

# A NEW ANGLE ON THEATER RENOVATION



CASE STUDY



DIVISION 9 ENGINEERED-TO-ORDER WOOD CEILINGS

# A New Angle on Theater Renovation

## LA Harbor College Theater

The challenge was to give the theater a modern look that tied in with the existing shell, while delivering on the project's critical acoustical needs.

The project had 6,900 SF of XL Channel tile and cross piece grilles.



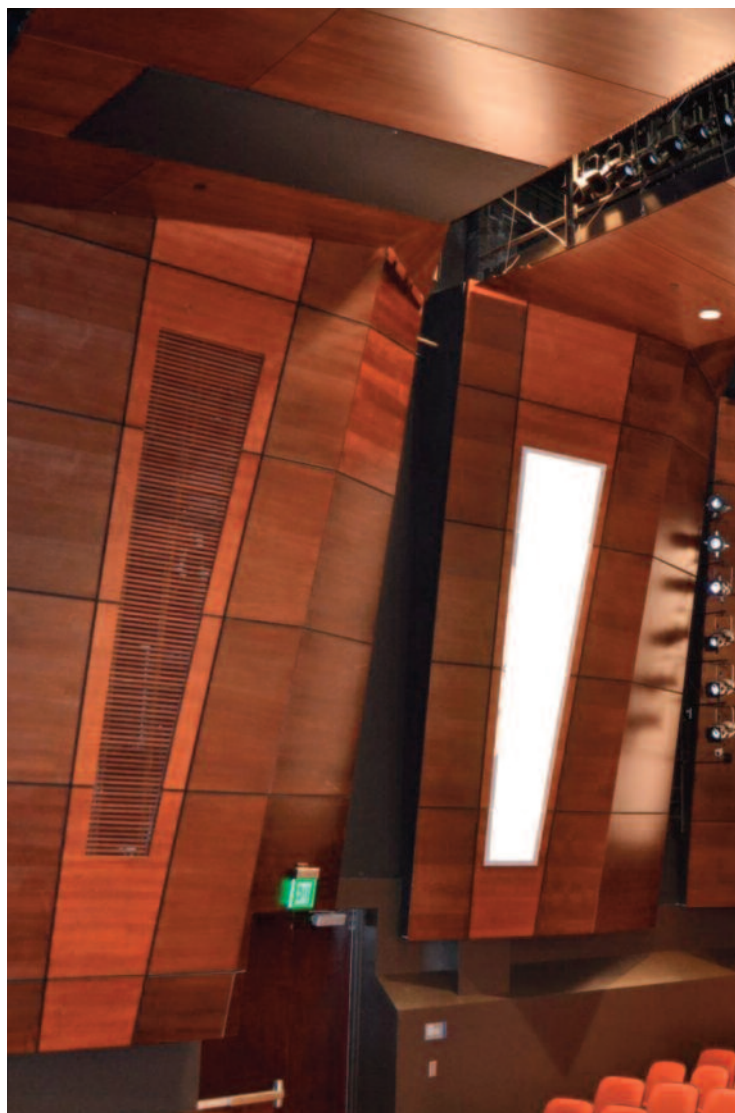
The LA Harbor College Theater, built in 1962, saw its first “phase” of renovation in the early 2000’s. Unfortunately, the general contractor defaulted and was removed from the project midway through the process and the building sat partially demoed and dormant for a few years. IBI Group and Pankow Builders were contracted to deliver a completed renovation through a design-build agreement. The project entailed a number of challenging factors in rehabilitating the space: functional design for a “double-duty” performance and meeting space, acoustical treatment, and aesthetics that tied in with the existing shell. These factors and the method of delivery required the manufacturers to sign up for tight schedule coordination, while offering their technical skill and a willingness to roll up their sleeves and drive the details. For the large wood ceiling and wall scope, Elljay Acoustics selected 9Wood.

The first challenge was delivering on the complex design, which was driven by the acoustical needs. Architect Thomas More of IBI Group reflected, “The existing space had poorly-designed

