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## Hoop pine panels 'ideal wood' for \$75m auditorium

'Like waking around the inside of a well-crafted musical instrument'

THE innovative use of laminated plantation hoop pine panels has been hailed at the 'ideal wood' in the construction of the new \$75 million recital centre in Melbourne.

Co-located on the corner of Sturt Street and Southbank Boulevard, the complex features a 500-seat theatre for the Melbourne Theatre Company and a 1000-seat recital hall, to bear the name of arts philanthropist Dame Elisabeth Murdoch.

Brisbane-based Austral Plywoods Pty Ltd, one of Australia's leading manufacturers of premium grade plywood, supplied material for the centre's walls and ceilings – three sheets of 25 mm A-C interior with 'A' grade cores laminated together to form 75 mm thick panels.

The order absorbed 10% of Austral's plywood production for six months.

The two venues were

designed by leading Melbourne architects Ashton Raggatt McDougall and constructed by Bovis Lend Lease. The project was managed by Major Projects Victoria.

Architect Steve Ashton said the design challenge was both aesthetic and technical.

"Surprisingly we began with the shoe-box - the shape that the experts say guarantees acoustic perfection," Ashton said.

"But the traditional box has been nudged out of 'box-ness'; it looks like a basic room but it is in reality, a complex space."

Ashton said the plywood panels were routed to create the grain, like wooden ivy over the walls, which in turn made the architectural character of the space – "like the back of a beautiful instrument, or

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Melbourne Recital Centre .. 'a bit like waking around the inside of a well-crafted musical instrument'.

# Plywood routed to create the grain

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the lining of a luxurious suite."

The centre was featured on the popular Catalyst ABC series. Presenter Dr Graham Phillips, a journalist with a PhD in astrophysics and lecturer at CSIRO, remarked on the "amazing inside of the auditorium – a bit like waking around the inside of a well-crafted musical instrument".

He told his viewers that the key was the wooden panels.

"They're made out of hoop pine – an Australian native – a wood grown in a plantation so it's environmentally friendly," he said.

"And hoop pine used to be used to make fruit boxes and butter boxes because it doesn't impart a taste on the food. In fact, it's still used to make icypole sticks.

"But the hoop pine also turned out to be an ideal wood for building an auditorium like this."

Austral plywood is based on 100% plantation grown



*Hoop pine laminated panels a key inside feature of the \$75 million Melbourne Recital Centre.*

hoop pine. Manufacturing to Australian/New Zealand standards, the company maintains a process quality control system in compliance with the EWPA-A-JAS-ANZ product certification scheme.

Austral Plywoods manufactures a wide range

of panel products, specialising in marine and appearance grade plywoods. The plywood was incorporated in the construction of numerous venues at the Sydney 2000 Olympics, including ceiling and wall linings, flooring and doors.



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