

Immediate Release

LMN Architects debut Voxman Music Building at the University of Iowa



Building provides for traditional and experimental music education

SEATTLE, October 27, 2016 /PRNewswire/ — LMN Architects, a multidisciplinary design firm known for community-focused civic projects of all scales, announces the opening of the Voxman Music Building at the University of Iowa. The Voxman Music Building celebrates musical performance at every turn, embracing a collaborative and exploratory student-driven model of education that treats every space as performance space. The building shares this sense of musical discovery with the community through the creation of a building that is as transparent as possible. The 190,000-square-foot project comprises a 700-seat concert hall, a 200-seat recital hall, an organ performance hall, a music library, rehearsal rooms, practice rooms, classrooms, and faculty studios and offices.

“The design team was able to conceive and realize a building that supports collaboration and creativity. It is a technical tour-de-force with acoustical performance, embedded technology, and other systems that allow us to be on the leading edge of music education, performance and scholarship,” says David Gier, Director of the School of Music at the University of Iowa. “This building also reflects our vision to engage and support the campus and region—for us to be fully interwoven into the cultural life of the community in every sense.”

The six-story building is situated between campus and the downtown core of Iowa City, embracing both academic and urban experiences. Conceptually, the pattern of streets and open spaces in the mixed-use district extends directly into the building’s multi-level interior spaces, cultivating a sense of vertical urban vitality and acknowledging its place within the community.

“This urban site is a thrilling place for a music school, but vertically stacking high-quality acoustically sensitive spaces on top of one another is a major technical challenge,” says Stephen Van Dyck, AIA, Project Designer from LMN Architects. “We conceived the design as a functional response to these conditions where each space is a discrete object with a dynamic, sinuous public space between them.”

The exterior of the building is wrapped in a composition of subtly-textured and delicately-reflective terra cotta panels and low-iron glass. The rich variety found in the terra cotta panel system is created using only two modules with two different combinations of finishes and textures. Additionally, a unique twisted terra cotta panel is used as part of the sun shading system.

“Urbanistically, the building engages the city by bringing the community inside. We selectively opened portions of the structure to visually connect it to the surrounding context, allowing the life of the school and the city to enrich each other,” says Mark Reddington, FAIA, Design Partner for LMN Architects.

The glazed corner entry reinforces the merger of campus and city, with the two major performance venues marking their presence on each of the main facades. The 700-seat concert hall cantilevers boldly over the Burlington Street sidewalk and the Student Commons below, while the 200-seat recital hall, which symbolically bursts with sound, is wrapped in a unique, shingled-glass wall system that extends over the South Clinton Street sidewalk. A fourth floor exterior terrace is nestled behind and between the wings of the rear facade, serving as an elegant gathering space that frames views to the city (and historic courthouse) and countryside beyond.

Inside, virtually every space is acoustically tuned and tunable—enhancing pedagogical flexibility, reinforcing the value of serendipitous performance, and cultivating opportunities for active and passive education. Here each space must adapt to accommodate a wide range of performances, from voice to percussion to classical to jazz. Between the performance spaces, three major gathering areas are linked by porous, daylit circulation volumes to form the student commons, a performance and rehearsal lobby, and a three-story atrium. The 700-seat concert hall and 200-seat recital hall, which are the primary performance venues, both uniquely feature windows to the outside, providing natural light and a connection to the community beyond. All performance, rehearsal, and studio spaces in the building are acoustically isolated from each other. This creates opportunities to stack similar program elements, resulting in dramatic interior sequences of spaces while solving challenges of acoustic separation and spatial efficiency. To soften the common spaces both acoustically and materially, vertical fins of felt protrude from the concrete walls of the building.

A high-performance architectural system was developed to meet the many requirements of the most demanding high-profile performance space, the concert hall. A “theatroacoustic” system was devised to unify acoustics, lighting, and life-safety requirements into a single dramatic, multi-functional architectural expression. The resulting intricately sculpted element is assembled out of 946 unique, folded-aluminum composite modules digitally fabricated from a parametric model, leveraging digital simulation to refine its unique form.

The 200-seat recital hall is wrapped in red-colored acoustical material and features a large glass wall at stage right that reveals the city beyond and floods the stage with natural light. Three major rehearsal spaces are topped with swarms of colored acoustical reflectors, each room employing a different color. The reflectors, referred to as kites by the students, include a solid version that reflects sound and a perforated version that permits sound to pass through, and provide an enhanced acoustical and lighting environment in a dramatic sculptural form.

The state-of-the-art building meets the needs of today while exploring a vision of music education and performance for the future; a future no longer bound by venue, where music is an art form in the process of reinventing how it is made and experienced.

Team:

LMN Architects (Design Architect)
Neumann Monson Architects (Associate Architect)
Mortenson (Construction Management)
Jaffe Holden (Acoustic Design)
Fisher Dachs Associates (Theater Planning)
Magnusson Klemencic Associates (Structural Engineering)
Shive-Hattery (Civil Engineering)
Design Engineers (Mechanical/Electrical/Plumbing)
Rider Levett Bucknall (Cost Estimating)



Horton Lees Brogden (Lighting)

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About LMN

Seattle-based LMN Architects specializes in the planning and design of significant public and private projects, including convention centers, cultural arts venues, education facilities, office buildings, multi-family housing, hotels, transit stations, mixed-use developments and other urban environments that celebrate and enrich communities. The firm is the recipient of the 2016 American Institute of Architects Architecture Firm Award. www.LMNArchitects.com

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