

Christel DeHaan Fine Arts Center

University of Indianapolis

Category: AIA Indiana 25-Year Award

Project Type: Higher Education Teaching & Community Concert Hall

Address: 1400 East Hanna Avenue, Indianapolis, Indiana 46227

Completion: 1994





DOWNTOWN INDIANAPOLIS

UNIVERSITY OF INDIANAPOLIS CAMPUS



**Christel DeHaan
Fine Arts Center**

UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS NEIGHBORHOOD

Site Context & Connections

The Christel DeHaan Fine Arts Center is both an educational facility and public performance venue located at the main entrance to the University of Indianapolis, a liberal arts institution founded in 1902 within the University Heights neighborhood just south of Indy's downtown.

Discussion of this project and its architecture begins with a reading of the University's Mission Statement, whereas *The University of Indianapolis champions lifelong learning through relevant and innovative education that fosters experiential learning, diverse perspectives, service for impact, and a global mindset.*



Photo from 2014 celebrating the building's 20th Anniversary

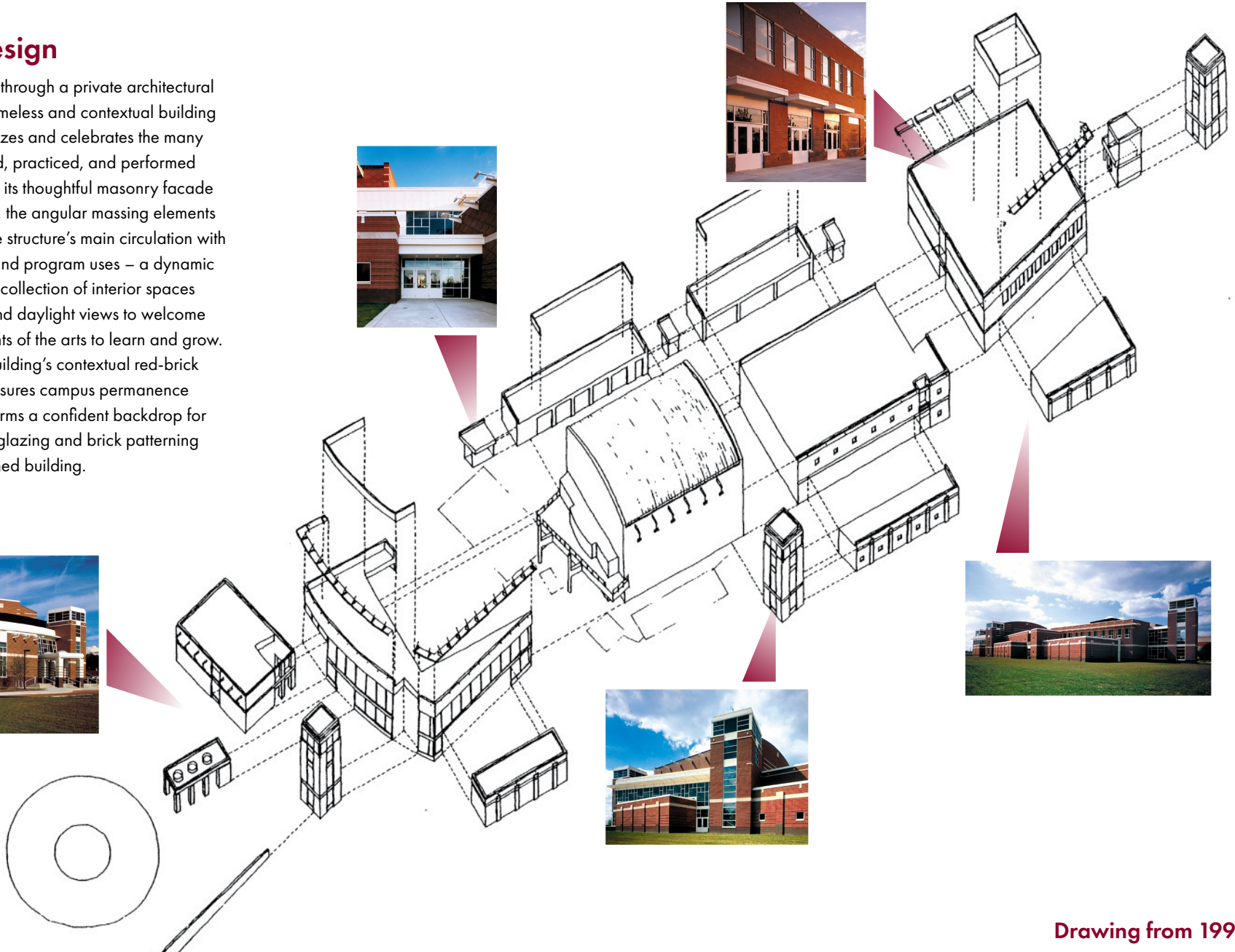
The Impact

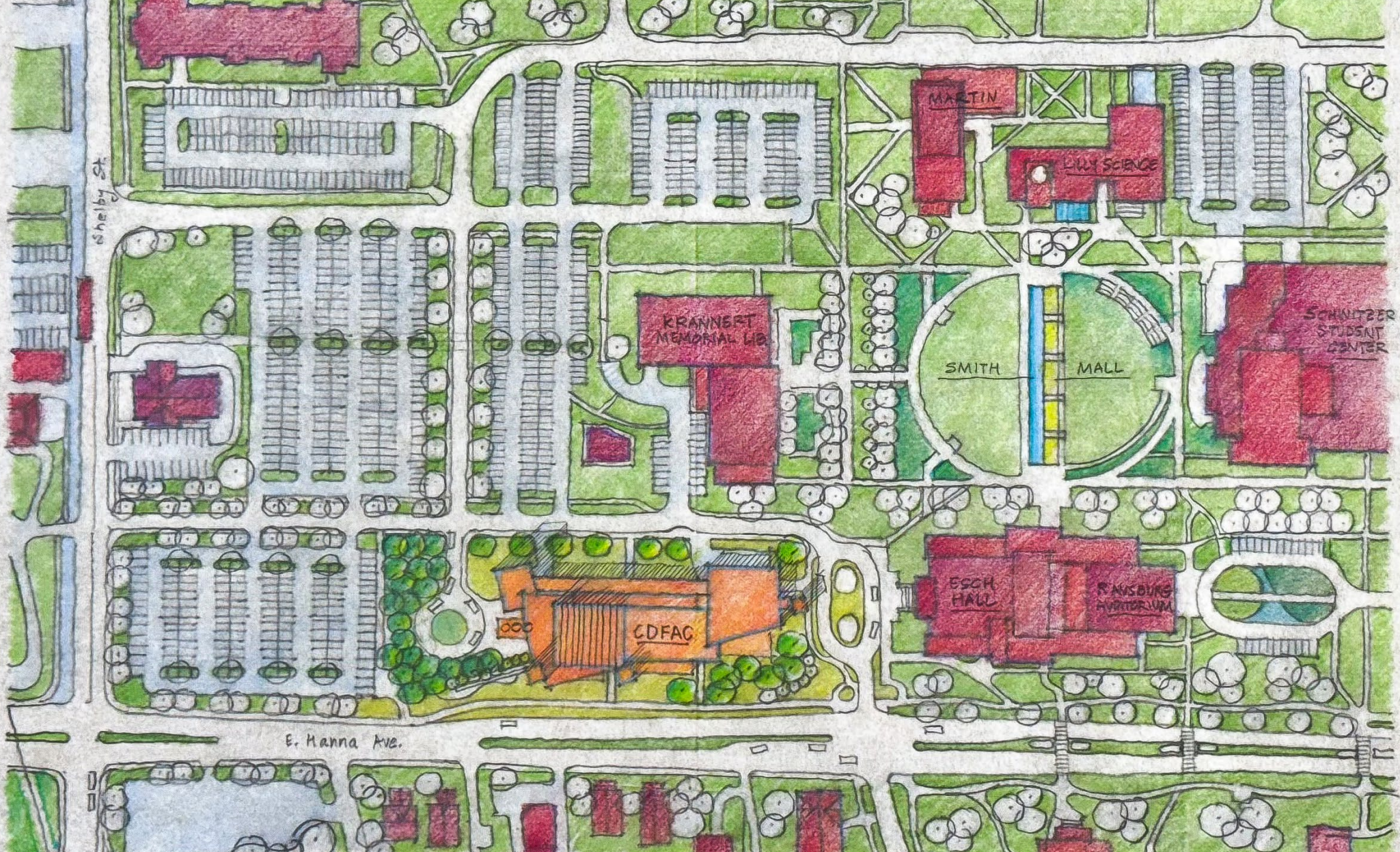
Dedicated in 1994, the University's vision for the project was to create the best medium-sized concert hall in the Midwest through its finely tuned acoustics and timeless quality architecture. Beginning with its original dedication ceremony recognizing Ms. Christel DeHaan's spirited gift to construct this signature landmark, the Fine Arts Center continues its original purpose 30-years later empowering cultural growth and equitable connections to the world of art through its diverse population of students, faculty, guest performers, and community.



