

# Rebirth of an icon

After years of neglect and decay, the curtain rises again at the Teatro Campos Eliseos in Bilbao

**M**ore than a century after opening in 1902 and after 20 years of decline, the Teatro Campos Eliseos in Bilbao, Spain reopened on 11 March 2010. An outstanding example of Art Nouveau architecture, the venue, now restored to its former glory, is one of Spain's most technologically advanced multipurpose venues for the performing arts, musical presentations, artistic and educational events. Along with many other technological advances, this venue now showcases one of Gala Systems' fully automated seat and floor transformation systems.

The Teatro Campos Eliseos was originally built by local Bilbao architect Alfredo Acebal in collaboration with French-Basque designer Jean Baptiste Darroquy, who created the distinctively ornate Art Nouveau façade, characterised by organically inspired curvilinear forms. The theatre is recognised by the local Basque government as "a heritage building of high cultural significance".

The renovation project was conducted over a five-year period, during which the building underwent a complete restoration of the façade and a floor-to-ceiling renovation of the entrance hall, inner hall and proscenium, while preserving the venue's unique Art Nouveau architectural heritage. Seating areas were updated with the integration of a fully automatic Gala Venue space reconfiguration system that can easily and speedily transform from one configuration to another to meet the requirements of individual events. All of the interior improvements – including design and installation – were managed by the engineering department of the General Society of Authors and Publishers (SGAE).



