

Holy Cross M A G A Z I N E

INSIDE THE “UNCOMMON COMMONS”

YOUR BACKSTAGE LOOK AT THE KEY SPACES AND FEATURES
OF HOLY CROSS' UPPER CAMPUS MASTERPIECE,
THE PRIOR PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

Three Words That Revolutionized Jesuit Education PAGE 34

The Man Who Brought The Devil Back to Salem PAGE 59

The Vision for Holy Cross Athletics Success PAGE 38





INSIDE THE “UNCOMMON COMMONS”



01 THE BEEHIVE

Call it the heart of the building or the central hub – anything but a lobby. Located at the center of the building, the **Beehive** is its crossroads, a large, open area where people can enjoy a hot beverage and conversation one minute and push furniture out of the way the next to watch (or join) an impromptu performance. The space also offers a real-time look into the work being done all around via the glass-walled rehearsal, work and performance spaces and labs on all three floors. With a soft opening in winter 2023 and an official opening in fall 2023, the **O'Connor Family Café** will offer drinks and snacks to those enjoying the Beehive as a study, work or conversation space.

Your guide to the key spaces and features of Holy Cross' new academic building and arts hub, the **Prior Performing Arts Center**.

BY
MELISSA
SHAW

"Welcoming and flexible"
– *The New York Times*

"A physical manifestation of Holy Cross' commitment to the arts"
– *Archello*

"An up-and-coming center for public presentation of the arts, as well as for pedagogy"
– *The Architect's Newspaper*

"Forward-looking, marking another step in Holy Cross' evolving mission"
– *Architectural Record*

Holy Cross' Prior Performing Arts Center (PAC) has only been open since September 2022, yet has already been written about extensively in the national – and international – architectural press. But, for all the coverage, it's lead designer Charles Renfro who may sum up the 84,000-square-foot, \$110 million building best: "The new Prior Performing Arts Center is an uncommon commons."

Here's a behind-the-scenes look at the spaces and features that make the academic building a stunning, cutting-edge showcase, today a reality on Mount St. James thanks to the generosity of many donors, led by namesake Cornelius B. Prior Jr. '56, who gave the largest arts-related gift in College history.



02 IRIS AND B. GERALD CANTOR ART GALLERY

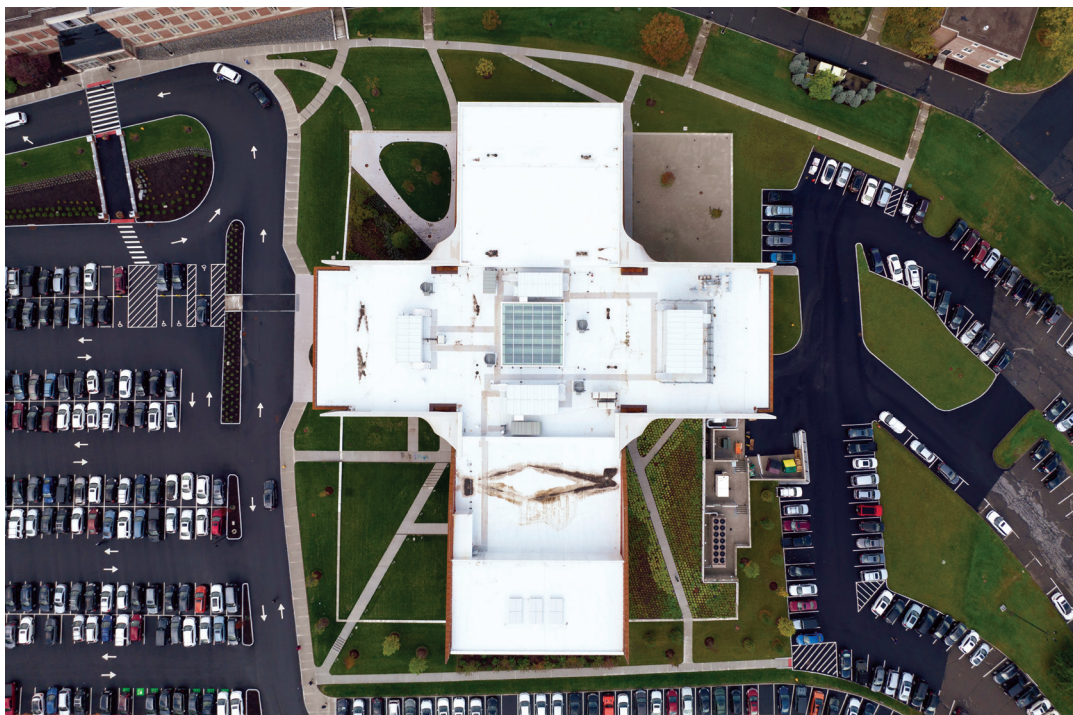
Located in O’Kane Hall for nearly 40 years, the **Cantor Art Gallery’s** new 2,500-square-foot home is a modern, light-filled space that allows for increased accessibility and integration into the academic and cultural life of the College. A state-of-the-art storage space for the gallery’s collection allows faculty to request artworks that their classes can study in an attached study room, an opportunity that was impossible at the Cantor’s original location.

