

A 'Baradari' of Entertainment!



- Bhavanashi Ramakrishna

Hyderabad - the very name springs in mind a grand history of romance and artistic pursuance of life! Amidst many things that etch this legacy, one that stands high and 'sounds' loud and clear about the magnificence that the 16th century capital of Golconda Kingdom was, is the Taramati Baradari.

Developed into an expansive multipurpose entertainment and commercial facility, the 'complex' today means a whole big proposition- much more than its history. AS seeks to present a leaf out of it!

December 7, 2007, an evening at Taramati Baradari - just inside the outskirts of Hyderabad, the historic capital of Andhra Pradesh - and the whole ambience came to life, effervescing with a lease of what it was during its grand old historic heyday. The capacity audience at the 1600-plus seat-amphitheatre was held captive in rapturous attention even as acclaimed cultural exponents kept radiating their artistic skills all through the ambience.

With a galaxy of eminence comprising Zakir Hussain, Ronu Majumdar, Pankaj Udhas, Pandit Birju Maharaj, Ananand Shanker and Jagjit Singh, and the likes descending on the crescent-shaped open-air auditorium, some 15 feet aloft from the ground the setting couldn't

have been more pulsating and picturesque. For, the magnificent Golconda Fort looming nearby, a colourfully-lit Monument providing a backstage, a verdantly green canopy all around, embellishments of luxury amenities, all complementing one another, contribute to a great cause- culture, heritage and, of course, tourism. However though, playing a role central to the entertainment fare of the three-evening event was apparently the absorbing audio (with supporting video accompaniment). While the place, by virtue of its historical nature, and size and scale typified a uniquely different setting, the ambience demanded an equally exhaustive and 'performing' audio match to complement the experience.

The Place

The Taramati Baradari complex is a seven-acre expansive premises with several modern adornments, all set in the backdrop of the Baradari monument. Originally considered Abdullah Quli Qutb Shah (seventh sultan of Golconda Kingdom)'s ode to his favourite courtesan Taramati, it had been developed multifariously by the Andhra Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (APTDC) a few years back to include several other facilities that can address modern demands.

The complex, primarily comprises:

- A 1600-seat open-air auditorium
- A 500-seat, air-conditioned indoor auditorium / convention centre
- Two banquet halls with a seating capacity for 150 and 100
- A lecture hall with a seating capacity of 100
- Two boardrooms with a seating capacity of 60 and 40
- A business centre with conferencing facilities

These facilities are also complemented by a 24-room A/C hotel and a 6-suite speciality hospitality wing, plus a multi-cuisine and a bar and restaurant.

The Amphitheatre

The amphitheatre or the open-air auditorium - as it is

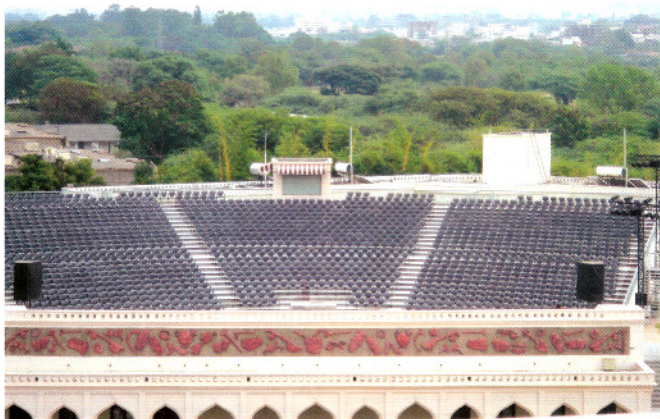
commonly referred to as - possesses the most imposing look of all, next only to the Taramati Monument facing it. Stylised in typical Qutb Shahi architecture the amphitheatre features a row of arched, columnar corridor providing a 'Hyderabadi' face to the stage. Behind this, and below the uplifted stage, is a row of greenrooms meant for the artistes. The outer parapet wall above the greenroom is treated with high-relief stone etchings of several musical instruments symbolising Indian musical traditions.

A staircase from either side of the greenroom corridor leads to the massive amphitheatre. Another pair of staircases provides entry at the rear end of the place.

The amphitheatre features a massive stage of around 80-feet width and created at a height of four-feet from the amphitheatre floor level. The seating is planned in three huge columns making a crescent shape some 15 feet away from the stage. The control room is created at the rear end, behind the seating area. Looking down the stage or the seating area provides a breathtaking sight as it gives a glimpse of the expanse of the legacy of the Golconda Kingdom.

