

Three Dimensional Music

By Louise Teague

The IPFW John and Ruth Rhinehart Music Center was designed by the architectural firm of Schenkel Shultz to serve the university and the community. Visually exciting, the building was created with glass-primed piano studios, conference rooms, and lobby that provide exquisite spaces for learning and interaction, with panoramic views of the IPFW arts plaza and the heart of the campus.

Inside and out, the John and Ruth Rhinehart Music Center sings. A brick design surrounds the exterior of the building, creating an architectural “score” with a second floor treble staff and first floor bass staff. Windows represent notes and glass prisms add musical accents.

Inside, each space has been fine-tuned. Teaching studios, rehearsal spaces, and practice rooms are acoustically isolated and acoustically calibrated. Floating floors and ceilings, massive walls 16”-18” thick, and door seals ensure there will be no vibration, no bounced sound, and no echo. Two programs can occur at the same time, one in the small recital hall and one in the larger performance hall, without interfering with each other.

“The challenge was to make the architectural design an acoustic envelope,” says Schenkel Shultz Principal, Richard Stump. Each building element was designed in concert between the architect and acoustician to enhance sound. For acoustic balance, the 1,600-seat Auer Performance Hall and 250-seat Rhinehart Recital Hall feature wood and canvas reflector panels hanging from the superstructure to accommodate unamplified vocals and instrumentation for the IPFW Music Department and Fort Wayne Philharmonic musicians, as well as amplified spoken word for the Omnibus Lecture Series speakers.

Beginning in November 2005, at a cost of \$25 million, the entire project was developed using a synchronized process. The core design team consisted of Richard Stump, architect, Schenkel Shultz; Joseph Myers, acoustician, Kirkegaard Associates; John Sauer, engineer, BSA Life Structures; and Joshua Grossman, theatre consultant, Schuler & Shook. Other building partners included Place Designs, RTM, Lynch Harrison Brumleve, and Blundall & Associates. Fort Wayne-based Schenkel Shultz, a national leader in educational building design, served as project manager. Feters Construction, Inc. in Auburn, served as General Contractor, to make the vision of this spectacular building a reality.