

# MUNICIPAL THEATRE OF FARO 2000-2005, Faro – Portugal

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**Client** Municipality of Faro

**Engineering** Betar, Estudos e Projectos de Estabilidade (structures), JOULE, Projectos, Estudos e Coordenação (electrics, security), José Galvão Teles (mechanics), Grade Ribeiro Estudos, Projectos e Consultadoria Lda (water, sewage), A. Teixeira, Gás-Engenharia (gas installations), Estudi Acústic H. Arau (acoustic project), Marta Byrne (landscape)

**Photography** Daniel Malhão

The Faro Municipal Theatre rises as a compact and introverted volume next to the new entrance to the city of Faro. Its volume of Siena earth-coloured stone and transparent glass base, alternating with pressed cement panels, rests on a black platform, cutting out its silhouette in a generic, dispersed and uncharacterised territory.

Parallel to the railway, the only grounding element of the uncontrolled expansion of this periphery, the building offers its flank to the *Ria de Faro*, seeking to rescue architectural fragments around it, violently cut off from its founding reason - *Horta do Ourives* (a property from the end of the 18th century, organised around the hermitage of *Senhor do Bonfim*, in a curious mixture of plain architecture and baroque expression).

The restoration of this heritage ensemble by the Faro City Council made it possible to house the Faro Regional Orchestra and the City Office. With the new Theatre, they create a nucleus of cultural and performance activities in this peripheral area of the city.

As a hinge for the new set, the theatre building extends its podium-square to the outside, providing an area of great value for outdoor recreational and cultural activities. The scale of the exterior space - as public space - equals the interior, dissolving the relationship between exterior and interior spaces, with the foyer being inseparable from the square. Containing an auditorium with around 800 seats and a scenic stage, the building can be interpreted as a *boîte à merveilles*, which goes out to make the shows it offers shine.

Due to outside noise, the acoustic engineer Higiní Arau opted for a theatre box structurally separated from the rest of the building. Its foundation - made up of hundreds of piles - rest on resilient discs. In this sense, any vibrations in the ground are not transmitted to the structure and, therefore, to the venue. The concert hall also contains a stage with double depth, in which the backspace serves as a rehearsal room or an extension of the stage itself.

The artists' area occupies the flanks of the rehearsal room on two floors, containing four collective dressing rooms, individual dressing rooms and an artist's bar facing an interior patio. An identical area appears on the opposite side, where the administration offices are located. All these rooms connect directly to the stage. On the -1 floor, there is the sub-stage, the workshop, the technical areas, the dimmer room, the instrument deposit and the orchestra pit for around 70 musicians. The foyer area or the Theatre's entrance connects to the other spaces: public bathrooms (-1 floor), entrances for the audience of the concert hall and the control rooms, theatres simultaneous translation rooms, cloakroom, and ticket office.

