



The pioneering days of the Belgian radio were over with the creation of the National Institute for Radio Broadcasting (INR-NIR) in 1930. Given the importance of radio at this time it became obvious that a new building was required for broadcasting.

In 1933, as the result of a competition, the project of the Belgian architect, Joseph Diongre, was selected. His proposed designs offered architectural rigour combined with a response to the stringent technical and acoustic constraints whilst also envisaging a space intended to welcome the general public. Diongre was equally attentive to details such as the materials used and the creation of specially designed furniture.

The much-needed « sound factory », started in 1935, and saw the light of day in 1938. It was one of the earliest radio buildings in Europe.

Immediately, the intrinsic qualities of the studios (especially Studio 4) gained international recognition attracting the most prestigious musicians of the century to Brussels for concerts, festivals or recordings – classical, contemporary, jazz. The frugality and the pragmatism of its concept made the 'steamship' world famous upon its inauguration. The intrinsic qualities of the studios gain international recognition and attract the most prominent musicians of the century in classical or contemporary music and jazz for concerts, festivals or recordings. The history of the building has always been linked with radiophonic and musical creativity. In 1953, it becomes the birthplace of Belgian television, the new medium which was about to conquer the world. So, for more than thirty years, the NIR-INR became the audiovisual centre 'par excellence'. When the original proprietors left the building in 1974, it became home to several cultural institutions that provide it with a new dimension until its closure in 1995.

After a partial preservation order in 1994, the former National Institute for Radio Broadcasting building was finally saved for posterity in 1998, thanks to the company « Omroepgebouw Flagey N.V. – Maison de la Radio Flagey S.A. ».

With the renovation work completed, the building, or « steamship » as it is affectionately known, has a new, dynamic look.

Forty prominent companies and institutions raised the capital that was necessary to preserve this unique and historic building from 1938. By joining forces, they were able to restore it to its former glory. The project represents an investment of 43 millions of euros. This cultural project not only sets a standard in private and public partnership, but also serves as a prime example of good citizenship and patronage in the arts.

The former NIR-INR building, now renamed « Flagey », has opened its doors again to artists and the general public alike. For decades the Radio Building was both a meeting place and a creative centre for musical and cultural activities. Flagey is continuing along that path and, with its various cultural partners, has developed a programme rich in diversity, focussed above all on the performers and its public.

The aim of Flagey is to create a place where the public will be attracted by its energy and lively open atmosphere.

Flagey also sees itself as a meeting place for the different cultures and communities within our own country and the world at large.

The fact that it is situated in a lively and multi-ethnic area of Brussels already puts it at the heart of Europe

This new project has brought the former NIR-INR building into the XXIst century, whilst highlighting its architecture and its history, in order to develop a unique « sound and image factory » in Brussels.

The project envisages the building being re-employed for various purposes : cultural activities, office space and shops. The ability to harmonise and co-ordinate these various areas will be the key to the success of this project.

The cultural space, in the centre of the building consists of five studios of different size and function. These studios are located between the basement and the 6th floor ; This unique feature allows the organization of all kinds of activities : concerts, recordings, projections, ...

The viability of this renovation project depended on an increased seating capacity in Studio 4, to at least 900 seats, and at the same time providing variable acoustics facilities.

On the basis of these criteria, an acoustic study was undertaken which was able to establish that a surface area of 900 m² and an acoustic volume of approximately 12.000 m³ allowed the seating capacity of Studio 4 to be augmented without changing its acoustic quality, provided strict guidelines were followed.

All these interventions, based on the principle of reversibility, enable Studio 4 to meet the numerous requirements of producers and performers. The concept for the new Studio 4 is the work of the Belgian architect Philippe Samyn.

Born out of a great impulse of generosity where private and public sectors meet, Flagey wishes to be a centre of cultural activity, progressively invested by a public that will make it their second « home ».

In the spirit of the founders of the project, five ambitions are put ahead:

Cultural, to make of this ship, a « sound and image factory », a cultural pole that is alive day and night, a festive and joyful place, an educational project open to young people, a leading role player of the Belgian and even the European cultural life, open to different styles of music, offering an important place to images and the interpenetration of different artistic disciplines.

Architectural and real estate to save this building, which is a witness to Belgian history as well as a technical masterpiece, by giving back all its functions while respecting and highlighting its architecture, as well to adapt its installations and equipments to the newest technology, so that it can once again find a prominent place on the European cultural scene.

Economical to develop in this vast building a plethora of commercial and cultural activities that will strengthen each other and will guarantee the project's viability.

Political : this project wishes to be a « P.P.P. », a private-public partnership : the meeting place between a private sector that has a growing consciousness about its responsibilities in terms of general interest and a public sector that, with its competences, its role of social regulator and its financial means, stays the main responsible for the cultural life of the country and for its influence abroad. Flagey wishes to attribute an important role to the public sector, assisted by the private sector, more specifically in the development of the cultural project.

Social : this project wishes to be the result of dynamic actions taken by the representatives of the country's different communities, with the aim to create a high quality cultural institution with a European orientation. This project is inscribed in a particularly rich social context, at the border between the privileged neighbourhood of the Ixelles lakes and an immigrant's area. By opening up to these different communities, its development should blow a new life into the entire neighbourhood.

Finally, through the choice of its activities, this project has the ambition to touch a large public and to make it discover the artistic dimension of each of its cultural components.