

# Thornton Tomasetti

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*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

## **THORNTON TOMASETTI WINS SEAIO AWARD OF MERIT FOR DESIGN OF OVERTURE CENTER FOR THE ARTS IN MADISON, WISCONSIN**

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### ***Structural Engineers Association of Illinois Honors Project at Annual Gala***

**(CHICAGO, June 10,  
2008)** – The Structural Engineers  
Association of Illinois (SEAIO)  
presented an Award of Merit to  
the Thornton Tomasetti-designed  
Overture Center for the Arts in  
Madison, Wis. at its annual  
Excellence in Structural



Engineering Awards banquet on June 7th in Chicago. Daniel Marquardt,  
managing principal of Thornton Tomasetti, accepted the award.

SEAIO's annual Excellence in Structural Engineering Awards recognize creative achievement and innovation in structural engineering design, or in the publication of a significant work contributing to the advancement of structural engineering.

Designed by Pelli Clarke Pelli Architects, the Overture Center for the Arts project encompasses an entire city block and was built in two phases on a fast-track schedule. Phase 1 included a new 2,250-seat performance hall, with three additional flexible spaces, and the construction of the Yost Rotunda. Phase 2 consisted of the new and expanded Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, and the renovation of two existing theaters, the 800-seat Capitol Theater and the 350-seat thrust stage Isthmus Playhouse.

The project's complex architectural design, its incorporation of existing structures, acoustic design of sensitive theater spaces, and fast-track schedule pushed the limits of engineering design and interdisciplinary teamwork.

The need for high-end acoustics in the new performance hall created unique engineering challenges. Eighteen-inch-thick walls around the stage and auditorium extend up to 115 feet vertically and 90 feet horizontally. Structural elements connecting to the walls external to the performance hall were isolated with acoustic bearing pads and could not be used to brace the wall. Unique details were developed to transfer lateral loads to the walls at specific locations. The balconies within the performance hall took the form of "warped bowls" to optimize sight lines. Special detailing was required to address the significant chord forces resulting from the shape of the balcony.

Structural challenges in Phase 2 included the renovation of the existing Capitol Theater, incorporation of portions of an existing structure with an operating mechanical penthouse, and the design of the support structure for a towering glass "Icon" at the east end of the site. Entire floors were removed and replaced with floors at different elevations, requiring elaborate construction sequencing and temporary bracing of existing columns. The spirit of collaboration between the owner, the architect, the consultants and the contractor allowed both phases of this complex project to open on schedule.

**About Thornton Tomasetti ([www.ThorntonTomasetti.com](http://www.ThorntonTomasetti.com))**

Thornton Tomasetti provides building engineering services to clients worldwide on projects of all sizes and complexity. From the tallest buildings and the longest spans, to innovative building systems and materials, the firm is committed to creating the best solutions through its technical ingenuity, pursuit of excellence, and responsiveness to client needs.

Founded in 1956 as Lev Zetlin & Associates, today Thornton Tomasetti is a 650-person organization of engineers and architects, collaborating from offices across the United States and in Hong Kong, London, Moscow, and Shanghai. Services cover structural design, building evaluation, and remediation to optimize building efficiency and performance. Thornton Tomasetti mobilizes rapidly to provide disaster response investigations, and delivers expert consulting services and testimony for legal and insurance purposes.

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