The Center for the Performing Arts
The Center for the Performing Arts

A WORLD-CLASS PERFORMING ARTS CENTER IN CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA

The Center for the Performing Arts at Penn State plays a crucial role in the vibrant campus and community life of Penn State and the Centre region. A cultural gem set in the middle of Pennsylvania, the center presents nationally and internationally renowned artists and companies, plans and implements education and community engagement programs, and commissions and presents new work. The center also manages Eisenhower and Schwab Auditoriums and provides production, ticketing, and audience services for Penn State and external organizations. Penn State students and area residents proudly share its offerings with family, friends, and out-of-town guests, knowing they can count on breathtaking performances that dazzle and captivate the hearts and spirits of audiences. The center enriches and inspires on a grand scale, bringing to rural central Pennsylvania the kinds of cultural opportunities usually found only in metropolitan areas.

Like all performing arts organizations in the United States, the Center for the Performing Arts depends upon private support for a significant portion of its operating budget. Although the University supplies an infrastructure of financial support for facilities, maintenance, and staffing, the center relies heavily upon a combination of earned and contributed income for its programming. As we strive to keep the center accessible to our community and truly innovative, we are seeking a donor with the foresight and vision to name the Center for the Performing Arts and underwrite its programs. A transformational gift creating a major endowment will generate dependable funding well into the future, allowing the center to maintain its tradition of excellence and develop in new directions to advance the performing arts and further enrich our campus and the cultural life of the region.

AN ARTISTIC AND CULTURAL LEGACY

The center’s roots lie with the Artists Series, which began in 1957. Using a variety of facilities for symphonies and other larger concerts, the Artists Series originated to offer the very best in the performing arts to the campus and community—a mission that remains at the heart of the center today. The Artists Series
found a home in 1974 with the completion of the 2,500-seat Milton S. Eisenhower Auditorium, which still provides the perfect environment for symphonies, Broadway musicals, opera, and dance. Schwab Auditorium has also proven to be a resourceful host for more intimate performances such as chamber music and jazz. After more than a decade of further developing its top-notch programs, the Artists Series merged with Auditorium Management in 1985 to become the Center for the Performing Arts and a unit of the College of Arts and Architecture.

As the center has developed over the years, the Penn State and Centre region communities have seen increasing numbers of performances featuring the most respected names in performing arts. Classical artists like Yo-Yo Ma, Itzhak Perlman, James Galway, and Marilyn Horn have delighted audiences with their virtuosity. Jazz greats such as Wynton Marsalis, Ray Charles, Lionel Hampton, and Betty Carter have ignited the auditoriums with blazing intensity. Numerous Broadway musicals have graced the Eisenhower stage, including Les Miserables, Cats, and Mamma Mia!

Today, the Center for the Performing Arts continues this proud tradition by offering high-caliber performances in a wide range of genres each season. The 2010-2011 season, for instance, offered a lineup that included such shows and artists as:

- Virtuoso violinist Joshua Bell
- Jazz piano legends Dave Brubeck and Ramsey Lewis
- The Merce Cunningham Dance Company
- Celtic fiddler Natalie MacMaster’s Christmas in Cape Breton
- The Eroica Trio and Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center
- Argentina’s Tango Buenos Aires in Fire and Passion of Tango
- The touring Broadway musicals Monty Python’s Spamalot, The Color Purple, and Spring Awakening

With these performances and many other programs, the center has brought the world to central Pennsylvania, entertaining, inspiring, and educating more than 60,000 people each year.

**ADVANCING ART AND BUILDING COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS**

The Center for the Performing Arts acts as not just a conduit but also an advocate for the arts by supporting the creation of new works and providing opportunities for students and the community to make meaningful connections with the artists who write, compose, choreograph, direct, design, and perform in theater, music, and dance. Cultivating the arts by commissioning new works has enabled the center to present
world-premiere performances by such artists as the Kronos Quartet, Urban Bush Women, Bill T. Jones, and the St. Lawrence String Quartet. The center co-commissions chamber music works through membership in a national consortium. Some of the center’s most important work, moreover, engages audiences beyond simply “seeing the show.” The center invites many visiting artists to arrive before their performance dates to engage in curriculum-connected programs for students, community outreach programs, and other residency activities.

Two ongoing projects illustrate the center’s commissioning and residency programs in action. In August 2010, the center was awarded a major grant from the Creative Campus Innovations Grant Program, funded by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, that supports an innovative eighteen-month residency and creation program partnering Penn State students and faculty in architecture, landscape architecture, dance, and engineering with Los Angeles-based Diavolo dance company. Entitled The Secret Life of Public Spaces, the project allows Penn State students and faculty to immerse themselves in Diavolo’s creative process, culminating with site-specific dance-based works created and performed by students and the world premiere of a new work by Diavolo.

