

Press release

04 March 2005

New Globe Theater for New York

Foster and Partners design for the New Globe Theater will create a world-class performance venue on Governors Island in New York Harbour. Working in partnership with Barbara Rmer from the New Globe, the proposed new venue will stage Shakespearean plays along with contemporary drama and a wide variety of other performances, offering 100,000 affordable tickets each year. Housed in the early nineteenth-century Castle Williams - a massive 200-foot round masonry fort - the design preserves this decaying national monument while revitalising Governors Island with a contemporary and accessible cultural hub. The Foster design for the New Globe has generated wide public and official support and is currently under consideration by the National Park Service, which owns Castle Williams.

Heralding the reopening of Governors Island, which has been closed to the public for 203 years, the theatre will be a five-minute ferry ride from Lower Manhattan and Brooklyn and would illuminate New York Harbour. The Foster studio has worked closely with preservationists on the proposed design that includes a new roof canopy protecting the courtyard elevation of this National Monument. The internal proportions of Castle Williams are identical to those of the renowned Elizabethan Globe Theatre in London, and the New Globe Theater has been conceived as a reversible insert that perfectly matches the existing castle structure. In keeping with Foster and Partners commitment to environmentally sustainable architecture, the thermal mass of the castle is used as a 'heat sink' to minimise the energy required to heat and cool the auditorium. A sun-

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

tracking shade - calibrated to the sun's annual path - shelters the glazed 'transition zone' from over-heating and heat pumps from the Hudson River eliminate the need for roof mounted cooling towers.

Visitors will enter the building through the castle's heavy stone fortifications and pass into a fully glazed five-storey foyer. Internal circulation is contained in a top-lit 'transition zone' separating the old restored castle and the new auditorium. The castle will also house a bookshop, bars, guest amenities, a library and boardroom for the resident theatre group, back-of-house facilities, and exhibition spaces which focus on the history of the castle. This juxtaposition of the heavy Newark sandstone and new light glazed foyer distinguishes the historic elements from the contemporary intervention. Views of the castle structure will be enjoyed through the glass enclosure of the auditorium. The central auditorium houses an audience of 1,200 - with 400 'grounding' standing tickets and 800 gallery seats. The new roof-level contains a bar with outstanding views that stretch from the Verrazano Bridge to the Brooklyn Bridge, encompassing the Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island, Lower Manhattan and Brooklyn.

The auditorium is an adaptation of the staging and acoustics of an original Shakespearean theatre. Using sophisticated computer software, Foster and Partners worked with Arup SoundLab to create a three-dimensional model of London's Globe. A recorded performance was then projected in the 'acoustic model' and analysed to provide a comparative basis for fine-tuning the new design. This allowed the team to correctly balance the direct and reverberant sound and study the acoustics of a performance from each tier.

"This is a fantastic opportunity to breath new life and activity into the long neglected Governors Island through culture, whilst preserving its unique historic heritage. The auditorium will give the audience and performers the intimate and intense experience of a Shakespearean theatre but with the best of modern acoustics and facilities."

David Nelson, Senior Partner and Head of Design