

Press release

14 October 2005

**The Sage Gateshead is officially opened by the Queen**

The Sage Gateshead - Foster and Partners regional music centre in Tyneside was officially opened today by Her Majesty the Queen, accompanied by the Duke of Edinburgh. The Royal party toured the new facility, taking in performances by the Northern Sinfonia and local school children, before unveiling a commemorative plaque. The Sage houses three world-class auditoria and a music school. In addition to its cultural programme, the Sages distinctive shell-like form has already made it a local landmark, celebrating the cultural rejuvenation of Tyneside.

In addition to the recently completed Sage, which has exceeded all attendance forecasts, the Foster studio is currently involved with two high-profile concert hall projects. In New York, the studio is undertaking an extensive refurbishment of the Avery Fisher Hall, the lynchpin of the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. In downtown Dallas, the studio has designed the Winspear Opera House in the heart of the new Performing Arts District which reinvents the concept of an opera house by creating a publicly-welcoming and engaging cultural building. Work starts on site on November 10th next month.

Notes to editors

The Sage Gateshead

Gateshead, England 1997-2004

Opened in December 2004, the Sage is a regional music centre of international standing, with an expected half million visitors each year. Designed after extensive consultation with audiences and musicians, the Sage fills a gap on the map for music venues in the North-East and has helped consolidate Tynesides position as an arts destination in its own right. The building is already a local landmark, forming the heart of an exciting project to regenerate the areas river frontage. It lies alongside the Baltic art gallery between the new pedestrian Millennium Bridge and the Tyne Bridge with its great arch, which is echoed in the shell-like form of the Sages roof.

The Sage provides three auditoria and accommodation for the Regional Music School and also acts as a base for the Northern Sinfonia and Folkworks, which promotes folk, jazz and blues performances. The largest of the three main performance spaces is acoustically state-of-the-art and seats up to 1,650 people. The second hall caters for folk, jazz and chamber music, with an informal and flexible seating arrangement for up to 400 people. The third space is a large rehearsal hall for the Northern Sinfonia and also forms the focus of the Music School. The School will be accessible to children, schools and people of all ages, raising the profile of the region as an innovative provider of musical education.

Each auditorium was conceived as a separate enclosure but the windswept nature of the site suggested a covered concourse along the waterfront to link them. As a result the entire complex is sheltered beneath a broad, enveloping roof that is shrink-wrapped around the buildings beneath and extends over

**For further information**

please contact Katy Harris at  
Foster + Partners,

T +44 (0)20 7738 0455

F +44 (0)20 7738 1107

E [press@fosterandpartners.com](mailto:press@fosterandpartners.com)

the concourse. Containing cafs, bars, shops, an information centre and the box office, the concourse is a major public space. It acts as a foyer for the auditoria and as a common room for the Music School, which is located beneath it. Back-of-house hospitality areas have been kept to a minimum to encourage performers to interact with students during the day and to mix with their audiences in the concourse bars in the evenings. With its informal atmosphere and unrivalled views out across the Tyne, this should become one of the city's great social spaces.

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