



THE RE-OPENING OF
THE ROYAL
OPERA HOUSE

21 SEPTEMBER 2009

CONTENTS

FOREWORD BY JEAN-JACQUES AILLAGON	3
PRESS RELEASE	5
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HISTORY OF THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE	6
WORKS TO UPGRADE SAFETY STANDARDS: ONE OF THE MASTER PLAN'S PRIORITIES	11
GENERAL PROGRAMME OF THE 2009-2010 SEASON	16
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APPENDICES	
THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE IN FIGURES	21
GLOSSARY	22

FOREWORD

BY JEAN-JACQUES AILLAGON

IN 2003, WHEN I WAS MINISTER OF CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION, I began a multi-year investment programme at the Château de Versailles called the «Grand Versailles Master Plan». The programme's three goals were to:

- improve the palace's fire safety system and the security of the collections it houses;
- make visitor facilities and services more comfortable and efficient;
- step up the restoration of the monument and its decoration.

THE WORK ON THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE THAT STARTED IN LATE 2007 and ended in September 2009 is part of that programme. It:

- moved all the technical facilities that potentially threatened its safety outside the walls of the opera house itself, which, being largely built of wood, was particularly at risk for fire;
- restored the proscenium arch and stage-house, which had undergone alterations in the 19th and 20th centuries, to their original 18th-century configurations;
- completely refurbished the auditorium, a wonder of late ancien régime architecture.

THE SENIOR ARCHITECT OF HISTORIC MONUMENTS FRÉDÉRIC DIDIER, Établissement public de maîtrise d'ouvrage des travaux publics (EMOC), Direction du patrimoine et des jardins de l'Établissement public du musée et du domaine national de Versailles headed by Daniel Sancho, and the Conservation du Musée, first under the leadership of Pierre Arizzoli-Clémentel and today of Béatrix Saule, have tastefully and effectively completed the work. Many people at Versailles harnessed their passion and tapped their skills for this wonderful project but I would especially like to thank Jean-Paul Gousset, the manager of the Royal Opera House and the Queen's Theatre. I would also like to mention the Société des Amis de Versailles, which donated the funds for the recreation of the proscenium arch's soft furnishings.

THIS HUGE, COMPLEX, €13.5-MILLION PROJECT has restored one of the Chateau de Versailles' masterpieces: the Royal Opera House is considered one of Europe's most beautiful court theatres; the most beautiful in my opinion. It has also restored the theatre's status as an outstanding venue to see and hear music and the performing arts. The programme of the 2009-2010 season will enrich the chateau's cultural offer under the joint leadership of the Versailles Baroque Music Centre, which is associated with the *Établissement public du musée et du domaine national de Versailles*, and its subsidiary *Château de Versailles-Spectacles*. I would like to thank Laurent Brunner, the dynamic director of *Château de Versailles-Spectacles*, and Hervé Burckel de Tell, director of the Versailles Baroque Music Centre.

Jean-Jacques Aillagon

Former minister,

President of the Établissement public du musée et du domaine national de Versailles

PRESS RELEASE

THE RE-OPENING OF THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE 21 SEPTEMBER 2009-09

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THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE IS RE-OPENING TO THE PUBLIC AFTER TWO YEARS OF SECURITY UPGRADING WORK. THE ÉTABLISSEMENT PUBLIC DU MUSÉE ET DU DOMAINE NATIONAL DE VERSAILLES IS REVIVING ITS MUSICAL TRADITION by presenting a regular programme of performing arts in this prestigious building. Under the management of its subsidiary Château de Versailles Spectacles, it rounds out the performances the Versailles Baroque Music Centre offers each autumn. The Château de Versailles is open to theatre, dance and the repertoires of Baroque and classical music. This season the Royal Opera House will host the greatest names on the French and international stage. Visitors to the palace can also see the opera and its wings during guided tours.

THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE, AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE CHÂTEAU DE VERSAILLES, IS THE WORLD'S FINEST EXAMPLE OF A COURT THEATRE, in particular because of its architecture, decoration, technology and stage machinery. King Louis XIV originally commissioned Jules-Hardouin Mansart to design the theatre in 1682 but Ange-Jacques Gabriel oversaw construction. The Royal Opera House was inaugurated in 1770, just in time to host the future King Louis XVI's wedding. In 1871 the hall, which Frédéric Nepveu extensively transformed under Louis-Philippe's 1830-1848 reign, was remodelled to house the French Senate. The theatre was not restored to its ancien régime appearance until 1957, after sweeping renovation and restoration work.

IN 2007 THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE WAS CLOSED TO UNDERGO EXTENSIVE SECURITY UPGRADING WORK. Senior architect of historic monuments Frédéric Didier and the Établissement public de maîtrise d'ouvrage des travaux culturels (EMOC) carried out the project, which mainly focused on replacing the heating, wiring and fire detection networks and on moving the technical facilities outside to the opera's courtyard. The work was part of the «Grand Versailles Master Plan» that Jean-Jacques Aillagon, who was then minister of culture and communication, launched in 2003. The priority was to increase the safety of the theatre, which was particularly vulnerable to fires.

