

New Marlowe Theatre, Canterbury  
2007 - 2011

marlowe theatre

keith williams architects

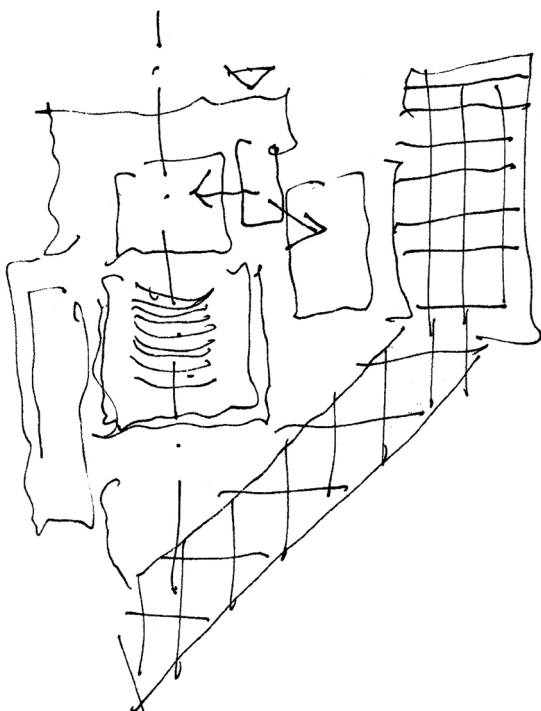




*"The New Marlowe Theatre is, we believe, a wonderful contemporary building, sensitively placed in the heart of a heritage city. Keith's design was the unanimous choice of both the public and project partners".*

*"His designs are stunning, he is an inspiring colleague and both he and his team are passionate about their buildings. KWA are a pleasure to work with".*

**Janice McGuinness : Head of Culture and Enterprise, Canterbury City Council**



Keith Williams' competition winning project for the new Marlowe Theatre in Canterbury was formally opened on the 4th October 2011 by HRH The Earl of Wessex KG, GCVO.

Named after Christopher Marlowe, the cathedral city's famous Tudor playwright, the new building has been constructed on the site of the former Marlowe Theatre which was housed in a now demolished 1930s cinema. The new building contains a 1,200 seat main theatre, a 150 studio theatre, cafes and bars, rehearsal and backstage facilities.

The main elements are united by an enwrapping colonnaded glazed foyer which opens onto the River Stour, and mediates between the existing street scale and the larger elements of the composition, such as the main auditorium and the stainless steel mesh clad flytower.

The £25.6 million project, close by Canterbury's Grade I Listed Cathedral and UNESCO World Heritage Site was delivered to time and budget, opening to the public 7th October 2011.



## AWARDS

### 2013

RICS Awards : South East Tourism & Leisure : Award Winner

RICS Awards : South East Project of the Year : Award Winner

Civic Trust Awards : Award Winner

The Structural Steel Design Awards : Commendation

### 2012

RIBA Downland Trust Award : Award Winner

British Construction Industry Awards : Marlowe Theatre : Shortlisted  
Building Project of the Year (£3m - £50m)