A freight elevator provides best practices for moving irreplaceable work into and out of the building, and a west wall space facing the exterior of the PAC showcases guest works, such as the inaugural exhibition, a 12-by-20-foot painting, “The Travelers,” by Justine Hill ’08.



03 A MEETING PLACE

Built on upper campus next to the bustling Hogan Campus Center, above a cluster of residence halls and downhill from the Hart Center at the Luth Athletic Complex, the building is fast becoming a popular location for faculty, staff and students to connect for meetings or catch up between classes. As *The Architect’s Newspaper* reports, the PAC is a place “not only for performances, classes and rehearsals, but for seeing and being seen, a welcoming site for the casual hangouts and meetups of collegiate life.”



04 THE DESIGN

While it certainly doesn't appear as such from the ground level, a bird's-eye view clearly shows that the two intersecting pairs of walls reveal a nine-square grid in the shape of a cross. Inside, four pavilions – featuring theaters to the north and south, art and media spaces to the west, and practice and production facilities to the east – surround the Beehive.

05 COSTUME DESIGN STUDIO

For 45 years, resident costume designer Kurt Hultgren and colleagues operated out of a cramped work space in O'Kane Hall, basically the equivalent of a crowded attic. This fall, as he created costumes for the inaugural theater production in the new **costume design studio**, supported by the Fuller Foundation, Hultgren and his staff enjoyed more than twice the workspace, cutting tables, laundry facilities and adjacent storage – and a wall of windows (as opposed to the previous total of one). “The whole setup could not have functioned better,” he says. “It was really a pleasure to work in the space. Having room to move is pretty amazing; in the old shop we were always tripping over stuff.”





06 PRACTICE ROOMS AND SOLOIST SUITE

With four **practice rooms** and a **soloist suite**, performers have ample places on the second and third floors to work on their craft. Two of the practice rooms feature glass walls that overlook the Beehive, allowing visitors to watch artists at work.



07 DILLER SCOFIDIO + RENFRO

The PAC was designed by New York-based architectural firm Diller Scofidio + Renfro, which specializes in cultural and civic projects, many of which take innovative approaches to integrating the visual and performing arts. Their work includes the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston and the renovation of the Juilliard School for young artists-in-training, as well as buildings at Brown University, the University of California at Berkeley, Columbia Business School and Stanford University, among others.

The firm is also well-known for such high-profile projects in New York City as the High Line Park on Manhattan's West Side (*above*), the renovation and expansion of the Museum of Modern Art and Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, and The Shed arts center.



08 OUTDOOR SPACES

At an institution known for its award-winning landscape, it's unsurprising that Holy Cross' newest building offers beautiful outdoor green spaces and gardens for education, entertainment and relaxation. By the first-floor entrance to the north is the **Tony and Renee Marlon Foundation Courtyard**, which features an 1898 Rodin statue, "Le génie du repos éternel" ("The Spirit of Eternal Rest"), donated by arts philanthropist Iris Cantor for the sculpture garden. To the south is the **Patterson Amphitheatre**, which can play host to everything from live performances to outdoor movie nights. At the main entrance to the west, the **Carey Garden** welcomes visitors to the building.



09 LUTH CONCERT HALL

The PAC's largest performance space, the **Luth Concert Hall**, is a 400-seat proscenium theater providing what The Architect's Newspaper describes as "a sonic ambience that can rival those of European opera houses," thanks to its high ceiling, the sustainably harvested West African makore hardwood that lines the stage and the custom-developed rippling concrete wall panels that reflect specific sonic frequencies. The large stage can present up to 140 performers when the hall is in concert formation, and has already showcased the work of Holy Cross ensembles ranging from the orchestra to the choir; it can also be reconfigured for dance and musical theater performances.



10 SEMINAR/ DRESSING ROOMS

An adjective frequently associated with the building is "flexible," as many spaces serve multiple purposes. Prime examples are the two **seminar/dressing rooms** on the second floor, which overlook the Beehive and are supported by Mimi and Sam Krug '65. When necessary, the two rooms can be used as dressing rooms for performers. The rest of the time, they can be used for instruction, a key resource in a busy building – and in high demand on a bustling liberal arts campus.



