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Specialist's Royal seal of approval

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NEWCASTLE'S Theatre Royal has turned to new technology in the next stage of a £7.2m transformation designed to reinforce its position as one of the finest theatres in Europe.

Gateshead-based IT specialist ITPS has just completed a commission to create an IT infrastructure that will support the needs of the 300,000 theatre-goers who visit the 170-year old historical and cultural landmark each year.

The theatre's IT system was previously outsourced to Newcastle City Council, before management went out to tender for a commercial technology partner who could create and support a flexible IT framework designed to support the needs of a 21st Century theatre.

ITPS beat off stiff competition before being appointed to install a data centre-based solution together with improved communications networks.

The project is the latest in a series of cultural client gains for ITPS, which includes Tyneside Cinema, Dance City and the Baltic.

The new Theatre Royal infrastructure is replicated at one of ITPS's two ISO 27001-accredited data centres, with automatic system protection, backup and reporting so that in the event of any disaster or interruption, it would be business as usual for the smooth running of the theatre.

Onward internet connectivity is managed through the data centre, which also houses the theatre's high performance mail server. This is complemented by local servers installed on site, which manage the ticketing system and other back office functions.

The team worked closely with the council's IT department to plan the new services transfer, migrating the

data and implementing the new system overnight and at weekends to minimise disruption.

Mark Mason, ITPS's sales consul-

tant, said: "The Theatre Royal is one of the region's most famous landmarks, and this was a radical shift in the way it managed its technology needs.

"We had to prove that we had the expertise and the track record to create, implement and support a new system – with no risk and no interruption to the day to day running of the theatre.

"We are very proud that the theatre management turned to a regional expert to meet their needs,

and to have played our part in equipping the theatre with the technology that will underpin its future."

Philip Bernays, chief executive of the Theatre Royal, said: "We see our partnership with ITPS as a key element in our future growth and our ability to offer a top quality experience to our audiences.

"With over 170 years' experience in attracting top quality productions to the theatre we are very familiar with first class performances, and that's exactly what ITPS delivered for us."



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SCREEN TEST: Philip Bernays, of Theatre Royal, Rachael Wooding, as Eva Peron in *Evita*, Mark Heenehan as Juan Peron, and Mark Mason, of ITPS