THE HISTORY OF THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE

THE BUILDING, WHICH STANDS AT THE END OF THE NORTH WING, IS BOUNDED BY THE RESERVOIR POOLS ON THE NORTH SIDE, the opera courtyard on the south, the rue des Réservoirs and the Place Gambetta to the east and the Parterre du Nord on the west. It has nine stories including the attic and basement, which, because of the ground's natural slope, is located at road level. Inside, the opera house features an oval hall including three levels open to the public and a stage whose floor rests on the five levels beneath it.

THE ORIGINS OF THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE DATE BACK TO 1682, WHEN KING LOUIS XIV, who loved music and dance, commissioned Jules-Hardouin Mansart and Carlo Vigarani to draw up plans for a ballet theatre at the palace of Versailles, but the project was not built. Until the mid-17th century Versailles had small, makeshift theatres that could only accommodate small audiences.

THE SHELL WAS PUT UP IN 1685 BUT WARS AND FINANCIAL WOES LATE IN LOUIS XIV'S REIGN INTERRUPTED THE WORK. Only the elevations facing the gardens were completed before finishing the north wing. But on the side facing the town, the opera's courtyard and the future stage-house stood unfinished for generations; a wall was built around them and they were hemmed in by temporary structures. All the foundations for the ballet theatre were laid but courtiers moved into the only part Mansart actually built: the first floor and attic, which were turned into housing.

LOUIS XV BALKED AT THE HIGH COST OF COMPLETING THE THEATRE, SO FOR NEARLY A HUNDRED YEARS THE COURT OF FRANCE SETTLED FOR A SMALL SPACE CONVERTED INTO A PERFORMANCE HALL UNDER THE PASSAGE DES PRINCES. When the king wanted to see a grand opera with many extras and complicated machinery, a makeshift theatre was put up inside the Great Stable and torn down the day after the performance. The same thing happened for the Dauphin's wedding in February 1745. The stopgap solution had so many drawbacks that Louis XV reconsidered the original site at the end of the north wing and commissioned his first architect, Ange-Jacques Gabriel, to complete the opera.

IN THE 1740S GABRIEL BEGAN MAKING PLANS AND DRAWINGS, revising and redesigning them in the following decade. Instead of a theatre for the court he built a hall that could be turned into areas that the Grand Apartment was lacking: a space for the royal feasts, a ballroom and a theatre whose size could be adjusted depending on whether the performance was just for the court or for a bigger audience.

MASONS DID NOT LAY THE FIRST COURSES OF THE HALL'S BRICKWORK UNTIL AFTER THE 1748 TREATY OF AIX-LA-CHAPELLE (AACHEN). The elliptical ground plan was the only one of its kind in France and the acoustics and layout were improved. Between 1750 and 1752 the wing connecting the main central pavilion and the future opera house's massive foundations was built above the existing service areas. According to an early plan this structure was to serve as the foyer and performers' dressing rooms.

IN 1753 GABRIEL CAME UP WITH A NEW DESIGN INFLUENCED BY CONTEMPORARY ITALIAN THEATRES, in particular the Teatro Alfieri in Turin. He modified the entrance to the amphitheatre and the royal box and changed the circulation patterns to fit the Italian model. But the high cost of the Seven Years War interrupted construction and courtiers immediately moved into the newly-built wing created to seal off the opera house's courtyard.

IN 1763 GABRIEL DREW UP A NEW SET OF PLANS AND LOUIS XV EARMARKED 40,000 pounds from the royal budget to prepare the site and build the outside walls. The interior decoration became more sober; the earlier project's rocaille ornamentation was toned down while the auditorium's architecture was accentuated. For example, in keeping with the king's wishes the royal box became more discrete but was nevertheless placed inside a triumphal arch.

SLODTZ AND COCHIN COLLABORATED ON THIS PROJECT, IN WHICH THE TERM OPERA ACTUALLY APPEARED. In 1765 Gabriel integrated a new colonnade under the upper balconies, where some traces of the rocaille style survived, while the work on the north façade, which ushered in the neo-Classical style, ended in 1768 with Pajou's sculpture depicting lyrical poetry on the pediment overlooking the reservoirs.

IN 1766, AS THE CONCEPT OF THE URBAN THEATRE AS A SEPARATE, FREE-STANDING STRUCTURE BECAME WIDESPREAD, Gabriel overrode the courtiers' objections and decided to eliminate their apartments overlooking the grounds in order to build a foyer. The Dauphin's wedding to the archduchess of Austria, scheduled for May 1770, pressured him to hasten the project's completion.

PAJOU, ASSISTED BY ROUSSEAU AND GUIBERT, COMPLETED THE INTERIOR DECORATION IN DECEMBER 1766. Durameau painted the ceilings. D'Arnoult built the machinery. In addition to the stage machinery, he built an auditorium floor that could be jacked up to stage level for balls and banquets.

