has worked closely with its project team to create a venue with the flexibility to accommodate dance, music, and theater presentations at a superior level of quality. When completed, the Jerome Robbins Theater will be unique among Manhattan venues as one of the most technically advanced theater of its size, and will achieve LEED certification for sustainable design and construction. The project team includes project managers, Denham Wolf Real Estate Services Inc.; architecture and engineering firm, WASA/Studio A; theater and acoustical consultants, Arup; structural engineers, Gilsanz Murray Steficek; and construction manager, Alcon Builders Group.

"Our objective was to renovate the Jerome Robbins Theater by enhancing the audience/performer relationship to reflect the philosophy and aesthetic of the BAC," says Stanford Makishi, Executive Director of BAC. "We could not have asked for a better team – one that is mindful of the budget, adheres to the timeline with exceptional attention to detail, and brings to the project extraordinary creativity and hard work."

The Jerome Robbins Theater will have sophisticated visual, sound, and design elements to benefit both audiences and artists. Visual sightlines were improved by investigating numerous stage/audience configurations to ensure that each of the 238 seats provides superior sightlines. Lighting systems with a maximum of 264 dimmers at 2.4kw and two dedicated follow-spot positions guarantee a wide spectrum of visual and lighting capabilities. Fully-motorized rigging system with a maximum of 18 line sets, a capacity of 1,750 pounds and winch speed of 20 feet per minute, allow for elaborate productions capabilities with multiple set changes.

The sophisticated sound system includes a control booth in the rear as well as a removable mixing position in the house. Advanced variable acoustics were achieved using wall panels that can be added or removed, offering performance capabilities that range from acoustical stringed instruments to amplified musical theater.

"The design of the Jerome Robbins Theater has focused on the experience of both performer and audience member and endeavors to enhance the relationship between the two, which is at the heart live performance" says Martin Kapell, architect for the space. "Through careful attention to sightlines and the materiality of the space, there will be an intimacy and immediacy to the theater that is often difficult to achieve. When coupled with a state-of-the-art theatrical infrastructure, there will be few theaters like it."

Architectural design elements of the project utilize a juxtaposition of new and old materials to add richness and depth to the space while adding sustainable features. Both aesthetically pleasing and environmentally responsible, the renovation incorporates materials with high-recycled content, such as "weathered" steel with a warm patina that will wrap around seating areas, sustainable wood panels for acoustics, and glowing synthetic resin materials for stair handrails.

"Having helped the Baryshnikov Arts Center purchase the property in November of last year, Denham Wolf is proud to be the project manager for its renovation," said Jon Denham, principal of Denham Wolf Real Estate. "The Jerome Robbins Theater will be a destination for performance groups and artists from around the world. The process of developing the project has been a reflection of how the BAC works – multidisciplinary and collaborative in every aspect."