

Melody maker

Brighton College is the latest beneficiary of Eric Parry's growing speciality for music schools

Words: Isabelle Priest Photographs: H  l  ne Binet



Eric Parry Architects is developing a niche for music schools. First there was Bedford School Music School in 2005, and now music schools at Wells Cathedral School and Brighton College have finished almost simultaneously. This is the new Brighton College Music School, which opened earlier this year and is the first phase of a larger performing arts centre that will complete in 2021.

It is part of a decade of transformation instigated by headmaster Richard Cairns which includes two buildings by Allies and Morrison, a design technology and English block by Kirkland Fraser Moor (KFM) and an academic building under construction by Hopkins to an earlier masterplan by also by KFM. The future drama section will begin on site after OMA's upcoming combined sports and science building finishes and demolition of the science block, alongside which the new music hall stands, has taken place.

This part however, still a 1130m² project, does stand alone as a commendable piece of architecture that squeezes into the site for the time being but will flourish when the overall project is unveiled later.

For the moment the music school nestles on the inside of an L-shaped dining complex slipped between the original college buildings and the bank of the playing fields behind. Having been relocated itself from premises off the main college grounds, it sits on the site of a former tuck shop, toilet block and squash courts, which rather wastefully were restored with a  40,000 donation from an old boy only three years before the launch of this competition in 2010 to demolish them.

As part of the scheme, the dining hall was refurbished and a new entranceway created from the original Gilbert Scott quad building into the small courtyard that fronts the building. It is intended to enlarge the courtyard in the second phase of works.

From here the only signs of a completely new building are the two-storey stone-clad and curved glazed corner that protrudes 9m from the science block. And it is revealing of the squish that this is not really where my tour began. Rather the building's true elevation is an entrance-less gable end one storey up on the bank to the rear, and which is best appreciated 100m onto the cricket pitch. From here the building shows its elegant composition and main purpose: an 11m wide by 11m tall by 15m deep, 195-seat recital room with a fully glazed end overlooking

Opposite The recital hall window overlooking the playing fields is high performance to resist cricket balls and create acoustic separation.

Below The colourful panelised diamond tile roof takes its cues from H  tel-Dieu de Beaune and other Burgundian architecture.

Right The percussion room, tucked away behind the recital hall, is day lit from above and heavily soundproofed.

IN NUMBERS

 5m
total contract cost

1,134m²
gross internal area

7.45
kgCo²/m²

Excellent
BREEAM review



body maker

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Best Photographs: H el ene Binet

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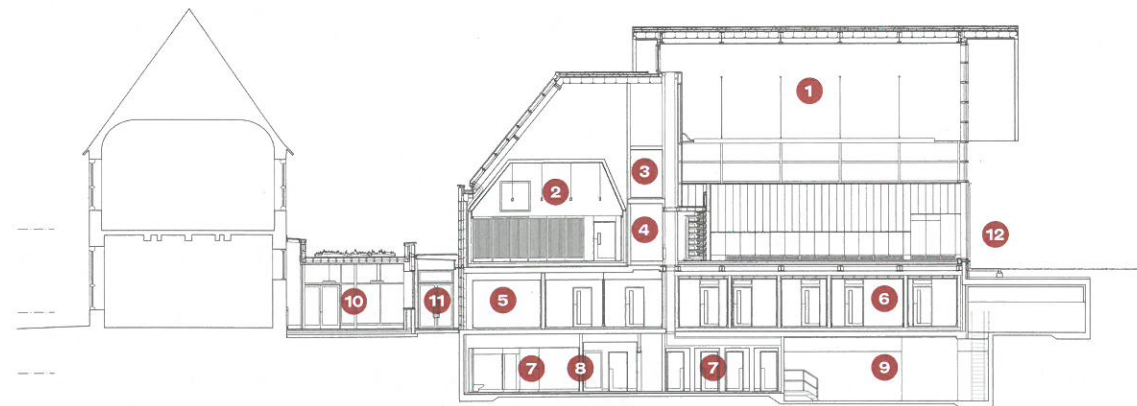
Excellent
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Section

Key

- | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 Recital hall | 7 WCs |
| 2 Percussion room | 8 Lobby |
| 3 Control and equipment box | 9 Plant |
| 4 Store | 10 Dining hall |
| 5 Lodge and head of music's office | 11 Covered corridor to dining hall |
| 6 Practice rooms | 12 Playing field |



the playing fields, its colourful chevron tiled roof floating above its stone walls on clerestory windows.

What appears from this aspect to be a single room building in fact tucks in a whole music department beneath, including a corridor of practice rooms, reception/lodge and head of music's office, as well as a control box, percussion room and processional steel stair.

Most impressive is the commitment by the architect to making a technically excellent environment for the appreciation of music largely without exposing it in the architecture. It involved sizeable air handling plant, acoustically separated floors between rooms, specific build-up in the glass, internal shutters, thick walls and deep sills, gills integrated into joinery and masses of insulation, particularly in the roof, which unfortunately is the only aspect of the project which could perhaps have been finished more delicately.

But inside, a neutral colour scheme leaves the aesthetic stage clear for the music that will be made here to fill the space. ●

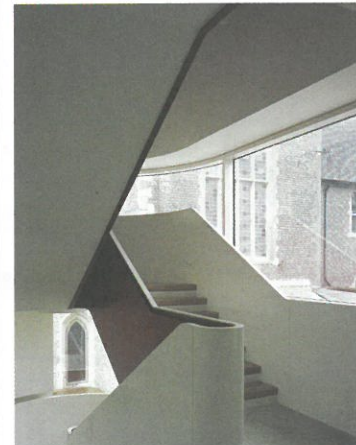


Below right The winding steel stair overlooks the courtyard by the main entrance, its underside painted bright red.

Below left A heavy wall processes air at the back of the recital hall and contains the control room. Gills along the walls can be opened to create different acoustic environments.

Credits

Client Brighton College
Architect Eric Parry Architects
Structural engineer Momentum Consulting Engineers
Main contractor R Durnell and Sons
Mechanical and electrical engineer Skelly & Couch
Acoustics Gillieron Scott Acoustic Design
Theatre consultant Charcoalblue
Quantity surveyor Academy Consulting
Fire engineer The Fire Surgery
Approved inspector Butler and Young
Planning consultant Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners



Suppliers

Roof tiles Ceramica Cumella, Barcelona
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Green roof Bauder
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