

scene

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Natural light floods the central atrium at MacPhail Center for Music, designed by James Dayton, where a music marathon will run all weekend long (see page F8). **RICHARD THONG SAARHEI** • rthong@startribune.com

MUSIC BOX

MacPhail Center opens its shiny (and rusty) new home near the Mississippi.

BY MARY ABBE • mabbe@startribune.com

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Kelly Rossum is jazzed. "I was commissioned to write a piece for the ribbon-cutting ceremony," said the trumpeter, who coordinates MacPhail's jazz program and is orchestrating the 10 a.m. event. "It's a classical piece for brass and percussion, so we'll have 16 instruments on the main floor and five additional brass on the third floor filling the place with music. It's called 'Welcome Home,' a fitting title because we'll be there for a long time."

Indeed, MacPhail is launching its second century in fine style.

MacPhail continues: A color graphic takes you inside the building's construction. **F8** ▶



The steel-clad concert hall sits above glass-walled spaces at street level in this view from the west.

Explore the new MacPhail Center building in more detail at www.startribune.com/music.



TOM SWENERTY • tswenert@startribune.com
A two-story-tall window is the backdrop for MacPhail's new concert hall, paneled in Douglas fir and hung with curved, wooden acoustic "clouds"



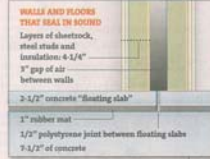
JOEL EDWARDS • jedwards@startribune.com
Shiny glass contrasts with rust-coated Co-Ten steel at the west entrance to MacPhail Center for Music.



RICHARD THONG SAARHEI • rthong@startribune.com
During a recent open house, MacPhail president David O'Fallon showed Katherine Ball and Alec Neal the atrium, which features amphitheater-style seating (right), where visitors can gather for informal concerts or just find a sunny perch while they wait for a lesson.

The new MacPhail: A finely-tuned instrument

CUSTOM-MADE STUDIOS FOR MAKING MUSIC
The acoustic design of each studio is tailored to the type of instrument or style of music being played. Shown here is the design of a typical studio. Each room also has a high-speed fiberoptic connection to state-of-the-art recording equipment in the concert hall.



UPPER FLOORS

The second through sixth floors hold most of MacPhail's 56 studios, several performance classrooms, music-therapy rooms and staff offices. Each floor has cozy lobbies where parents can wait for students, with elevators and restrooms close by. The building has humidity control to help protect delicate wood instruments.

ATRIUM

A vertical-fall glass wall fills the lobbies of the ground level and upper floors with natural light.

ADAPTABLE HALL

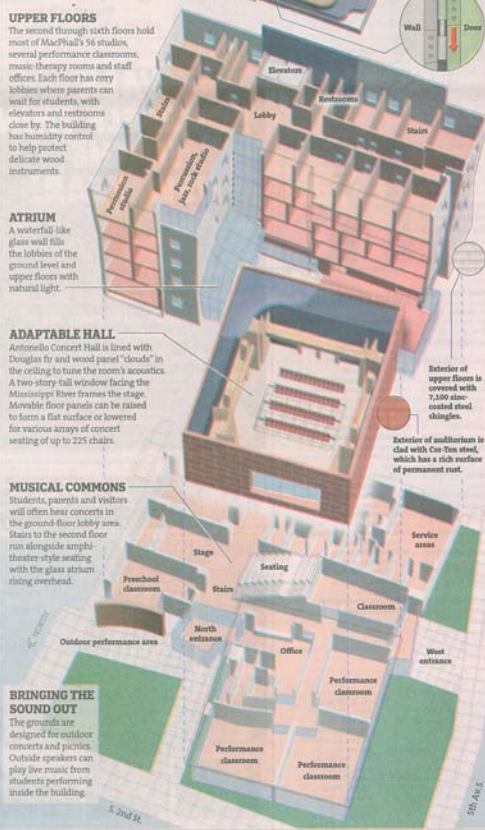
Antoniello Concert Hall is lined with Douglas fir and wood panel "clouds" in the ceiling to tune the room's acoustics. A two-story-tall window facing the Mississippi River frames the stage. Movable floor panels can be raised to form a flat surface or lowered for various arrays of concert seating of up to 225 chairs.