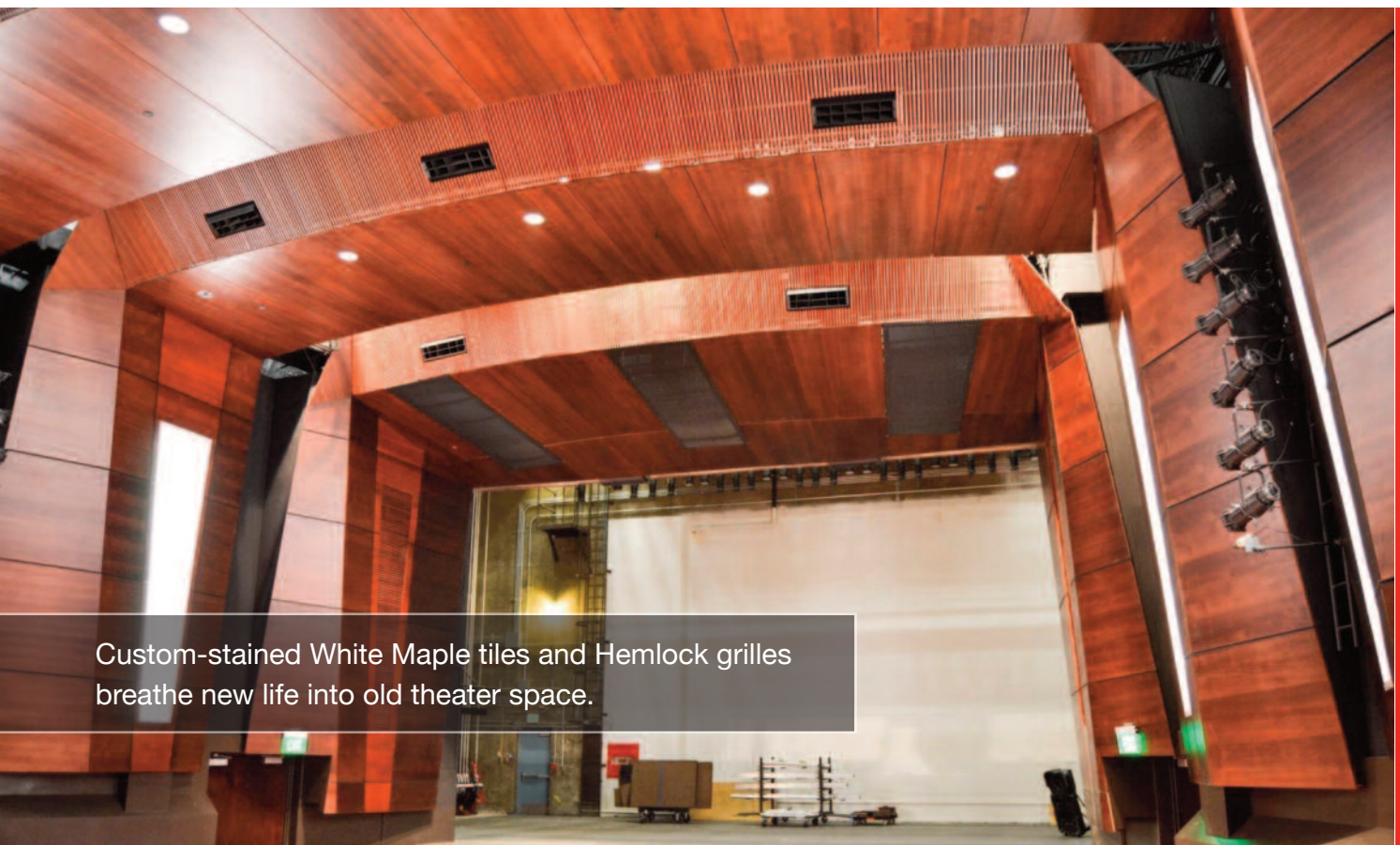
**“I don’t think there was a perpendicular joint in the whole building.”**

sidewalls, which didn’t have the proper shape elements to contribute to sound quality. We removed them, and the entire catwalk and ceiling.” To achieve optimum acoustical performance, an acoustical engineer advised in the development of geometric ceiling and wall shapes. “I don’t think there was a perpendicular joint in the whole building,” recalled 9Wood PM Brad Leonard. These shapes were clad with 9Wood flat wood tiles and grilles, which also integrated the intricate lighting and other fixtures.

