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CASE STUDY
The Gordy | Houston, TX

New Houston Theater Limits Noise Intrusion With BILCO's Acoustical Smoke Vents

The Gordy might not be the biggest theater in Houston, but in terms of appeal, intimacy and community impact, the newest addition to city's entertainment scene is certainly just as important.

The Gordy, named after philanthropists Russell and Glenda Gordy for their \$5 million donation to the \$35 million project, brings three theaters into one 66,850 square foot campus. The theater was constructed in a former storage facility for the Museum of Fine Arts. Architects also designed an addition to the building.

Three performance venues are the undeniable star of the show at The Gordy, which includes seating for 606 patrons of the arts. Charcoalblue, an international theatre and acoustics design consultancy, designed the theater areas in conjunction with project architect Gensler.

The 252-seat Sterling Stage is a thrust-stage theater, meaning that the stage extends into the audience on three sides. Tiered seating with handmade velvet seats add an air of intimacy.

The Lester and Sue Smith Stage includes 220 seats, while the versatile Rochelle and Max Levit Stage features 134 seats and can be configured in 17 ways.

"Together, they provide a varied and dynamic setting for live theater experiences of all kinds, from world premiere plays to jukebox musicals and everything in between," Joel Burkholder, The Gordy's Product Manager and Technical Director, said in a press release.

The Gordy is the home of Stages, a 43-year-producer of performances in Houston. Locally-based artists and crafts people from Stages showcase their work at The Gordy. Stages even provides learning opportunities, performance and product internship programs for college students, and a summer-time conservatory for middle school and high school students.

The building includes a parking garage, pedestrian plaza, rehearsal space, dressing rooms, costume room, scene shop and office space.

Architects specified seven acoustical smoke vents from BILCO for the project. Two vents measure 4-feet x 7-feet, 6-inches and others are 4-feet x 6-feet. Vents at The Gordy feature STC 50 and OITC 46 sound ratings, the highest on the market.



The smoke vents limit noise intrusion and are widely used in concert halls, theaters and other applications where outside noise can impact performance quality.

Acoustical smoke vents also include the standard properties that help firefighters bring a fire under control by removing smoke, heat and gases from a burning building. Vents also feature a Thermolatch® II positive hold/release mechanism that ensures reliable vent operation when a fire occurs. Vent covers open automatically upon the melting of a UL-listed 165°F fusible link.

The vents are fully insulated and gasketed for weather-tightness, and gas springs have integral dampers to assure the covers open at a controlled rate.

"We spent a lot of time researching and designing the envelope of the performance space," said Bruno Cardenas, a theater and acoustic consultant with Charcoalblue. "With the acoustical hatches, you won't hear rain, you won't hear traffic. With a regular smoke hatch, you will hear external noises. It's not the noisiest sight, but you don't want exterior noise to become an issue."



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