

The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (Central)

GRAHAM plays a starring role at Central

£16.7m

/ Project value

November 2016

/ The build commenced

October 2018

/ The build was completed

Resolving the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama's (Central) "pressing need" for additional rehearsal, performance and ancillary facilities, the £16.7m Phase 5 North Block Building has created 2,400m² of new space over eight floors and incorporates five double height studios and a courtyard theatre. A "world-leading" institution of the theatrical and performing arts, which counts Dame Judi Dench and Sir Laurence Olivier among its famous high-profile alumni, Central's BREEAM Excellent North Block Building has delivered cutting-edge facilities for both students and the local community and strengthened its reputation as an iconic North London cultural hub.

The brief

Replacing the temporary Studio 1, the developed brief centred on the construction of a new six storey extension building with a two-storey basement to significantly enhance Central's performance and film training capacity and deliver double height performance space to all levels. The improvement of the existing connection to the west block, including new mezzanine access walkways on levels one, three and five, was also a core component of the contract.



Jo Brand attending the topping out ceremony

"We can proceed with added confidence to start on site with our new building, bringing state-of-the-art studios to enhance facilities that are already considered to be amongst the best in our sector,"

Professor Gavin Henderson
Principal of the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama

“Central’s vision to provide high quality, bespoke teaching and performance spaces that meet its students’ needs and uphold its world-leading reputation was realised with this development. Distinctive, fit-for-purpose theatrical and performing arts facilities have been integrated with local architecture and have contributed to the surrounding cultural quarter, creating a long-term solution,”

Rob Joyce
GRAHAM Development Director

The challenges

The five double height studios, four at 128m² and one at 118m², facilitate a range of activities including rehearsal, performance, sound and film work. Highly acoustically isolated to prevent disturbance to adjacent spaces and to neighbouring properties, we had to be meticulous in constructing and finishing these flagship areas and worked closely with an acoustic consultant to ensure every aspect of the design detail was met.

The solution

As one of the “world’s pre-eminent conservatoires for the performing arts”, Central conducted a robust needs assessment in 2013 with the process identifying a significant lack of large studios while raising concerns regarding sub-standard off-site space. Some five years later, those issues have evaporated following the October 2018 opening of the striking new North Block Building. The construction programme began in November 2016 with the stripping out and demolition of the existing Studio 1 and the external core of Central’s West Wing before ground works, including piling to support the new form reinforced concrete frame structure of nine levels, were conducted. Aesthetically elegant, the external façade was traditionally clad and painted stucco to ensure its integration with the surrounding architecture. Featuring innovative design solutions, including photovoltaic panels and natural ventilation methods, the environmental impact of running the building has been significantly reduced. We also completed minor alterations to the existing West Wing Block and mezzanine floor structure and constructed a new electrical switch room.

Outputs & Benefits

/ **BREEAM:** BREEAM Excellent

/ **Construction:** A contiguous piled wall around the site perimeter was constructed, reinforced concrete lined walls were built below ground level to form a double-storey basement followed by the construction of an in-situ reinforced concrete frame for the six floors above ground

/ **Zoning:** Although a common electrical supply and heating plant are shared (Phase 4 & 5), through careful zoning the Phase 5 Building is a self-contained entity, which can function on its own

/ **Buildability Workshops:** Buildability Workshops with the Design Team and key supply chain partners were undertaken in order to meet Central’s primary objectives

/ **Client Needs:** Phase 5 addresses Central’s need to provide a number of high quality rehearsal and performance studios, in addition to office accommodation and ancillary spaces



For more information on how we’re delivering lasting impact:

+44 (0) 28 9268 9500

info@graham.co.uk

graham.co.uk

GRAHAM