

Market study

A new multifunctional theater, built into Hamburg's heritage-protected market hall, makes use of flexible stage technology

The city of Hamburg in northern Germany attracts more than two million musical visitors each year. Boasting a wide array of cultural venues, including three state theaters, and around 40 privately-owned theaters and museums, the city attracts more than five million tourists each year. Such is its popularity that Hamburg can lay claim to being the number one musical metropolis in mainland Europe.

Within this cultural center, a brand new, multifunctional theater opened its doors in March 2015 in the market hall, between the city center and the harbor.

The market hall, which was built in 1962, set new standards in architecture, as it was one of the last existing pre-stressed concrete buildings in Hamburg. Nowadays, placed under heritage protection, the market hall remains the city's main wholesale market for fruits and vegetables, with 1.5 million tons distributed at the venue.

The entire area occupies 430,000ft², though the new theater takes up only 10% of this floor space. Spread over three floors, the new theater occupies more than 70,000ft².

Carrying the weight

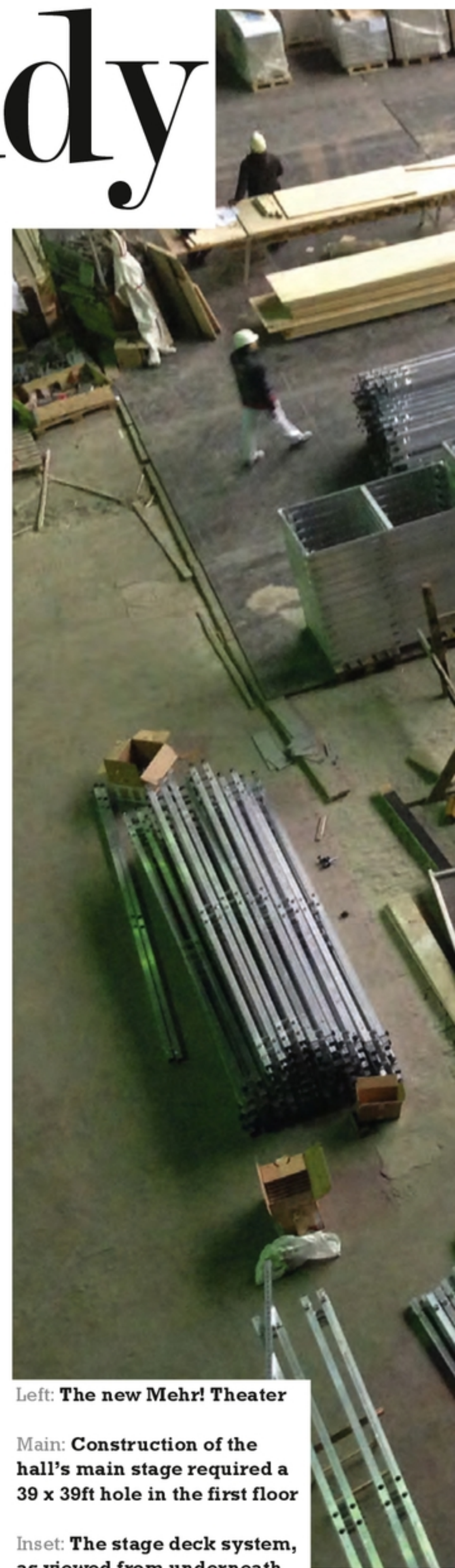
Mehr! Entertainment was contracted by the city to build a brand new theater. The Mehr! Theater is totally integrated into the construction of the market hall. The 66ft height and the span of the roof had to be preserved. The first step in construction was a scaffold wall to separate the main wholesale fruit and vegetable market from the dust created by the construction area of the new theater.

A particularly special part of the project was the implementation of the stage back wall, which had to carry the 60-ton stage roof. Two new steel arches, each weighing 40 tons, were built to carry the 60 tons of additional weight, caused by upper machinery, lighting and audio equipment.

In the basement of the market hall, existing walls were taken away, while new ventilation shafts and cabling were installed to create new rooms for the artists. For the main stage, a 39 x 39ft hole was put into the first floor to create a lower stage area. This hole was then filled by bringing in a mobile stage system. The HOAC StageDeck system was the perfect choice, and is designed to offer flexibility when building staging areas. It is possible to lift up frames in any part of the stage area without dismantling the whole row or stage. A new, patented link block, used for the connection of the frames, gives the user the freedom to open the stage wherever the show demands. The StageDeck columns ensure stable and tight stage under construction up to 5m. It is possible to manage each frame individually within the complete stage structure.

