

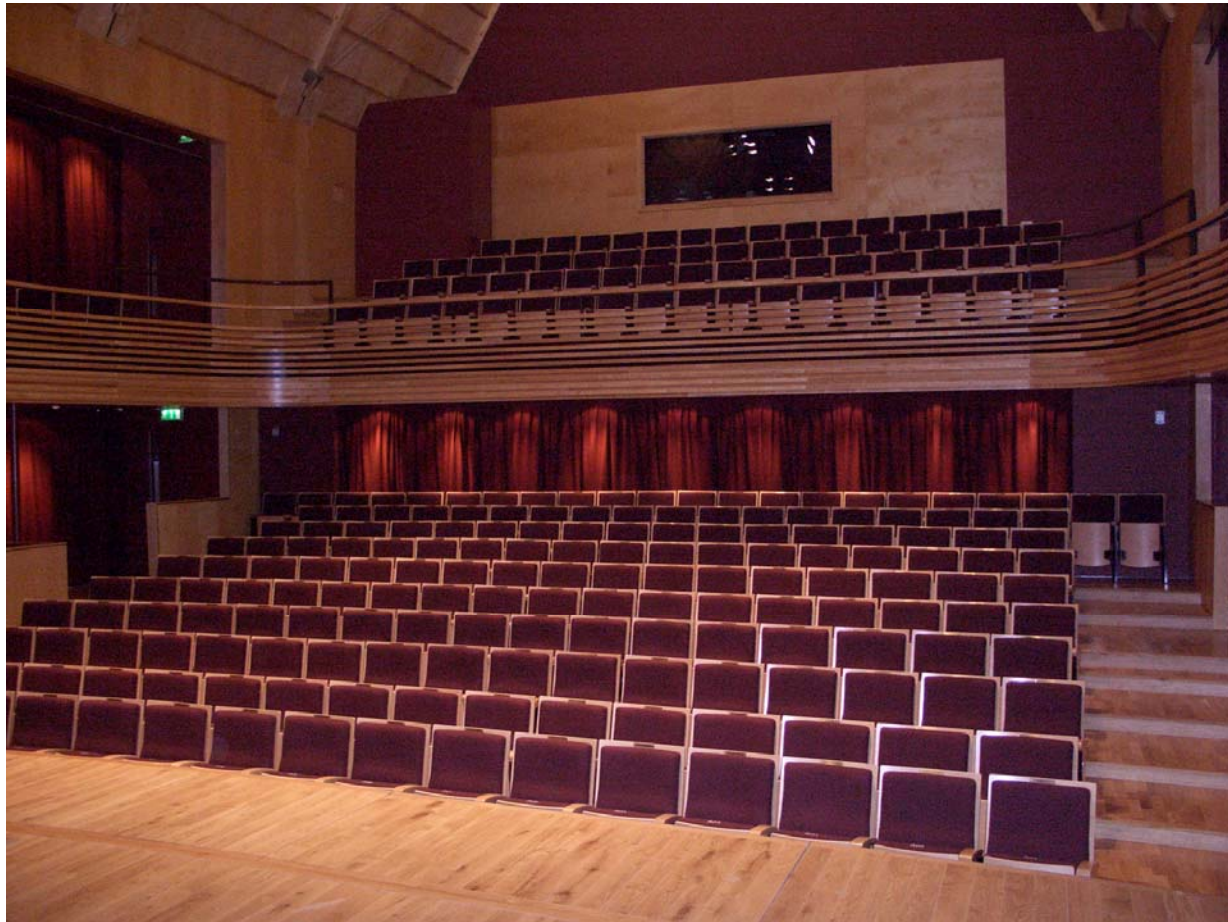
Yehudi Menuhin School, Surrey

Specialist in Flame Retardant Fabrics. Manufacturer and Installer of all types of Theatrical Drapes and Stage Equipment

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Drapes specialists J&C Joel has supplied the acclaimed Yehudi Menuhin School for gifted young string and piano players, with 14 special acoustic drapes for two levels of their brand new 315 seat Menuhin Concert Hall.

