









Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Center for the Musical Arts Interior

Evanston, Illinois, USA

Northwestern University's new music and communication building is located on the southeastern edge of the Evanston campus. Sitting on a prime site fronting Lake Michigan, the building defines a signature facility—a world-class structure for the university and a music school like no other. Designed to wrap and connect with an existing 1970s music building, the new Ryan Center enables the School of Music to consolidate its programs for the first time ever, completing a more than 40-year vision.

Guided by the university's master plan, the building forms a new quadrangle with other performing and fine arts facilities, fostering a more collaborative arts community. The dynamic, Z-shaped plan of the building mass defines the eastern edge of a new arts green then jogs to the western edge of the lake. A large atrium divides this form, providing the main entry and gathering space and offering striking views of the lake. Building materials relate to other campus facilities, with the three main performance venues—recital hall, opera/black box, and choral—all defined by limestone, and the classrooms, offices and practice rooms (with views) enclosed in glass. Certified LEED-NC Gold, the building offers a variety of innovative sustainable features, including a double-skin facade and grey-water system. All spaces respond to significant acoustical separation and performance requirements.

The 400-seat recital hall is the building's crown jewel. Featuring a 40-foot-high double-skin glass wall, the space sets performers against a dramatic backdrop of Lake Michigan and the Chicago skyline. To address acoustical challenges of the monumental wall, the inner glass slopes inward, preventing an echo. Horizontal woven-wood panels on the other three sides further absorb reflections while lending a feeling of warmth. The entire room works in harmony to provide a dramatic visual and acoustical setting for world-class performances of all kinds.

Project Data

SIZE

5 stories
152,000 sf total

FEATURES

400-seat recital hall
150-seat black box theater
140-seat choral rehearsal room
Classrooms
Practice rooms
Faculty and administrative offices
LEED-NC Gold

CLIENT

Northwestern University

Recognition & News

RECOGNITION

LEED-NC Gold