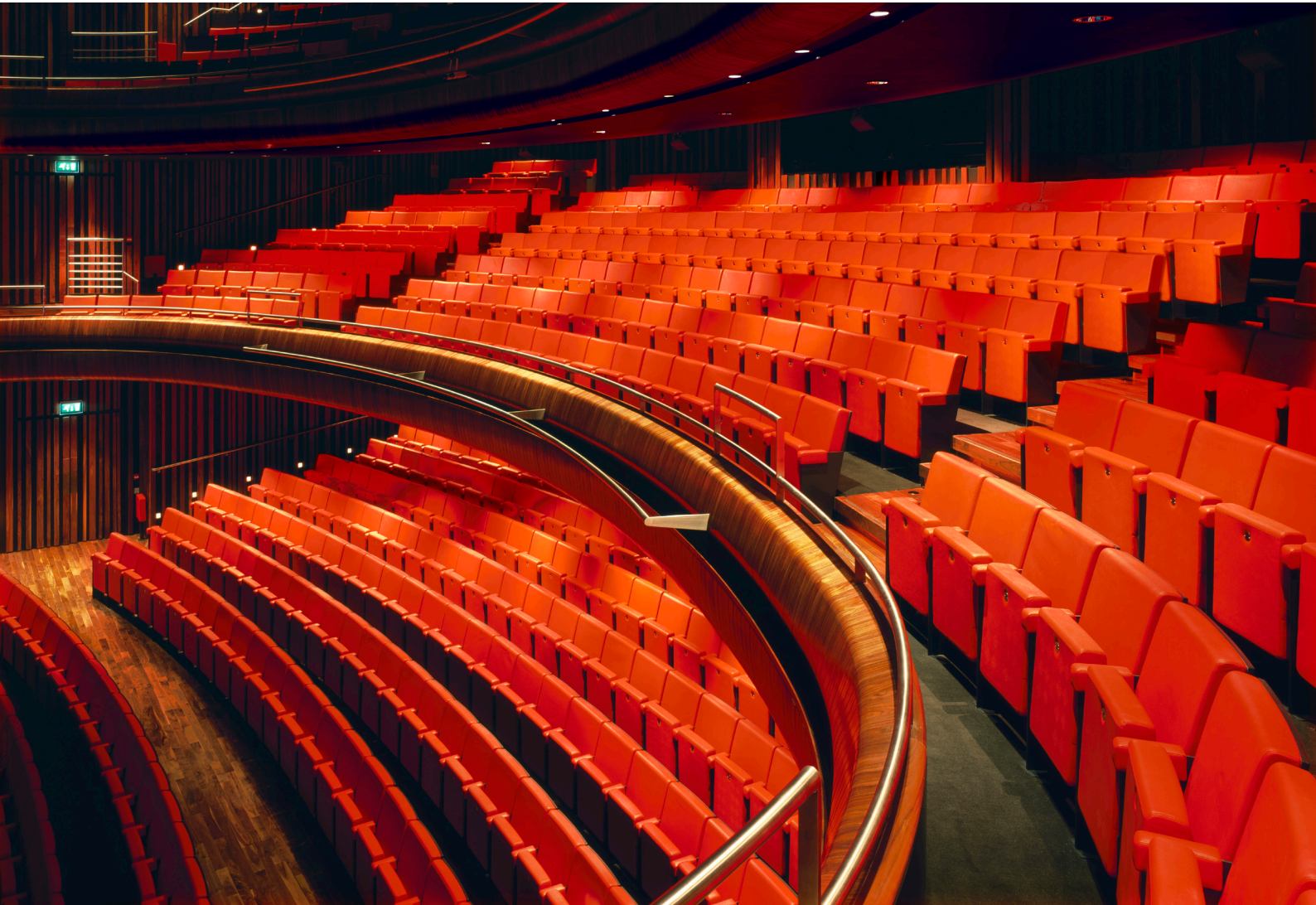
British Construction Industry Awards : Marlowe Theatre : Shortlisted  
Prime Minister's Award

East Kent People's Award : Award Winner

The Cultural Landscape Award : Award Winner (Canterbury Culture Awards)



keith williams architects



**HRH The Earl of Wessex KG, GCVO 4 October 2011**

*"..Canterbury has a splendid new landmark, Kent has an exciting new performing arts space and the region has a new venue which is capable of attracting the best performers in the land and beyond."*