THE OPERA HOUSE WAS USABLE JUST IN TIME FOR THE DAUPHIN'S WEDDING IN MAY 1770. The space served in its various configurations but very seldom functioned as a theatre because of astronomical operating costs. Meanwhile, Pierre-Adrien Paris designed a small theatre for Marie-Antoinette, which was never completed, in the Gabriel wing's staircase. And then the Revolution broke out.

THE WING SEPARATING THE OPERA HOUSE'S COURTYARD FROM RUE DES RÉSERVOIRS was originally intended to accommodate actors but remained occupied by courtiers, who had moved into them in the 1750s. So instead the decision was taken to erect a new building on the other side of the opera house, abutting the reservoirs' retaining wall. Gabriel delivered the project at the same time as that of the auditorium and slightly changed it during the course of construction, which lasted until late 1770. He eliminated the originally planned mansard attic, replacing it with a storey on the same level as the Reservoir Terrace. The hall was used increasingly seldom, so this building very quickly encountered the same fate as the north wing, where the spaces were no longer used solely by actors but also by the Court.

AFTER THE BODYGUARDS' BANQUET, the last feast to take place in the hall before the Revolution, the Royal Opera House fell into a deep slumber, interrupted very briefly in 1793 when the mirrors, chandeliers, curtain and furniture were auctioned off. Some of the decoration and machinery

vanished but the stage and auditorium remained intact.

DURING THE EMPIRE AND RESTORATION PERIODS THE WALLS AND ROOF WERE MAINTAINED JUST ENOUGH to keep them from falling down. When Louis-Philippe ascended to the throne in 1830, as part of his «reconciliation» project he decided to revive the splendour of the past and had the opera house restored as part of a sweeping renovation of the palace. The king commissioned his architect, Nepveu, to bring the theatre back into working order and turn the service rooms in the north wing into the huge kitchens required to hold lavish receptions.

THE WORK ALSO CONSIDERABLY ALTERED the floors of the two road-facing wings connecting the opera house to the main central pavilion, now called the Louis-Philippe Pavilion, where the Crusades Rooms were laid out. The lower levels still served as offices and servants' quarters but in the 1840s the upper floors were demolished to make way for the African Rooms, with the Constantine Room on the south and the Morocco Room to the north.

AFTER BEING ABANDONED FOR 40 YEARS, THE THEATRE required a major restoration. The foyer and auditorium were repainted in red with gold latticework, covering over the 18th-century false marble's delicate nuances. The original concept of having a flexible space that could be used for various purposes was abandoned and the renovation froze it into a theatre configuration. The orchestra section's raked floor was entirely rebuilt on a different slope from that of the 18th century, in order to improve visibility. The semi-circular floor plan was changed to expand the orchestra by eliminating the side projections that existed after the orchestra pit.

THE SWEEPING WORKS CAMPAIGN ALSO AFFECTED THE ACTORS' BUILDING but few of the original plans for that part of the complex were carried out. In early 1844 Nepveu suggested integrating the first of the small buildings abutting the reservoirs into the continuation of the actors' building while planning to eliminate the top storey and alter the roof by aligning the gutter with the retaining wall's balustrade. Those design changes compelled the architect to suggest the creation of a kiosk on the roof above the building's first two bays in order to keep the entrances serving the opera house's first basement level and the stage from the top two levels. It would have been extremely difficult to carry out and was quickly abandoned and replaced by a smaller-scale project dated October 1844, which was completed. The staircase serving the opera house's two entrances were eventually demolished and replaced by two straight flights of steps built right into the masonry walls.

THE OPERA HOUSE STRAYED FROM ITS ORIGINAL FUNCTION IN THE FOLLOWING DECADES. It was occasionally used for inaugurations, such as that of the Museum of the History of France in 1837, and lavish receptions, including the one for Queen Victoria in 1855. When the government of the Third Republic went to Versailles in 1870 the space was assigned a solemn purpose but one for which it was woefully inadequate: housing the Senate chamber. Changes to the opera house were insignificant under Louis-Philippe but very harmful after 1870: a new floor covered the amphitheatre, orchestra section, orchestra pit, proscenium and apron. The auditorium's oval ceiling was taken down and replaced by a huge skylight.

THE SENATE USED THE OPERA HOUSE LESS AND LESS AND ITS UPKEEP BECAME INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT. A preservation plan was drafted in 1952. The senior architect of civilian buildings, André Japy, was put in charge of the restoration work. The large-scale project aimed to restore the masonry shell, undo the harmful alterations made under the Third Republic and return the auditorium to its pre-Revolutionary appearance. The décor was painted to imitate serancolin, green, light cherry and light porphyry marble, advantageously replacing Ciceri's red and gold colour scheme, and the old painted panels of arabesques that Vernet the Younger painted in Marigny's former dressing room were restored.

