



Pantages Exterior

# Bringing ELECTRONIC ACCESS CONTROL to Historic Theaters

by Andy HILVERDA

**B**ROADWAY CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING Arts in Tacoma, Washington, celebrated their 25th anniversary in 2008; however, the historic theaters that make up Broadway Center have been a vital part of the town for 90 years and are listed on the National Registry of Historic Places. The vibrant history of the theaters is an important part of Broadway

Center's story, so their preservation and architectural integrity is taken very seriously.

Responsible for the day-to-day management, long-range planning, and interfacing with the Board of Trustees and the community overall, David Fischer, Broadway Center's Executive Director, says, "We needed to control and manage access to our buildings, rehearsal

Unless otherwise noted, all photos are courtesy of Broadway Center.



**Small Theater on the Square**

halls, classrooms, and offices. Our goal was to find an access control system that could be installed without altering the historic nature of our theaters.”

Fischer explains, “Broadway Center’s largest theater, The Pantages, was originally a vaudeville house and home to the famous “Klondike Kate,” Queen of the Yukon. Our smaller Beaux-Arts style Rialto Theater was a silent movie palace. Both theaters were restored in the 1980s and formed the nucleus of what was to become the Broadway Center for the Performing Arts in 1983. In 1993 Broadway Center added a third theater, Theater on the Square, which is a modern presidium theater for regional productions.”

Situated at an intersection that has been the town’s center for generations, Broadway Center is at the very heart of the Tacoma community. Fischer shares, “Many generations have gathered here to mourn or celebrate local and national events. Thousands of people came here to celebrate the end of World War I in 1918. Archival photos from 1929 show people gathered in solidarity in front of the theaters, trying to make sense of the Stock Market Crash. Again, in 1945, thousands joined together to rejoice at the end of World War II. In the 1960s, the theaters were at the center



**Rialto Exterior**

Courtesy of Chip Van Gilder



of protests as people demanded civil rights and equal protection under the law. And, in the late 1960s, they protested the Vietnam War here... and so on throughout the years.”

Under the Broadway Center umbrella, there are three rehearsal halls, classrooms, and a seven-story office building. They have nine active resident arts associations that use the Center for stage productions



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and classes, so they are often in operation 18 hours a day, seven days a week. Broadway Center employs 25 full-time and 60 part-time people, and has a volunteer-base of about 200 people. There are 250 doors, and each one secures access to the theaters themselves, equipment, concession goods, archival files, and offices. Each one of the doors has a certain set of people that are authorized to access specific areas.

The path to finding an access control system that could meet their requirements proved challenging. Fischer explains, “We looked at card access systems but they would have significantly altered the interior and exterior look of our theaters. Our 90-year old buildings have solid concrete walls. The systems would have required us

- 1 David Fischer, Executive Director, Broadway Center of the Performing Arts
- 2 Pantages Facade
- 3 Pantages Interior

to run surface-mount electricity which is incredibly expensive. In order to hide the electric runs, core drilling into the concrete walls would have been necessary and, of course, this was unacceptable.”

Still searching for a solution, they discovered the CyberLock Access Control System at a security trade show in New York, and quickly found that it met all their requirements. “Until we found their system, we had not come across a key management system that would allow us greater control and management capabilities without intruding on the look of our buildings. The decision from the very beginning was to implement the system in all the buildings that make up Broadway Center. We solicited the help of iCrescendo LLC, an access control integration company located in Seattle, Washington.



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Courtesy of Chip Van Gilder



iCrescendo came on site and worked very closely with us. Their people gave us the support we required to integrate the system and provided the training our staff needed to operate the system," says Fischer.

Fischer shares, "In the spring of 2008, we implemented a three-phase program over a period of nine months so at the end of that period everything associated with Broadway Center would be fitted with the new system. Of course, there was quite a bit of coordination with the people at iCrescendo in setting up the system."

"The affordability of the system has been an enormous benefit to us. No expensive wiring or damaging concrete core-drilling was needed for the installation, and we didn't have to change out the original mechanical lock hardware that was already in our buildings. All we had to do was remove the mechanical cylinders inside our door locks and replace them with the electronic cylinders," Fischer adds.

Before the new system was installed, lost keys were a problem for Broadway Center. They lost security to their buildings at times. They couldn't afford to re-key or change the locks every time someone lost a key. They had many keys in circulation and unaccounted for. After installing the new electronic cylinders, those keys are no longer a threat. "With this system, we can

deactivate a missing key so it cannot access our doors and our security isn't compromised. Key duplication had been a big issue for us. Now, people can't just go to a hardware store and make an extra key because the system's electronic keys cannot be duplicated," states Fischer.

The system's electronic keys are also programmable so Broadway Center can restrict each person's access to the areas they need to do their job and keep them out of areas they should not be in. Fischer explains, "Theaters are dark and inherently dangerous. There are many places to fall into and out of. Our fly system is a counter-weighted batten and pulley system that allows scenery to move in and out. There are overhead catwalks above the stages. We even have a very old pulley elevator on top of the Pantages Theater building. Knowing that we have only authorized, experienced people accessing these hazardous areas is an important benefit of the system," says Fischer.

People within their organization and other resident art associations use Broadway Center's classrooms, studios, and rehearsal halls without constant supervision. Fischer says, "The electronic locks and keys record openings and unauthorized attempts to enter. If a door to one of these areas is left unlocked, we can tell who forgot to lock the door in the audit report from the lock. Our stage, sound, and technical equipment is extremely valuable and a considerable expense to replace if stolen. The electronic lock and key system allows us to control who and when someone has access to this equipment."

Scott Painter, Broadway Center's Technical Services Director, is responsible for managing all their

facilities, including the stage areas. Scott oversees Broadway Center productions and rental productions by resident arts associations. He insures that all their needs are met in regards to technical and sound equipment. Painter says, "This system has certainly made my life easier since its implementation. I have gone from carrying at least 150 keys to carrying one electronic key to open all the doors in Broadway Center."

Fischer summarizes, "Each year Broadway Center hosts Holiday Celebrations. We carry on old traditions by hosting the 65-year old Holiday Tree and Menorah Lighting event. New Year's Eve brings First Night and in the spring comes the Daffodil Parade that has a history of more than 70 years. Everything we do ties back to that collective sense of community and preserving this special place for future generations. This new system has helped in this mission by affording us electronic access and key control without compromising the historical integrity and architectural beauty of our buildings." 

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