**Mark Everett, Theatre Director, The Marlowe Theatre 12 October 2011**

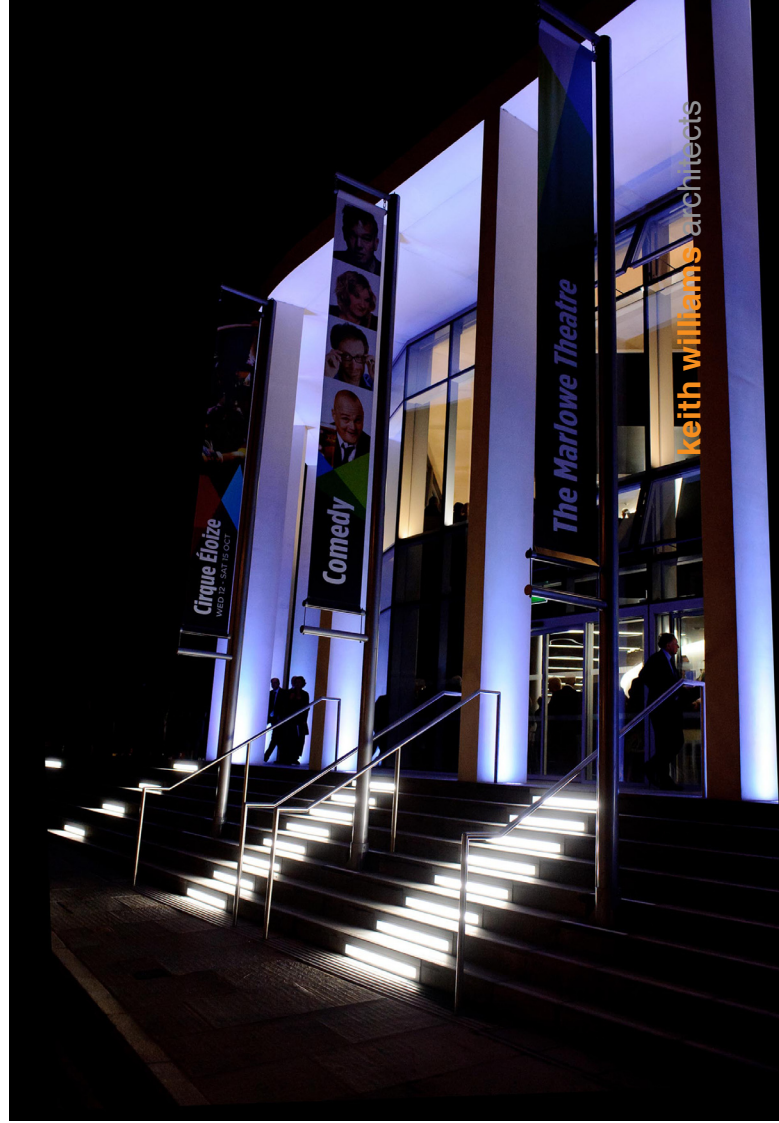
*"Within the envelope of a wonderful example of the best in 21st century architectural design, Keith Williams has provided us with a stunning 1200-seat main house that uses all the well-established traditional principles of auditorium design to provide a warm and intimate space in which to experience all forms of the performing arts at the highest standards. Joined democratically through common foyers dominating the front of the building on three levels, the 150-seat Marlowe Studio theatre provides a flexible and inspiring space for new and creative work of all kinds. The effect of both these spaces on our programming is truly inspirational."*

**The Daily Telegraph - Charles Spencer 10 October 2011**

*"The theatre, designed by Keith Williams is a beauty..... the new building offers a sleek and airy modernity that sits remarkably comfortably within the ancient city."*

**The Independent – Jay Merrick 28 September 2011**

*"...an architectural daring that has given the city (Canterbury) its first significant piece of contemporary architecture"*



**Architects Journal – Felix Mara 6 October 2011**

*"Williams establishes an exact and harmonious relationship with the colours of the local vernacular without aping it. .... Viewed as if in profile from the Marlowe's generous new piazza, it (the flytower) tilts upwards and gestures towards the cathedral – the apex of a sequence of, spiralling volumes."*

**ICON – Will Wiles – October 2011**

*"Keith Williams' new home for this Canterbury Theatre combines civic dignity with a few touches of appropriately theatrical flair."*





Named after Christopher Marlowe, Canterbury's famous Tudor playwright who was a contemporary of Shakespeare, the new 4,850sqm building replaces the existing theatre on its site in the heart of the city's historic core.

The Marlowe has a very large audience following and is a key part of the cultural life of the city and the region. The existing theatre building, a converted 1930's cinema, seemed rather more akin to low grade jazzy seaside architecture, than the major theatre in one of Britain's finest historic cities. The building was demolished, with only the steel frame structure of existing flytower and its sub-stage being retained. The new Marlowe was built in its place on an expanded site, which includes adjacent brownfield land connecting the site to the banks of the River Stour as it winds through the city centre.

The new building contains a 1,200 seat main auditorium with 2 curved balconies, flytower and orchestra pit, a 150 seat studio theatre, cafes and bars, as well as rehearsal and backstage facilities. The main elements are united by an enwrapping colonnaded glazed foyer, which connects the theatre's new public spaces and terraces to the Stour.