Thoughtful Design

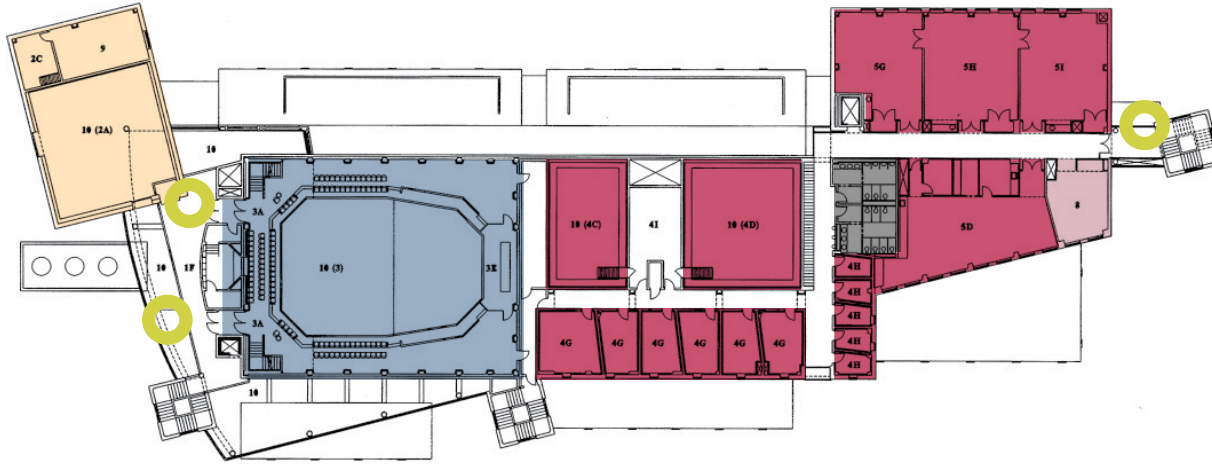
Chosen by the University through a private architectural design competition, the timeless and contextual building design by RATIO symbolizes and celebrates the many different art forms learned, practiced, and performed within its walls. Noted for its thoughtful masonry facade details and building form, the angular massing elements prominently juxtapose the structure's main circulation with the orthogonal volumes and program uses – a dynamic geometry that weaves its collection of interior spaces with window openings and daylight views to welcome and encourage all students of the arts to learn and grow. With a closer look, the building's contextual red-brick and limestone exterior ensures campus permanence and continuity but also forms a confident backdrop for key moments of window glazing and brick patterning becoming of a distinguished building.



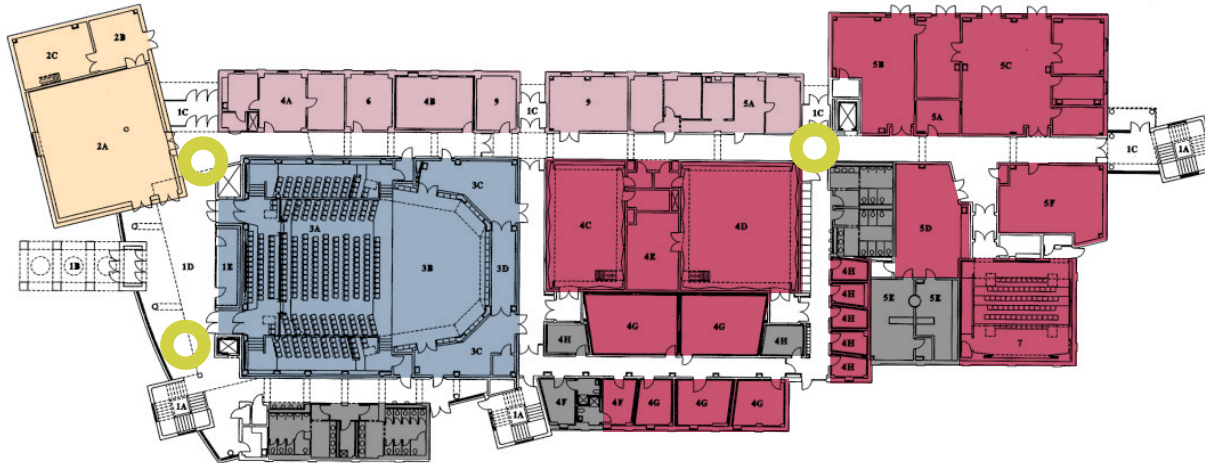


1 Site Plan








02 Floor Plan



01 Floor Plan



Key

-  Welcome Areas / Gathering
-  Circulation and Social Space
-  Support
-  Classroom
-  Faculty Office Space
-  Concert Hall
-  Art Gallery