Multiple applications

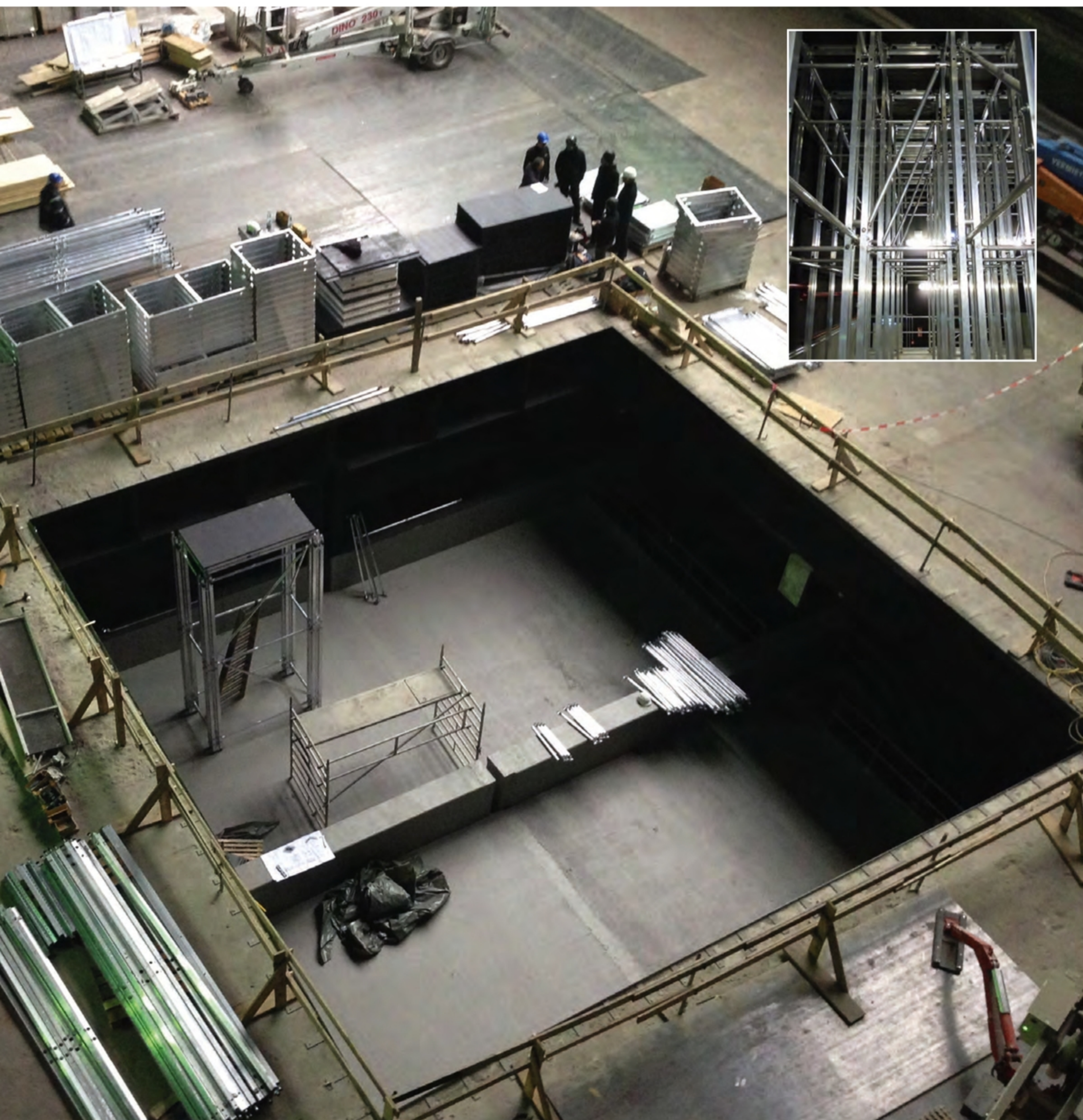
The primary aim of the project was to build a multipurpose theater. The venue is designed for a maximum of 2,400 seats and, when a combination of standing space and seating is used, is capable of accommodating up to 3,500 spectators. The stage area can be used in various configurations, from a 3,445ft² center stage up to