MUSICAL COMMONS

Students, parents and visitors will often hear concerts in the ground-floor lobby area. Stairs to the second floor run alongside amphitheater-style seating with the glass atrium rising overhead.

BRINGING THE SOUND OUT

The grounds are designed for outdoor concerts and picnics. Outside speakers can play live music from studios performing inside the building.



Source: MacPhail Center for Music, James Dayton Design

BILLY STEVE CLAYTON • Star Tribune

MUSIC BOX

MACPHAIL FROM FI

Its \$25 million new home, designed by Minneapolis architect James Dayton, is a steel-clad, state-of-the-art facility that's wired for recording throughout, with an elegant 225-seat wood-paneled concert hall; 56 practice rooms specially tuned for the acoustic needs of instruments ranging from piccolos to snare drums; rooms for master classes by everyone from touring opera singers to fiddlers; studios for voice and instrument lessons, preschool programs and music therapy.

"The building is exciting, but it's driven by a deeper understanding of what music does for individuals, communities and the world we're living in," said MacPhail's president, David O'Fallon.

"We're living in a world that's tearing us apart, where many things divide us. Music is one of the things that can bring us together," he said, citing the many concerts organized spontaneously across the country in the aftermath of the Sept. 11 tragedy. "We want people to heal within ourselves and to connect across our lines of age, income and ethnicity, and we know music does this. Doing that consciously and at a very high level is part of the DNA of this place."

Vision and growth

An exalted vision, new technology and explosive growth are among the factors that propelled MacPhail to jettison its 85-year-old building at 1128 LaSalle Ave. and restate across downtown.

Founded in 1907 by William S. MacPhail, a violinist with the Minneapolis Symphony (now the Minnesota Orchestra), the school was long housed in a four-story complex that also was state-of-the-art when it opened in 1923. That meant no air conditioning, little soundproofing, men's and women's bathrooms on alternating floors and a drafty lobby that — as one bemused staff member put it — looked like the seely setting for a film noir murder mystery. Only the potted palms and spitoons were missing.

Despite its tacky environs, MacPhail developed a sterling reputation as a training ground for young and adult musicians. In the past five years, enrollment has grown from about 5,000 to more than 7,500. Faculty members perform with the Minnesota Opera, local ensembles and in New York groups.

Voice coach Audrey Stottler, who joined the faculty about 18 months ago, sang for the past 25 years at leading opera houses in London, Vienna, Tokyo and elsewhere including five years at New York's Metropolitan Opera and an equal time in Copenhagen. Now she's developing the Audrey Stottler Opera Workshop, a new MacPhail program to prepare young artists for auditions and professional careers.

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MACPHAIL GRAND OPENING

Where: 501 S. 2nd St., Minneapolis
Admission: Free 612-321-0100 or www.macphail.org
Parking: Ramps are located west and east of the building, plus there's metered street parking.

SATURDAY

- 10 a.m. Ribbon cutting and fanfare written by Kelly Rossum.
- 11 a.m.-11 p.m. Music marathon in the new entrance hall.
- 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Kidfest with hands-on activities and performances for children 10 and under.
- 7 p.m. Choral concert in the Antoniello Concert Hall featuring M's Capella, MacPhail Singers, the Twin Cities Gay Men's Chorus and Consortium Carissimi.

SUNDAY

- Noon-6 p.m. Music marathon continues.
- Noon-2 p.m. Piano extravaganza in the concert hall with students and faculty including Jill Elmira, Gary Spies and Greg Thiesen.
- 2-6 p.m. High school rockers compete in a Battle of the Bands.

TUESDAY-FRIDAY

- 12:15 p.m. "Bach's Lunch" programs featuring Kelly Rossum Quartet (Tue.), harp flute duets by Kathy Kende and Michelle Prich (Wed.), vocalist Ruth MacKenzie and guitarist Dean Magraw (Thu.) and cello/percussion ensemble JelloSlave (Fri.).
- 7 p.m. Master classes featuring pianist David Berkman and trumpeter Scott Wendt (Tue.), violinist Pamela Frank (Wed.), and pianist Christopher O'Hiley (Thu.), plus the finale of the Battle of the Bands (Fri.).

