



Left: State-of-the-art movement studios in the new Handel Center feature special slip-resistant, cushion-backed flooring to reduce injuries and sound-proofing panels on the walls to isolate noise.

Below: Joseph N. Desautel Jr. (third from left), CEO of Downes Construction Company, presents the keys to the Mort and Irma Handel Performing Arts Center to Provost Lynn Pasquerella (second from left). Looking on are Downes Construction President John E. Downes III (far left), Mort and Irma Handel (third and second from right), and Hartt School Dean Malcolm Morrison (far right).

It's Showtime!

Keys to Handel Center Open a Beautiful Dance and Theatre Venue



The transformed Mort and Irma Handel Performing Arts Center of The Hartt School officially became a University facility in July. Officials from the Downes Construction Company handed over the keys to University Provost Lynn Pasquerella as University officials, the lead individual donors, and members of the construction team looked on.

"This is a facility that truly befits the outstanding talent at The Hartt School. We couldn't be prouder of this facility," Pasquerella said to Downes Construction Company President John E. Downes III and Chief Executive Officer Joseph N. Desautel Jr.

The center is located at the site of the former Thomas Cadillac distributorship at the corner of Albany Avenue and

Westbourne Parkway in Hartford, about 1.5 miles from the main campus. The 55,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art facility will be the instructional home for collegiate and Community Division students at The Hartt School. The building houses five dance studios, four theatre rehearsal studios and two black-box theatres, as well as faculty offices, a bank, a café, and community meeting space.

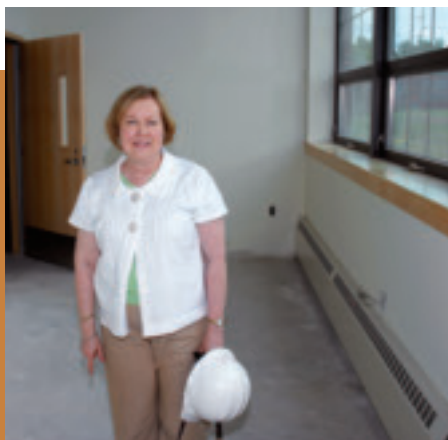
Hartt School Dean Malcolm Morrison called the Handel Performing Arts Center "the fulfillment of a dream, the culmination of a career." Morrison will be stepping down as dean of The Hartt School on Dec. 31.

Also attending the ceremony were Mort and Irma Handel, donors of the

largest individual gift to the project. "There is no better testament to Malcolm's tenure as dean than this facility," Mort Handel said.

Downes Construction, based in New Britain, Conn., was the lead construction management company on the project, which began in June 2007 and was completed on time and under budget. Capital Restoration of Hartford provided assistance to Downes in managing the project and supervising the subcontractors.

The center was ready for the University's first day of classes, Sept. 3, 2008; its official dedication date is Sept. 12. An open house will be held on Oct. 4, and a special celebration gala is scheduled for Saturday, Nov. 8. ■



It Must Be Fate

As Hartt Theatre Division Coordinator Joan Coates (left) moved into her new office at the Handel Center in July, her past stepped up to greet her at the door. In 1976, when the building was still a car dealership, Coates purchased a car there. A year later, she began working at the University of Hartford. Although she traded in the car in the mid-'80s, she kept the job.

"I think the Handel Center is beautiful. It's wonderful to be here," says Coates. "When I bought a car here three decades ago, I never dreamed that work would bring me back to this historic building!" ■