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CASE STUDY

New Brunswick Performing Arts Center | New Brunswick, N.J.

Come Together: New Jersey Project Combines Theaters and Residences

A project that combines the best of entertainment and residential living adds a show-stopping structure to the community in New Brunswick, N.J.

The New Brunswick Performing Arts Center opened in September 2019, and unites 207 upscale apartments, two theaters and more into one 23-story building. Construction on the \$172 million high rise, located about 40 miles south of Manhattan, began in 2017. Putting together the financial jigsaw puzzle to fund the project began in 2010.

"We wanted to build an arts center that had no debt, and we had to do some unique things to do that," said Christopher Paladino, President of the New Brunswick Development Corporation, which spearheaded the project.

Designed by Elkus Manfredi Architects, the marquee attractions for New Jersey residents are the 463-seat Elizabeth Ross Johnson Theater and the 252-seat Arthur Laurents Theater. The vibes from each theater are quite different – the larger theater is more striking, while the smaller is more quaint – but both allow the building owner to bring first-rate shows to town.

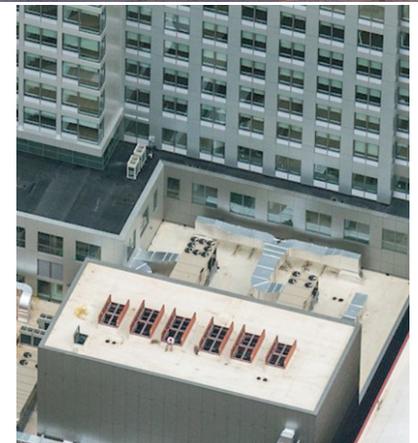
The 5,400 square foot lobby adds an inviting area for patrons and passersby, and three rehearsal rooms that replicate the stages allow for incoming shows to quickly set up in their new surroundings. The spaces can also be used for general classes, workshops, and small public performances. Four member companies, including the Mason Gross School of the Arts from nearby Rutgers University, call the NBPAC home.

The apartments include studios, 1-bed, 1-bath, and 2-bed, 2-bath units. The units come with appliances, panoramic views of New Brunswick and tons of amenities. A rooftop pool and deck, fitness center, demonstration kitchen, karaoke room and residents lounge are among the features that modern-day apartment dwellers crave.

Atop the building are eight acoustical smoke vents manufactured by The BILCO Company. The vents guard against noise intrusion while providing the security of automatic smoke venting. In 2020, BILCO unveiled a new acoustical smoke vent that offers an OITC-46 sound rating and an STC-50 sound rating. Both figures are the highest in the industry.



Two of the vents are 5-feet x 10-feet, and the others were 5-feet, 6-inches by 12-feet. Elliot Serebrenik of Fontana Metal Sales in New York City secured the smoke vents, which allow for the escape of smoke, heat, and gases in a burning building. The vents include a positive hold/release mechanism that ensures reliable operation when a fire occurs. It also automatically releases vent covers upon the melting of a 165° F (74° C) fusible link.



"We were familiar with the manufacturer from previous projects and they offered the most advantageous sizes," said Andrew Goetze, AIA, Project Manager for Elkus Manfredi Architects. "The fire code stipulates a certain percentage of the stage area to be properly vented and BILCO had sizes that fit the bill."

The COVID-19 pandemic temporarily halted shows just six months after the NBPAC opened. The show will go on, eventually, and Paladino promises a unique experience for visitors.

"The experienced theatergoers will see that the level of comfort, the sound, and the sightlines create an experience that is second to none," he said.



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