Left: The new Mehr! Theater

Main: Construction of the hall's main stage required a 39 x 39ft hole in the first floor

Inset: The stage deck system, as viewed from underneath



STAGE TECHNOLOGY

Mehrl Theater Hamburg | F101 Architekten | Photo: Andreas Meichsner



5,380ft² of stage area. The stage can be configured to be visible from all four sides. The variable seating system is a mixture of fixed installed steel tribunes, opposite the main stage and complemented by a flexible tribune system. Choosing the same frame system as for the main stage, the theater reached the perfect alliance of sustainability and flexibility. Using the HOAC SystemFrame with its compliant accessories makes it possible to save on critical setup time and manpower costs.

The architecture of the hall, the foyer and the bars was designed in an open-plan style, and the inner construction methods did not include

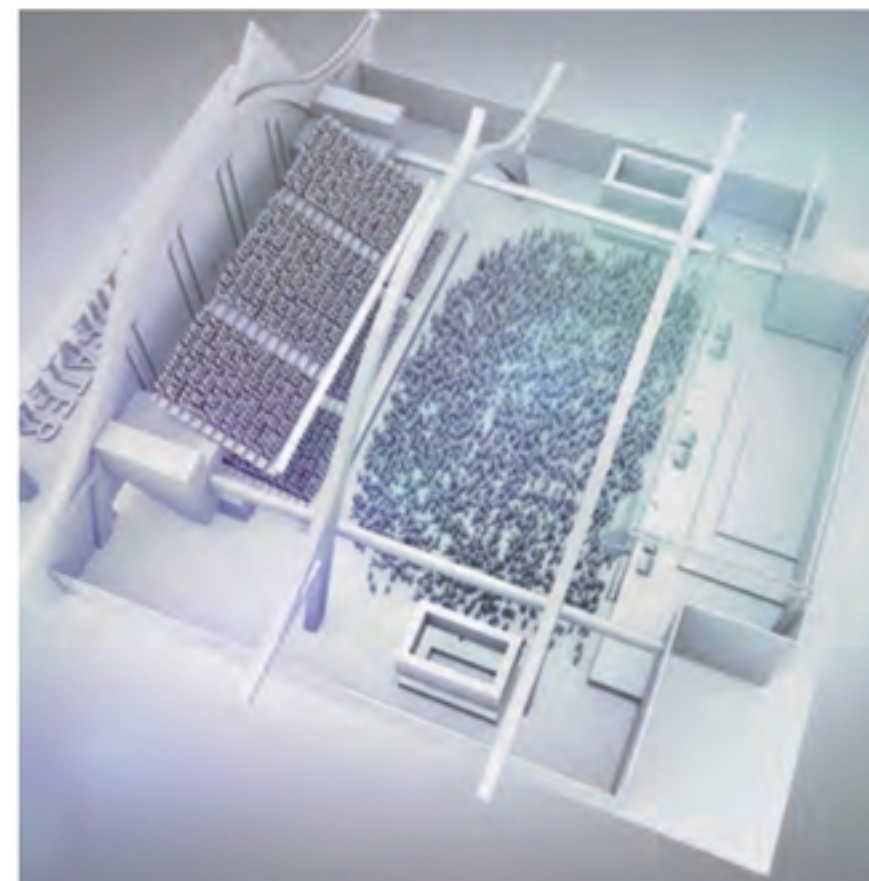
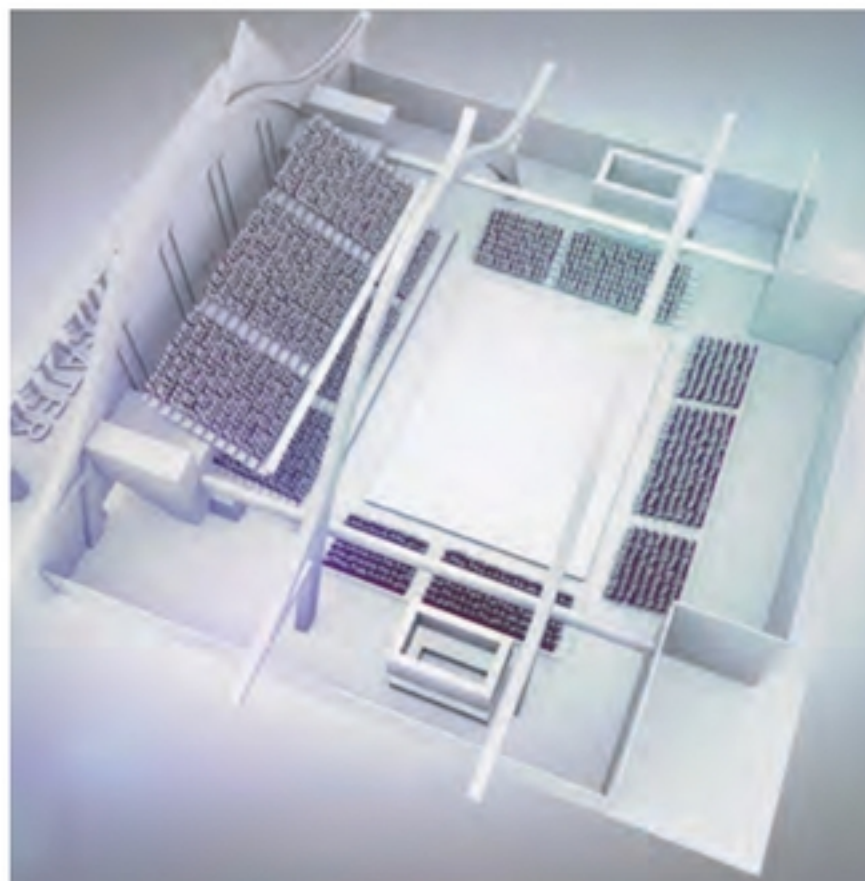
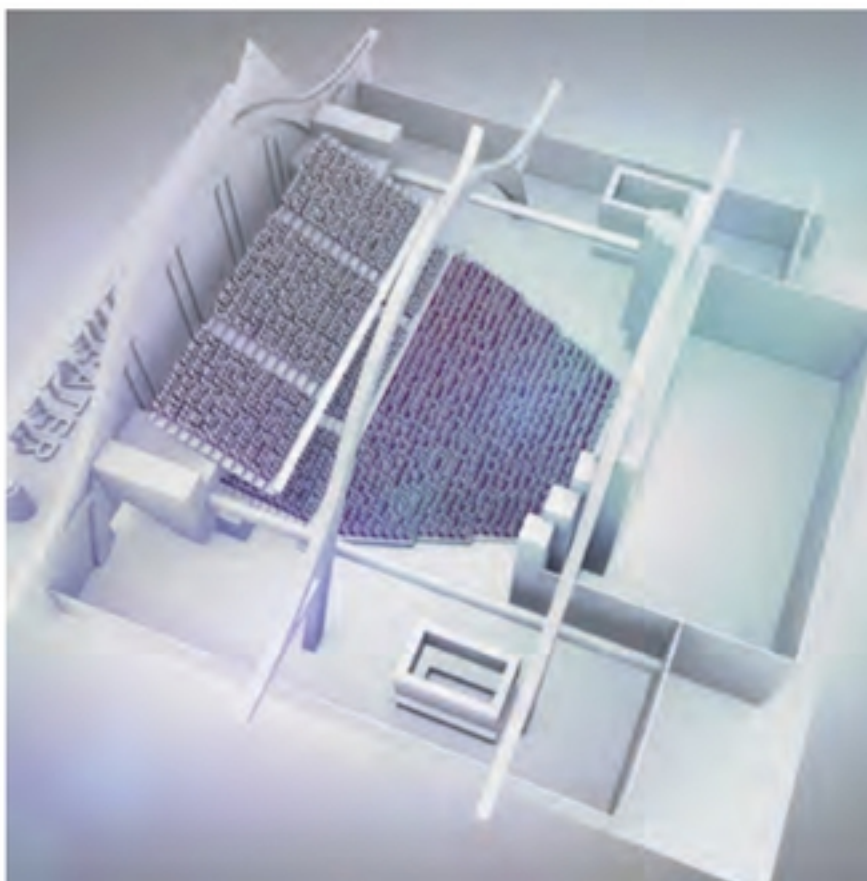
Above: The London Symphony Orchestra perform at the hall's opening on March 7, 2015

Below, from left: The concert hall in three of the various possible configurations: with proscenium; with center stage; set up to stage a rock concert

dividing walls and false ceilings. As well as the outstanding architecture, the market hall benefits from its direct connection to the harbor.