IN ADDITION TO RESTORING THE AUDITORIUM'S ORIGINAL DECORATIVE SCHEME, MORE SIGNIFICANT WORK WAS UNDERTAKEN. For example, Durameau's ceiling was put back into place and the original proportions of the king's grilled box were restored. But some 18th-century features, such as the second floor of terraced seats in the colonnade, seem to have been ignored and several of Nepveu's structural alterations were kept. Japy did not restore the widening of the amphitheatre's arms, keeping the auditorium's configuration frozen as a performance space, making it impossible to use as a reception hall without undertaking extensive modifications. Nevertheless, on 9 April 1957 Queen Elizabeth II, on her first State visit as sovereign, was received in a superb, impeccable opera house for its inaugural performance.

UNFORTUNATELY, DESPITE THE AVOWED GOAL of restoring the opera house to its use as a theatre and to its appearance during the ancien régime, no archaeological research was carried out when the stage was transformed during the extensive restoration work. The firebreak created between the stage and the auditorium – a thick concrete wall holding up an iron curtain – directly affected the opera house's architectural and functional layout. In order to build it, the stage's depth was shortened and the historical volume of the understage, which integrated the space beneath the proscenium and the orchestra pit, was altered in order to locate the toilets and the room housing the building's electrical equipment there.

WHEN THE 1958 CONSTITUTION WAS PASSED THE SENATE AGREED TO HAND THE OPERA HOUSE over to the museum but refused to give up its right to use the theatre, which it had been doing since the 19th century. The spaces in the north wing located under the Morocco Room were used to store records and the actors' building was converted into housing for Senate employees. Fortunately those changes barely altered the space. The north wing's lower levels have remained in the condition Nepveu left them and the actors building's plans differ very little from the originals.

THE POSTWAR WORK MUST BE CONSIDERED A SUCCESSFUL PRESERVATION EFFORT. In 1960 culture minister André Malraux recalled that the Royal Opera House is a museum attesting to the restored glory of Versailles, but that there was no obligation to keep it in continuous use. Guided tours and very occasional performances were the only opportunities visitors had to see this gem of 18th-century art and architecture.

NEVERTHELESS, THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE'S GROWING APPEAL, whether as a museum or as a theatre, prompted the decision to open it up to the public during self-guided tours; meanwhile, the desire to schedule performances of outstanding quality has greatly increased since the 1990s.

HOWEVER, THE OPERA HOUSE'S RUNDOWN EQUIPMENT AND ORIGINAL CONFIGURATION AS A COURT THEATRE made it increasingly difficult to operate while complying with today's regulations. It became obvious that upgrading its safety standards had to be a major priority of the Établissement Public du Musée et du Domaine National de Versailles.

THE PROJECT IS BASED ON THE NEED to combine today's safety requirements with architectural heritage. The result is a minimalist intervention involving the demolition of modern but outdated features and moving the most hazardous equipment out of the building. All the equipment rooms have been grouped together in the opera courtyard while the recent handover of the areas belonging to both houses of parliament to the Établissement Public du Musée et du Domaine National de Versailles has freed up the areas the Senate used near the opera for re-use.

WORKS TO UPGRADE SAFETY STANDARDS: ONE OF THE MASTER PLAN'S PRIORITIES

The master plan

AT A PRESS CONFERENCE IN VERSAILLES ON 30 OCTOBER 2003, Christine Albanel, who was then the president of the Etablissement Public du Musée et du Domaine National de Versailles, and Jean-Jacques Aillagon, then the minister of culture and communication, announced the implementation of «Grand Versailles», a long-awaited development and works project. The 17-year, €500-million programme was to be the biggest one Versailles had known since Louis-Philippe.

THE THREE PRIORITIES ARE TO:

- restore the historic monument and its décors,
- upgrade safety throughout the site by improving security systems, renovating equipment and strengthening protection against the risks of intrusion and vandalism,
- improve visitor reception by developing a broader, easier-to-understand offer and simplifying entrance modalities.

THE MASTER PLAN'S FIRST STAGE, WHICH IS TAKING PLACE BETWEEN 2003 AND 2011, INCLUDES all the studies (diagnoses, investigations, design, etc.) necessary to definitively stabilise the programme, goals and means, as well as to carry out work deemed a priority.

THE PALACE'S OPTIMUM SECURITY LEVEL will not be achieved until all the existing technical equipment is upgraded to standards. But that modernisation involves increasingly extensive, complicated work, in particular taking apart the historic décors and putting them back together again, creating technical equipment networks and completely reconfiguring the wiring and heating systems. This work, which will require closing parts of the palace to the public, will be carried out during the master plan's second stage, which should take place during the second decade of this century.

