

MACTON® Turntable Divisible Auditoriums

“MAKING A STATIC AUDITORIUM DYNAMIC”

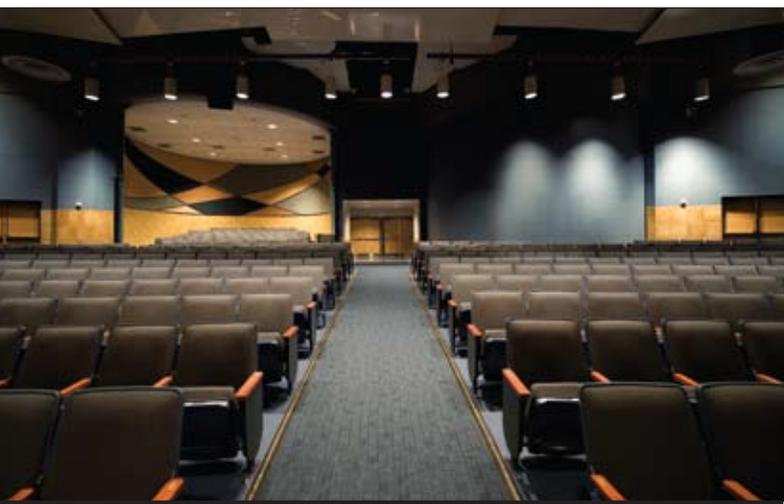
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It's called the School of the Future, and it may well be the gold standard for American public education. Built via a partnership of the Philadelphia School District and Microsoft®, the \$63 million West Philadelphia facility, which opened in September 2006, was designed in the words of the district “to create a sustainable and replicable model for improved instruction and systemic reform.”

One striking example of its futuristic approach is the school's Performance Arts Center, which can actually rotate one or more sections to create additional space for education, meetings and programs if the seats aren't filled to capacity. The auditorium is based on a turntable design that school officials say easily facilitates conversion. This is not the usual image of a secondary school auditorium — and that's precisely the point.

AUDITORIUM USAGE

The traditional high school auditorium has always been the gathering place for assemblies, study halls, meetings, commencements, class plays and other entertainment functions. However, most of the average school day, it either sits empty or sparsely filled. That makes it the least used room in the school and, because of its size, the most expensive. This combined economic and academic shortcoming convinced designers of the School of the Future (SOF) that a traditional auditorium would be inadequate and contrary to their vision.



The Performance Art Center required different conceptual approaches. It had to be an optimistic environment to encourage and propel thinking, create spaces that would help students perform at the highest level and provide easy access. That

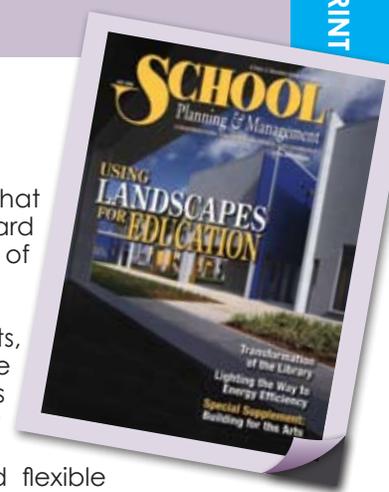
meant overcoming a problem that frequently recurs with a standard fixed auditorium — lack of adaptability.

Prisco Group, the school architects, originally considered multiple designs with four seating sections on turntables to focus student sight lines. However, in its search for more suitable, versatile and flexible applications, Prisco decided on a Turntable Divisible Auditorium (TDA) engineered and manufactured by Macton Corporation.

The TDA is best described as a dynamic system that reconfigures seating capacity for maximum utilization of space. For the Performance Arts Center, turntables rotate one or more seating sections into separate and acoustically isolated rooms to create additional space for education, performances, staff and civic meetings.

ADDING VALUE

Perhaps the most important factor in determining its value to the project was overcoming the twin challenges of flexibility and utilization that in years past were not associated with the standard auditorium. At the same time, the SOF auditorium had to be a professional performance area for all “constituents:” students, teachers, performers, audience and the community. The answer was a TDA system with a flexible three-way configuration forming two new learning or performance areas. Most important, the TDA made this functionality possible with little change to the size of the auditorium's footprint and eliminated the necessity for additional construction. Projected heating, ventilation and air conditioning expenses are also lower.



The SOF Performing Arts Center features two 32-foot diameter turntables, each with a 98-seat capacity enabling the auditorium to be increased by 30 percent increments when needed. Thus, the auditorium may be configured with 328, 426 or 524 seats for hosting a wide range of events with intimate capacity. Conversion is simple — the push of a button. It only takes a few minutes for sections of the auditorium to rotate and convert to either stand alone learning or performance areas.

The design also efficiently resolved another challenge — pathway access, always an issue in auditorium construction. The TDA conversions all enjoy convenient access from a common lobby without requiring additional hallways and the costs and inconveniences that accompany them.

REACTION FROM THE SCHOOL

Principal LaVerne Wiley said the entire SOF community is “impressed” by the changing Performance Arts Center. “We always get a positive reaction when the auditorium is converted,” she said. “You can [utilize any of the] three areas and not have it interfere with the other two sections. It’s not disruptive, we can adapt it anyway we want and that’s what makes it useful.”

Wiley recalled that when she became principal, she walked into what she thought was a unique classroom and was surprised to learn that it was part of something else. “I had no idea I was actually in the auditorium at the time,” she said. “It’s nice to be able to convert it to small or larger classrooms.”

Wiley said the community has taken notice of the center’s many capabilities. “We are getting so many requests from public and private organizations to use this facility. I am glad we have it.”

SOF: A TREND SETTER

The School of the Future is likely to set new standards for school construction, especially its innovative, multiple-use Performance Arts Center. At a time when getting the most of a facility’s space and budget are paramount considerations, the TDA will reconfigure underutilized space to fulfill continuous educational, staff and civic requirements. In light of its functionality, it would not be surprising to see static auditoriums disappear from school construction projects.



To learn how you can integrate a TDA into your next educational facility, please email us at: TDA@macton.com, call us at **800-334-TURN** or visit www.macton.com/tda.



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