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Wyeth Architects earns 2022 Elizabeth Mills Brown Award of Excellence for Legacy Theatre in Branford, CT

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Branford, CT Wyeth Architects received a 2022 Elizabeth Mills Brown Award of Excellence for their work on the Legacy Theatre.

The Legacy Theatre was built in 1886 as a non-denominational church for the residents and visitors to Stoney Creek in Branford. It was later used as a performance hall, a movie house, a corset factory, and a puppet museum. The non-profit theater group Legacy Theatre purchased the property in 2013, called for renovations and restoration, and opened its doors on April 23, 2021. The original masonry building and wood-framed stagehouse addition have a 2,850 s/f footprint. It is now a 127-seat theater with dressing rooms and rigging, lighting, and sound systems. Every inch has been optimized, with spaces overlapping and interlocking. An accessible stage and tech booth have been added for the Legacy's theater troupe who use wheelchairs or crutches. There are no fossil fuels used on site. Electric air-to-air heat pump mechanical systems provide heating, ventilating, and air-conditioning. An enthalpy recovery ventilator with Merv 13 filters constantly brings in fresh air, while in-duct ultraviolet light and ionic plates work to kill viruses, providing a healthy indoor environment. These efforts result in a remarkably low air leakage rate for a theater, let alone an adapted masonry building. Summer energy use—with rehearsals, set work, and day and evening programming—averaged only 10.5 kWh. The low-energy demand also helps this non-profit financially, through low electrical bills.

Wyeth Architects' work on The Legacy Theatre was previously recognized with a 2022 Sustainable Architecture Award from AIA Connecticut. New Haven's Hotel Marcel, the country's first net-zero hotel, also received an Elizabeth Mills Brown Award of Excellence.

Jointly presented by AIA Connecticut and Preservation Connecticut, the Elizabeth Mills Brown Award recognizes projects that are noteworthy both as respectful preservation of historic places and as excellent architectural designs. The award is named for the architectural historian and preservationist who inspired Connecticut state and local officials as well as residents to protect the architectural riches of the state.

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