



Case study

Lyric
LYRIC OPERA
OF CHICAGO

Lyric Opera of Chicago Gives the Evolv Express® Accolades for Its Security Screening Performance

Lyric Opera House of Chicago

OPENED: 1954

HOME: Ardis Krainik Theatre in Civic Opera Building

CAPACITY: 3,563

EMPLOYEES: 1,000+ PT and FT Staff

WEBSITE: www.lyricopera.org

Solution Snapshot

Goals

- Provide frictionless security screening for all patrons, especially the elderly
- Avoid generating a high rate of false security alarms
- Scale to handle a high volume of security screening in the final 30 minutes before curtains
- Ensure threat resolution experience is seamless
- Onboard and train inexperienced staff on security screening operation
- Ensure all guests are in their seats at curtain call

Solution

People

- Deployed 3 Evolv Express® systems in optimal flow area at the entrance
- Provided day-of-deployment support
- Trained staff on setup, operation, teardown, and storage of the Express system

Technology

- 2 Evolv Express Dual-Lane Systems
- 1 Evolv Express Single-Lane System
- Evolv Cortex AI®
- Evolv Insights®

Process

- Evolv Engineering Solutions team deployed 1 dual-lane Evolv Express system and 1 single-lane Express system on the initial launch
- Trained principal stakeholders on using Evolv Insights analytics
- Introduced customer to Evolv online user community, The Bridge, for ongoing knowledge transfer and support

Outcomes



Scale to screen more than 1,600 guests in 30 minutes before curtain calls



Expedited secondary security screening



Delivered positive guest experience, not one complaint received to date



Able to quickly and easily disassemble, move, and store Express systems

Security Screening Introduced at Storied Chicago Opera House

The Lyric Opera of Chicago has a storied 66-year-old history and is one of the premier opera houses in the United States.

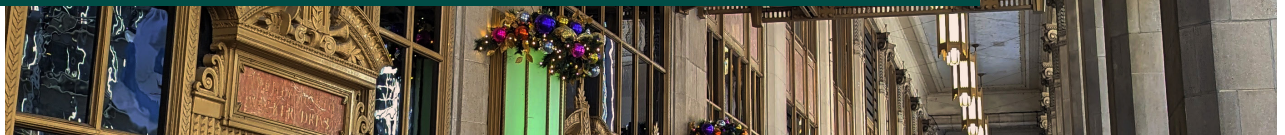
Its permanent home is the Civic Opera Building, the second-largest opera auditorium in the United States. The interior of the Civic Opera Building was renovated in 1996 and its interior was named Ardis Krainik Theatre after Ardis Krainik, the General Director of the Lyric Opera of Chicago, who oversaw the renovation. In addition to opera performances, the Civic Opera House is home to the Joffrey Ballet—which moved to the Civic Opera House in 2020—as well as musicals.

Historically, the Lyric House did not employ security screening. “We adhere to the Illinois protocol that bans handguns in public buildings,” says John Yelen, the Senior Director of Facilities for the Lyric House. “But we never found any since we never checked anyone. Other theaters in the Chicago area had implemented Evolv Express systems and our executive management team had visited those sites and seen the Express in action. Our General Manager had also seen the Express system at a local sports stadium and was impressed with the seamless approach to security screening.”



“ We considered other options, such as walkthrough magnetometers and hand-held wands, for primary security screening but they simply weren’t a fit. A lot of our patrons are elderly, and we needed something that was easy to walk through. The Evolv Express met those requirements.”

- John Yelen, Sr. Director of Facilities, Lyric Opera House of Chicago





Validating the Decision to Acquire Evolv Express® Systems

The wheels were already in motion to implement the Express system at Lyric Opera when Yelen joined mid-2021.

The management team at Lyric Opera had seen the Evolv Express system in use at a local professional sports stadium as well as a couple of local performing arts centers and were recommending the use of Express systems at Lyric Opera. Thus, when an Evolv partner and member of the Chicago Cultural Security Group invited Yelen to attend a meeting last summer where one of the members was scheduled to review the Evolv Express system, he happily accepted. "Our management team was already sold on Evolv, and this event helped cement the decision for me," Yelen relates. "We considered other options, such as walkthrough magnetometers and hand-held wands, for primary security screening but they simply weren't a fit. A lot of our patrons are elderly, and we needed something that was easy to walk through. The Evolv Express met those requirements."



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Accelerated Initial Deployment

The initial plan for the Lyric Opera team was to deploy the Express systems during the holiday season.

But when the Express systems became available earlier, Yelen elected to move up the deployment date. “The activities around Mexican Independence Day in September had us concerned, and we wanted to have them in place for a couple of events where we anticipated full-capacity audiences,” he says.

