

# TECHNICAL SOURCE GUIDE

## SUPERPLY

By Roy Hoglund, Scenic and Lighting Designer, University of Wisconsin - Oshkosh

The technical theatre industry continually faces the challenges of greater production demands, lower budgets, and higher materials costs. In meeting these demands, we often have to look to new or different materials that fulfill our specifications, yet lower the costs of production. Richard Rodgers, the Production Manager of Milwaukee Repertory Theatre has come across a product that may assist us in meeting those needs. Richard found "SuperPly," manufactured by Roseburg Forest Products Co., to be a sound alternative to traditional AC plywood. Its smooth hardwood veneer face has no wood patches, major splits, or worm holes, and its veneer grain, unlike fir, is almost nonexistent. This results in only minor preparatory work before painting, which is a major savings in labor, according to Richard. And, it can be stained to give the appearance of a variety of hardwoods without having the obvious appearance that fir offers.

While it still has the structural characteristics of traditional AC Plywood it sells for the same price or less- approximately \$1.00 to \$2.00 less per sheet from some distributors (see cost breakdown in the following table), and it comes in all of the popular dimensions of standard plywood. Paul DesJardins of Amerhart Industrial, a SuperPly distributor, stated that at the present time the lower cost is due to the fact that SuperPly has only been on the market for three years, and that as its popularity grows, the price will ultimately increase. This product is also an adequate financial alternative to MDO (medium density overlay), while still maintaining the smooth, paintable surface. SuperPly's minor drawback is its weight—it's approximately two to three pounds heavier than standard AC plywood in the 3/4" thickness size.

It is the manufacture's intent to give SuperPly a consistent look and yet keep the price low by using less expensive, more available woods. While the surface veneer is comprised of different hardwoods, all the veneers should appear to be the same. Richard's recent shipment was veneered in hackberry/sugarberry, a domestic bottom-land hardwood with characteristics similar to white elm. This, according to G. R. Kaufman of Roseburg Forest Products Co., comprises a very small portion of the veneer market. Seventy to ninety percent of the SuperPly veneers are made of guatombu, a tropical hardwood grown in Argentina. According to Bob Siegfried of the U. S. Forestry Department, its subtle grain gives it a similar appearance to birch, pine, and maple.