SOME WORK AND SERVICES HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED AS PRIORITIES. In addition to the indispensable studies mentioned above, several actions will be necessary, including:

- completely bringing the Royal Opera House up to present-day safety standards,
 - moving equipment or functions that pose risks, no matter how minor, outside the palace walls,
 - implementing definitive safety measures that will be unaffected by later modernisation campaigns.
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Upgrading the Royal Opera House's safety standards

THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE THAT ANGE-JACQUES GABRIEL BUILT IN 1770 is mainly of wood, making it particularly vulnerable to fire. Moreover, in addition to being a prime example of 18th-century architecture, it is a performance space, meaning that very strict fire safety standards must be met.

CONSEQUENTLY, THE CURRENT OPERATION FOCUSES ON MOVING ALL THE POTENTIALLY HAZARDOUS EQUIPMENT inside the Royal Opera House (mostly under the stage) outside the building and on creating a continuous flow between the stage and auditorium by eliminating the fire curtain and the concrete wall.

THE FIREBREAK THAT WAS BUILT BETWEEN THE STAGE AND THE AUDITORIUM IN THE 1950S HAS BECOME RUNDOWN and its location has made it impossible to use the whole stage. This wall has been eliminated, while the original purpose and character of the wooden service stairs flanking the house have been restored. The artists' dressing rooms on the sides of and under the stage have also been eliminated and all the hidden stage machinery has been brought back into view so that visitors can see it during tours. New lighting and scenery racks have been built in the flyloft. The part of the north wing that closed off the opera house's courtyard to Place Gambetta has been redesigned to house the workshops, storage spaces and administrative offices, while the actors' building has been returned to its original purpose. The Royal Opera House's original structure and acoustics have been restored and it can welcome audiences and performers in the best possible conditions.

IN ADDITION TO UPGRADING SAFETY STANDARDS, ALL THOSE STEPS have eliminated the unfortunate architectural alterations dating back to the 1950s, which had negative consequences on the stage, understage and original machinery. Stage work is planned in order to fill the empty space in the proscenium resulting from the elimination of the iron curtain with adequate equipment.

The Royal Opera House's movable frame

THE MOVABLE FRAME IS THE DECORATIVE FEATURE MAKING IT POSSIBLE TO REDUCE THE STAGE'S OPENING. It is located immediately upstage from the proscenium curtain and made up of an adjustable-height border (the tormentor) and two sliding sub-frames, one on stage right, the other stage left (movable curtains). Every theatre has this equipment, although the audience cannot always see it.

TO BUILD A FACILITY THAT WOULD FULFIL THE OPERA HOUSE'S THREE PURPOSES (royal banqueting hall, ballroom and grand theatre), Gabriel designed a big portico in the middle of the huge space that magnificently served the ballroom and banqueting functions but was less suited to performances. The portico, which comprised a lintel resting on two pairs of Corinthian columns, could house equipment used to transform the space. Silk borders forming a lambrequin hung from the underside of the entablature. That is what the proscenium arch looked like for the 1770 inaugural performances, which were never repeated because of the cost.

DURING THE 1957 RESTORATION ANDRÉ JAPY, WHO HAD TO BUILD A FIREWALL, kept the silk draperies and re-installed the great silk proscenium curtain with a fleur-de-lys pattern in its original position. To adjust the proscenium arch's height and width he built movable curtains out of sheet metal mounted with a calico painted to imitate marble and a canvas tormentor weighed down with a boom. Today's project must succeed in adapting the Royal Opera House to the requirements of modern stagecraft without detracting from its historical integrity by creating a new décor in the original style that will neither slavishly reproduce the auditorium's features nor anticipate the stage scenery but ensure a quiet transition between stage and auditorium. André Fontaine has been commissioned to carry out the project, which he based on a watercolour in the National Archives. The scenery will be painted in tempera on canvas, the tormentor will be treated like a painted frieze and the curtains will hang from two wooden frames suspended from a track.

Programme

The planned work consists of four operations:

OPERATION 1: BRINGING THE OPERA HOUSE'S SAFETY STANDARDS UP TO CODE

- Relocation of the primary technical facilities, which have been under the stage and auditorium since 1957, outside to an underground space in the opera courtyard. Creation of a connecting tunnel beneath the façade.
- Demolition of the technical rooms inside the opera house.
- Demolition of the dressing rooms and workshops under the stage.
- Elimination of the firewall under the stage (demolition of the concrete firewall followed by the recreation of the downstage and centre stage) and elimination of the iron curtain. That work has turned the stage and auditorium into a single space, leading to new technical and functional safety requirements.
- Renovation/upgrading of all the wiring (normal and security). Upgrading of all the emergency lighting to meet safety standards.
- Upgrading of the fire security system (detection, alarms and servo-control) to comply with standards.
- Upgrading of the integrated auditorium-stage space's smoke ejection system. Tests were carried out in situ in 2005 in order to determine the best technical solution. Given the theatre's complexity, they will be complemented by a smoke propagation simulation study using state-of-the-art computer simulation tools.
- Upgrading of the heating, ventilation, plumbing and fire protection systems.
- Improvement of the scenery lift's security.
- Demolition of the walls around the two service staircases on either side of the stage and restoration of the staircases.
- Creation of regulation fire stops and isolation of the opera house from the north wing.
- Creation of access to the orchestra section for people with reduced mobility.
- Creation of a fire tower upstage.