The Acoustic Ambience that Matters

Besides the imposing look, the amphitheatre is also characterized by a seemingly impeccable acoustic ambience that is complemented by a matching audio and lighting system.



The amphitheatre - a grand view from atop the Taramati Monument



A view of the amphitheatre from the ground (observe the greenrooms behind the columnar corridor)



A view of the Taramati Monument from the ground, The Monument is diagonally opposite to the amphitheatre

Two Meyer Sound UPA-1P speakers are erected - diagonally - one each on either side of the stage - and are complemented by four more Meyer Sound MTS 4A with two on each side of the seating area. These speakers are supported by three Mackie - SRM 450 stage monitors and Klark Technik DI boxes.

In addition, the electronics supporting the audio comprise an Allen&Heath GL 330 audio mixer, DBX equalizers and crossovers, Shure and Audio Technica microphones, Pioneer dual CD players. While the main

speakers in front of the stage are protected in weatherproof cases, smaller front speakers are normally installed prior to the performances. Rest of the electronics are installed in the control room at the rear end.

"As this is a classical performance venue the sound levels are kept relatively lower than similar sized shows," explains Jaleel H Sabir, chief of The SoundRoom, the Hyderabad-based audio-visual system integrator who handled the project. "Front fill speakers are equalized and time aligned to blend seamlessly with the main speakers."

The A/V Equipment at Taramati Amphitheatre:

Description of Item	Qty
Alan & Heath GL 330 Audio Mixer with Power Supply	1
DBX Equalizer	2
DBX 480 Crossover Compressor with Limiter	1
Shure - DFR 22	2
Shure - DFR 11	1
Shure - EUT 124/SM58 Wireless Combo Microphone Set	3
Shure 5M 58 LC	8
Shure 5M 57 LC	10
Shure Beta 52A Microphone	1
Shure Boundary Mic	1
Audio Technica AT 4041 Condenser Microphone	3
Audio Technica PRO 35X Condenser Microphone	2
Audio Technica Gooseneck Mic	2
Vesacom - Microphone Stands	21
Klark Technik DI Box	3
Mackie - SRM 450 Stage Monitors	3
Meyer Sound - UPA - 1P	2
Meyer Sound - MTS 4A	4
Pioneer CMX 3000 Dual CD Player	1
TC Electronics Effects Processor	1
Drawmer Gate	1
Stavol - Integrated Servo Control Voltage Stabilizer - 5 KVA	1
Audio Technica Studio Head Phone	1
Inter - M Gooseneck Microphone Base	1
Goose Neck Light	1
Cables, Connectors & Accessories Kit	1

A customized provision is made before the stage for hosting 5.1 concerts. According to the system integrator, the video provision was typically for covering the same live concert. However, making a cinematic environment out of this open-stage venue - by erecting any structure of large size over the already raised stage - was feared to undo the impact of the whole setting of the monument behind.

There was no structured acoustic tech spec requirement since it was an open-air auditorium. However, the crescent shaped space did prove a point or two for the integrator to work on the uniform distribution of sound. "Average playback level is around 30-40dB over the noise floor," explains Sabir, "we tried to maintain a uniform sound over the entire seating area. The overall sound quality is excellent judging by the feedback we get from patrons!"

The impact that the concerts at the place had been making on the audiences is claimed to be a testament to the 'performance' of the system integration.

Ch. S.R.K Prasad, joint manager with the APTDC, and in charge of the Baradari Complex, vouches satisfaction with the system functionality. "There haven't been any major issues with the audio," he says, "the systems are installed in a fashion that they will withstand all climatic conditions."



The view of the amphitheatre and the monument (left and right)

The executive is, however, concerned about the commercial success of the whole venture. Though the State government had developed several luxury facilities - as part of an ambitious plan to promote what it called 'cultural tourism', and had been making aggressive publicity campaigns, not much headway came its way. According to him, the venue's being far off from the city is proving both advantageous and disadvantageous. Being far off from the city and located in proximity with the military area, it is away from the hustle and bustle of the city and makes an ideal setting for pleasant, entertaining evening. However, difficulties of late night transport - and

logistics - have been two big challenges.

The audio-visual installation and system integration for the entire project had been done by The Sound Room while the lighting solution had been worked out by the Hyderabad-based Loma Design Arts.

Of the two boardrooms, one is set for upgradation while the convention centre or the indoor auditorium is active and churning out some good revenues by hosting corporate events, besides cultural fetes.



A view of the amphitheatre taken from the A/V control room at the rear end. (Inset) The rack-mounted A/V equipment in the control room