Oksana Bryn, whom she met in 1978 after graduating from Concordia College in Moorhead. With Bryn's guidance, Stottler learned how to be a "working singer" capable of singing anywhere, anytime while living a vagabond life that kept her "on the road seven months out of 12," she said.

MacPhail continues: Echoes of the Whitney Concert Hall in L.A. **F8** ▶

Music Box

By MARY ABBE, Star Tribune

Last update: January 10, 2008

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"For a farm girl from Minnesota to have a 25-year career in opera is a miracle," Stottler said. MacPhail, she hopes, is the vehicle through which she can transmit that miracle to young Minnesotans.

MacPhail is especially well known for a Suzuki program that puts mini-violins in the hands of kids as young as 4, but it also has eight music therapists who work with learning-disabled children and adults, and 24 jazz musicians who instruct at least 10 different jazz combos. In the summer, dozens of adults rosin-up their bows for "chamber music camp," an intensive two-week program that culminates in a recital high on camaraderie and amateur nerves. High school students in the "Rim Shots" percussion program have recorded three CDs, toured France and performed throughout the United States.

"The new building really puts us into a new era in two ways," said Paul Babcock, MacPhail's executive vice president and Rim Shots instructor. "It's a much better environment for learning, sharing and performing music because of the acoustic design and performance spaces. And the technology lets us better connect with students via computer, share music across fiberoptic cables and 10-gigabyte wiring, do video and audio recording and online research."

Designing for the future

How to house so diverse a program was not obvious. The expansion program began in 2000 when MacPhail sold its LaSalle Avenue building to neighboring University of St. Thomas for \$4 million, with which it launched a capital campaign. A Chicago architecture firm proposed a utilitarian building reminiscent of the old facility, but the project stalled.

Then, armed with a new strategic and business plan, the center changed its name (it was called MacPhail Center for the Performing Arts until 2003) and embarked on aggressive partnerships with schools and community centers including suburban locales. Three years ago it relaunched its capital campaign and announced Dayton as its new architect. It now has \$25.6 million in hand, said Babcock.

Before founding his Minneapolis firm in 1997, Dayton had worked for five years in the Los Angeles offices of architect Frank Gehry. He was on the Gehry team that designed the now famous Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, and he had done loft housing in MacPhail's new neighborhood.

"My kids had gone to MacPhail and I knew the old building," Dayton said, adding: "If I could, I would spend my whole career working in the arts. The amount of civic engagement, passion, energy and enthusiasm that arts projects have in them is the stuff you can't find doing office or domestic projects. It's what I think makes for great architecture."

O’Fallon says that 10 minutes into their first conversation he knew Dayton was the right guy. When he called a couple of days later to ask if Dayton might do some speculative work on the project, Dayton told him “I already have sketches.”

The new building’s centerpiece is a cube covered in rust-colored Cor-Ten steel that houses the Antonello Concert Hall. Warmly framed by wood paneling, the hall is an open yet intimate space in which musicians will always be just a few feet from the audience. Adjustable panels can lower parts of the floor to improve the audience’s view of performers. Curving, wood-paneled acoustical “clouds” hang from the ceiling. A 32-foot-long, 18-foot-tall window overlooks the street and the river a block away.

On a recent tour, Minnesota Orchestra conductor Osmo Vänskä was so entranced by the hall that he immediately committed to staging the orchestra’s future chamber performances there, O’Fallon said.

Studios, practice rooms and offices are housed in a silvery, six-story tower clad in 7,100 panels of zinc-galvanized steel. Those two sculptural forms are linked by a glass-enclosed lobby, preschool rooms and an informal performance area overlooked by an alpine sweep of stairs and seating platforms.

“Architecture for me is about making compositions of space, volumes and masses that you see from the outside and experience from the inside -- they play off each other,” Dayton said.

MacPhail’s building echoes and adapts some ideas from previous Dayton projects, including the Minnetonka Center for the Arts, where he also broke the building into several boxes and used Cor-Ten.

The Douglas fir lining MacPhail’s concert hall was picked, he said, “as an allusion to Disney Hall,” whose interior is also sheathed in wood panels. Ultimately, he hopes MacPhail graduates will recall those architectural details when they travel the world and recognize “that there is a relationship between MacPhail and the Disney and the larger world of concert halls.”

Mary Abbe • 612-673-4431