During the project, original features under the stage and in the orchestra section, previously unknown because the concrete wall had concealed them, were discovered and painstakingly restored, helping to completely return the Royal Opera House to its ancien régime appearance.

OPERATION 2: REHOUSING OF THE OPERA HOUSE'S SERVICES IN THE NORTH WING

This operation, which the major understage demolition work for security reasons (moving all the potentially hazardous equipment outside) made necessary, involves remodelling approximately 800m² of rooms adjoining the stage-house in the north wing in order to rehouse the opera's workshops, storage facilities and administrative offices.

OPERATION 3: STAGE EQUIPMENT

This work, which totally respects the site's integrity, involves extending the grid and false grid, repositioning the silk curtain and equipping the proscenium with sets of lines installed in the stage catwalks. In addition to this work involving the reconfiguration of the stage, in summer 2009 work began to bring the standards of existing equipment, in particular movable equipment, up to code. This campaign will be completed in 2011.

OPERATION 4: REBUILDING THE DRESSING ROOMS

Dressing rooms for approximately 100 performers will be built on the two top floors of the old actors' building vacated when the Senate offices left in 2005. This work in the old apartments does not require heavy construction but mainly involves bringing safety standards and wiring up to code and creating toilets.

CLIENT

Etablissement public du musée et du domaine national de Versailles (EPV)

DELEGATED CLIENT

Etablissement public de maîtrise d'ouvrage des travaux culturels (ÉMOC)

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Frédéric DIDIER, Senior Architect of Historic Monuments.

Yves LE DOUARIN, Inspector of Historic Monuments.

KHEPHREN Ingénierie, structural engineering.

INEX, BET fluid engineering.

ALTO Ingénierie, BET electrical engineering – fire safety

STAGE PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Thierry GUIGNARD and Loïc DURAND, stage designers

BUDGET

The operation's total estimated cost is €13.5m TDC.

COMPANIES

Technical inspection	SOCOTEC
SPS	Norisko
OPC	IPCS
ISS Overall Coordinator	PCA

Operation 1

Asbestos removal	Isotec entreprise
Shell, civil engineering	Lefevre
Shell, masonry, stone-cutting	Lanfry
Wooden framework	Les métiers du bois
Carpentry, windows	Aubert-Labansat
Painting	Duval et Mauler
Chandeliers	Tisserant Art et Style
CVCD	UTB
Electricity	Satelec
Fire safety	INEO VD / Siemens

Operation 2

Shell - masonry	Lanfry
Ventilation and climate control	UTB
Electricity	Inéo VD
Carpentry	Asselin
Painting	Duval et Mauler
Lift	OTIS
Fire safety	INEO VD / Siemens

Operation 3

Stage work	CAIRE
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GENERAL PROGRAMME OF THE 2009-2010 SEASON AT THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE

21 September 2009, 9pm

The re-opening of the Royal Opera House

HAYDN, GLUCK, MOZART : SYMPHONIES AND ARIAS

Programme by Château de Versailles Spectacles

Mireille Delunsch, soprano

Richard Croft, tenor

Bryn Terfel, bass-baritone

Haydn: Symphony 85 "The Queen of France"

Gluck: Orchestral Suite from the Ballet Don Juan ou le festin de Pierre

Mozart: arias from Idomeneo, The Marriage of Figaro and Don Giovanni

The château wishes to thank all the sponsors who contributed their support to this evening, in particular Kamal Douaoui, Xavier and Hubert Guerrand-Hermès, the Four Seasons Hotel George V, Vinci and Breguet Watches.

10, 13 and 15 November 2009, 9pm

L'AMANT JALOUX OU LES FAUSSES APPARENCES

Programme by the Versailles Baroque Music Centre

Comedy in three acts. Libretto by Thomas d'Hèle.

Music by André Ernest Modeste Grétry (1741-1813)

Created at Versailles on 20 November 1778 and at the Comédie Italienne de Paris on the following 23 December.

Magali Léger, Léonore, soprano

Claire Debono, Isabelle, soprano

Maryline Fallot, Jacinte, soprano

Frédéric Antoun, Florival, tenor

Brad Cooper, Don Alonze, tenor

Vincent Billier, Lopez de la Plata, bass-baritone

Le Cercle de l'Harmonie

Jérémy Rhorer, conductor

Pierre-Emmanuel Rousseau, director

Antoine Fontaine, scenery design and painting

Opéra Comique production

Versailles Baroque Music Centre/Opéra-Comique co-production

21 November 2009, 8:30pm

CÉPHALE & PROCRIS

Ballet Heroïque

Programme by the Versailles Baroque Music Centre

Libretto by Marmontel, 1773

Music by André Ernest Modeste Grétry

Pierre-Yves Pruvot, Céphale, soprano

Katia Vellétaz, Procris, soprano

Bénédicte Tauran, L'Aurore, soprano

Isabelle Cals, Palès, La Jalousie, soprano

Aurélie Franck, Flore, soprano

Caroline Weynants, L'Amour, soprano

Namur Chamber Choir

Les Agréments

Guy van Waas, conductor

Scores printed by the VBMC

Versailles Baroque Music Centre/Namur Ancient Music and Vocal Art Centre/Liège Philharmonic