The front of the Teatro Campos Eliseos in Bilbao and (below) the main hall

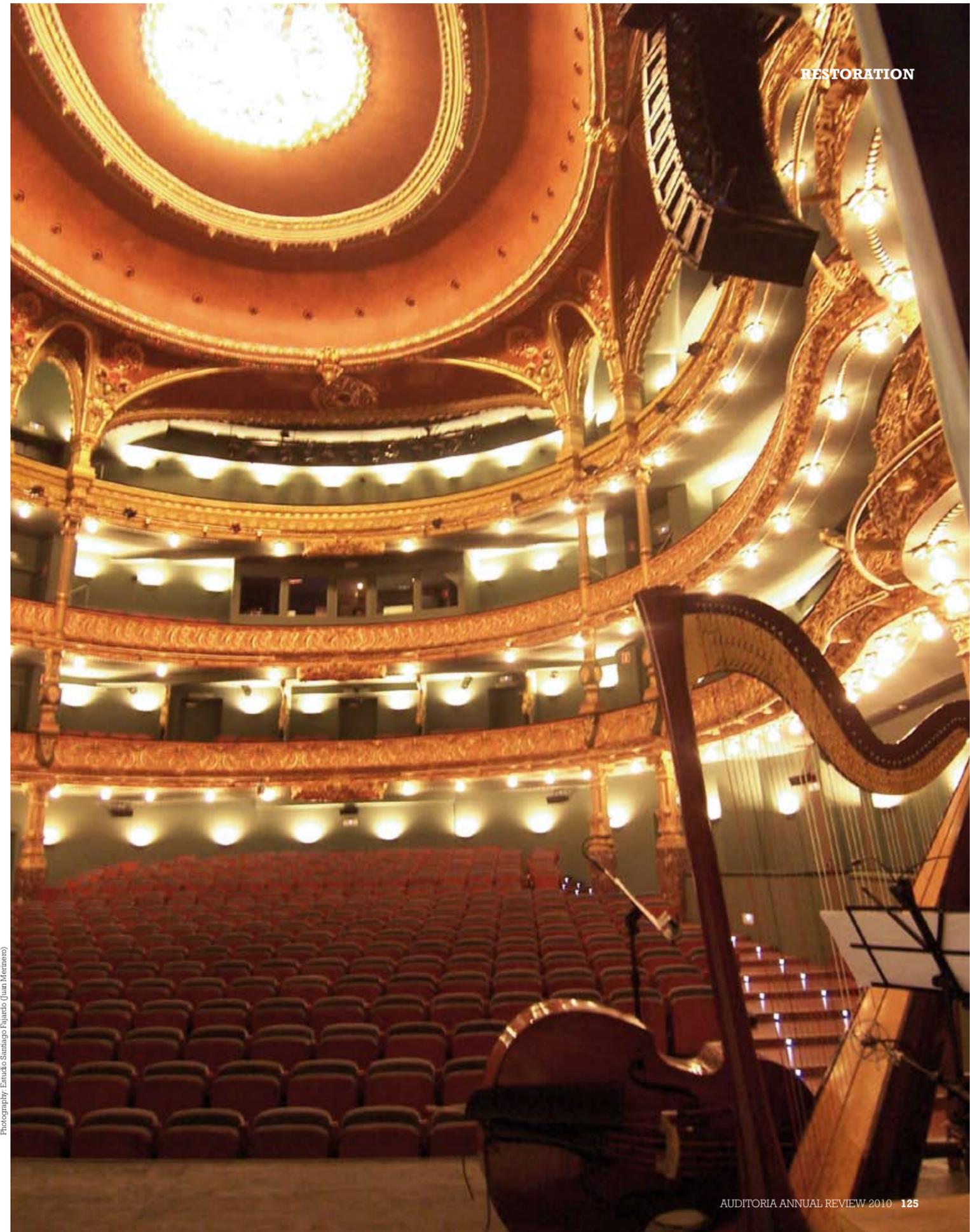


Improvements include: a motorised over-stage system provided by Trekwerk; audiovisual live recording studios equipped with internet connections that can be used for live transmission during events; digital consoles for processing and mixing; ultra-compact powered speakers by Meyer Sound that provide distributed effects at the perimeter and other areas; an HD camera system to record any activity that occurs both in the main hall and in the sixth-floor multipurpose room; and a full-resolution digital projector 4K (4096 x 2160 pixels).

Funding for the project was borne jointly in equal parts by the SGAE and the City of Bilbao under an agreement signed between the two institutions in December 2003, which stipulated that management of the venue was to be transferred to the SGAE for a period of 30 years. From the start, the SGAE decided to turn the Teatro Campos Eliseos into a thoroughly modern multipurpose cultural space offering a wide array of events – without sacrificing the aesthetic integrity of the venue.

Eduardo Bautista, president of the SGAE, said: "The Teatro Campos Eliseos is to be a cutting-edge, multi-purpose cultural space offering a varied programme of theatre, new media, music and contemporary dance, with special attention to authors and the Basque Euskera. It will also serve as a training centre for various artistic disciplines and serve as the permanent headquarters of the SGAE in Bilbao."