In June 2011, the center secured the largest grant in its history from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for a three-year classical music project. Major residency programs—with an opera company and a major American symphony orchestra—will constitute a key component of the project, as will student engagement activities allowing interaction between students and the artists in both traditional and non-traditional venues. Curriculum partnerships will integrate classical music artists and projects with the Penn State arts and humanities curriculum to provide students with a more comprehensive understanding of the history and culture surrounding the genre. In addition, Penn State’s Altoona campus will host artist residencies and present performances in partnership with the center.

Going forward, the Center for the Performing Arts will focus on expanding commissioning and residency programs like these and seeking new approaches—especially interdisciplinary approaches—to integrating those activities into the academic and cultural life of Penn State and the Centre region. These programs will also advance the center’s stature among university-based performing arts centers, which will in turn allow us to attract the highest-quality performers and innovative artists to our stages and classrooms.

**Building an Endowment for the Arts**

Penn State believes that the arts are vital to the University and bring out the very best in a community by increasing the quality of life for all of its residents. As testimony to this tenet, the University allocated
approximately $1.5 million directly to the center this year for salaries and benefits. Additional support is provided through the University’s general operating budget for facilities maintenance and upkeep, utilities, insurance, janitorial staff, and other services.

Funds for programming, commissioning, educational programs, and outreach, however, come primarily through ticket sales and private support. Extensive programs like *The Secret Life of Public Spaces* and the three-year classical music project are made possible only through major grants from national foundations. While the Center for the Performing Arts can and does secure some grants of this type, its accomplishments are still limited by the highly competitive nature of the nonprofit funding world for the arts and humanities.

Enriching the student experience is one objective of Penn State’s current University-wide fundraising effort, *For the Future: The Campaign for Penn State Students*. This objective acknowledges that our students thrive in an atmosphere that fosters creative expression, global involvement, community service, and personal growth. Penn State believes that a diverse and stimulating cultural life plays an important role in creating such an atmosphere.

As part of the *For the Future* campaign, the Center for the Performing Arts is seeking a major investment from a donor who truly understands the great value of the arts to our University and region. Endowment funding in particular holds the key to a center that is sustainable in the long term, one that has the resources to present familiar genres and performers that attract repeat audiences while also supporting artistic innovators who are alive to the full possibilities of their forms. A transformational, naming gift will generate secure, reliable support in perpetuity that is dependent neither on competitive, project-based grants nor on the commercial attractiveness of a given artist.

Although the center’s needs will vary from year to year, income generated from this endowment will support the following three goals:

1) *Affordability and Accessibility*: Endowment income can help to keep performance tickets affordable, ensuring the broadest possible access to the performing arts.

2) *Enhanced Educational Services and Outreach*: Endowment income can benefit Penn State students by supporting curriculum-connected programs with visiting artists, production collaborations with the Schools of Music and Theatre, and participation in commissioned works. The community can benefit from annual performances provided for the schools as well as lectures, workshops, and other presentations from visiting artists.
3) **High Artistic Quality**: Endowment income can provide stable funding for artist fees, enabling the center to compete for the very best artists and ensembles and reducing reliance on ticket sales, especially for artists and genres that fall outside mainstream popular culture. Such income can also enhance the center’s commissioning activities, enabling students and faculty members to collaborate in the production of new works for the stage and promoting Penn State as a national leader and innovator in the creative process.

**FOR THE FUTURE OF THE ARTS AT PENN STATE**

The University is immeasurably enriched by a comprehensive and innovative arts center that impacts academic and student life through curriculum and engagement programs. Vibrant communities value a vibrant arts program. The aura of a high-quality performing arts center impacts a region in innumerable ways—from elevating the quality of life, to providing opportunities for children’s enrichment, to fortifying the economic and business climate of the community. Ever-changing and growing, the Center for the Performing Arts provides these and many other benefits to Penn State and the Centre region as it carries on its rich cultural and artistic legacy.

Ensuring that the center can continue to grow and develop to meet the needs of our University and our community will require significant investment. The leading university-based performing arts centers in the nation have dedicated endowments that provide the resources for programs that are national in scope, provide a sustained and meaningful impact on students, and make substantial contributions to their campuses and communities. The performing arts centers at other Big Ten universities such as Illinois, Nebraska, and Ohio State—all named centers—have the capacity to annually organize major projects and host significant creative residencies for the benefit of their students, institutions, and communities.

A transformational gift to name the Center for the Performing Arts at Penn State would provide it with similar resources, solidifying the center’s place in the top tier of university-based performing arts centers and giving it the capacity to more fully integrate the arts into the fabric of the University and community. With the sustainable funding this gift will generate, the Center for the Performing Arts can truly achieve its vision of enriching lives through inspiring experiences, now and for generations to come.
To learn more about giving opportunities at Penn State, please contact Rodney P. Kirsch, Senior Vice President for Development and Alumni Relations, at 814-863-4826 or rpk6@psu.edu.

To learn more about the Center for the Performing Arts, please contact George Trudeau, Director, Center for the Performing Arts, at 814-863-9494 or gjt11@psu.edu.

Penn State is committed to affirmative action, equal opportunity, and the diversity of its workforce.
U. Ed DEV 011-20 ajs