Will Alsop

Greater Beijing Grand Theatre and Cultural Master Plan, Langfang, China

**Area:** 367,700 sqm  
**Design Time:** 2010  
**Theatre Consultant:** Theatreplan  
**Structural Engineer:** Arup
Life revolves around the theatre. The theatre is placed in the centre of 'ordinary things'. Life in 'ordinary things' is theatre. The design for this theatre sits within a large park, containing studios, museums, a library, galleries, offices and shopping. These activities wind over and around proposed canals either side of the main theatre building.

The theatre is designed as a sculptural four-legged object, which touches this beautiful green setting very lightly. The three theatres are raised up in the air by 30 metres and accessed via escalators and lifts within the sculpture's legs. The large service zone to the rear of the theatres is accessed via a spiral ramp and lorry lifts, so that a visiting production can still unload directly into the theatre. This would be the only theatre in the world that could incorporate Phantom of the Opera’s 20 trucks at once.

The main auditorium seats 2000 people and is carefully designed to enable performance on a standard stage, central stage and 270 degree stage via automated moveable seating units. The building also includes an 800 person multi-function theatre, where the seats fold into the floor to allow seating at tables. A 500 person children’s theatre is designed as the perfect interactive auditorium for young people.

The foyer space maximises the drama of the sweeping shell structure in which the theatres are housed. Upon entering the 30m high space via escalator or elevator, you will see activity around you on many levels. In particular the coloured restaurant objects sweep overhead as they bridge across into the rock-like auditoria. Around the perimeter of the theatre building sits the supporting commercial accomodation. The lower level of this raised box holds retail units of varying sizes, on the roof is a strip of park, perfect for relaxing or perhaps to hold events such as weddings. This park is served by ‘horns’ of restaurants which project out of the theatre foyer over the sidewalk. The undulating park below continues under the theatre and includes an amphitheatre which will be used for outdoor concerts and events. The water within the landscaping cools this shaded space to provide refuge in the hot summers and also to naturally ventilate all of the support spaces to the theatre above.