11

BOROUGH'S THEATRE

The 200-seat **Borough's Theatre** was designed as a black box theater, an industry term for an intimate venue with highly flexible configurations for performance and seating. Featured above the performance space is the theater's notably accessible catwalk, which allows student technicians to easily manipulate the Borough's sophisticated lighting and sound equipment. The theater's 52-foot south wall is retractable, extending the performance or audience space into the Beehive. In November 2022, the Borough's was host to the center's inaugural theater performance, an adaptation of Euripides' "Iphigenia" translated by Mary Ebbott, professor of classics. "We can now dream of something that we previously had not been able to conceive," says director Ed Isser, Distinguished Professor of Ethics and Society. "It's a transformative space, and there are boundless opportunities."

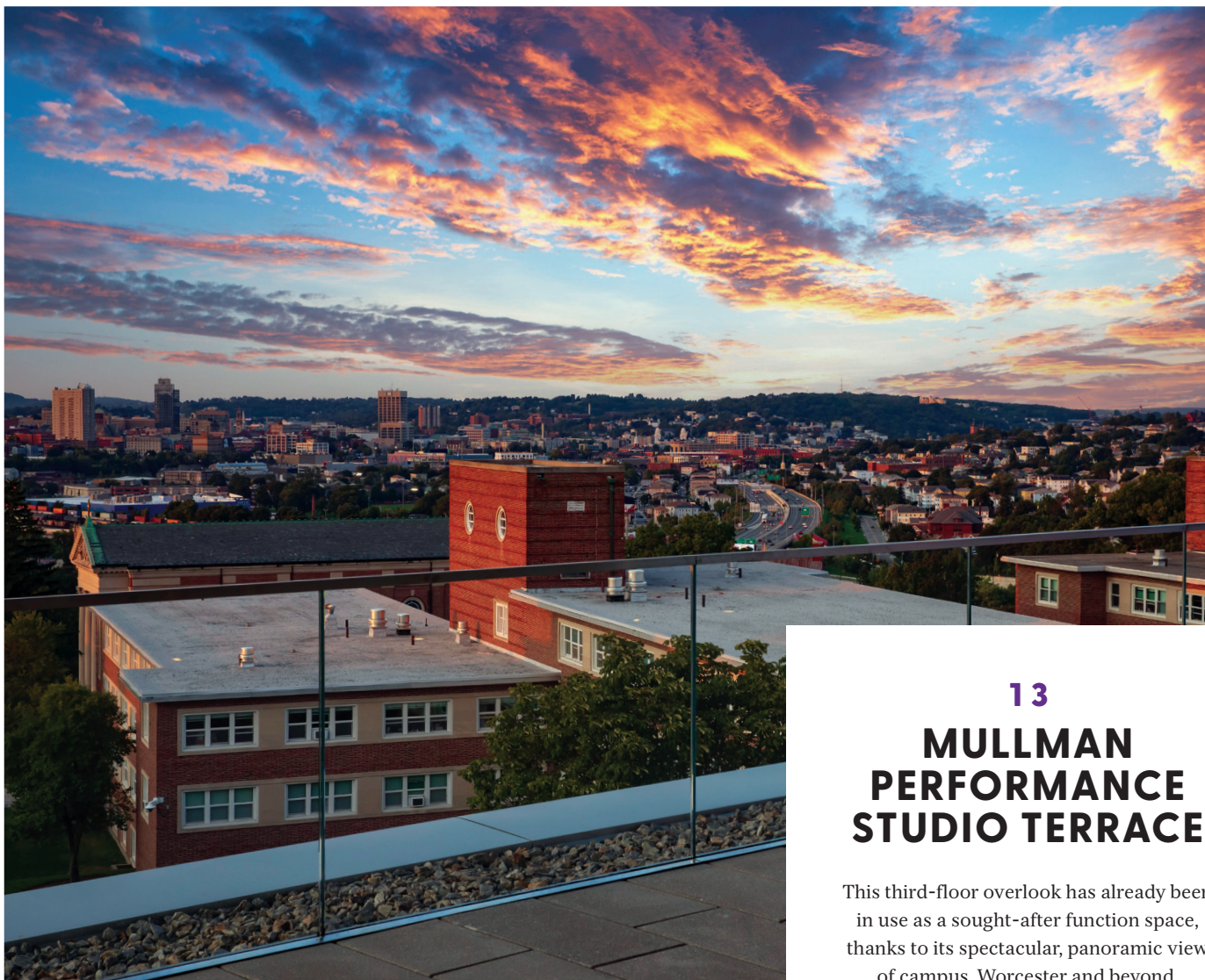
12

LOVELETTE ENSEMBLE ROOM

Located on the second floor next to the recording studio, the **Lovelette Ensemble Room** is designed for pristine audio capture.

