

The new Experimental Puppetry Arts Centre (EPAC) celebrates the tradition of puppetry in Stara Zagora and provides a unique venue for experimentation in theatrical arts and other artistic forms while favouring participation by the public. EPAC is designed as a nimble, performative and flexible full-scale stage set. The proposal facilitates the blurring of boundaries between audience and stage, puppet and viewer, and fiction and daily life; while fulfilling the technical requirements of a black box theatre and its supporting activities.

The stage-like structure frames a sequence of outdoor and indoor spatial experiences at different scales. The yard is designed as an outdoor room that expands vertically via a rooftop amphitheatre. The rehearsal space culminates this journey extending the amphitheatre and offering views over General Gurko Street. This spatial sequence honours the magnificent trees on the site, framing them as the backdrop of the events hosted in the yard and the rooftop.

Four main features drive the design:

1. Flexibility and expandability of the theatrical spaces.
2. Preservation of the trees existing on site and expansion of the yard to the rooftop.
3. The new theatre as a vertical extension of the rich network of public spaces of the city.
4. Noise barrier: the secondary programs clustered around the perimeter of the rooftop shield the surrounding residential buildings.

The multifunctionality of the main hall is achieved through flexibility and expandability. The range of possible activities and events are classified according to their frequency and their requirement for openness or enclosure.

The theatre's construction reinterprets two construction systems with a long-standing tradition in Bulgaria: prefabricated concrete panels and sawn lumber. The aim is to benefit from local knowledge, materials and technologies to minimize transportation costs and emissions while honouring vernacular traditions.

The estimated construction cost is 659.256,50 €.

- Building density: 556,16m²
- Total built-up area: 1.908,19m² (766.49m² above ground)
- Total landscaping area within the boundaries of the plot and building: 222,81m² (including 21,86m² of roof vegetation)