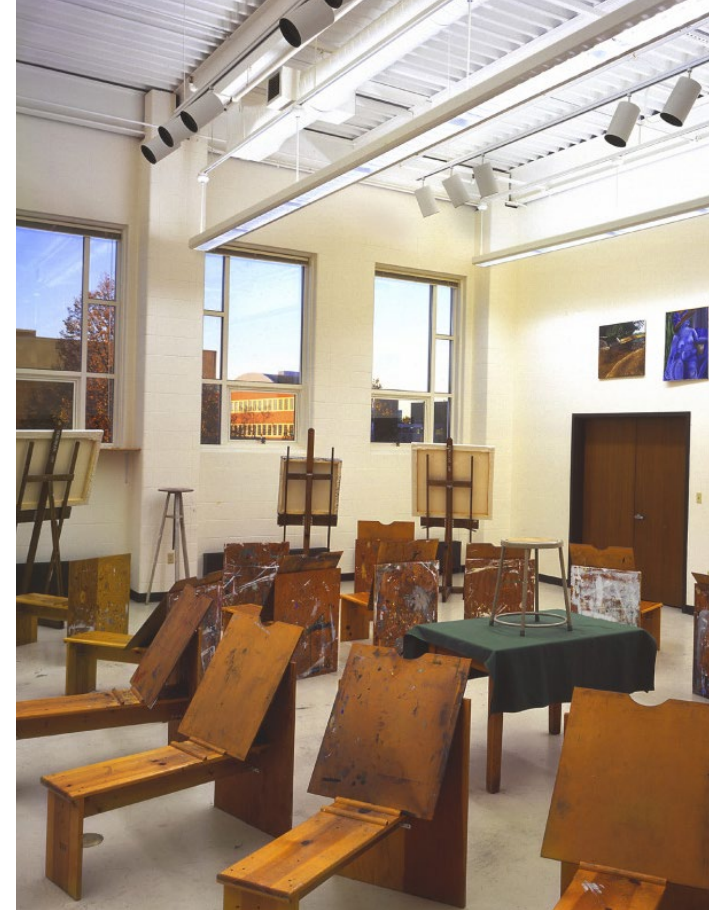


South Elevation



North Elevation





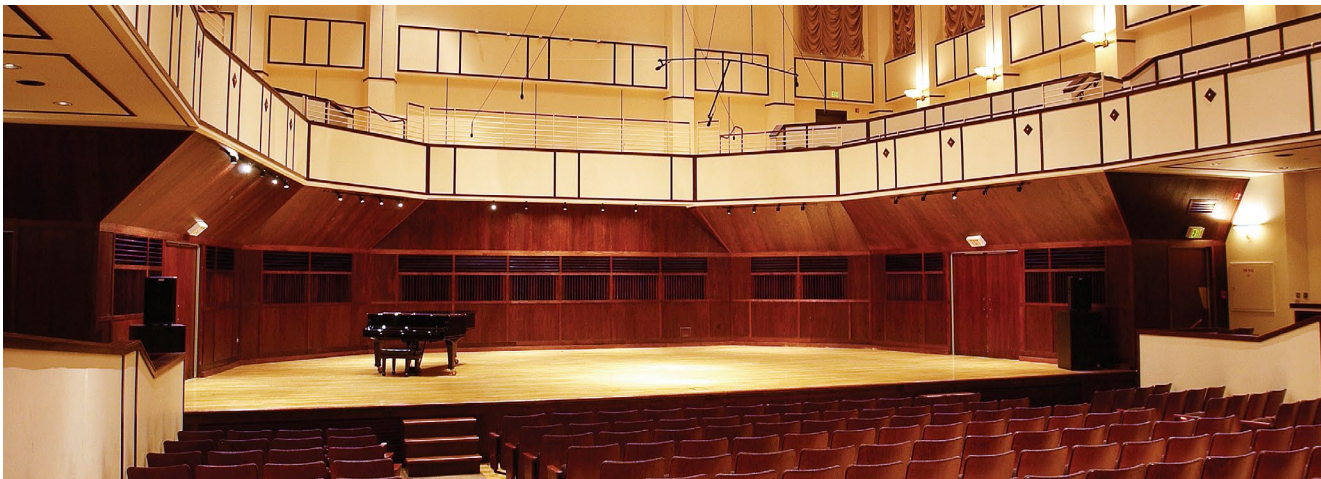
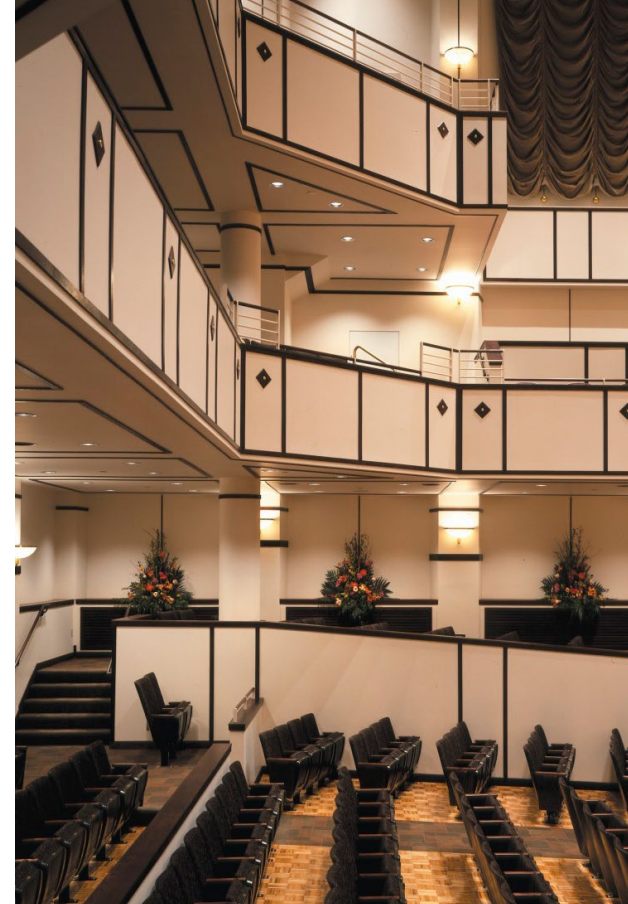
Forming the perimeter architecture, the design features both music and art programs such as studio classrooms, rehearsal rooms, exhibition galleries, private practice, faculty research, and studios for sculpture, ceramics, digital arts, graphic arts, photography, printmaking, drawing and painting. This organization sets up a taller center volume to express the main destination Art Gallery and 500-Seat Concert Hall. Adding further detail along the primary length of Hannah Avenue, the structures dark-brick building base anchors the longer structure and crescendos

to a contextual red-brick facade where moments of glazing and distinct volumes are featured at a smaller, neighborhood scale. Lastly, the main public arrival and event lobby caps the building's west façade where the community's diversity of patrons come together within the daylight filled atrium shaped by arced and sloped façade of glass and steel showcasing the act of celebration and equal access to art – the primary philanthropic inspiration for University Board of Trustees Chair and building namesake, Ms. Christel DeHaan.

The Concert Hall

