

# From floor to ceiling, ASU Gammage facelift welcomes audiences back

**Donors step up for floor refurbishing, new HVAC and electrical systems in time for 2025–26 Broadway season**

By Mary Beth Faller, ASU News  
October 7, 2025

Carefully wrap a seat in protective plastic. Three thousand times.

Scrape layers and layers of paint and epoxy off the floor. By hand. Move onto the next row and do it again.

Weeks of painstaking labor has resulted in a facelift for the interior of ASU Gammage, just as crowds return for the start of the new Broadway season this month.

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## Coming up at ASU Gammage

[ASU Maroon and Gold Band & ASU Philharmonia: Bravery](#),  
7:30 p.m. Oct. 9.

"[Suffs](#)," the Tony Award-winning musical about the suffragette movement, kicks off the Broadway series, Oct. 14-19.

"[Still/Here](#)," the groundbreaking dance theater work by Bill T. Jones, marks its 30th

The work included stripping and refinishing the floor, upgrading the electrical system, replacing the HVAC system and removing the old orchestra shell. It was the biggest renovation since 2017, when two elevators and 88 women's bathroom stalls were added.

anniversary, Oct. 25.

Read more about the [upcoming season](#).

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ASU Gammage, a crown jewel of the entire state, marked its [60th anniversary](#) a year ago.

Colleen Jennings-Roggensack, executive director of ASU Gammage, said that Frank Lloyd Wright did not design Gammage to have anything replaced.

"And in fact, he actually said that the buildings he built should fall down after 50 years. And I was like, 'No, not this one.'"

The work started when the previous Broadway season ended, on Aug. 3.

"We went all the way through 'Moulin Rouge' and then boom, the minute we closed the doors, we had 12 different construction companies coming in, so it meant they worked around the clock," said Jennings-Roggensack, who is also the vice president for cultural affairs at ASU.

The construction was a symphony in logistics and Terry Cranmer was the conductor.

"Gammage never goes down for this long," said Cranmer, the director of facilities at the building.

"We're replacing four very large HVAC units in the building and they said they absolutely, positively needed at least eight weeks. So if we're going down for eight weeks to do HVAC, well we're also going to redo the floor. And a couple railings needed to be welded. And we needed to do some touch-up painting."

Cranmer, who worked with ASU Facilities Development and Management, gathered all the contractors to coordinate before work began.

"We have different entrances for different contractors and they're working different hours, but that way we can monitor that the correct (personal protection equipment) is coming into the building.

"And these contractors have just been fabulous helping each other out. They move vehicles to accommodate the latest thing that needs to come in. And it's been the most complicated but the most seamless project I've ever worked on."

The floor of ASU Gammage was a stratified history of the past six decades.

"Initially it was colored cement, and then they polished it and then sealed it," Cranmer said.

"And then they didn't like the color so they painted it. And they didn't like that color, so they painted it again. And they didn't like the fact that the paint was wearing off. So then they epoxied it. And then as the epoxy started to wear, they put more paint on top of it."

The floor-stripping company was Southwest Surface Blasting but their method was the opposite.

The workers crawled around the floor using hand grinders to strip away the layers, row by row, down to the original cement. That required a special power and filtration setup and, because the HVAC was being replaced, at times there was no air conditioning.

Then the floor got a layer of epoxy with colored chips and glow-in-the-dark row numbers to make it easier for guests.

Another big problem was the lack of electrical outlets, as few things needed to be plugged in when Gammage opened in 1964.

“Our poor ticket office was blowing circuits all the time. So we added their very own circuit breaker box,” Cranmer said.

The 80-ton orchestra shell that's on the stage stopped working over a year ago. So workers cut it apart and carried the pieces outside to remove it.

“There's a fundraising movement now to bring in a new kind of orchestra shell that'll be easier to set up and take down,” Cranmer said.

Donors stepped up for the renovation work, Jennings-Roggensack said.

“ASU cares about its buildings because it cares about the people who come to those buildings. We care about our patrons. We care about our students who perform on the stage,” she said.

“We're not alone in that care and concern because our donors actually paid for 50% of this renovation work because they care so much.”

Cranmer said several donors have stopped by to check on the renovation progress.

“I love that because if someone is kind enough and generous enough and believes in you enough to make a donation, then they should actually see everything in action. I love showing people their money at work.

“If I'm out and about, people have to tell me about their first visit to Gammage, like a first date, a first kiss. It's amazing how this building is woven into the lives of so many people.”

ASU Gammage is sometimes called the “pink birthday cake,” and next up on the renovation wish list is refurbishing the building's rosy exterior, Jennings-Roggensack said.

“People think it's paint or stucco. It's not. It's a rose quartz applique. And you can't paint it — it's an artisan project. And there are only so many people on the planet that can do this,” she said.

“I know that people will want to chip in and help us do that because that will be no small feat.

“Gammage is what people bring to it — their inquisitive nature, their joy, their wonder and their love for the arts.”

*This story originally appeared on [ASU News](#).*

## Main image



All 3,000 seats in ASU Gammage had to be wrapped before workers could start on the interior renovation project this summer, which involved stripping and refurbishing the floor, replacing the HVAC systems, upgrading the electrical system and removing the 80-ton orchestra shell from the stage. Photo by Charlie Leight/ASU News

## Gallery





Noe Gonzalez, the site superintendent with Tempe-based Techniquex, does finishing work with the flooring sealant at ASU Gammage. Techniquex applied the new floor epoxy after workers from Mesa-based Southwest Surface Blasting stripped the floor down to the cement.



Paul Rayner, pipe fitter for McCarthy Building, tightens bolts for the new HVAC system at ASU Gammage.





The pink exterior of ASU Gammage is not paint or stucco, it's rose quartz applique. Refurbishment of the exterior is on the renovation wish list for Gammage, which will require a skilled artisan.