

Case Study: Harlequin Liberty® sprung floor installation at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, London

Introduction

Trinity Laban is one of Europe's leading institutions for dance artist training. Based in the spectacular RIBA award-winning Laban Building at Deptford Creekside in London, it is both dramatic and colourful thanks to an exciting collaboration between award-winning Swiss architects Herzog & de Meuron and internationally acclaimed artist Michael Craig-Martin. Within this vibrant, purpose-built, state of the art building dancers can be rest assured that their rehearsal work in the studio and their performances in the theatre will all take place using the same tried and tested Harlequin dance floors they will experience in studios and on dance stages worldwide.

The requirement

Before moving from their previous facility at New Cross, London, Trinity Laban already enjoyed a long-standing relationship with Harlequin Floors. But for the newest facility they wanted sprung floors in all the main dance studios and to be sure that they made the right decision, conducted a practical evaluation. Before the final specification for the sprung floors was confirmed, three dancers flew from Trinity Laban to Natwick, Boston to test out a similar floor for themselves, at an installation at Boston Ballet completed by American Harlequin Corporation. Their verdict was the final seal of approval for the selection of Harlequin's Liberty sprung floor to create 13 purpose built world-class dance studios.



The solution

Before the Harlequin Liberty panel system was approved, testing was conducted in conjunction with Wirsbo, manufacturers of the under-floor heating system, where water pipes are buried in the screed, to ensure that sufficient heat passed through the floor without detriment to the floor and vinyl surface, and that a specified heat value was achieved at the floor surface.

Harlequin Floors' Contracts Division worked closely with the main contractors to supply and install the floors, comprising:

- 1,762m² of Harlequin Liberty sprung floor panels and Harlequin Studio vinyl floors in all 13 main dance studios and the Dance Movement Therapy clinic
- Matching colour vinyl skirting fitted in all the main studios

- 138m² of un-sprung maple floor installed in the Pilates studio
- 200m² of sprung maple floor for the stage of the 300 seat Laban Theatre
- 66m² of un-sprung maple floor in the wings of the Laban Theatre
- 536m² of a specifically constructed plywood floor in the Laban Library and Archive, based on a stepped and ramped up sub-floor resting on 50mm blocks, designed to permit forced ventilation under the entire floor area
- Rectangles of Harlequin Cascade vinyl for the pianos to stand on in all studios to prevent pressure marks on the foam-backed Harlequin Studio vinyl.

