

BIRMINGHAM ROYAL BALLET, BIRMINGHAM



LOCATION: BIRMINGHAM
CLIENT: BIRMINGHAM ROYAL BALLET
VALUE: £2.7M
SIZE: 2375M ²
COMPLETION: 2015
SERVICE: ARCHITECTURE, INTERIOR DESIGN
SECTOR: ARTS & CULTURE
STRUCTURES: ARUP
SERVICES: ARUP
COST CONSULTANT: GLEEDS
CONTRACTOR: OVERBURY CONSTRUCTION

With aspirations of creating a world-class centre of excellence as a dance rehearsal facility and also to support the wide range of additional activities expected of a modern arts organisation; Austin-Smith:Lord was appointed by Birmingham Royal Ballet as Architect, Interior Designer and Design Team Leader for the refurbishment of the Birmingham Royal Ballet building.

The refurbishment included the upgrade of two existing ballet rehearsal studios, the creation of an informal performance venue for audiences of up to 100 people within the existing footprint of the two other rehearsal rooms, the replacement of current facilities for dancers' changing, welfare and rest areas and existing administration offices. The existing reception and main access into the building were also addressed and improved.

"A-S:L produced a fine design for the studio and administration home of Birmingham Royal Ballet. The building required a major overhaul after 25 years of busy use and needed to be brought into the 21st Century. For the sum of £2.7M A-S:L created state of the art dance facilities within the existing building resolving historic 'navigation' issues and making the building accessible and open to external users. Significantly, the design was created with sustainability high on the agenda, both in terms of environment and future business needs. The design involved a major technical upgrade to provide the most efficient use of digital equipment to aid teaching and archiving. The net result is a beautiful and inspiring studio building that will set the standard for decades to come."

Christopher Barron,
Chief Executive - Birmingham Royal Ballet



BRB has been based in Birmingham since 1990 when it moved from London into its purpose built home beside the Birmingham Hippodrome Theatre. The BRB building, which included four ballet studios, changing rooms, shower and toilet facilities for the dancers, offices for the executive, music, production and technical staff and extensive costume workshops and storage; was showing its age. It was clear that while it continued to deliver its primary role as a dance rehearsal facility, it struggled to support the wide range of additional activities expected of a modern arts organisation.

In addition to the Royal Ballet School, the building is also utilised by community groups, a number of which are considered disadvantaged, to hold a range of community based classes and rehearsals. They are supported by the Friends of BRB.

The facilities, though catering for this to a certain extent, needed changing to ensure the building was more suitable for the needs of the community groups.

The works undertaken by us and our team addressed all of the existing building's shortfalls and involved major refurbishment of all three floors of the building.

The major design challenges were overcome during the refurbishment project include the improvement of the working environment for dancers and admin staff, eradication of existing accessibility difficulties inherent in the existing building, significant upgrade and replacement of existing heating, ventilation and lighting systems to meet 21st Century performance and energy use standards, and enhancement of corporate branding, and signage on the exterior of the building.