

Let the Drums Roll Out, Let the Cymbals Ring!

FUNDRAISING FOR PHASE I OF PERFORMING ARTS CENTER COMPLETED

Thanks to a \$4 million grant recommended by Connecticut Gov. M. Jodi Rell and approved by the state Bond Commission in January, the University will begin construction on Phase I of its new Performing Arts Center (PAC) at the former Thomas Cadillac dealership in North Hartford, a mile southeast of the University's Bloomfield Avenue campus. The funds were awarded from the state's Urban Action Program.

"This will be a major community resource. It will draw people to the neighborhood and will serve as an important catalyst for economic development," Gov. Rell said in a press release. "Hartford's Upper Albany Avenue will become a richer cultural corridor, flanked on one end by the Performing Arts Center and on the other by The Artists Collective and its acclaimed community arts programs."

A ceremonial groundbreaking will take place this spring, followed by the start of construction. The new arts facility is scheduled to open in the fall of 2008.

"I am ecstatic," said University President Walter Harrison in announcing the bond approval. "I am very thankful to Gov. Rell for her strong support for this project. I began intense efforts to access the state's funding two years ago and never doubted that we would succeed. The governor's announcement demonstrates our shared belief that the PAC will be an extremely valuable resource for the University and the North Hartford community."

The \$30 million PAC will alleviate space shortages for The Hartt School's undergraduate programs as well as those in Hartt's Community Division. Enrollments for both have nearly tripled since the Fuller Music Center opened in 1963, partly due to the addition of dance and theatre divisions.

"We are delighted to have this opportunity to both expand our space and consolidate our programs," says Hartt Dean Malcolm Morrison. "The Hartt School has developed into a comprehensive performing arts school, training professionals in music, dance, and

theatre. This new building will give each of our programs appropriate, dedicated, and state-of-the-art facilities. This is a wonderful expression of the University's goals and an affirming vote of confidence from our supporters."

In 2001 the University went public with plans to buy the 7.2-acre site at the corner of Albany Avenue and Westbourne Parkway and convert the buildings, kicking off what Harrison describes as "the long and complex process of raising funds for this facility."

A number of significant pledges have been made to the project by individual donors, as well as the state and federal governments and various foundations and corporations.

These funding sources include \$2.5 million from the Connecticut Development Authority Brownfield Program in conjunction with the city of Hartford; \$1.5 million from the federal government through the efforts of U.S. Rep. John Larson and U.S. Senators Christopher Dodd and Joseph Lieberman; a \$1 million pledge from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving; and a \$610,000 grant from MassMutual Financial Group of Hartford, Inc.

The project will transform three buildings, designed in 1929 by pioneering industrial architect Albert Kahn, into a world-class performing arts facility that will benefit both University students and the neighboring community. Phase I will reconfigure the interior of the main building into much-needed space for The Hartt School's dance, theatre, and music theatre programs. It will also provide a bank, a coffee shop, and space for use by community organizations. ■



Due to space shortages on campus, Hartt's Dance Division must rent the former studios of Dance Connecticut, which are on Farmington Avenue in Hartford. This means the dance students must board a shuttle bus around 7:30 a.m. every morning that takes them into Hartford to the studios. After a long day, they return to campus at 4 p.m. to attend academic classes in the two evening courses that are required each semester. Once the Performing Arts Center is completed, dance students will be on a normal schedule, taking their courses in the daytime and rehearsing in the evenings.