Hall coproduction

10 and 11 December 2009, 9pm

MOLIÈRE: THE IMAGINARY INVALID

Programme by Château de Versailles Spectacles

Michel Bouquet

Directed by Georges Werler

14 December 2009, 9pm

JULIETTE GRÉCO

Programme by Château de Versailles Spectacles

16 December 2009, 9pm

LA GAÏÉTÉ LYRIQUE: ROYAL OFFENBACH!

Programme by Château de Versailles Spectacles

Excerpts from Orpheus in the Underworld, La Périchole, The Grand Duchess of Gerolstein, La Vie Parisienne, Ba-Ta-Clan, etc.

Anne Marguerite Werster, soprano,

Gilles Ragon, tenor

Ile de France National Orchestra - Conductor Jean Christophe Keck

18

18, 21 December 2009 8pm

20 December 2009, 3pm

MOZART : COSI FAN TUTTE

MOZART/DA PONTE TRILOGY

Programme by Château de Versailles Spectacles

Ensemble Philidor – Music Director: François Bazola
Director: Yves Beaunesne
Fiordiligi, Soula Parassidis, Magali de Prella in alternation
Dorabella, Amaya Dominguez
Despina, Mélanie Gardyn
Don Alfonso, Lionel Peintre, Matthieu Lécroart in alternation
Ferrando, Julien Behr
Guglielmo, Marc Mauillon, Christophe Gay in alternation

9 January 2010

BARBARA HENDRICKS

Programme by Château de Versailles Spectacles

Arias from Purcell to Haendel
Henry Purcell: The Fairy Queen, orchestral suite
Dido and Aeneas, arias and symphonies
Music for a while
Sweeter than Roses

George Frederick Haendel:
Terpsicore, orchestral suite
Semele, Radamisto, arias for soprano

Drottningholm Baroque Orchestra

23 January 2010, 9pm

ORCHESTRE DES CHAMPS ELYSÉES

Programme by Château de Versailles Spectacles

Andreas Staier, pianoforte
Mozart, concerto no. 11; concerto no. 13
Haydn: Symphony no. 60, «The Distracted»

19

27 February 2010, 3pm

9, 11 and 13 February 2010, 8pm

MOZART : DON GIOVANNI

Programme by Château de Versailles Spectacles

Soloists, Choir and Orchestra of the Opéra Fuocco– Conducted by David Stern

Directed by Ioshi Oidami

Marc Callahan Don Giovanni

Jacquelyn Wagner Donna Anna

NN Don Ottavio

Chantal Santon Donna Elvira

Pierrick Boisseau Masetto

Caroline Meng Zerlina

NN Leporello

Frédéric Bourreau Commandatore

Artistic co-director, choirmaster Jay Bernfeld

Costumes Elena Mannini

6 and 13 March 2010, 6:30pm

7 and 14 March 2010, 3pm

THE BOURGEOIS GENTLEMAN: MOLIÈRE/LULLY

Programme by Château de Versailles Spectacles

Le Poème Harmonique

Artistic Director Vincent Dumeštre

Director Benjamin Lazar

Choreography Cécile Roussat

Olivier Martin Salvan Monsieur Jourdain,

Nicolas Vial Madame Jourdain and the singers

Arnaud Marzorati, Claire Lefilliâtre, François-Nicolas Geslot, Serge Goubioud, Jan Van Elsacker,

Emmanuel Vistorcky, Arnaud Richard

28 March 2010, 3pm

30 March 2010, 8pm

MOZART: THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO

Programme by Château de Versailles Spectacles

Soloists, Choir and Orchestra of the Rouen Opera

Artistic director Oswald Sallaberger

Director Stephan Grögler

Count Almaviva: Ricardo Novaro

Figaro : Carlos Esquivel

Suzanne: Bénédicte Tauran

Countess Almaviva: Sinead Mulhern

Marceline : Sophie Pondjiclis

Bartolo : Luciano Di Pasquale

Cherubin : Marie Gautrot

Curzio/Basilio : Eric Sahla

Antonio : Alain Herriau

Barberine : Violaine Le Chenadec

20

12 April 2010, 9pm

CHERUBINI: FROM MEDEA TO PYGMALION

Programme by Château de Versailles Spectacles

Karine Deshayes and Caroline Mutel, sopranos
Les Nouveaux Caractères
Conductor Sébastien d'Hérin