Two Express systems were purchased by Lyric Opera—a dual-lane system for the front entrance and a single-lane system for the stage door. Yelen decided to take the systems live for an opera that was expected to draw around 2,000 patrons, and the patron services team was tasked with managing screening. “This was without any prior communications to our patrons and training with the patron services team,” he notes. “Training occurred on the same day as the event, and the deployment could have been better. We weren’t going from a legacy security screening solution like other Evolv clients, but rather from nothing to Evolv. As a result, guests weren’t sure what we were doing and what to expect in passing through the Express lanes. Out of almost 2,000 attendees, we had a pretty low alarm rate”

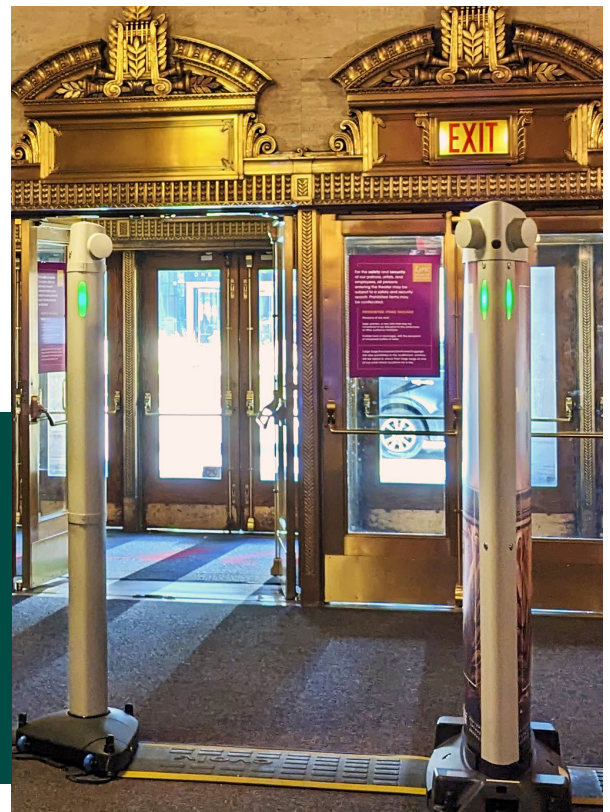
During the security screening, the Patron Services team determined that one dual-lane system at the entrance was insufficient. The Evolv engineer was onsite for the first performance to help as needed and stepped up to the challenge. “The Evolv Solutions Engineer unassembled and moved the single-lane system from the stage door over to our

entrance almost immediately,” he says. “We really appreciate his prompt response. He also helped us reconfigure the entrance to the way our team wanted. We had the dual-lane Express system pushed up against the wall, and he worked with us to reconfigure the two Express systems to optimize flow through security as well as ticketing.”

Beyond the questions guests had regarding the Express system and what it was for, the biggest challenge patrons had on opening day was navigating over the mat between the towers. “Our guests with walkers and canes had a hard time distinguishing between it and our carpet as both are grey,” Yelen explains. “We put reflective yellow tape across the edges of the lanes so they would see them.” This quick trick did the job and eliminated the challenge. Despite these useful lessons learned, the team was impressed with the Express system overall and concluded the Lyric Opera team simply needed additional training from Evolv.

“The Bridge is full of helpful information, and our Evolv Customer Success Manager has helped to ensure our team has access to all the appropriate training materials.”

- John Yelen, Sr. Director of Facilities,
Lyric Opera House of Chicago



Training and Security Documentation Key to Success

In response to these initial challenges, the Evolv team worked with Yelen to roll out formalized training on the Express system to the Patron Services team.

The Evolv team also worked to ensure the Lyric Opera team had access to The Bridge, Evolv's User Community that includes training assets and materials, best practices, and articles on topics such as what to look for when hiring for a flow control screener versus a threat resolution screener.

"In retrospect, we shouldn't have deployed until we had time to train our staff and to document system processes," Yelen recounts. "I think the importance of the training and documenting ConOps was heightened for us because we didn't have anything in place before—which typically isn't the case for an Evolv customer. The Bridge is full of helpful information, and our Evolv Customer Success Manager has helped to ensure our team has access to all the appropriate training materials."

While the Patron Services team manages flow control and threat resolution, Yelen plans to hire Door Monitors in the near future, who will assume those roles once they are on board. "Patron Services doesn't have the bandwidth to manage the Express systems," Yelen says. "Once we onboard, train, and test the Door Monitors on the Express systems, we will move those responsibilities over to them."

“Over half of our audience arrives less than 30 minutes before the shows start. Having an additional security lane gives us the ability to screen even higher volumes of patrons.”