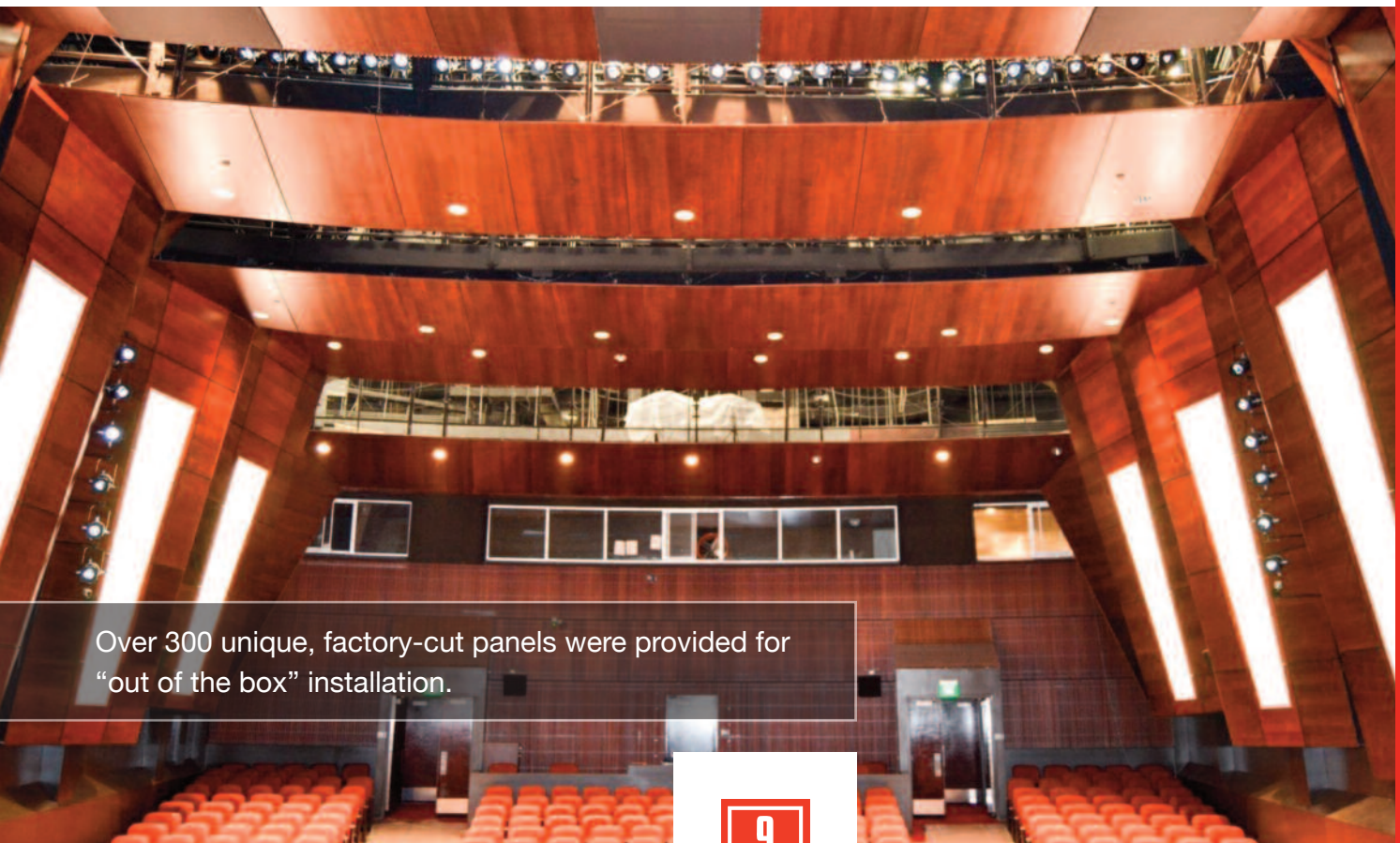
9Wood employed 3-D modeling to deconstruct the geometric shapes. “This was really two projects in one—the wall and ceiling—but they had to align,” added Leonard. “In the early model, when the geometry changed at one location, *(continued on page 4)*







Custom-stained White Maple tiles and Hemlock grilles breathe new life into old theater space.



Over 300 unique, factory-cut panels were provided for “out of the box” installation.



it created a ripple effect and changed the dimensions of all the panels.” The shop drawings detail over 300 unique panels. In addition, the 18 pages of drawings show all suspension and wall attachment points. The shops were “one-stop shopping” for review and sign-off by the architect, and installation by the acoustical sub-contractor. After approval, the panels were pre-cut and finished in Oregon, about 1,000 miles away from the jobsite. The panels were ready for install right out of the box, with labels matching per their shop drawing location, much like a giant jigsaw puzzle.

Aesthetically, the challenge was to give the theater a modern look that tied in with the existing shell, including doors and wainscoting. “The college wanted a stain for a warm finish that was faithful to the original design. Based on previous experience we liked White Maple and Hemlock,” recounted More. 9Wood provided a custom match per the control sample. Another subtle yet critical design element was the grain orientation. All panels were coordinated and cut to maintain consistent direction.

The end result is a space that breathes new life into the building. Architect More summarized, “9Wood was extremely proactive in the design development stage. The detailing was well thought-out and cohesive. We would highly recommend them to other architects, contractors, and clients.”



LA Harbor College Theater

## Project Details

**LA Harbor College Theater**  
Wilmington, CA

Total Scope: 6,915 SF

Products: 4500 XL Channel Tile,  
1100 Cross Piece Grille

Architect: IBI Group

Contractor: Elljay Acoustics



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