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## CONSTRUCTION AND PLANNING

# Revolutionizing Sound in a Historic Concert Hall

The Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall, home to the Oregon Symphony since 1984, is a mainstay in downtown Portland, Oregon. Since its opening in 1928, the historic building has undergone a number of reinventions, from its original role as a Vaudeville hall to a movie theater and, ultimately, a live music venue.

Despite the venue's popularity, several challenges—including an aging shell of reflecting panels surrounding the stage, coupled with a lack of warmth and resonance in the venue's acoustics—necessitated a renovation of the facility to ensure it could continue offering an enjoyable experience for patrons and music lovers.

Maintaining the integrity of the historic space was key in this project. To limit the need

for significant architectural alterations, Staging Concepts, a Trex Company with more than thirty years of experience as an industry leader in designing and engineering staging equipment, worked with theater consultant Shalleck Collaborative to create an innovative solution to make use of 3,750 square feet of previously unusable space above the decorative ceiling.

Combining its industry-leading platforms with specially designed end framing for superior support, Staging Concepts developed an access platform system positioned eighty feet above the main floor of the theater. The custom catwalk incorporates aluminum beams that significantly reduce the weight imposed on the existing structure, thus protecting the venerable building.

Staging Concepts also provided custom mounting plates, as well as steel and aluminum guardrail, which sits fourteen inches above the decorative plaster ceiling and allows staff to access the hall's new audio system of more than forty speakers and microphones. The access platform system was built to service the new sound system, which offers a new method for the venue's sound management.

As Cindy Albrecht, director of sales and marketing for Staging Concepts, says, "This project has opened the door to new and exciting ways that we can work with theaters and music venues to offer the best possible experience for patrons while safely and effectively maximizing space. Sound is such a crucial aspect of enjoying live events. The updated acoustics at the Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall will continue to delight music fans for years to come."

The Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall project is a perfect example of the custom solutions that Staging Concepts can not only visualize but realize. To install the access platform system, the Staging Concepts team worked with a variety of trades, including electrical and AV, for the layout of the platform paths. For the necessary access and to get the equipment into the venue undamaged, an opening was made in the ceiling, and a crane was used to load in the equipment, moving materials to an



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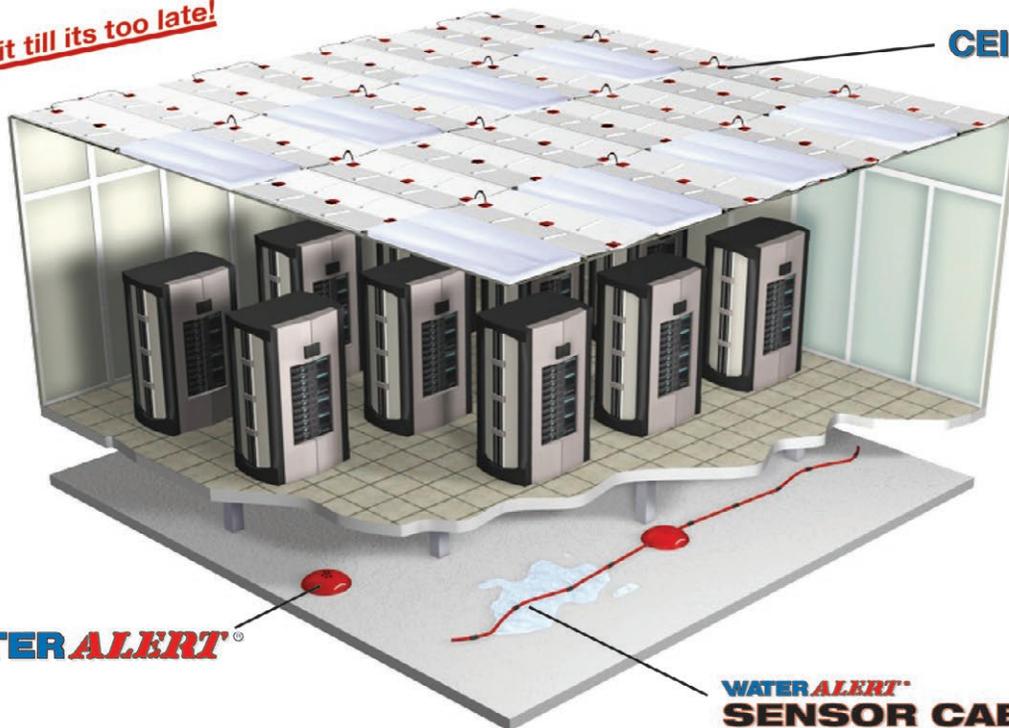
intermediate roof that provided access to the balcony of the seating area. From there, an access panel was removed; the equipment was hoisted through it, and finally moved into the attic area for installation. All of this work was done without the need for HVAC moves or welding and without lasting change to the decorative ceiling. To finalize installation, steel plates were bolted to the existing steel roof trusses. The overhaul was part of a \$9.6 million project funded by a consortium including the Oregon Symphony and the City of Portland. The venue reopened to the public in the fall of 2021.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** Staging Concepts engineers and produces the most advanced modular, custom portable staging solutions for all types of venues, including performing arts spaces and production companies, sports facilities, worship venues, convention centers, hospitality settings, and special events. Since 1990, the company has been committed to elevating the abilities of all people to safely access and enjoy amazing life experiences. Based in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Staging Concepts is a division of Trex Commercial Products, Inc., a subsidiary of Trex Company, Inc. For more information, visit [www.stagingconcepts.com](http://www.stagingconcepts.com).

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