For the opening of the theater on March 7, 2015, and following 15 months of construction, a classic concert was planned. HOAC delivered the mobile aluminum construction for the acoustical shell just in time for the performance. The London Symphony Orchestra travelled to the new venue, and welcomed the 2,400 concert guests with a "Moin, Moin" – the traditional Hamburg greeting. ■

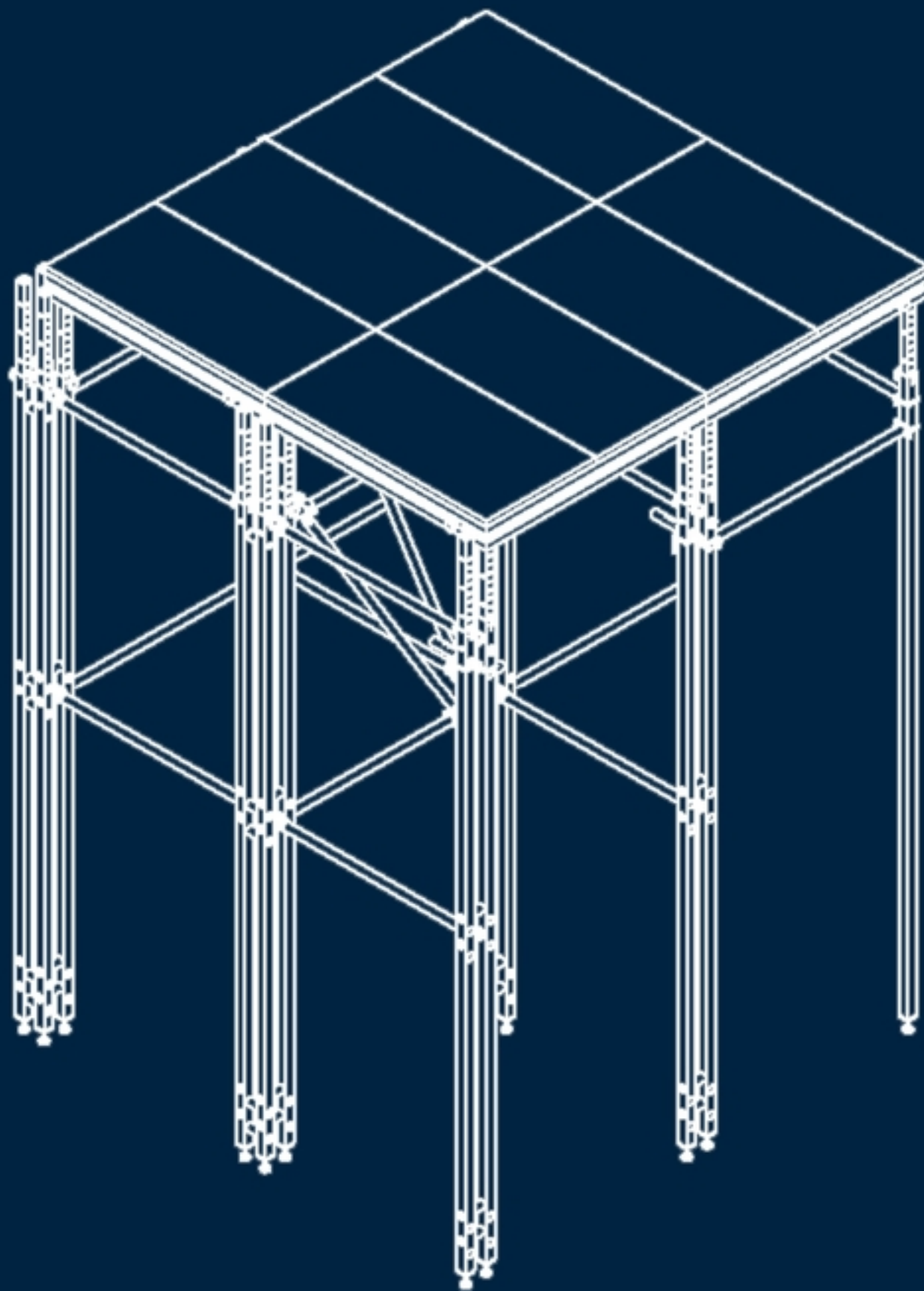
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