Concluding with the main Concert Hall, the interior architecture was chosen to be modeled after acoustically proven English courtyard theaters and classical Viennese shoe-box music halls with clear sightlines for spectators. Careful composition of wood flooring selections, pendant lighting bowls, plaster wall finishes, angled pilaster shapes, density of seating and seat padding, low-thrust air diffusers, and every thinkable construction detail were composed to maximize the acoustical accuracy and performance of the Hall.

The Concert Hall is home to the University's Music Department, which has grown from having 33 students enrolled at the time the building was inaugurated, to over 120 students in 2023. In addition to hosting classes, Christel DeHaan Fine Arts Center hosts over 250 concerts a year and is home to the Indianapolis Quartet. The Concert Hall has also hosted the Senator Lugar Symposium, faculty senate, graduations, alumni receptions, and more.





Concert Hall 30 years later, hosting a performance in 2024



Delivering the Mission

In support of the University's Mission, the Christel DeHaan Fine Arts Center has delivered successfully on the original design vision established at the project's inception and continues to operate today as a welcoming and accomplished arts venue defined by its unchanged architectural image, its sensitivity to campus context, and its lasting aesthetic presence bolstering the community. Much appreciation is owed to the Awards Jury Members for acknowledging this project three decades ago with a 1995 AIA Indianapolis Honor Award and a 1994 AIA Indiana Citation Award.