2 June 2010, 9pm

BACH: THE BRANDENBURG CONCERTOS

Programme by Château de Versailles Spectacles

Les Musiciens du Louvre-Grenoble
Conductor Marc Minkowski

9 and 10 June 2010, 9pm

FOUR ELEMENTS - FOUR SEASONS

Programme by Château de Versailles Spectacles

A choreographed concert
Midori Seiler, solo violin
Orchestra: Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin
Juan Cruz Díaz de Garaio Esnaola, director, dancer and choreographer
Jörg Bittner, lighting

16 June 2010, 9pm

ERA LA NOTTE

Programme by Château de Versailles Spectacles

Monteverdi: from Lamento d'Arianna to Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda

Anna Catarina Antonacci, Soprano – Les Siècles
Directed by Juliette Deschamps
Sets by Cécile Degos
Lighting by Dominique Bourguières

20 June 2010, 6:30pm

TRIBUTE TO RAMEAU

Programme by Château de Versailles Spectacles

Alexandre Tharaud, piano
Couperin, Rameau, Ravel

Find the full programme of the Versailles Baroque Music Centre at www.cmbv.fr and of Château de Versailles Spectacles at www.chateauversailles-spectacles.fr.

THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE IN FIGURES

- Total length of the building: **66 metres** on the ground.
- Total width of the building: **34 metres** on the ground.
- Total height of the stage-house from the paved floor to the crest: **39 metres**.
- Median height of the understage, from the paved floor of the 5th understage level to the stage floor: **13 metres**.
- Median height of the overstage, from the stage floor to the grid: **18 metres**.
- Surface area of the 5th understage level after the work: **825m²**.
- Surface area of the stage, including the proscenium: **800m²**.
- Depth of the stage, from the proscenium to the backstage wall: **30 metres**.
- Total height of the auditorium, from the orchestra pit to the painted ceiling: **16 metres**.
- Area of the auditorium: **340 m²**.
- **750 light** bulbs are in the auditorium's chandeliers and sconces.

THE SAFETY UPGRADING WORK

- **Nearly 150 km of electric cables** were laid.
 - **70 m³ of oak** were required to rebuild the understage and the service corridors (the stage catwalks) after the firewall between the auditorium and the stage was eliminated.
 - **290 m³ of concrete and 72 tonnes of steel** were demolished when the firewall between the auditorium and the stage was eliminated.
 - **850 m³ of concrete** were necessary to create the facilities buried beneath the courtyard of the opera house.
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GLOSSARY

Apron

Section of the stage floor that projects outwards into the auditorium. In proscenium theatres, the part of the stage in front of the curtains or the proscenium arch.

Centre line

An imaginary line dividing the stage down the middle into two equal parts.

Curtains

Movable vertical panels on either side of the stage opening used to «open» or «close» the sides of the stage frame depending on need. The curtains are topped by the tormentor, which horizontally follows the same principles.

False grid

A structure over the grid housing some of its equipment (pulleys) in order to facilitate circulation.

Flyloft

The part of the theatre located above the stage, which includes the:

- services on either side of the stage
- catwalks connecting the services
- grid above the whole thing.

The ideal flyloft should be more than twice the height of the proscenium arch, in order to hide the scenery.

Forestage

The front of the part of the stage closest to the audience.

Foyer

The part of the theatre the audience enters when arriving at the theatre. The word «foyer» means «hearth» in French. Prior to the 18th century the only heated part of a theatre was the entrance area, where the audience could go to warm up in front of a fire between acts. The hearth vanished long ago but the space is still known as the foyer.

Grid

Area over the stage housing the machinery's rigging and superstructure. The grid is a framework of beams approximately 10 centimetres thick with openings approximately five centimetres wide through which cables, wires and lines pass. The crossbeams are spaced one every meter.

Lambrequin

A stationary ornamental border in front of the apron curtain. The lambrequin adds to the auditorium's style and architecture and hides the lower part of the apron curtain when it is up.

Proscenium

The part of the stage between the curtain line and the audience.

Proscenium arch

The opening in the wall that stands between the stage and auditorium; the «picture frame» through which the audience sees the performance. The movable opening of the stage formed by adjustable elements (curtains and tormentor) are located behind this frame.

Sides

The garden side is the left side of the stage for the audience and the courtyard side is the right side. In the 17th century, looking out from the stage and into the auditorium, the King's loge was on the right-hand side and the Queen's loge was on the left-hand side. The right side was therefore called the «King's side» and the left side the «Queen's side». In 1792 the Revolution abolished everything that might remind people of the monarchy. The right side (the King's side) became known as the «garden» side, after the Tuileries Garden, and the left side (the Queen's side) as the «courtyard» side because of the Carrousel courtyard.

Stage

The part of the theatre where the performance takes place.

Stage floor

Flat surface including the stage and wings.

Stage opening

Frame limited by the auditorium architecture and vertical curtains on each side and by the horizontal border above them.

Understage

Floors beneath the stage (there can be as many as five) housing stage equipment.

Upstage

The part of the stage furthest from the audience.
