

Miller Performing Arts Center wins international recognition

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The Miller Performing Arts Center on the Alfred University campus has won a second major award, this time from the United States Institute for Theatre Technology, Inc. (USITT). USITT, an association of design, production and technology professionals in the performing arts and entertainment industry, will present a merit award to the Miller Performing Arts Center project March 22 at the USITT Annual Conference and Stage Expo in Minneapolis, MN. It was selected by a panel of architects as one of "four outstanding examples of theater architecture" chosen to receive the awards "recognizing excellence in design of theater projects." Others selected were the Roda Theater in Berkeley, CA, and the Coronado Theatre in Rockford, IL, both of which will receive honor awards, and the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London, England, which, like the Alfred University theater, will receive a merit award. "This award recognizes that the Miller Performing Arts Center is not only aesthetically intriguing, but beautifully functional," said Dr. Charles M. Edmondson, president of Alfred University. "It provides a wonderful learning and performing environment for the students in our Performing Arts division." Dedicated in 1995, the Miller Performing Arts Center was made possible by a gift to Alfred University from Dr. Marlin Miller, a member of the Class of 1954, current trustee and former chairman of the Board of Trustees. The project earlier won an award for its unusual design and the use of brick on the exterior. Architect for the project was Bruce Wood of Kallman McKinnell and Wood, Inc., Boston, MA. Theater consultant was David Weiss, and acoustical consultant was Lewis Goodfriend and Associates. Special features of the \$8 million Miller Performing Arts Center include: the C.D. Smith Flexible Theatre, a 50 x 50-foot square theater with seating for up to 250. The space features a "sprung floor," meaning it has a two-level, shock-absorbing floor that helps to prevent injuries to actors while at the same time providing sound-proofing. Except for a door through which the audience enters, there is nothing to mark the empty space in terms of the geography of the stage. Above the space is a grid with a series of catwalks with railings that provide railings for hanging lights. The catwalks are also non-geographical, allowing for flexible and creative use of the space. There is a control booth for the stage manager and also a sound booth. The theater has the potential to open into the scene shop, which can then serve as a traditional proscenium theater. The scene shop mimics the size of the theater to aid in moving constructed items. the Rod Brown Studio, an acting and directing rehearsal hall that allows several theater projects to occur simultaneously in the building. A rarity in undergraduate theater programs is a fully equipped design studio, as well as a well-fitted costume shop. the Adelpia Dance Studio, a spacious, two-story room. At the entrance, the ceiling is 16 feet, but it soars to 28 feet to meet the two-story windows overlooking the Kanakadea Valley in which Alfred University is located. The room also features a "sprung" floor and has access to a storage area and two dressing rooms. the Brooks Music Rehearsal Hall and the Emerson Rehearsal Hall, mimic the soaring ceilings and expansive windows of the dance studio. The building contains seven music practice rooms, including a double room for small ensemble practice; instrument storage areas; a music library; a seminar room; a class piano laboratory; faculty offices and a room to collect and display memorabilia relating to the history of performing arts at Alfred University.