The building has been treated as a single composition but heavily modelled

so as to rise in steps from the scales of St. Peter's Church and the existing buildings along the Friars, the street on which the Marlowe sits, to the pinnacle of the remodelled flytower. An 8m high, reconstructed stone colonnade enwraps the glass foyer, unifying and mediating between the necessarily large components such as the main auditorium and flytower, and the 2 and 3 storey historic buildings along The Friars. It also provides shelter to the south-facing foyer from solar gain.

The 3 level foyer unites all the major public spaces and the two auditoria. It is seen as a crystal ribbon by day transforming into a blade of light by night, an open and inviting place providing a new kind of meeting space within the city with the potential for extended social and cultural activity.

After the cathedral tower (Bell Harry), the Marlowe's current flytower was the second tallest structure in the city. Lumpy and aesthetically crude, it contained, however, the minimum functional volume for its theatrical purpose. We determined that it should be remodelled to create accent, and a more dynamic silhouette than a rectangular functional shape could provide. In a radical move Keith Williams proposed a new form for the flytower some 9m taller at its highest point than that existing, to create a pinnacle.

This proposal adjacent a World Heritage site sparked much debate.

Oriented toward the cathedral, the new flytower form may be seen as a prominent pinnacle of secular architecture within the city whilst ensuring that the tower of the mediaeval cathedral's religious architecture retains its pre-dominance.

The flytower's surfaces are clad in a stainless steel mesh skin set 500mm in front of silver aluminium cladding, dematerialising the flytower's form, and causing its surfaces to shimmer and sheen whilst subtly reflecting clouds and the hues of the daytime sky and sunset. The flytower is lit at night to increase the dramatic effect of the theatre both at approach of audience and from afar within the city.

In a move which echoes the elevated main theatre at the Unicorn Theatre 2001-2005, the second auditorium is lifted 5.5m above entrance level, to allow the foyer to slide beneath and maintain visual connection with the river. The second auditorium's external skin is clad in pre-oxidised copper to make the visual distinction between the two auditoria and to form a contextual connection with the red and brown roofscape of the city.





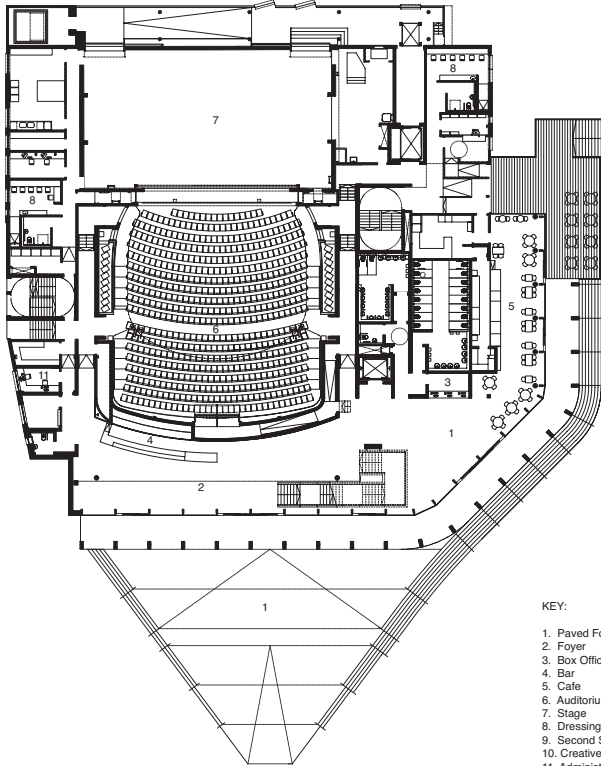
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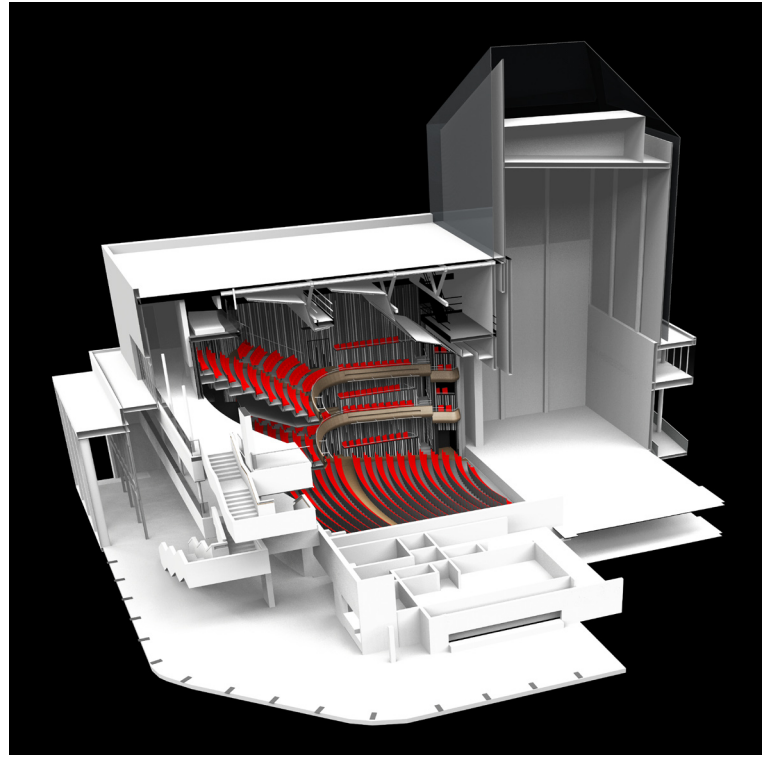


