

J&C Joel 
Inspiration in every performance

1928



MAYFLOWER THEATRE

UK / Southampton

www.jcjoel.com

MAYFLOWER THEATRE

Country / City: UK / Southampton

Completion: 2018

Capacity: 2,270

Usage: Traditional Theatre

Technology



Creative
Drapery



Over Stage
Engineering



Traditional
Drapery

Overview

The Mayflower Theatre in Southampton has reopened following a major £7.5 million refurbishment that restored the venue to its former glory. As part of the transformation, leading theatre drapery specialist J&C Joel delivered bespoke drapery throughout the auditorium.

In a rapid 16-week turnaround the UK's largest regional theatre was restored to its former glory. The project had a complete face-lift including being completely repainted with a new red and gold colour scheme.

Working closely with leading architect Foster Wilson (FWA), J&C Joel supplied drapery for every area of the auditorium using custom-dyed Norland IFR Trevira Velour (VEL650/00). Our team designed and manufactured bespoke decorative elements too; custom braid, fringing, rope detailing and 11 appliqued Mayflower ships.

Mayflower Ships

There were four key challenges with this project which set it apart from other large-scale theatre projects J&C Joel has undertaken in the past. The first challenge was to design and manufacture 10 fabric-centre piece Mayflower ships which were to be the focal point for the box and arch pelmets together with the main pelmet.

FWA created the original artwork using an historic sketch of the original Mayflower ship. J&C Joel's design team then converted the artwork into detailed production drawings for manufacture.

The team used antique gold and mustard Regal Satin alongside custom-dyed rope to create the intricate pieces. Craftsppeople assembled the ships using magnifying lamps and tweezers to achieve exceptional detail. Each ship featured a custom 8mm gold rope border to complete the finish.



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Bespoke Pelmets

The second of the challenges was the pelmets for the boxes that flanked the stage. The theatre regularly hosts large touring productions that require extensive lighting positions. However, existing lighting bars conflicted with the new pelmet design.

To solve the issue, J&C Joel worked with FWA to engineer concealed slits within the pelmets. Technicians can peel back these openings whenever productions need access to the lighting bars. When not in use, specially designed infill panels attach with Velcro to create the appearance of a seamless drape.

This solution required exceptional manufacturing precision to ensure all trims aligned perfectly when closed. To finish the boxes off, J&C Joel produced self-lined legs with custom tiebacks installed on timber battens, fixed into the underside of the box.

A late addition to the refurbishment introduced another major challenge: the new proscenium pelmet and frame.

Unlike traditional installations, the pelmet was required to sit flush to the underside of the uneven proscenium arch rather than behind it. To achieve this, J&C Joel recorded measurements every 100mm across the width of the arch and used the data to create detailed CAD drawings.

Measuring 13.900m wide with a drop of 2.667m at its deepest point, the pelmet frame was fabricated in seven pieces from Sapele timber at J&C Joel's premises.

After a successful on-site test fit, the team returned the frame to its workshop and covered it in black Molton (MOL002) followed by Norland velour (VEL650/00). A bespoke 100mm wave braid was then applied which was designed to flex around the pelmet's tight curves.

The team mitred the braid at the lower corners and concealed the joins using decorative rope swirls. The finished pelmet also featured a large applied Mayflower ship centrepiece.

Arch Pelmets

The final challenge was the measuring, design and production of six arch pelmets which sat at a high level in the auditorium. The difficulty with this element was that the arches curved in both planes which presented a challenge from a fixing perspective.

The fixing system also needed to accommodate integrated LED lighting designed to illuminate the surrounding wall artwork.

In order for the pelmets to read correctly, each needed to be made at slightly different sizes due to the arches being uneven. J&C Joel measured each arch and produced a CAD drawing which was overlaid onto the FWA auditorium drawing. This allowed J&C Joel to ensure that each of the arch pelmets would fit precisely.

Working alongside main contractor GF Holding, the team created curved MDF templates with custom headers that allowed secure installation within the building structure.

J&C Joel wrapped the MDF panels in the same Norland velour before applying the bespoke braid, rope detailing and applied ships. In order to deal with the corners of the pelmet, the team mitred the braid for a neater fit and then covered the joins with rope swirls.

To complete the installation, J&C Joel produced custom legs with varying drops to accommodate the auditorium stairways. Lastly, the team finished the design with bespoke tiebacks.



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