



*Courtesy of REX/OMA photographed by Tim Husley*

**The Dee and Charles Wyly Theatre, a reimagining of a conventional theatre building, with a ground-level performance space and auditorium visible from the outside, opens in Dallas this week.**

**The Wyly Theatre, part of the city's new AT&T Performing Arts Center, is designed by Joshua Prince-Ramus (partner in charge) and Rem Koolhaas (founder of OMA).**

Unlike a typical theatre, the Wyly accommodates back-of-house and front-of-house areas above and beneath the auditorium rather than wrapped around it, liberating its perimeter – a glass

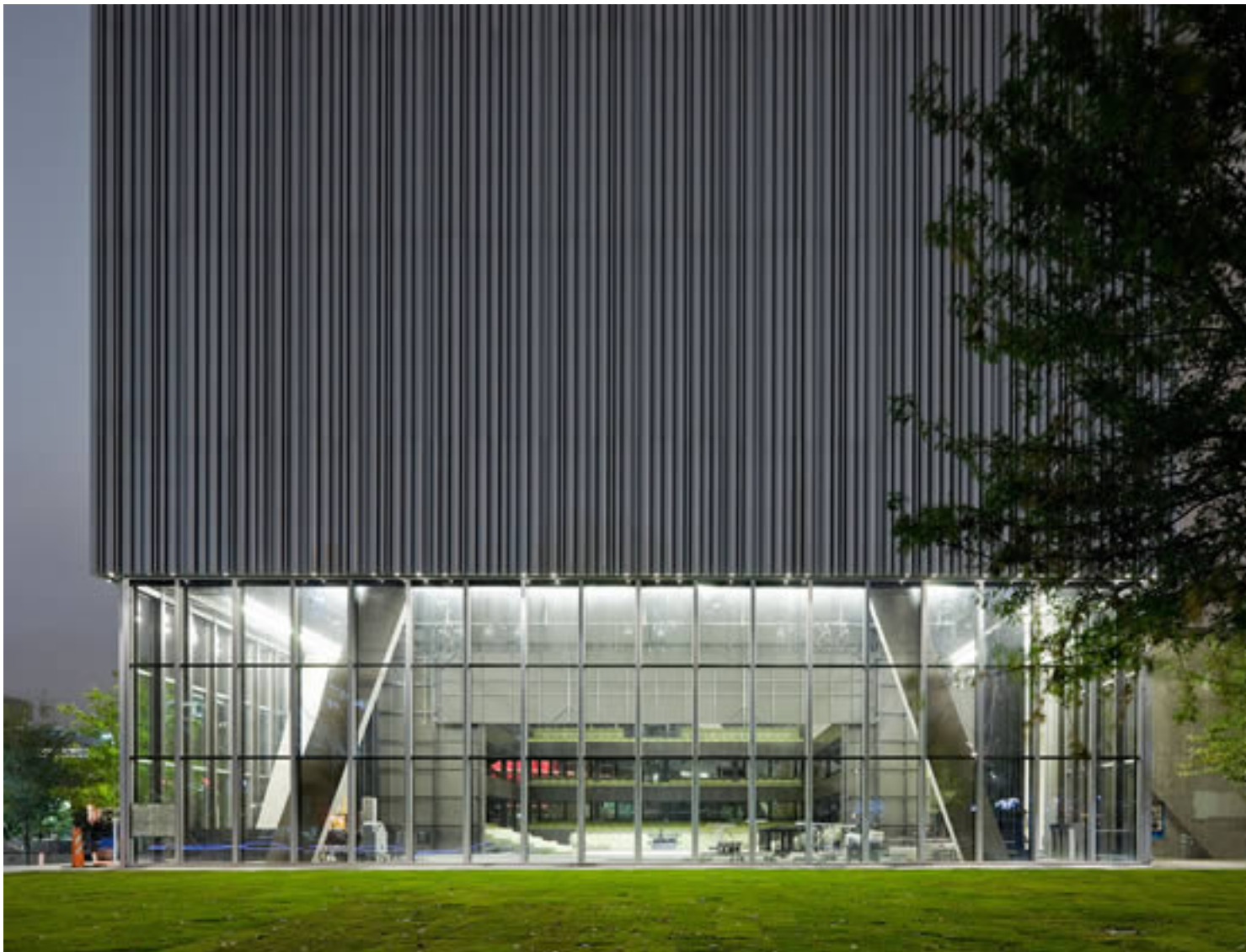
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façade with optional blackout blinds – for direct contact with the urban surroundings. Passersby have the chance to glimpse the action inside; the theatre itself, which seats up to 575, can offer views of the city of Dallas as a backdrop.

Rem Koolhaas, who will be giving a lecture in the Wyly Theatre on 15 October at 4pm, commented: “By stacking all facilities necessary for the functioning of a theatre in a single vertical volume, we create a situation where the technologies of the stage define an infinite variety of theatre arrangements, from the completely open to the completely enclosed.”



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With 12 storeys clad in distinctive tubular aluminium, the Wyly has a commanding presence on the south side of the AT&T Performing Arts Center complex. The building has a total area of 7,500m<sup>2</sup> (80,300 square feet) and includes a cocktail bar, offices, costume shop, and a multipurpose rooftop space. The Wyly uses a state-of-the-art “superfly” tower, able to efficiently move both scenery and seating, facilitating unprecedented flexibility and experimentation in the configuration of a theatre space: proscenium, thrust, traverse, arena, studio, and flat floor arrangements can be set up in less than a day.



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No longer shielded by transitional and technical areas – foyer, ticket counters, backstage facilities – this reimagining of the theatre typology exposes the auditorium to the city on all sides. On alternate nights, the Dallas Theatre Center, for whom the Wyly will be a new home, can perform Shakespeare in a hermetic container one night, or – opening the blackout blinds

along the exterior glass walls – with the city of Dallas as a backdrop the next.



Image courtesy of REX/OMA

The tallness and simplicity of the box form, together with the unique visibility of the activities in the theatre, gives the building prominence in the large new complex of the Dallas Center for the Performing Arts. The form also facilitates innovation in the theatre's mechanics: the conventional fly tower above the stage has been extended vertically (with program concentrated around it on multiple levels), and can pull up both scenery and seating.

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