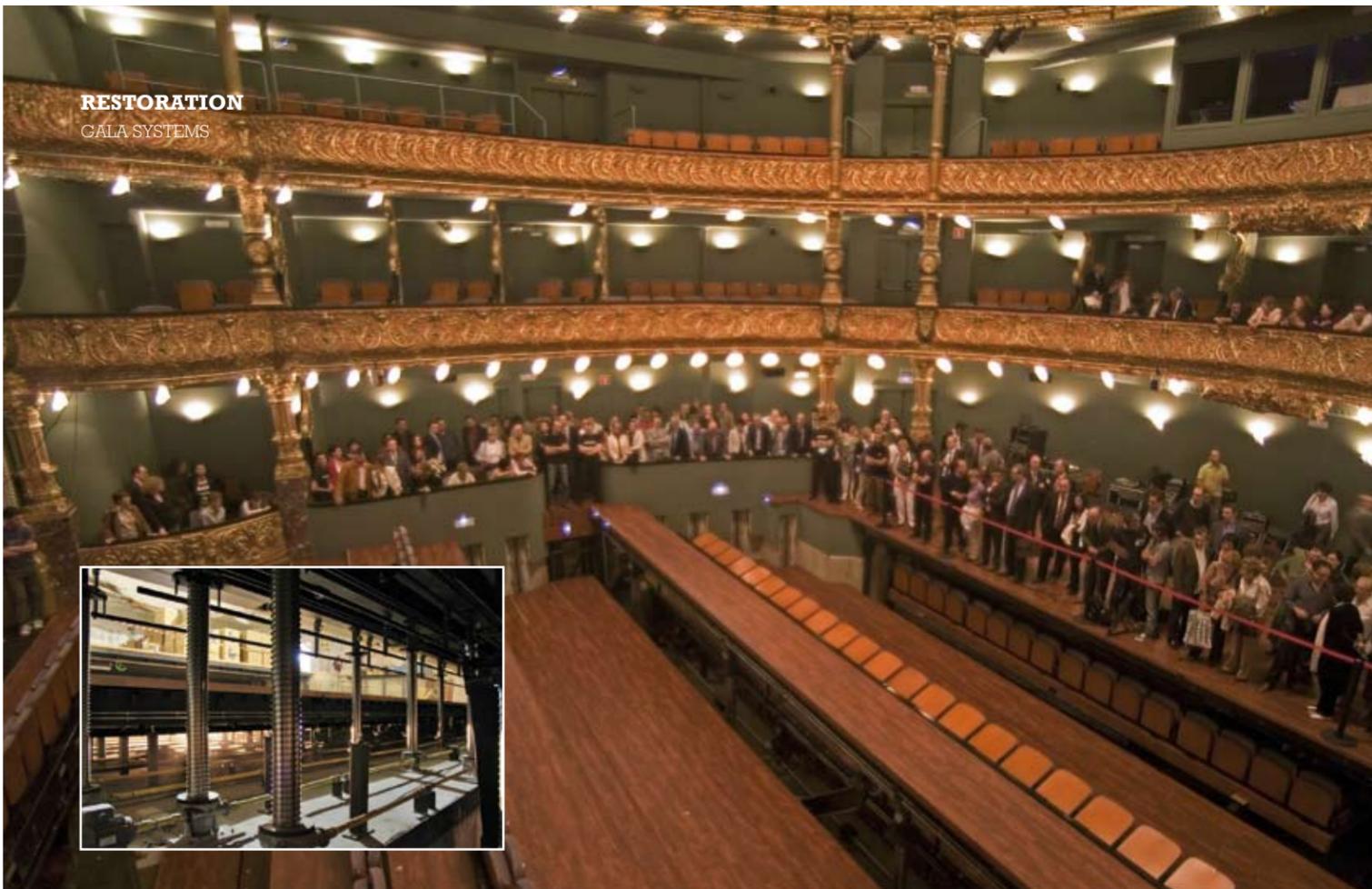
The work was undertaken by SGAE's Eduardo Bautista and a project team composed of architect Santiago Fajardo, the technical office of the SGAE led by Angel Quintanilla & Julio Cejalvo, and assisted by a team from Garcia Dieguez Consulting. The project team worked



Photography: Ernando Santiago Fajardo (Juan Meitner)

**RESTORATION**

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**The theatre's main seating area and (inset) the Gala Venue space reconfiguration system**

closely with Gala Systems from the very early stages of the project to design a custom, fully automatic Gala Venue space reconfiguration system that allowed the configuration of the rows nearest the stage with minimal impact on the architecture and building infrastructure. The completed Gala Venue rotational seat storage assembly was integrated into the existing 1.3m-deep foundation.

Besides the spectacular main hall, the building also houses the offices of the northern territorial delegation of the SGAE, a restaurant and multipurpose rooms for new media presentations. With a programme composed of "varied arts and genres for all ages" according to Luis Álvarez, musical performances will comprise a share of 42% of venue usage, followed by drama at 29%. Training and dance performances will comprise the remainder.

The new Teatro Campos Eliseos is a harmonious balance of art and technology that is flexible enough to host a multitude of different events over the course of a single day in a wide range of seating configurations that maximise accessibility and comfort.

Following the success of this project, the SGAE has embarked in collaboration with Gala Systems on several new upcoming ventures including the Teatro Parallel project in Barcelona and the CITE project in Seville, Spain, which also includes fully automated seat and floor transformation systems. ■

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## Teatro Campos Eliseos

**Total surface area:** 7,891m

**Stage dimensions:** 12m x 10m

**Capacity:** Main hall – 805; main hall with orchestra occupied – 1,120; classroom – 100

**Configurations:** Grand theatre, conference hall, banquet hall, rock configuration (flat floor)

**Sound:** 35,000W (Meyer Sound Melodie); Digico SD8 mixing consoles  
**Video:** HD video projection system (6 cameras) with full-resolution digital projector 4K (4096 x 2160 pixels)

**Overstage:** 35 motorised pipes by Trekwerk, capacity of 900kg and a maximum speed of 1.8m/s + 6 point hoist (1,000kg)

**Lighting:** 312 x 3kW + 60 x 5kW ETC Sensor dimmers + Ethernet/DMX network; 250 lighting fixtures and 18 Clay Paky moving lights

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