

York Theatre Royal: act three

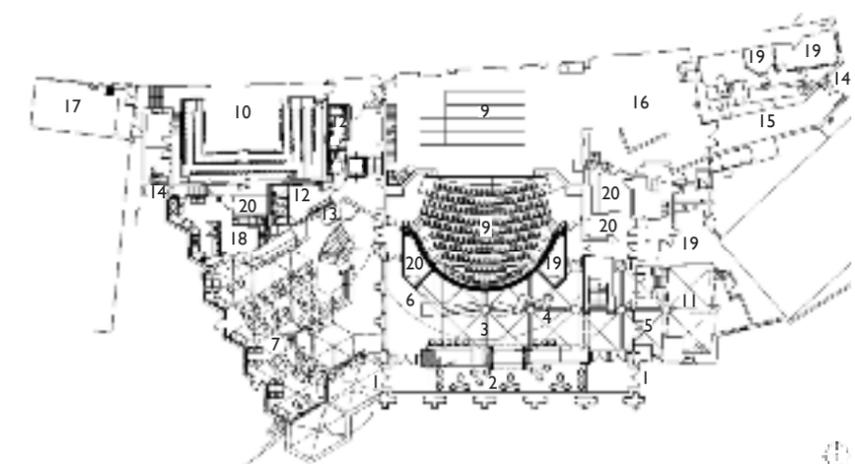
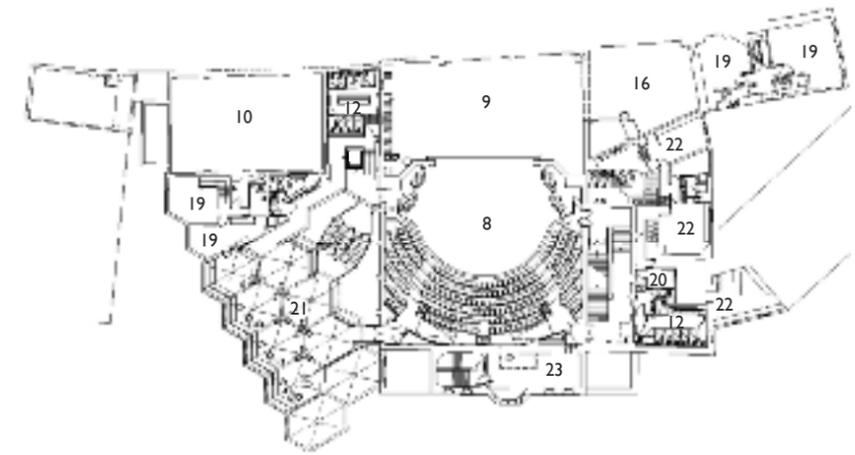
A series of carefully controlled interventions by De Matos Ryan have transformed the spatial and environmental performance of York's grade-two listed theatre.*

De Matos Ryan's reworking of grade-two* listed York Theatre Royal is designed to unlock the potential of a complex site that has been incrementally developed over 270 years. A key feature of the scheme is the introduction of two new lobbied entrances, one of which allows access from the south for the first time. The creation of a new foyer space below the

dress circle at the back of the stalls – an area previously occupied by broom cupboards – combined with glazing the street-facing Victorian colonnade are the most demonstrable front-of-house changes. They dramatically improve circulation, connecting the Patrick Gwynne extension (house left) to the Georgian staircase and Keregan Room (house right).

The foyer not only improves welcome, gathering and orientation, but also allows the heritage of the theatre and site to be revealed. An example is the terrazzo floor, which incorporates a patterned inlay expressing the geometry of mediaeval vaults that once traversed the space. An original doorway has been exposed from within the layering of the colonnade wall

ABOVE/OPPOSITE Front elevation with newly glazed Victorian colonnade; main auditorium with new seats and reworked stage.
 BELOW/RIGHT Ground- and first-floor plans; section. Key: 1 entrance, 2 colonnade, 3 foyer, 4 box office, 5 cloakroom, 6 cafe, 7 restaurant, 8 auditorium, 9 stage, 10 studio theatre, 11 Keregan events space, 12 toilets, 13 lift, 14 staff entrance, 15 get-in, 16 wing dock, 17 workshop, 18 kitchen, 19 offices/back-of-house, 20 plant/technical 21 bar, 22 dressing rooms, 23 control room.



linings and backlit Corian counters accommodate the cafe and box office. Colour changing controls allow the front of house ambience to reflect the theatrical programme. A cafe has been installed in the adjacent colonnade to animate the street frontage and entice visitors.

Aimed at enhancing the theatre-going experience, larger toilets on both sides of the building and on all floors reduce waiting times during intervals. Newly created 'sound lobbies' fitted with acoustic insulation provide spaces on all levels for informal performances, including music and poetry. Acoustic separation of the cafe, restaurant and bars allows them to operate during performances, increasing revenue.

Access has been improved throughout with the introduction of assisted and lobbied front doors, a range of counter levels and step-free access from the street to the auditorium. A new

lift makes the dress circle and first-floor theatre bar accessible to all for the first time.

Patrick Gwynne's listed 1967 extension has been carefully refurbished to de-clutter and reinstate the original design intent. Included are new floor coverings and furniture, upgraded lighting and replaced rooflights.

Among the upgrades to the auditorium are new seating, energy- and operationally-efficient air-handling and enhanced thermal insulation. The rake of the stalls has been increased to improve the visual and spatial connection with the dress circle. The gallery has also been re-raked to improve sightlines and increase ticket yield. Last but not least, the venue's previously raked stage meant that many theatre companies put York at the end of their tours due to the need to adapt scenery for a sloping surface. Alterations to the stage and orchestra pit have

widened the scope of cultural possibilities and improved health and safety. These include level access and a flat stage with better cross-over and increased headroom beneath.

BELOW Refurbished bar; staircase with circular rooflights; backlit Corian-clad foyer; detail part-section through auditorium.
 Key: 1 reinstated York stone pavement flags, 2 powder-coated linings and structural glazing channels, 3 trench heater, 4 carpet, 5 lacquered black steel linings, 6 render, 7 revealed medieval wall, 8 terrazzo floor; 9 black engineered timber slats, 10 LED lighting, 11 acoustic ceiling, 12 air handling and ceiling plenum, 13 acoustic plasterboard, 14 existing cast iron column, 15 backlit Corian bar and box office counters, 16 6mm float mirrors, 17 steel portal frame, 18 existing stone colonnade.

Credits Architect: De Matos Ryan; structural engineer: Price & Myers; services: P3r; qs: Aecom; acoustician: Charcoalblue; main contractor: William Birch & Sons; client: York Citizens Theatres Trust, York Conservation Trust; terrazzo floor: Flowcrete; carpet: Ege Carpets; cork flooring: Wicaders; wall tiles: Solus Ceramics; render: Keim; engineered timber slats: Valchromat; acoustic ceilings: Sto.

