

Lincoln Center is Refreshed With USAI Lighting's BeveLED Minis



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Lincoln Center has been an iconic presence in the heart of New York City since the first building—Philharmonic Hall—rose on its site in 1962. In 2015 entertainment mogul David Geffen stepped in with a \$100 million infusion that allowed for a complete reinvention of the site—from redesigned interior spaces, to a completely reimagined theater. An essential part of the renovation was the bold lighting scheme, which creates an enticing, colorful glow from outside—inviting the community in—and improves the experience of visitors once they're inside. Lighting designers Fisher Marantz Stone relied heavily on USAI Lighting's downlights to achieve those effects.

The \$550 million project—which had additional funding through a \$50 million gift from e-commerce founder, Joseph Tsai—required improving the acoustics of the theater, making it more comfortable, and creating a collection of adaptable, flexible interior spaces that could host a range of performances and events.

“The building itself is a theatrical experience; it puts on a show for the city. So during this project, the project team’s guiding principle was: ‘To create a presence for an iconic building that’s expressive of the artistic and performance community—and make it more accessible to the broader community,’” said Paula Martinez-Nobles, Fisher Marantz Stone (NY), Principal-in-Charge of the renovation.

The masterplan was developed with a goal to create a space that set off the excellence of its performances with a space of great beauty and great sound. The renovation’s priority was to achieve this through: 1. shape – by creating a more rounded structure; 2. size – designing a smaller hall with less seating and a stage closer to the audience; and 3. materials – including a sound absorbing acoustic plaster system for the ceiling. The acoustics system resulted in a ceiling thickness that greatly exceeded the typical to absorb sound. This created a challenge for the recessed lighting which accommodates for standard ceiling thickness. Additionally, the plenum (space between the ceiling structure and drop ceiling) was tight with an overall depth of 6.6”.

The FMS lighting design team had to work closely with USAI to find a solution that would address the thicker ceiling with a housing small enough to fit in the extraordinarily tight plenum space.

USAI’s engineering team was able to provide the appropriate modification for its iconic BeveLED Mini 3” Round Trimless Downlights that would maintain the high performance, and beam quality within a small aperture size, while using a new small housing to squeeze into the tight plenum space. The downlights were used to illuminate for general circulation by lighting over seating areas at the underside of the balconies – bathing a warm glow that emphasizes the fabrics and materials

The white travertine colonnades of Lincoln Center are undeniably historic—and the design team—of Fisher Marantz Stone lighting design of New York, Diamond Schmitt Architects, of Toronto; Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects, of New York, Fisher Dachs Associates, and acoustician Paul Scarbrough of Akustiks in Norwalk, Connecticut—had to work within that artistic and historic frame, while strengthening its power and purpose. Choosing the right lighting was a key part of the solution: The carefully orchestrated

lighting design, which includes a variety of BeveLED Mini fixtures throughout the circulation areas, the back of house, and in the balcony seating areas. The fixtures not only offered the perfect lighting solution for each space, but helped ease the logistical challenges the design team faced while renovating the hall during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The renovation had to address more than the concert hall itself: All the public spaces needed a functional and aesthetic facelift, too. The team envisioned a more inviting lobby, with comfortable gathering places and easy access to ticketing and information. All the areas had to be easier to adapt to a range of events, large and small. Finally, guests should feel comfortable in all spaces and be able to find their way easily through them and to the theater itself.

The designers chose BeveLED Mini to guide visitors and staff through the circulation areas, which the architects reorganized for better flexibility and flow. BeveLED Mini wall wash with 3000K CCT also work to accentuate the vibrant tones of the bold decor—which includes gold-leaf tiles along the new stairwells, brass-inlaid terrazzo floors, and bold chandeliers, as well as a custom wallcovering wrapping the walls of the Wu Tsai Theater. FMS chose BeveLED Mini 3-inch round wall wash to illuminate the mural, which “marks the end of the outer, public spaces and the beginning of the theatrical heart of David Geffen Hall,” notes the lighting designer. BeveLED Mini Incline were used for sloped ceilings within Grand Promenade.

CREDITS

LIGHTING DESIGNERS: Fisher Marantz Stone

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PRODUCTS

[BeveLED Mini® 3” — Downlight, Adjustable, Wall Wash](#)

[BeveLED Mini® 3” — Incline For Sloped Ceilings](#)

[BeveLED Mini® Cylinder 3.5”](#)