

ARCHITECTURAL RECORD

The Manon Caine Russell and Kathryn Caine Wanlass Performance Hall

Logan, Utah

Sasaki Associates

The angles of a new concert hall echo the mountains surrounding it and the music inside.

In this 420-seat hall, Sasaki Associates plays with geometries that have both acoustical and contextual significance. An orthogonal concrete shell with 18-inch thick concrete walls encloses the main performance space, whose height, shape, and materials were carefully considered for optimum sound qualities. A contrasting zinc panel-coated entrance pavilion has origami-like folded volumes that suggest a melding of the man-made and the natural—precise architectural geometry that also recalls the primordial tectonic forces that formed the surrounding Bear River Mountains. By day, triangular skylights angle light into interior spaces; at night the pavilion faces an outdoor piazza and is dramatically lit, highlighting splayed columns in a pattern meant to suggest musical notes.



Photo © Robert Benson Photography

Collaborating with Artec Consultants, New York-based theater acousticians, Sasaki conceived the octagonal main space as a “second universe” cut off from outside sound, while offering a wide array of adjustability depending on the type of musical performance and the number of occupied seats at any given time. Multiple layers of drywall, and a final veneer of warm-colored beech wood that wraps the interior space, augment the thick concrete walls. All mechanical systems are suspended on pads or springs to avoid the slightest vibration or extraneous sound.

To lend a sense of procession and ritual consistent with the university's heavy commitment to arts education, Sasaki's landscape architects conceived an entry precinct with an allée of native trees and a series of pea stone fields that lead from one of the main campus portals into the new piazza.

The new performance hall was made possible by a gift from sisters Manon Caine Russell and Kathryn Caine Wanlass, both alumnae of the university and long-time USU benefactors. The hall is only the first step in an envisioned School of Arts campus for the eastern portion of Utah State University that will work to bolster the school's reputation as a leading arts institution in the Intermountain Region.

Formal name of project: The Manon Caine Russell and Kathryn Caine Wanlass Performance Hall

Location: Logan, Utah

Gross square footage: 20,000 sq.ft.; 420 seats

Total construction cost: \$9.5 million

Completion Date: January 2006

Owner: Utah State University

Architect:
Sasaki Associates