Level 1



KEY:

1. Paved Forecourt
2. Foyer
3. Box Office
4. Bar
5. Cafe
6. Auditorium
7. Stage
8. Dressing Rooms
9. Second Space
10. Creative Space
11. Administration Offices
12. Meeting Room



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2007-2011

marlowe theatre

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My Marlowe Opening Weekend  
Pocket Comedy  
The Marlowe Theatre

**THE PLAYERS**

Client	:	Canterbury City Council
Architect	:	Keith Williams Architects Keith Williams, Richard Brown (director in charge), Guy Davies (associate in charge - design stage), Matthew Green (senior architect – construction stage), Licia de Angelis (auditoria) Sandra Beyer, Cheah Yit Eet, James Davies, Nicola Fox, Britta Neffgen, Mark Taylor, Carl Trenfield
Fit-out & Interiors	:	Keith Williams Architects
Project Manager	:	Drivers Jonas Deloitte
Structural Engineer	:	Buro Happold
M&E Engineer	:	Max Fordham
Fire Engineer	:	Buro Happold
Quantity Surveyor	:	Rider Levett Bucknall
Theatre Consultant	:	Charcoalblue
Acoustic Consultant	:	Sandy Brown Associates
Lighting Consultant	:	Max Fordham
Landscape & Ecology Consultant	:	Lloyd Bore
Visual Impact Assessor	:	Miller Hare
CDM Coordinator	:	Rider Levett Bucknall
Archaeology Consultant	:	CgMs Consulting
Access Consultant	:	The Access Collaboration
Catering Consultant	:	Winton Nightingale
Digital Imaging	:	Keith Williams Architects
Models	:	Hidden Modelshop
Main Contractor	:	ISG Jackson
Approved Building Inspector	:	Canterbury City Council Building Control

Photos : Hélène Binet and Tim Stubbings



Sir John Tomlinson and Carmen Giannattasio - on the Marlowe Stage, 4th October 2011

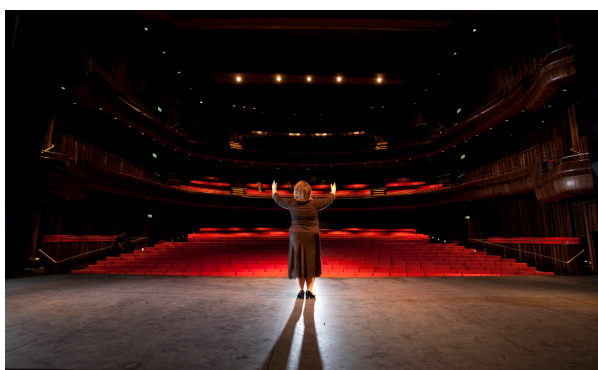


## Facts & Figures

Project Title	: New Marlowe Theatre
Client	: Canterbury City Council
Programme	: 2007 - 2011
Area	: 4,850 sqm
Total Project Cost	: £25.6 million



New Marlowe Theatre among the city's roof tops



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