

A Tale of Two Opera Houses - the Oldest and Youngest in Europe - Teatru Manoel Malta and Nevill Holt UK

Anne Minors¹

Sound Space Vision, 2 Tay House, 23 Enterprise Way, London SW18 1FZ, United Kingdom

ABSTRACT

When the oldest working opera house in Europe wants to remodel its orchestra level and re-introduce parterre boxes, how do we preserve the famous acoustic of the Manoel Teatru through the seat design and box fronts alone? Re-raking the stalls floor and allowing for water chilled cooling was another of the challenges to the seat design, as well as the baroque style of seat, seat count and budget. Meanwhile in Leicestershire, the open courtyard of a 17th century stable block was being transformed into a permanent opera house for 400 people in place of a tent structure. The fixed dimensions and the stone walls form the basis of a unique and intimate space, limited in height by its location on the edge of an escarpment. How to balance audience area, orchestra pit depth and stage depth to delight the audience's eyes and ears? The paper will discuss the materiality of each theatre and the considerations that had to be made in both places in terms of form, finish and scale.

¹anne.minors@soundspacevision.com