**WSDG Completes Balcony Renovation for the 1920s Art Deco Gem, the Avalon Theatre**

New balcony offers better views and enhanced ergonomics while maintaining acoustics and aesthetic beauty

**Easton, Maryland, December 9, 2019 -** Global acoustic consulting and audio-visual integration firm WSDG has announced the completion of a crucial set of balcony renovations at the historic Avalon Theatre in Easton, Maryland. The performance venue has been updated with world-class acoustics, state of the art production lighting, and audiovisual capabilities, while still retaining its iconic 1920s Art Deco look and feel. Nearly a century after its completion in 1922, the Theatre remains a vibrant hub of community life for the nine-county Eastern Shore territory east of the Chesapeake Bay. As a host for both nationally known and local performers, the 423-seat venue presents a variety of musical and dramatic theatre, symphony orchestras and other musical acts, but can also be configured for banquets and cabarets, exhibitions and ballroom dancing.

**A historic mission**

Early in the renovation process, the Avalon Foundation, which runs the Avalon Theatre as a 501(c)(3) charitable organization, retained WSDG to complete a master plan study of the long-term renovations. Those plans included theatre expansion, A/V upgrades and balcony reconstruction. As the Avalon Theatre no longer screens movies as its primary source of revenue, the removal of the old projection booth allowed for the reconstruction of the balcony along with upgrades to the spectators’ sight lines, comfort and safety. To perform what Joshua Morris, Partner and COO of WSDG called “a high-intensity seating and platform layout,” the firm took measurements to create extensive 3D models of the new balcony setup. With the plans in place, Morris said the working relationship naturally evolved into WSDG accepting the commission to improve the balcony itself.

That mission demanded that neither the seat count nor the acoustics of the balcony be compromised, while also improving the comfort, safety and visual experience of the audience. “Because we are engaged in so many of the disciplines this project required—architecture, acoustics, A/V, lighting, ergonomics, 3D visualization, interior design—we presented Avalon with an integrated design approach,” Morris said. “This allowed us to greatly streamline the communication and enhancing the efficiency of the collaboration process.”

For better ergonomics, the balcony’s seats needed to be widened as much as possible and positioned to be focused on stage performers, rather than a screen. Certain railings that obstructed the view of some seats needed to be replaced with better railings and improved lighting for visibility. The balcony’s walkways also needed better tread depth and tread visibility, as well as height consistency. Finally, all the renovations needed to be aesthetically consistent with the Avalon Theatre’s beloved Art Deco motif.

**A quantum leap in experience**

Morris and his team worked closely with Al Bond, President and CEO of the Avalon Foundation and Jessica Bellis the COO/CFO, who headed up the interfacing and reviewing procedures with the local heritage committee. Together they paid respect to the theatre’s aesthetic character. The rear of the balcony needed particular attention. The projection booth’s walls, door and floor were removed and dimmer racks, exhaust ducts, speakers and other elements were relocated or reappointed.

“Al’s work in this realm was vital to getting this approved and built,” Morris said. “It would have been difficult if not impossible for us to do this without it.”

WSDG helped to match the new balcony’s tin ceiling to the existing tin ceiling, and The Avalon Foundation selected the new chairs and carpet to enhance and harmonize the old. In the end, the team succeeded in increasing the newly designed balcony’s seat count to 219, while increasing the width of each seat by two inches and maintaining the excellent acoustics.

“We were able to create a new balcony experience that is a quantum leap from what was there,” Morris said. “It’s more comfortable, with better sight lines and more safety features.”

Avalon Theatre-goers this season will enjoy the upgraded balcony experience when taking in operas by George Frideric Handel, Giacomo Puccini, Philip Glass and the Gershwins, as well as concerts of classic rock, bluegrass, Americana and other genres.

## ABOUT WSDG, LLC

For nearly 50 years, acoustic consulting and A/V integration firm [WSDG](http://www.wsdg.com/) has designed nearly 3,000 media production facilities worldwide and counting. Projects range from Jimi Hendrix’s Electric Lady Studio and Jazz At Lincoln Center in New York, to broadcast facilities for The Food Network, CBS and WNET, over twenty teaching studios for The Art Institutes, and corporate clients such as Sony, IBM and Novartis. Recent credits include Jungle City in New York, The Church Studios in London, private studios for Green Day, Jay-Z, Bruce Springsteen, Alicia Keys and Academy Award-nominated film composer Carter Burwell. WSDG has collaborated with such noted architects as Frank Gehry, Philippe Stark, Rafael Viñoly, Santiago Calatrava, Grimshaw, and Norman Foster.  An eleven-time winner of the prestigious pro audio NAMM [TEC Award](https://www.tecawards.org/) for outstanding achievement in Acoustics/Facility Design, WSDG maintains U.S. offices in New York, Washington, DC, San Francisco and Miami and global offices in Barcelona, Basel, Berlin, Belo Horizonte, Buenos Aires, Guangzhou, Mexico City and Mumbai.

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