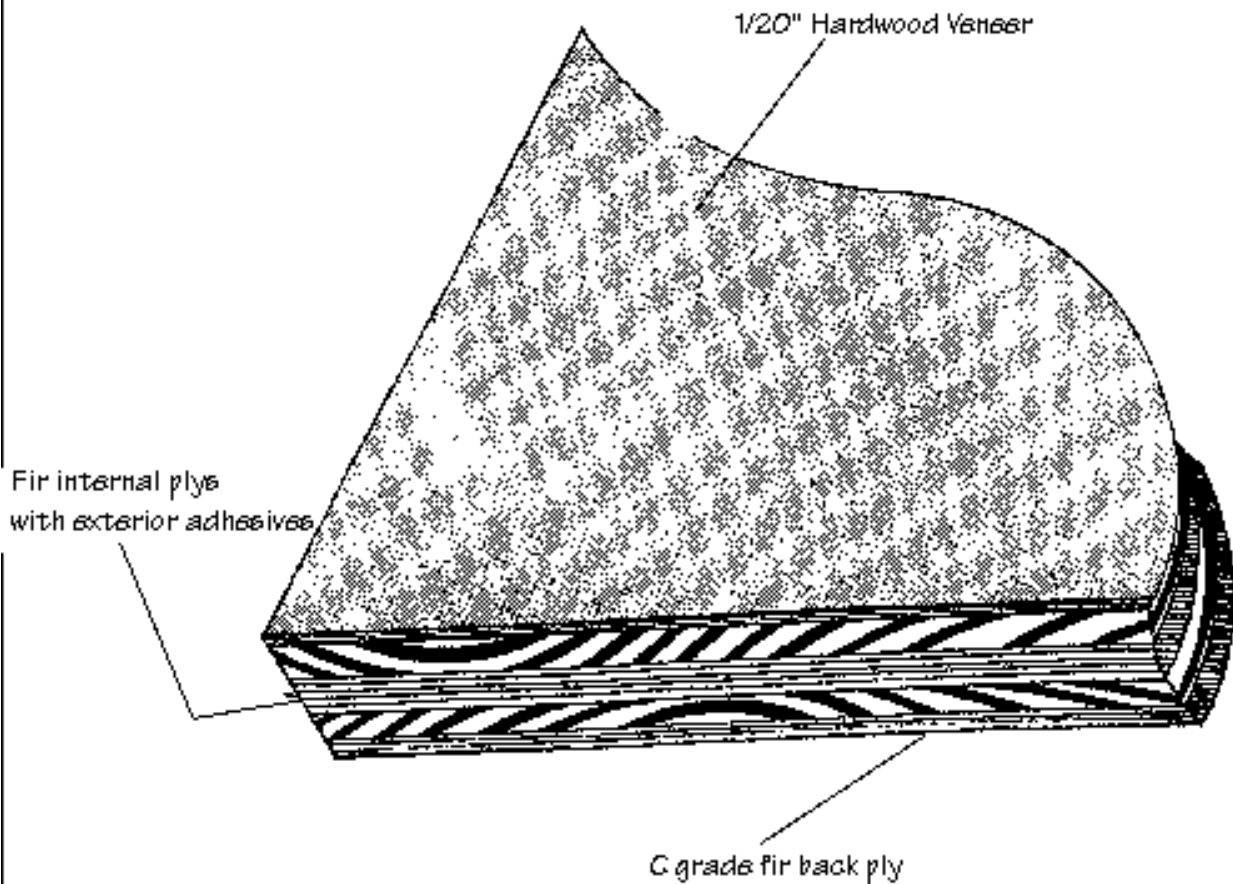
An increasing concern for the technical theatre industry is the utilization of environmentally sound products. Kaufman stated that the need for this product stemmed from a shortage of high-grade, old-growth fir due to the spotted owl dilemma. Although it was originally marketed for everything from cabinets and furniture to planter boxes, it is now heavily used in the film industry. According to Phil Wiseley of the Wisconsin based Environmental Decade, it is impossible to tell whether the trees utilized in the production of SuperPly are plantation-harvested or cut in the wild, but at present guatombu is not on the endangered wood species list compiled by the Association of Wood Professionals\*. The Technical Source Guide editors

Thank you for taking time to read this "classic" Technical Source Guide! Because it has been published a relatively long time ago, addresses (physical & web) and any phone numbers, might not be current!

# TECHNICAL SOURCE GUIDE

believe the SuperPly product to have definite advantages in the theatre and entertainment industry, but we encourage our readers to thoroughly research all materials on their own before purchasing. To find the name of a distributor in your area, contact:

*Roeburg Forest Products Co.  
P.O. Box 1088  
Roseburg, OR. 97470  
Phone: (503) 679-3311*



# TECHNICAL SOURCE GUIDE

The following chart gives a breakdown of cost comparisons, utilizing figures given to us by Paul DesJardins, Amerhart, LTD.

Standard Size	Real Size	Cost Per Single Sheet	Cost Per Sheet Within Unit	Sheets Per Unit
4 x 8 1/4" ACX	1/4"	14.95	12.70	125
4 x 8 3/8" ACX	11/32"	17.00	14.56	84 to 90
4 x 8 1/2" ACX	15/32"	20.78	18.02	62 to 66
4 x 8 5/8" ACX	19/32"	25.90	22.69	50 to 55
4 x 8 3/4" ACX	23/32"	27.69	24.32	42 to 44

\* A list of endangered wood species, compiled by the Association of Wood Professionals, are: Teak, Brazil wood, Mahogany (Phillipine), South American Cedar, Central American Cedar, Ebony, Rosewood, Satinwood, and Tulipwood.

Thank you for taking time to read this "classic" Technical Source Guide! Because it has been published a relatively long time ago, addresses (physical & web) and any phone numbers, might not be current!

## Technical Source Guide #12 – SUPERPLY

- A project of the USITT Technical Production Commission

**Disclaimer:** the publisher does not assume any liabilities resulting from the use of the information contained in this document. Neither Sightlines nor USITT endorses any products presented.