

SPECIALTY STEEL CURTAINWALL FRAMING
SETS THE STAGE AT TRUMBULL
HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM

Project: Trumbull High School Auditorium
Location: Trumbull, CT
Architect: JCJ Architecture
Product: SteelBuilt Curtainwall Infinity™ SSG System



Lecture halls often conjure up images of teachers, scribbling pens and ticking wall clocks – not students in dance shoes, theater costumes or choir robes. But at Trumbull High School, Trumbull, Connecticut, dance shoes and costumes might be more appropriate.

Built in 1971, the school's lecture hall quickly became the main auditorium and host to drama and dance productions, music events and assemblies. Nearly four decades later, however, the school's Board of Education found that time and excessive use had taken their toll on the performance center, leaving it far from show worthy. Broken seats, overused lights and a host of age-related problems plagued the once modern space.

In 2008, the board put renovation plans into action. They commissioned JCJ Architecture, a renowned firm with a branch in nearby Hartford, to not only upgrade, but also transform the lecture hall into a full-fledged performance center suitable for use by the entire town.

To be successful at integrating students with the greater public, the new design would need to center on what Greg Smolley, principal of JCJ Architecture, calls "a sense of shared openness." For inspiration, the firm looked at public school auditoria from pre-war schools. These airy, naturally lit designs led to the architects' desire for a natural light source – a portal that would let in daylight and allow people to look into and out of the space.

The firm opted for a glazed curtain wall system that would form the building's exterior, spanning the length of the auditorium and reaching towards the sky. Large spans of glass would allow natural light to enter the hallway in front of the auditorium, pass through a second layer of curtain wall, and subtly illuminate the performing area. The opening would also allow performers to draw inspiration from nature, and allow outsiders to watch dancers and performers practice on a regular basis.

With the basic design in place, the challenge for JCJ Architecture was to find the right curtain wall framing system – one with thin profiles, a smooth glass-to-frame surface and the ability to support oversized glazed lites. As a renovation, the system would also need to blend with the auditorium's neighboring buildings.



The firm chose SteelBuilt Curtainwall Infinity™ SSG System from Technical Glass Products, Snoqualmie, Washington. The steel-based curtain wall framing system is typically three times stronger than aluminum assemblies of the same profile dimension, allowing for reduced frame dimensions and greater free spans of glazing, both of which are necessary for increasing daylight and views.

Silicone sealant is used to seal the building from the elements and transfer wind loads to the supporting steel curtain wall. The aesthetic result is the appearance of smooth and uninterrupted glazed lites, which provide clear lines of sight into and out of the auditorium.

“The curtain wall system was our vehicle for connecting performers to the outside world, and the outside world to the performers,” says Smolley. “With SteelBuilt Curtainwall Infinity SSG, viewers from outside the building can actually see straight through the stacked curtain walls, over the chairs and down into the performance center.”

In appearance, the curtain wall system is sophisticated and modern. It forms a straight, unadorned rectangle of glass that does not overwhelm, but rather gracefully complements the red brick of the surrounding building. The slender steel frames are subtle behind the glass, their form a delicate outline to the auditorium inside.

“Aesthetics were a main consideration,” adds Smolley. “We wanted a sleek framing system that would blend in with the surface of the glass. With the SteelBuilt system, you can look all the way down the surface of the application without the framing bumping out. That’s important. It really takes viewers’ attention off the framing and allows them to focus on the glass and what’s behind it.”

For more information on SteelBuilt Curtainwall Infinity SSG and the SteelBuilt family of products, along with TGP’s other architectural glass and framing, visit www.tgpamerica.com.

To learn more about the work of JCJ Architecture, visit www.jcj.com.

