

A New Stage Environment Expands Potential for Canada's National Arts Centre Orchestra

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ABSTRACT

Recent renovations within Southam Hall at Canada's National Arts Centre have enlivened the aural and visual concert environment, improving the acoustic conditions for orchestral performers onstage. The original hall lacked in its ability to provide onstage support and created an apparent and literal distance between the orchestra and audience. Qualitative and quantitative data from audience and performers clearly indicated some of the original room's key deficiencies; in some instances, the conditions were simply lackluster, in other cases, the acoustics were problematic. The overall experience lacked in depth and clarity. Criteria for the hall's renewal sought to solve the acoustic shortages while also enriching the visual environment.

A new shell, forestage architecture, and audience seating provided the means to reshape the room, allowing it to speak with a new articulate voice, elevating the overall experience. Feedback gathered from performers and audience periodically through the course of the first season in the renovated room coupled with measured data have given further insight into the contrasts between the former and improved environments. The orchestra has been able to redefine the technical and artistic possibilities as they have adapted to the renovated room.

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