– John Yelen, Sr. Director of Facilities,
Lyric Opera House of Chicago





Achieving a Great Performance

With the right training and security operating procedures in place, security screening with the Express systems has been a great success.

"We've found some handguns so far belonging to off-duty policemen," Yelen says. "Overall, we've screened a little more than 17,000 patrons attending different events at the Ardis Krainik Theatre with alarms for only less than 10%. And when an alarm is set off and the patron needs to pass through secondary screening for threat resolution, the process is very easy. The threat resolution tablet shows exactly where the purported threat is located."



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- John Yelen, Sr. Director of Facilities,
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The speed at which Lyric Opera can screen incoming patrons is extremely important, and it can directly impact how patrons experience the performances. "We do not permit seating for late arrivals once a show starts and do not hold the curtains at the start of a show," Yelen says. "As a result, it is extremely important that we screen and get patrons to their seats before the curtain opens to start a show. If not, then they could miss up to half of a show in some cases." For a full house performance like a musical, this means that the Lyric Opera team may need to screen upwards of 1,600 patrons in less than 30 minutes. Using the Evolv systems, patrons are processed fast enough that those arriving right before curtains open are still able to get to their seats on time. "Thus far, the results are quite positive," Yelen reports. "We survey our patrons after every performance, and we have not received a negative comment yet."

Benefiting from the Flexibility and Insights of the Express System

One of the aspects Yelen likes about the Express systems is the portability.

"We need to disassemble, cover, and store them for private events," Yelen says. "Currently, because union rules prohibit us from using union staff to work on the Express systems, I've even been doing it myself. It is a really easy and fast process. The documentation on shutting down, restarting, and troubleshooting the Express system is really helpful here."

Another feature Yelen likes is the analytics from Evolv Insights®. "Before the Express system was deployed, we didn't know when our patrons arrived down to the level of a show and genre type," he says. "For example, Insights analytics tell me in five-minute increments, for each of our different performance genres and individual shows, how many patrons arrived and passed through security screening. I also can analyze our weapons detection analytics in a similar manner." As the Insights analytics reports are easy to generate, Yelen plans to begin sharing those with the management team during monthly meetings.

While the Lyric Opera team didn't know about Evolv Cortex AI® capabilities until just recently, they are excited about realizing those benefits. "If certain items that aren't threats keep setting off alarms, this data—from across the Evolv customer base—enables Evolv to build intelligence into the Express detection process to reduce an already low rate of false alarms," Yelen comments.

“The ability to integrate the Express systems with some of our existing technologies as well as push alerts to local first responders are a big plus. Evolv listened to its customers and aligned its technology roadmap with the requirements customers were talking about.”

- John Yelen, Sr. Director of Facilities, Lyric Opera House of Chicago



Patron Safety and Experience: “I’m Really Glad They Did That”

As Yelen looks to the future, he is excited about the opportunities to integrate the Express systems with other systems—from Lyric Opera’s security cameras to radios carried by in-house personnel and first responders like the local police department.

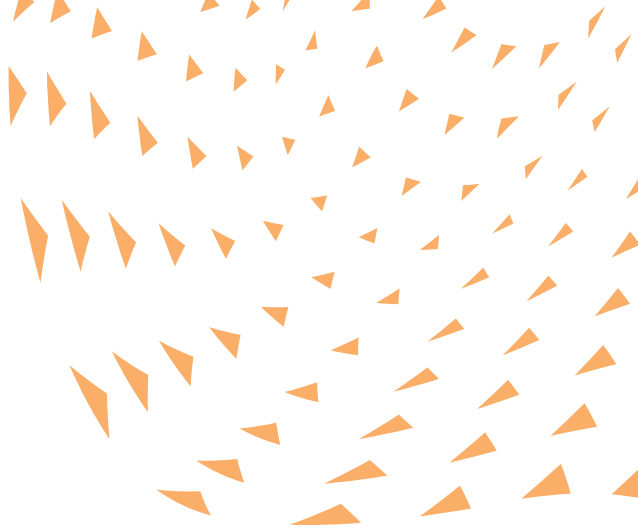
“The ability to integrate the Express systems with some of our existing technologies as well as push alerts to local first responders are a big plus,” he says. “Evolv listens to its customers and aligns its technology roadmap with the requirements customers were talking about.”

These integration initiatives ultimately align with the Lyric Opera’s priorities of safety and experience. “We cannot have a security solution that creates friction and degrades our patron experience,” Yelen sums up. “Whether it is a season ticket holder or a first-time patron; a musical, opera, or ballet performance, security screening cannot detract from the experience of attending the performance.”

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