

The Right Tone

Wood sets the stage for performing arts center



Photo © Tim Griffith

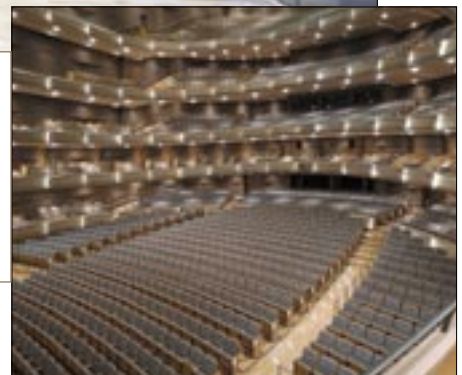
Project Details

Location: Toronto

Wood Flooring: Maple by Gammapar, sapele, basswood

Flooring Installation: Barwood Flooring (Toronto)

Architects: Diamond and Schmitt Architects (Toronto)



The Canadian Opera Company (COC) has been a cultural institution for more than 55 years. For most of its history, the COC had been performing in rented theater spaces, but last year, the COC finally got a permanent home with the Four Seasons Centre—a 240,000-square-foot masterpiece that occupies an entire city block in downtown Toronto and includes R. Fraser Elliott Hall, a five-tiered, 2,000-seat auditorium (inset photo) where the main opera performances take place. The grand building is both an acoustical and architectural marvel, and wood is an integral part of its design and functionality. The designers wanted everything that patrons touch to be wood, so wood was used for flooring, seats, handrails, doors, slats and more.

The majority of the wood flooring used is acrylic-impregnated engineered maple. According to Matthew Lella, project architect at Diamond Schmitt Architects, a glue-down installation directly over the slab was chosen to maximize the reflection of sound waves, while bevels in the flooring create a slight diffusion of the sound. Basswood, a softwood, was installed over sleepers in the orchestra pit because the sleepers and natural wear in the floor diffuse sound directly underneath the musicians. This attention to detail with both acoustics and design earns the architects a standing ovation.— C.L.