Double-panelled glass doors, windows and a floating floor make it the quietest room in the building, while laser-cut walls collect and scatter sound waves to enhance the crispness of the sound.





13

MULLMAN PERFORMANCE STUDIO TERRACE

This third-floor overlook has already been in use as a sought-after function space, thanks to its spectacular, panoramic view of campus, Worcester and beyond.



14

FOLEY SCENE SHOP

Visitors wondering about upcoming performances only have to stand in the Beehive and look east into the **Foley Scene Shop** to see students, faculty and staff at work on the next show.



15

RECORDING STUDIO

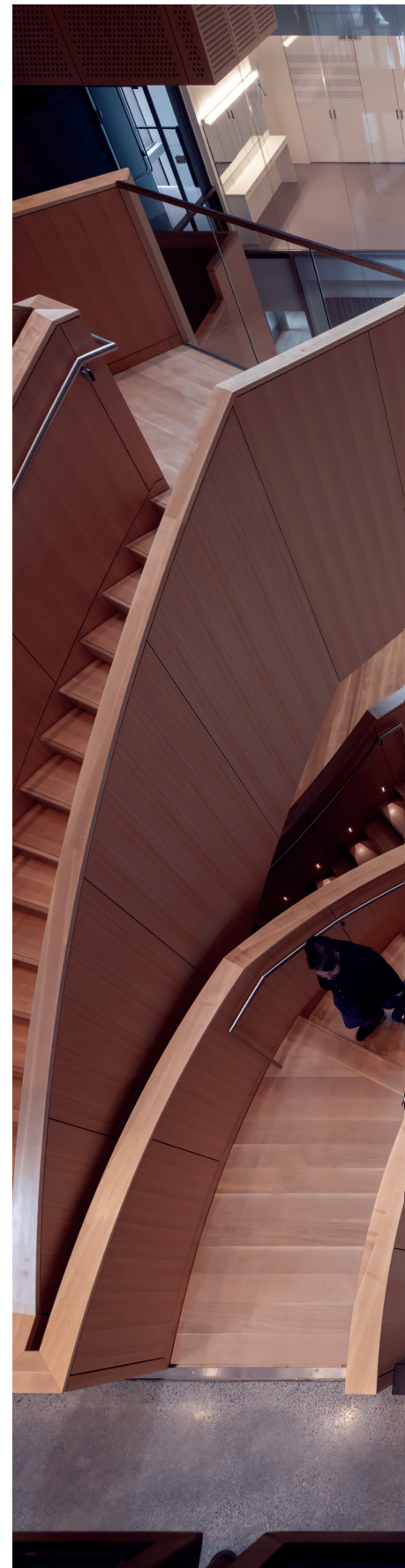
The **recording studio** is wired to capture performances taking place anywhere in the building. Supported by the Fletcher Foundation, it is also a fully outfitted classroom where students can work with state-of-the-art software, microphones and other equipment on curricular and extracurricular projects. It is contiguous to the Lovelette Ensemble Room, which doubles as a recording space.



16

ALDEN TRUST PERFORMANCE STUDIO

Located on the third floor, this large rehearsal, performance and gathering place offers an inspiring setting for work by Holy Cross community members and visiting artists alike. Adjacent to the studio is the **Joyce Performance Lounge**, where artists and audiences can mingle before or after a show.





17

BOOTH MEDIA LAB

The **Booth Media Lab**, a multimedia teaching space, sports a large projection screen and moveable work spaces that each include a networked laptop, synthesizer and audio interface. This allows the lab to play host to courses in electronic music and musical composition, sound recording, sound editing, and video and film editing. Kathleen Chadwick, visiting assistant professor in the Department of Theatre and Dance, taught a fall 2022 class in the lab, *Virtual Realities*, in which students learned how to design and develop virtual environments. “The flexibility of the space let us change the setup as needed,” she says. “And the large projection screen let them see my software demonstrations in detail, which is essential in teaching the very complex applications we used to make the virtual reality scenes.” When the room is not in use as a classroom, computer workstations can be locked away in the custom-built closets that line the room, creating yet another site for functions, performances or rehearsals.

18

THE STAIRCASE

The Prior Performing Arts Center may be the campus’ most versatile building. It is anchored, however, by a permanent, dramatic feature: a two-story cantilevered **staircase** that offers striking angles from which to view the center’s comings and goings. ■

