



Audio Engineering Society – New York Section

NEWSLETTER – MEETING NOTICE

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Thursday March 18th, 2010
Join us for a Meet & Greet at 6:30pm
Presentation at 7:00pm

NOTE: This meeting is on a Thursday at an Alternate Venue
Merkin Concert Hall at Kaufman Center
129 West 67th Street
between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenues

You must present photo I.D. at the Main Lobby AES Table

“Renovations to Merkin Concert Hall”

Host:

James Williamson- Operations Manager, Kaufman Center

We will have a tour of the Merkin Concert Hall facility. Acoustical designers from JaffeHolden and A/V system integrators AVI-SPL will present an overview of the renovation of the hall, its acoustics and A/V infrastructure.

Jaffe Holden has designed some of the world's major performing arts centers and built strong relationships with many venues. Projects include New York's Zankel Hall at Carnegie Hall, Cleveland's Severance Hall, New York's Lincoln Center, Philadelphia's National Constitution Center and The Franklin Institute expansion, and Japan's Tokyo International Forum.

With a strong presence based on more than 40 years in the industry, AVI-SPL is recognized as the largest global integrator for audio/video systems and services through an international delivery network. Solutions include integrated systems such as videoconferencing, collaborative communication and streaming media.

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MEETING REPORT

Thursday March 18th, 2010

Renovations to Merkin Concert Hall

Host: **James Williamson**- Operations Manager, Kaufman Center
Presenters: **Ben Bausher**, Jaffee/Holden; **Adrian Bennett** - AVI-SPL



L-R: Robert Auld, James Williamson, Ben Bausher, Adrian Bennett

How do you update a performing hall and maintain the acoustics? March's Section meeting was a case study. Located on the Upper West Side just a few blocks from Lincoln Center, the 449-seat Merkin Concert Hall at Kaufman Center has been an active venue for performance and recording since its initial construction in the mid-1970s. The combination of an intimate space and clear but supportive acoustics makes the Hall a popular performing venue for students and professionals. The interior and exterior renovations to Kaufman Center, completed in January 2008, included upgrades to the Merkin Hall infrastructure, and addressed seating, air handling, lighting, and connectivity. How the renovations were accomplished was the topic of tonight's meeting.



The design firm of Jaffe/Holden was responsible for the design of the Merkin Hall upgrades and Mr. Ben Bausher spoke about the goal of "acoustic preservation" and the tasks of documenting the sound of the Hall, installing the new technology, and then measuring to be sure the hall would sound the same after the renovations. The two main acoustic concerns were replacing the seating and re-furbishing the wooden acoustic panels on the stage, ceiling, and walls of the hall. Mr. Bausher spoke about the extensive lab testing of the proposed new seating to ensure that the acoustic properties of the new seating closely matched the older seating and introduced no unwanted results. The engineering went as far as cantilevering the chairs from the risers rather than attaching them directly to the floor. The Hall's acoustic panels (reflection and diffusion) were removed and sent out for cleaning and visual renovation. After they were re-installed, the overall effect with the new seats was that the hall retained its familiar acoustics, with maybe just a touch more clarity, possibly due to the elimination of years of accumulated dust from the tops of the panels. The goal of lowering the noise floor was addressed by improved air handling, new lighting and controls, and through the rubber isolators installed by the MTA on 2,000 feet of the Broadway Express subway line as part of the Lincoln Center renovation project.

Mr. Adrian Bennett of systems integrator AVI-SPL described infrastructure upgrades including new power distribution, a new sound reinforcement system with dsp processing, and new stage wall plates and stage boxes feeding a distribution panel. As Mr. Bennett explained, 80% of their work was done in the design and fabrication stages, prior to passing any audio. Technical power was handled with an isolated feed from the transformer for clean power being sent to sequenced outlets for control of load and grounding. Wall plates at the back of the stage led to a distribution rack at stage right with splits for the house mix position, recording studio, and optional stage position for monitors. The house mix position was tied to the balcony amp and processor room which fed the installed theater speakers and subwoofers, the stage boxes for optional front row reinforcement, and the wall plates for temporary surround speaker positions. The audience of about 40 joined in a lively question and answer period for both presenters, followed by a chance to get on stage to examine the distribution rack, check out the wall plates and floor boxes, and continue the questions and conversation.

Report by David Prentice