National Opera House
Wexford
Co Wexford Ireland

RIAI CULTURAL BUILDING OF THE YEAR
RIAI TRIENNIAL GOLD MEDAL 2017 (SHORTLISTED)
STIRLING PRIZE (SHORTLISTED)
“Ireland has had to wait a long time for its first proper opera house, but patience has been rewarded: the beautiful building now shoehorned into Wexford’s tight little streets is an architectural triumph… the acoustic and sight lines are well neigh perfect.”

Michael Church : The Independent

“Pass through the same modest back-street entrance and you emerge into a shiny state-of-the-art Opera House, a 780-seater mini Glyndebourne, its elegant horseshoe swathed in sleek American walnut, ...with crystal clear acoustic, spacious stage, comfortable seats, good sight-lines throughout the house.”

Anthony Holden : The Observer

“The auditorium is a fantastic achievement. There are some cosmetic similarities to Hopkins’ Glyndebourne but I find Wexford much more satisfying. At Glyndebourne the auditorium constantly reminds you that it is a kit of parts, but Wexford is a taut and modeled skin of timber, which distorts and shifts, but is always whole. The steeper lines of the balconies, ending beautifully as they turn toward the stage, are fabulous from every angle.”

Kieran Long : Architects Journal
“the building has also been highly commended by audiences, artists and critics for its excellent acoustic, superb staging and production facilities, and its very relaxing and comfortable ambience”.

“We continue to be impressed by the vision, ingenuity and creativity which Keith Williams Architects brought to the design and construction of Wexford Opera House”.

David McLoughlin : Chief Executive 
Wexford Festival Opera
The re-building of Wexford’s opera house by Keith Williams Architects and the Irish Government’s Office of Public Works, was one of Ireland’s most important cultural regeneration projects of the early 21st century.

The multi-award winning venue, constructed in the heart of medieval maritime Wexford, contains the main opera house, the O’Reilly Theatre (780 – 840 seats), full flytower and backstage and the Jerome Hynes Theatre, a transformable second space of 170 seats, together with rehearsal, production facilities, bars, café and foyer spaces.

Carefully integrated into the historic fabric of Wexford’s medieval centre, the scale of the opera house and its contribution to Wexford’s silhouette only becomes apparent when viewed from the harbour. From there, the new flytower appears alongside the spires of Wexford’s two Pugin inspired churches, and the Franciscan Friary, announcing the presence of an exceptional cultural building in the historic townscape.

Internally, the main auditorium, inspired by the form of a cello and the curves of a classic horseshoe form operatic space, is lined in black American walnut with seating in pale purple leather giving a rich sense of materiality to this spectacular theatrical space.

The new house opened on 16 October 2008 with a performance of Rimsky-Korsakoff’s Snegourchka (the Snow Maiden).

Though primarily conceived for Wexford’s autumn opera festival, the new building operates as a year round performing arts venue.

Described as one of the great small opera houses of the world, with exceptional acoustic, the multi-award winning building was officially designated as Ireland’s National Opera House by the Irish Government in 2014.

Among many awards, the building was shortlisted for the RIAI Triennial Gold Medal 2017, and provided the base from which Wexford Festival Opera has excelled winning the Best Festival Award at the 2017 International Opera Awards.

Client : Wexford Festival Opera
O’Reilly Theatre (780-855 seats)

“What has been achieved is remarkable”
Liam Tuite : Architecture Ireland

Key Successes

- Design and delivery of an internationally famous opera house inserted into Wexford’s historic context
- Creation of a world class auditorium with exceptional acoustic qualities
- Multi-award winning performing arts building embedded in the Heart of the Community
- Key part of Wexford County Council’s regeneration strategy
- Project delivered to time and budget

Multi-award winning highly complex performing arts project

- O’Reilly Auditorium: Main opera theatre with 855 – 780 seats and full orchestra pit (2 pit lifts)
- Jerome Hynes Theatre : A studio theatre of 170 seats fully retractable (motorised)
- Full Flytower and Backstage enabling multiple operas to be staged in rotation
Keith Williams’ early concept sketches

National Opera House from High Street

Foyer grand stair
National Opera House Wexford

Auditorium Detail Longitudinal Section

Keith Williams Architects
Section through Foyer and Second Space

1. Entrance
2. Reception/ Box Office
3. Foyer
4. Bar
5. Main Auditorium
6. Second Space
7. Green Room
8. Administration Office
9. Servery
10. Dressing Room
11. Void
12. Corporate Reception
13. Tension wire grid
14. Rehearsal Room
15. Board Room

Jerome Hynes studio theatre (170 seats)
Awards

2017
RIAI Triennial Gold Medal
Shortlisted

2010
AIA Excellence in Architecture
Awards Winner
Civic Trust Award for Outstanding Contribution
Awards Winner

2009
Stirling Prize
Shortlisted
RIAI Cultural Building of the Year
Award Winner
RIBA Awards 2009
Award Winner
Irish Times Special Jury Award
Award Winner

2008
OPUS Awards
Award Winner

Facts & Figures

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<tr>
<td>Client</td>
<td>Wexford Festival Opera</td>
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<tr>
<td>Construction Programme</td>
<td>Nov 2006 - Sept 2008</td>
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<tr>
<td>Budget</td>
<td>€33 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>Area</td>
<td>7,235m²</td>
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