Harlequin Liberty® sprung floor

Floor dimensions

Ground floor

- 1 12.7m x 9.3m
- 2 17.4m x 9.8m
- 3 8.1m x 6.35m

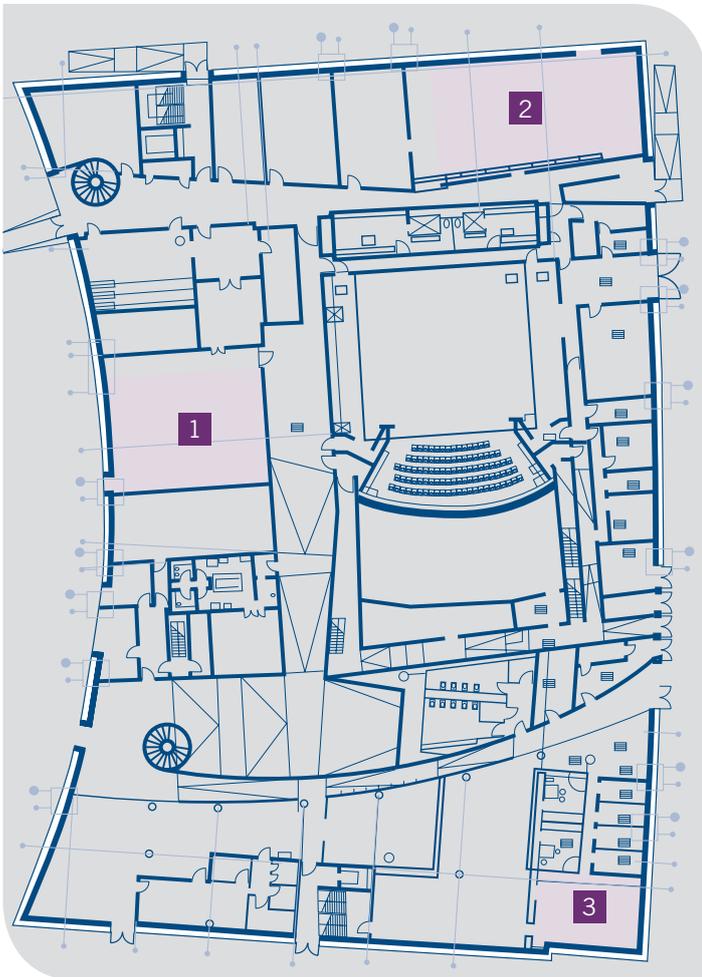
Total area: 340m²

First floor

- 4 14m x 9.85m
- 5 17.4m x 9.8m
- 6 13.8m x 7.2m
- 7 10.4m x 6.25m
- 8 11.9m x 8.2m
- 9 17.2m x 8.5m
- 10 14.3m x 11.7m
- 11 19.5m x 12m

- 12 14.1m x 12.2m
- 13 8.3m x 13.1m
- 14 15.6m x 13.1m

Total area: 1,603m²



About Harlequin Liberty®

Harlequin Liberty is a sprung floor panel system, chosen by Trinity Laban as a permanent dance floor and designed for permanent or portable installation. Panels are laid in a brickwork fashion onto the sub-floor, so that cross-joins do not coincide. The panels join together by a rounded tongue and groove, with product developments now including Harlequin's 'latch and lock' system which is secured in place using the one turn of a key mechanism.



Harlequin Liberty is a relatively "springy" floor with good area elasticity. The corners and sides of each large panel are fully supported by foam pads spaced at regular intervals, giving uniform and consistent shock damping and providing the same "feel" and energy return to one or several dancers on the same panel, with no hard spots at the joints.

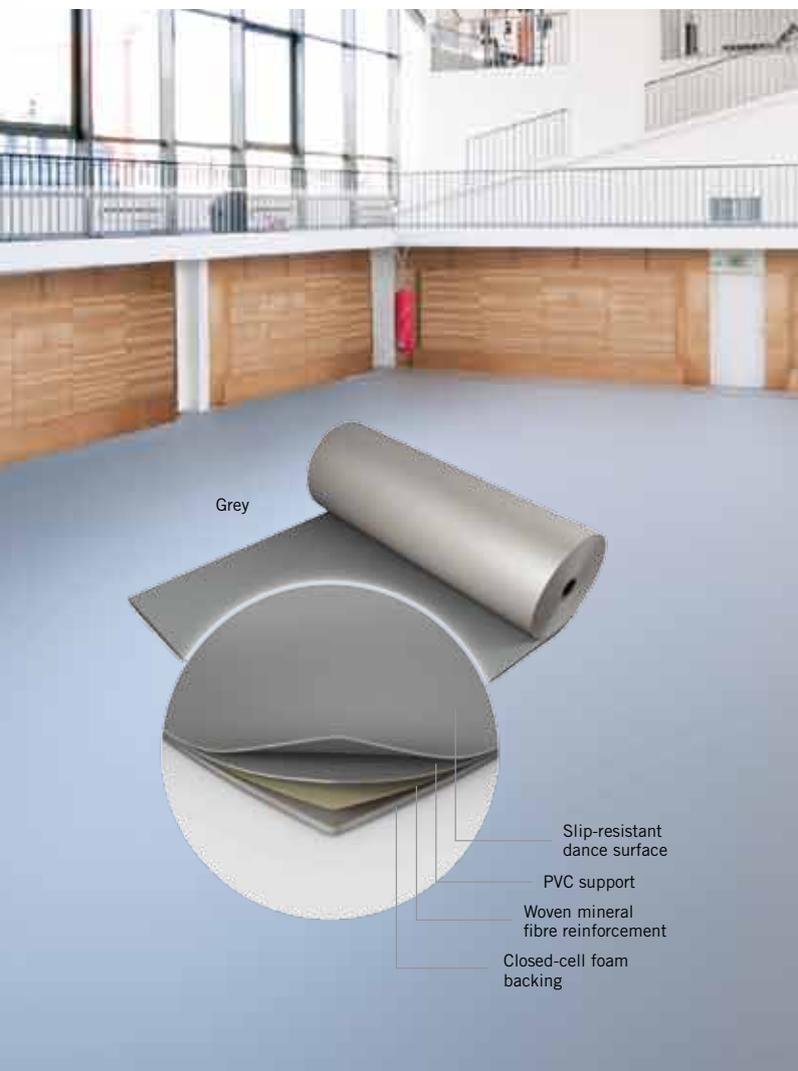
It is finished by choosing an appropriate Harlequin vinyl performance floor from our range. For permanent or semi-permanent use, installation can be carried out by the customer themselves or by our Contracts Division.