The funding impetus for the £5 million project came with the death of Menuhin, the school's founder and mentor, in 1999. The new venue was finally completed and opened in January. Lead Architect Mark Foley of Burrell Foley Fischer worked closely with the School's acoustician Bob Essert of Sound Space Design and theatre consultants Anne Minors Performance Consultants.

It was Essert who recommended J&C Joel to provide the necessary drape elements, knowing the Halifax based company from previously working on The Sage, Gateshead, where Joel's supplied the drapes.

The Menuhin Hall is a chamber music venue and a daily performance and rehearsal space for school use. The students are primarily string and piano players, however they also participate in school choirs, and student rock groups are starting up. Additionally, the Hall is available to hire for other music events and recording sessions.

With all this in mind, acoustical flexibility was essential, and the drapes are a vital component of the room's sonic ambience.

Sound Space Design specified the drapes, and Anne Minors Performance Consultants prepared the specifications and drawings. The acoustic requirement was for the drapes to reduce the reverberation

and loudness over the widest possible frequency ranges.

Heavier drapes provide better low frequency sound absorption, and Essert had recommended two layers with a total weight of 1500g/sqm. The room's finishes of natural and painted timber are designed to optimise the sound for strings, but the idea was also to ensure the room is optimised for other types of musical instruments and for amplified sound.



Essert contacted J & C Joel's Sales Manager, Suzanne Wynne, who managed the project for them, and introduced her to Headmaster Nicolas Chisholm. Wynne comments, "It was a privilege to be asked onboard such a prestigious project, and be involved in an environment that encourages gifted children to excel and become first rate musicians."

The face of the drapes is a coloured wool serge, custom dyed by Joel's to the clients specific choice, a rich Copper Beach colour. This was one of the biggest challenges of the manufacture, recalls Wynne.

The original colour was chosen from a paint swatch, but as colours can appear different on various base materials like paper, fabrics, wood etc, considerable skill and dexterity was required to obtain an almost exact match between paper and fabric dye. J&C Joel worked closely with the dyer and finisher, when the end result was produced, everyone involved was well impressed.

After learning what was available from Joel, SSD and AMPC specified 420g/m² of face fabric and 600g black wool serge lining, both with 50% fullness. All drapes were manufactured by one of J & C Joel's in-house sewing departments, utilising their most experienced cutters and machinists, specially trained in manufacturing drapes of this nature.

AMPC worked with the architects and client in seeing that the drapes were quickly and easily deployable in the venue. The curtains can be drawn over the walls on three sides of the auditorium, thus altering the room acoustics to the needs of the performance. This creates different environments conducive to anything from vocals and the spoken word to various levels of loudness required for different musical performances.



Headmaster Nicolas Chisholm says, "The drapes are an absolutely fundamental element of the Hall's acoustics - and they certainly do their job well. The system gives us infinite variety by having them fully or partially drawn. We enjoyed working with J&C Joel enormously on the project, and are delighted with the end results. In addition to their acoustic properties, the drapes are also very aesthetically pleasing. They look sumptuous and glowing when drawn and add to the intimate feel of the space."

About The Yehudi Menuhin School

The Yehudi Menuhin School is located in Stoke d'Abernon, Cobham, Surrey and was founded by Menuhin in 1963. He wanted to create the ideal conditions for musically gifted children to develop their full potential on stringed instruments and piano. The School has expanded since then and now educates over sixty talented boys and girls between 8 and 18, at least 50% from the UK and the rest from all over the world. In 1973 the School gained 'special status' as a Centre of Excellence for the Performing Arts. Since 1975 pupils at the school have been funded by the Department for Education so parents pay a contribution towards the cost of their child's education according to their means. It is intended that once selected, children should be able to attend the school for their exceptional musical ability, irrespective of their parents' financial background.

Content

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