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CASE STUDY

Great Lakes Center | Petoskey, Michigan

Great Lakes Center for the Arts In Harmony with the Local Environment

When the Great Lakes Center for the Arts opened last year in Michigan, the \$25 million facility featured state-of-the-art equipment, including digital sound technology that is found in only a few theaters across the country.

Further enhancing the sound quality are acoustical smoke vents manufactured by The BILCO Company. The facility, which is located in Petoskey, includes five smoke vents with both an STC and OITC sound rating that block outside noise to maintain the quality of the sophisticated sound system.

The acoustical vents are commonly used at concert halls, theaters and other venues that require limited noise from the outside. The vents also protect property and aid firefighters in bringing a fire under control by removing smoke, heat and gases from a burning building. The vents allow air quality and visibility to be maintained so that guests can safely exit the building and firefighters can enter.

“With the potential for more than 500 visitors for larger events, our team knew we would have a need for a dependable smoke ventilation system,” said Jason Novotny, the lead architect for TowerPinkster, the firm that designed the building. “With this being a high-performing acoustical environment, we designed a separate structure for the performance hall from the remainder of the building. This was solely for acoustical isolation of building elements. The BILCO acoustical smoke vents became a part of this ‘shell within a shell’ with their acoustical sound reducing characteristics.”

The Great Lakes Center for the arts is a 525-seat, 40,000-square-foot facility that is steps away from Little Traverse Bay, an offshoot of Lake Michigan. The Center will host audiences attending performances for classical music, ballet, intellectual dialogue, comedy, country music, jazz, cinema, and more.

Novotny said the architectural team went to great lengths to develop a theme for the space that was highly influenced by local colors and textures. “We included aged copper, Petoskey stone, natural sedimentary rock, and of course, the beautiful blue waters of Lake Michigan,” Novotny said. There is also a curvilinear wood ceiling which resembles waves and



Photo: Brooksie Productions

echoes the flow of the lake. There is also a large rooftop terrace with stunning views of Lake Michigan.

“The color palette and design features intentionally reflect the beauty of Northern Michigan, with blues, sands, grays, copper and patterns and textures that evoke the water of Lake Michigan,” said Jill O’Neill, Executive Director of the Center.

Besides the architectural splendor, technical components also distinguish the center. The theater designers, Fisher Dachs Associates and TowerPinkster, identified solutions that make the venue enticing for performers and patrons.

The multi-channel sound reinforcement system includes loudspeakers that meet the requirements of celebrity performers’ technical requirements, and electronic architecture that allows acoustics of the venue to be optimized to meet the varied requirements of the wide range of programming.

This building adds a space for world-class performers to stop that did not exist in Northern Michigan,” Novotny said. “It adds to the valuation of the performing arts community that was intended by the clients.”

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