

CULTURE

Architecture

Winning Theatre

A LOCAL DESIGN FIRM MAKES IT THEIR MISSION TO REINVIGORATE A HISTORIC BEVERLY THEATRE TO AWARDS STATUS.

By Danielle Evans-Cole

SV Design wins an award for the renovation of the Cabot Theatre.

Photograph by Lauren Poussard



AT ITS PRISM Awards Gala this past October the Builders and Remodelers Association of Greater Boston (BRAGB) recognized the team behind the preservation and revitalization of Beverly's iconic Cabot Theatre. The Silver in the category of Excellence in Remodeling: Best Historical Restoration Over \$1 Million, was awarded to SV Design for architecture and interior design, along with Tiro Design & Construction, Dave Carnevale, Windover Construction, and Groom Construction.

In 2014, a dedicated group of community activists known as the Five Founders, including SV Design's founding principal, Thad Siemasko, AIA, saved the historic theatre from possible demolition. The Cabot, known originally as The Ware Theatre, opened on December 8, 1920, as a landmark venue for vaudeville and silent movies. Of the original 20,000 Vaudeville theaters built in the 1920s, The Cabot is one of only 250 to still exist.

Over the past 10 years, SV Design has donated countless hours of architectural and design services to the multi-million-dollar project restoring the historical theater to a live-performance venue. Carrying out the Five Founders' vision, SV Design worked to not only bring back the theatre's classical revival opulence, but also to add careful upgrades to modernize all systems including HVAC, sound and stage lighting, and accessibility features to ensure full ADA compliance.

Preservation efforts included reviving the ornate interior Adams-style motif and murals. In particular, the expansion of the lobby included exposing and refurbishing the original rose window, restoring the vaulted ceilings, and saving the stunning neo-classical chandelier at the entrance. The performance hall received all new, wider balcony seats as well as reconstructed opera boxes to allow for additional seating. SV design also added a new box office, concession, and bar counter to the lobby.



According to SV Design's Stefano Basso, AIA, principal, "A wealth of historical artifacts including photos and the 1920 blueprints have been invaluable as we work to ensure we're honoring the theater's history. Sometimes we didn't know what we'd find until we peeled back the layers, such as when we uncovered the original poster cases and marble walls in the lobby."

The project also brought unique logistical difficulties. "Occupied renovations are always tricky, but the degree of difficulty is that much higher when you have 1,000 people showing up and walking through your construction site," says Basso.

Even with this award, SV Design's work is not done. The next phase, slated to start in summer 2025, includes a major facelift on the building's façade with additional interior work including new greenrooms, VIP lounge, crew space, and storage.

If you visit The Cabot to take in one of its upcoming performances, you will also discover the unique energy of the theatre. "The building is beautiful, but there is something electric about the space that brings a special vibrancy to the North Shore that just doesn't exist anywhere else. We're lucky to have this theater where so many of its kind were demolished and we're doing our part to ensure it's here for future generations," reflects Basso. ■ thecabot.org; svdesign.com

TOP TO BOTTOM: Groom Construction will work with SV Design on the next phase of the exterior restoration project. The theater dates to 1920.

*Photograph by Lauren Poussard.
Rendering by SV Design*