About Harlequin Studio

Mirella Bartrip, Director of Dance, who has been with Trinity Laban for over 30 years, explains Trinity Laban's decision in choosing Harlequin Studio as an appropriate vinyl performance surface; "The aesthetics in any design of a performance are incredibly important, so in the theatre we have selected not just the grey floor, but we have the capacity to be black or indeed white in the theatre, so it was important we employed a company that was able to give us the product we wanted in a variety of different contexts. We selected grey for the studios because that was a neutral colour; it went with the rest of the building and contributed to the 'feel good' factor for our students and the faculty."

Harlequin Studio is produced from a hard-wearing vinyl and its formulation focuses on the demands of dancers. The result is a slip-resistant floor that offers dancers added confidence for demanding choreography and movement.

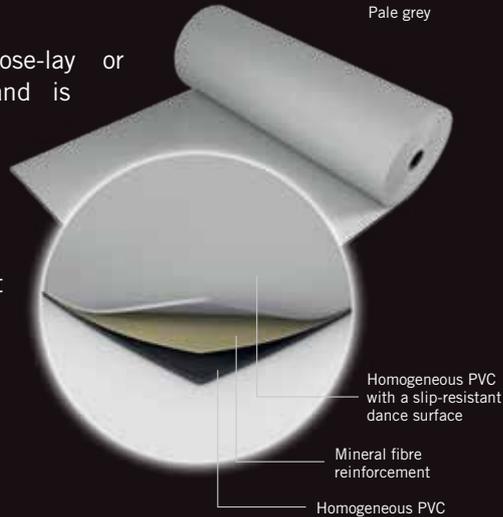
Harlequin Studio's firm but lightweight foam backing is ideal for ballet, contemporary and modern dance as well as many other styles of dance designed for dance, studio and stage use and is specified for loose-lay or permanent installation within dance institutions, dance studios, schools and theatres.



About Harlequin Cascade

In the case of Trinity Laban, Harlequin Cascade was used under the pianos in the dance studios to protect the Harlequin Studio performance vinyl from pressure marks due to its foam backing. Harlequin Cascade is a flagship product at Harlequin Floors and is the ultimate heavy-duty performance surface.

It is specified for loose-lay or permanent installation and is widely used as a ballet floor, although it's also a popular tap dance flooring choice and is used on tour by Riverdance; proving just how versatile it is.



The results 10 years on...

Harlequin Floors recently returned to Trinity Laban to talk to Principal Anthony Bowne and Director of Dance Mirella Bartrip, to find out how the Harlequin floors had performed over 10 years since they were installed in the then new building.

Mirella Bartrip explained, "It was very, very important for us in this new building to have the very best floors. Harlequin was the name out there. That was our first choice...it is extremely important the floors are of the best quality. First of all they need to have the right degree of spring in them and that is something Harlequin are experts at. Secondly, the actual surface has to be one that isn't slippery or too sticky. So that's Harlequin for us."

Mirella sums up, "They have worn excellently, the quality is really fantastic and they clean very well. Our floors have been

used not just by our students, but by external users, dance companies and the floors have been absolutely terrific for all of that time."

Professor Anthony Bowne, Principal, says in the interview, "We have been very lucky to work with Harlequin over the years. We wanted the best dance floors, we demanded the best dance floors and Harlequin have supplied them and have been a very good organisation to work with throughout that time."



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