

(Clockwise from above) The upgrades include new seating for the UCC Hall; a more open entrance area; and a new atrium with a lawn outside. ST PHOTOS: ALPHONSUS CHERN

NUS Cultural Centre reopens

University arts complex gets new seating, upgraded infrastructure and a new atrium in \$20-million upgrade

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The University Cultural Centre (UCC) at the National University of Singapore officially reopens today after a \$20-million renovation that lasted six months.

A new multi-purpose atrium that can hold 120 seated or 220 standing has been added to the arts complex in Kent Ridge Crescent. The centre also includes the 1,700-seat UCC Hall; the mid-sized UCC Theatre, seating just more than 400; as well as a 22m by 15m dance studio.

The new 400 sq m atrium was designed by local firm Forum Architects, which did the university's new sports centre, completed last year, as well as the Yale-NUS College campus. The atrium replaces an under-used concrete courtyard between the UCC Hall and UCC Theatre.

The courtyard has been transformed into an enclosed space with carpeted flooring and one retractable wall. Another wall is made of

glass panels and looks out onto a lawn of roughly the same area, which can be used for performances and other events.

The upgrade, which started when the UCC closed on Aug 14 last year, is the first since the arts complex opened in September 2000. It was long overdue, says the director of the NUS Centre for the Arts, which manages the UCC.

Ms Sharon Tan added that the centre sees heavy use, with about 200,000 people going through every year, including audiences and performers. It serves a range of needs, from the university's annual graduation ceremonies to arts performances to state ceremonies.

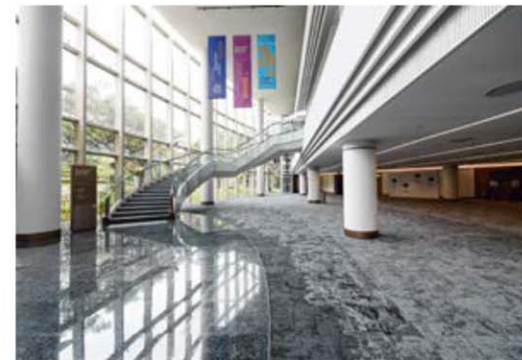
"Because of the kind of events we host, we have to ensure quality service and infrastructure," she says.

Apart from university events, the centre has been used for the state funerals of founding prime minister Lee Kuan Yew in 2015 and former president SR Nathan a year later.

Venues at the UCC are also often booked by external parties for lectures or performances of music, theatre, dance and even stand-up comedy.

British funnyman Bill Bailey held a solo show at the UCC Hall in 2016, and in 2015, the Singapore Writers Festival held a headline lecture by American political philosopher Michael Sandel at the same venue.

Most of the improvements were



to infrastructure, including new flooring and new seating throughout the UCC Hall and UCC Theatre. The UCC Theatre fits 425 now, sacrificing 30 seats for more space between the retractable rows. The retraction mechanism has also been replaced.

Technical infrastructure upgrades include new lighting and air-conditioning as well as replacing manual flybars with a theatrical rigging system that can be operated from a console.

The arrival porch has also been expanded and two staircases that connected the first floor to the second have been replaced with a single stairway. "These things were much needed to give a sense of arrival and help the flow of people around the UCC," says Ms Tan.

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