

# Leicester Performing Arts Centre "Curve"

Leicestershire, United Kingdom



## Project

Innovative, new build theatre development

## Location

Leicester, UK

## Commencement on site

June 2005

## Completion year

August 2008

## Client

Leicester City Council

## Project partners

Architect: Rafael Vinoly

QS: Turner and Townsend

Mech/Elec Engineers: Ove Arup

Structural Engineers: Adams Kara Taylor

Theatre Planners: Ducks Sceno

Acoustics: Kahle Acoustics

## Value

£51 million

## Bovis Lend Lease role

2 Stage Lump Sum

## Contract Administrator / Client Project Manager

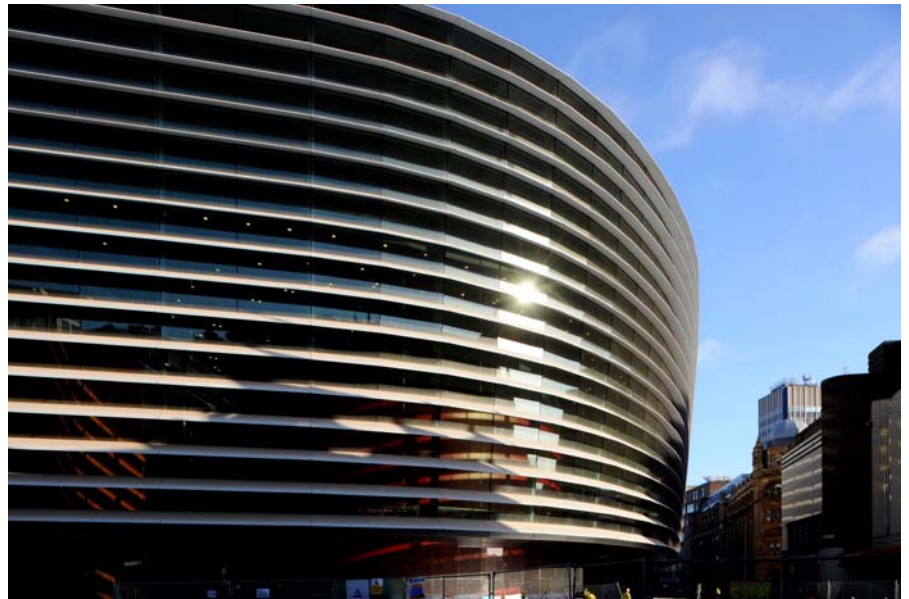
Focus Project Management

## Highlights

- Unique design – 'theatre inside out'
- Complex construction challenges
- Close partnership working with client & authorities

*"The experience of the performing Arts is a form of social interaction in which the spatial and temporal conditions of its aesthetics cannot be reproduced with architecture alone. The value of this limitation, so essential to the character of live performance, is in its immediacy, in its capacity to motivate engagement and with it, the opportunity to encourage social awareness."*

**Rafael Vinoly**



This innovative, new build development is the first UK venture for the award winning architect Rafael Vinoly.

With responsibility for design, project and programme management, the Bovis Lend Lease team worked in close partnership with their client, Leicester City Council, to deliver what has been dubbed a 'theatre inside out' – whilst facing the considerable design and construction challenges posed by a tight, city-centre location.

## Challenges

The 13,000 square metre performing arts centre, with its fully-glazed transparent façade, will house two auditoria and a stage that can be revealed to the street outside.

One auditorium has 750 fixed seats whilst the second has an open floor space for 350, these face each other sharing one large stage which, with the help of acoustic curtains, can be divided, adapted or united into any number of configurations.

Many of the workshops and rehearsal spaces are open to public view. There are four concrete pillars in the main auditorium effectively acting as 'table legs' for the cantilevered roof structure which is free floating with a 130 metre wide glass wall suspended from this with a floating mezzanine storey.

The challenges presented by such an innovative design have been many and varied.

Construction took place in a very confined site and there were a number of very large structures to deal with, necessitating close liaison with the local authority and the highways agency when roads had to be closed.

Special transport was needed to deliver a number of structures, such as their size, and special cranes used to lift these into place.

The glass facade was fitted during winter, when it was discovered that the structure was moving, this meant the need for bracing, allowing the glass to be put in place and take the load before the temporary support could be removed.

## Safety

Detailed advance planning was the key to safety on this project. The need to bring on site and fit such a considerable quantity of unusually large structures without endangering site workers or members of the public meant that sections of the site were closed for safety purposes on occasion.

Regular and detailed consultation with neighbouring businesses, the local authority and the highways agency were of paramount importance to ensure not only practical safety but also compliance.

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## Scope of work

Leicester City Council is developing a Cultural Quarter in the City with the aim of reconfiguring and relocating Leicester's key arts, media and broadcasting provisions as a cultural regeneration driver in the St George's area of the city.

The vision embraces Leicester's intent to become the prime cultural production house of the East Midlands and a regional flagship for cultural diversity, investment and cultural industries.

The new complex replaces the function of the old Haymarket Theatre and the live works of the Phoenix Arts Centre. The vision for the project was to create a theatre 'turned inside out', offering itself as a total resource for professional artists and community members to take and share the theatre.

The building is more like a 'factory' – with the inner workings of the producing theatre, the construction, craft and technical components exposed to the street, to public view and use. Dissolving the distinction between the production and performance of those events, extends the social reach of this form and makes it more accessible and consequently socially more effective.

The project comprises a main foyer and two auditoriums, catering and welfare services, office, storage and theatre production facilities, plus dedicated rehearsal and dance studio areas.

*Progress images August 2008*

